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The Memory of Meanings

The Images of Jewish-Catholic Relations in Interwar Lublin in Oral Histories

Dziaczkowska, Magdalena

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PO Box 117
221 00 Lund
+46 46-222 00 00



The Memory of Meanings

The Images of Jewish-Catholic Relations in Interwar
Lublin in Oral Histories

MAGDALENA DZIACZKOWSKA

CENTRE FOR THEOLOGY AND RELIGIOUS STUDIES | LUND UNIVERSITY



The Memory of Meanings

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The Images of Jewish-Catholic Relations in Interwar
Lublin in Oral Histories

Magdalena Dziaczkowska



LUND
UNIVERSITY

DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

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Professor François Guesnet

Professor in Modern Jewish History, Department of Hebrew and Jewish Studies,
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Abstract This work explores narratives of Jewish-Catholic relations in interwar Lublin, as recalled by its Jewish and Catholic inhabitants by the end of their lives. Thus, it concerns both memory and intergroup relations and seeks to understand the attitudes towards the religious Other. The main body of sources for this qualitative study is a collection of oral histories from the Grodzka Gate – NN Theatre Centre in Lublin, which were analyzed thematically focusing on the memory of everyday interactions between Jews and Catholics. Particular attention is paid to the link between memory and identity. The analysis of the narratives draws extensively from theories regarding intergroup contact (Gordon Allport's intergroup contact theory later developed by i.a. Linda R. Tropp and Thomas Pettigrew), the relation between personal agency versus social structures (Margaret Archer's morphogenetic sequence), as well as the theory of communication based on context (Dorota Kuncewicz et al.). The latter, combined with an adaptation of Erwin Panofsky's iconology, provides an insight into the meaning of the stories – how the religious Other is perceived, why it could be so, and what consequences it has on intergroup relations decades after the recalled events took place. The findings are grouped into two analytical parts of the dissertation: one dedicated to identity, and another concentrating on relations, which are described on three levels – spatial, interpersonal and interreligious. On the one hand, the study indicates sensitive points in intergroup relations such as the role of social class and gender relations, which can be used to strengthen existing intergroup separation. On the other hand, it points to instances of overcoming separation and segregation through affective ties, especially of friendship, common socio-economic background, education and personal values. It points to (inter)religious literacy fortifying prejudice. The main finding, however, is the fundamental difference in perceiving the same past by the minority and the majority group, which has dire consequences for the relationship between these two groups until today. The study suggests the need for further research on how this memory gap can be addressed to find constructive ways of producing inclusive collective memory in both groups, recognizing the experience of the Other.		
Key words: Jewish-Christian relations, Jewish-Catholic relations, Jewish-Polish relations, interreligious relations, intergroup relations, lived religion, oral history, memory, Otherness, religious Other, identity, Holocaust, victimhood, trauma, Polish Jews, interwar, Poland, stereotypes, antisemitism, anti-Judaism, allo-Semitism		
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Lublin in Oral Histories

Magdalena Dziaczkowska



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*This study is dedicated to the memory of all those
whose stories it tells*

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	10
Abbreviations.....	14
Glossary.....	15
PART 1 Competing Narratives.....	19
Chapter 1 Introduction.....	21
Instead of a Preface.....	21
The Topic, the Research Questions and the Approach.....	24
Theoretical Framework.....	44
Chapter 2 <i>Opowiem ci historie</i> : Between Story and History	65
The Stories – About the Sources	65
The Methodology.....	80
PART 2 The Setting.....	91
Chapter 3 Jews and Catholics in Interwar Poland	93
Struggles to Define the Polish Nation in the Period of the Second Republic..	93
The Main Points of Tension between the State, the Church and the Jewish Minority.....	117
Jews and Polish Catholic National Culture – between Assimilation and Exclusion.....	125
Solutions for the Jewish Question.....	128
Chapter 4 Jews and Catholics in Lublin.....	131
7 לונלינער – the Jews of Lublin	136
Lubluniacy – the Catholics	149
Part 3 Identity	157
Chapter 5 Introducing the Protagonists	159

The Group	161
Catholic Lubliners	164
Jewish Lubliners	177
Chapter 6 Negotiating Identities.....	207
Part 4 The Relations	225
Chapter 7 Spatial Relations.....	227
Intergroup Topography	230
Spatial Comfort Zones and the Constructions of the Jewish Space	232
Comfort Zones and Mobility	267
Chapter 8 Interpersonal Relations within Secular Framework.....	283
Economy.....	285
Neighbors.....	304
School	320
Political Parties	336
Friendships.....	338
Romantic Engagements	353
Chapter 9 Interreligious Relations.....	367
Observing the Other's Religion – Personal Narratives	370
Pre-Existing Knowledge – Metanarratives and Collective Memory	383
Behavior – Accounts of the Interactions.....	397
Reassessing the Ingroup and the Outgroup.....	418
Iconology of the Oral Histories	422
Chapter 10 Conclusions	435
Bibliography	445
Primary Sources.....	445
Literature.....	460
Links	484

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Abbreviations

BBWR – Bezpartyjny Blok Współpracy z Rządem (Nonpartisan Bloc for Cooperation with the Government)

CISZO – צענטראלע יידישע שול-ארגאניזאציע (Central Jewish School Organization)

CZJN – Chrześcijański Związek Jedności Narodowej (Christian Union of National Unity)

KPP – Komunistyczna Partia Polski (Communist Party of Poland)

KUL – Katolicki Uniwersytet Lubelski Jana Pawła II (John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin)

OH GGTNNC – Oral history transcript from the archive of the Grodzka Gate – NN Theatre Centre in Lublin

OZN – Obóz Zjednoczenia Narodowego (Camp of National Unity)

PPS – Polska Partia Socjalistyczna (Polish Socialist Party)

SN – Stronnictwo Narodowe (National Party)

WIZO – Women International Zionist Organization

ZLN – Związek Ludowo-Narodowy (Popular National Union)

Glossary

Agudath Israel – “Union of Israel”, a religious Jewish political party, established in 1912 in Katowice, and active throughout the Second Polish Republic. Subsequently, a Haredi Jewish party in Israel, currently predominantly Hasidic.

BBWR – a “non-political” organization in the Second Polish Republic closely affiliated with Józef Piłsudski and Sanacja.

Bund – The General Jewish Labor Bund in Poland. A Jewish socialist and anti-Zionist party, promoting Jewish autonomy (political, cultural and social) and focusing on the worker’s rights. In the last years before the Second World War, it became the most influential Jewish political force in Poland.

CISZO – a secular organization of Polish Jews active in the interwar period, connected to Bund and the Folkist movement. Education in the CISZO schools was characterized by propagating views opposed to Zionism and the Hebrew culture. Instead, it advocated a secular culture with a strong significance of the Yiddish language and socialist values. The organization’s schools taught in two languages. The so-called Polish subjects were taught in Polish, and the rest in Yiddish.

CZJN – a conservative party active between 1922 and 1926.

Chametz – foods with leavening agents that are forbidden on the Jewish holiday of Passover.

Endecja – National Democratic party active in Poland since the second half of the 19th century until the end of the Second Polish Republic, known for its nationalist and antisemitic character. During the interwar time it functioned under two names: first as the People’s National Union (Pl. Związek Ludowo-Narodowy, hereafter ZLN) and then from 1928 as the National Party (Pl. Stronnictwo Narodowe, hereafter SN).

Endek – a member of the National Democratic party of Poland.

Freblówka – a type of preschool.

Gimnazjum – high school in interwar period. From 1932 onwards, it lasted for four years, preceded by six years of elementary school and followed by two years of *liceum*.

Gimnazjum Humanistyczne – a private Jewish *gimnazjum* in Lublin.

Hasidism – a Jewish religious group, which arose as a spiritual and pietist revival movement in the territory of contemporary Western Ukraine during the 18th century. It drew from kabbalah and highlighted God's immanence in the world and the attainability of holiness for every person. It is the second biggest mass movement of mysticism, after Sufism, combining an elitist character with an egalitarian approach. It spread rapidly throughout Eastern Europe and had numerous followers in interwar Poland. The followers gather around central figure of a rabbi – a tzadik who is a member of a family – from a dynasty of Hasidic rabbis. The main dynasties in interwar Poland were Ger, Sochatchov, and Aleksander.

Lubliner – a Jewish inhabitant of Lublin.

KPP – a communist party in Poland active between 1918 and 1938.

OZN – a Polish political party founded in 1937 by sections of the leadership in the Sanacja movement. It adopted 13 theses on the Jewish question modeled after the Nuremberg laws, labelling Jews as a foreign element that should be deprived of all civil rights and ultimately expelled.

Poland A and B – a conventional distinction referring to historical, cultural and political differences between the western and the eastern part of Poland (Vistula river is the dividing line), corresponding respectively to the former Prussian partition (A) and Russian and Austrian ones (B). Poland A is more industrial and enjoys faster economic growth than Poland B, which is under-invested in and has a prevalingly post-agricultural character. Culturally, the western part is seen as more progressive and carrier-oriented, while the eastern part as more traditional and family-oriented. This division is also reflected in political sympathies prevalent in both parts of the country.

PPS – one of the most important parties in Poland from its inception in 1892 until its merger with the communist Polish Workers' Party to form the Polish United Workers' Party in 1948, which could be seen as a counterbalance to Endecja. Marshal Józef Piłsudski belonged to and later led the party in the 1920s and early 1930s.

Rosh HaShana – the Jewish New Year, usually in the end of September or beginning of October. It begins a ten-day period of penitence culminating in Yom Kippur, which is followed by the festival of Sukkot.

Sanacja – a Polish political movement that was created in the interwar period, prior to Józef Piłsudski's May 1926 *Coup d'État*, and came to power in the wake of that coup. Its name translates into English as “sanitation”.

Shechita – ritual slaughter in Jewish tradition.

Shabbat / Shabbos / Shabbes goy – a non-Jew asked for help with performing forbidden works on Shabbat, especially kindling the fire or similar.

SN – a Polish nationalist party active between 1928 and 1947, formed after the transformation of Popular National Union (ZLN). It was the main right-wing political organization and the one of the main opponents of the Sanacja government.

Sukkah / Kuczka – a booth constructed for the holiday of Sukkot, reminding of the booths in which Israelites lived during their time on the desert after leaving Egypt.

Sukkot / Kuczki – one of the autumn holidays, following Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur, celebrated for seven days to thank God for harvest and remember His providence when Israel lived in the tents. During the week of festivities one is supposed to dwell in the sukkah.

Tarbut – a Jewish secular cultural and educational association, active mainly in the interwar period, which ran a network of Jewish secular, Hebrew-language schools in parts of the former Jewish Pale of Settlement, specifically in Poland, Romania and Lithuania.

Tashlikh – a Jewish atonement ritual performed during the High Holy Days (Rosh HaShana). It concerns praying in the proximity of a large natural body of water (river, lake, sea, etc.).

WIZO – a volunteer organization established in 1920, which in the interwar period focused on providing community services to Jews in Mandate Palestine. Nowadays, it is dedicated to social welfare in all sectors of Israeli society, the advancement of the status of women, and Jewish education in Israel and the Diaspora.

ZLN – a party uniting conservative politicians, active between 1919 and 1928.

PART 1
Competing Narratives

Chapter 1

Introduction

Instead of a Preface

This is a study of memory and intergroup relations. The story I am telling is about people and their difficulties in meeting Otherness. I would like to introduce the reader to my work with the help of a photograph taken in a place documenting what happens when the human ability to accept the Other fails.



Figure 1. The view of the memorial statue nowadays with the place where the next photo was taken marked. The original photo taken by Tero Jänkä can be found online at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Majdanek_pomnik.jpg.



Figure 2. Me with some family members at the foot of the memorial statue. The photo was taken in 1991 by my father.

This is me (the girl wearing a dress held by an adult woman – my aunt) when I was five years old, walking on the site of the former concentration and extermination camp Majdanek. Within a radius of 150 km from my home, one can find three significant extermination camps: apart from Majdanek, there are also Bełżec and Sobibór. During Operation Reinhardt,² approximately one million Jews (one-sixth of the estimated total number) lost their lives in the Lublin region some forty-three years before I came to the world. I was born 7 km away from Majdanek and when I was writing the first draft of this chapter, my grandmother still lived very close to the site. So close, in fact, that on

² Operation Reinhard (or Reinhardt) was named after Reinhard Heydrich, the coordinator of the “Final Solution of the Jewish Question,” who outlined the plan of extermination of the Jews living in General Government (Nazi-occupied Poland). Within the framework of this operation, the Nazis introduced extermination camps and killed approximately 1.7 million Jews and an unknown number of Poles, Roma and Soviet POWs. The headquarters of Operation Reinhardt were located in Lublin and the Lublin ghetto was one of the first ones to be liquidated. Financial benefits from the action for the Reich are estimated at ca. 178.7 million German marks. For more information on Operation Reinhardt, see Dariusz Libionka, “Akcja Reinhardt. Zagłada Żydów w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie” (Warszawa: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2004).

visiting her we would go for Sunday walks to the former camp. It was a huge green area and we would enter only the lawns close to the main street, not approaching the barracks and the mausoleum looming in the distant sections of the camp, behind Field V and VI. I still remember the overwhelming impression of the massive grey statue commemorating the victims, which as a child I took for some form of a man-made rock. I grew up with a dim awareness of the past atrocities and rich Jewish history of Lublin creating a web of unspoken meanings and implications, running under the visible tissue of the town. Inaudible whispers of the past. Seemingly, it was distant and unrelated to my identity – a view shared by the vast majority of the Polish Catholic population.³

It was only when I was 27, after moving to Israel to work as a volunteer and becoming friends with Israelis of Polish origins, that my perspective changed. Suddenly, they were the friends that, had history taken different course, could have been my friends in Poland. Suddenly, the Holocaust became my personal loss. I became deeply interested in its history and the Jewish past of my town and region as a part of my own identity of a Polish Catholic woman. At the same time, I started to ask questions regarding Jewish life before the Holocaust, and the relations between the Catholics and the Jews in the land where my family roots run deep. My questions led me first to working with the Grodzka-Gate NN Theatre in Lublin (hereafter GGTNNC), whose outstanding collections I am using in this study, and then back to academia to study Jewish texts and Jewish-Christian relations.

In addition, my doctoral thesis is a fruit of not only my curiosity back then but also an interesting experiment in being a minority. The entire period of my doctoral project was an exercise in facing otherness and becoming a stranger. Both in Sweden and Israel, as a Catholic I was member of a minority group towards which there is considerable prejudice, although undoubtedly my position remained privileged in many ways. The experience of being the Other myself opened my eyes to the vulnerabilities every minority experiences and made this a “lived” study not only through my theoretical approach (lived religion)⁴ but also through my own living of everyday interreligious and intercultural encounters.

³ The non-memory of the Jewish past in Lublin has been researched, for example, by Katarzyna Sztopy-Rutkowska, who in one of her articles focuses specifically on Lublin and another city in eastern Poland, Białystok; Katarzyna Sztopy-Rutkowska, "The Forgotten Histories of a City. The Jewish Past of Białystok and Lublin in the (Un)Memory of the Present Inhabitants," *Pogranicze. Studia Społeczne* 18 (2011), <https://doi.org/10.15290/pss.2011.18.04>. Her main conclusion is that the Holocaust still holds a marginal position in Polish collective memory.

⁴ Lived religion is an ethnographic and holistic framework or approach within sociology of religion, aiming at understanding the religion as it is practiced (“lived”) by ordinary people in the contexts of everyday life (e.g., domestic, work or commercial religious settings). It originates in the French school of sociology of religion (*la religion vécue*) and can be also referred to as “everyday religion” and “living

The Topic, the Research Questions and the Approach

The central thematic axis of this work is the image of the lived, enacted relation to Otherness in everyday life in the narrations thereof. I am limiting myself to the interreligious dimension of Otherness and the everyday experience of alterity when encountering one who does not belong to the same religious community. Narrowing down this very broad problem, my research focuses on the accounts of relations between Jews and Catholics in the city of Lublin in the period of the Second Polish Republic (1918-1939) as presented in oral histories collected by the GGTNNC⁵ in Lublin.

One could ask, what is special about this city in Poland B, failing to keep pace with other Polish cities, and having a very provincial character in the interwar period. Does it deserve to be studied in this context? Most cities of the Second Republic of Poland had a large Jewish population and many of these communities were long established, well-known and culturally animate, and had relations with the Catholic inhabitants. Lublin stands out on a few levels. Firstly, Lublin's population was composed mostly of Jews and Catholics, with all the other minorities being less than one percent of the population.⁶ Such composition enables the researcher to see the dynamics of intergroup relations in a clear way, without much interference from other minority groups. Secondly, Lublin has rich source material regarding the Jewish community and the relations between the two groups, including the impressive collection at GGTNNC. Thirdly, Lublin was very eastern-Polish in its attachment to traditions and a certain backwardness; thus, it can be seen as closer in the types of intergroup relations to the *shtetls* than other Polish cities such as Warsaw, Lwów or Kraków. This particularity makes it an interesting case. Moreover, it was an important center of religious education, with the Catholic University and the Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin. This implies high standing of religion in local social life and more complex relation to modernization and politicization than in other big Polish cities, making it an appropriate and fascinating case to study lived religion. Finally, the choice honors the long history of the Lublin Jewish community and the importance of the town in the history of the Polish Jewry, being a seat of the Council of Four Lands and a spiritual center of Jewish thought.

religion". The concept was popularized by such scholars as Nancy T. Ammerman, David D. Hall, Meredith McGuire, and Robert A. Orsi.

⁵ A local cultural institution devoted to preserving the cultural heritage of the town and the region of Lublin, with a particular emphasis on the Jewish heritage.

⁶ See Urszula Bronisz Andrzej Jakubowski, Elżbieta Łoś, *Historia Lublina w liczbach. History of Lublin in Figures* (Lublin: Urząd Statystyczny w Lublinie 2018). Tabl. 101.

I am particularly interested in the narratives describing the relations to the Other as experienced on a daily basis. In the relations themselves, I pay much attention to the attitudes and cultural tropes, trying to understand how memory translates into representations of the past, in this case narrative. In other words, the focal point is how people recollect and represent the past. By making such a choice I do not mean to underestimate the weight of the past itself nor imply that it is completely impossible to “see” the past through the narratives. I think that the past is present in the personal narratives analyzed in this study. However, its presence is mysterious as every narrator (also scholarly!) offers their own account of the past – as if one was collecting a number of paintings representing one place. Naturally, such paintings are capable of conveying an idea of the place itself but even more of indicating tropes regarding the painter: their education, cultural background and even the ideology and religion that influenced them. I approach the painting – and the oral histories, in the case of this study – as a text of culture, trying to access what lies beyond formal means of expression (narrative). Thus, the subject of this study is the narrative re-enactment of the past, not the past itself, and the approach to history is constructionist.⁷

One of the most important tenets of my approach is assuming that religion played a part in shaping attitudes and actions towards the other both for Catholic and Jewish inhabitants of interwar Lublin. This study addresses “lived inter-religiosity” – the realm of daily *inbetweenness*⁸ – interreligious encounters happening on an everyday basis between Catholics and Jews whose relation to their own religion naturally varied. Some of these interactions had religious dimension (for example being asked to be a *Shabbos* goy), which implies a religious social practice, but the majority did not; and yet, religion regulated the relations between the group and the others. This appears more salient in Halakha than in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, yet the Catholic contextual

⁷ It will not be possible to delve into the discussion of the concept and its intricacies, explaining why I do not follow Hayden White’s rhetorical constructionism or Leon J. Goldstein’s “disciplinary matrix” framework but instead lean towards Frank Ankersmit’s ideas of creating historical meaning through the representation of the past, which can be seen as a worthy substitute for the past itself. Having said that, it seems important to add that the approach of this study takes a much more favorable view on narrative and the kinship between literature and history than Ankersmit does. Franklin Rudolf Ankersmit, *History and Tropology: The Rise and Fall of Metaphor* (Oakland: University of California Press, 1994); Hayden White, “The Question of Narrative in Contemporary Historical Theory,” *History and Theory* 23, no. 1 (1984), <https://doi.org/10.2307/2504969>; Leon J. Goldstein, “History and the Primacy of Knowing,” *History and Theory* 16, no. 4 (1977), <https://doi.org/10.2307/2504806>.

⁸ The term is drawn from Martin Buber’s conceptualization of the “in between” space, also defined as “mutual” (*gegenseitig*), being part of his dialogic principle framework. Martin Buber, *I and Thou* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1970).

teachings prove to convey very strong opinions about Jews and the proper ways of relating to them.⁹

Following the above-described ways of thinking about the past and interreligious relations, the research questions do not pertain to the past itself but rather to memory and the images of the past contained in the narratives at hand. The main question is how mutual Jewish-Catholic relations are represented and why it could be so. As the study lies at the intersections of the fields of lived religion, interreligious studies and memory studies, it refers to the categories employed by these fields.¹⁰ Auxiliary questions include the following: What stereotypes possibly underpin the narratives? How did the Second World War and the Holocaust affect the narratives? What political, religious and philosophical tropes emerge in the narratives and how do they influence them? How do these narratives relate to the politics of history in Poland, Israel and other countries where the interviewees lived in the period between the past and the now of the interview? How did the social position, gender, education and other possible factors influence the point of view of the interviewees?

The analysis of oral histories is supplemented by the information found in archival materials such as press releases, autobiographical literature and scholarship.

Status Quaestionis

In recent decades, as a result of changes in Christian thinking about Jews and Judaism, Jewish-Christian relations have become a topic of countless publications, including academic studies. The increased interest in the topic stems to a large extent from a post-Holocaust sense of guilt. The Church had to ask herself how a genocide of that scale was possible in the middle of Christian Europe.¹¹ Two historical periods are of special interest: the moment of the parting of the ways between Judaism and Christianity, and the postconciliar developments following *Nostra aetate*. This might result from the assumption that the Church has come full circle: from detaching herself from Judaism, through anti-Judaism and supersessionism to reconciling again with her Jewish roots.

⁹ Antisemitic and anti-Judaic attitudes of many members of the Catholic clergy in Poland were public (for example, Fr. Józef Kruszyński, a rector of the Catholic University of Lublin) and some interviewees attest to the antisemitic content of Catholic sermons.

¹⁰ A more detailed discussion devoted to theories can be found below.

¹¹ There is no possibility here to expand on post-Holocaust theology. For reference see, for example: Barbara U Meyer, "Structures of Violence and the Denigration of Law in Christian Thought," *Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations* 13, no. 1 (2018); Stephen Ronald Haynes, *Prospects for Post-Holocaust Theology: "Israel" in the Theologies of Karl Barth, Juergen Moltmann, and Paul van Buren* (Atlanta: Emory University, 1989); Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide: The Theological Roots of Anti-Semitism* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1996); Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology* (London: SCM, 1974).

The majority of academic studies in Jewish-Christian relations either approach the topic from a historical or a theological perspective. I will focus here on the first group, to which this study belongs. A majority of the historical publications choose to approach the matter from a political perspective, often focusing on antisemitism,¹² anti-Judaism¹³ and political aspects of Jewish-Christian coexistence.¹⁴ It is striking that the overwhelming majority of publications focus on the relations of the Church and Christians to Jews, and historical studies showing Jewish attitudes towards Christianity are extremely rare.¹⁵ I can see two reasons for such a development. Firstly, Jews as a minority are not treated as actors and agents, but more as re-actors to the actions of the majority societies they lived in. Therefore, they are presented as victims and their fragile, vulnerable situation is seen as significantly limiting their ability to control their fate. Secondly, because historically, in Europe, Jews were repeatedly accused of anti-Christian attitudes and actions such as sacrilege, ritual murder of Christian children, etc., it might feel that any examination of Jewish attitudes towards Christianity bears, however slightly, a resemblance to these highly unjust practices.

Moreover, it is hard to overlook the prevalence of a certain structuralism in studying the history of Jewish-Christian relations. The tendency seems to be to study institutions and organizations, and relations held at official and public levels. Naturally, this results largely from the nature of available sources, as there are scant sources available to learn about interactions between ordinary people in the distant past. However, social history, not to mention history from below, seems to be rather absent even with respect to the recent past, in spite of the abundance of sources such as letters, diaries and other ego-documents.¹⁶

¹² See, e.g., Robert S Wistrich, *A Lethal Obsession: Anti-Semitism from Antiquity to the Global Jihad* (New York: Random House, 2010); James Carroll, *Constantine's Sword: The Church and the Jews: A History* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2001); Lucy S. Dawidowicz, *The War Against the Jews 1933-1945* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1975); Edward H. Flannery, *The Aniquish of the Jews: Twenty-Three Centuries of Anti-Semitism* (New York, London: Collier-Macmillan, 1965).

¹³ See, e.g., David Nirenberg, *Anti-Judaism: The Western Tradition* (New York: WW Norton & Company, 2013); Ernest A Rappaport, *Anti-Judaism: A Psychohistory* (Chicago: Perspective Press, 1975).

¹⁴ In this context, I understand political as pertaining to public affairs, Church and state authorities and the institutional dimension of social life.

¹⁵ One of seminal studies in this area, in fact stressing mutuality, is Karma Ben Johanan, *Jacob's Younger Brother: Christian-Jewish Relations after Vatican II* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2022). See also Magdalena Dziaczkowska and Adele Valeria Messina, *Jews in Dialogue: Jewish Responses to the Challenges of Multicultural Contemporaneity. Free Ebrei Volume 2* (Leiden: Brill, 2020).

¹⁶ The exception to this is Holocaust history where ego-documents are extensively used.

In the specific case of Poland, historians' interest evolved mainly about the relation between the Catholic Church and the Jews,¹⁷ so again a one-way relationship, largely dominated by anti-Judaism and antisemitism, while theologians focused on the newly established dialogue between the Catholic Church in Poland and the Jews by the end of the communist era.¹⁸ The latter interests me only marginally as a part of the interpretational context. The former, however, is directly connected to the main topic of this study. It is also very important to note that in the Polish context, there is a considerable overlap between Polish-Jewish and Catholic-Jewish relations, leading to confusion, which I discuss in detail below. For obvious reasons, the scholarship on these topics developed in Poland only by the end of the communist regime and later, as before this studies of religion were not favored, not to mention high levels of antisemitism leading to two massive waves of Jewish immigration, first in 1957 (so called *Gomułka's Aliyah*) and subsequently in 1968 (March antisemitic campaign).

Jewish-Catholic Relations in Interwar Period

Moving to the central topic of my study, Jewish-Catholic relations in interwar Poland have been studied quite extensively but only in some aspects, in general following the trends described above. Therefore, there is a strong interest in the relationship of the Catholic Church in Poland to Jews and Judaism. The Church is seen rather as an institution, not so much a community of the faithful, and the focus is especially on what the members of the hierarchy and the clergy wrote or published about Jews and Judaism.

The earliest publication in that vein came out in 1994. Ronald Modras' seminal *The Catholic Church and Antisemitism: Poland, 1933-1939*¹⁹ investigated a wide selection of

¹⁷ See, e.g., Bożena Szaynok, "Kościół katolicki w Polsce wobec tematyki żydowskiej w roku 1968. Historia pewnego oświadczenia," *Kwartalnik Historii Żydów* 270, no. 02 (2019); Ariech Kochavi, "Polscy biskupi, Watykan i Żydzi polscy w czasie przejmowania władzy przez komunistów na podstawie brytyjskich raportów dyplomatycznych," *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały*, no. 5 (2009); Dariusz Libionka, "Polska hierarchia kościelna wobec eksterminacji Żydów—próba krytycznego ujęcia," *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały*, no. 5 (2009); Łukasz Tomasz Sroka, "Kościół katolicki w Polsce wobec kwestii żydowskiej. Dyskusja na łamach „Gazety Kościelnej” na przełomie XIX i XX wieku," *Res Gestae* 7 (2008).

¹⁸ See, e.g., Henryk Muszyński, *Początek wspólnej drogi: dialog katolicko-żydowski w Polsce w latach 1986-1994* (Gniezno-Pelplin: Bernardinum, 2015); Waldemar Chrostowski, "Na drogach dialogu Kościoła z Żydami i judaizmem," *Paedagogia Christiana* 26, no. 2 (2010).

¹⁹ Ronald E. Modras, *The Catholic Church and Antisemitism: Poland, 1933-1939*, Studies in Antisemitism (Chur, Switzerland, Langhorne, PA: The Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism (SICSA), the Hebrew University of Jerusalem by Harwood Academic Publishers, 1994); translated into Polish and published a decade later as R.E. Modras, *Kościół katolicki i antysemityzm w Polsce w latach 1933-1939* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Homini, 2004).

materials. His study is based mostly on the Catholic mass media (press) and the conclusions convey a rather somber image of the Catholic clergy in Poland, not only failing to denounce antisemitic violence in Poland but also being integral cogs in the National Democrats' antisemitic machine. Moreover, he names the main tropes informing such attitudes, which are not theological but rather political, and resulted from the Catholic hierarchy's aspirations to create in Poland an Augustinian *Civitas Dei*, being some form of Catholic totalitarianism. Therefore, the main tropes expressed by the clergy were: the belief in Jewish-Masonic alliance, the myth of world domination, Judeo-communism (*żydokomuna*), treating antisemitism as a widespread phenomenon naturally accompanying Jewish presence in Europe, the malignant Jewish impact on the Polish economy as well as the belief that Polish culture can only be Catholic (*Civitas Dei*) and in order to keep it that way all foreign influence should be fought against. The only reoccurring explicitly theological problem is the accusation that the Talmud is essentially anti-Christian. Modras also mentions the issue of ritual murder, although rather marginally. At the same time, he points to contextual nuances of Polish antisemitism, recalling examples of "righteous" antisemites such as Zofia Kossak or Father Maximilian Kolbe, both of whom connected Jews with undesirable values foreign and dangerous to the Polish nation but at the same time explicitly rejecting violence against them.²⁰ Modras contextualizes the Polish case with examples from the universal Catholic Church in that period, stating that the Polish Church was not out of step with the Church in Europe, the USA and the Holy See, and suggests that they were all united in their antisemitic attitudes under the aegis of combatting secularization, of which Jews were seen as the agents. His study was trailblazing and as such deserves much praise, even though one could wish the core of the source materials he used had been broadened, as he mostly used the mass-range Catholic press, not including more intellectual Catholic titles or other sources. It is also worth noting that he focuses exclusively on the final six years of the Second Polish Republic, coinciding with Hitler's rise to power.

Over a decade later, another monograph dedicated to the relationship of the Church in interwar Poland with the Jews was published, this time including the entire interwar period and not focusing solely on antisemitism.²¹ This book, penned by Damian Pałka,

²⁰ Balancing theological violence and physical violence has been a persistent theme in the history of Jewish-Christian relations, starting from the early Church and Augustine. In fact, the reflection on the relation between these two layers of violence and whether the first one enables the second one appears in a systematic way only after the Holocaust, when it becomes in a sense unavoidable.

²¹ Damian Pałka, *Kościół katolicki wobec Żydów w Polsce międzywojennej* (Kraków: NOMOS, 2008).

was conceived as a form of continuation and completion of Modras' work.²² Pałka widens the scope of historical materials used in the study. He examined mainly the documents in the state and Church archives in Warsaw, Gniezno and Poznań.²³ Moreover, the research included pastoral letters and official communications of the Polish bishops and curial ordinances, synodal resolutions, Catholic popular press as well as strictly theological journals, manuals of pastoral theology, published collections of sermons, and the journals of Cardinal Aleksander Kakowski. Based on this impressive collection of sources, Pałka concludes that the reluctant attitude of the Church in Poland towards the Jews stemmed first and foremost from the supersessionist teachings of previous centuries (continued in the interwar period) and secondarily was influenced by the contemporary socio-political situation and competing cultural and national aspirations of Poles and Jews. His conclusions are supported also by another study he conducted, researching the manuals of pastoral theology used in Poland from 1874 until 1939.²⁴ It is also worth mentioning that he includes quite a detailed bibliography up to the date of publication (2008).²⁵

Another interesting publication with similar approach, although not directly focusing on the interwar period, is that by Krzysztof Lewalski.²⁶ Published in English only in 2021,²⁷ it concentrates on the attitude of Christian Churches towards Jews in the Kingdom of Poland in the second half of the long 19th century (1855-1915). The title (*The Attitude of Christian Churches in the Kingdom of Poland toward Jews in 1855-1915*) suggests that Lewalski does not focus solely on the Catholic Church, which undoubtedly is a *novum*, and goes back in time – in comparison to Modras and Pałka – to the partition period and the First World War. Well written and engaging, the study indicates the size and diversity of the Christian and Jewish population, both religiously and socially, and explains how the policies of the partitioning powers impacted Jewish-Christian relations in the Kingdom of Poland. This, naturally, also

²² Pałka presents a summary of the political and cultural setting in which the relationship took place in another publication: Pałka, "Warunki dialogu Kościoła katolickiego z Żydami w II Rzeczypospolitej," *Poznańskie Studia Teologiczne* 18 (2005).

²³ Archdiocesan Archives in Gniezno, Poznań and Warsaw, Naczelny Instytut Akcji Katolickiej in Poznań, Archiwum Akt Nowych, Archiwum Państwowe in Poznań (Pałka, *Kościół katolicki wobec Żydów w Polsce międzywojennej*, 21-22).

²⁴ Pałka, "Żydzi w polskich podręcznikach teologii pastoralnej (1874-1939)," *Teologia Praktyczna* 5 (2004).

²⁵ Pałka, *Kościół katolicki wobec Żydów w Polsce międzywojennej*, 141-147.

²⁶ Krzysztof Lewalski, *Kościół chrześcijański w Królestwie Polskim wobec Żydów w latach 1855-1915* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2002).

²⁷ Lewalski, *The Attitude of Christian Churches in the Kingdom of Poland toward Jews in 1855-1915*, (New York: Peter Lang, 2020).

helps in understanding the following period. At the same time, he refers to the main issues of these relations in the 19th century: antisemitism, anti-Judaism, pogroms, blood libels, assimilation, missionary activity and modernization. Clearly, the described period helps to understand the following one, being a subject of my study. The advantages of Lewalski's work are many: the very wide scope of addressed issues, an inclusion of a wide array of archival materials, a thorough representation of socio-political background, immense knowledge of this period (especially in reference to the Catholic Church in Poland) and the pioneering character of the work. Naturally, the topic of the volume does not allow for an in-depth analysis of all the discussed issues but rather serves as the first step towards the study of Catholic-Jewish relations in that period.

Apart from these trailblazing and extensive contributions, there is a large number of shorter studies in the form of articles or book sections, tackling more specific issues pertaining to Jewish-Catholic relations in interwar Poland.²⁸ The Catholic press versus the Jews probably is one of the best-researched themes with the earliest studies published as early as the mid-1980s, continuing until the present day. As early as 1987, Jan Janiak published an article about the interpretations of national socialism in the Catholic press in the period 1934-1939.²⁹ Subsequently, the 1990s and early 2000s saw dozens of articles by Franciszek Adamski, Anna Landau-Czajka, Dariusz Libionka and Viktoria Pollman.³⁰ All of these contributions focus on how the Catholic press presented the Jews and what attitudes towards them were displayed. To no surprise, these attitudes turn out to be predominantly antisemitic, informed by anti-Jewish

²⁸ An excellent review of the studies published until 2008 can be found in Pałka, *Kościół katolicki wobec Żydów w Polsce międzywojennej*, 14-24.

²⁹ Jan Janiak, "Rasistowska doktryna narodowego socjalizmu w interpretacji polskiej publicystyki katolickiej z lat 1934-1939," *Życie i Myśl* 9/10 (1987).

³⁰ See Franciszek Adamski, "The Jewish Question in Polish Religious Periodicals in the Second Republic: The Case of the *Przegląd katolicki*," in *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry Volume 8: Jews in Independent Poland, 1918-1939*, ed. Antony Polonsky, Ezra Mendelsohn, and Jerzy Tomaszewski (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1994); Anna Landau-Czajka, "Żydzi w oczach prasy katolickiej," *Przegląd Polonijny* 18, no. 4 (1992); Landau-Czajka, "The Image of the Jew in the Catholic Press during the Second Republic," in *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry Volume 8*; Landau-Czajka, "Koncepcje rozwiązania kwestii żydowskiej w programach polskich stronnictw politycznych lat 1933-1939," *Przegląd Historyczny* 87, no. 3 (1996); Dariusz Libionka, "Kwestia żydowska w prasie katolickiej w Polsce w latach trzydziestych XX wieku," *Dzieje Najnowsze: [kwartalnik poświęcony historii XX wieku]* 31, no. 1 (1999); "Kwestia żydowska" - myślenie za pomocą clichés: "Odrodzenie" 1935-1939: przyczynek do historii antysemityzmu w Polsce," *Dzieje najnowsze* 27, no. 3 (1995): 31-46 ; Libionka, "Duchowieństwo diecezji łomżyńskiej wobec antysemityzmu i zagłady Żydów," in *Wokół Jedwabnego*, ed. Paweł Machcewicz and Krzysztof Persak (Warszawa: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2002); Viktoria Pollmann, "Kwestia żydowska w prasie katolickiej lat trzydziestych. Badania empiryczne prasy biskupiej metropolii krakowskiej na bazie ilościowej," *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego* 2 (1997).

stereotypes and both anti-Judaic and antisemitic tropes. Further developing her research interests, Landau-Czajka has also published a monograph on the conceptions of solutions to the “Jewish issue” in the Polish press.³¹ Moreover, in that period one can notice a growing interest in the press supervised by Fr. Maximilian Kolbe, and his own writings regarding the Jews, bearing fruit in the organization of a symposium on that topic followed by an eponymic volume.³² Kolbe’s case is extremely interesting because even if he himself did not publicly address the Jewish question in an antisemitic way, he supervised a printing house publishing journals which displayed and probably popularized anti-Jewish attitudes among Polish Catholics. Naturally, the fact that Kolbe died a martyr’s death in Auschwitz adds to the complexity of his case.

Another important contribution, although somewhat different in character, is the doctoral dissertation of Anna Łysiak-Majdanik from 2007.³³ Although it tackles similar issues to the above-mentioned publications, it applies a different methodology and chooses another focal point. It provides a thorough analysis of the Catholic theology of Judaism expressed by two of the most famous and prolific preachers of interwar Poland, whose books are republished and read even today: Fr. Józef Kruszyński and Fr. Stanisław Trzeciak. The former is particularly relevant for this study as he was the rector of the Catholic University of Lublin in 1925-1933, and before taking up the position, he published 15 clearly antisemitic books, whose content Łysiak-Majdanik analyzes along with Trzeciak’s writings and contemporary Polish journalism. The study builds on former scholarship (discussed above) and does not offer any groundbreaking conclusions but rather continues the quest to fathom in detail the Polish Church’s attitudes towards Jews and Judaism, this time taking a more theological turn, similar to Pałka’s study of theological manuals. The dissertation’s value lays in the clear presentation and contextualization of the main antisemitic tropes present in these narratives. The author has also published two articles following up on some of the tropes included in the dissertation, both further analyzing the theology of Judaism presented by Rev. Kruszyński.³⁴

³¹ Anna Landau-Czajka, *W jednym stali domu... Koncepcje rozwiązania kwestii żydowskiej w publicystyce polskiej lat 1933-1939* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Neriton: Instytut Historii PAN, 1998).

³² Stanisław Celestyn Napiórkowski, *A bliźniego swego... Materiały z sympozjum ‘Św. Maksymilian Maria Kolbe, Żydzi, masoni’* (Lublin: Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego, 1997).

³³ Anna Łysiak, "The Rev. Kruszyński and Polish Catholic Teachings about Jews and Judaism in Interwar Poland," *Kirchliche Zeitgeschichte* 16, no. 1 (2003); Łysiak, "Judaizm rabiniczny i współczesny w pismach teologów katolickich w Polsce w latach 1918-1939" (PhD diss., Jagiellonian University, 2007).

³⁴ Łysiak, "The Rev. Kruszyński"; Anna Jolanta Majdanik, "Between Fascination and Contempt: Jews and Judaism in the Writings of Rev. Prof. Józef Kruszyński (1877–1953), Pre-War Rector of the Catholic University of Lublin," *Studia Letteraria Historica* 8 (2019).

Not surprisingly, a large portion on the research of Polish- or Catholic-Jewish relations in Poland relates to the Holocaust.³⁵ Starting from the famous “Neighbors” by Jan Tomasz Gross,³⁶ the academic and public discourses have centered around the Polish complicity in the genocide³⁷ while continuing the research on the rescue of Jews by non-Jewish Poles.³⁸

Very few publications analyzed other aspects of the Polish Church’s relation to the Jews. They focus mostly on anti-Jewish Catholic attitudes, therefore maintaining the focus on a one-way relationship.³⁹ Among them, it might be worth singling out the topic of the ritual murder addressed in the Polish context, for example, by Jolanta Żyndul, Joanna Tokarska-Bakir or Magda Teter.⁴⁰

Another aspect of Jewish-Catholic relations in Poland that is present in the scholarship is the topic of conversion, becoming the Other, and again the focus is mostly on Jews becoming Christians. Therefore, the studies focus on conversion to Catholicism or to other Christian churches in the early modern period including the

³⁵ Barbara Engelking, *The Attitudes of Poles Towards Jews During the Holocaust* (Leiden: Universiteit Leiden, 2021); Martyna Grądzka-Rejak and Jan Olszek, *Holokaust, pamięć, powielacz. Zagłada Żydów i okupacyjne stosunki polsko-żydowskie w publikacjach drugiego obiegu w PRL* (Warszawa: Biblioteka Więzi, 2020); Jacek Leociak, *Młyny Boże. Zapiski o Kościele i Zagładzie* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Czarne, 2018); Joshua D. Zimmerman, *Contested Memories: Poles and Jews during the Holocaust and Its Aftermath* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2003).

³⁶ Jan Tomasz Gross, *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001). Gross, *Fear: Anti-Semitism in Poland after Auschwitz: An Essay in Historical Interpretation* (New York: Random House; Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), Jan Tomasz Gross and Irena Grudzinska, *Golden Harvest: Events at the Periphery of the Holocaust* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

³⁷ Joanna Tokarska-Bakir, *Jewish Fugitives in the Polish Countryside, 1939–1945*, Beyond the German Holocaust Project (Berlin: Peter Lang Verlag, 2021); Barbara Engelking and Jerzy Michałowicz, *Such a Beautiful Sunny Day...: Jews Seeking Refuge in the Polish Countryside, 1942–1945* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2016).

³⁸ Jacek Leociak, *Ratowanie. Opowieści Polaków i Żydów* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2010); Jan Grabowski, *Rescue for Money: Paid Helpers in Poland, 1939–1945*, Hatsalah temurat kesef (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2008).

³⁹ See Stanisław Gajewski, "Katolickie organizacje akademickie wobec kwestii żydowskiej w okresie II Rzeczypospolitej," in *Polska-Polacy-mniejszości narodowe*, ed. Wojciech Wrzesiński (Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1992); Brian Porter, "Antisemitism and the Search for a Catholic Identity," in *Antisemitism and Its Opponents in Modern Poland*, ed. Robert Blobaum (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005).

⁴⁰ Magda Teter, *Blood Libel. On the Trail of an Antisemitic Myth* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2020); Jolanta Żyndul, *Kłamstwo krwi: legenda mordu rytualnego na ziemiach polskich w XIX i XX wieku*, 1st ed. (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Cyklady, 2011); Joanna Tokarska-Bakir, *Legendy o krwi: antropologia przesądu* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo W.A.B., 2008).

19th century,⁴¹ and the Protestant missions to the Jews such as the Barbican Mission.⁴² Interestingly, I have not come across any studies of Catholic efforts to convert the Jews. Similarly, only exceptionally do scholars study Christian conversions to Judaism⁴³ or Jewish conversions to Catholicism in the interwar period. In the latter case, the interest evolves more around the notions surrounding the conversions and the boundaries of Jewish and Catholic identity that were an integral part in the discussions of the Jewish question.⁴⁴ I do not know of any studies which present sociological and statistical research on the numbers of conversions and motivations for such decisions. Thus, it seems that there might be another interesting research gap here.

Recently, it seems that the mutuality of the Jewish-Christian relations in interwar Poland has gained some scholarly interest. Blanka Górecka's doctoral dissertation focuses on Christian domestic servants employed in Jewish households in Poland before the Second World War and as such contributes to the understanding of the Jewish representations of Christian Poles, Polish/Catholic-Jewish relations as well as mutual perceptions and attitudes towards each other.⁴⁵ The researcher's choice of sources is very telling. She analyses folkloric expressions, life-story interviews, historical press documents and Rabbinic Responsa, and successfully combines historical methods with ethnographic ones. As pioneering as her study is, the work has a very limited social scope, exploring only one type of power structure. Thus, the need for further development in this field is very clear. After Górecka's dissertation, my own study would be the second one addressing the lived relations between Jews and non-Jews in interwar Poland, seeing the relation as a bidirectional dynamic.

⁴¹ Artur Markowski, "Materiały dotyczące konwersji Żydów na Suwalszczyźnie w pierwszej połowie XIX w.," *Studia Judaica* 8 (2005); Markowski, "Konwersje Żydów w północno-wschodnich rejonach Królestwa Polskiego w pierwszej połowie XIX wieku," *Studia Judaica* 9 (2006); Adam Kaźmierczyk, *Rodziłem się Żydem...: konwersje Żydów w Rzeczypospolitej XVII-XVIII wieku* (Kraków: Księgarnia Akademicka, 2015); Kaźmierczyk, "Konwersja Żydów na chrześcijaństwo w Krakowie w okresie staropolskim," *Krzysztofory* 35 (2017); Ellie R. Schainker, *Confessions of the Shtetl: Converts from Judaism in Imperial Russia, 1817-1906*, Stanford Studies in Jewish History and Culture (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2020).

⁴² Tomasz Wiśniewski, "Konwersje Żydów na ziemiach polskich. Studium przypadku Misji Barbikańskiej w Białymstoku 1924-1939" (PhD diss., Adama Mickiewicza University, Poznań, 2011); Jagodzińska Agnieszka, *„Duszozbawcy”? Misje i literatura Londyńskiego Towarzystwa Krzewienia Chrześcijaństwa wśród Żydów w latach 1809–1939* (Kraków–Budapeszt: Wydawnictwo Austeria, 2017).

⁴³ Jan Lorenz, "Being and Becoming. Polish Conversions to Judaism and the Dynamics of Affiliation," in *Jewish Religious Life in Poland since 1750*, ed. François Guestnet et al., POLIN Studies in Polish Jewry (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2021).

⁴⁴ Agnieszka Jagodzińska, "Konwertyczna gorączka z początku XX wieku: teksty, autorzy, metahistorie," *Kwartalnik Historii Żydów* 272, no. 4 (2019).

⁴⁵ Blanka Górecka, "Christian Domestic Servants in Jewish Households in Poland: An Ethno-Historical Study" (PhD diss., Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2019).

The above publications undoubtedly constitute a very good basis for further research; however, it is clear that they mostly follow only two trajectories: a focus on the mono-directional Catholic relation to Jews and Judaism as well as a concentration on the official, institutional level of Jewish-Catholic relations. While this is not a fault per se, it is worth noting that such a structuralist approach leaves the lived aspect virtually absent, as individuals seem to be agency-deprived and determined by the structures of the Church, influenced by the press, etc. One does not have access through this method to the attitudes towards the Other displayed by an ordinary Polish Catholic or Jew. I believe that, in spite of this defect, such an approach can be helpful in creating a bird's eye view of the past, and maybe even is the right one to begin with; nonetheless, it leaves many areas of human experience "unresearchable" in some way. This might be determined to a certain extent by the type of historical materials that are available; nonetheless, the more modern the period, the more private, personal documents were created, as the level of literacy and participation in cultural life significantly increased throughout the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th. Therefore, recently an interesting turn towards ego-documents, personal experiences and the lived dimension has taken place, visible mostly in the studies concerning Polish Jewry in the interwar period.⁴⁶ Turning toward the lived relations between Jews and non-Jews is still a *novum* and Górecka's doctoral dissertation should be praised as the first example of such a study.

My response to the perceived *status quaestionis* concerns turning towards the lived relations seen as bidirectional. Therefore, I am interested in microhistory from below, slightly similar to Górecka but adding the aspect of mutuality through comparing how both Jews and Catholics saw each other and why it could be so. In addition, although I am interested in microhistory, the main topic of this study is memory. Furthermore, methodologically, I choose a different path than the above-mentioned researchers, again standing on ground in some ways similar to Górecka. I do not focus on the press or any institutional documents but instead investigate the narratives conveyed in oral histories of Jewish and Catholic Lubliners. Such a choice allows me to access the world of ordinary people and their representations of Otherness, implicitly adopting the framework of lived religion, particularly as understood by Nancy T. Ammerman and Robert A. Orsi.⁴⁷ It permits me also to recreate an interreligious dialogue that never

⁴⁶ J. Shandler et al., *Awakening Lives: Autobiographies of Jewish Youth in Poland Before the Holocaust* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002); Alina Cała, *Ostatnie pokolenie: autobiografie polskiej młodzieży żydowskiej okresu międzywojennego ze zbiorów YIVO Institute for Jewish Research w Nowym Jorku* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Sic!, 2003).

⁴⁷ Although Ammerman tends to prefer "everyday religion" over "lived religion", her approach to studying religion, as it plays out in the everyday lives of ordinary people and the contexts they inhabit by using people's narratives, is one of the cornerstones of this study; Nancy Tatom Ammerman, *Studying Lived Religion: Contexts and Practices*. (New York: New York University Press, 2021);

took place in real life.⁴⁸ The closest methodological approach to this I have found in the field of Jewish-Christian studies, although not concerning Poland, would be that of Emma O'Donnell Polyakov in *The Nun in the Synagogue*.⁴⁹ However, while she is employing the ethnographic method of conducting interviews herself, I am using already recorded oral histories, treating them as valuable records of the memory of the Other.

The Structure

This study is divided into four parts. The first part (Chapter 1 and Chapter 2) discusses theories and methods. The second part (Chapter 3 and Chapter 4) introduces the reader to the socio-historical background of the period referred to in the stories, to facilitate the understanding of their content. The third part (Chapter 5 and Chapter 6) focuses on the interviewees' identity, starting the analysis of the sources and presenting thirteen biographies of the interviewees in order to give the reader some insight into their social background, age, gender, education, relation to religion and politics and other factors that might have had an impact on their attitude towards the Other. The final chapter of this part addresses the identity-related tensions emerging upon comparison of the Hebrew and Polish interviews with three Jewish interviewees. The last part is dedicated to intergroup relations and can be considered the core of the study, presenting a thorough analysis of the sources. Chapter 7 concentrates on spatial relations, Chapter 8 on interpersonal relations in a secular framework and Chapter 9 on interreligious relations. This final part is followed by the conclusions.

The Rationale

As one can easily see from examining the existing state of the field, many aspects of Jewish-Christian relations in interwar Poland have not been researched yet. Studies of

Ammerman, *Sacred Stories, Spiritual Tribes: Finding Religion in Everyday Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). I also borrow from Robert A. Orsi's approach in understanding lived religion as a work of social agents as narrators and interpreters of their own experiences, and thus agents creating meanings from their actions. Such an approach results in focusing on actions and interpretations (the stories) of people involved in the study. See Robert Anthony Orsi, *The Madonna of 115th Street: Faith and Community in Italian Harlem, 1880--1950* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985).

⁴⁸ This idea of artificially confronting two discourses on one topic can be found, for example, in Jennifer Nyström, "Reading Romans, Constructing Paul(s): A Conversation between Messianic Jews in Jerusalem and Paul within Judaism Scholars" (PhD diss., Lund University, 2021).

⁴⁹ Emma O'Donnell Polyakov, *The Nun in the Synagogue. Judeocentric Catholicism in Israel* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2020).

attitudes towards the Other are lacking. In addition, it can be noted that the research focuses on the relations of Catholics towards the Jews but not in the opposite direction.

The reasons why such approaches might have seemed more urgent are clear: the most basic sense of justice requires that it is the majority that needs to examine their conscience regarding relating to minorities. Such an examination of conscience was undoubtedly needed and historians' task in this endeavor is obvious. What constitutes a commendable start, however, becomes insufficient if not developed further with time. It is a mistake to speak about studying intergroup relations when one focuses solely on the relationship of one group towards the other without paying much attention to reciprocity. Because of the importance of the power relations, we are always tempted to dedicate more space to those who seem to have more power and therefore overlook the attitudes of the victims. Thus, the research on Jewish lived relations to Polish Catholics is almost completely lacking, and in addition, the optics of the dynamics of intergroup relation in this case is deprived of the aspect of mutuality. Rather, the Jews are treated as passive victims of the attitudes exhibited by the Polish Catholic majority. Such an approach robs them of their agency – repeating in historiography the discriminations these people needed to suffer in vivo. As protagonists of the stories, they pass down to history as victims only. In this study, I would like to show their agency as well, not merely because these perspectives are lacking, but also because I think the ethics of presentation demand it. Even if every Jewish protagonist of this story fell victim of antisemitism at some point in their lives, and the trauma of the Holocaust has left an indelible imprint on their lives and narratives, they deserve to be presented as more than victims: artists, activists, believers, classmates, family members, etc., who as such interacted with the outgroup, just as Polish Catholics did. Thus, they are taken for who they really are, as none of them was only a victim, and treating them as only victims would seem to be devoid of respect to their full personhood.

Competing Narratives and the Politics of Memory

To make the already complex topic even more complicated, one should bear in mind the intricacies of the post-Holocaust collective memory, a subject studied extensively in the Polish context.⁵⁰ Both groups have developed certain narratives of victimization

⁵⁰ Magdalena Kawa, *Narracje o Holokaucie. Dyskurs naukowy a debata publiczna w Polsce* (Chełm: Państwowa Wyższa Szkoła Zawodowa w Chełmie, 2017); Piotr Forecki, *Od Shoah do "Strachu": spory o polsko-żydowską przeszłość i pamięć w debatach publicznych* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 2010); Jan Błoński, *Biedni Polacy patrzą na getto* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2008); Michael C. Steinlauf, *Pamięć nieprzyswojona. Polska pamięć Zagłady* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Cyklady, 2001); Steinlaufidem, *Bondage to the Dead: Poland and the Memory of the Holocaust* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1997).

(and victimhood!), and these narratives color the memory of the times preceding the Shoah. Apart from the problems concerning the ethics of representation, the victimhood discourse has grave consequences for the politics of memory, identity and history.⁵¹ The communities that suffered devastating losses during the Second World War have the right to speak about their suffering. These narratives are of crucial importance in contemporary national identity formation, in particular for Poles and Israelis. However, the question is: How to speak about the victims and the difficult past? How to remember it and commemorate it in a helpful way? In a highly politicized atmosphere, as it happens to be both in Poland and in Israel, the narratives of victimhood are often instrumentalized, or even weaponized, for political reasons, and translate into international political tensions, as it could be seen recently with the amendments to Polish property law⁵² and earlier with the Institute of National Remembrance law (2018).⁵³

In August 2021, the Polish President signed an amendment to the Code of Administrative Procedure introducing changes by adding (i.al.) to article 158, paragraph 3, the statement that if from the date of delivery or announcement of the decision referred to in Art. 156 § 2, thirty years have elapsed, no proceedings are instituted for the annulment of the decision.⁵⁴ The bill was passed in the Polish Parliament without any objection, with ca. 25% of the deputy members withholding their vote but not a single vote against. However, it caused much agitation both in Israel and the USA as it was seen as an act directed against Holocaust survivors and their heirs in order to prevent them from getting back their family properties in Poland. Naftali Bennett, Israeli Prime Minister, called the amendment ‘a shameful decision and a disgraceful contempt for the memory of the Holocaust,’⁵⁵ and the Foreign Minister, Yair Lapid, reacted in a very emotional way, saying that “Poland today, for the first time, approved an anti-Semitic and immoral law and that Poland has tonight become an anti-democratic, non-liberal country that does not honour the greatest tragedy in

⁵¹ Aleida Assmann, "Europe's Divided Memory," in *Memory and Theory in Eastern Europe*, ed. Uilleam Blacker, Alexander Etkind, and Julie Fedor (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

⁵² "Ustawa z dnia 11 sierpnia 2021 r. o zmianie ustawy - Kodeks postępowania administracyjnego," Internetowy System Aktów Prawnych, accessed 28.10.2021, <https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=WDU20210001491>.

⁵³ "Polish Memory Law: When History Becomes a Source of Mistrust," 2018, accessed 10.11.2022, <https://neweasterneurope.eu/2018/02/19/polish-memory-law-history-becomes-source-mistrust/>.

⁵⁴ "Ustawa z dnia 11 sierpnia 2021 r. o zmianie ustawy - Kodeks postępowania administracyjnego."

⁵⁵ "Israel Furious as Poland's President Signs Bill to Limit Property Claims," Reuters, 2021, accessed 22.10.2021, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/polands-president-signs-bill-limit-ww2-property-restitution-claims-2021-08-14/>.

human history.”⁵⁶ The reaction included the suggestion that Poland’s ambassador to Israel should prolong their vacation and not return to Israel, as well as Israel refraining from sending an ambassador to Warsaw. In fact, to date, there is no Polish ambassador in Israel. In addition, the U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken expressed concerns that the Polish parliament had passed the bill, and urged President Duda not to sign it.⁵⁷

At the same time, Duda claimed that with his signature an era of legal chaos ended – the era of re-privatization mafias, the uncertainty of millions of Poles and the lack of respect for the elementary rights of citizens of Poland. Therefore, he claimed the act as not only a regulation of the re-privatization mechanisms but also as a solution to an internal Polish problem, and without a connection to Holocaust survivors. Moreover, the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs made the argument for the need to ensure citizens’ trust in the state and to implement a principle of legal certainty.⁵⁸

According to a Polish-Jewish social activist Janek Śpiewak, the amendment is a positive development. It implements the judgment of the Constitutional Tribunal of May 2015, is a realization of the demands of the tenants’ movement and Adam Bodnar’s (Ombudsman for Civil Rights) demands, removes the legal catch used for wild re-privatization, brings to a close the issue of re-privatization in Warsaw, re-privatization of agricultural property and pre-war enterprise assets. At the same time, it does not close the process of re-privatization in other cases where post-war nationalization did not take place; that is, the act does not apply to property without inheritance and the so-called Just Act 447 adopted by the US Congress, as the issues with respect to this property are regulated by pre-war regulations.⁵⁹

To sum up, while Poland saw the amendment as an internal regulation, Israel has seen it as an attack on the rights of Holocaust survivors, undermining their status as victims and depriving them of reparations that they rightly deserve.

Similarly, a debate over the Amendment to the Act on the Institute of National Remembrance of 2018 proved the width of the gap dividing Polish and Israeli perceptions of the past and victimhood. The amendment penalized public speech which attributes responsibility for the Holocaust to Poland or the Polish nation and was conceived as a

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ "Poland Passes Law That Would Cut Off Property Claims," Voa News, 2021, accessed 24.10.2021, https://www.voanews.com/a/europe_poland-passes-law-would-cut-property-claims/6209457.html.

⁵⁸ "Decyzja prezydenta wywołała burzę. Politycy komentują podpisanie noweli Kpa," Wirtualna Polska, 2021, accessed 28.10.2021, <https://wiadomosci.wp.pl/decyzja-prezydenta-wywolala-burze-politycy-komentuja-podpisanie-noweli-kpa-6672417135892992a>.

⁵⁹ I quote Śpiewak following his videoblog: "Międzynarodowa afera o reprivatyzację," updated 21.10.2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h1UOXpRVv0>.

response to the “Polish death camp” controversy and perceived anti-Polish bias especially in the USA and in Israel.⁶⁰ The Amendment was an expression of the politics of history introduced by the Law and Justice party, aiming at perpetuating the image of Poles as victims of Nazi and Soviet aggression, and the unwillingness to discuss the problem of Polish collaborationism.

Naturally, the Amendment was met with harsh critique not only in Israel and the USA but also in Poland. Stanisław Krajewski, the co-chair of the Polish council of Christians and Jews, objected on the grounds that the law could be used as “a blunt instrument for paralyzing and punishing anyone you don’t like” and the Polish Bishops’ Conference linked the law to a rise in antisemitism and further polarization between Christians and Jews.⁶¹ In the end, under pressure from the Department of State of the USA, modifications were introduced to remove the possibility of criminal prosecution, and a joint declaration was issued by the Polish and Israeli prime ministers condemning antisemitism and rejecting anti-Polonism.⁶²

These two examples not only show the gap between the positions of Poland and Israel towards the politics of memory but also point to the problem of the lack of dialogue which leads to ignorance of other possible perspectives. Both Polish and Israeli governments showed a remarkable lack of sensitivity to the narrative of the other side that the act in fact concerns. The Polish government claimed it solves its internal issues without noting that they concern also Jews who are not currently Polish citizens. The Israeli government instead perceives these actions only as an attack on the rights of Holocaust survivors, not even noting the Polish reasons why such acts might actually be needed, although probably in a different form.

In this sense, the narratives of victimhood are not innocent, because of the human tendency to focus on one’s own victimization and suffering. Two more examples illustrating what happens in such cases could be the two flashpoints in Polish-Jewish relations: the controversies over Auschwitz and Jedwabne.⁶³ As Ewa Ochman puts it,

⁶⁰ For the text of the Amendment and the Act, see "Nowelizacja ustawy o Instytucie Pamięci Narodowej," 2019, accessed 28.10.2021, <https://trybunal.gov.pl/postepowanie-i-orzeczenia/komunikaty-prasowe/komunikaty-po/art/10463-nowelizacja-ustawy-o-instytucie-pamieci-narodowej>.

⁶¹ "Polish Archbishop Answers Holocaust Law Critics", *The Tablet*, 2018, accessed 22.10.2021, <https://www.thetablet.co.uk/news/8727/polish-archbishop-answers-holocaust-law-critics>.

⁶² This declaration in turn was condemned by Yad Vashem on the grounds that it was equating antisemitism and anti-Polonism. For more details, see Jörg Hackmann, "Defending the ‘Good Name’ of the Polish Nation: Politics of History as a Battlefield in Poland, 2015–18," *Journal of Genocide Research* 20, no. 4 (2018), <https://doi.org/10.1080/14623528.2018.1528742>.

⁶³ While I focus only on these two cases, an excellent synthesis of the problems of narrations about the Holocaust in the Polish public discourse is given in Magdalena Kawa’s doctoral dissertation published in 2017: Kawa, *Narracje o Holokaucie*.

The Auschwitz memorial site, recognised by the West as the most important memory site of the Holocaust, had been a key symbol of their nation's martyrdom for Poles until the 1990s. Throughout the communist era, the issue of the Holocaust was marginalised and relegated to the commemorative periphery. The distinction between a concentration camp (Auschwitz) and a death camp (Auschwitz-Birkenau) was blurred. As was the ethnic identity of victims, who were conflated into a category of 'victims of Fascism'. Jewish suffering was largely assimilated into the narrative of the Polish-national tragedy and symbolically represented in the official figure of six million Polish citizens who perished during the war.⁶⁴

In Poland, the communist metanarrative presenting the Second World War as the victorious combat against Fascism provided a matrix or interpretational frame not differentiating between Jews, Christian Poles, Roma and other victims of the Third Reich. Within this framework, Auschwitz was seen as a site of universally human, and particularly Polish, martyrdom. From 1979 onwards, starting from the papal visit to the site, the Catholic metanarrative of redemption focusing on Catholic martyrs such as Fr. Maximilian Kolbe and Sr. Edith Stein (both canonized) overlapped with the one highlighting the 'combat with Fascism' helping the local Catholics to make yet another type of meaning with respect to the former camp site. This, in turn, led to establishing such commemorative measures as setting a papal cross and establishing a Carmelite convent close to the site. From the Polish Catholic point of view, these were appropriate means to commemorate the place of a genocide and honor its victims. However, Jewish communities perceived these acts as an attempt to "baptize" the site, Polonize it or even de-Judaize it. The requests to remove the nuns and the cross were taken by many as "an attempt to undermine Poland's sovereignty" and "a challenge to Poles' right to self-identification through Catholic symbols and rituals."⁶⁵ The problem of the cross in Auschwitz pertains thus to both memory and identity of both Catholic Poles and Jews.

Similarly, when Jan Tomasz Gross published his famous book *Neighbours* in 2001, in which he delved into a case of the mass murder of the Jewish inhabitants of the small town of Jedwabne by their Catholic neighbors.⁶⁶ The public debate on the book revealed that some sectors of Polish society (for example, the right-wing and center-right political parties) are not willing to consent to acknowledge the Polish complicity in genocidal acts committed during the WW2 but prefer to concentrate solely on Polish

⁶⁴ Ewa Ochman, *Post-Communist Poland: Contested Pasts and Future Identities*, ed. Richard Sakwa, BASEES/Routledge Series on Russian and East European Studies (London: Routledge, 2015), 36.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 37.

⁶⁶ More on Gross' book and the controversy it spurred can be found, for example, in: Barbara Törnquist-Plewa, "The Jedwabne Killings – A Challenge for Polish Collective Memory," in *Echoes of the Holocaust: Historical Cultures in Contemporary Europe*, ed. Klas-Göran Karlsson and Ulf Zander (Havertown: Nordic Academic Press, 2003).

victimhood. This in turn leads to the exclusion of any narratives competing with Polish victimism⁶⁷ – which are perceived as anti-Polish.

At the same time, the narrative of victimism is present also in the Israeli politics of memory and history, sometimes leading to situations mirroring the Polish cases; that is, the exclusion of competing narratives which, if included, could develop towards multidirectional memory. One example of such an approach could be the educational and exhibition-related activity of the Yad Vashem Museum; another might be the Jewish youth trips to Poland known as “Masa’ot le Polin” or simply “the Holocaust trips.”

As noted by Amos Goldberg,⁶⁸ the way in which the exhibition at the museum is built fails to convey what he calls “historical complexities”, such as (among many) the factors leading to the Holocaust other than antisemitism, other options for the solution of the Jewish question (e.g., the Madagascar plan), the stories of the perpetrators and bystanders, etc.⁶⁹ Goldberg goes so far as to judge that Yad Vashem’s authoritative narrative “does not even make an effort” to link the Holocaust to other global catastrophes and displays “a very narrow ‘intentionalist’ approach which already in the mid-eighties was pretty much outdated in historiography.”⁷⁰ Moreover, the ‘individual voices’ used in the construction of the exhibition are subordinated to one totalizing narrative of the “Jewish perspective.” The latter however, is Zionized (the focus on Hebrew for example) and made heroic (the absence of a discussion on problems such as Jewish collaboration, lack of internal solidarity, moral breakdowns, etc.) through an exclusion of every element that could interfere with the closed and self-contained narrative. Thus, in the end all “Otherness” is excluded from the narrative, which becomes mythical rather than historical – exactly like in the above-discussed Polish cases.

Similarly, the trips to Poland are often planned with a specific narrative in mind. As observed by Dalia Ofer, the students go to Poland aiming to be there for Yom HaShoah and the March of the Living, which is a celebration of Jewish resurrection.⁷¹ This Jewishness encompasses Israelis, Jewish students from the Diaspora (mainly the USA)

⁶⁷ I understand victimism as a synonym of victim mentality. I hope it is clear that it is not my intention to negate in any way Jewish or Polish suffering during the Second World War and beforehand; however, I am using this term to show how the past suffering functions in the public discourses and the politics of memory.

⁶⁸ Amos Goldberg, "The 'Jewish Narrative' in the Yad Vashem Global Holocaust Museum," *Journal of Genocide Research* 14, no. 2 (2012).

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 192-197.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 196.

⁷¹ Dalia Ofer, "We Israelis Remember, But How?: The Memory of the Holocaust and the Israeli Experience," *Israel Studies* 18, no. 2 (2013), 81-82.

and official ceremonies with Israeli officials, pointing to the fact that the State of Israel equals Jewish resurrection. Curiously, until 2014 Polish Jews were not invited to participate in these ceremonies.⁷² Young Israelis coming to Poland rarely meet the Jewish community in Poland and also have very limited contact with non-Jewish Poles during their trips. In 2009, the Israeli Ministry of Education recommended various form of meetings between Polish and Israeli youth during the trips to Poland.⁷³ Nonetheless, even the implementation of the recommendation shows, as documented by the study of Nitza Davidovitch and Dan Soen, that it does not change attitudes of young Israelis toward Poles and Poland in a significant way.⁷⁴ Davidovitch and Soen point to the need for teaching the Polish narrative to the students before they visit Poland, as the meetings are not enough to change the general cultural and social isolation from the Polish environment. The prevalent narrative seems to remain the Zionist one aiming at the strengthening of the Israeli identity.⁷⁵ Moreover, one can easily notice the issues of legitimate narratives of victimization. Marek Edelman's voice, for example, can be seen as such an "illegitimate" narrator because even though he was a heroic type fighting in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, he was not a Zionist, stayed in Poland, and as such does not fit into the official narrative of victimization promoted in Israel.⁷⁶

The above aspects of Polish/Catholic-Jewish/Israeli relations have been thoroughly researched and here I refer to them only in order to briefly sketch the complex landscape of conflicting narratives determining Polish and Israeli politics of memory and history.⁷⁷ A reference to this context is indispensable to understand the weight of the theme of this study. The latter can be understood only when seen as an attempt at participation in the discussion on competing Jewish- and Polish-Catholic narratives. Polish Jews and Catholics whose voices are heard in this work narrate from different

⁷² Private conversations with representatives of the Jewish Community in Warsaw and Krakow.

⁷³ Nitza Davidovitch and Dan Soen, "The Trip Experience: Poland and the Polish People as Perceived by Israeli Youth in Light of Their Trips to the Death Camps," in *Shoa and Experience: A Journey in Time*, ed. Davidovitch and Soen, (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2015), 4.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 19nn.

⁷⁵ Zehavit Gross, "Holocaust Education in Jewish Schools in Israel: Goals, Dilemmas, Challenges," *Prospects* 40 (2010).

⁷⁶ See, e.g., Witold Bereś and Krzysztof Burnetko, *Marek Edelman: Życie Po Prostu* (Warszawa: Świat książki, 2008); Marek Edelman, Włodek Goldkorn, and Rudi Assuntino, *Straznik. Marek Edelman opowiada* (Kraków: Znak, 2006); Marek Edelman, *The Ghetto Fights: [Warsaw 1941-43]* (London: Bookmarks, 1990); Hanna Krall, *The Subtenant; To Outwit God* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1992); Lucy S Dawidowicz, "Observations: The Curious Case of Marek Edelman," *Commentary* 83, no. 3 (1987).

⁷⁷ Dina Porat, *Israeli Society: the Holocaust and Its Survivors* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2010).

points of view and through the lenses of different (if not opposite) interpretational frameworks. I accept this reality, aiming at maintaining the scholarly distance of an interested observer, and present these different perspectives with as much faithfulness and accuracy as I can. However, by the nature of the study I am also an interpreter and commentator (and, literally, the translator) of these narratives, and my observation unavoidably takes place from a very particular point of view, which is described in detail in Chapter 2.⁷⁸

Theoretical Framework

Refining the Concepts

Jewish-Catholic/Christian versus Jewish-Polish

Although the scholarship raising the problem of Jewish-Christian/Catholic relations in interwar Poland seems limited, it is worth noting that the problem of relations between Jews and non-Jews is often approached from a point of view that uses the ethnic/national (*narodowy*) criterion to draw the line between these groups.⁷⁹ This

⁷⁸ See pp. 86-89.

⁷⁹ The literature on Polish-Jewish relations is abundant; therefore, I would like to refer here to selected examples. General historical studies include: Konrad Zieliński, *Stosunki polsko-żydowskie na ziemiach Królestwa Polskiego w czasie pierwszej wojny światowej* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS, 2005); Ewa Kurek, *Poza granicą solidarności: stosunki polsko-żydowskie 1939-1945* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Clio, 2008). Interestingly, Kurek, whose scholarship remains controversial, included quite an extensive chapter on Polish-Jewish relations before 1939, attempting to show that from the partitions until the outbreak of the Second World War Jews were not seen by Poles as co-citizens, but rather co-residents who were not loyal to the Polish cause. Tomasz Gąsowski, "Z polskich lasów do polskiego dworu: wpływ powstania styczniowego na relacje polsko-żydowskie na przełomie XIX i XX wieku," in *Powstanie styczniowe: odniesienia, interpretacje, pamięć*, ed. Tomasz Kargol (Kraków: Towarzystwo Wydawnicze "Historia Iagellonica", 2013); Joanna Nalewajko-Kulikow, "Myśli nowoczesnych Żydów. Wybory do IV Dumy, bojkot ekonomiczny i stosunki polskożydowskie (1912-1914) w świetle warszawskiego „Hajntu”," *Kwartalnik Historii Żydów* 2 (2016). For history of Polish diplomatic relations with Jews, see Jerzy Tomaszewski, "Archiwum: Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej wobec Żydów, 1938-1939 (dokumenty)" *Polski Przegląd Dyplomatyczny* 11 (2003); Krzysztof Bojko, "Stosunki polsko-żydowskie i polsko-izraelskie w latach 1918-1948," *Polski Przegląd Dyplomatyczny* 3 (2006). For local historical studies, see Jan Jerzy Milewski, "Stosunki polsko-żydowskie w Ostrołęckiem i Łomżyńskiem w latach trzydziestych i w czasie II wojny światowej," *Zeszyty Naukowe Ostrołęckiego Towarzystwa Naukowego* 16 (2002); Katarzyna Kałafut, *Relacje polsko-żydowskie w międzywojennym Przemysłu w świetle tygodników „Nowy Głos Przemyski” i „Ziemia Przemyska”* (MA diss., Jagiellonian University, 2013); Jerzy Gapys, "Relacje polsko-żydowskie w województwie kieleckim w latach 1918-1939. Wybrane zagadnienia," *Kieleckie Studia Teologiczne* 15 (2016); Aleksandra Imiłowska-Duma, "Stosunki polsko-żydowskie we Lwowie w latach 1918-1919 (wybrane zagadnienia)," *Polonistyczno-Ukrainoznawcze Studia Naukowe* 3 (2017); Wacław Wierzbieniec, "Rytmy codzienności i niecodzienne wydarzenia w relacjach polsko-żydowskich w Tyczynie w okresie

means that Jews and Catholics are often seen as Jews and Poles, and therefore the research addresses Jewish-Polish relations. One might find this problematic because it excludes Jews from the spectrum of Polishness and suggests that being Polish or Jewish takes place on an ethnic level, an idea clearly linked to the interwar racial antisemitism displayed by the National Democrats. Moreover, certain scholars such as Jerzy Tomaszewski, Henryk Chałupczak, Tomasz Browarek, Szyja Bronsztajn, Stanisław Krajewski, Wojciech Jaworski, Tadeusz Radzik and Gabriela Zalewska posit that the criterion of faith/religion is more credible for estimating the size of the Jewish minority.⁸⁰

Surprisingly, the Polish versus Jewish distinction is often used with little analytical reflection of what it entails. Eliza Grzelak notes that a categorization into Poles and Jews is used in the language as an alienating factor.⁸¹ However, observations regarding the depth of this alienation as ingrained in the language are rather rare.⁸² It is particularly worth attention because of its uniqueness: one cannot think of a similar example in other contexts; one does not speak about French-Jewish, Italian-Jewish or American-Jewish relations, and probably if one heard such an expression, its meaning would not be clear at all. Why, then, does it work in the Polish context?

When trying to find an answer to this identity question, Krzysztof Koseła's concept of entangled identity (*splątana tożsamość*)⁸³ provides some insight. He notes that in the case of Poles, the Catholic identity is strongly glued to the Polish ethnic identity; therefore, one can infer that when scholars speak about Polish-Jewish relations they really mean the relations between Catholic Poles and Jews. The fact that it is not explicitly stated implies that it is expected that the reader understands that; it belongs to collective memory, and one inherits the understanding that Polish also means Catholic, and that Jewish also means the Other. One might wonder: how does one inherit such an understanding?

międzywojennym (1918–1939)," in *Małe miasta: codzienność*, ed. Mariusz Zemło (Białystok–Głogów Małopolski–Supraśl: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu w Białymstoku, 2019); Wojciech Mądry, "Stosunki polsko-żydowskie na Uniwersytecie Poznańskim w latach 1919–1939 w świetle materiałów archiwalnych," *Sprawy Narodowościowe Seria Nowa* 52 (2020).

⁸⁰ Damian Pałka, "Stosunek Kościoła katolickiego do żydowskiej aktywności gospodarczej w Polsce międzywojennej w kontekście realizacji zasady spoczynku niedzielnego," *Poznańskie Studia Teologiczne* 21 (2007), 75-76.

⁸¹ Eliza Grzelak, "Assimilation, Integration, Multiculturalism: An Ethnolinguistic-Communicological Perspective," in *Jews in Eastern Europe: Ways of Assimilation*, ed. Waldemar Kornacka-Sareło Szczerbiński, Katarzyna (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016). 4.

⁸² For more thoughts on this topic, see Magdalena Dziaczkowska, "The Polish Case: Pedophilia, Polak-Katolik, and Theology of the Nation," *Svensk Teologisk Kvartalskrift* 96, no. 3 (2020).

⁸³ Krzysztof Koseła, *Polak i katolik. Splątana tożsamość* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo IFiS PAN, 2003).

Identity Questions: Polak-katolik and the Problem of Assimilation

Helpfully, this question has been already addressed in the scholarship studying the concept of *Polak-katolik* and the idea of the Polish nation, understood in the categories of the theology of the nation. One can say that the historiosophy and theology of the Polish nation is the source of the exclusivist approach, and consequently of the contrasting of Polishness and Jewishness.

The systematic modern reflection on Polishness developed during the partitions. As the Polish polis was in a state of decay, the concept of Polishness gradually advanced from the material to the spiritual through messianic ideas.⁸⁴ It is particularly interesting to follow how this fundamentally universalistic belief was, with time, replaced by a very particularistic nationalism in the second half of the 19th century, and how the Catholic Church became entangled in the National Democrats' quest to "create" a Polish Catholic country. Among many publications that address these issues, I would like to point to the ideas expressed by Wilhelm Feldman, Paul Brykczyński and Brian Porter-Szűcs.

Feldman's personal story could easily become the material for a doctoral dissertation – he was born "a child of the Jewish proletariat" in a Hasidic family in Zbaraż, and eventually turned Polish scholar and patriot, serving as the head of Piłsudski's press bureau during the First World War and briefly as *chargé d'affaires* in the Second Polish Republic.⁸⁵ In his *Dzieje polskiej myśli politycznej*, published in 1920,⁸⁶ Feldman makes an interesting remark that the National Democrats raised "the Jewish question" as a substitutionary topic in order to draw public attention away from more salient issues such as, in this case, the Russian-Austrian conflict.⁸⁷ According to Feldman, some philosophers of history belonging to the National Democratic movement went so far as to blame Jews for the national uprisings (both the November and the January), creating the organic work movement (*prąd pracy organicznej*) and other initiatives that were deemed undesirable from the National Democratic point of view, which favored

⁸⁴ For a general understanding of the idea of Polish messianism, see Paulina Litka and Łukasz Kowalik, "Polski mesjanizm romantyczny," *Przegląd Filozoficzny – Nowa Seria* 27, no. 1 (2018); Andrzej Walicki, *Filozofia a mesjanizm: Studia z dziejów filozofii i myśli społeczno-religijnej romantyzmu Polskiego* (Warszawa: PIW, 1970); Marek A. Cichocki and Andrzej Walicki, "Między polskim mesjanizmem a misjonizmem. Rozmowa z Andrzejem Walickim," *Teologia Polityczna* 4 (2006/2007). For Mickiewicz's messianism see, e.g., Andrzej Walicki, *Mesjanizm Adama Mickiewicza w perspektywie porównawczej* (Warszawa: IFiS, 2006).

⁸⁵ "Feldman, Wilhelm," The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe, 2010, accessed 20.09.2021, https://yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/feldman_wilhelm.

⁸⁶ I am using the second edition: Wilhelm Feldman, Leon Wasilewski, and Józef Feldman, *Dzieje polskiej myśli politycznej 1864-1914* (Warszawa: Instytut Badania Najnowszej Historji Polski, 1933).

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 346.

rapprochement with Russia. In fact, the calls for boycotting Jewish trade were aimed at enforcing Russian trade initiatives in Polish lands. Although Feldman does not dedicate much space to explicitly discussing the Jewish question or the *Polak-katolik* idea, he introduces the reader to the complexities of Polish political thought in the period directly preceding the rebirth of independent Poland, pointing to populist strategies employed by the *Endecja*. Thanks to his analysis, it is easier to understand how various antisemitic tropes were instrumentalized for specific political goals and the construction of the canonical *Endekian* Polishness. For example, he pinpoints one of the most significant phenomena in the history of antisemitism – that the rise of antisemitic attitudes is often related to political or economic crises and that it was used in that function by the National Democrats already before the rebirth of independent Poland. Later, in the Second Republic, the *Endecja* would further develop this tactic, promoting their model of the Catholic, ethnically “pure” Poland and manipulating the masses to eliminate their own political adversaries by throwing out the accusation of “Jewishness,” therefore making Jewishness a marker of Otherness and a tool for fighting their political enemies. Paul Brykczynski describes such a strategy in his book on the assassination of President Gabriel Narutowicz,⁸⁸ proving that the *Endecja* used antisemitic tropes to implement their political agenda and fight the opposition. In case of Narutowicz, the results of such strategy turned out to be tragic, as they led to the assassination of the first president of the Second Polish Republic.

Furthermore, a very broad research on the topic of Polish nationalism and the model of a Catholic Poland is conducted by Brian Porter-Szűcs.⁸⁹ His earliest contribution⁹⁰ is dedicated to the development of Polish nationalism in the 19th century, tracing the origins of national egoism to the rejection of positivist teleology in historiography. While highlighting the common ideological bases for socialism and nationalism in Poland, he realizes that the turn consisted of the *Endecja* having no historiography, in certain sense, and choosing a diachronic mode of thought over a synchronic. Instead, the “realism”⁹¹ – a belief that the national conflict is both unavoidable and ever-present – replaced a positivist belief that modernization (or progress) would lead to the betterment of the world (and, in consequence, some settlement of the Polish-Jewish question). This diffidence towards progress, according to Porter-Szűcs, lay at the core of the *Endekian*

⁸⁸ Paul Brykczynski, *Primed for Violence: Murder, Antisemitism, and Democratic Politics in Interwar Poland* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2018).

⁸⁹ This author has published both as Brian Porter and Brian Porter-Szűcs, and I will use both following the specific quotations.

⁹⁰ Brian Porter, *When Nationalism Began to Hate: Imagining Modern Politics in Nineteenth-Century Poland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 234.

turn to national egoism, chauvinism ('my country, right or wrong') and the cult of strength under the pretense of being "scientific." Undoubtedly, his work is enlightening in many ways, for example occasionally pointing to the expressions of anti-Judaism in the Polish Church, frowning on assimilationist and reformist patriots who showed signs of "philo-Semitism".⁹² Thanks to these observations, one can note how the Polish and the Catholic started to meld into one under the *Endekian* aegis.⁹³

In the section of the volume *Antisemitism and Its Opponents in Modern Poland*, edited by Robert Blobaum,⁹⁴ Porter focuses on another aspect of the problem, Catholic antisemitism as an effect of an attempt to define the Church's place in the modern world.⁹⁵ Arguing against the notion that the modern Church's anti-Judaism is completely separate from antisemitism, he shows how the quest to "reconcile themselves with modernity"⁹⁶ led Catholics in Poland to the development of a militant rhetoric. This, in turn, translated erroneously the apocalyptic struggle against the Satan operating in the modern world through means such as atheism, Bolshevism, Freemasonry, etc., into racial struggle for survival. Thus, as the Jews were associated with the spiritual enemies of the Church, it enabled a rhetorical leap right into racial antisemitic discourses, employing its tropes in the apocalyptic framework. These interesting observations force the reader to note that the often suggested transition from the Christian anti-Judaism⁹⁷ to antisemitism is far from obvious and might result from very surprising reasons. In other words, not only the *teaching of contempt* provided fertile soil for the development of secular antisemitism, but also an unexpected mechanism of feedback, the Church's dialogue with modernity, promoted absorbing the elements of secular antisemitism, originally foreign and even contradictory to Catholic teachings (e.g., the commandment to love one's neighbor), into its own discourses.

⁹² Ibid. 41.

⁹³ Another publication explaining the dynamics of melting nationalism and Catholicism into one ideology in Endekian thought is Bogumił Grott, *Nacjonalizm i religia: proces zespalania nacjonalizmu z katolicyzmem w jedną całość ideową w myśli Narodowej Demokracji 1926-1939* (Kraków: Uniwersytet Jagielloński, 1984). Grott points to the influences of Italian Fascism in 1920s and the "softening" of nationalism in the 1930s – towards formations similar to Portuguese *salazarismo*.

⁹⁴ Robert Blobaum, ed., *Antisemitism and Its Opponents in Modern Poland* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005).

⁹⁵ Porter, "Antisemitism and the Search for a Catholic Identity" in Blobaum, *Antisemitism and Its Opponents in Modern Poland*.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Porter, after Peter Schäfer I presume, calls this phenomenon "Christian Judeophobia," however, I do not follow his terminology. I understand the term Judeophobia to denote general anti-Jewish sentiments, and anti-Judaism to denote a form of Christian attitude holding against Jews the deicide charge and deeming them accursed by God.

Porter-Szűcs further explores the connections between Polish and Catholic identity in his extensive study *Faith and Fatherland*,⁹⁸ where he discusses ten notions he deems crucial for the development of Polish Catholicism as an ideology, including two key concepts crucial for my research: the Jew and the *Polak-katolik*. He shows how these categories function as constructed discursive elements of identity-making in the ideological project of Polish Catholicism, ultimately determining the interpretative matrix applied in the process of making sense of Polish identity and history, framing the eternal enemies, etc.⁹⁹

In addition to these studies of Polish identity, one should consider Anna Landau-Czajka's book on assimilation in the interwar period.¹⁰⁰ The study both presents theoretical problems connected to inhabiting the borderlines of the national identity and discusses specific practical conditions and implications of assimilation, shedding light on the failure of the idea of Jewish assimilation to Polish society, and the complete abandonment of conviction that it is possible for Jews to become Polish. Landau-Czajka maintains that Jews possessed very limited options for assimilation, as a Jew could assimilate only within certain limits and only to certain social groups of Polish society. Practically, the only social group open for Jews was the *intelligentsia*. In opposition to all other minorities, a Polish Jew could not choose their way of being Polish but could be accepted as a Pole only when abandoning their Jewishness.¹⁰¹ Landau-Czajka writes about the absurd exclusion of those who attempted assimilation:

Hundreds of years of stereotypes did their job - an assimilated Jew did not follow the traditional stereotype, and thus became "invisible" to both societies. It's necessary to for it had to be placed on one side - either Polish or Jewish, and his features placed him in between. **Meanwhile, both in the Polish and Jewish consciousness "in between" did not exist or should not have existed.**¹⁰²

⁹⁸ Brian Porter, *Faith and Fatherland: Catholicism, Modernity, and Poland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

⁹⁹ Alina Cała, *The Image of the Jew in Polish Folk Culture* (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press; The Hebrew University, 1995); Cała, *Wizerunek Żyda w polskiej kulturze ludowej* (Warszawa: Oficyna Naukowa, 2005); Alina Cała and Mikołaj Golubiewski, *Jew. The Eternal Enemy?* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2018). See also Brian Porter-Szűcs, "Why Do Polish Catholics Hate the Jews? A reasoned answer to a stupid question," in *Antisemitism in an Era of Transition. Continuities and Impact in Post-Communist Poland and Hungary*, ed. Gwen Jones and François Guesnet (Bern: Peter Lang, 2014); Porter-Szűcs, "The Birth of the *Polak-Katolik*," *Sprawy Narodowościowe. Seria nowal Nationalities Affairs* 49 (2017), <https://doi.org/10.11649/sn.1280>.

¹⁰⁰ Anna Landau-Czajka, *Syn będzie Lech... Asymilacja Żydów w Polsce międzywojennej* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Neriton, Instytut Historii PAN, 2006).

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 435-438.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 439. Translation and emphasis mine.

Given, the overall rejection of a Jew as an equal Polish citizen, many Jews attempting to assimilate in the end turned to Zionism. At the same time, the younger generation in particular was acculturated: consumed Polish culture and spoke Polish, while maintaining a Jewish identity and being considered the Other by Polish Christian society.

From Ideas to Practical Problems

Understanding the dynamics of the construction of the *Polak-katolik* helps to prove that the usage of the national criterion is far from innocent. Even though it could be seen as a dominant category simply due to the fact that it became dominant in the language used in the interwar period to denote the two groups, it bears some unforeseen implications.

Firstly, it follows the National Democrats' antisemitic and racist distinctions that excluded Jewishness from Polishness (Jews are not and cannot become Poles). Secondly, it silently suggests that the tensions between the two groups were connected to the secular paradigm and therefore modern racist antisemitism, while it has been proven that Polish antisemitism was significantly shaped by the Catholic anti-Judaism and the two mutually fueled each other; hence, religion played an important role in its formation and perpetuation.¹⁰³ Thirdly, when we look at numbers, terming Polish citizens as those of Polish or Jewish *ethnos* (*narodowość*) has further consequences – one has trouble counting how many Jews inhabited the Second Republic of Poland.

When conducting the two general censuses (1921, 1931), the authorities decided to include religion and mother tongue in both but nationality (*narodowość*) only in the first one.¹⁰⁴

Tabl. 1. The First versus the Second National Census.

The First National Census 1921	The Second National Census 1931
Nationality	-
Mother tongue (not processed)	Mother tongue
Religion	Religion

¹⁰³ See, e.g., Tokarska-Bakir, *Legends o krwi: antropologia przesądu*.

¹⁰⁴ The censuses are widely considered inaccurate; nonetheless, they are the only statistical source one has in this case and provide some general orientation in figures. The First General Census from September 30, 1921 did not include all the territories that eventually became parts of the Second Polish Republic and did not encompass inhabitants of the Vilnius region or the Polish part of the Upper Silesia. Moreover, most scholars agree that numbers reflecting the minorities' presence in the Second Polish Republic were lowered. The same assumption is often raised regarding the Second General Census from December 9, 1931.

When one counts how many Jewish people lived in Poland in 1921, those who declared Jewish nationality equal 2,048,878 (7.97% of the entire population of Poland) while the number of adherents of the Mosaic religion is 2,771,949 (10.78%). The religious affiliation seems to be a more inclusive category, encompassing approximately 700,000 (ca. 26%) more people than the *ethnos*. In 1931, the Second General Census did not ask for the nationality but the mother tongue¹⁰⁵ and revealed that “Jewish” language (Yiddish), was declared by 2,489,034 (7.79%) Polish citizens. Hebrew was indicated by 243,539, which sums up to 2,732,573 (8.56%) Polish citizens declaring one of the Jewish languages as their mother tongue. We can make a reasonable assumption that all of them can be safely called Jews; however, those Jews who spoke Polish as their mother tongue are invisible in this statistic. Now, this Yiddish + Hebrew number can be compared to 3,113,933 adherents to the Mosaic faith, which equals 9.75% of Polish citizens. Again, we have an interesting discrepancy between these two markers, both used for distinguishing Jews from the non-Jewish population. Summing up, also in this case the number of the members of the religious Jewish community is higher than the number based on “secular” markers, even if the difference is less significant than in the previous census, amounting to slightly more than 380,000 individuals (some 13%) and less telling, as Hebrew and Yiddish do not encompass all of the Jewish community. At the same time, the number of those who would choose Jewish *ethnos* as part of their identity remains unknown just as the number of Jews whose first language was Polish.

In case of Polishness, the numbers could be easier to interpret, as Polish mother tongue would imply identification with Polish *ethnos*; however, it does not imply an identification with one *ethnos* only. Therefore, one might think that the attachment to the distinction of Polish and Jewish in academia is rather surprising, when in reality the research shows that assuming the mutual exclusivity of the categories of Polishness and Jewishness often obfuscates more than it clarifies. In this case, as usual, language expressions – in this case, the perpetuation of the expression *Polish-Jewish relations* – follow or preserve certain deeply rooted, foundational convictions about the deep divide separating these two. Therefore, I choose to name the two groups Jews and Catholics (not Poles) not only because I am interested in them as religious groups but also because I find such a distinction less confusing.

¹⁰⁵ It defined the mother tongue (*język ojczysty*) as the language in which one thinks, to which one feels the closest connection and which one uses in their family.

Applying Theories

The Problem of Agency: Structures versus Individuals

In this study, I use theories belonging to the fields of social history, cultural studies and memory studies, even though one could also say that I navigate the field of religious studies (lived religion) or interreligious studies. Intersectionality is probably the closest term to describe my perspective. However, I do not intend to focus on the intergroup conflict between the privileged and the discriminated against, which an intersectional framework entails because of its structuralism. While I acknowledge the conflict and the importance of the structures in creating and maintaining the divide, I attempt to treat every person whose narrative I analyze as an actor with agency, not a cog in the machine of the struggle of classes, genders or ethno-religious groups. I am afraid that using the idea of the intergroup struggle obscures individual choices and agency, and therefore somehow demeans the interviewees.

It seems that Margaret Archer's morphogenesis provides a more balanced view of the problem.¹⁰⁶ She proposes understanding of the relationship between structure and individual as a morphogenetic sequence, including three phases: structural conditioning, social interaction and social elaboration. As I see it, structural conditioning in this case corresponds to the politics, the Church's teachings, culture, etc. Social interaction is how individuals react to the conditioning (accept, internalize, reject, rebel, etc.) and finally social elaboration is what comes out of this interaction and is fed back to the structures. In interwar Poland, the vast majority accepted the direction of structural conditioning regarding minorities and thus the social elaboration resulted in a strengthening of xenophobic attitudes, although this does not imply that all individuals shared these attitudes.

In addition, one can take into account also the broadly understood personalist approach, seeing every person as a means in and of themselves, profoundly free to make their own choices and control their attitudes, even if they are not always fully aware of that freedom. In that, I follow the famous psychiatrist and Auschwitz survivor, Viktor Frankl, who stated that:

Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms — to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way. And there were always choices to make. Every day, every hour, offered the opportunity to make a decision, a decision which determined whether you would or would not submit to those powers which threatened to rob you of your very self, your inner freedom; which

¹⁰⁶ Margaret Scotford Archer, *Realist Social Theory: The Morphogenetic Approach* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

determined whether or not you become the plaything to circumstance, renouncing freedom and dignity.¹⁰⁷

Another Auschwitz survivor, the Polish sociologist Anna Pawelczyńska, who studied values and violence in the concentration camps, to some extent confirmed these reflections in her research, claiming that the concentration camp inmates had their own system of values, that resisted the camp's structures.¹⁰⁸ Given their camp experiences, it seems that their observations come from extreme conditions and therefore are trustworthy because they address inalienable human qualities. Accepting their conclusions entails also a deep respect for human freedom: I see and present individuals as free, even if they are subject to severe structural pressures and oppressions. In my analysis, I will point to the structural conditions that could affect their choices, but I try to avoid structuralism as understood in a deterministic way.

Antisemitism, Anti-Judaism, Allosemitism

Many scholars have decided to frame Jewish-non-Jewish relations in the framework of the study of antisemitism and one could point to many reasons for doing so. However, following the ideas expressed by, for example, Polish historian Jerzy Tomaszewski, it seems more fruitful to analyze the intergroup processes in broader frameworks such as xenophobia or nationalism, of which antisemitism is just one aspect.¹⁰⁹ Naturally, I acknowledge the particular status of antisemitism and anti-Judaism; nevertheless, I apply the theories of antisemitism only when discussing specifically anti-Jewish attitudes and behaviors, not as a meta-narrative serving to interpret the entirety of the relations between Jews and non-Jews.

In fact, the framework of allosemitism¹¹⁰ seems more fitting for the analysis of the narratives, as the Catholic relationship to Jews is marked by a profound sense of Otherness. The Jew is the Other, almost ontologically different. Even if the Catholic

¹⁰⁷ Viktor E. Frankl, *Man's Search for Ultimate Meaning* (New York: Insight Books, 1997).

¹⁰⁸ Anna Pawelczyńska, *Values and Violence in Auschwitz: A Sociological Analysis* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 1979).

¹⁰⁹ Jerzy Tomaszewski, "Some Methodological Problems of the Study of Jewish History in Poland Between the Two World Wars," in *From Shtetl to Socialism*, ed. Antony Polonsky (London: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1993).

¹¹⁰ The neologism created by Artur Sandauer was popularized by Zygmunt Bauman: see Zygmunt Bauman, "Allosemitism: Premodern, Modern, Postmodern," in *Modernity, Culture, and "the Jew"*, ed. Bryan Cheyette and Laura Marcus (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998). The term signifies an ambivalent attitude towards the Jews, encompassing both philosemitism and antisemitism, that can be described as attributing to Jews the Otherness that cannot be overcome. Bauman sees it as a form of proteophobia, that is, fear of the multiform.

interviewees display positive attitudes towards their Jewish neighbors, this sense of alterity, non-normativity, permeates the images of the Jewish people they encountered.

Intergroup Contact Theory

To speak about the dynamics of intergroup relations, and to talk about prejudice and stereotyping, I borrow from the intergroup contact theory to address the problem of othering. This theory helps to organize the content of the narratives and name the processes described by the interviewees, and provides the tools to speak about prejudice. As the study does not directly investigate intergroup relations in the past but the memory thereof, this theory is used as an explanatory tool rather than a basis for constructing models and individuating patterns of interactions.

The intergroup contact theory, also known as the contact hypothesis, stems from Gordon Willard Allport's theory, formulated in 1950s, on the contrasting effects of intergroup contact during the riots between Blacks and Whites in the USA.¹¹¹ Allport notes that the intergroup contact usually reduces but sometimes exacerbates prejudice, depending on meeting or not four positive features of the contact: (1) equal status of the groups in the situation, (2) common goals, (3) intergroup cooperation, and (4) the support of authorities, law or custom (institutional support).¹¹² The meta research carried out by Pettigrew and Tropp in 2006, however, emphasized that any contact, if not taking place in the most hostile and threatening conditions, improves the understanding between groups, and that the improvement is not linked to cognitive but rather emotional factors.¹¹³ This means the stereotypes of the Other do not change but the attitude changes, increasing the "likeability" of the outgroup and in consequence the tolerance to their Otherness. Interestingly, the research suggests that contact decreases prejudice significantly more in majority groups than minority groups, and that one of the most significant factors was cross-group friendship.¹¹⁴ Positive attitudes towards the outgroup in cases of friendship were particularly resistant to change thanks to the optimal conditions for the intergroup contact that are fulfilled: cooperation and common goals, repeated equal-status contact and self-disclosure. Such

¹¹¹ Gordon W. Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1954). For this section I use in particular two articles from a wider list: Ashley Lytle, "Intergroup Contact Theory: Recent Developments and Future Directions," *Social Justice Research* 31, no. 4 (2018), <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11211-018-0314-9>; Thomas F. Pettigrew et al., "Recent Advances in Intergroup Contact Theory," *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 35, no. 3 (2011).

¹¹² Pettigrew, "Recent Advances in Intergroup Contact Theory," 273.

¹¹³ Thomas F. Pettigrew and Linda R. Tropp, "A Meta-Analytic Test of Intergroup Contact Theory," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 90, no. 5 (2006), <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.90.5.751>.

¹¹⁴ Pettigrew et al., "Recent Advances in Intergroup Contact Theory," 273.

intimacy facilitated intergroup trust and forgiveness in case of a conflict. In my analysis, I apply the contact hypothesis to draw connections between the frequency and quality of intergroup contacts of the interviewees and the representations of intergroup relations in the analyzed oral histories.

Another important finding is that intergroup contacts among children (for example, being in the same school class) reduced stereotyping and increased intentions to engage in future contact with the outgroup.¹¹⁵ This seems to be particularly relevant for my research because a majority of the interviewees interacted with the outgroup as children or young adults. Therefore, it is curious to see if their childhood intergroup contacts correlate with their views of the outgroup as seniors. It might be that already their childhood intergroup contacts set a paradigm for how they would later see the other group. Naturally, very often childhood intergroup contacts depend on many factors such as the views of their parents and the environment they grew up in (upbringing patterns). It is also worthwhile mentioning that when the contact is forced or has not been chosen by the participants, or when they feel threatened, the contact does not help in decreasing prejudice, and increases negative attitudes towards the outgroup.¹¹⁶ In my analysis, I am also considering this factor, when looking at displayed attitudes and representations of the outgroup.

Some scholars such as Marianne Bertrand and Esther Dufflo draw attention to self-selection; in their opinion it might be that those who are already less prejudiced seek the contact with the outgroup, and therefore the results cannot be extrapolated to the entire group.¹¹⁷ Undoubtedly, this should be taken into consideration as a possible explanation.

Finally, studies on Israeli and Palestinian youth reveal the role played by competing narratives and resulting approaches to contact (the confrontational approach versus the peaceful approach).¹¹⁸ The confrontational approach and unwillingness to acknowledge the outgroup's narrative of the past results in negative effects of the intergroup contact. In the context of this study, the findings imply that those interviewees who were more rigid in their adherence to their group's negative narrative about the Other could display more prejudice against the outgroup. For example, if they accepted the

¹¹⁵ Loris Vezzali and Sofia Stathi, *Intergroup Contact Theory: Recent Developments and Future Directions* (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), chapter 9.

¹¹⁶ On the relation between threat, prejudice and temporality and the TIMICAT model, see *ibid.*, chapter 5.

¹¹⁷ Marianne Bertrand and Esther Duflo, "Field Experiments on Discrimination," in *Handbook of Economic Field Experiments*, ed. Esther Duflo and Abhijit Banerjee (Amsterdam: North Holland, 2017).

¹¹⁸ Andrew Pilecki and Phillip L. Hammack, "Negotiating the Past, Imagining the Future: Israeli and Palestinian Narratives in Intergroup Dialog," *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 43 (2014).

discourse on the economic boycott of Jewish trade or the deicide charge, they might have constructed their narratives in a more prejudiced way than those who had a more critical approach.

Spatial Segregation

One of the chapters in this study draws extensively from theories of spatial segregation, originally developed, similarly to the intergroup contact theory, in studies of the relations between the blacks and the whites in the United States.¹¹⁹ The main assumptions followed in the analysis is that spatial segregation reflects wider social inequalities and power structure and the privileged consciously distance themselves from the unprivileged.¹²⁰ Theories of self-segregation,¹²¹ spatial comfort zones¹²² and contact zones¹²³ are employed to explain why certain images of the other space are more prevalent than the others. Further discussion of these problems is conducted in the beginning of Chapter 7.

Othering

To describe the intergroup relations, in addition to intergroup contact theory I am using the concept of othering, which originates in feminist theory and post-colonial studies but eventually spread to other areas of the humanities and social sciences. Lajos Brons links it to Hegelian dialectic of “Master-Slave.”¹²⁴

From many definitions of othering, in this study I relate in particular to Mary K. Canales’ concept of exclusionary othering, which often uses the power within relationships for domination and subordination.¹²⁵ In the context of my study, I

¹¹⁹ Pioneering studies of the Chicago School of urban sociology led to the formulation of hypotheses such as Ernest Burgess’s zonal hypothesis: see James A. Quinn, “The Burgess Zonal Hypothesis and its Critics,” *American Sociological Review* 5, no. 2 (1940); Ernest W. Burgess, “The Growth of the City: An Introduction to a Research Project,” in *Urban Ecology: An International Perspective on the Interaction Between Humans and Nature*, ed. John M. Marzluff et al. (Boston, MA: Springer US, 2008).

¹²⁰ Luděk Sýkora, “New Socio-Spatial Formations: Places of Residential Segregation and Separation in Czechia,” *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie* 100, no. 4 (2009), <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9663.2009.00550.x>. 432.

¹²¹ Ceri Peach, “Good Segregation, Bad Segregation,” *Planning Perspectives* 11, no. 4 (1996); Gwilym Pryce et al., eds., *Urban Inequality and Segregation in Europe and China*, The Urban Book Series (New York: Springer, 2021), 15.

¹²² Sahba Besharati and Don Foster, “Understanding Informal Segregation: Racial and Spatial Identities Among the Indian Minority of Mokopane,” *Diversities* 15, no. 2 (2013).

¹²³ Mary Louise Pratt, “Arts of the Contact Zone,” *Profession* (1991).

¹²⁴ Lajos L. Brons, “Othering: An Analysis,” *Transcience, A Journal of Global Studies* 6, no. 1 (2015).

¹²⁵ Mary K. Canales, “Othering: Toward an Understanding of Difference,” *Advances in Nursing Science* 22, no. 4 (2000).

understand othering as recognizing and labelling persons as “Other”, meaning different from the prevailing social norm and as such unwelcome, put outside of the “us” and banished into “them.” The process of stigmatization and exclusion is often possible due to the visibility of one’s Otherness. In case of the Jews and Catholics in interwar Poland, these visible features were, for example: skin and hair color, facial features, accent and fluency in Polish (e.g. *żydłacznie*), dress, manners and even smell. The narratives often refer to these “othering features” to mark the differences between the ingroup and the outgroup.

Following Anthonie Holslag on this point, I make connections between the *social imaginaire*, starting from the visual and specific hostile actions towards the other that reflect the process of selfing, intrinsically related to othering.¹²⁶ Essentializing the Other (the Jewish Other in this case) through stereotypes does not serve only to exclude the outgroup but at the same time it enables the ingroup, facing a social and political crisis, by looking inward to establish a new sense of Self by inventing the Other.¹²⁷ Therefore, when analyzing how the other is represented in the narratives, I try to understand how othering helps to create one’s own identity of a Jew (Polish Jew?) or a Polish Catholic.

Identity

As the notion of othering remains in close connection to identity-making, and perceptions of the self, I would like to briefly present my understanding of identity in the context of this study. I assume the social identity theory proposed originally by the Polish Jewish social psychologist Henri Tajfel.¹²⁸ He proposed that a person’s sense of self is based on their membership in social groups such as social class, family, political organizations, sport organizations, etc. This theory indicates that one divides the world into “us” (ingroup) and “them” (outgroup) through the process of categorization and that stereotyping (understood as categorizing people into groups) is based on a natural cognitive tendency to group things together. It happens through exaggerating the differences between the groups and similarities within the same group. The axis of this theory is the conviction that the members of the ingroup will tend to find negative aspects of an outgroup, enhancing therefore their self-image.

The three stages of the process are social categorization, social identification and social comparison. During the stage of social categorization, one not only categorizes

¹²⁶ Anthonie Holslag, "The Process of Othering from the 'Social Imaginaire' to Physical Acts: An Anthropological Approach," *Genocide Studies and Prevention: An International Journal* 9, no. 1 (2015).

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 96.

¹²⁸ Henri Tajfel and John C. Turner, "An Integrative Theory of Intergroup Conflict," in *Organizational Identity: A Reader*, ed. Mary Jo Hatch (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Henri Tajfel, "Social Identity and Intergroup Behaviour," *Social Science Information* 13, no. 2 (1974).

people into groups but also assumes that the person will act according to the norms of the groups they belong to; for example, if I categorize a man as Jewish, I will expect him to have certain beliefs. The next stage is adopting the identity of the group one categorized oneself as a member of, such as students, Poles, Jews, Christians, etc. If one of the interviewees categorized themselves as Polish they would act and present themselves as they believe a Pole should act and be represented; for example, a Jewish man with a strong sense of Polishness would highlight his emotional attachment to Polish history and his participation in Polish national holidays. In addition, one conforms to the norms of the group, which proved difficult for many Polish Jews who felt themselves to be Poles, as the norm of *Polak-katolik* started to grow stronger. The self-identification entails also emotional significance and connection between self-esteem and group membership. Finally, a comparison between the groups takes place, in which the ingroup has to compare favorably to the outgroup. If the two groups identify themselves as rivals (as *Endeks* did with the Jews), they are forced to compete in order that the members can maintain their self-esteem (“we are better than them”). This theory implies that in the Polish case, as long as the National Democrats identified themselves as in contrast and competition with the Jews, the identity of Polish Jews as being both Polish and Jewish had to be contested as it was threatening the Polish identity as understood by the *Endeks*.

Apart from the social identity theory, I also accept Eriksonian premises, describing identity as a fundamental organizing principle which develops constantly throughout life.¹²⁹ In this sense, identity is not only social but also personal and it involves the experiences, relationships, beliefs, values and memories that together make up a subjective sense of self, changing but continuous over one’s lifetime. In this approach, self-image is viewed as a unifying factor allowing a person to maintain a continuous sense of self (I am the same person throughout my lifetime, even if changes in values, experiences, etc. take place). In this study, I focus especially on the identity-building function of memory and on the relational character of identity-forming processes which take place in relation to self and the others (ingroup and outgroup). I see personal narratives as expressions of one’s identity and I assume one’s identity is the organizational principle, the metanarrative within which the narratives should be read and interpreted.

Naturally, identity is not understood as static but also not as completely fluid. Paul Ricoeur’s distinction between *idem* and *ipse* helps to balance its changing and constant aspect.¹³⁰ *Idem* is the constant part, the core of the identity that constitutes the sameness of the self, while *ipse* is the changing part of the self. Both of these aspects are presents

¹²⁹ Erik H. Erikson, *Identity and the Life Cycle* (New York: Norton, 1980).

¹³⁰ Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, trans. Kathleen Blamey (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

in the narratives as the narrator maintains the sense of continuity of the self, while accounting the changes the self has gone through throughout its lifetime.

Finally, the developmental psychology theory of the identity styles should be referred to, at least briefly. It has been proven that the so-called informational identity style has positive connections of openness to experience, as well as with caring (empathy), the need to know, and openness to ideas. Rydz et al. have shown that, in addition to this, the religiosity of an individual can serve as a contextual framework.¹³¹ It provides meaning and directs the individual in their interpretation, understanding and response to life experiences, including the encounters with Otherness. Thus, the study has shown that religion plays a moderating role between identity styles and the readiness to enter into interreligious dialogue.

These findings are employed in a very rudimentary way in Chapter 5, discussing the identity of the interviewees by attempting to assess, when possible, individual's identity styles. They are taken into consideration when asking questions whether one was predisposed to be more or less open towards Otherness.

Memory

My understanding of identity implies deep connection to memory, which I find described very well by John R. Gillis: "the core meaning of any individual or group identity, namely, a sense of sameness over time and space, is sustained by remembering; and what is remembered is defined by the assumed identity."¹³² In other words, the Ricoeurian *idem* is maintained by memory. Gillis suggests that identity and memory (remembering) mutually sustain and shape each other in the process of constant negotiation. In other words, one makes sense of who they are, based on what they remember, but how and what they remember is impacted by the point of view they assume and their sense of self. Such an understanding links to selfing and othering as well – one makes sense of who they are when confronting and creating otherness. In this sense, the Other is incredibly precious for identity formation but also inescapable. As Sartre wrote: *l'enfer c'est les autres*¹³³ and in this sense, the Otherness remains a challenge and the Other – an enemy, a mirror in which one can perceive their own inability to accept that what transcends them.

¹³¹ Elżbieta Rydz and Jakub Romaneczko, "Identity Styles and Readiness to Enter into Interreligious Dialogue: The Moderating Function of Religiosity," *Religions* 13, no. 11 (2022).

¹³² John R. Gillis, "Introduction: Memory and Identity. The History of a Relationship," in *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 3.

¹³³ Garcin in the fifth scene of *Huis clos* (Eng. *No Exit*).

It is only in considering the hell of Otherness that one can understand Jewish-Catholic relations in Poland and the memories thereof, especially for the Jews who were heavily marked with discrimination, persecution and separation. All of the interviewees grew up in a time of fervent debates on national identity and experienced first-hand consequences of certain ideological developments leading to the cultivation of a culture of exclusion and division. Their memories shaped their identities and affected the narratives they shared in their oral histories.

When conceptualizing memory, I also refer extensively to the ideas expressed by Aleida Assmann. She proposes that every “I” is connected to a multi-layered “we” – a series of voluntary or involuntary memberships in various groups (such as family, nation, political party etc.),¹³⁴ which links to Tajfel’s theory of social identity. The memory is formed in connection to these memberships and as a result, “the memory of an individual includes a great deal more than the events of his or her own experience, individual and collective memories are always interwoven in his or her memory.”¹³⁵ In consequence, one’s “horizons of memory” extend beyond the temporal scope of their own experience, both receding into the past and projecting onto the future.¹³⁶ Thus, one remembers not only their own experiences but remembers on behalf of the above-mentioned groups one belongs to. For example, family memory spans three generations but religions or cultures span much longer periods. Moreover, not only what one remembers but also how is connected to the social milieu and the act of communication (*communicative memory*).¹³⁷

Assmann distinguishes four levels or dimensions of memory: individual, social, collective/national/political and cultural. She understands individual memory as a faculty of processing one’s own experiences; an episodic memory, characterized by specific properties. It is perspectival,¹³⁸ interlinked,¹³⁹ fragmentary¹⁴⁰ and fleeting.¹⁴¹

¹³⁴ Aleida Assmann, *Shadows of Trauma: Memory and the Politics of Postwar Identity* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016), 9.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 13.

¹³⁸ Meaning that within one’s life story one always occupies a specific position and has a particular perception of events that differs from others’.

¹³⁹ Interlinking with others’ memories signifies the connection one makes between one’s own memories and those of others; these memories mutually strengthen and confirm each other.

¹⁴⁰ Limited in scope and formless per se. One makes sense of specific remembered episodes by incorporating them into a larger story.

¹⁴¹ Memories can change with time, fade away or be forgotten. In addition, the importance of various memories can change throughout life. Memories are stabilized within stories.

Social memory in Assmann's approach is connected to generational identity. Following Karl Mannheim and Maurice Halbwachs, she assumes that certain key historical experiences (e.g., the Second World War) inform the perceptions of the generation, forcing them to assume, willingly or not, certain shared convictions, values, attitudes, world perspectives and interpretative models.¹⁴² In addition, she considers the age between 12 and 25 formative for the entire development of one's personality; therefore, the experiences one undergoes in this period can be seen as determining the "generational memory". In case of the oral histories studied in this dissertation, such observation is significant on multiple levels. Firstly, it implies that the common defining moment for the generation studied is the Second World War and the Holocaust, as all of them were aged 12-25 at the beginning of or during the war. Secondly, it suggests that there is a common way of remembering and recreating the past in narratives, determined by this defining moment. Thirdly, it assumes a community of interpretation. However, the latter can be only assumed within the social milieu of the person who remembers. Thus, the generation is limited to one's own community, meaning the generational memory of Catholics and Jews in this study will have contact points but will also have divergences because it was supported by communication within two distinct social groups. Therefore, it differs.

All these layers of memory interweave and function together and are supported on a biological (neural) level, social level (interaction through communication) and cultural level (signs). In this study, the second and the third level are particularly relevant; therefore, memory is understood as a communicative network, "a social construction through which interpersonal relations and conversation are built and sustained" and "a collective symbolic construction" which is built and sustained by social communication.¹⁴³

In my work, I am focusing on social, cultural and national memory, leaving neural memory to specialists in other relevant fields (medicine, psychiatry, etc.). Following the dominant tendency in memory studies, I see the past *as a construction that responds to the needs and possibilities of the present*.¹⁴⁴ Therefore, I read the oral histories in this interpretational key, as narratives not only concerning the past but constructed in response to the present needs, possibilities and realities of politics of memory.

Assmann notes that *we are what we remember and also what we forget*,¹⁴⁵ drawing attention to what is not being remembered as equally significant as what is. In this vein,

¹⁴² Assmann, *Shadows of Trauma*. 14.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 19.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 44.

I attempt to see what (events, attitudes, emotions) is absent in the narratives and suggest possible explanations why it could be so. Particularly, the comparison of the forgotten aspects of the past between the two groups can shed new light on their experiences and attitudes and assumed identities.

In the context of the sources I use, another important problem related to memory is that of trauma. While I do not research the Holocaust itself, all the narratives are “tainted” by its shadow, even if it is being reflected differently in Jewish and non-Jewish narratives, as the experiences of these two groups diverge radically. Barbara Engelking, who studied the Holocaust narratives, indicates four main elements of the posttraumatic memory of survivors: the presence of the imprinting of death (and fear of death); the sense of guilt; mental stupefaction, suspicion of false comfort and finally the need to understand, to make sense of it.¹⁴⁶

In this study, reoccurring elements are undoubtedly the sense of guilt and the need for understanding. The sense of guilt emerges *in the feeling of indebtedness, of obligation to the dead*,¹⁴⁷ appearing in the narratives of Jewish interviewees when speaking about their family members. The need for understanding is also reflected in their thoughts about what is important in life or what message they would like to convey to the next generations (they were explicitly asked for that in some cases). Such a reflection allows them to detach themselves from the trauma and see their experiences as a part of a “bigger story” – a fight of Good and Evil, etc.

Secular Paradigm

Finally, I would like to refer briefly to the secular paradigm. It is beyond doubt that in the interwar period, the process of secularization was advancing both in the Catholic and Jewish communities.¹⁴⁸ This is proved by the intensity of political and ideological engagement that in some ways replaced the religious activity for many. However, although I acknowledge the impact of secularization on the generation whose oral histories I study, I look at their experience from a post-secular point of view.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁶ Engelking adopted these elements after Robert Lifton; see Robert Jay Lifton, *Death in Life: Survivors of Hiroshima* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1991).

¹⁴⁷ Engelking Barbara and Paulsson Gunnar, *Holocaust and Memory* (London: Leicester University Press, 2001), 247; Steinlauf, *Bondage to the Dead*.

¹⁴⁸ Shmuel Feiner and Chaya Naor, *The Origins of Jewish Secularization in Eighteenth-Century Europe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011); Kamil Kijek, *Dzieci modernizmu. Świadomość, kultura i socjalizacja polityczna młodzieży żydowskiej w II Rzeczypospolitej* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2017).

¹⁴⁹ Clayton Fordahl, "The Post-Secular: Paradigm Shift or Provocation?" *European Journal of Social Theory* 20, no. 4 (2017), <https://doi.org/10.1177/1368431016645821>.

Thus, I see religion as an important and formative part of their experiences – even the fact that some of them made a decision to distance themselves from religion shows how important a factor it was. In addition, their culture – both Jewish and Catholic – developed along and under influence of the religious laws, traditions and superstitions rooted in religious teachings. Therefore, in addition to the points discussed above, when speaking about Polish-Catholic versus Jewish, the decision to speak about Jewish-Catholic relations and not Jewish-Polish relations is linked also to the conviction that, broadly understood, religion is an important aspect of the identity of the protagonists of this story.

Chapter 2

Opowiem ci historię: Between Story and History

This study, even if written in English, is in fact (at least) bilingual and often refers to Polish expressions. One of the starting points in my analysis of the sources is the reflection on the Polish term *historia*, which should be understood exactly as it is in Latin – as both a story and a history. One can easily notice that the kinship between the two lies in the act of narrating events. *Opowiem ci historię* means ‘I will tell you a story’ but it could as well mean ‘I will tell you history.’¹⁵⁰ The interviewees tell their stories which the researcher attempts to convey, but at the same time, the researcher attempts to tell her history as well – the story according to her. In the following section, I will reflect on the sources and the methods used. Much attention will be paid to telling story and history – the narrative and narrateability in historiography, as well as to introducing the stories analyzed in this study.

The Stories – About the Sources

The oral histories at hand come from an exceptionally rich archive of the Grodzka Gate – NN Theatre Centre, a pioneering institution in the development of oral history in Poland, and one of the most important archives of that type in Poland. The collection has not been extensively explored for research purposes yet, and as such, this study is a novelty.

Even though oral histories have not been that much on the radar in the research of Jewish-Christian relations,¹⁵¹ in general they are accepted historical sources, especially

¹⁵⁰ The act of telling is also (re)creating (hi)story.

¹⁵¹ A very interesting exception to this rule is the recent book by Emma O'Donnell Polyakov, *The Nun in the Synagogue*, focusing on Judeocentric Catholicism among nuns and monks in Israel. Her study is based on interviews.

in postcolonial historiography and history of World Christianity.¹⁵² In particular, oral histories and interviews conducted within the framework of ethnographic methods are often employed in the studies of lived religion and especially in the context of Holocaust studies.¹⁵³

Moreover, I see the oral histories in the larger framework of ego-documents and autobiographical sources, in this case, naturally, not written. Although the production of and the interest in ego-documents are not modern phenomena, starting as they do with Augustine's *Confessiones*, the term was used for the first time by the Dutch historian Jacob Presser in the context of the Holocaust survivors' testimonies, and it remains predominantly used in the context of Holocaust studies. The analysis of ego documents is often conducted with consideration of such hermeneutical keys as selfhood, plural self, relational personhood, etc.¹⁵⁴ The field of Holocaust studies is seen sometimes as encompassing also the interwar period and the pre-Holocaust experiences of later victims. Jeffrey Schandler's translation of Polish Jews' autobiographies from the YIVO collection should probably be seen in that perspective.¹⁵⁵ However, I would not like to classify my study as belonging to the field of Holocaust studies for at least three reasons. Firstly, the study does not focus on the experience of the Holocaust, in spite of its implicit ubiquity. Secondly, I do not see the interviewees primarily as Holocaust survivors or witnesses but members of different religious groups. Thirdly, my work does not have a purely commemorative character, even if every storytelling is commemorative in its re-enactment of the past, but rather interrogative.

Finally, in addition to Holocaust studies, one can notice also a growing academic interest in Jewish autobiographical writings such as the recent project conducted at

¹⁵² Examples of using oral histories for historical research, apart from the more common sociological cases, start from Allan Nevins and proceed to contemporary researchers such as Raphael Samuel, Luisa Passerini, Alessandro Portelli or Jan Vansina in postcolonial historiography. In history of World Christianity, the significance of oral histories is reflected, for example, in the work of the International Association for Mission Studies' Mission Study Group, Documentation, Archives, Bibliography and Oral History (DABOH) established in 1972. In the Polish context, important for this study, the discussion on oral histories as historical sources is an ongoing process; see Marta Kurkowska-Budzan, "Informator, świadek historii, narrator – kilka wątków epistemologicznych i etycznych oral history," *Wrocławski Rocznik Historii Mówionej* 1 (2011), <https://doi.org/10.26774/wrhm.5>; Marta Kurkowska-Budzan and Marcin Stasiak, "Oral History / Oral Sources - Polish Historians' Dilemmas," *Bulletin de l'AFAS. Sonorités* 46 (2020), <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.4000/afas.4215>.

¹⁵³ Malin Thor Tureby, "Memories, Testimonies and Oral History. On Collections and Research about and with Holocaust Survivors in Sweden," in *Holocaust Remembrance and Representation: Documentation from a Reserach Conference* (Stockholm: Norstedts Juridik AB, 2020).

¹⁵⁴ Mary Fulbrook and Ulinka Rublack, "In Relation: The 'Social Self' and Ego-Documents," *German History* 28, no. 3 (2010), passim.

¹⁵⁵ Shandler et al., *Awakening Lives*. See also Alina Cała's research on the same collection: Cała, *Ostatnie pokolenie*.

Wrocław University, aiming at publishing a canon of the memoirs of Polish Jews spanning from the 17th to the 20th century.¹⁵⁶

The Body of Sources

The main body of sources comprises 45 life stories, some of them composed of more than one interview.¹⁵⁷ Some stories encompass the entire life story and some mention postwar events only in passing. I selected the stories from a wider collection of 404 fragments of interviews with 340 people, available online.¹⁵⁸ The audio and video recordings of the full interviews were not available; however, I received access to full transcriptions. The fragments of audio and video recordings available online supported the analysis of these texts, and are indicated in the footnotes and bibliography.¹⁵⁹ The interviews were conducted in Polish, sometimes with short fragments in Hebrew and Yiddish.¹⁶⁰ The earliest of the interviews was recorded in 2000 and the latest in 2017. In addition, three interviews in Hebrew from the Yad Vashem collections were used. Because the name and some personal information (e.g., birthdate) of the interviewees are made public at the archive level and serve to identify the files in the GGNNTC, I do not anonymize them.

The Topics

All the interviews were semi-structured and the questions concerned mostly the interwar and wartime. In case of the Jewish interviews, they usually addressed also their life after the war, while the Catholic interviewees did less so. In addition, the focus was on the Jewish Lublin, thus the Catholics were asked about their memories of Jewish culture but Jews were not asked about the Polish Catholic culture, customs or beliefs. Moreover, such asymmetry is often seen in the studies of Jewish-Christian relations as Jews usually focus on preserving their identity and surviving. Their group dynamics are characterized by inwardness, while Christians tend to be more outward-bound, not the

¹⁵⁶ "Kanon literatury wspomnieniowej Żydów polskich," Katedra Judaistyki Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, accessed 01.07.2021, <http://zydzi.autobiografia.uni.wroc.pl/category/seria-wydawnicza/>; Cała, *Ostatnie pokolenie*; Kijek, *Dzieci modernizmu*; Shandler, *Awakening Lives*.

¹⁵⁷ Sometimes the couples were interviewed together, such as Rywka and Dawid Sztokfisz as well as Chana and Mosze Wasąg.

¹⁵⁸ The online archive of the Oral History Program at the GGTNNC: <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra>, accessed 10.02.2020

¹⁵⁹ Such audio and video files are not available for all the interviews but for the majority.

¹⁶⁰ Usually these fragments were condensed biographies of the interviewees, as they were answering the question: "Please tell about yourself in Yiddish (or Hebrew) now."

least because of the missionary aspect of their theology, and because they are the majority in European and American contexts, where such studies take place. It is also worth noting that the majority group often becomes “invisible” because the tensions between the majority and the minority group are usually felt more by the latter, and thus they are addressed as issues pertaining to the minority, while they result from conditions and attitudes in both groups.

In addition, the concentration on the Jewish past in this particular case stems possibly from at least two different assumptions. One would be a moral obligation towards the victims of a genocide and a will to compensate for the inability to help them. Another would be an epistemic desire to recreate the story that was pushed beyond the boundaries of the Polish politics of history and memory for the postwar decades and thus retrieve forgotten or ignored narratives.

While the interviews cover a multiplicity of themes such as professional development, family history, Jewish Lublin, the Second World War, etc., the focus of this study is on the Jewish-Christian relations. Within this meta-theme, numerous issues were raised; however, some themes were particularly popular, among them (in decreasing order): family, childhood, leisure, the Second World War, poverty, Jewish trade, Jewish food, gender relations, topography, Jewish looks, social solidarity, antisemitism, death and knowledge about the other religion. The experience of the war and the Holocaust always plays a central role in the stories.

The Selection

The choice was made based on the criteria of relevance (thematic and chronological), abundance of details and diversity (balanced proportion of Jews and Catholics, genders, inclusion of diverse socio-economic backgrounds). In other words, I have chosen those interviews that contain the most information about Jewish-Catholic relations and which reflect gender and social diversity. Therefore, I focus on the life stories that included the narratives I thought the most diverse, multifaceted and detailed about Jewish-Christian relations in interwar Lublin, so that they present the widest possible span of experiences and perspectives. Moreover, the choice was motivated by the factor of representativeness of various social groups present in interwar Lublin. Following prosopographic ideas, the aim was to give voice to those who could represent them, that is, people of varied socio-economic background, education, political orientation, religious observance, etc.

The remaining stories are used in an auxiliary way, as some of them only briefly mention some aspects of Jewish-Catholic relations and do not introduce new ideas or approaches. In the cases of the chosen stories, I resort to a prosopographic approach in analysis and interpretation, which imposes quantitative limits. This approach investigates the common characteristics of a group of people whose individual

biographies may be untraceable, through a collective study of their lives. Prosopography focuses on the networks of individuals and the position of an individual in society in search of common patterns of certain social groups. Such an approach is very helpful in this study because it allows me to see the interviewees as representatives of certain social classes and, in consequence, to treat their stories as entry points to understand the social mechanisms of intergroup relations and remembering. Naturally, such an idea can be only implemented with a specific number of interviewees; thus, I present thoroughly only twelve biographies in the identity section, to reflect the perspectives of specific social groups. Other interviews are used thematically in Part 4.

The Circumstances of the Interviews

The interviews were conducted by the employees of the Oral History Department at the Grodzka Gate – NN Theatre Center¹⁶¹ in the period between 2004 and 2017. While the interviews with Catholics were conducted mostly in Lublin either at the Center or in their homes, the interviews with the Jewish participants were recorded within the framework of the project aiming at finding Jewish Lubliners¹⁶² in Israel, the UK and the USA. There, the Jewish interviews were recorded in their homes, and in exceptional cases elsewhere.¹⁶³ I have used these materials available as texts (transcriptions, edited texts) as well as audio or video files (edited), depending on the interview.¹⁶⁴ I did not have access to unedited audio/video recordings of the interviews. I have not conducted any of the interviews myself, as they took place years before I started this project, and by the time I started my study, most of the interviewees were no longer alive.

The approach guiding the interviewers seems to be an attempt to “recover” lost parts of local history and to include non-mainline perspectives, as described in detail below in the discussion about oral history and testimony. It also could be seen in the perspective of memory work, Polish-Jewish dialogue and reconciliation, conducted by the Grodzka Gate – NN Theatre Centre, although this is never explicitly expressed. However, especially in the context of Polish oral historians reaching out to Jewish Lubliners, it was perceived along these lines by the interviewees. The length of the

¹⁶¹ Tomasz Czajkowski, Piotr Lasota, Marek Nawratowicz, Wioletta Wejman and others.

¹⁶² Lubliner – a term used to describe individuals born in Lublin who emigrated and live abroad. Usually refers to Jews.

¹⁶³ In one case, a Bundist activist was recorded in the office of the Bund in Tel Aviv.

¹⁶⁴ Earlier interviews tend to only have an audio version, while the later ones were usually videotaped. Such a choice was dictated by the limited resources of the Center. Due to the policy of the archive, I was not granted access to the unedited video and audio recordings but had to rely on the edited sections available online.

interviews varies between twenty minutes and three hours. The transcription of a single interview is usually between thirty and eighty pages.

Although this body of sources has been on the radar of local scholars such as Marta Kubiszyn, Adam Kopciowski and Robert Kuwałek, who noticed its potential for writing history of the Jewish Lublin, interwar Polish Jewry and the history of the Holocaust, to this date it has not served as a basis for monographic research nor inspired an academic inquiry of Jewish-Christian relations in the interwar period.¹⁶⁵

The Interviewees

The interviewees were men and women born in the period from 1912 until 1934. All of them were either born in Lublin or moved there at a young age, and spent their childhood and/or youth in the city. Thus, their memories often reflect a child's perspective.¹⁶⁶ A total of 23 of them were Jewish, and 22 were non-Jewish Roman Catholics. The group includes 20 (12 Jewish and 8 Catholic) men and 25 (11 Jewish and 14 Catholic) women of various socio-economic backgrounds, which will be discussed in detail in Chapter 5. A slight overrepresentation of women is motivated by the content of their stories – they often revealed more relevant details.

A significant part of non-Jewish interviewees stayed in Lublin throughout their lifetime, while for obvious reasons virtually all of the Jewish interviewees left after the war. All of the interviewees are first generation Second World War survivors and Holocaust survivors and all of them were aged above 70 at the time of conducting the interviews.

¹⁶⁵ The existing research includes the following publications: Marta Kubiszyn and Adam Kopciowski, *Zydowski Lublin. Źródła, obrazy, narracje* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS, 2021); Marta Kubiszyn, *Niepamięć - Postpamięć - Współpamięć. Zagłada lubelskich Żydów jako przedmiot kultury pamięci* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS, 2019); Kubiszyn, "The Witness's Perspective: Destruction of the Lublin Jewish Community in non-Jewish Oral Testimonies," in *Psyche, Trauma, Memory*, ed. Joanna Postulszna (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Aureus, 2017); Kubiszyn, "Projekt "Historia mówiona miasta Lublina" Ośrodka Brama Grodzka - Teatr NN: Samorządowa instytucja kultury w działaniach na rzecz ochrony wielokulturowego dziedzictwa środowiska lokalnego w jego niematerialnym wymiarze," in *Niematerialne dziedzictwo kulturowe: zakresy - identyfikacja - zagrożenia*, ed. Jan Adamowski and Katarzyna Smyk (Lublin-Warszawa: Wydawnictwo UMCS; Narodowy Instytut Dziedzictwa, 2015); Kubiszyn, "Historia mówiona a doświadczenie graniczne: okupacyjne losy Żydów lubelskich w świetle wspomnień nieżydowskich świadków Zagłady," in *Historia mówiona w kręgu nauk humanistycznych i społecznych*, ed. Stanisława Niebrzegowska-Bartmińska, Joanna Szadura, and Mirosław Szumiło (Lublin: Uniwersytet Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, 2014); Kubiszyn, *Edukacja wielokulturowa w środowisku lokalnym. Studium teoretyczno-empiryczne na przykładzie Ośrodka „Brama Grodzka – Teatr NN” w Lublinie* (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, 2007); Robert Kotowski, *Dziewczeta w mundurkach: młodzież żeńska szkół średnich w Polsce w latach 1918-1939* (Kielce: Muzeum Narodowe Fundacja Posteris, 2013).

¹⁶⁶ The possible inaccuracies do not pose any problem as the focus of this study is on the memory and meanings, and the latter are well preserved even if the memory of events can be imprecise.

As far as I know, the interviewees were reached through snowballing starting from those who were known or related to relatively known Lubliners (e.g. activists, poets etc.), and gradually expanding the circle. The Jewish Lubliners were often reached through the network of the Lublin Landsmannschaft in Israel. The Catholic interviewees were chosen because they lived in Lublin in the interwar time and remembered it. My choice singled out those who spoke the most about the Jewish-Catholic relations.¹⁶⁷

The interviews were conducted, recorded and archived with the written permission of the interviewees, and the consent forms are archived at the GGTNNC, together with the original audio or video files. Based on their consent to publish the interview materials, it is assumed that there is no obstacle to use them for research purposes.

The Interviewers and the Framework of the Interviews

Those who recorded the interviews termed them oral histories and recorded them within the framework of the oral history program at GGTNNC, consciously making a choice to insert their work in the larger framework of oral history tradition. They explicitly refer to the method of oral history, discussing its history and tenets as well as the conditions of its development in Poland, and in Lublin in particular.¹⁶⁸

Therefore, I refer to the main body of the sources used in this project as oral histories (Pl. *historie mówione*) although I am aware that many would rather apply the term testimonies (Pl. *świadectwa*) to them, and the institution recording the interviews applies the term “witnesses of history” to the interviewees. It is worth mentioning that in 2013 the institution published their own manifesto of oral history, penned by its director and founder, Tomasz Pietrasiewicz, explaining how they understand the scope and role of the oral history:

¹⁶⁷ Although the GGTNNC had the idea, discussed below, to give voice to the marginalized, it is not applied in the direct way to the selection process of the Catholic interviewees. Rather, in an attempt to recover the lost history of Jewish Lublin, anyone who can contribute with their memories of the Jewish past of the city is given voice.

¹⁶⁸ "Historia mówiona," Grodzka Gate - NN Theatre Center, accessed 31.05.2021, http://teatrnn.pl/historiamowiona/hm_leksy/3537. The website of the Oral History Program is now being remade, so links may move from the time of this publication.

A MANIFESTO OF ORAL HISTORY ¹⁶⁹

In order to emphasize the importance and role of the "Oral History" program for each local community, the "Grodzka Gate - NN Theater" Center proposes the Oral History Manifesto.

1. Everyone's story is important.¹⁷⁰
2. You have the right to leave your story to future generations.
3. Your story is an inseparable part of the history of the town where you live. It is the personal lives of people that make up the most vivid and emotional story of any place.
4. The place where you live (city, town, village) should be responsible for saving and preserving your story.
5. All recorded stories should be available for listening in the place where they are stored and on the Internet.
6. The most natural guardian of an Oral History program should be the School.

Pietrasiewicz's approach clearly corresponds to classical desiderata of oral history as established in the 1960s and 1970s in the USA and UK: thinking local, from below and encompassing excluded-to-date narratives.¹⁷¹ The first point highlights the equality of everyone's story and therefore imply writing the history *from below*, including the narratives of ordinary people and considering them relevant, significant and worth recording. The second point goes a step further, claiming that not only are these stories are worth recording but also preserving for future generations. This perspective refers also to the postulate of using oral history as a tool for seeking social justice through giving space to hidden or forgotten voices,¹⁷² such as the Jewish Lubliners whose voices

¹⁶⁹ The manifesto was originally published in Polish and is available at the website of the oral history program: "Manifest Historii Mówionej," accessed 31.05.2021, <http://teatrnn.pl/historiamowiona/node/148>. (translation mine).

¹⁷⁰ In Polish *historia* denotes both a story and a history, and therefore this sentence could be understood also as "Everyone's history is important", the next sentence as "You have the right to leave your history to future generations", etc. This double meaning significantly influences the approach to oral history in this case, as story becomes history.

¹⁷¹ By the classical tenets of oral history, I mean for example those formulated by Paul Thompson in: Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988); or Alessandro Portelli in: Alessandro Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli, and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2001).

¹⁷² Paying attention to hidden and forgotten voices is closely tied to the origins of oral history in the UK, and labor history, when doing oral history was seen as a form of social justice – giving voice to

were absent during the entire postwar period, which connects also to the fourth point. The Catholic interviewees' voices are seen as important less because of the status of the interviewees, and more because of the topics they raise.

The Centre was one of the first institutions in Poland that started to see the stories of former inhabitants of the city as *inseparable part of the history of the town*. When in 1998, the Center initiated its oral history program, the Jewish community of Lublin was minuscule with approximately thirty members (in contrast to ca. 42,000 before the Second World War!), and the Jewish history of Lublin was not on the radar of the majority of the town's population. The Holocaust had not only taken away the Jews of Lublin, but in addition, erased the majority of tangible traces of their presence in the city. Collecting oral histories changed the optics: it became the first step in seeing the Jewish history as an integral part of the history of Lublin and a way of preserving the memory of the place through the intangible – the stories.¹⁷³ At the same time, oral historians of the Center also interviewed non-Jewish people whose voices were formerly silenced or hidden, such as anticommunist activists, workers, women, etc., but these groups are not subjects of my study.

Taking responsibility for the stories to the point of calling themselves “the guardians of memory”¹⁷⁴ as well as sharing them with wider audiences became one of the most significant parts of doing the oral history (see points 4 and 5) in GGTNNC. Although the Centre offers training in oral history for volunteers and high school students, aiming at larger social engagement in the process of preserving the memory of the place, the last point of the manifesto does not seem to be unanimously accepted by the educational institutions of the city. Nonetheless, the GGTNNC's aspiration to insert its work into the context of oral history understood as a form of social service is very clear. All of the above postulates – such as the aspiration to attain social justice, to serve the community and to preserve the memory of those who did not have a chance to write their own history – place the Centre's approach in the framework of socially engaged oral history, as initiated in the UK and the USA.

Testimony or Oral History?

The second reason for me adopting the term oral history rather than testimony is the usage and understanding of these terms in the Polish context – where the sources were

underprivileged, disenfranchised and discriminated, whose experiences were largely absent from historiography hitherto.

¹⁷³ Such a point of view was repeatedly expressed by Tomasz Pietrasiewicz, who bears the responsibility for creating the philosophical underpinnings of all the Center's activity.

¹⁷⁴ The name is applied also to people sharing the memory of the Jewish Lublin and the region; see "Strażnicy Pamięci," accessed 15.02.2023, <https://teatrnn.pl/ar-oplakiwanie/straznicy-pamieci/>.

generated – and the Israeli context – important to understand the interviewees who made *Aliyah* and spent most of their lives in an Israeli setting.¹⁷⁵ In both contexts, the term testimony is linked to the Holocaust and the atrocities of the Second World War. Testifying is done as an act of justice for the victims and against the perpetrators, which entails a very significant moral aspect of the act of witnessing and the constructed narrative.

The focus of this study is different and leans more towards the history of intergroup relations than pre-Holocaust history. While the Holocaust remains a key factor informing the perspectives of the interviewees, especially the Jewish ones, the interviews were not recorded within the framework of a Holocaust remembrance project but rather attempts to contribute to local history. Therefore, they should be seen as such.

Furthermore, there are a number of issues concerning the status of the witnesses that one could take into consideration. In Poland, the discussion of the testimonies started in 1968, with the reflection on so-called provoked sources (Pl. *źródła wywołane*), which are created through the researcher's involvement (e.g., interview, conversation, polemics), in the context of proposing the inclusion of sociological methods in historical research.¹⁷⁶ According to Marta Kurkowska-Budzan, the aspect of history from below, characteristic of oral history, was absent behind the Iron Curtain and similarly in Israel, the notion of witnessing, testimony (Pl. *świadectwo*) and the witness of history (Pl. *świadek historii*) were prevalent.¹⁷⁷ Such an approach results from historical circumstances. In the 1980s anti-communist circles started to record those who were persecuted or marginalized by the regime, and whose narratives were in evident conflict with the official version of history, which developed later, after the fall of the regime, into an institutionalized activity taking on the name of oral history.¹⁷⁸ The idea of giving voice to the marginalized initially took on a distinctly political character, similarly to other post-totalitarian countries but in contrast to the Western Europe.¹⁷⁹

Epistemologically, the interviews with enemies of the regime were seen as a source of knowledge but were also ascribed an ethical dimension, as an act of justice: giving

¹⁷⁵ *Aliyah* – an act of “going up”, that is, moving to the Land of Israel and formally becoming a citizen of the State of Israel. Out of twenty-five Jewish Lubliners in this study, twenty (80%) emigrated to Israel at some point.

¹⁷⁶ Kurkowska-Budzan, "Informator, świadek historii, narrator," 16-17; K. Kersten, "Historyk – twórcą źródeł," *Kwartalnik Historyczny* 78 (1971), 318.

¹⁷⁷ Kurkowska-Budzan, "Informator, świadek historii, narrator," 17.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 17.

¹⁷⁹ Stefan Ionescu, "The Boom of Testimonies after Communism: The Voices of the Jewish Holocaust Survivors in Romania (1989-2005)." *Studia Hebraica* 5 (2005).

voice to the underprivileged and persecuted. Thus, they encompassed two of the major trends of oral history proposed by Michael Frisch: *more history* (epistemological) and *anti-history* (ethical) but with stronger *anti-historical* emphasis.¹⁸⁰ In addition, in Polish the semantic field of the word witness (*świadek*) entails the notions of truth and justice, and therefore has strong ethical shade. Therefore, to sum it up in the Polish context, the notion of witnessing comes with strong ethical underpinning, and less epistemological focus. The witness's responsibility is to commemorate, preserve the memory and pass it on, which is linked to keeping the group's identity, hence the ethical dimension.

Kurkowska-Budzan claims that in contrast to other historical sources, in the Polish socio-cultural context, applying critical apparatus towards the witnesses' narratives becomes morally awkward. These people are treated as heroes of our times; they are "nominated" to become witnesses of history in recognition of their sufferings and as an act of reparation and amends. At the time of the interview, they are elderly, respectable and victims of wars and oppressive regimes. As such, they stand on high moral ground, not encouraging, at best, a critical approach to their oral histories. Epistemologically, their narratives might be treated as less important than the knowledge they convey through the narratives but ethically, they play a central role.¹⁸¹ This might explain the lack of critical research using oral histories.

Similarly to Poland, in Israel, the emphasis is also on the term testimony (עֵדוּת).¹⁸² Naturally, such an approach results from the specific post-Holocaust context referred to above, in which oral history in Israel developed. Even when the choice is made not to use the word testimony, in Hebrew the equivalent for oral history is תיעוד בעל פה which means literally oral documentation; therefore, the emphasis in both cases is on commemoration and preservation (ethical aspect), and less on the story, so to say. Going back to Frisch's distinctions again, the underscoring of the documentary character of the interview hints towards *more history* but at the same time, similarly to Poland, there is a visible tendency to protect the survivors by creating an aura of sacredness around them. This elevation of witnesses does not seem to invite critical analysis of their narratives because heroes are never questioned. On the other hand, given how the suffering of the Holocaust survivors went unacknowledged and

¹⁸⁰ Michael Frisch, *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History* (Sunny Press, 1990), 187.

¹⁸¹ Kurkowska-Budzan, "Informator, świadek historii, narrator," 19-20.

¹⁸² For a thorough discussion on the terms witness and testimony in the Jewish context, see James Edward Young, *Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust: Narrative and the Consequences of Interpretation* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990), 18-22.

unrecognized¹⁸³ until the Eichmann process, the compensating mechanism of elevating the witnesses is not only understandable but could be seen as a moral imperative.

In Israel, the situation and social status of the survivors has been subject to change, connected to the development of Israeli national identity and re-examination of the relationship between Israel and the European Jewry.¹⁸⁴ In relation to the Holocaust survivors, Dina Porat states that in Israel:

the pendulum moved from contempt mixed with pity in the 1950s to empathy in the 1970s and even identification in 1980s. The main reason for this change was not their increasing knowledge of the facts... The reason was, rather, the maturing of the Israeli society: the more the 'adolescent pimples' of Zionism healed, and the society became less harsh, heroic and closed within itself; more it opened to self-questioning and self-criticism.¹⁸⁵

Porat makes the point that the stabilization, maturation and democratization of Israel were developments unavoidably leading to acknowledging the experiences of the Holocaust survivors. As the State of Israel became a tangible reality, and the Zionist dream was achieved, the strong pressure to reject all the "weakness" of the diaspora decreased and Israeli society was more prone to look back and re-assess its non-acceptance of those who were "led to slaughter" without resistance, thus lacking the desired courage and resistance in the face of the Nazis.

Others could say that it was the growing nationalism of Israeli society that with time accepted the narratives of the survivors to weaponize them. However, it seems that the "maturing" idea makes more sense, as the processing of trauma always takes extended periods of time. Thus, the delayed social reaction or recognition is less surprising than

¹⁸³ Axel Honneth's theory of recognition and Judith Butler's grievability help to understand the process of acknowledging the suffering of the Holocaust survivors. Simply put, one's identity depends on the recognition of their worth and the value of their life (which is grievable, meaning that the loss of it is considered something to mourn) by their society. This could be extended to recognizing a person's life experiences as significant and their miseries as grievable. Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996); Judith Butler, *The Force of Nonviolence: An Ethico-Political Bind* (New York: Verso Books, 2020).

¹⁸⁴ The memory of the Holocaust in Israel has been the subject of many studies. See Yechiam Weitz, "Political Dimensions of Holocaust Memory in Israel During the 1950s," *Israel Affairs* 1, no. 3 (1995), <https://doi.org/10.1080/13517129508719341>; Julia Resnik, "'Sites of Memory' of the Holocaust: Shaping National Memory in the Education System in Israel," *Nations and Nationalism* 9, no. 2 (2003); Dalia Ofer, "History, Memory and Identity Perceptions of the Holocaust in Israel," in *Jews in Israel. Contemporary Social and Cultural Patterns*, ed. Chaim I. Waxman and Uzi Rebhun (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2004); Gal Arieli, "National Days, National Identity, and Collective Memory: Exploring the Impact of Holocaust Day in Israel," *Political Psychology* 40, no. 6 (2019).

¹⁸⁵ Dina Porat, *Israeli Society, the Holocaust and Its Survivors* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2010), 353.

one would think. Moreover, the new state had plenty of urgent current issues to solve; therefore, it could be assumed that there was no space to address the past.

In the years directly following the Holocaust, the young state faced severe problems, starting with absorbing the survivors (already before 1948), through the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, and then facing deficits in food, housing and employment when the population grew quickly. Therefore, there might have been no possibility of counting, registering or tending to the needs of the Holocaust survivors. In the first years of the state of Israel, an interesting mix took place: Israel signed the Reparations Agreement between it and the Federal Republic of Germany in 1952, thus symbolically inheriting the legacy of Jewish suffering and martyrdom.¹⁸⁶ Materially, the money played an important role in financing the construction of the country's infrastructure and establishing the economy of the new state, thus creating a unique embodied connection to the victims to the building of the country.

Parallel to that, the state emphasized the heroism and fighting back (Zionist values) of the Jews during the Holocaust and celebrated Jewish suffering in the context of heroism. A significant part in that process was also played by Yad Vashem, established in 1953:

Not only it is called the Martyrdom and Heroism Remembrance Authority, but the nine categories of dead Jews to be commemorated include individuals, families, and communities (including all organizations) who, as the Declaration of Independence has stated, were 'forced to slaughter.' The authority was also to memorialize the bravery of Jewish soldiers, underground fighters and ghetto fighters. Moreover, another article of the Yad Vashem law endows the six million murdered Jews with 'a commemorative Israeli citizenship... to signify that they in their death have become part of their people.' Thus, by using expressions such as 'forced to slaughter', 'Holocaust and bravery,' and expanding the number of categories for commemoration, the state elevated the valour of the Jews in Europe to a position equal to their suffering, and thereby resolved the problem of its relationship to them.¹⁸⁷

Although Porat does not explicitly state it, the establishment of Yad Vashem and the memory of the Holocaust served as a tool for creating national memory. Idith Zertal claims that the creation of a pantheon of the nation's dead martyrs helps to create a sense of a "victim-community," in which past sufferings are used to unify the nation

¹⁸⁶ The decision was surrounded by one of the fiercest debates in the Knesset, one of the main arguments against accepting the reparations being that it could be conceived of as an act of forgiveness.

¹⁸⁷ Porat, *Israeli Society, the Holocaust and Its Survivors*, 347.

and the idealized victims serve as a reflection of the ideal national self.¹⁸⁸ The memory of the trauma therefore becomes binding:

Through the constitution of a martyrology specific to that community, namely, the community becoming a remembering collective that recollects and recounts itself through the unifying memory of catastrophes, suffering, and victimization, binding its members together by instilling in them a sense of common mission and destiny, a shared sense of nationhood is created and the nation is crystallized. These ordeals can yield an embracing sense of redemption and transcendence, when the shared moments of destruction are recounted and replicated by the victim-community through rituals of testimony and identification until those moments lose their historical substance, are enshrouded in sanctity, and become a model of heroic endeavor, a myth of rebirth.¹⁸⁹

The creation of the myth and “enshrouding in sanctity” seem to be the crucial points of this process. For the study of intergroup relations such a “hagiographical” approach could not be helpful because it discourages critical inquiry and analysis. In addition, the practical permanent connection between the term witness and the status of a victim is somehow limiting and could be even seen as derogatory. Firstly, it perpetuates the setting established by the oppressors. Secondly, extracting the victimization as the only point of interest in their life stories contributes to seeing them as the objects, not actors, of the story, therefore showing them always in the setting established by the oppressors who deprived them of agency. Therefore, from an ethical point of view, it would be appropriate to present the survivors as actors in their life stories. This at first sight may be a non-evident connection between the term witness and the implied permanent victimization, and is yet one more reason to turn to the more neutral *interviewee* or *narrator*. Otherwise, when we call a person a witness of history and their contribution a testimony, it becomes morally binding to compensate them for their previously underprivileged status. The language we are using obligates us to put first the *anti-historical* aspect, the act of making amends and seeking social justice. Maybe it is the right way?

On the other hand, it can (but does not have to) pose a threat, especially to academic research. When we put the witness of history on a pedestal, we risk instrumentalizing their narrative and interpreting it in a way that will serve to defend them and protect their good image, but also to extrapolate this whitewashed image to “us” – the members of the group the witness represents (Poles, Jews, Israelis, etc.). Thus, the risk is also to instrumentalize the story and stop seeing the person herself, but focus on the role of

¹⁸⁸ Idith Zertal, *Israel's Holocaust and the Politics of Nationhood*, Cambridge Middle East Studies (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.

the witness one ascribes to them. They are definitely the protagonists of the story but being the witnesses of history does not prevent human mistakes or moral ambiguities; it does not canonize them. The process of social canonization in fact deprives them of their personality and sometimes can blur many important aspects of their stories. In such a setting any sort of critical approach to these sources becomes blasphemy. Applying a critical academic approach, in turn, aims at uncovering what lies beyond the assumed role of the witness.

Finally, I apply the term testimony only to the three interviews given to Yad Vashem, used as auxiliary sources.¹⁹⁰ They have a clearly testimonial character – their main goal is to testify to the atrocities and preserve the memory of the Holocaust victims. Their character is much more emotionally and ethically charged than an oral history.

Constructing the Narratives

The above discussion foreshadowed issues pertaining to the construction of the narratives and the position of the narrator. The latter construct their narrative based on personal experiences, but the creative process is shaped by their identity and the role determined by the character of the interviews. The content of the story must agree with their role (e.g., if they speak from the position of a victim, the story must include an account of their victimization) and the constraints of social context, which is reflected in the intra-contextual narration (when narrator speaks from the position of participant of the story) and the extra-contextual narration (when the narrator steps out of the represented world to speak from a meta-position).¹⁹¹ Thus, the narrator presents themselves both as a participant and a medium of the past, offering their own interpretation of it.

In the body of oral histories at hand, the narrator speaks from the position of a witness, and the implicit expectation is that they will convey valuable information about the past, thus playing an important social role of the guardian of collective memory. Such a person by definition must fortify the group identity and thus will not reveal much cognitive dissonance regarding their group. In the sources, this is reflected, for example, by the resistance of the Catholic interviewees to admitting Polish antisemitism. They might describe the antisemitic violence but they usually resisted accepting the term and provided various excuses for the hostility against the Jews.¹⁹²

¹⁹⁰ Icchak Carmi Weinreb, Testimony, *Video*, Yad Vashem, O.3/VT/10188963; Chawa Goldminc, Testimony, *Video 1-4*, Yad Vashem, O.3/VT/11736; Helena Grynspan, Testimony, *Video 1-4*, Yad Vashem, O.3/VT/11736.

¹⁹¹ For the types of narrator, see Dorota Kuncewicz, Jolanta Sobkowicz, and Ewa Sokołowska, "Which Literary Theory Tools Can a Psychologist Use for Interpreting Language Communication?" *Polish Journal of Applied Psychology* 12, no. 4 (2014), 77.

¹⁹² See Chapter 7.

However, the social constraints are multi-layered and intersectional. One has multiple loyalties: national, religious, towards friends, family and significant others, towards the political party one supports, etc. Chapter 5 is dedicated to the identity of the interviewees: there, these various aspects of identity which shape the narratives are taken into consideration and discussed further.

The Methodology

Analyzing the Narratives

As already mentioned, I have pre-selected the interviews based on the online archive where edited fragments of interviews are available.¹⁹³ I have searched using the key words: Jewish-Christian relations, Jewish-Polish relations and interwar period. When it comes to the selected oral histories, I used the NVivo software in order to process the data. After the selection, I uploaded the selected texts and coded them using nodes pertaining to the topics appearing in the narratives. At the same time, I started the comparative analysis of the stories of various interviewees. I compared their age during the period and at the moment of giving the interview, their social class, gender, education, religious background and identity styles. Then, because of the impossibility of accessing the archive in situ due to the pandemic, I attempted to recreate the interviews based on the edited fragments available online as much as was possible in order to recreate biographies of the interviewees. At a later stage, it was possible to access the complete unedited transcriptions at the seat of the GGTTNC in Lublin, and thus complete the data. Therefore, I have written a short biography of every interviewee and then proceeded to cross-analyze the materials.

The main body of interviews was compared to four other kinds of sources. Firstly, I examined who from the pre-selected group gave their testimony to Yad Vashem, and compared the testimony from Yad Vashem to the interview given to the Grodzka Gate – NN Theatre Center in Lublin. This comparison potentially sheds light on the impact that the following factors have on the narrative: the interviewer, the agenda of the interviewing institution, the language used to produce the account and the time of

¹⁹³ See "Historia mówiona." For the practice of basing on sources collected by someone else, see, for example: Guy Beiner, ed., *Pandemic Re-Awakenings: The Forgotten and Unforgotten 'Spanish' Flu of 1918-1919* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), especially Chapter 1.

recording the account. To my knowledge, out of 25 Jewish interviewees, only 3 gave their testimonies (interviews) to Yad Vashem.¹⁹⁴

Secondly, I compared the interviews with written autobiographical accounts of Lubliners, especially with Róża Fiszman-Sznajdman's book.¹⁹⁵ Her memoirs recall Jewish Lublin, commemorating lost family members and describing in detail everyday life with its attractions and sufferings.

The process of textual analysis of the sources builds on Erwin Panofsky's *Iconology*, which (surprisingly!) was never extrapolated to fields other than history of art, and offers very clear structure for the analysis of all the texts of culture, no matter if visual or textual. The first step explains the what – the literal meaning of the text. In this case, it assumes grouping the narratives along the main themes and presenting them with a historical commentary, which includes confrontation against other sources if they concern some specific events. The second step concerns explaining the how. It consists of linking these descriptions to what I call in this study metanarratives, and some others call tropes,¹⁹⁶ meaning widely spread narratives shaping the views on the outgroup and otherness in collective memory. Such a process is conducted in the analytical chapters and takes the lion's share of the space. The third step refers to the why and is based on the method proposed by Kuncewicz et al.¹⁹⁷ Using tools borrowed from the theory of literature, the analysis pays attention to the language structure and disruptions of the narrative to discern the intention of the narrator in shaping the narrative in a certain way. The final part of the analysis takes place in the conclusions, and appears in a particularly salient way in the final part of Chapter 9.

¹⁹⁴ File numbers: 10188963, 11397, 11736.

¹⁹⁵ Róża Fiszman-Sznajdman, *Mój Lublin* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Lubelskie, 1989). I do not refer to other memoirs of Lublin, which in my perception do not add much nuance to the topic of this study, e.g., Krystyna Modrzewska, *Trzy razy Lublin* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Panta, 1991); Eva Eisenkeit and Esther Minars, *A Lublin Survivor: Life Is Like a Dream* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2019).

¹⁹⁶ Carlo Ginzburg, *Threads and Traces: True, False, Fictive* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012); Manuela Consonni and Vivian Liska, eds., *Sartre, Jews, and the Other. Rethinking Antisemitism, Race, and Gender* (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, Oldenbourg, 2020).

¹⁹⁷ Dariusz Kuncewicz et al., *Po ciszy. Rozważania o komunikacji opartej na kontekście* (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego Jana Pawła II, 2019); Dorota Kuncewicz, Jolanta Sobkowicz, and Ewa Sokołowska, "Usłyszeć niewypowiedziane, czyli o interpretacji psychologicznej za pomocą narzędzi teorii literatury," *Polskie Forum Psychologiczne* 20, no. 3 (2015); Kuncewicz, Sobkowicz, and Sokołowska, "Which Literary Theory Tools Can a Psychologist Use for Interpreting Language Communication?"

Interpreting the Narratives

I read the oral histories from a semiotic point of view,¹⁹⁸ as the texts of culture, for a twofold reason. Firstly, because they reveal cultural meanings and cultural patterns, in this case pertaining to religious identity as well as conceptions of sameness and Otherness. Secondly, because such an approach allows me to turn the narrative's fabric inside out and notice what factors might have influenced specific elements of the narrative and why the story is being told in a specific way. For example, one of the Catholic interviewees stated that the relations with the Jews were very normal, but then shortly after proceeded to describe how his friends interrupted praying Jews by throwing crows in the synagogue. Another person states that the intergroup relations were good and people respected each other, and shortly after that proceeds to describe how her childhood friends were throwing stones at a religious Jew.¹⁹⁹ They clearly do not hear the dissonance; therefore, my role is to understand why. What framework allows them to reconcile two such statements?

Therefore, an act of the interpretation consists of deciphering the meanings, or systems of values, beliefs, etc., that lie beyond the surface of literal meaning. In this sense, close reading and interpretation of the sources becomes an archaeological work, an exercise in singling out treads and traces of cultural phenomena, political ideologies, religious beliefs and other elements of the socio-cultural context in which the texts were generated. In such an approach, the oral histories capture a specific form of a text – a life story – that one was developing throughout their lifetime, that was recorded at a particular moment in time, incorporating in some way the entirety of the cultural contexts the person was exposed to.

It is of extreme importance here to underscore that such analysis is possible only thanks to the theory of communication based on context developed by Kuncewicz, Sobkowicz and others.²⁰⁰ Their insights on memory, communication and context prove to be enlightening:

It may seem that language code can be analyzed on several levels independent of context, but in the real world code, context and meaning can only be viewed as different aspects of the same event. The meaning is in experience, in culture, in the history of the word,

¹⁹⁸ By the semiotic point of view, I understand the focus on signs (narrative tropes) and their meaning in analysis and interpretation of the sources. Thus, the process of reconstructing the social ties through distinguishing the elements of narratives, either cultural (tropes) or emotional-behavioral (fear, suspicion, rejection, deception etc.).

¹⁹⁹ For ethical reasons, I do not point to the specific interviews in this case.

²⁰⁰ Kuncewicz et al., *Po ciszy*.

in shaping generations. If it is passed on, a generational and cultural memory is created, which can exist without remembering the facts.²⁰¹

Narratives created by the interviewees during the process of the interview are expressions of such cultural memory, which is passed on to the next generations who do not remember the facts but do inherit attitudes and sentiments, for example, towards the members of the outgroup. When I heard as a teenager that I squeeze my laundry in the Jewish way, I had no idea about the Jewish history in Poland but I immediately understood that it implied that I do something in a way that is weird, incorrect and undesirable. The attitude remained ingrained in the language without me having any knowledge of the past events. The observation that what is being preserved is the memory of meanings, not facts, is of crucial significance for my study because even if the oral histories can be erroneous with respect to facts, the meanings are preserved in the language in an impeccable way. The interpretation of oral histories is directed towards unpacking these meanings.

This in turn, is not possible without a thorough knowledge of the history of Jewish-Catholic relations in Poland. The history of the relationship provides an interpretational context: it underpins the narratives. Time in the narratives is not linear but rather encompasses the entirety of the interviewee's experience, and the events are given meaning in the context of their entire life: the war, the Holocaust, the postwar experiences, their education, political views, religious background, etc. Therefore, both the internal (their biographies) and the external context (events) provide interpretational clues.

Thus, in the final step of the analysis – interpretation – I have individuated the most important themes in the accounts of the intergroup relations. Then, I have analyzed them, paying attention to the tropes from larger metanarratives (e.g., blood libel or the idea of filthy Jews). These tropes were analyzed with the help of secondary literature. Subsequently, following the theory of communication based on context, I applied the literary tools to individuate inconsistencies in the narrative and notice when the position of the narrator changes, as these two factors indicate meanings beyond the story, willingly or not hidden from the recipient of the narrative; elements incongruent with the desired content of the narrative. Finally, I interpreted these incongruences, referring again to the secondary literature addressing the issue at hand.

Historian as Author: Creating an Empathic Narrative

When I think about writing history, I cannot avoid recalling two Nobel laureates, the novelists Orhan Pamuk and Olga Tokarczuk. The association naturally stems from the

²⁰¹ Ibid., 55. Translation mine.

awareness of the literary roots of historiography and close kinship between the two, based on, for example, accessing the world through narratives and on the role of the narrator.

After publishing one of his best novels, *Snow*, Pamuk received criticism from the westernized readership, complaining that he wrote about religious extremists. In response, he wrote:

I was now impervious to the complaints, even being committed to the idea that **the art of the novel was at its most powerful when it could deliver us, or at least try to, into the worlds of those who do not think or live like us.** Indeed, it is, in my view, the novelist [sic] **duty to bring out the humanity of the “other”**, to embrace even those his readers do not wish to know or understand and perhaps even regard as dangerous.²⁰²

History does not differ significantly from literature in the quest for understanding reality (*the why*) and creating representations thereof through narratives. Historiography, similarly to Pamuk's literature, seeks explanations, especially of things exceptional, odd and extraordinary. His postulate to “bring out the humanity of the other” and to access worlds of “those who do not think or live like us” can be a valuable hint in historiography, especially when studying history of interreligious relations.

Tokarczuk, when reflecting on narrative and the role of the narrator in her Nobel Lecture in 2019, offers insights which can bring much benefit to historians, who are, after all, narrators themselves.²⁰³ Firstly, she notes the centrality of the first-person narration in the Western culture, a significant remark for a scholar studying oral histories:

Western civilization is to a great extent founded and reliant upon that very discovery of the self, which makes up one of our most important measures of reality. Here man is the lead actor, and his judgment—although it is one among many—is always taken seriously. Stories woven in first person appear to be among the greatest discoveries of human civilization; they are read with reverence, bestowed full confidence. This type of story, when we see the world through the eyes of some self that is unlike any other, builds a special bond with the narrator, who asks his listener to put himself in his unique position.

The discovery of self, therefore, invites immediately empathy – putting ourselves in the narrator's position and therefore creating a certain fellowship, a community of

²⁰² Orhan Pamuk, *Snow*, trans. Maureen Freely, Everyman's Library (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2011), Postscript, 457. Emphasis mine.

²⁰³ Olga Tokarczuk's Nobel Lecture is available online at "Nobel Lecture," The Nobel Prize, 2018, accessed 1.10.2021, <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/2018/tokarczuk/lecture/>.

compassion, and a field of the exchange of experiences through the narrative.²⁰⁴ Tokarczuk also calls for the restoration of the parabolic dimension of narrative (*historia magistra vitae*), which connects to empathy because one can understand the universal meaning of the story only through putting themselves in the protagonist's shoes. Moreover, she envisions a revolution in narrative towards an approach attentive to the mysterious interconnectedness of all *the Others*:

I also dream of a new kind of narrator—a “fourth-person” one, who is not merely a grammatical construct of course, but who manages to encompass the perspective of each of the characters, as well as having the capacity to step beyond the horizon of each of them, who sees more and has a wider view, and who is able to ignore time. (...) Seeing everything means recognizing the ultimate fact that all things that exist are mutually connected into a single whole, even if the connections between them are not yet known to us. **Seeing everything also means a completely different kind of responsibility for the world, because it becomes obvious that every gesture “here” is connected to a gesture “there,”** that a decision taken in one part of the world will have an effect in another part of it, and that differentiating between “mine” and “yours” starts to be debatable.

The decision not to other *the Other* but instead to include the otherness in the narrative appears to be an act of responsibility, as the Other in fact is a yet- undiscovered part of oneself.²⁰⁵ Finally, this attentive and astute narrator is also a “tender” one. Tokarczuk has her own definition of tenderness, however:

...tenderness is the art of personifying, of sharing feelings, and thus endlessly discovering similarities... Tenderness is the most modest form of love.... It appears wherever we take a close and careful look at another being, at something that is not our “self”... Tenderness is deep emotional concern about another being, its fragility, its unique nature, and its lack of immunity to suffering and the effects of time. Tenderness perceives the bonds that connect us, the similarities and sameness between us. It is a way of looking that shows the world as being alive, living, interconnected, cooperating with, and codependent on itself.

²⁰⁴ It is worth mentioning that in the context of the studies in Jewish-Christian relations the problem of empathy was brought up also by Emma O'Donnell Polyakov when discussing her usage of the ethnographic method and the ethics of representation; O'Donnell Polyakov, *The Nun in the Synagogue*, 16.

²⁰⁵ As I point out in the introduction to *Jews in Dialogue*, in Hebrew there is an interesting play of words: the word responsibility (אֲחֻזָּה) includes the word other (אֲחֵר); Dziaczkowska and Messina, *Jews in Dialogue*, 4.

Although Tokarczuk argues that tenderness “goes far beyond empathetic fellow feeling,” it is worthwhile noting that it originates in empathy and proceeds towards acknowledging the other’s vulnerability as a matter of importance to oneself. This naturally happens in literature, when the protagonist’s lot become the reader’s worries and the reader identifies with the protagonist of the story. In this sense, my study aims at such an effect of going out of oneself in order to identify with the Other and discover the sameness between the Other and me. In a way, it is an attempt to present such a tender approach.

However, to fully grasp the concept, it is necessary to refer to the original Polish word used in Tokarska’s speech – *czuły*. In Polish the term has slightly different connotations than the English *tender*.²⁰⁶ *Czuły* derives from the verb *czuć* (to feel, to sense, to experience) and refers firstly, similarly to English, to affection and cordiality, but then also sensitive or sensitized to something and as such attentive, more responsive and precise in reactions or showing the nuances of the phenomenon it reacts to. Only by taking into account these meanings can one can truly grasp the concept of the “tender narrator” and notice how desirable such an approach could be in historiography as well as literature. A tender narrator is attentive, sensitized and precise in their empathy, and as such dedicated to the ethics of representation.

Reflexivity

While speaking about empathy and the tenderness of the narrator, it is worth noting that these are not purely intellectual categories. Both Tokarczuk and Pamuk suggest that in order to stay human, one should accept emotions, or even use them wisely in the process of narration. Especially in cases of such a highly emotionally charged topics like the relations between Jews and Catholics in interwar Poland, excluding the emotional aspect both as an element present in the stories and as a part of the process of my interpretation would be dishonest and impoverishing for this project. I try to include this element in the section below, together with a short description of my prior experiences with lived Jewish-Christian relations and the resulting assumptions that influenced the research process.

My positionality

Although I am aiming at scholarly distance, my point of view is informed by my Polish and Catholic identity and my life experiences. In particular, five types of experiences proved to be formative: being a minority, living away from homeland, participating in interreligious dialogue, working with Polish-Jewish youth meetings and having close Jewish friends.

²⁰⁶ "Czuły," Słownik Języka Polskiego PWN, 1.10.2021.

Although I have spent the first 25 years of my life as a member of a majority group, a Catholic woman in Poland, the experience of being a part of a religious and ethnic minority both in Sweden and in Israel has undoubtedly sensitized me to the issues faced by minorities. The latter include systemic discrimination within administrative systems and public institutions, stereotyping, othering, limiting access to medical care, religious practice, etc. It was particularly interesting to be a minority in the Jewish state – a homeland to those whose parents and grandparents once were in minority in Poland. As I was subjected to some forms of discrimination and exclusion, I could experience first-hand many emotions accompanying this experience, for which I am grateful. Anger, frustration, extrapolating the hatred of the perceived injustice to the entire system and then the nation who accepts such treatment of minorities. All of these feelings flowed through me at some point. It made it easier for me to understand why some Polish Jews who immigrated to Israel kept a generally negative image of Poles, colored by resentment, even though my experience was just a tiny fraction of the discrimination they experienced in my homeland.

However, I was not only othered, I was also selfed. On many occasions, I was included in religious celebrations, I became part of the local academic milieu, I ate Israeli food and learned Hebrew slang. My everyday life, with the exception of my religious practice and a few other aspects of cultural life, was an Israeli life for the three of five years of the duration of this project. The everyday experiences did not differ much from those of an average Israeli – taking the same public transportation, going to the same doctors, shopping in the same supermarkets, etc. In effect, I was Israelized *nolens volens*. Thus, my connection to Israel and the Jewish people is also a lived, embodied experience of being a part of the Israeli society and acquiring some Israeliness through osmosis.

Furthermore, just like the Jewish interviewees, I look at Polishness differently because of emigration. In many oral histories, Polish Jews who made *Aliyah* speak explicitly about their relation to Polishness and a sense of detachment that they are trying to compensate for by reading Polish literature or speaking Polish at home. The emigration is for them yet another contribution to the non-normativity of their Polishness, making it both an integral, irremovable part of their identity and an external phenomenon seen from the distance of their emigration. In that, I identified much more with their perceptions than with those of the Catholic interviewees.

In addition, my personal engagement in interpersonal and institutional Catholic-Jewish dialogue affects my position in this research. Jewish-Catholic relations deeply emotionally involve me, and therefore by writing about them, I do not allow the scholarly distance to grow so far as to render the main problems of this study to be seen as purely theoretical or remotely detached from the challenges of the practicalities of Polish-Jewish and Catholic-Jewish dialogue. Rather, the academic study appears to me

as intimately connected or even intertwined with the lived aspects of politics of memory and history, as can be understood from the above sections referring to the competing narratives.

The fourth factor I want to refer to is the work in informal education with mixed Polish-Jewish groups. I had a chance to conduct both one-time workshops and weeklong trips in such groups. The possibility to observe how the initial prejudice melts down with time spent together was priceless, and predisposed me to accept the main tenets of the intergroup contact theory, as it aligned with my pedagogical experiences. In addition, educational experience enabled a reflection on the role of pre-existing knowledge, the presence of metanarratives taught at school and affective ties in transforming attitudes towards the otherness.

Finally, speaking of affective ties, many Jews of Polish descent have become a part of my life, either for a limited time or for good. While the stories of the Catholic Lubliners cross the paths of my family and closest hometown friends, the stories of the Jewish Lubliners reflect the lot of my Jewish friends' families. Although the majority of my friends' families did not come exactly from Lublin, the similarity of lot and recognizable parallels in the fate of the Polish Jewry definitely keep my memory committed to respect and loyalty. Polish Jews, after all, are the community my friends come from and thus through extension become part of my story and an object of my loyalty as well. I myself have gone through the processes described by the intergroup theory: learning about the other, decreasing prejudice, changing my behavior towards the other and the entire outgroup and reassessing my own group in the light of the previous steps of the process. Thus, in the end, I identify myself to some extent with both the described groups. I do not usurp the Jewish identity; however, my loyalty is not exclusively on the Polish Catholic side. The face of the Other, as Levinas would say, prompts me to assume my responsibility towards them.

Without having experienced the consequences of assuming particular narratives in encounters with the other, I might not have noticed the importance of the narrative history and have taken a different methodological and theoretical stance. I remember a Polish-Israeli²⁰⁷ youth meeting during which one of the Jewish participant revealed that his family member was murdered by a Pole during the Second World War and one of the Polish participants shared that his grandfather was killed by a Jewish co-partisan. It was enlightening to see how these narratives affected the two young men's attitudes towards the outgroup and what happened when they could share the stories in front of the Other and consider the Other's perspective as, if not legitimate, then at least possible.

²⁰⁷ The meeting took place in a secular setting in GGNNTC.

In consequence, my reading of the sources is similarly comparative: it is an effort to create a discussion between the Catholic and the Jewish interviewees I wish could have taken place but, for the most part, unlike in the case of Polish and Israeli youth, never had a chance to take place. The attempt is to present narratives on both sides with as much accuracy and nuance as possible, while trying to point to the key divergences in understanding and evaluation of the experiences of Jewish-Catholic relations in interwar Poland, and possible reasons for such divergences. By doing that, I am trying to confront the two sides of the story and construct a dialogue that has never happened.

Naturally, this process required at times an emotional stretch, as I was not always fully comfortable with the patterns I saw in the data or with the feelings they evoked. Familiarizing myself with the life stories of the interviewees turned out to be extremely emotionally taxing, and the responsibility for their stories at times overwhelming. Discovering a sense of guilt possibly underpinning someone's account felt like stripping a leper. Reading and listening to the entire interviews, including the descriptions of hardships, betrayal, murder and loss during the Holocaust made me mourn their losses as if I was becoming part of their story. Observing their tragedy from a safe distance of almost a century, but nonetheless witnessing. Becoming their memory.

Concluding Notes

Bibliographical Note

For the reader's convenience, bibliographical references always point to the English edition of the publication unless there is none, and then to the original one. The references to the oral histories point to the fragment of the oral history quoted in the text. Thus, firstly, they refer to the edited transcript of the interview available on the spot in GGNNTC, indicating the page in the transcript²⁰⁸ and then to the fragment available online as text and audio or video file when possible. As all the interviews with the same person were made available to me in one file, the pages continue through all the interviews indicated in the bibliography under the same name. For example, page 36 of the transcript might be the first page of the second interview, page 80 the first page of the third interview, etc. The references to the interviews from the Yad Vashem archives include the name of the collection and the file number and no page information as they refer to audio and video materials.

²⁰⁸ Only in the chapters dedicated to identities, the emphasis is placed on referring to the transcript to be able to follow the storyline in the original interview. In this part, as an aid, a link to a short biography of the interviewee online is also referenced.

Note on the Usage of Personal Pronouns

When one's gender is known, I stick to the personal pronoun related to this particular gender. Consequently, all of the interviewees whose stories are analyzed here are referred to as he or she because these are the personal pronouns these people used.²⁰⁹ However, when referring to general understanding of terms and ideas I use "they" instead of him or her. Therefore, when in need of generalizations, I say for example that a person has the right to choose *their* personal pronoun, because I find this linguistic solution more inclusive and highlighting of the communal aspect of generalization than other alternatives.

²⁰⁹ Polish grammar is highly gendered, especially in the past and future tense; thus, I follow the grammatical choices the interviewees made.

PART 2
The Setting

Chapter 3

Jews and Catholics in Interwar Poland

Struggles to Define the Polish Nation in the Period of the Second Republic

Norman Davies accurately describes the period of the Second Polish republic as Poland's 'experiment in independence.'²¹⁰ After over a century of political absence, the country had to rebuild from the damage caused by the First World War and face endless challenges: from establishing its borders, to creating coherent systems of education, healthcare, transport, etc., to becoming home to various ethno-religious groups and solving the burning question of peasantry.²¹¹ Kathryn Ciancia describes the complex situation of this young state in the following way:

The interwar Polish state was thus born into a world in which narratives of civilization, backwardness, and sovereignty circulated far and wide. But it was also born into an eastern Europe of emerging nation-states, which were home to high percentages of so-called national minorities. In a country made up of areas that had previously been part of the Russian, Austro-Hungarian, and German empires, Polish citizens spoke a variety of languages, including Yiddish, Hebrew, Russian, Ukrainian, German, Belarusian,

²¹⁰ Norman Davies, *Heart of Europe: The Past in Poland's Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 95.

²¹¹ Peasants (Pl. *chłopi*) were the lowest social class, who constituted the largest percentage of the society (approximately 55%). Their economic situation was worse than before 1918, when the income and purchasing power of the peasants were higher than in the reborn Polish Republic. In addition, the rural areas struggled with overcrowding and the resulting poverty. To solve this problem, the government implemented land reform in 1925. Moreover, the construction of the Central Industrial District in the 1930s was designed to attract unqualified workers from villages to relieve the situation. See Włodzimierz Mędrzecki, *Odzyskany śmietnik. Jak radziliśmy sobie z niepodległością w II Rzeczypospolitej* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2022), especially chapter 5.

Lithuanian, and Czech. Those who spoke Polish as their mother tongue constituted just 69 percent of the total population on the 1931 census.²¹²

The Second Republic of Poland thus had to deal not only with a complex ethno-national composition but had to face economic and social problems – the backwardness of many provinces in the context of global discussions on the meaning of civilization and the conceptual spaces between empire and nation-state. The overall situation of the lands taken back from the three partitioning powers is ironically defined by Włodzimierz Mędrzecki, a Polish historian studying interwar Poland for over forty years, as “recovered garbage”.²¹³

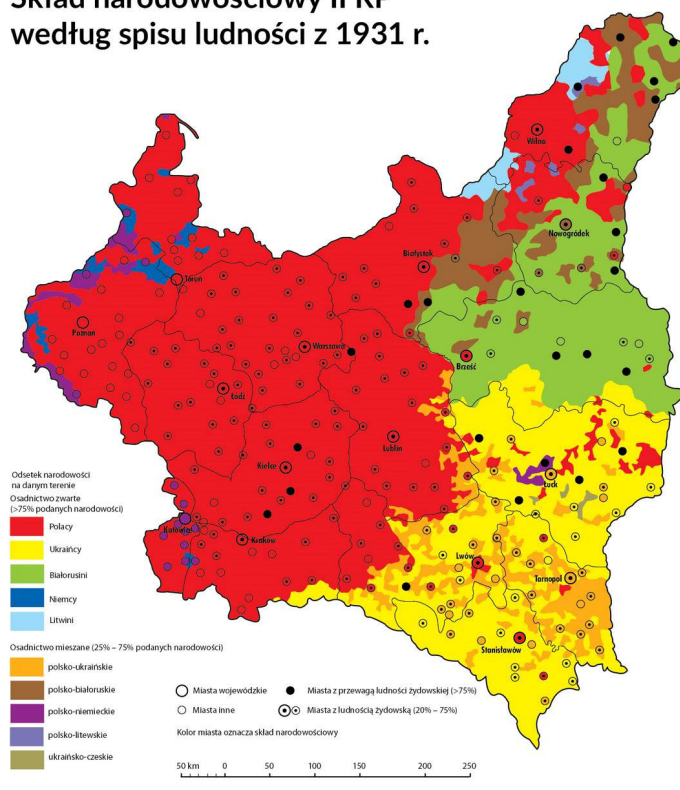
Borders

While all the victorious powers (the Allies) unanimously supported the existence of the Polish State, having in mind the creation of a buffer zone separating Western Europe from Bolshevik Russia, the definition of the Polish borders was not obvious from the beginning. The Treaty of Versailles signed at the 1919 Paris Peace Conference confirmed the rebirth of Poland and made it regain the most part of the lands taken by the Prussian Empire during the first and second partition. Germany had to cede to Poland the major part of Greater Poland, portions of Upper Silesia and Pomerelia and parts of East Prussia. The remaining parts of Silesia as well as a part of Eastern Prussia (Warmia and Mazury) were to be decided upon by plebiscites. Then, the Eastern border was settled as a result of the Polish wars with the West Ukrainian People’s Republic (the Battle of Lviv) and Soviet Russia, ceding to Poland East Galicia, West Volhynia, Polesie, Grodno, Vilnius and the Western part of the Minsk region. Vilnius was occupied in 1920 by Piłsudski who proclaimed the establishment of the theoretically independent state – Middle Lithuania, which in 1922 was incorporated into Poland. Naturally, such a situation was unacceptable to the Lithuanian state who announced a state of war with Poland, which remained in effect until 1938. The Southern border was also the subject of conflict. It was supposed to be settled by the result of a plebiscite but eventually was decided upon in 1920 at the Spa Conference, leaving Zaolzie, with a considerable Polish minority, on the Czech side of the border.

²¹² Kathryn Ciancia, *On Civilization’s Edge: A Polish Borderland in the Interwar World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 3.

²¹³ Mędrzecki borrows the expression *odzyskany śmietnik* (recovered garbage) from Juliusz Kaden-Bandrowski’s novel *General Barcz*, ed. Michał Sprusiński, Biblioteka Narodowa. Seria 1 nr 223, (Wrocław, Kraków: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1975). See Mędrzecki, *Odzyskany śmietnik*.

Skład narodowościowy II RP według spisu ludności z 1931 r.



<http://Polska1918-89.pl>

Figure 3. Ethnic composition of Poland. Red: Poles, yellow: Ukrainians, green: Belarusians, blue: Lithuanians, navy: Germans. Interestingly, Jews are absent.

Poles and Their Minorities

When the borders of the Second Polish Republic were finally set, the country found itself with approximately one third of its population composed of various ethnic minorities. The census of 1921 estimates the percentage of ethno-national minorities at 30.8, but given the governmental agenda favoring the Polish majority, some researchers estimate the number to have been as high as 40 percent.²¹⁴ The differences

²¹⁴ Joseph Marcus, *Social and Political History of the Jews in Poland, 1919-1939* (Amsterdam: Mouton Publishers, 1983), 17. Below I follow the official statistics, even if they should be taken with a pinch of salt. When one summarizes the ratio of the minorities, it appears as if Poles were approximately 62% of the population. My aim in this section is to point to the general landscape of this ethno-religious mosaic rather than providing perfectly accurate statistical data. For those interested in more critical

of religion or rite/denomination overlapped with the ethnic divisions, as often takes place. Therefore, the vast majority of those identifying as of Polish nationality were Roman Catholic (approximately 94% of the Poles according to the official statistics). Next, the biggest ethnic group in the state were Ukrainians (approximately 14.3%) who were predominantly Greek Catholic (Uniate) with some members of the Orthodox Church (but separated from the Moscow Patriarchate) as well. The third group according to size were Jews with approximately 10% of the population identifying with Judaism but only 7.8% with the Jewish nationality. Another two significant minority groups, both estimated at about 3.9%, were Belarussians and Germans. The former belonged to the Orthodox Church and the latter were predominantly Protestant with a much smaller percentage of Roman Catholics. All the other ethnic groups together made for less than 0.1% and included Russians (Orthodox) and Armenians (mostly Armenian Catholic).

The situation of these minorities in the new state was regulated for the most part by the Polish Minorities Treaty (the Little Treaty of Versailles) from 1919²¹⁵ and the Constitution of the Republic of Poland from 1921 (hereafter the March Constitution). In the former, the Polish government declared that it will support

total and complete protection of life and freedom of all people regardless of their birth, nationality, language, race or religion (art. 2). It also indicated that difference of religion, creed, or confession shall not prejudice any Polish national in matters relating to the enjoyment of civil or political rights, as for instance the admission to Public employment, functions and honors, or the exercise of professions and industries (art. 7).²¹⁶

In addition to the Treaty, the March Constitution also guaranteed equal rights to all citizens, no matter of what religion or nationality, at the same time granting each ethnic and religious group the right to have their own cultural life. It is worth noting, however,

estimates, I recommend, for example, Włodzimierz Mędrzecki, "Liczebność i rozmieszczenie grup narodowościowych w II Rzeczypospolitej w świetle wyników II spisu powszechnego (1931 r.)," *Dzieje Najnowsze:[kwartalnik poświęcony historii XX wieku]* 15, no. 1-2 (1983).

²¹⁵ Signed by Ignacy Paderewski and Roman Dmowski on June 28, 1919.

²¹⁶ I quote the articles of the Treaty after the English version available on Wikipedia: "Little Treaty of Versailles," Wikipedia, 2022, accessed 02.11.2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Little_Treaty_of_Versailles. The Polish version can be found at "Traktat między głównymi mocarstwami sprzymierzonymi i stowarzyszonymi a Polską, Wersal, 28 czerwca 1919 i Ratyfikacja Traktatu przez Polskę, Warszawa, 1 września 1919," Electronic Museum, 2013, accessed 02.11.2021, https://web.archive.org/web/20140308135112/http://electronicmuseum.ca/Poland_between_Wars/aris_peace_conference/paris_poland_pl.html.

that eventually the Treaty was renounced in 1934 due to problems with the German minority.

The Jewish Minority

The place envisioned for the Jewish minority in the new Poland was the main cause of disagreement regarding the Treaty among both the Polish leaders and Polish Jews themselves. The Treaty was originally drafted between the leaders of the Allies and the Jewish delegations and could be seen as a battlefield of diverse theories of the nation and the nature of Jewish identity (ethnic versus religious).

David Lloyd George, the prime minister of the United Kingdom, expressed his wish that the Jews join the Polish nation as Polish citizens, just as it was in England or in France.²¹⁷ In addition, Geroges Clemenceau highlighted that the Treaty did not see the Jews as a separate political entity in Poland.²¹⁸ Woodrow Wilson, on the other hand, on more practical note, saw the necessity of granting Jews equal political and language rights.²¹⁹

Among the Jewish delegations, opinions also varied. The most influential American delegation (sent by the American Jewish Congress) advocated for equal rights of all citizens, autonomy in governing their own institutions, freedom to use their own languages and the right to celebrate Shabbat. The French *Alliance Israélite Universelle* saw the Jewish people as an exclusively religious community, and therefore opposed treating them as a national minority. A similar line was represented by the British delegation.²²⁰ In contrast, the Zionist Organization, who also sent their representatives, postulated recognizing Jewish nationality, guaranteeing linguistic freedom and education in the mother tongue, as well as the right to political representation both nationally and in the League of the Nations. The national line was also supported by other delegates coming from Eastern Europe. Eventually, the Treaty addressed both the issues pertaining to linguistic and cultural freedom as well as religious freedom.

Although the legal regulations assured equal rights to all minorities, the Polish political elites were far from reaching an agreement as to how this should look in practice. Granting minority rights to Germans, Ukrainians and Belarussians seemed to pose a threat to Polish sovereignty, as they belonged to nations with political aspirations

²¹⁷ Jolanta Zyndul, *Państwo w państwie? Autonomia narodowo-kulturalna w Europie Środkowowschodniej w XX wieku* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo DiG, 2000), 63.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 64.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, 65.

contrary to the Polish *raison d'état*. Jews en masse, on the other hand, were not prone to cultural assimilation/social integration, and as such also posed a challenge. Endecja proposed a model of uniformization and Polonization of minorities, while Piłsudski saw a multiethnic state (a political rather than ethnic nation) as the best solution. It is also worth noting that the Treaty was perceived by the Polish delegation and many ordinary Poles as relating first and foremost to the Jewish minority, and was seen as forced upon Poland due to the influence of the American Jewry.²²¹ During the discussions preceding the ratification of the Treaty in the Polish Parliament, it was unanimously underscored that it limited Polish sovereignty and humiliated a country that historically had proved to be a safe haven for groups persecuted in other parts of Europe.²²²

In addition, those concerned – the Polish Jewry – lacked concurrence, as the community was divided and full of internal ideological divergences. A very suggestive image of this diversity and discord can be found in Arthur L. Goodhart's memoir *Poland and the Minority Races*.²²³ An American Jew, Goodhart was sent to Poland in 1919 as a member of the US mission in order to investigate wholesale killings of Jews in Poland; however, his book provides an insight into the situation of Jews and other minorities in the first turbulent years of the Second Republic of Poland.²²⁴ Goodhart relates the encounters of the Mission with various Jewish delegations in Poland. Although the meetings took place within a short span of two days, he had occasion to hear all the major voices in the Jewish political arena of the time, which I will examine here, starting with his encounter with local Zionists.

... A Committee from the Zionist organization called on the Mission. They seemed to be exceptionally able men, and expressed in clear and forceful language. In dress and manners they were entirely modernized and were separated by centuries from the kaftaned Jews we had seen in the poor quarter

²²¹ Mark Levene, "Britain, a British Jew, and Jewish Relations with the New Poland. The Making of the Polish Minorities Treaty of 1919," in *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry Volume 8*, ed. Antony Polonsky, Ezra Mendelsohn, and Jerzy Tomaszewski, Jews in Independent Poland, 1918-1939 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2004), 15.

²²² Zyndul, *Państwo w państwie? Autonomia narodowo-kulturalna w Europie Środkowowschodniej w XX wieku*, 76.

²²³ Arthur L. Goodhart, *Poland and the Minority Races* (New York: Arno Press & The New York Times, 1971).

²²⁴ The US Mission was appointed by the US President Woodrow Wilson on the request of the Polish President of the Council of Ministers, Ignacy Paderewski, in response to reported pogroms taking place in Poland. The Mission, consisting of Henry Morgenthau, Gen. Edgar Jadwin, Homer H. Johnson and Arthur L. Goodhart, was sent to Poland on July 10, 1919 (Johnson joining three weeks later); *Ibid.*, 7.

on Sunday. They said they hoped that the Mission would bring about better relations between the Poles and the Jews, but this could only be done if the truth were established. They wanted separate schools for their children and also the right to manage their own charities and other institutions. They believed that Judaism was a question not only of religion, but also of race. They were anxious to preserve their racial culture, which could only be done if the children were taught in Jewish schools.²²⁵

Clearly, the Zionists opted for being treated as a national minority; they were detached from the religious tradition and modern in the way they behaved or dressed. To Goodhart they probably seemed familiar in their demeanor, unlike the traditional, backward “kaftan” Jews he saw as little exotic relics of the humiliating past. Similarly to the Zionists, the Jewish People’s Party, or Nationalists, who came to see the mission on the following day, wanted to preserve the Jewish culture and self-government, but did not want to re-establish a Jewish homeland in Palestine.²²⁶

The Assimilators, who called after the Nationalists, did not believe that race or nationality was part of the equation but rather that *Judaism is only a question of religion*, similar to the perspective expressed by the *Alliance Israélite Universelle*.²²⁷ Goodhart describes the Assimilators as wealthy and culturally integrated into the Polish society:

In culture and dress they have become entirely Polonized and speak Polish as a rule. The wealthiest business men and the leading lawyers belong to this group. In the middle of the nineteenth century they were the spokesmen for the Jewish community, but lately they have entirely lost their influence. This is due in part of the fact that many of them have been baptized. It is a great pity that this division should have occurred. Most of the prominent Jews in Poland are not leaders of their people as it is the case in other countries. The Assimilators said that they were particularly opposed to the clause in the treaty between the Allies and Poland which gave the Jewish people the right to have separate Jewish schools. They felt that by establishing such institutions the Jewish and Polish children would be kept apart and the line of demarcation deepened.²²⁸

Therefore, the Assimilationists thought along the lines indicated by the Western political leaders; however, Goodhart immediately notes the unpopularity of such opinions and the lack of support for such views among the Jewish community. The Assimilationists wanted to see Jews as equal citizens, thus also supporting common

²²⁵ Ibid., 24.

²²⁶ Ibid., 25.

²²⁷ Ibid.

²²⁸ Ibid.

education, which would improve Jewish relations with Polish (Christian) children. The Zionists and Nationalists on the other hand thought that this would weaken the Jewish national spirit and identity.

Finally, Goodhart also heard about the position of the Bund, whose representatives he did not have a chance to meet officially because they rejected the US Mission as a capitalistic invention without a real impact on improving the situation of the poor masses and as such not worthy of the attention of honest socialists. One of the Bundists he met on another occasion expressed his judgement in a clear way, stating that

...as a representative of the Bund he could not welcome any Mission which came from capitalistic America... All we were doing was to take the burden off the shoulders of the rich Polish people who ought to be forced to take care of their own poor.²²⁹

Although Goodhart's book is not a textbook of political history but rather a personal memoir, his impressions provide an excellent introduction to the nuances of Jewish internal political life. However, the situation of the Jewish minority depended not only on the internal divisions of the community or the pronouncements of the 1919 Treaty but also on the ideologies of the nation followed by the Polish political elites, their leaders and in the end, the Polish masses.

Eventually, the situation of the Jewish minority was regulated by the directive of the Ministry of Religious Denominations and Public Education (18 January, 1919, amended February 7, 1919), sanctioning the existing community executive boards but changing the election system of the community's leadership and removing education from the aegis of the religious communities.²³⁰

Competing Theories of the Nation

Many Polish thinkers in the interwar period saw the fundament of the nation in the shared national consciousness, the latter understood, for example, as an ethno-cultural bond resulting from common history and genealogy but also an awareness of common

²²⁹ Ibid., 44-45.

²³⁰ Piotr Kendziorak, "World War One and Independent Poland, 1914–1939" in *Sources on Jewish Self-Government in the Polish Lands from Its Inception to the Present*, ed. François Guesnet and Jerzy Tomaszewski (Leiden: Brill, 2021). More on the way the Jewish communities were managed can be found in Chapter 4, in the section *Traditional Religiosity versus Secularization*. See also François Guesnet and Antony Polonsky, eds., *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry Volume 34. Jewish Self-Government in Eastern Europe* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2022).

interests and the will to maintain them.²³¹ Most of them, like Zbigniew Zakrzewski, believed that the nation was an association aiming at increasing the common participation in material and spiritual life of the whole humanity and that this aim could be realized only by having a proper and own state.²³² After 1918, the notions of the nation and the state were strongly bound together in Polish political thought, and the conviction that the stronger the state is, the safer the nation became a dominant perspective across the political spectrum, from the conservative right to progressive left. A similar train of thought is reflected in Zionist ideology; however, firstly, I will focus on the concept of the nation among the non-Jewish Polish political parties.

Dmowski versus Piłsudski

The tutor of the Polish society which saw independent Poland... was not either the commander Piłsudski. Throughout the whole period of existence of independent Poland, Piłsudski decided about Polish politics, even from his coffin he influenced political events. Dmowski raised this society, shaped its views.²³³

As observed above by Stanisław Mackiewicz, Roman Dmowski and the National Democrats (*Narodowi Demokraci*) proved to be the dominant political force in that period, and their conceptualizations of the Polish nation have had an enormous impact on popular concepts of the nation to this day.²³⁴

One of the most lasting legacies of their thought is the interweaving of the physical aspects of the nation (*biological community*) with the spiritual and moral dimensions. Zygmunt Wasilewski, one of the theoreticians of the Polish National Democrats,

²³¹ Barbara Stoczevska, "Naród i nacjonalizm w myśli politycznej II RP - kontrowersje wokół pojęć," in *Odmiany współczesnej nauki o polityce*, ed. Piotr Borowiec, Robert Kłosowicz, and Paweł Ścigaj (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2014), 238-9.

²³² Ibid.

²³³ Stanisław Mackiewicz, *Historia Polski od 11 listopada 1918 r. do 17 września 1939 r.* (London: Puls 1992), 56. Translation mine.

²³⁴ In this study, I often use the term *Endecja* (see the glossary) to denote the National Democrats. After the May coup d'état (1926), the movement had its non-parliamentary organizations such as *Obóz Wielkiej Polski* and then *Związek Młodych Narodowców*. It is worth noting that due to the length of this study I can offer in this section only a brief indication of the general direction of thought of specific political parties and movements, while in reality the ideology of each group underwent complex processes of shaping and development. Regarding the history of National Democratic thought in Poland, see, e.g., Aneta Dawidowicz, "Stan badań nad dziejami i myślą polityczną Narodowej Demokracji," *Athenaeum. Polskie Studia Politologiczne* 33 (2012); Stanisław Kilian, *Myśl edukacyjna Narodowej Demokracji w latach 1918-1939* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Wyższej Szkoły Pedagogicznej, 1997); Szymon Rudnicki, "Narodowa Demokracja po przewrocie majowym: zmiany organizacyjne i ideologiczne (1926-1930)," *Najnowsze Dzieje Polski: materiały i studia z okresu 1914-1939* 11 (1966).

mentions that the nation is based not only on physical, material kinship but mainly on the psychical one, and therefore the nation is a “psychical organism.”²³⁵ Roman Dmowski, the leader of the *Endecja* and one of the fathers of Polish independence, considered a nation a “living social organism, having developed its spiritual distinctiveness on the basis of race and history, its culture, its needs and interests,”²³⁶ placing the emphasis on the spiritual dimension of the nation’s existence. Therefore, for the *Endeks*, Polishness, the fact of belonging to the Polish nation, was founded on a spiritual bond and shared consciousness (*jaźń*) rather than a mere ethnic or racial factor. The community formed in such a way had to be defended by the national state which would put its economic and political interests first, over the interests of other groups who in such a vision become strangers, not partaking in the values of spiritual/psychical community. This necessarily entails that strangers are seen as enemies, potentially dangerous and disruptive to the national system of values. In consequence, the concept of the nation entails also a certain approach to the idea of the state – the incorporation-based model of the state (*koncepcja inkorporacyjna*) according to which people of non-Polish origin would have to assimilate to Polish culture (Polonize) or emigrate (Jews and Germans).

Among these hostile minorities, the position of stranger *par excellence* is given to the Jews. As noted by Aneta Dawidowicz, Jews were perceived not only as unwelcome strangers that could never assimilate to Polish society, but also as a destructive force, harmful to the Polish national identity:

For fear of the universalisation of the identity of the Polish nation, the idea of assimilating the Jewish population was categorically rejected. It was believed that the presence of this population was conducive to the transfer to Poland of decaying values, saturated with foreign, "Jewish" spirituality, contrary to national and Catholic values.²³⁷

Jews were also seen as promoters of socialism, communism, bolshevism, cosmopolitanism and Masonic auxiliaries; that is, supporters of all the most feared enemies of the National Democrats. In addition, they were believed to have created an international “anonymous power” – an international, hidden complot that managed to control all the major political upheavals and revolutions, as well as political, intellectual and economic life in general. The antisemitic tendencies in the politics of the *Endeks* became

²³⁵ Zygmunt Wasilewski, "O nacjonalistycznym poglądzie na życie," *Mysł Narodowa*, 1927.

²³⁶ Roman Dmowski, *Kościół, naród, państwo* (Warszawa, 1927), 17-18.

²³⁷ Aneta Dawidowicz, "Problematyka mniejszości żydowskiej w myśli politycznej Stronnictwa Narodowego (1928–1939)," *Wschód Europy* 3, no. 1 (2017), 70; see also Brykczynski, *Primed for Violence: Murder, Antisemitism, and Democratic Politics in Interwar Poland*.

radicalized in the 1930s with the call for economic boycott, limitation of civil rights and eventually emigration of the Jews from Poland.

Another important aspect of the Endekian concept of the nation was the relationship to religion and Catholicism in particular.²³⁸ Initially, under the influence of the fascist movement, the National Democrats preached the nation as the highest value over all other moral, religious and political values, but with time, as the social role of the Catholic Church in Poland grew, they moved towards recognizing beliefs and religious feelings as significant sources of national strength.²³⁹ Thus, religious integritism was incorporated in the theory of the nation developed by the Endekian thinkers; according to Dmowski, who was agnostic himself, Catholicism was inherent to Polishness:

Catholicism is not an addition to Polishness, a color in it in a certain way, but it is in its essence, to a large extent is its essence. The attempt to separate Catholicism from Polishness in our country, to detach the nation from religion and the Church, is destroying the very essence of the nation.²⁴⁰

Apart from forming the core of the Polish national identity, Catholicism was also seen as a normative factor, regulating human behavior in all aspects of life; a source of social norms and conventions, and thus of public importance. The gluing together of the Polish and Catholic identity in *Endecja's* thought had serious and long-lasting repercussions for Polish self-understanding and the relations along the majority-minority line, the most important consequence being the treating of the Church as a national institution. However, various factions understood the relationship between the nation and the Church in varying ways.

Popular National Union (ZLN) assumed that Poles should be educated in the Catholic spirit, and the Church ought to be “a moral director” of the nation. ZLN offered its membership only to those who were both Christian and Polish and protested the phrasing of the Constitution that made all confessions equal. The organization did not approve of the Holy See’s relation to Poland, deeming it anti-Polish, and propagated the slogan “Polak-katolik” during the parliamentary elections of 1922. In time, the organization made attempts to distance itself from the rhetoric of the national

²³⁸ A comprehensive study of the process of unification of nationalism and Catholicism in the ideology of the National Democracy was conducted by Bogumił Grott in the framework of his habilitation (Grott, *Nacjonalizm i religia*), as well as in his later research, Grott, *Katolicyzm w doktrynach ugrupowań narodowo-radycznych do roku 1939*, ed. Jagielloński Uniwersytet, Catholicorum, qui nationalismum radicalement secuti sunt, doctrinis ante annum 1939 propagatis (Kraków: Nakładem Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 1987).

²³⁹ Grott, *Nacjonalizm i religia*. Passim.

²⁴⁰ Roman Dmowski, *Kościół, naród i państwo* (Warszawa: Nakładem Obozu Wielkiej Polski, 1927), 13. Translation mine.

egoism and move towards a theology of the nation, highlighting the fact that God created the nation as the only basis of human life through a lasting chain of generations.²⁴¹

Stronnictwo Narodowe (hereafter SN), a successor of ZLN, highlighted that the Polish nation is Catholic and that faith and religion are the strongholds of social life. In addition, emphasis was put on the role of the Catholic Church in the history of Poland and it was postulated that the state should express the Catholic-ness of the nation. Nonetheless, they criticized a part of the Church's hierarchy and frowned upon social Catholic movements like the youth organization "Odrodzenie." The members of the SN often referred to the concept of Christian nationalism, underscoring the divine origin of the idea of the nation, but identified Catholicism with National Democratic ideology. Religion, thus, served as a stabilizer of social life and protected the nation from demoralization. In addition, in their view tight bonds between the Church and the state would provide the best conditions for Polish international politics.²⁴²

A contrasting concept of the nation and the state was displayed and promoted by another father of Polish independence, Józef Piłsudski, and his followers. One of the first documents of the Second Republic was a cable signed by him and sent by the radio on November 16, 1918, informing the public about

the restoration of Poland's independence and sovereignty [which] henceforth becomes an accomplished fact; about the rebirth of the state ... **by the will of the entire nation**, about ... replacing the rule of violence that had been overwhelming the fate of Poland for one hundred and forty years (bold mine).²⁴³

This unique document reflects Piłsudski's political vision regarding the rebirth of Poland and hints at his understanding of the nation. One can learn here that he saw himself as an executioner of the entire nation's will to establish an independent and sovereign country, and that this will likely resulted from having suffered a hated oppression for over a century. Therefore, one can assume that two conditions indicate belonging to the Polish nation at this historical turning point: the experience of oppression from the partitioning powers (Russia, Prussia and Austro-Hungary) and the wish for the rebirth of the independent Polish state. Both of these are more concrete and broad than the notions of "psychical organism" or spiritual bond evoked by the

²⁴¹ Kilian, *Myśl edukacyjna Narodowej Demokracji w latach 1918-1939*, 47-71.

²⁴² Jerzy Kornaś, "Naród i państwo w myśli politycznej Stronnictwa Narodowego (1928-1939)," *Zeszyty Naukowe Akademii Ekonomicznej w Krakowie* 692 (2005), 32-34; Kilian, *Myśl edukacyjna Narodowej Demokracji w latach 1918-1939*, 72-100.

²⁴³ Quotation after: "Poznaj historię nadania depezy," Muzeum Józefa Piłsudskiego w Sulejówku, accessed 20.05.2021 <https://muzeumpilsudski.pl/poznaj-historie-nadania-depezy/>. Translation mine.

Endeks. Moreover, the cable refers to *the existence of the Polish Independent State incorporating all the lands of united Poland*,²⁴⁴ therefore referring to the First Polish Republic. There is no reference to ethnic categories but rather to the territorial dimension of the former political entity. *All the lands of united Poland* in fact were not a clear category and the first years of the Second Polish Republic were a period of disputes and military struggle to establish the Polish borders, as I mentioned above. In fact, Józef Piłsudski intended the creation of a bloc of states such as independent Lithuania, Belarus and Ukraine confederated with Poland. Such a development would not only create a buffer zone between Poland and the Soviet Union in case of military invasion but also create a political counterbalance to both Germany and the USSR.

In contrast to the *Endeks*, *Piłsudczycy* (Piłsudski's followers) chose the state, not the nation, to be the axis of their ideology. Thus, they saw the geopolitical position of Poland as the main source of concern rather than its complex ethnic composition. In such a framework, thanks to a strong and independent state, the nation understood as a united political community of all the citizens becomes a subject, not an object, of history. Leon Wasilewski, one of Piłsudski's the closest cooperators, called for a re-evaluation of the ideas of the nation and the state: *First the State, then the Nation*.²⁴⁵ In addition, Wasilewski had a negative attitude towards nationalism understood as the pursuit of a national state, as did Piłsudski followers in general; however, they retained patriotism as the highest value. One can describe Piłsudski's ideas as secular, egalitarian, referring to the French conceptions of the nation as a community of equal citizens detached from categories such as ethnicity or religion.

Other Polish political parties such as socialists and the peasant party paid less attention to the concept of the nation as they concentrated more on economic challenges and improvement of the living conditions of the peasants and the workers, who constituted the vast majority of the population.

The Position of the Catholic Church in the Second Polish Republic

The Hierarchy of the Catholic Church and Polish Independence

Already in July 1915 all the Polish bishoprics (Poznań, Lwów, Warsaw and Krakow) issued a common appeal for material and help for Poland, suffering as it was from war

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ Stoczevska, "Naród i nacjonalizm w myśli politycznej II RP - kontrowersje wokół pojęć," 244.

losses.²⁴⁶ In particular, the celebration of the centennial of the establishment of the diocese of Warsaw in 1917, coinciding with a conference of bishops, became an occasion for the hierarchy from all the three partitions to meet. Those present were, first and foremost: the archbishop of Warsaw, Aleksander Kakowski; the Latin and Armenian bishops of Lwów, Józef Bolczewski and Józef Teodorowicz; the bishop of Przemyśl, Józef Pelczar; the bishop of Tarnów, Leon Wałęga; the bishop of Kraków, Adam Stefan Sapieha; and as a president, the archbishop of Gniezno and Poznań, Edmund Dalbor. The latter was perceived as the Primate and president of the Polish Episcopate.²⁴⁷ During these celebrations, bishop Teodorowicz gave a sermon referring to the symbolism of resurrection, linking it to the regaining of Polish independence. According to Michał Piela, the correspondence of archbishop Kakowski accurately illustrates the approach of the Catholic hierarchy to Polish independence. In a pastoral letter from September 20, 1917, Kakowski wrote:

It should also be emphasized that with the right to exist we have a sacred, unlimited right to independence, and every good and noble son of this land should desire it with all his heart, with all the love of his righteous soul, and offer it all that time and circumstances will require.²⁴⁸

Therefore, the Polish hierarchy showed a sense of patriotism and univocal support for the Polish cause. Additionally, the Holy See had also shown support for the Polish cause: in May 1918, Benedict XV appointed a nuncio to the Polish lands, residing in Warsaw: Mons. Achille Ratti (future pope Pius XI).²⁴⁹

When it came to strictly political involvement, in November 1916, the creation of a puppet Kingdom of Poland was announced by Germany and Austria, and Kakowski agreed to become a part of the Interim Council of State (*Tymczasowa Rada Stanu*). In addition, numerous members of the Catholic clergy worked for the administration of the Kingdom and in various pro-independence movements in all the partitions and

²⁴⁶ Michał Piela, "Kościół i duchowieństwo polskie w latach 1914-1918," *Dzieje Najnowsze [kwartalnik poświęcony historii XX wieku]* 36, no. 3 (2004), 189; Henryk Olszar, "Kościół w Polsce w okresie międzywojennym (1918-1939)," *Symposium* 1, no. 12 (2004), 12.

²⁴⁷ Piela, "Kościół i duchowieństwo polskie w latach 1914-1918," 192.

²⁴⁸ Archiwum Archidiecezji Warszawskiej, Teczka Abp A. Kakowski, List pasterski z 20 IX 1917 r., quoted in Piela, "Kościół i duchowieństwo polskie w latach 1914-1918," 192.

²⁴⁹ Achille Ratti became Pope Pius XI in February 1922 and served until his death seven years later. As pope he opposed both Nazism (*Mit brennender Sorge*, 1937) and communism (*Divini redemptoris*, 1937). He was the apostolic nunzio in Poland in the period 1918-1921 and left in a climate of tension. Warsaw forced his departure on the grounds that his neutrality in Silesian voting was being questioned by Germans and Poles. The former objected to the Polish nuncio supervising local elections, and the latter were upset because he curtailed political action among the clergy.

later during the time of the plebiscites.²⁵⁰ The Episcopate also supported the Regency Council (*Rada Regencyjna*) which eventually handed over power to Piłsudski.

Legal Status of the Catholic Church

The position of the Catholic Church in the Second Republic of Poland was regulated mostly by two legal acts: the March Constitution of 1921 and the Concordat of 1925, and later also by the April Constitution of 1935.²⁵¹ The implemented solutions were shaped by the role that the Catholic Church played historically and by the fact that the majority of the population (75%) belonged to that Church.²⁵²

The parliamentary debate over the relationship between the new state and the church was very heated. The left wing parties, especially PPS, demanded the laity of the state and explicit statements on the separation between the church and the state in the Constitution. The right wing parties, on the other hand, in particular the *Endecja*, requested a confessional state with the Catholic Church as the State Church.²⁵³ The accepted regulations, expressed in the March Constitution (1921) and the Concordat (1925), were a result of the compromise both groups reached.²⁵⁴

Therefore, the Constitution guaranteed the equality of all citizens, regardless of their confession. Every citizen was granted the right to freely confess their religion both privately and in public (the latter with respect to others' lifestyles and public order), to convert to a different religion or be a non-believer. All coercion regarding religious matters (forcing someone to practice any religious actions or rituals or belong to a specific confession) was banned. All public institutions were obligated to facilitate religious ministry to the people that found themselves there (e.g., in prisons, military barracks, etc.). Avoidance of public duties due to religious reasons was forbidden. At the same time, religion was introduced as a mandatory subject at school for all students

²⁵⁰ Olszar, "Kościół w Polsce w okresie międzywojennym (1918-1939)," 13-14.

²⁵¹ The latter kept intact the regulation of the March Constitution, confirming the status of the Catholic Church in Poland.

²⁵² Józef Krukowski, "Status prawny religii i kościoła rzymskokatolickiego w Polsce (1918-1993)," in *Religia i Kościół rzymskokatolicki w polskiej myśli politycznej 1919-1993*, ed. Jan Jachymek (Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS 1995), 32.

²⁵³ The idea of linking the newly established Polish state and the Catholic Church was discussed among the clergy resulting in two main conceptualizations of that link, both claiming that Poland should be a Catholic country. The more open vision, proposed for example by Dominican Fr. Jacek Woroniecki, assumed that the Catholic character of the country would result from the status quo, and be free from any governmental pressure, while another vision, promoted by e.g., Jesuit Fr. Jan Rostworowski, saw Catholicism as a state religion, and assumed no separation between the state and the Church. Pałka, *Kościół katolicki wobec Żydów w Polsce międzywojennej*, 30.

²⁵⁴ Krukowski, "Status prawny religii," 32.

below the age of 18. These lessons were to be conducted by those of the relevant confessions with the supervision of the state education authorities.²⁵⁵

In the light of the Constitution all the confessions were deemed equal; however, the Catholic Church was the only one who received recognition in the document, while other confessions were to be recognized by way of legislation. All the confessions had the right to internal autonomy, organization of public gatherings aiming at group prayer, the purchasing of real estate and effects and governing them according to their will and needs, organizing charity institutions and the duty to refrain from action that would contradict the current legislation.²⁵⁶ The Catholic Church was named as the supreme confession, which was intended as *primus inter pares* but was often interpreted as *suum cuique tribuere*. On a practical level, such regulations implied the public and legal personality of all the confessions.

The relation of the Catholic Church (both Roman and other rites such as Greek or Armenian) with the Second Republic of Poland was further regulated in the Concordat, which in fact granted it more privileges than the Constitution. The Church was allowed full freedom of activity and complete autonomy in internal administration and the management of the Church's possessions.²⁵⁷ The bishops, the clergy and the faithful were free to communicate directly with the Holy See, without any control or interference from the State. In addition, the State did not censor in any way Church documents, publications, sermons, etc.

Organization

The metropolitan system in Poland was regulated by both the Concordat and the bulla *Vixdum Poloniae unitas*, also from 1925.²⁵⁸ To the already existing 16 dioceses, the pope added 4 new ones – Częstochowa, Katowice, Pińsk and Łomża – and cancelled the Sejny diocese. He also created two new metropolises – Kraków and Vilnius – in addition to Gniezno and Lwów, and maintained the union *aque principaliter* of Gniezno and Poznań. All of the dioceses, apart from Lwów, had their borders changed due to new territorial circumstances. In addition, the free city of Gdańsk was given its own diocese, subservient directly to the Holy See, and one military bishopric was founded in Poland with the role of serving the army and their families. The largest

²⁵⁵ Ibid., 33.

²⁵⁶ Ibid., 34.

²⁵⁷ Ibid., 34-35.

²⁵⁸ Some changes were also regulated by the bulla *Pro rectibus et utilius* from 1923.

diocese by area was that of Vilnius and the smallest one was that of Katowice, while the most populous was Warsaw and the least populous was Łuck.²⁵⁹

Jewish Nation, Jewishness and Jewish Politics of Identity

As in the 19th century, the formula of Jewish life in the ghetto or shtetl started to prove insufficient, and notwithstanding the challenges of modernity, starting from Haskalah, various movements tried to find a solution to the impasse of living the subdued, economically unstable life of an isolated minority, trapped between antisemitism and their own often isolationist religious traditions. The two decades of independent Poland were a period of dynamic exploration of various concepts of Jewish identity, proposed by diverse political parties and ideological movements. Below, the proposed visions of Jewish identity are presented, and their relation to political parties.

As Joseph Marcus wrote in his seminal book *Social and Political History of the Jews in Poland, 1919-1939*, it is difficult to estimate precisely how many Jewish political parties there were in Poland, as the numbers fluctuated constantly.²⁶⁰

Their number reflected an exceptional variety of opinions and the intensity with which Jews support their political beliefs. But it was also the results of Poland having been made up of territory formerly partitioned between three powers. Thus, there were various territorially, or regionally independent parties, whose established leaders resisted unification.²⁶¹

This multiplicity suggests the diversity of opinions within the Jewish community, which in fact can be seen as much more diversified than the Polish majority. The contentious issues were the attitudes to nationalism, religion and socialism, to name a few.

The variety of political opinions among the Jews reflected, above all, the fact that parties representing class or economic interests were sub-divided long nationalist and cultural lines.²⁶²

It is important to note that within this diversity the social support for various ideas changed over time and the balance between various parties was dynamic. Initially,

²⁵⁹ Olszar, "Kościół w Polsce w okresie międzywojennym (1918-1939)," 25.

²⁶⁰ Marcus, *Social and Political History*, 261.

²⁶¹ Ibid.

²⁶² Ibid.

“orthodox Jews were more numerous than any other political movement. But the Zionists were more important.”²⁶³ However, with time, socialists, particularly the Bund, gained a lot of significance for the Jewish community.

The electoral system, based on the d’Hondt method, favored big parties, and as a result, the parliamentary elections did not reflect the real following of various Jewish parties.²⁶⁴ For this reason, municipal elections and the *kehillot* elections are seen as more accurate illustrations of the support for Jewish parties, although the latter cannot be relevant to measuring the support for the left-wing and secular parties, which showed little interest in them. Zionists were always over-represented in the parliament, in comparison to the proportion of the votes. In 1922, for example, among 35 Jewish deputies and 12 senators who were elected, 25 deputies and 8 senators were Zionist. It is worth mentioning that the parliamentarians were perceived as the Jewish representatives both by the Jews in Poland and the authorities; therefore, their decisions had an enormous impact on the policies adopted towards the Jewish minority. In the *kehillot* elections (1924-1927) the orthodox lists won 43.9% of the votes, while the Zionists won only 26.8%. Based on these data, according to Marcus, the following chart can be proposed:²⁶⁵

Tabl. 2. Proportion of votes for various Jewish parties in the *kehillot* elections in 1924.

Party	Percentage of votes	Political orientation
Non-party	22	Orthodox
General Zionists	18	Zionist
Bund	13	Socialist, anti-Zionist
Agudath Israel	11	Orthodox
Mizrachi	9	Orthodox, Zionist
Folkists	6	
Left-Wing Zionists	4	Zionist
Poalei Zion Left	3	Zionist, socialist
Others	14	

²⁶³ Ibid., 262

²⁶⁴ According to Marcus, the votes were not reflected in the number of representatives in an accurate way: while, for example, the all-Zionist “Committee of United National-Jewish parties” of eastern Galicia obtained 168,593 votes and fifteen seats, the partly non-Zionist “National Jewish Union” of west Galicia polled 86,782 votes but won only two seats, while the Bund with 80,875 votes failed to win a seat at all. Ibid., 263.

²⁶⁵ Ibid., 264.

Below I will present a short overview of these parties with particular emphasis on their outlook on Jewish identity, the place of Jews in Poland and their concepts of Jewishness and the Jewish people/nation.

Zionists

The Zionists offered an alternative to life in the ghetto by promoting the idea of creating a Jewish homeland in Palestine and creating an idea of a “new Jew”.²⁶⁶ This new Jew had to be modern, autonomous and rational, free of the “diseases” of the Diaspora. In *Altneuland*, for instance, Theodore Herzl conveys an idea of raising the young generation with a new culture of the body: physically fit, playing sports and games to overcome the physical weakness seen as the inseparable part of life in the Diaspora.²⁶⁷ An important part of this project was also training the new generation to become farmers and fighters, and therefore break with a perceived passivity and vulnerability and acquire a strong skill set to work and protect the land.

Although the quest for the Jewish homeland united all the Zionists, their programs and the means they employed differed significantly. General Zionists,²⁶⁸ attached to middle class European liberal values, lobbied for the cause trying to influence the political powers to support their cause (“the program for tomorrow”). However, they were even more interested in the “program for today”; that is, domestic problems and policies aiming at improving the current situation of the Jews in Poland.²⁶⁹

The Revisionists, founded in 1923 by Ze'ev Jabotinsky, were ultranationalist, anti-socialist, syndicalist and militant-revolutionary. In many ways they resembled other right wing nationalists (and fascists) of Europe, having very strong opinions in favor of using military means to establish a Jewish homeland in Palestine. After 1931, the party declared that it would be no longer interested in domestic issues but would focus entirely on emigration to Palestine and the liquidation of the diaspora. It is hard to estimate their exact following, but it was quite broad.

Religious Zionists (Mizrachi) focused on Torah and Labor as the core values of their ideology. They propagated secular education in religious schools, reform of traditional Judaism and did not find domestic issues relevant.

The Zionist Left were represented by Paolei Zion, a moderate social-democratic party, which combined socialism and trade unionism with Jewish nationalism. They

²⁶⁶ Naturally, the idea of a “new Jew” was not understood unequivocally in the movement. To learn more about the nuances, see, e.g., Yitzhak Conforti, “‘The New Jew’ in the Zionist Movement: Ideology and Historiography,” *Australian Journal for Jewish Studies* 25 (2011).

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 90.

²⁶⁸ For the divisions among Zionists, see Marcus, *Social and Political History*, 264- 280.

²⁶⁹ The Women Zionist Organization in Poland could be regarded as a part of the General Zionists.

split in 1920 into Poalei Zion Left and Right; the Left prevailed in numbers, while being more focused on the proletariat and revolution – less Zionist, in fact.

Interestingly, in spite of their strong nationalistic outlook, Zionists were acquiring Polish culture and becoming culturally assimilated into Polish society, using acculturation as a mediator of modernization.²⁷⁰

The Bund

The General Jewish Labour Bund (hereafter: Bund) was the largest Jewish socialist party, established by the end of the 19th century in the Russian Empire. It remained an important political movement in the Second Republic of Poland in the territories of the former Russian partition.²⁷¹ The Bund supported revolutionary socialism and excluded all contact with non-socialist parties, refusing to cooperate with communists as well due to morally unacceptable measures employed by the latter.

The movement could be seen as the main ideological adversary to Zionism and one of the strongest Jewish parties, gaining the support of the majority in the years preceding the Second World War. One of the reasons for this was its determination in answering antisemitic attacks (e.g., announcing a general strike in response to the Przytyk pogrom). Another was their considerable backing from Jewish politicians and Polish trade unions, and finally its unfading efforts to improve the quality of life of the Jewish masses.

The Bund had a clearly proletarian outlook and postulated creation of a just socialist system including the nationalization of business and redistribution of the land. It attracted mostly artisans, workers and left-wing intelligentsia.

When it came to their vision of Jewish identity, they categorically opposed Zionism, treating it as a form of reactionary and imperialist escapism in service of the British Empire. Instead, they promoted the idea of *doikayt* (hereness) which signified that the future of the Jewish people would be connected to the Diaspora (here) where their past

²⁷⁰ Piotr Kaszczyszyn interviews Kamil Kijek, "Stracona szansa na polską żydowskość," *Pressje Teka* 53; Kijek, *Dzieci modernizmu*.

²⁷¹ Those interested in the movement will find many publications to offer insight into the history and ideology of the movement, including the following: Roni Gechtman, "Socialist Mass Politics through Sport: The Bund's Morgnshtern in Poland, 1926–1939," *Journal of Sport History* 26, no. 2 (1999); Henri Minczeles, *Histoire générale du Bund: un mouvement révolutionnaire juif* (Paris: Editions Denoël, 1999); Zvi Y. Gitelman, ed., *The Emergence of Modern Jewish Politics: Bundism and Zionism in Eastern Europe* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2014); Bernard Goldstein, *Twenty Years with the Jewish Labor Bund in Warsaw (1919-1939)*, trans. and ed. Marvin S. Zuckerman, Shofar Supplement in Jewish Studies (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2016). Vincenzo Pinto, *Bundist Legacy after the Second World War. 'Real' Place Versus 'Displaced' Time*. Free Ebrei 1 (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2018); Joshua D. Zimmermann, *Poles, Jews, and the Politics of Nationality: The Bund and the Polish Socialist Party in Late Czarist Russia, 1892-1914* (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004).

was, with all its rich history and cultural resources. Thus, they were convinced that Polish Jews should remain in Poland and be granted full cultural autonomy. The latter would be centered on Yiddish culture and secular socialist values as unifying factors. Naturally, such an approach resulted in the proliferation of Yiddish literature and art in Bund circles and the institutions it supported. For the Bundists, the social identifier of Jewishness was Yiddish and the glue holding Polish Jews together was culture, not religion or the notion of an ethnic nation. Therefore, they also played a central role in the development of Yiddish newspapers in both Poland and Russia.

The Bund was known also for its children (SKIF) and youth (Tsukunft) organizations, providing the youngest generation with scout activities, sporting events and political training, imparting socialist values from a very young age. These experiences had a formative character for many young Jews in a period of economic depression and growing antisemitism. It was also the largest political party supporting CISZO (Central Yiddish School Organization), where the instruction was given in Yiddish with a secular and socialist orientation. In many towns the Bund also organized facilities for children in danger of contracting tuberculosis (Medem Sanatorium) and having difficult with their living conditions.

Interestingly, the Bund also promoted gender equality and had many female activists, mostly devoted to daycare centers and developing educational and cultural centers for young women.

Agudath Israel

The transformation of sectors of the traditional Jewish society of Eastern Europe (who were in majority) into an organized orthodox political movement took place in the last decades of the 19th century as a response to both growing secularization (*maskilim*) and the Zionist movement. The formation of Agudath Israel in Poland took place during the German occupation in the First World War, with the inspiration coming from German Orthodoxy. The Polish Aguda was founded in Warsaw in February 1916.²⁷² In time, the movement developed subdivisions such as Tseirey Israel (youth section),

²⁷² For the history of the Agudath Israel see, e.g., David Vital, *A People Apart: A Political History of the Jews in Europe, 1789-1939*, Oxford History of Modern Europe (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 616–640, 785–789; Gershon Bacon, *The Politics of Tradition. Agudat Yisrael in Poland 1916-1939*, Studies of the Center for Research on the History and Culture of Polish Jews the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, The Hebrew University, 1996); Alan Mittleman, *The Politics of Torah: The Jewish Political Tradition and the Founding of Agudat Israel* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1996); Jerzy Tomaszewski, *Najnowsze dzieje Żydów w Polsce: w zarysie (do 1950 roku)* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 1993); Eliyahu Meir Bloch, "אגודת ישראל" [Agudat Israel], in יהדות ליטא [Lithuanian Jewry], ed. Nathan Goren (Tel Aviv: Hotza'at 'Am HaSefer, 1972); Ezra Mendelsohn, "The Politics of Agudas Yisroel in Inter-War Poland," *East European Jewish Affairs* 2, no. 2 (1972); Joseph Friedenson, *A History of Agudath Israel* (New York: Agudath Israel of America, 1970).

Poalei Agudas Israel (worker's division), Bnos Agudas Israel (girl's section) and Neshey Agudas Israel (women's section).

The organization saw the current disturbing events, especially the growing secularization of the Jewish masses, as the birth pangs of messiah (*bevelei Mashiah*),²⁷³ and attempted to find answers in religion. Aguda's slogan was "to solve all the problems of our time in accordance with the spirit of the Torah and the tradition" (*Daat Torah*),²⁷⁴ and it represented all the orthodox Jews. They considered themselves "an organizational embodiment of the sentiments of the vast majority of the community", not a political party, guided by the leaders of the religious life – the rabbis.²⁷⁵ The Aguda opposed Zionism as a secular ideology but supported the settlement in the Land of Israel. Aguda was also known for eagerness to cooperate politically with the Polish authorities.

They put great emphasis on religious education and introduced substantial changes in women's education, through a model of Bais Yakov pioneered by Sarah Schenirer. It was an orthodox response to the growing modernization of girls from religious families who went to secular schools due to a lack of alternatives. In addition, they protected the religious education by succeeding in convincing the government to recognize the Aguda schools (such as Horev, yeshivas and the above-mentioned Bais Yakov) after adding some secular subjects to the curriculum. Approximately half of Jewish children going to private schools attended the Aguda-affiliated education system.²⁷⁶

The organization enjoyed considerable support and claimed to have 60,000 registered members in Poland and 200,000 votes in the Sejm elections in 1928.²⁷⁷ It controlled many *kehillot*, including Warsaw and Łódź. It is worth noting that the head of the Lublin Yeshiva, Meir Shapira, was one of the main leaders of Aguda in interwar Poland.

Folkists

The Jewish Democratic People's Party was formed in German Warsaw in 1916, similar to Agudath Israel. It originated from a small circle of intellectuals who, under the leadership of Simon Dubnov and Yisroel Efroikin, formed the Folkspartaj in Saint

²⁷³ Bacon, *The Politics of Tradition. Agudat Yisrael in Poland 1916-1939*, 63-69.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 48.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁶ "Agudas Yisroel," YIVO, 2010, accessed 27.01.2022, https://yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Agudas_Yisroel.

²⁷⁷ Marcus, *Social and Political History*, 285.

Petersburg in 1906, following the Revolution.²⁷⁸ They believed in Diaspora Nationalism; that is, national-cultural autonomy, similar to the Bundists. In addition, they advocated the democratization of politics, parliamentarianism, national minority rights and the right to use Yiddish in public life. The creation of the party in Poland a decade later, firstly under the name Folks-Komitet, took place in the environment of the Yiddish secular school movement, concentrated around the Warsaw Yiddish daily *Der Moment*.²⁷⁹

Their political program focused on gaining political equality while maintaining independent Jewish politics, national cultural autonomy based on Yiddish as the vernacular and supporting institutions of secular Yiddish culture. In time, it formed an alliance with Polish non-socialists, curiously including *Endecja*.

In contrast to the socialist and proletariat-oriented Bund, their target group was the *petit bourgeoisie* and their relations to Zionism and socialism were rather hostile; they did not manage to maintain an alliance with the Jewish left wing parties with whom they shared a care for Yiddish culture and education. On an economic level, they advocated strengthening the Jewish petty trade and artisanry. The core of their electors were to be found in Warsaw, Łódź and Vilnius.

Assimilants

Joseph Marcus describes assimilants as “people standing outside the established parties, who, as mostly conscious, non-observant Jews, were politically opposed to a separate Jewish national existence” who sought to integrate into Polish society through education and language and expected full civil rights for Jews.²⁸⁰

After the First World War, the Union of Poles of Mosaic Religion of All Polish Lands was formed (1919-1924) by some prominent intellectuals such as Samuel Dickstein, Stanislaus A. Kempner, Kazimierz Sterling and Kazimierz Natanson. Other smaller associations were also established across Poland. All of them had non-socialist outlooks and opposed Jewish cultural-national autonomy.

²⁷⁸ More about the party can be found here: Alexander Guterman, *Kehilat Varshah ben shtei milhamot ha-‘olam 1917-1939 [The Warsaw Community between the two World Wars in the Shackles of the Law and the Reality (1917-1939)]* (Tel Aviv: Universitat Tel-Aviv, 1997); Oscar I. Janowsky, *The Jews and Minority Rights (1898–1919)* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1933); Aleksander Hafftk, "Żydowskie stronnictwa polityczne w Polsce Odrodzonej. Działalność parlamentarna i polityczna posłów i senatorów żydowskich w Polsce Odrodzonej," in *Żydzi w Polsce odrodzonej: działalność społeczna, gospodarcza, oświatowa i kulturalna*, ed. Ignacy Schiper, Arieh Tartakower, and Aleksander Hafftk (Warszawa 1932); Mark W. Kiel, "The Ideology of the Folks-Partey," *East European Jewish Affairs* 5, no. 2 (1975).

²⁷⁹ "Folkists," YIVO, 2010, accessed 27.01.2022.

²⁸⁰ Marcus, *Social and Political History*, 288.

Another assimilationist party was the Jewish Club of State Idea, founded in Vilna and Białystok. They tried to attract lower classes to identify with the Polish state and resolve the Jewish problem within the boundaries of Poland.

In addition, after 1933, when the situation of Polish Jews deteriorated, the Association of Jewish War Veterans became politically active, and later merged with other similar groups to create the Association of Non-Party Jews and All-Class Bloc of Polish Jews, although they did not gain any political success.

Communists

The illegal Communist party was naturally not a Jewish organization; on the contrary, it opposed the national and economic interests of most Polish Jews. However, it had a separate Jewish section, the Central Jewish Bureau, which cleaved off from the main organization due to the linguistic and cultural separateness of the Jewish comrades. The overall percentage of the Jewish participation in the Communist Party of Poland oscillated between 20% and 35%; however, in Warsaw it reached 65% in 1937.²⁸¹

Conclusions

The unquestionable success of the above-mentioned parties lies in the way they raised the national consciousness of the Jews and had an unmistakable impact on forming different models of Jewish self-understanding. Ideological programs of particular parties had much a bigger influence on constructions of Jewish identity in Poland than on solving concrete problems faced by the Jewish community. Thus, although their work for the improvement of general situation of the Jewish minority in Poland can be seen as a failed mission in many ways, in hindsight, their activity was an invaluable expression of various projects on Jewish identity, crucial for the existence of the Jewish community. In spite of their many efforts, these parties did not manage to solve *the Jewish question*: that is, to ensure the equal status of the Jewish minority, alleviate antisemitism, considerably improve the economic condition of the Jewish working class or even represent the Jews to the Polish government in a coherent way. However, their ideological input in constructing Jewish identities was profound and lasting, and certainly is well reflected in the oral histories under scrutiny in this study.

²⁸¹ Ibid., 290.

The Main Points of Tension between the State, the Church and the Jewish Minority

Sunday Rest

The question of Sunday rest has remained a cause of disagreement between the Church and Jewish communities throughout the ages. Numerous synods as well as pastoral letters forbade the Jews to open their businesses on Christian holidays (including Sundays); however, it seems that in Polish lands until the end of the 19th century, Sunday rest was not observed by Jewish shops and other enterprises. In May 1882, the tsarist authorities introduced restrictions regarding Jews performing their professions on Sundays and Christian holidays.²⁸²

In independent Poland the proposal for regulations regarding Sunday rest was submitted a number of times, and each time it stirred a vivid discussion.²⁸³ The first proposal came in 1919 when the deputies of ZLN requested a formal prohibition of trade on Sundays and Christian holidays. The Jewish parliamentary club, with prominent voices such as Abraham Ozjasz Thon, M. Halpern and Szyja Hesel Farbstein, indicated that in western European countries where a similar law was introduced, an exception was provided for the Jewish population.²⁸⁴ In spite of the proposed amendments, the bill was passed unchanged, prohibiting all trade on Sundays and Christian holidays, with the exception of public services and the Sundays directly preceding Christmas and Easter.

Apparently, in spite of passing the bill, the reality did not reflect the regulations, as many Christian associations as well as Endecja, and finally the Catholic press, repeatedly discussed the question of Sunday rest, noticing that it was not observed properly by Christians or by Jewish businesses. At the same, throughout the interwar period, the Jewish community was raising the issue for exactly opposite reasons, pointing to the dramatic economic consequences the bill had for Jewish businessmen, forced to close their businesses two days a week, and therefore losing considerable opportunities to earn. Naturally, the Catholic hierarchy also sought to apply pressure

²⁸² The issue of these new regulations belonged to a wave of anti-Jewish incidents by the tsarist authorities after the assassination of the tsar Alexander II, for which Jews were blamed. Per se, the laws did not include the territories of the Kingdom of Poland; however, in practice similar precedential laws had already existed there. John Klier, *Russians, Jews, and the Pogroms of 1881-1882* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), passim. Pałka, *Kościół katolicki wobec Żydów w Polsce międzywojennej*, 191.

²⁸³ Pałka, "Stosunek Kościoła," passim.

²⁸⁴ Pałka, *Kościół katolicki wobec Żydów w Polsce międzywojennej*, 192.

in order to secure Sunday rest and lessen the demoralization of the Catholic masses.²⁸⁵ It is worth noting that the question of Sunday rest was not merely religious but became a tool in the economic boycott of the Jewish enterprises.

Devotional Objects

Another thorny subject, linked to both economic and religious factors, was that of the production of devotional objects (*dewocjonalia*). Although in theory, a manufacturer of devotional objects was obligated to obtain a number of permits and concessions to make sure his products abided by the canons established by the Church laws, in practice, cheap products manufactured without such permits were widely popular. These were produced primarily by Jewish businesses, whose number remains uncertain.

In 1936, *Stowarzyszenie Kupców Polskich w Częstochowie* published an appeal claiming that 80% of the wholesale of Catholic devotional objects was in Jewish hands, and called for boycott of such products.²⁸⁶ In fact, they claimed that in Częstochowa all the stalls selling *Christian* devotional objects were tagged: *Here, Christian merchandise*, and the products manufactured by Catholics had received a distinctive mark.²⁸⁷

The Catholic hierarchy protested against the Jewish involvement in the production of Christian devotional objects and repeatedly admonished the faithful to purchase them only from Catholics, because only then were the objects manufactured according to liturgical precepts.

Finally, in 1937, the problem was discussed within a bill proposal submitted to Sejm. It regulated the trade and production of devotional objects, permitting only the members of a certain religion or confession to deal in the manufacture and trade of the devotional objects of that religion. On the occasion of discussing the bill in the parliament, the deputies highlighted that Jewish involvement in the trade of Christian devotional objects increased tensions between the Catholics and the Jews, because it is offensive that those who sell Christian objects in fact have a hostile attitude towards Christianity.²⁸⁸

²⁸⁵ For a more detailed account of the conflicts regarding the question of Sunday rest, see Pałka, 189-212.

²⁸⁶ It is very difficult to verify if these estimates were accurate or served as a figure of speech in order to instigate fear of Jewish domination in yet another branch of trade.

²⁸⁷ Pałka, *Kościół katolicki wobec Żydów w Polsce międzywojennej*, 218.

²⁸⁸ Pałka, 219.

Shechita

Shechita or ritual slaughter (according to *kashrut*) was another problematic issue repeatedly discussed in the Polish parliament. The first attempts to limit Jewish ritual slaughter took place in 1923 on the initiative of the CZJN on economic grounds. However, campaigns effectively limiting it appeared only in mid-30s.

In 1935, one of the most prominent Catholic antisemites of the interwar period, Fr. Stanisław Trzeciak, gave a lecture regarding ritual slaughter, arguing that it was not a biblical but rather a “Talmudic” idea, meaning that it was a human invention, not a divine commandment. In addition, he claimed that shechita was a dominating way of slaughter, contributing to its taking over of the entire slaughter business in Poland, and therefore prohibiting it would strengthen the Polish economy. Finally, he also used the humanitarian argument, claiming that this type of slaughter tortures animals, degrades men and offends God.²⁸⁹ Trzeciak’s arguments were countered by rabbi Moses Schorr, renown scholar and Jewish activist, who highlighted the role of the oral Torah in the Jewish tradition and pointed to the quick and painless death of the animal as a result of the shechita.²⁹⁰

In 1936, deputy Janina Prystorowa proposed a project of a bill prohibiting ritual slaughter, which was directed principally against the Jewish minority but also accidentally against the much smaller minority of Polish Muslims (Tartars) and Karaites. The petition was based on the humanitarian argument (shechita is not a humanitarian way to slaughter animals); however, it included also economic and political motives, the latter directed against the government, which could either prohibit the ritual slaughter, against the constitution (freedom of religion), or enter into conflict with the significant part of the Catholic clergy and petit bourgeoisie.

After numerous discussions and amendments, the bill was passed on April 17, 1936. It stated that all the animals must be stunned or made unconscious in another way before slaughter takes place. However, the minorities who needed to perform the slaughter in another way were free to do so (if they constituted over 3% of the local population), under the condition that the amount of meat produced in that way would correspond only to the needs of the said community. Such meat would be marked in a specific way. In practice, it was a form of economic boycott, aimed at limiting the Jewish shechita. Nonetheless, as with many other similar regulations, in practice it was not observed with much insistence.

²⁸⁹ Pałka, 224-225.

²⁹⁰ Pałka, 226

Other attempts to completely delegalize schehita took place in 1937 and 1939, but it was only the Nazis who introduced a complete ban on the ritual slaughter in October 1939.²⁹¹

Economic Boycott and Practical Antisemitism

Already by the end of the 19th century in Galicja, Fr. Stanisław Stojalowski had called for an economic boycott of the Jews. Starting from 1907, this postulate also permanently entered the Endekian propaganda, reaching a peak in 1935, and often leading to Pogroms like the one in Przytyk. Boycotts were usually organized by nationalist organizations and were usually directed against petty traders and small businesses.

The Endekian newspaper “Gazeta Poranna Dwa Grosze”²⁹² was the first to launch the call for the economic boycott of Jewish business in 1912, which was later followed by prevalent part of the Polish press. It took place in the context of the elections to the IV Duma (Russian Parliament): when electing the deputy from Warsaw, it turned out that the majority of electors were Jewish, and therefore when one the candidates representing the Endecja and Pedecja (Progressive Democracy) refused to accept Jewish equal rights, seeing it as an attack on the Polish majority status, the Jews supported the candidate from the left, Eugeniusz Jagiełło. The fact that Jews could influence the lot of the Polish majority came as a shock to Polish public opinion. Poles felt as if they were guests in their own home, and a widespread sense of threat was felt.²⁹³

In addition, the fact that the Jewish electors announced they would defend and promote the interests of their own community, although possibly cooperating with Polish society, was seen as separatist, and therefore hostile towards the Poles. In the shared Polish *imaginaire*, the memories of Jewish patriots such as Berek Joselewicz or

²⁹¹ Pałka, 228-231.

²⁹² Also known as *Dwugroszówka*, the newspaper was established by Stronnictwo Demokratyczno-Narodowe using money donated to the party by Ignacy Jan Paderewski. Due to strongly antisemitic character, he made public announcements that he was not aware of the purpose to which his donation would be used because of the boycotts of his concerts in the USA. In addition to promoting economic boycott of Jewish business, the newspaper also launched a campaign against president Narutowicz. See Mieczysław Sobczak, *Stosunek Narodowej Demokracji do kwestii żydowskiej w latach 1914-1919* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Ekonomicznego we Wrocławiu, 2008), 119, footnote 10; elsewhere he writes about the “anti-Jewish face of the daily newspaper”, Sobczak, *Narodowa Demokracja wobec kwestii żydowskiej na ziemiach polskich przed I wojną światową* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Akademii Ekonomicznej im. Oskara Langego, 2008), 209.

²⁹³ Lesław Sadowski, *Polska inteligencja prowincjonalna i jej ideowe dylematy na przełomie XIX i XX wieku. Na przykładzie guberni łomżyńskiej, suwalskiej i Białegostoku*, Polska XIX i XX Wieku - Dzieje Społeczne (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1988).

Michał Lande were replaced by the images of Jewish merchants selling provisions to both Polish and Russian military units during the January Uprising, using the conflict for their own financial gain, and therefore benefitting from the Polish suffering. The language of public opinion evolved in this direction, identifying Jews with other oppressive Others: particularly Russia, and to a smaller degree, Germany. Jewish aspirations for autonomy became a reason for accusations of nationalism, thus far reserved for aggressive ideas of Dmowski, and rejecting participation in the Polish lot.

Thus, the economic boycott of the Jews, instigated by the *Endeks*, changed its status: from exclusively Endekian political action, it became an act of patriotic battle, and as such acceptable also in the liberal political environments, very far from the National Democrats. Elimination of the foreign elements in the Polish economy was seen as an act of self-defense. As a liberal newspaper, "Prawda", stated:

The aim of the fight will be the nationalization of industry and domestic trade, polishing Polish cities and towns, today mostly inhabited by Jews. The lack of Polish bourgeoisie threatens with the extermination of the nationality. The assimilation went bankrupt, the Jews do not respect Polish culture at present, but they shame and ridicule it.²⁹⁴

Assimilation was deemed a failure and Jews were seen as an internal enemy, a fifth column to be fought and not bargained with, threatening Polish culture with Judaization (*zazydzenie*). The events of 1912 led to formulations of Polish cultural racism and seeing at least some aspects of antisemitism as necessary elements of patriotic duties.²⁹⁵ Economic boycott was thus perceived as a duty of a good Pole, although the poor population in particular continued to favor Jewish businesses, in particular the shops, for their low prices. The Catholic clergy in general supported the "polonization" of economy, usually warning against using violence but encouraging the boycott per se.²⁹⁶

In independent Poland, the economic boycott intensified in 1935, after the economic crisis, when the propaganda turned into an active boycott; that is, picketing Jewish shops and not letting in Christian customers.²⁹⁷ In 1936 the minister of internal affairs, Sławoj Składkowski, expressed support for an economic boycott, at the same time condemning the anti-Jewish violence. The support was justified by

²⁹⁴ "Praktyka i życie społeczne," *Prawda. Tygodnik polityczny, społeczny i literacki*, 16.11.1912.

²⁹⁵ Sadowski, *Polska inteligencja prowincjonalna i jej ideowe dylematy na przełomie XIX i XX wieku. Na przykładzie guberni łomżyńskiej, suwalskiej i Białegostoku*. Passim.

²⁹⁶ Pałka, "Stosunek Kościoła"; Pałka, *Kościół katolicki wobec Żydów w Polsce międzywojennej*, 231-248.

²⁹⁷ This motif is omnipresent in prevalent number of oral histories.

overpopulation in Poland, the need of emancipation of the peasant masses and defense of the Polish trade from foreign domination.²⁹⁸

Struggle for Confessional School

According to the Versailles minority Treaty, minorities were granted the right to both receive equal education and establish their own schools, preserving their national and cultural heritage. As a result, the Jewish minority would attend either public or private schools, the latter often organized by particular Jewish political parties or factions. In particular, the Orthodox Jews would highlight the necessity of receiving Jewish education in the framework of a confessional school. At the same time, the Catholic Church also made efforts aiming at imposing a confessional character to the public education system, rendering it Catholic instead of making it available for children of all confessions. However, during the whole interwar period the mixed (non-confessional), civic model of education prevailed.

In March 1919 the School Commission (*Komisja Szkolna*) at the episcopate requested the introduction of religious practices in schools, which would include the participation of students in religious services opening and closing the school year as well as participation in Sunday mass, praying at the beginning and at the end of daily classes and confession of all the students twice a year. The Commission postulated also the establishment of Catholic schools where the curriculum would agree with Catholic teaching, and where children would not intermingle with peers from other confessions. Some Catholic publicists pointed to the challenges of teaching and learning in a mixed environment, such as forcing Jewish children to attend school on Shabbat, confusion in the conveyed system of truths and values, leading to disorders in personal development and growth of the students, and “incommensurable mental and physiological maturing” of students from various confessional groups which resulted in them preventing each other from progressing with studies.²⁹⁹ Others warned against the deleterious influence of Jewish students and teachers on Polish ones and called for segregation in order to save Polish youth from confusion, demoralization and immorality.

During the drafting of the March Constitution, the Church lobbied for the confessional model, while Polish Teachers' Union (*Związek Nauczycielstwa Polskiego*) lobbied for the mixed model. The latter used the argument of Polonization of minorities at school, and noted the difficulties in the Borderlands regarding de-

²⁹⁸ Mieczysław Różański and Piotr Szymaniec, "Debaty wokół zakazu uboju rytualnego w II Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej," *Przegląd Sejmowy* 1 (2020), 127, footnote 30.

²⁹⁹ Pałka, *Kościół katolicki wobec Żydów w Polsce międzywojennej*, 253.

Polonization and lack of access of the Polish teachers to Ukrainian and Belarussian schools. The Constitution did not mention confessional schools but it introduced mandatory religious education to the system, later re-confirmed in the Concordat.³⁰⁰ The idea of secular education expressed in the Constitution was met with critique by the Catholic Church, who largely saw the mixed schools as an opportunity for spreading Jewish influence over Catholic youth, and remained unshaken in these beliefs until the outbreak of the Second World War.

The second important document regulating the education system was “Act on the organization of education” (*Ustawa o organizacji szkolnictwa*) issued on July 24, 1924.³⁰¹ It introduced a coherent system of education for the entire country, aiming at creating a common, mixed school “educating children of Polish and non-Polish nationality to be good citizens of the State, in mutual respect for their national properties”.³⁰² The minorities’ elementary schools which did not have Polish as their language of education were obligated to include in the curriculum the Polish language (grade 1-3) and Polish history taught in Polish (from grade 4 onwards). In addition, respective high schools were allowed to be bilingual, but were required to teach in Polish some of the subjects, such as Polish language and literature, history, geography and knowledge of contemporary Poland.

Finally, in 1932 a new legislation regarding the education system, the so called Jędrzejewicz reform,³⁰³ was passed. It stated that the mandatory education on an elementary level could be realized in a public school, at home or in another school, and defined the mandatory time of education as seven years. It highlighted that the curriculum aimed at providing coherent bases for general education and socio-civic preparation in view of the economic needs of the country (Art. 11). The reform introduced three types of elementary school: first, second and third level. The first level

³⁰⁰ Interestingly after *Sanacja* took over, in 1926 the minister of Religious Confessions and Public Education (Minister Wyznań Religijnych i Oświecenia Publicznego), Kazimierz Bartel issued an ordinance obligating all the Catholic students to participate in religious practices (common services on Sundays and holidays, spiritual retreats, confession and communion). Pałka, 259.

³⁰¹ Full text of the law can be found online: "Ustawa z dnia 31 lipca 1924 r. zawierająca niektóre postanowienia o organizacji szkolnictwa," Internetowy System Aktów Prawnych, 2009, accessed 15.02.2022, <https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=wdu19240790766>.

³⁰² *Ibid.*, Art. 2. Translation mine.

³⁰³ Called after Janusz Jędrzejewicz, Minister of Religious Denominations and Public Enlightenment. The text of the law available here: "Ustawa z dnia 11 marca 1932 r. o ustroju szkolnictwa," Internetowy System Aktów Prawnych, 2009, accessed 15.02.2022, <https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=wdu19320380389>.

included basic general education,³⁰⁴ the second level broadened and deepened the first and the third level aimed at preparing students for socio-civic and economic aspects of life. After the elementary school there would be four years of *gimnazjum* (no specialization at that point) ending with so called *mała matura* (final exam) and two years of *liceum* ending with *matura*. Apart from the *liceum*, students could continue their education in vocational (*szkoły zawodowe*) or pedagogical high schools (*licea pedagogiczne*).

As a result of the above legislation, Catholic children would attend public schools as did the majority of Jewish children (approximately 70%).³⁰⁵ The remaining 30% would attend private schools, predominantly run by various Jewish organizations with either Yiddish, Hebrew or Polish as the language of instruction (with bilingual options as well). Ideologically these private schools would belong to three movements: Orthodox, Zionist or Yiddishist (largely controlled by Bund).

The Orthodox movement could be seen as a parallel to the Catholic Church in their insistence on confessional education. One type of religious schools for boys were Talmud-Torahs, where the education would begin quite early, at the age of three or four, and focus on the holy books. Similar to them were *cheders*, largely depending on a particular teacher's initiative and focusing on Talmud and its translations into Yiddish. In 1916, Agudas Israel founded a Choreb/Chorev organization that would serve as an umbrella for the Talmud Torahs, and provide some central administration and supervision. Boys would continue their religious education in *yeshivot*.

In addition, as a response to the phenomenon of secularization of Jewish girls sent to public schools, in 1917 Sara Schenirer established a separate system of education for girls in Kraków, namely Bais Yakov (Beit Yacob) where the instruction was given in Yiddish solely by female teachers. It encompassed traditional religious education and in some cases also general subjects.³⁰⁶

Zionist schools were Tarbut, Yavne/Yabne and Szul-Kult. Tarbut primary and secondary schools were the first ones with Hebrew as the language of instruction, established as early as 1916. These schools were secular in character and intended as a counterpart to the Yiddish schools controlled by the Bund. Yavne/Yabne schools, on the other hand, were more religious in character, as they were controlled by the

³⁰⁴ The first-level type would take seven years but only encompass the curriculum of four years, therefore would not be enough to continue the education in a gymnasium; this type was popular in the rural areas.

³⁰⁵ Marcus, *Social and Political History*, 148.

³⁰⁶ More on the network, including a comprehensive bibliography can be found online at "Bais Ya'akov Schools," Jewish Women's Archive, 2021, accessed 15.02.2022, <https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/bais-yaakov-schools>. See also Rachel Manekin, *The Rebellion of the Daughters: Jewish Women Runaways in Habsburg Galicia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020).

Mizrachi movement, and bilingual: general subjects were taught in Polish and the Jewish subjects in Hebrew. Finally, the least significant of the three was Szul-Kult which kept Yiddish as the primary language of instruction but included in the curriculum Hebrew and subjects related to Palestine and Jewish national consciousness.³⁰⁷

The Yiddishist schools, founded on the initiative of the Bund and Folkists, were united under the Central Yiddish School Organization (CISZO), and from 1924 their schools were accredited as equivalent to other state schools. Although the language of instruction was Yiddish, Polish was taught on a level aiming at providing the pupils with enough fluency to participate in Polish society. Initially Hebrew was taught as a foreign language before the organization drifted into more anti-Zionist, secular and socialist direction. Interestingly, approximately two-thirds of the students in CISZO schools were girls.³⁰⁸

Jews and Polish Catholic National Culture – between Assimilation and Exclusion

In the interwar period, Jewish citizens, sometimes fully assimilated to Polish culture, enriched it in a significant way, contributing to Polish literature, music or fine arts. Their Jewishness, sometimes referred to as Jewish background (*pochodzenie żydowskie*), was, however, often frowned upon and ultimately was seen as a proof of their un-Polishness by representatives of increasingly prevalent nationalist thought.

National Democrats applied racial antisemitism at a spiritual or psychical level (psychical racism) and the motif of “Jewish soul” or “Jewish psyche” could be often found in the discourses published in, for example, *Szczerbiec*³⁰⁹ or in the publications of ecclesiastical antisemites such as Rev. Józef Kruszyński. This “Jewish psyche” made the Jews into the polar opposites of Catholic Poles – their religion, their values, beliefs, customs and likings were irreversibly different from those of the Catholics. This type of psychical racism assumed that Jewishness is an internal irremovable quality; therefore, Jews cannot acculturate or integrate into Polish society due to their inherent

³⁰⁷ Marcus, *Social and Political History*, 150-153.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 150.

³⁰⁹ These ideas can be compared to conceptions promoted by Julius Evola, Italian philosopher, poet, painter, esotericist, and radical-right ideologue, the leader of “racial philosophy” and a theoretician of spiritual racism (and a prolific writer). He propagated the view of Jews as the carriers of the spiritual decadence of the West expressed in democracy, egalitarianism and materialism. Such views of “Jewish soul” can be seen, e.g., in *Szczerbiec*. See “Pojęcia o „rasowości”. Rasizm hitlerowski jest wytworem ducha żydowskiego,” *Szczerbiec*, 1938, 9.

divergence from the Catholic norms, nor assimilate through baptism, as the Jewishness persists and manifests itself in their mentality, thoughts and expressions.

As a result, even completely assimilated Polish-Jewish writers, for example, were not deemed truly Polish, and their writings were not Polish but “polonophone” (*polskojęzyczne*), meaning that they mastered the Polish language but the true content of their work remained Jewish. Such literature was tagged Judeo-Polish (*judeopolska*), and the Polish language was treated as a form of disguise, a mask worn to deceive the Polish public and poison Polish literature and culture.³¹⁰ The Jewishness of assimilated authors would eventually spread to the readers who would in turn unwittingly assimilate to the Jewish culture. Władysław Studnicki, for instance, was persuading his readers that “it is better to have the Jewish psychical world next to oneself, than in oneself”.³¹¹

The growing strength of Endekian propaganda as well as the engagement of the Catholic clergy in spreading antisemitic ideas made the society very suspicious regarding Jewish participation in Polish national culture, and on the most basic level, even to the phenomenon of assimilation, occurring in Polish lands since the 19th century. Due to this unwillingness to include the Jews in Polish society, Anna Landau-Czajka describes the model of Jewish assimilation in Poland as ambivalence.³¹² As a result of such ambivalence, the process of transitioning between one culture and another does not fully take place but rather results in a state of suspension, where none of the two cultures or identities become fully one’s own or fully foreign. This suspension, in the Polish case, is conditioned by a certain discrepancy of desires between the majority and the minority group – the majority group rejects the minority while the latter, at least in part, aspires to integrate into the majority group.³¹³

The Poles were used to their Jewish neighbors but as an isolated community, not aspiring to become part of the Polish nation. The growing assimilation of “new Jews” – emancipated, secular, speaking Polish and “invisible” in their Jewishness – was perceived especially by the bourgeoisie as a threat to Polish interests.³¹⁴ As long as Jews were “marked” by their traditional garb and customs, kept the age-long separations, they were accepted as a caste of Polish society but as soon as they started to show

³¹⁰ Landau-Czajka, *Syn będzie Lech*, 36.

³¹¹ Władysław Studnicki, *Sprawa polsko-żydowska* (Wilno: Józef Zawadzki, 1935; repr., Komorów: Wydawnictwo Antyk, 2011), 86.

³¹² In that, she follows the categorization proposed by Antonina Kłosowska. See Antonina Kłosowska, “Tożsamość i identyfikacja narodowa w perspektywie historycznej i psychologicznej,” *Kultura i społeczeństwo* 1, no. 36 (1992), 140.

³¹³ Landau-Czajka, *Syn będzie Lech*, 24n.

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 54.

aspirations of participation in the Polish national culture, they would encounter attacks from Jew-eaters (*żydożercze napaści*).³¹⁵

The assimilation was seen by some as an impossible and treacherous task. In fact, Jews were pretending to be good citizens in order to take over power, and enslave non-Jewish co-citizens, due to their shrewdness and greed, by exerting Jewish influence over them (*zżydzenie*).³¹⁶ As Landau-Czajka puts it:

This distrust and reluctance was perhaps caused not so much by antisemitism – as it was not always hostility towards Jews – but by the unbelief that one could stop being a Jew, and the adoption of a certain determinism. You could change your nationality, as long as you didn't come from a Jewish family. Jews remained Jews forever. This belief was sustained by religion, no other nation played such a role in Christian beliefs, no other was both chosen and cursed. Ludwik Oberlander even claims that the attitude of Polish society towards Jews was "magical". The Jews were perceived as "historically, by God's will, immutable and immovable". Thus, every change in Jewish society was received with disbelief, it seemed alternately to be a ruse, camouflage or ridicule.³¹⁷

To sum up, the most important arguments the nationalists had against assimilation and Jewish participation in Polish national culture were the inherent Jewish inability to change (persistence of Jewishness) and the lack of genuine Jewish interest in assimilation due to Polish weakness. Therefore, the Jews would be using the Polish disguise only to reach positions of power and eventually dominate the Polish “national soul” in order to weaken it and therefore destroy the nation from within. Finally, the Jewish participation in Polish culture would poison or contaminate the “Polish spiritual life” with inherently Jewish qualities, fundamentally opposed to the Polish ones.

Demoralization Charges

The charge of poisoning the Polish national spirit were brought up by the Church with particular emphasis on sexual morality: spreading and using pornography,³¹⁸ using contraceptives, propagating and carrying out abortion, encouraging promiscuity, etc. Although it was acknowledged and deplored that many Catholics committed the above transgressions, the responsibility for spreading sexual immorality was charged to the Jewish press and entertainment business. In addition, it was underscored that

³¹⁵ Antoni Słonimski, *Kroniki tygodniowe 1927-1931* (Warszawa: LTW, 2003), 69, 243.

³¹⁶ After Landau-Czajka, *Syn będzie Lech*, 55.

³¹⁷ Ibid., 56. See also in this thesis the accounts on Catholic children's attitude towards the Jewish teachers becoming an object of ridicule when they “try to” be Polish but “reveal” their Jewishness (p. 302).

³¹⁸ It is not clear what was meant by that term.

propagation of pornography, contraceptives and abortion was a predominantly Jewish occupation, as were sex trafficking and organized prostitution.³¹⁹ Thus, the poisonous influence of the Jews on the Polish nation was not only related to the vaguely understood Jewish psyche but was directly linked (in the discourses published by the Catholic press and uttered by the members of the clergy) to sexual immorality, and as such was seen as exceptionally scandalous.

Solutions for the Jewish Question

Even such a superficial survey as mine of the main points of tension between the Polish state, the Church and the Jewish minority already makes it clear that the position of the Jewish minority in the Second Republic was threatened both by the racial ideology displayed by the National Democrats and by the anti-Judaic coloring of the Catholic discourses.

Emigration and Separation

In the 1930s the Jewish question became the main axis of the political programmes on the right; however, according to Landau-Czajka, all the political parties with the exception of the left wing, agreed that the Jewish question in Poland required radical means.³²⁰ Therefore, it was not only National Democrats who called for decreasing of the number of the Jews in Poland through mass emigration, but rather it was a relatively univocal opinion on the Polish political scene. In 1938, the head of the OZN, Stanisław Skwarczyński publically claimed in his speech that:

We see the solution to the Jewish problem in the radical reduction in the number of Jews in Poland. It is possible only by carrying out an emigration plan of the Jews from Poland. This plan must take into account the interests of the state and be completely realistic.³²¹

The differences of opinion, however, occurred when it came to the methods used for decreasing the Jewish population in Poland, namely whether the emigration was voluntary or coerced and organized top-down by the Polish government. In the first

³¹⁹ Pałka, *Kościół katolicki wobec Żydów w Polsce międzywojennej*, 276-299.

³²⁰ Landau-Czajka, "Koncepcje rozwiązania kwestii żydowskiej w programach polskich stronnictw politycznych lat 1933-1939," 561.

³²¹ Quoted in *ibid.*, 552.

case, Jews would be “encouraged” to emigrate or forced by economic boycott and various discriminatory laws depriving them of their livelihood. In the second case, Jews would be subjects of a displacement organized and carried out by the Polish authorities. In both cases, the intended result would be making Poland *judenrein* or at least making the Jewish minority significantly less numerous.

The parties which concentrated on the Jewish question opted for the more drastic plan, while those which deemed it a secondary issue usually would just point to emigration as a solution without actually précising the means by which the process should be conducted. Landau-Czajka highlights that none of the parties foresaw an ongoing coexistence of Jews and Poles in a long run, at the same time realizing that the mass emigration would not be an immediate solution but rather a matter of time.

At the same time, the vexing question seemed to be how to settle the Jewish question *meanwhile*. The Polish right proposed to separate Jews from the Polish society, establishing an impermeable wall between the two communities; however, without using violence.³²² The left responded with the slogan of equality and respect of all the nations, without explicitly mentioning the Jewish community as such. It is also worth mentioning that some Catholic groups saw assimilation through baptism as a viable option for Jewish assimilation,³²³ however, in general the attitude towards Jewish conversions to Catholicism was very skeptical and suspicious. At the same time, the Catholic clergy was prevalently in favor of the separation and then immigration of the Jewish population from Poland, although achieved by means agreeing with Catholic ethics.³²⁴

³²² In practice, the followers of these parties, however, would resort to violence. *Ibid.*, 562.

³²³ Pałka, *Kościół katolicki wobec Żydów w Polsce międzywojennej*, 306-328.

³²⁴ *Ibid.*, 301-306.

Chapter 4

Jews and Catholics in Lublin

About Lublin

Lublin, located halfway between Warsaw and Lwów, was the biggest urban center of the Lublin Voivodeship (administrative area) and one of the ten biggest cities in Poland during the interwar period. Historically, the settlement located on the intersection of trade routes connecting the area with the Black Sea (later *Via Regia*) dates back to the sixth century, but the name *Lublin* appears in the sources for the first time only in 1228, roughly a century before the settlement received a town charter based on the Magdeburg rights (1317).³²⁵ The city developed thanks to a favorable location on trade routes and its golden period coincided with the reign of the Jagiellonian dynasty. During this period Lublin became not only an important venue of the trade fairs but also of religious and cultural life. The period of prosperity was also a time of growing diversification among the population of Lublin: it became an important center of Jewish life and a home to some Protestant Reformation movements, such as, for example, the Polish Brethren. The golden age of the city ended with the 17th century wars, in particular the Khmelnitsky Uprising (1655) which preceded by an epidemic (1650-55), and followed by the Swedish Deluge (1656).³²⁶

During the time of the partitions, Lublin became a part of the Congress Poland and therefore belonged to the Russian Empire.³²⁷ In 1837 it became a capital of the governorate and a local center of the Russian administration, which encouraged some positive developments, such as building a railway (Привислинская железная дорога, *Privislinskaya zheleznaya doroga*, Eng. Vistula River Railroad) connecting the city to the Volhynia region on the one hand (Kowel) and the Vistula river on the other

³²⁵ The Magdeburg rights were a set of town privileges based on Flemish Law, introduced by Otto I. They were adopted by Polish kings and turned out to be a milestone in the urbanization of Poland.

³²⁶ "Powstanie Chmielnickiego w Lublinie 1648–1655," Grodzka Gate-NN Theatre Centre, accessed 10.01.2022, <https://teatrnn.pl/leksykon/artykuly/powstanie-chmielnickiego-w-lublinie-16481655/>.

³²⁷ With the exception of the period between 1795 and 1809 when it was under the Austrian partition.

hand (Mława). It was also a time of social change and the growing significance of the middle class, as well as slow the industrialization and urban growth of the city tissue.

Lublin in Independent Poland

In November 1918, Lublin became the scene for the establishment of the first Polish independent government – the Provisional People’s Government of the Republic of Poland – but soon after that, it lost political significance. It had a distinctly provincial character and developed more slowly than other Polish cities of comparable size. In 1921 it was the fifth biggest city in Poland, while in 1939 it occupied the eleventh position in the ranking, giving way to other cities which had developed at a faster pace such as Bydgoszcz, Katowice, Częstochowa or Sosnowiec.³²⁸ The city had a very low natural increase (rising in the years of economic prosperity and falling at the times of economic crises) and the growth of the population depended much on the migration from the countryside to the town.

Population

Jews and Catholics together constituted approximately 99% of the city’s population in the interwar period. Such a composition makes it a perfect study case for those interested in Jewish-Catholic or Jewish-Polish relations, because there is functionally no third group that one would have to take into consideration in the analysis of the intergroup dynamics.

The ratio between these two groups was slowly changing in favor of the Catholics: the Jewish population decreased from almost 40% in 1921 to 32% in 1939, but nonetheless the percentage of Jewish inhabitants of the city was high, similar to Warsaw or Łódź.³²⁹ Among the cities in Poland, only Lwów had a higher percentage of the Jewish population, standing at 37%.³³⁰ Another particularity of Lublin was a relatively low level of assimilation of the local Jews and strong attachment to religious orthodoxy and Hasidism. This could be seen, for example, in the absence of a Reformed synagogue in the town and very low levels of identification with the Polish language.³³¹ In 1931, only 2.5% of the Lublin Jews declared Polish their mother tongue, while in Lwów, the

³²⁸ Aleksander Kierek, "Rozwój gospodarczy Lublina w latach 1918-1939," in *Dzieje Lublina*, ed. Stanisław Krzykała (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Lubelskie, 1975), 39.

³²⁹ In 1931 Lublin was approximately 34% Jews, while in Łódź it was 33%, in Warsaw 30%, in Vilnius 28%, Krakow 26%, in Katowice 5% and Poznań 2.8%.

³³⁰ Interestingly, the entire Lublin region also had a high rate of Jewish population. According to the 1931 census, the Lublin Voivodship had 2,087,951 inhabitants including 287,639 Jews, making for almost 14% of the population and therefore placing the region as the second most “Jewish” in Poland, after the Łódź voievodship.

³³¹ All the numbers and estimations in this section are based on the Second Census from 1931.

only more “Jewish” city of the Second Republic of Poland, it was almost ten times as high, standing at 24%.³³² On the other hand, when compared to the overall tendency in Poland, where only 1.7% Jews declared Polish as their mother tongue,³³³ the Lublin Jewish community seems to be quite representative of Polish Jews in general. However, one should take into consideration that Jewish youth, who were not asked about their language preferences and identification, would most probably indicate Polish as their mother tongue to a much higher degree.

The most popular language of the Jewish minority in Lublin was of course Yiddish, with 36,549 Jews claiming it as their mother tongue (almost 94%), which was much higher than the average for Poland (approximately 80% of Polish Jewry). The rate of those declaring Hebrew as their mother tongue stood at 3.7% (1,452 respondents), making it the second most popular Jewish mother tongue in Lublin but less popular than among Polish Jews in general (approximately 8% of Polish Jews declared Hebrew as their mother tongue).

Gender

In 1931, the city population stood at 112,285, including 60,121 women (almost 53.5%) and 52,164 men (46.5%). The gender ratio among both the Catholic and Jewish population was very close to the general rates. Interestingly, the data regarding professionally active citizens of Lublin reflects the same proportions, meaning that women were more than a half of professionally active inhabitants. In some areas of economy, the gender ratio remained at similar levels to the population gender ratio. However, women were overrepresented in the branches summed up as “other” including education, culture and public services.³³⁴ In Poland, among those working outside of agriculture, women constituted 51.6% of the professionally active; thus in Lublin the percentage of working women was slightly higher than on average.

Economy

The branches of local economy were industry, craftsmanship, trade, communication and services.³³⁵ The main social group of the town were workers – they constituted almost 40% of the working population and the percentage was constantly increasing.

³³² One can note that in the cities of the former Austrian and Prussian partition more Jews declared Polish their mother tongue and therefore were assimilating to the Polish culture. In Krakow, it was almost 19%, in Poznań almost 30%, while in Warsaw it was only 5.5%.

³³³ Kierek, "Rozwój gospodarczy Lublina w latach 1918-1939," 22.

³³⁴ Unfortunately, further specification of how many women worked in each of these sub-branches is not available.

³³⁵ Kierek, "Rozwój gospodarczy Lublina w latach 1918-1939," 42.

Within this group, the majority were Polish-Catholic with a much lower percentage of Jews, the latter mostly working in small works and workshops. The second largest group were the self-employed who worked in petty trade and craftsmen, who together made for approximately 23% of the working population. It is estimated that trade was the source of income for half of this group, and that the other half worked in often illegal and underequipped workshops whose numbers constantly vacillated due to the unstable economic situation. In 1921, there were 1100 registered workshops, and in 1937 almost 2900; however, the number of illegal workshops is impossible to estimate. The leading branches in craftsmanship were shoemaking and tailoring. It is estimated that approximately 60% of the workshops were owned by Jews.³³⁶

Those entrepreneurs who employed others were not many – between 2% and 4% of the population – and approximately two thirds of them were Polish. The owners of large businesses in trade and real estate were mostly Jewish, while the large industries were owned mostly by Poles with a lower percentage of Jewish owners, depending, however, on the branch.³³⁷ Jews prevailed in free professions while Poles did so among white-collar workers (due to the antisemitic legislation these positions were not available to the Jews).³³⁸ The main branches of industry in Lublin were food and the machine industry, including agricultural machines, food industry machines, aircraft industry, scale production, tannery (owned mostly by Jewish owners) and tobacco. The biggest factories, with over 1000 workers, were the Lublin Aircraft Factory and the sugar refinery (“Lublin”). The medium size (500-1000 workers) factories included M. Wolski & Co., The Lublin Factory of Agricultural Machines and Tools (“Plon”), “Lechia” producing mill machines, the tobacco fermentation plant, the glassworks and the “Eternit” factory. Another 14 firms employed between 50 and 100 workers. Jewish capital was not more than 20% of that invested in the private sector.

The economic growth of the city had phases of prosperity (1926-1929, 1936-1939) and crisis (1924-1935, 1930-1935). The period of the deepest depression was 1930-1935, resulting from the Great Depression.³³⁹ The main challenges to the local economy were high unemployment rates during the entire interwar period and lack of infrastructure.

³³⁶ *Ibid.*, 68.

³³⁷ *Ibid.*, 46.

³³⁸ *Ibid.*, 46.

³³⁹ It seems that the Great Depression affected Poland more severely than some other countries due to the inadequate economic response of the government and the pre-existing economic difficulties.

Authorities

The Decree on municipal self-government of February 4, 1919, known as the February 4th decree, constituted municipal communes as self-governing territorial units having public-legal personality and the capacity to act in the field of civil law. The local government administration bodies in the cities there were the city council and the magistrate headed by the president (or mayor). The city council had legislative powers and control, and its main tasks included: deciding on general rules of urban economy, establishment of management rules, acquisition and disposal of municipal real estate, adopting the city budget as well as taxes and fees, establishing and canceling official posts and selecting members of the magistrate and exercising control over them. Within the scope of granted competences the city council had the right to adopt a resolution and the right to issue provisions consistent with the applicable legislation. The city council was composed of councillors and members of the magistrate, elected for 3 years – in universal, equal, direct, proportional, secret-ballot elections. In Lublin, 46 councillors were elected. The candidates had to have the right to vote, be over 25 years of age and have the ability to read and write in Polish.³⁴⁰ Thus, minorities' members were entitled to sit on the council, and Jews always had their representatives councillors.³⁴¹

Infrastructure and Living Conditions

For an average inhabitant, the living conditions in interwar Lublin were far from comfortable. At the beginning of the period, in 1918, the waterworks were not only old, but also privately owned, as were the municipal slaughterhouse and gas plant. The sewage system and public transport system were seriously underdeveloped. The number of school buildings was insufficient and the hospitals needed a thorough modernization. With time the situation improved but it was a slow process. The waterworks was purchased from private hands, and by 1929 a second one was built. Between 1925 and 1929, the problem of the municipal sewage system was also solved. The design of the sanitary equipment was undertaken by the well-known American company Ulen & Company, active also in other Polish cities. Before 1930 a municipal company for waterworks and sewage system was established. In 1928, a municipal power plant was launched, thanks to which many houses and streets gained lighting.

³⁴⁰ Mariola Szewczak-Daniel, "Samorząd miejski w Lublinie w początkach II Rzeczypospolitej," *Studia z dziejów państwa i prawa polskiego XXI* (2018), 195-196.

³⁴¹ Zbigniew Zaporowski, "Żydzi w Radzie Miejskiej Lublina 1919-1939," in *Żydzi w Lublinie. Materiały do dziejów społeczności Żydowskiej Lublina*, ed. Tadeusz Radzik (Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS, 1995), 237-244; Tadeusz Radzik, "Żydzi lubelscy w społeczności miasta XVI – XX w.," in *Żydzi lubelscy. Materiały z sesji poświęconej Żydom lubelskim*, ed. Wojciech Hawryluk and Grzegorz Linkowski (Lublin: Ośrodek Brama Grodzka-Teatr NN, 1996), 45-51.

The issue of transportation was addressed through starting a few bus lines and paving some streets.

Significant number of residential buildings required serious renovation and almost 20% of flats were located unfavorably in basements or attics. The apartments were small and crowded – an average apartment would only have two rooms and would house five people. However, half of all inhabited apartments would only contain one room and would house four people on average.³⁴² Almost 45% of the Lublin population lived in these small flats.

In addition to housing overcrowding, sanitation also left a lot to be desired. In 1924 only 5% of houses had a sewage system, gas lightning or were equipped with a bathtub, a little over 8% of houses had electricity and approximately 23.5% running water. According to the census of 1931, the situation had slightly improved: a little over 8% of the houses had a sewage system and 35.6% electricity. Nevertheless, one third of the entire population lived without running water, sewerage, gas or electricity, which placed Lublin among the most underdeveloped cities in the Second Republic, followed only by Vilnius.³⁴³ Such bad living conditions contributed to the repeated outbreaks of epidemics of scarlet fever, typhus and other diseases.

די לובלינער – the Jews of Lublin

A Historical Sketch

The history of the Jewish Lublin has been the subject of numerous publications; therefore, in this section, I am presenting just a short summary, while referencing the most important publications.³⁴⁴

³⁴² Kierek, "Rozwój gospodarczy Lublina w latach 1918-1939," 78.

³⁴³ Ibid., 80.

³⁴⁴ The first comprehensive history of the Jewish Lublin can be found in Majer Bałaban, *Die Judenstadt von Lublin* (Berlin: Judischer Verlag, 1919). Other important publications include: Radzik, "Żydzi lubelscy w społeczności miasta XVI – XX w."; Radzik, *Uczelnia mędrców Lublina* (Lublin, Wydawnictwo UMCS, 1994); Adam Kopciowski, "Zarys dziejów Żydów w Lublinie," in *Żydzi w Lublinie — Żydzi we Lwowie. Miejsca — Pamięć — Współczesność*, ed. Joanna Zętar, Elżbieta Żurek and Sławomir Jacek Żurek (Lublin: Katolicki Uniwersytet Lubelski Jana Pawła II, 2006). Kopciowski, *Wos hert zich in der prowinc? Prasa żydowska na Lubelszczyźnie i jej największy dziennik "Lubliner Tugblat"* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS, 2015); Kopciowski, "Zarys dziejów Żydów w Lublinie"; Konrad Zieliński and Nina Zielińska, *Jeszywas Chachmej Lublin: Uczelnia Mędrców Lublina* (Lublin: Wydaw. UMCS, 2003); Konrad Zieliński, *W cieniu synagogi: obraz życia kulturalnego społeczności żydowskiej Lublina w latach okupacji austro-węgierskiej* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS, 1998).

Most probably a well-organized Jewish community (hereafter: *kehilla*) existed in Lublin already in the 1470s when rabbi Jacob of Trento came to Lublin, expelled from Germany upon accusations of blood libel.³⁴⁵ In the 16th century dynamic development of the Jewish settlement in Lublin took place. Advantageous geographic location on the trade routes (*Via Regia*) encouraged many Jewish merchants to settle there. In 1523 the *kehilla* of Lublin was granted by Sigismund the Old, a privilege giving her a status equal to other *kehillot* of Poland. In 1556 Lublin Jews received further privileges, granting them internal legal and administrative autonomy and subordinating them to the power of *voievoda* (representative of the royal power) as an appeal body.³⁴⁶

Fast growth of the Jewish community and its economic prosperity led to a conflict with the Christian burghers and the issuance of laws aiming at limiting the Jewish trade in the city. In 1535 the town of Lublin was granted a royal privilege *De non tolerandis Judaeis* and in 1568 the Jewish city received the privilege *De non tolerandis Christianis*, forbidding Christians from purchasing houses or land within the Jewish town. These developments, even though they were repeatedly trespassed, resulted in a separation between the Christian and the Jewish town lasting until the mid-19th century, and the creation of an arrangement called by Adina Cimet *parapolis* – a segregated community outside of the *polis*.³⁴⁷ The Jewish life concentrated in this *parapolis* of the Podzamcze (literally *Under the Castle*) area, where soon spiritual-religious centers of Jewish thought sprang up, such as the famous yeshiva established in approximately 1530 by Shalom Shachna (father in-law of Moses Isserles of Kraków) and formally opened only after his death, in 1567. The first rector of the yeshiva was Shlomo Luria (*Maharshal*), followed by Mordechai Jaffe, Meir ben Gedalia (*Maharam*) and Shmuel Eliezer Halevi Eideles. At the same time, the *kehilla* built its first masonry synagogue (the *Maharshal* synagogue, which stood until the Nazi German liquidation of the ghetto), followed by the complex of other synagogues, the offices of the *kehilla*, yeshiva, *bet hamidrash*, mikveh and kosher butchers. The so-called Old Jewish Cemetery was probably in use starting from 1489.

In the 1570s Lublin also became the second most important center of Jewish printing in Poland, after Cracow. The first Jewish printing house was established in Lublin in 1547 by Chaim ben David Schorr, a couple of decades before any Polish printing

³⁴⁵ Radzik, "Żydzi lubelscy w społeczności miasta XVI – XX w.," 79.

³⁴⁶ Radzik, *Uczelnia mędrców Lublina*, 9.

³⁴⁷ Adina Cimet, *Jewish Lublin: A Cultural Monograph* (Lublin: Maria Curie-Skłodowska University Press, 2009), 29-31.

house. From 1572 until 1685 the printing house passed to the Jaffe family who printed hundreds of Hebrew books of supreme quality.³⁴⁸

Already in 1580, the center of the Jewish self-government in Poland was transferred to Lublin, when king Stephan Batory established the Council of Four Lands (Va'ad Arba Aratzot) there. The period of Jewish prosperity ended abruptly in the middle of the 17th century with the Khmelnitzky Uprising, the invasion of the Muscovites and later the Swedes. In 1655 the majority of buildings in the Jewish town were destroyed and the invaders killed approximately 2,000 Lublin Jews. The Jewish community was seriously weakened for the next century until the time when the Hasidic movement was brought to Lublin by Yakov Yitzhak Horowitz (the Seer of Lublin). The importance of Hasidism since then has been a characteristic mark of the local Jewish community. As pointed out by Robert Kuwałek, it can be attested to by the fact that in the 1820s and 1830s there was an official Hasidic synagogue located in the Seer's house in Szeroka 28, while in other towns the Hasidic *shitblech* were not legally recognized.³⁴⁹ Kuwałek highlights that such a Hasidic-Orthodox character became typical for Jewish religious life, where until the Holocaust not a single reformed synagogue opened due to the very strong anti-assimilationist positions of the local religious leaders.³⁵⁰

Horowitz was a disciple of the famous tzadik Eliezer of Leżajsk, and created his own court first in Wieniawa (at that time outside of the town of Lublin, later its suburb) and then in 28 Szeroka Street, where in 1794 he established the first Hasidic house of prayer. The disciples of the Seer established new Hasidic dynasties, such as Ger (the Alters), Belz (the Rokeachs), Kuzmir (the Taubs), Izbica and Radzyń (the Leiners) as well as Kock (Menachem Mendel Morgenstern), and because Horowitz did not establish a dynasty, they overtook his legacy and attracted his followers. Another important Hasidic leader was Yehuda Leib Eiger, who settled a few houses away from the Seer's *shitbl*, at 40 Szeroka Street. His dynasty led the local Hasidic community until the outbreak of the Second World War.³⁵¹

The Jewish population of Lublin was steadily growing. Although in the times of the Seer, Jews constituted approximately a half of the entire population of the city, the numbers were initially not very high, as the town was now provincial and abandoned. However, throughout the 19th century the numbers increased significantly, from

³⁴⁸ "Historia żydowskich drukarni w Lublinie," Grodzka Gate-NN Theatre Centre, accessed 15.02.2022, <https://teatrn.pl/leksykon/artykuly/historia-zydowskich-drukarni-w-lublinie/>.

³⁴⁹ Robert Kuwałek, "Przemiany społeczno-kulturalne w środowisku Żydów lubelskich w XIX i XX wieku," in *Żydzi lubelscy. Materiały z sesji poświęconej Żydom lubelskim*, ed. Wojciech Hawryluk and Grzegorz Linkowski (Lublin: Ośrodek Brama Grodzka-Teatr NN, 1996), 48.

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 56.

³⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 48-50.

approximately 4,000 Jews around 1800 to 23,500 in 1897. Interestingly, the balance between the number of Jewish and Christian inhabitants of Lublin remained at around 50%, sometimes reaching up to 60% for Jews (1860s).³⁵² Until the 1850s Lublin remained the second biggest (after Warsaw) Jewish settlement in the Kingdom of Poland. In the wake of the First World War it was inhabited by 38,000 Jews.

This period of rapid demographic growth of the Jewish community took place under heavy legal restrictions until 1862. The Russian authorities sanctioned the old privilege *De non tolerandis Judaeis* creating a separate Jewish district of the city. In addition, Jews were not allowed to purchase land, had no right to vote or take on public functions. They also paid additional taxes and were banned from certain professions. When the restrictions were lifted, many (assimilated and/or well off) Jews moved to the Old City and to Krakowskie Przedmieście, and opened their new business in industry. However, the majority of the Jewish population remained in the ghetto. Adam Kopciowski notes that when compared to other big cities of the Kingdom of Poland, the Jews of Lublin were poor, traditionally religious with a low level of education and very isolated from the broader society; he points to the strong Hasidic influences, which conserved such a traditional and backward-looking environment.³⁵³

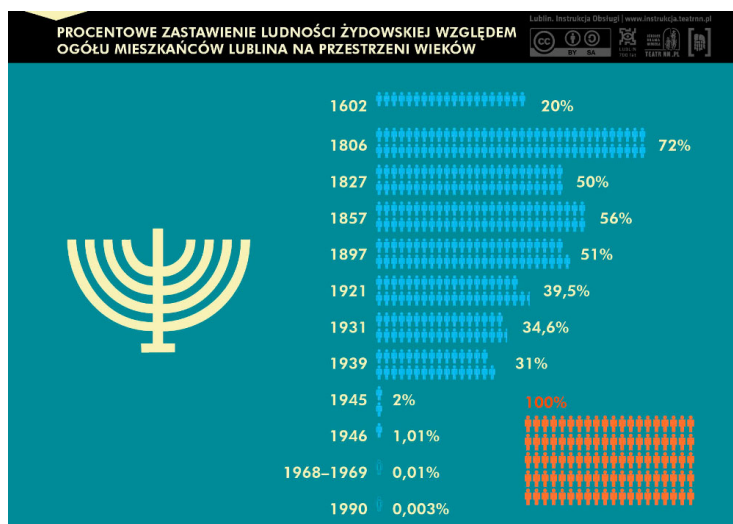


Figure 4 The percentage of the Jewish inhabitants of Lublin over time.

Source: <https://teatrnn.pl/leksykon/artykuly/sytuacja-prawna-ludnosci-zydowskiej-w-polsce-i-w-lublinie/>.

³⁵² "Wielokulturowość Lublina – statystyka," Grodzka Gate-NN Theatre Centre, accessed 03.11.2021, <https://teatrnn.pl/leksykon/artykuly/wielokulturowosc-lublina-statystyka/>.

³⁵³ Kopciowski, "Zarys dziejów Żydów w Lublinie," 17.

By the end of the 19th century Lublin was reached by new socio-political ideologies, which introduced some intellectual ferment and changes in the self-perception of the Jewish community. At the turn of the century, the first Zionist and Bundist organizations were established, together with private schools for Jewish girls as well as public benefit institutions (the hospital, the orphanage). In parallel, the *kehilla* became more active, as it became the scene of disputes and clashes between the Orthodox and the followers of the new ideologies. The intensification of these processes took place especially during the Austrian occupation (after 1915) because of the liberal approach of the new authorities, who granted equal rights to the Jews. Therefore, more Jewish private schools were opened, including three *gimnazja*, and the first Jewish newspaper in Polish was established in Lublin³⁵⁴ as well as an amateur Jewish theatre by Jakub Waksman and the first public Jewish library which was located by the *kehilla*. During the interwar period, the Jewish community developed solid structures of social and political life, which are described more in detail in the following sections. However, as Tadeusz Radzik points out, overall the Jewish community was slow to assimilate, with a very traditional socio-occupational structure, the latter perpetuating isolation and backwardness.³⁵⁵

Traditional Religiosity versus Secularization

Kehilla (Pl. *gmina*) was a traditional Jewish community organized according to Talmudic principles, and a form of Jewish self-government in Polish lands, present for centuries. After Poland regained its independence, some political Jewish organizations wanted to turn *kehillot* into institutions of national and political self-government, putting less emphasis on their religious character; however, the Polish authorities did not give them autonomy in the political sense but kept them as religious institutions.³⁵⁶ They were public-law corporations with legal personality.

The *kehilla's* council was the establishing and controlling institution, and the board was the executive body. The council was in charge of adopting a budget, establishing the principles of financial management, the election of rabbis and deputy rabbis and establishing religious schools and charity institutions. The members of the council and the board were elected by the community members, and the funding came from

³⁵⁴ *Mysł Żydowska*, soon to be replaced by the Yiddish *Lubliner Tugblat* which remained the most popular daily until the war.

³⁵⁵ Radzik, "Żydzi lubelscy w społeczności miasta XVI – XX w.," 50.

³⁵⁶ It was regulated by the decree from January 18, amended on February 7, 1919: "On changes in the organization of religious communes in the former Congress Kingdom" (*Pl. O zmianach organizacji gmin wyznaniowych na terenie byłego Królestwa Kongresowego*).

commune fees and revenues from real estate.³⁵⁷ The board consisted of a rabbi and four members elected for a period of four years and had to be approved by the Ministry of Religious Denominations and Public Education. The rabbi's tasks included supervision of religious institutions, issuing certificates allowing religious education, weddings and divorces, presiding over a conciliation court adjudicating in religious matters, chairing the celebration of Jewish and national holidays and leading prayers on these occasions in the main synagogue.

The *kehilla* dealt with the organization and care of the rabbinate, synagogues, prayer houses, ritual baths, hospitals and cemeteries.³⁵⁸ Moreover, it watched over religious education and educating young people in the spirit of tradition, and provided the population with kosher meat. The *kehilla* also looked after poor Jews, who constituted a considerable percentage of Lublin's population. Thus, in principle, it was religious in nature, but in addition, it coordinated and financed the activities of all kinds of institutions: religious, educational, medical and philanthropic. It could be called the most important body representing and governing the Jewish minority.

Lublin was known as a religious and spiritual center of Judaism in Polish lands and as such was a home to many synagogues and houses of prayer. In addition to official synagogues under the aegis of the *kehilla*, there were approximately a hundred private houses of prayer active in the interwar period. The historical synagogues included the Great Synagogue (*Maharshalsbul*), Maharam's synagogue, Saul Wahl's synagogue (the Messengers' synagogue), Hirsz Doktorowicz's synagogue (*Kotler-shul*) as well as Parnes and *de Hasidim* in Szeroka 28, established by the Seer of Lublin. Apart from the latter, a few other Hasidic communities had their synagogues in Lublin: the Belzyce Hasidim, the Parysow Hasidim, the Kozhnitz Hasidim, the Parczew Hasidim, the Radzyn Hasidim, the Uman Hasidim, the Skierniewitz Hasidim, the Ger Hasidim and the Sokolow Hasidim.³⁵⁹ Moreover, private synagogues were maintained by various professional groups such as barterers, cabdrivers, butchers, carriers, bakers, traders, painters, carpenters or water carriers.³⁶⁰ Members of other organized groups also had their own synagogues; for example, the Mizrachi party and various charitable

³⁵⁷ Izabela Gładysz, "Gmina Wyznaniowa Żydowska w Lublinie w latach 1918–1939," in *Żydzi w Lublinie. Materiały do dziejów społeczności żydowskiej Lublina*, ed. Tadeusz Radzik (Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS, 1995), 155–156.

³⁵⁸ It owned two cemeteries, a Jewish hospital, an asylum for children and elderly (*ochronka*), dormitory "Hachnossos Orchim", three ritual baths, a sanatorium in Otwock and other real estate. Gładysz, "Gmina Wyznaniowa," 159.

³⁵⁹ "Synagogi i domy modlitwy w Lublinie," Grodzka Gate-NN Theatre Centre, accessed 10.01.2022, <https://teatrn.pl/leksykon/artykuly/synagogi-i-domy-modlitwy-w-lublinie/#synagogi-postepowe>.

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

organizations such as Linas Hatzedek, Bikur Cholim or the cultural organization Hazomir.

All of these synagogues were Orthodox or Hasidic and until the outbreak of the Second World War no reformed or assimilationist synagogue was established in Lublin, which reflects the character of the local community, attached to traditional Jewish forms of worship.³⁶¹ The Hasidic tradition was particularly strong, and in that, Lublin reminded many shtetls of the Eastern provinces of Poland at that time.

In addition, Lublin became a seat of the Yeshivas Chachmei,³⁶² established by the famous rabbi Meir Shapiro, a deputy to the Senate and a promoter of the Daf Yomi study program.³⁶³ It is believed that the Lublin yeshiva was unquestionably the best among the interwar yeshivas. It was not affiliated with any Hasidic court and attracted elite students.³⁶⁴ The yeshiva was also known for its outstanding infrastructure. The building, opened in 1930, included a study room-synagogue, conference hall, guest rooms as well as dormitories for the students (a complete *novum*), a library of approximately 13,000 volumes, a model of the Jerusalem temple as well as its own bakery, dining hall, baths and other facilities.³⁶⁵ Thus, the school offered not only excellent teaching but also very modern and comfortable boarding.

Thus, Lublin can be seen as a vibrant center of Jewish religious life, and many young Jews adhered to religious Orthodoxy. However, from the beginning of the 20th century secular socio-political movements started to undermine religious values in favor of secular ideals, and the process of secularization started gaining momentum, especially among the youth, from the mid-1930s. As the first generation of Jews born and educated in the Second Republic started to enter adulthood, it became obvious that they did not want to stay within the borders of the ghetto and the framework of the traditional *shtetl*-like life, organized by religious customs and precepts. A significant part of young adults integrated into wider Polish society in their language and lifestyle. Many became involved in political organizations with the ideologies of Zionism and socialism being the most popular among progressive youth. Most saw their future in education and finding a way to integrate into a modern society while maintaining their

³⁶¹ There was a small progressive group of Jewish intellectuals and social activists lobbying for the establishment of a reformed synagogue, however, their efforts never bore fruition.

³⁶² Zieliński, *Jeszywas Chachmej Lublin: Uczelnia Mędrców Lublina*.

³⁶³ Daf Yomi is a system of a Torah study, in which the entire Talmud is completed, one day at a time, in a cycle of approximately seven and a half years. The idea behind this approach is to make Talmud study accessible to Jews who cannot devote their entire life to the study of Torah because they are professionally active.

³⁶⁴ Antony Polonsky, *The Jews in Poland and Russia*, vol. III (Oxford: The Litman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2012), 189.

³⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 38.

Jewish identity in an un-orthodox way, or immigrating to the land of Israel. They often aimed at reinventing the Jewish identity outside of the religious context, highlighting the importance of secular identity aspects such as language, literature and broadly understood culture. Above, when presenting various Jewish political parties, I have pointed to their diverse visions of the new Jewish secular identity, for example socialist or Zionist.

Jewish Political Diversity

The revolution of 1905 brought with it the animation of the political life in Jewish Lublin with two parties taking the lead: the Zionists and the Bundists. By 1918, there were eleven parties in the town, from communists to Orthodox religious Jews.³⁶⁶

Adina Cimet claims that the young generation was an audience for many parties and often would change their membership, and that the general atmosphere in Lublin was open – to the events organized by a certain party, members from other parties would come to listen, which furthered the idea of political change (or exchange?).³⁶⁷ She also notes that most parties agreed on one sole point: they all supported the Lublin Jewish choir, the second largest in Poland after the one from Vilnius.³⁶⁸ Below, I briefly describe these parties,³⁶⁹ starting from the most popular.

Jewish Political Parties

The local political scene reflected the diversity visible on a larger scale. Thus, all the main Jewish parties active in Poland operated also in Lublin: the Bund, General Zionists, Zionists Revisionists, Poalei Sion-Right and Left, Agudath Israel, Mizrachi, Folkists and communists.

³⁶⁶ Kuwałek, "Przemiany społeczno-kulturalne w środowisku Żydów lubelskich w XIX i XX wieku," 60; "Życie polityczne lubelskich Żydów w dwudziestoleciu międzywojennym," Grodzka Gate - NN Theatre Centre, accessed 17.02.2022, <https://teatrnn.pl/leksykon/artykuly/zycie-polityczne-lubelskich-zydow-w-dwudziestoleciu-miedzywojennym>.

³⁶⁷ Cimet, *Jewish Lublin: A Cultural Monograph*, 219.

³⁶⁸ Ibid.

³⁶⁹ With the exception of Hitachduth. I have not found enough data regarding the Lublin branch.

The local branch of the Bund, founded in 1916, had a youth section (Tsukunft), a children's section (SKIF)³⁷⁰ and the "Jaf" section for women.³⁷¹ The local press associated with the Bund included three titles: *Noje Folkscajtung* (daily), *Lubliner Sztyme* (weekly) and *Jugund Wekker* (bi-weekly).³⁷² As in other places, the Bund in Lublin was mostly working with and for the proletariat, and dominated the local trade unions. The standard activities of the Bund consisted of organizing rallies, meetings and lectures, which often would turn very political and anti-governmental. Sometimes they would attack other parties³⁷³ or agitate for the Bund. In Lublin, the Bund was also successful in the elections to local authorities (self-government).³⁷⁴ Overall, including the youth sections, the Bund in Lublin had approximately a thousand members.³⁷⁵

The General Zionists in Lublin brought together members from the Jewish middle class, usually well off, many of whom belonged to the local intellectual elite.³⁷⁶ The first structures of the organization of General Zionists were established in 1917 and

³⁷⁰ The activities of the youth sections, SKIF and Tsukunft, encompassed youth meetings, agitation campaigns, rallies, academies, lectures, etc. All these activities aimed at broadening the influence of the Bund. See "Organizacje młodzieżowe Bundu – Cukunft, SKIF, Jaf – struktura i funkcjonowanie w dwudziestoleciu międzywojennym w Lublinie," Grodzka Gate - NN Theatre Centre, accessed 20.02.2022, <https://teatrnn.pl/leksykon/artykuly/organizacje-mlodziezowe-bundu-cukunft-skif-jaf-struktura-i-funkcjonowanie-w-dwudziestoleciu-miedzywojennym-w-lublinie/>.

³⁷¹ Emil Horoch, "Socjalistyczny Powszechny Żydowski Związek Robotniczy 'Bund' w Lublinie w latach 1918-1939 (główne problemy)," in *Żydzi w Lublinie. Materiały do dziejów społeczności żydowskiej Lublina*, ed. Tadeusz Radzik (Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS, 1995).

³⁷² The Yiddish titles are written following the Polish transliteration.

³⁷³ Especially the Orthodox, the Zionists and the Folkists. There was also an ongoing conflict with the communists. On the other hand, the Bund highlighted its ties to the socialist movement and cooperated, for example, with PPS in organizing the celebrations of the Labour Day (May 1), as mentioned, for example, by Josef Fraind, "Bund – Socjalistyczny Powszechny Żydowski Związek Robotniczy Bund w Lublinie w dwudziestoleciu międzywojennym," Grodzka Gate - NN Theatre Centre, accessed 18.02.2022, <https://teatrnn.pl/leksykon/artykuly/bund-socjalistyczny-powszechny-zydowski-zwiazek-robotniczy-bund-w-lublinie-w-dwudziestoleciu-miedzywojennym/>.

³⁷⁴ In 1919 it won 5 mandates (the best result for any Jewish party), in 1927 it won 8 mandates and in 1929 – 9 (making it the most popular Jewish party in town), in 1934 – 4 and in 1939 it won 8 mandates.

³⁷⁵ In 1930, Tsukunft alone had some 500 members, SKIF only 40 and Jaf some 60 members. See Chmielewski, "Bund – Socjalistyczny Powszechny Żydowski Związek Robotniczy Bund w Lublinie w dwudziestoleciu międzywojennym."

³⁷⁶ Hibat Cyjon established the first (in Lublin) secular school where Hebrew was the language of instruction. See "Organizacja Ogólnych Syjonistów – struktura i funkcjonowanie w dwudziestoleciu międzywojennym w Lublinie," Grodzka Gate - NN Theatre Centre, accessed 17.02.2022, <https://teatrnn.pl/leksykon/artykuly/organizacja-ogolnych-syjonistow-struktura-i-funkcjonowanie-w-dwudziestoleciu-miedzywojennym-w-lublinie/>. The president of the General Zionist organization in the interwar period was first Dr Mojżesz Mieczysław Zajdenman and then Luzor Nisenbaum.

eventually counted approximately 500 members.³⁷⁷ The Lublin branch of the organization belonged to the radical option Al Hamishmar,³⁷⁸ which contested the World Zionist Organization because of their leniency with the British authorities of Palestine (thus blocking Jewish settlement there). At the same time, they also propagated the emigration of Jewish workers and farmers and were opposed to cooperation with non-Zionist organizations. Their regular activities encompassed organization of lectures, collection and in particular rallies and meetings with known activist such as Vlodimir Jabotinsky or Icchak Grünbaum.³⁷⁹ In addition, Zionist ideas were propagated through courses and summer camps (*kolonie*).³⁸⁰ Within the framework of the organization operated the Jewish national funds, Keren HaYesod and Keren Kayemeth LeIsrael.³⁸¹ The organization had two affiliated youth movements, HaShomer HaTsair³⁸² and Herzliya.³⁸³ In addition, there was a women's section, later transformed into WIZO. Other organizations affiliated with this political party were the sport club HaKoach, the Tarbut Association and *Gimnazjum Humanistyczne*.

Zionist revisionists split from the organization in 1926 by the initiative of Jabotinsky. The Lublin branch consisted of the Local Committee and over 100 people. The party criticized Jewish religious, socialist and communist circles, as well as the Polish national circles and the Sanacja ruling power. Naturally, they were also in conflict with the General Zionists, sometimes escalating into physical violence and clashes during rallies and meetings. They were linked to two youth organizations: the Zionist Youth Union "Masada" (smaller) and Beitar, the latter counting some 120 members led by Natan Sztajman.³⁸⁴

³⁷⁷ The monthly membership fee was between 50 grosz and 1.50 zł. Ibid.

³⁷⁸ Led by Icchak Grünbaum.

³⁷⁹ Such meetings would attract between a couple dozen and even a few thousand people.

³⁸⁰ The first group of the *chalutzim* composed of six individuals left Lublin in 1925.

³⁸¹ The first one came from internal taxation of the members of the organization while the latter was supported by voluntary donations, and curiously chiefly managed by women: Bela Dobrzyńska, Szonbrunowa and Goldwagowa. Ibid.

³⁸² Led by Moteł Lewin. It counted some 150 members. See "Haszomer Hacair – struktura i funkcjonowania organizacji skautowej w dwudziestoleciu międzywojennym w Lublinie," Grodzka Gate - NN Theatre Centre, accessed 20.02.2022, <https://teatrnn.pl/leksykon/artykuly/haszomer-hacair-struktura-i-funkcjonowania-organizacji-skautowej-w-dwudziestoleciu-miedzywojennym-w-lublinie/>.

³⁸³ Both youth groups aimed at educational activity, teaching Jewish history and culture, geography of Palestine and Hebrew language.

³⁸⁴ "Żydowski Związek Skautowy im. kpt. J. Trumpeldora – struktura i funkcjonowanie w dwudziestoleciu międzywojennym w Lublinie," Grodzka Gate - NN Theatre Centre, accessed 20.02.2022, <https://teatrnn.pl/leksykon/artykuly/zydowski-zwiazek-skautowy-im-kpt-j-trumpeldora-struktura-i->

Poalei Sion-Right gained support prevalently among the leftist Jewish intelligentsia, workers, tailors, petty traders and shop keepers.³⁸⁵ The Lublin branch of the party had a negative approach towards the Bolshevik revolution in Russia, and in spite of being a small organization conducted relatively lively agitation activity, organizing meetings, rallies, lectures and academic events. They postulated: Jewish educational and cultural autonomy; awakening of the Jewish national awareness; the need to build a national home in Palestine with socialism as the guiding idea; and critique of Jewish left-wing organizations for not understanding the idea of Zionism. The party was linked to educational and cultural organizations such as: Freichat, Perec Library, Tarbut and the sport club HaPoel.³⁸⁶

Poalei Sion-Left was close to communism (it aimed at introducing the communist system in the Jewish state in Palestine and supported the USSR) and had minimal influence in Lublin, exerted only among Jewish workers of extremely leftist views.³⁸⁷ Poalei Sion-Left was in constant conflict with other leftist parties such as the Bund as well as Zionists. The Jugend organization³⁸⁸ aimed at shaping the youth in socialist spirit, similar to Tsukunft for the Bund; however, it was more extreme, leaning towards communism.

The religious Zionist Mizrachi, established in Lublin in 1920, had rather weak influence in the local Jewish community, as did the Folkists, whose local branch was founded in 1917. In addition, it is worth remembering that Jews constituted half of the small Communist party in Lublin.³⁸⁹ Other Jewish organizations in Lublin included Keren Kayemet, Keren Hayesod and Folksuniversitet.

funkcjonowanie-w-dwudziestoleciu-miedzywojennym-w-lublinie/#struktura-zydowskiego-zwiazku-skautowego-w-lublinie.

³⁸⁵ In 1926, the party had 100 members and was led by a Committee. In 1932, there were only 32 members and the Committee.

³⁸⁶ In addition, it was linked to youth organization HeHalutz, and from mid-20s also to HaShomer HaTsair. See "Poalej Syjon Prawica – struktura i funkcjonowanie Żydowskiej Socjalistycznej Partii Robotniczej Robotnicy Syjonu w dwudziestoleciu międzywojennym w Lublinie," Grodzka Gate - NN Theatre Centre, accessed 19.02.2022, <https://teatrnn.pl/leksykon/artykuly/poalej-syjon-prawica-struktura-i-funkcjonowanie-zydowskiej-socjalistycznej-partii-robotniczej-robotnicy-syjonu-poalej-syjon-praw/>.

³⁸⁷ The Lublin branch had approximately 200 members, including 80 members of the youth section called Jugend.

³⁸⁸ Judend published two newspapers: "Die Fraje Jugend" and "Jugend Fohen".

³⁸⁹ Horoch, "Socjalistyczny Powszechny Żydowski Związek Robotniczy "Bund" w Lublinie w latach 1918-1939 (główne problemy)," 227-236.

Literacy and Jewish Schools

In 1921, over 42% of the Lublin Jews could not read or write, in comparison to the average of 28% in other cities. The most illiterate social group were women over the age of 60 (59%), therefore born before 1860. The majority spoke Yiddish and were not well educated.³⁹⁰ However, the generation whose stories are analyzed in this book was the one to bring about a change. They attended schools where Polish was the main language of instruction or at least a mandatory subject, with the end being that they were, as Kamil Kijek puts it, “influenced by Polish high and mass culture.”³⁹¹

Lublin offered a variety of options for Jewish education, both religious and secular.³⁹² Two Talmud-Torah schools, and some hundred cheders were designed for mostly for religious boys,³⁹³ and in addition a number of private secular elementary schools functioned, for example, under the auspices of CISZO. Altogether, there were 15 Jewish secular schools in Lublin, including three *gymnasia*: *Gimnazjum Humanistyczne*, the so called *Szkoła Szperowej* (Szperowa’s School) and “Kultura”. Polish was the language of instruction; however, the classes took place on Sundays instead of Saturdays, and all the Jewish holidays were respected. To the regular curriculum, they added “Jewish religion” and Hebrew language.

Gimnazjum Humanistyczne was established in 1919, and in reality was composed of two schools located near each to other: one for boys and one for girls. The girls’ gymnasium was situated in Niecała 3 and boys’ in Radziwiłłowska 5.³⁹⁴

Gimnazjum Szperowej, established in 1916 by Szymon Szper and managed from 1919 by his widow, Róża Szperowa, was since 1925 the only coeducational Jewish high school.³⁹⁵ It was located in Zamoyska 12 and closed in 1933 as a result of a teaching rights check conducted by the state. The school’s rights were not found to be sufficient to prolong its activity, as it happened often for Jewish private schools.

³⁹⁰ Radzik, "Żydzi lubelscy w społeczności miasta XVI – XX w.," 86-87.

³⁹¹ Kijek, *Dzieci modernizmu*, 13.

³⁹² Jerzy Doroszewski, "Życie oświatowe społeczeństwa żydowskiego w Lublinie w latach 1918-1939," in *Żydzi w Lublinie. Materiały do dziejów społeczności żydowskiej w Lublinie*, ed. Tadeusz Radzik (Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS, 1995).

³⁹³ "Życie religijne lubelskich Żydów," Grodzka Gate - NN Theatre Centre, accessed 03.11.2021, <https://teatrnn.pl/leksykon/artykuly/zycie-religijne-lubelskich-zydow/>.

³⁹⁴ "Szkoły w Lublinie," Grodzka Gate - NN Theatre Centre, accessed 14.03.2022, <https://teatrnn.pl/leksykon/artykuly/szkoly-w-lublinie/#szkoly-kontynuujace-tradycje-szkol-powszechnych>.

³⁹⁵ Official name: Gimnazjum Koedukacyjnym Nauczycieli Szkół Średnich w Lublinie, see "Gimnazjum Szperowej w Lublinie (nieistniejące)," Grodzka Gate - NN Theatre Centre, accessed 14.03.2022, <https://teatrnn.pl/leksykon/artykuly/gimnazjum-szperowej-w-lublinie-nieistniejace/>.

After *Szperowa* was closed, one of its teachers, Chaim Glasberg, established another private gymnasium ("Kultura") in Niecała 6, where part of the *Szperowa* students were transferred. Until the outbreak of the war, the school shared its premises with a private Hebrew elementary school (Tarbut), which had its classes in the afternoon.³⁹⁶

Economy and Professions

The prevalent professions among the Lublin Jews were in the field of craftsmanship: shoemaking and tailoring were the leading ones. In 1939, out of approximately professionally active Jewish individuals, almost 5000 declared artisanship their profession, including 1726 shoemakers and 595 tailors. Other branches of artisanry counted three hundred or less professionals. The second largest professional group in the Jewish community was white-collar workers and tradesmen with 884 representatives.³⁹⁷

Jewish Cultural Life

Interwar Lublin was a scene of vibrant Jewish culture, expressed through various channels. First, the Jewish press published in Yiddish, Hebrew and Polish.³⁹⁸ Second, there was Jewish cinema and theatre.³⁹⁹ Moreover, Lublin was hometown to a few Jewish writers such as dramatist Jakub Waksman or poet Yankev Glatsztejn.⁴⁰⁰ Youth

³⁹⁶ "Szkoly w Lublinie."

³⁹⁷ The statistic data comes from Andrzej Jakubowski, *Historia Lublina w liczbach. History of Lublin in Figures*, Tables 113-114.

³⁹⁸ In the period 1916-1939, about 30 Jewish newspapers appeared in Lublin in Yiddish, Polish and, occasionally, in Hebrew. The first Jewish newspaper published in Lublin was the Polish *Mysł Żydowska* (1916-1918), which aimed at alleviating Christian-Jewish antagonisms, defending Jews against antisemitic attacks, and promoting coexistence based on mutual respect and understanding. The most popular were the daily *Lubliner Tugblat* and the weekly *Lubliner Sztyme*, which was published in Yiddish. *Lubliner Tugblat* was the first and the longest-published Yiddish-language local newspaper. A weekly *Lubliner Sztyme* was an organ of the Lublin Bund and had a clearly left-wing character. Other newspapers were more short-lived.

³⁹⁹ In the years 1916–1939, a total of about 30 silent and sound Jewish films produced in Poland and abroad were screened in Lublin. Most Lublin cinemas, in particular "Corso", "Rialto" and "Bałtyk", screened such films sporadically, mainly around Pesach. It was probably in "Bałtyk" where the *The Dybbuk* probably had its world premiere on September 20, 1937. Jewish plays were mostly staged in the former Old Theater (then "Pantheon Theater", "Powszechny Theater") headed by Trachtenberg, where such actors as Ida Kamińska, Jonas Turkow, Moris Szwarc, Dina Halpern, Rudolf Zasławski, Dżigan Szumacher and others were staged 2-3 times a week. In addition, amateur theatre groups were active both in schools and in various organizations.

⁴⁰⁰ Lublin never became an important center of Jewish literary life, but several Jewish writers came from the city. Among them was Jakub Waksman (a relative of Helena Grynspan), one of the most prolific

often attended Jewish libraries⁴⁰¹ and spend their free time in Jewish sport clubs, often related to specific political organizations.⁴⁰²

Lubliniacy – the Catholics

For the majority of the city's population, 1918 meant liberation from the yoke of Russian and then Austrian occupation. The Catholic inhabitants often emphasized the regained freedom through linking religion with nationality. This was expressed, for example, in their relation to the Orthodox churches built by the Russians.⁴⁰³ The Orthodox church on Aleja Raławickie was renamed the Roman Catholic garrison church, while another Orthodox church standing on the main city square was demolished and the material from the demolition was used to build the Soldier's House.⁴⁰⁴

Instead, new Catholic churches were built or expanded. In the Bronowice quarter, a new church (St. Michael) was erected. The Salesian monastery in Kalinowszczyzna was

Jewish dramatists of the time whose plays were staged in the "Pantheon" theatre, associated with the Hazomir Society; as well as poets Jakub (Yankev) Glatzstejn and Mosze Szulstajjn. Among the less known Jewish writers from Lublin, one should mention the doctor Gerszon Gabriel Lewin, Josef Hernhut, and Bolesław Warman. In addition, Lublin was a home to several Jewish female writers, such as Malwina Meyerson and her daughter Franciszka Arnsztajnowa, Anna Langfus and Zofia Grzesiak. None of them write in Yiddish but in Polish and (Langfus) in French. In addition, the locals attended meetings with famous Jewish authors such as: Szalom Asz, Perec Markisz, Melech Rawicz, Halpern Lejwik, Michał Weichert, Alter Kacyzne, Perec Hirszbejn, Marek Arnsztejn, Zalmen Zylbercwajg, Mosze Kulbak, Janusz Korczak, Urke Nachalnik. Probably the greatest event of this type was Chaim Nachum Bialik's visit to Lublin in 1931.

⁴⁰¹ There were few libraries with secular literature in Lublin, partly because of the strong influence of Orthodox Jewry and their aversion to modernity and secularity. One of such libraries was that of Kultur Liga, affiliated with Bund and possessing a collection of 3,000 books in Polish and Yiddish. In 1916, efforts were made to obtain permission to establish a Jewish public library. The library started operating in August and was endorsed by the local *kehilla*, it was located at Rynek 8, near its offices.

⁴⁰² The first sport club was the Jewish Gymnastic and Sports Association Szimszon, affiliated with the Zionist Organization, which existed in the years 1917/18-1920. Until 1939, a number of Jewish sports clubs operated in Lublin with various political affiliations and connections with all Jewish political parties in Lublin, among them: Makabi Jewish Gymnastic and Sports Society (the only non-partisan club), Jewish Sports Club Szomrija/ Jardenia (related to HaShomer HaTsair), Jewish Gymnastic and Sports Association Hakoach (united organizations), Hapoel Jewish Workers' Sports Club (Poalei Zion Right), Sztern Jewish Workers' Sports Club (Right Poalei Zion), ŻAR Sports Club, Workers Society of Physical Education Morgensztern (Bund).

⁴⁰³ See Jerzy Żywicki, "Adaptacje dawnych cerkwi na świątynie rzymskokatolickie w międzywojennym Lublinie," *Kwartalnik Historii Kultury Materialnej* 66, no. 3 (2018).

⁴⁰⁴ Mentioned, e.g., by Josef who speaks about having gymnastics classes there. See. p. 305.

expanded, a cemetery in Unicka St. gained a new chapel, later made a parish. Two new wooden churches were built in Krochmalna St. and Kunickiego St.

The Diocese

As a result of the partitions, the Chełm diocese was divided between Russia and Austria. The seat of the diocese was transferred to Lublin on August 20, 1801,⁴⁰⁵ an event followed by the formation of a new territory for the Lublin diocese and the abolishment of the Chełm diocese.⁴⁰⁶ Thus, the establishment of a new bishopric in Lublin coincided with the difficult political change – the beginning of Poland's partitions. The partitions influenced Church life in a considerable way. Apart from the changing of the borders of dioceses, the Russian authorities liquidated all the orders and imposed restrictions on religious observance. For over a hundred years, free pastoral activity, supplementing the parish network and creating new places of worship were not allowed, for fear of the promotion of Polish cultural-national values.⁴⁰⁷

Upon the establishment of the Second Polish Republic some major changes began to take place in the Lublin diocese: the parish network was reorganized and increased by creating nearly 100 new parishes and a number of church institutions. Moreover, in 1918 the Catholic University of Lublin was founded by Fr. Idzi Radziszewski, former rector of the Imperial Roman Catholic Theological Academy in St. Petersburg. It was tied to the diocesan structure, inter alia through the person of the great chancellor, who was supposed to always be the current bishop of Lublin.⁴⁰⁸ During the entire interwar period, Lublin's bishop was Marian Leon Fulman, Polish patriot and a supporter of the National Democracy.⁴⁰⁹

⁴⁰⁵ Bolesław Kumor, "*Granice metropolii i diecezji polskich (968-1939)*", *Archiwa, Biblioteki i Muzea Kościelne* 18 (1969), 326.

⁴⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 328. The new diocese included almost the entire former Latin diocese of Chełm, as well as small parts separated from the dioceses of Poznań, Płock and Łuck. At the time of its creation, the Lublin diocese covered an area of 23,250 sq. km and consisted of 330,000 people. It was divided into 17 deaneries and 214 parishes. "Historia archidiecezji," *Archidiecezja Lubelska*, accessed 07.11.2022, <https://archidiecezjalubelska.pl/o-archidiecezji/historia/>.

⁴⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰⁸ "Kościół Lubelski 1805 - 2005," *Biblioteka Uniwersytecka KUL*, accessed 05.11.2021, http://www.bu.kul.pl/kosciol-lubelski-1805-2005-historia-i-archiwalia,art_11482.html.

⁴⁰⁹ Arrested by the Germans under the so-called Sonderaktion Lublin, imprisoned in the Lublin castle in 1939, sentenced to death and transported to the concentration camp in Oranienburg-Sachsenhausen (1939–1940). After his release from Sachsenhausen, interned in Nowy Sącz (1940–1945). He died in Lublin on December 18, 1945.

The Catholic University of Lublin

The idea to establish a Catholic university among the Polish diaspora in St. Petersburg translated into the establishment of the organizing committee in February 1918 on the initiative of the above mentioned Fr. Radziszewski. In July 1918, the establishment of a Catholic university was approved at a conference of Polish bishops in Warsaw with the participation of the apostolic nuncio Achille Ratti, with the nomination of Radziewski to become its first rector. The Catholic university was supposed to conduct scientific research in the spirit of harmony between science and faith, educate a new generation of Catholic intelligentsia and raise the nation to a higher level of religious and intellectual life. These ideals were embodied in the motto of the university: "Deo et Patriae" (For God and Fatherland).⁴¹⁰

The first academic year was inaugurated on December 8, 1918 in the building of the Diocesan Theological Seminary in Lublin – the temporary seat of the University. At that time, four faculties were launched: Theology, Canon Law, Law and Social and Economic Sciences, and Humanities. In 1922, the University was transferred to its new seat, the building at Aleja Raławickie, a former Dominican Observants' monastery, transformed in the 19th century into a military hospital. The same year, the founder and first rector, Fr. Radziszewski, died. After him, the position was taken by Fr. Jacek Woroniecki OP (1922-24),⁴¹¹ then briefly by Fr. Czesław Sokołowski (1924-1925) and then Fr. Józef Kruszyński (1925-1933).⁴¹² The latter authored numerous books of an antisemitic character before being elected rector. Upon accepting the nomination, he was asked by the Cardinal of Warsaw, Aleksander Kakowski, to interrupt such nature of the publications. The last interwar rector was Fr. Antoni Szymański (1933-1939) whose interests involved mostly Catholic teachings on societal issues.

In the interwar period, many eminent scholars became involved in the Catholic University of Lublin, including theologians Fr. Gommar Michiels OFM and Fr. Jan Roth SJ, lawyers Cezary Berezowski, Zygmunt Cybichowski, Tadeusz Hilarowicz and Antoni Peretiatkowicz, linguists Jan Baudouin de Courtenay and Witold Doroszewski, archaeologist Kazimierz Michałowski, papyrologist Jerzy Manteuffel, historian Stanisław Smolka, literary historian Wiktor Hahn and architect Marian Lalewicz.

⁴¹⁰ "Powstanie Uniwersytetu," *Katolicki Uniwersytet Lubelski Jana Pawła II*, accessed 07.11.2022, https://www.kul.pl/powstanie-universytetu,art_49407.html.

⁴¹¹ A duke and a renowned Thomist. He was attacked by the right-wing for his lenient attitude towards the national and religious minorities.

⁴¹² Łysiak, "The Rev. Kruszyński and Polish Catholic Teachings about Jews and Judaism in Interwar Poland"; Łysiak, "Judaizm rabiniczny"; Michał Głowiński, "Trzy broszury antysemitki księdza profesora Józefa Kruszyńskiego," *Kwartalnik Historii Żydów* 2 (2016); Magdalena Zajkowska, "Ksiądz Józef Kruszyński jako ideolog antysemityzmu w II Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej" (MA diss., Jagiellonian University, 2016).

The Association of Catholic Academic Youth “Odrodzenie” (Eng. Revival), remaining in close cooperation with Catholic Action, and having an ecumenical inclination, had a strong influence among the students of the Catholic University. The main goal of “Odrodzenie” was the education of future social and political activists in the Catholic spirit, understood as preparation and formation of young people to participate actively in the life of the country in the future.⁴¹³ The Lublin branch was closely associated with Christian Democracy.⁴¹⁴

Other organizations attracting the students of the Catholic University, even taking over other student organizations,⁴¹⁵ were “Koło Młodych Obozu Wielkiej Polski” and “Młodzież Wszechpolska”, both belonging to the National Democrat spectrum. These organizations were hostile towards the perceived activity of communists and freemasons in Poland and the wider world as well as to the excessive development of Jewish trade and craftsmanship.⁴¹⁶ When Roman Dmowski, the leader of the National Democrats, called for the economic boycott of the Jewish businesses, the Youth Academic Union of “Młodzież Wszechpolska” implemented these directives in Lublin, in cooperation with the “Rozwój” association.⁴¹⁷ Both “Koło Młodych Obozu Wielkiej Polski” and “Młodzież Wszechpolska” supported the Green Ribbon League, a national organization established to introduce the economic boycott of the Jews.⁴¹⁸ Some students belonging to “Młodzież Wszechpolska” prepared “Informator Polski”, which included the addresses of all Polish companies and advertisements for Christian entrepreneurs.⁴¹⁹ In 1934, both organizations came under the influence of “Obóz Narodowo-Radykalny” (hereafter ONR), and subsequently the authorities of the University abolished all political academic organizations. However, nationalistic inclinations remained visible among students, for example during the pilgrimages to Częstochowa when the following slogans were written on the carriages of the trains going to Jasna Góra: “Down with Sanacja”, “Long live Roman Dmowski”, “Long live ONR”, “Long live

⁴¹³ Andrzej Luter, "Stowarzyszenie Katolickiej Młodzieży Akademickiej "Odrodzenie" w Wilnie jako prekursor ekumenizmu i dialogu katolicko-żydowskiej w Polsce," *Forum Teologiczne* 7 (2006), 126.

⁴¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 114.

⁴¹⁵ Marek Czyrka, "Związek Akademicki Młodzież Wszechpolska i Ruch Młodych Obozu Wielkiej Polski w Lublinie w okresie II Rzeczypospolitej," *Niepodległość i Pamięć* 16, no. 1(29) (2009), 120.

⁴¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 114.

⁴¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 115.

⁴¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 119.

⁴¹⁹ *Ibid.*

National Party”.⁴²⁰ These tendencies had a strong impact on the relations between the students of the Catholic University and the Jewish inhabitants of the town.

Religious Life

While the religious life of the Jewish community did not change significantly with the new political reality of independent Poland, the Catholics found themselves in a completely different situation. The Catholic Church in Poland was oppressed during the partitions, and many expressed opinions indicating the moral and spiritual fall of the Polish nation under the partitions. Thus, spiritual-religious life was supposed to resurge with the rebirth of free Poland; however, it faced many challenges.

Fr. Edward Walewander mentions such problems as the popularity of religious sects in the diocese, lack of knowledge of the catechism, reluctance of the clergy to get involved in pastoral care,⁴²¹ poverty and low moral standards.⁴²² Bishop Fulman encouraged diocesan priests to participate in associations and organizations for lay people. Many retreats and conferences were organized in the diocese in order to provide spiritual formation for the clergy and prepare them for these new tasks. Much emphasis was put on beautifying the liturgy as it was seen as a means of getting the attention of the faithful; a first step in the process of attracting them to engage with sacramental life. Pastoral care took various forms: missions, retreats, pilgrimages, promoting religious and moral values and socio-political content, engagement in cultural life, and establishing groups and associations for young Catholics.⁴²³ It is also worth mentioning that the catechism classes as well as daily prayers and attending Sunday mass were mandatory in public schools for all Catholics. Such regulations can be seen in the perspective of “spiritual rebirth” of the nation in independent Poland, understood as privileging the Catholic Church.

The Catholic community resources and infrastructure gradually increased during the interwar period. By the end of that time, the Catholic Church had seven parishes in the city, the oldest one being the Cathedral parish erected in 1832,⁴²⁴ the second oldest being St. Agnes parish (1866), and then (chronologically in descending order): the

⁴²⁰ Ibid., 120.

⁴²¹ Caused by the habits caused by the previously binding restrictions introduced by the Russian authorities.

⁴²² Edward Walewander, *Pedagogia katolicka w diecezji lubelskiej: 1918-1939* (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego, 2007).

⁴²³ Ibid., passim.

⁴²⁴ Before this, the main church of the town, so called *fara* in Polish, was St. Michael's parish, liquidated in mid-19th century.

Conversion of St. Paul (1884), St. Nicholas (1902), St. Michael Archangel (1921), the Sacred Heart of Jesus (1934) and St. Therese of the Child Jesus (1937).⁴²⁵

Historically, numerous monasteries and convents were located in the city; however, due to the anti-Polish politics of the Russian empire nearly all of them were dissolved.⁴²⁶ The churches were either transferred to the jurisdiction of the bishop, changed into Orthodox churches, or turned into secular buildings such as hospitals or military barracks. In the interwar period, some of the orders managed to receive back their former properties. The Capuchins returned to their monastery in 1919 but were not able to retrieve all of it before 1932.⁴²⁷ The Dominicans returned in 1938.⁴²⁸ Jesuits took over the former Bernardine church in 1920.⁴²⁹ All of this contributed to the animation of local religious life.

Political Parties

The first local government elections took place in February 1919 and they reflected the strong competition between the National Democrats and the PPS,⁴³⁰ with no decisive majority. In the by-elections of 1921, the socialists prevailed, but the first mayor of the city (Czesław Szczepański) represented the National Democrats. The next elections in 1927 changed the power balance: not only did the PPS and Jewish left-wing groups remain in power, but the president (Antoni Pączek) was also a member of the PPS. The change in political orientation of some members of the PPS led to an internal division and the dissolution of the Council in 1929 and in the meantime the function of municipal authorities was performed by government commissioner Józef Piechota (center, BBWR). In the next elections, which took place in 1934, the BBWR won, and

⁴²⁵ Information based on the data available on the Lublin Diocese website: "Parafie," Archidiecezja Lubelska, accessed 09.11.2022, <https://archidiecezjalubelska.pl/parafie/?litera=L>.

⁴²⁶ Such developments were typical not only for the Lublin region but in the entire occupied Polish lands. In the areas incorporated to Russia 423 monasteries (98.8%) and 76 convents (93.9%) were dissolved, and in the Kingdom of Poland 186 monasteries (98%) and 17 convents (23%). In the Prussian partition all the monasteries and convents were eventually dissolved, and in the Austrian partition ca. 64% of the monasteries and 50% of the convents. See "Kasaty zakonów i klasztorów," Encyklopedia PWN, accessed 09.11.2022, <https://encyklopedia.pwn.pl/haslo/kasaty-zakonow-i-klasztorow;3999996.html>.

⁴²⁷ "Historia," Kapucyni Lublin, accessed 09.11.2022, <https://www.kapucyni-lublin.pl/historia/>.

⁴²⁸ "Historia Bazyliki i Klasztoru," Lublin.dominikanie.pl, accessed 09.11.2022, <https://lublin.dominikanie.pl/klasztor/historia/>.

⁴²⁹ "Historia kościoła pod wezwaniem św. Piotra Apostoła w Lublinie," Kościół rektoralny św. Piotra Apostoła w Lublinie, accessed 09.11.2022, <http://swpiotr.lublin.pl/o-kosciele/>.

⁴³⁰ In the elections, the Jewish parties' loyalties were divided: socialist parties joined the left, orthodox ones the right.

thus the Council formed as a coalition of BBWR with Jewish folkists and elected Józef Piechota (also from BBWR) as president; after his death in 1937 he was succeeded by Bolesław Liszkowski, who held this position until the outbreak of the war.

Thus, one can easily note that on the level of the authorities, power belonged mostly to the left-wing and centrist parties. However, National Democrats were also very active,⁴³¹ especially among the students of the Catholic University. Other parties had less of an influence on the political life of the city.

Literacy and Education

In 1921, approximately 27% of the Catholic inhabitants of Lublin were illiterate;⁴³² thus, 15% more of the local Catholic Poles than the local Jews could read and write. In the first year after the war, 24 elementary schools and 12 *gimnazja* operated in the town. Soon, other secondary schools were established: two Jewish ones and two Polish ones, increasing the number of secondary schools to 17 in 1924. Most of them were private and not co-educational. The only public female secondary school was that of the Lublin Union (*Unii Lubelskiej*), while two schools – S. Staszic’s and J. Zamoyski’s secondary schools – were dedicated to the education of male youth. The private secondary schools for girls included W. Arciszowa, H. Czarnecka, W. Kunicki, A. Radzikowska, M. Sobolewska, R. Szperowa and the Congregation of the Ursuline Sisters. Those for boys were A. and J. Vetter, S. Batory (“Lublin School”) and “Biskupiak” (The Bishop’s secondary school).

In addition, a number of vocational and artistic secondary schools operated, including the Secondary School of Construction, transformed in 1932 into the High School of Roads, Construction and Melioration, and the Private Men’s School of Crafts and Industry. Moreover, the Moniuszko Music School was active from 1916 and the Fryderyk Chopin School from 1929. Fine arts were represented by the Free School of Painting and Drawing established in 1927 by the wife of famous painter Józef Mehoffer.

A number of academic and scientific associations were established in Lublin at that time, such as the Lublin Historical Society,⁴³³ the Lublin Society of Friends of

⁴³¹ Ewa Maj, *Narodowa Demokracja w województwie lubelskim w latach 1918-1928* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS, 2002).

⁴³² Andrzej Jakubowski, *Historia Lublina w liczbach. History of Lublin in Figures*. Table 99.

⁴³³ Initiated by medievalist and paleographer Leon Białkowski, professor of the Catholic University of Lublin, and director of the Lublin Archive.

Science,⁴³⁴ the Society of Lovers of the Polish Language and the Lublin Cultural Work Association.⁴³⁵

Cultural Life

For non-Jewish citizens, it was also a time of cultural revival on many levels: literary, artistic and musical.⁴³⁶ Cinema and theatre were popular ways of spending free time. Six cinema theaters operated in the city (“Corso”, “Apollo”, “Stylowy”, “Gwiazda” and “Rialto” which was also the seat of the Jewish theater).⁴³⁷ The Lublin Theatre initially staged primarily operettas and comedy, although after 1919 the new director introduced a more classic and ambitious repertoire.⁴³⁸ Cultural events were described and advertised in the local press, reflecting the major political divisions of the time.⁴³⁹

⁴³⁴ Established by a historian Zygmunt Kukulski, professor at the Catholic University, headmaster of the Stefan Batory Secondary School, who during the Second World War taught at Edinburgh University.

⁴³⁵ The latter two founded by Dr. Feliks Araszkievicz, a professor of the Catholic University, who devoted his research entirely to the culture and literature of the Lublin region.

⁴³⁶ The local people of letters centered around the literary journal *Reflektor* and organized themselves into the Union of Writers in Lublin, led by, among others, the above-mentioned Arnsztajnowa, the most famous local poet Józef Czechowicz and Józef Łobodowski (mentioned in Chapter 8). The activities of the Union reached a fairly wide audience thus impacting the entire local community. In addition, the Public Library of Hieronim Łopaciński was a local cultural hub. Fine arts bloomed even more than the literary life, with painters such as Józef Pankiewicz, Władysław Barwicki, Witold Bogucki, Alojzy Kuczyński, Stefan Terpiłowski, Tadeusz Śliwiński and two Jewish painters Symcha Binem Trachter and Henryk Lewenstadt.

⁴³⁷ Their repertoire included film screenings as well as revues and cabarets with the participation of recognized artists from the Warsaw scene, such as Hanka Ordonówna, Zula Pogorzelska or Ludwik Sempoliński.

⁴³⁸ The new repertoire included Wyspiański, Rittner, Szaniawski, Shakespeare, Moliere and Fredro. Numerous renowned Polish actors were invited to the stage of the Lublin theater, e.g., Ludwik Solski and Aleksander Fertner. From 1932, the activity of the theatre decreased leaving more space for the productions of visiting theater groups. They were hosted either in the Lublin theatre or in the summer theater Rusalka, where films were also screened, if needed.

⁴³⁹ Those which lasted throughout most of the interwar period were *Głos Lubelski* associated with the National Democracy and its counterbalance *Express Lubelski* close to Sanacja. Moreover, until 1921, the liberal *Ziemia Lubelska* was published. Other local newspapers were *Przegląd Lubelsko-Kresowy*, *Życie Lubelskie* and the biweekly *Życie Artystyczne*.

Part 3

Identity

Chapter 5

Introducing the Protagonists

This chapter aims at introducing the interviewees through their biographies, as presented in the stories. Due to their high number and the limited length of this study, I have decided to choose a sample group of 10 interviewees (approximately 20% of the group). Such a number is high enough to show the diversity of attitudes and life stories, while remaining feasible and not too long. Although the choice cannot but be subjective, it was far from random. It reflects in the best way the diversity of the group in terms of gender, age, social class, religiosity and the attitude towards the outgroup. Having said that, the reader should be reminded that the choice does not represent the actual ratio between various groups in interwar Polish society, just as the whole group of interviewees does not represent it.

This approach to biographies draws on prosopography⁴⁴⁰ in believing that understanding the biographies is necessary to correctly interpret the stories and their contextual significance. In particular, these approaches shed light on possible reasons for taking various positions on Jewish-Catholic relations, and the representativeness of these stories as collective memory. Another important presupposition is that memory and identity mutually shape each other and the stories play a crucial role in mediating this reciprocal influence.⁴⁴¹ In other words, they both reveal and shape the identity of the story teller, while both creating and preserving memories. The story told is always negotiated with the identity, and elements that do not fit are usually not included in the story.

Moreover, the biographies are recreated here, taking into consideration the notion of trajectory, introduced by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss⁴⁴² and then further

⁴⁴⁰ Prosopography is understood here as a collective biography, an investigation of the common characteristics of a group of people, whose individual biographies may be largely untraceable. In that sense, the biographies of the interviewees are seen as certain types of biographies, which to some extent and in some aspects can be extrapolated to the social groups they represent, and thus help to understand larger social dynamisms.

⁴⁴¹ See Chapter 1, p. 38-43.

⁴⁴² G. Glaser Barney and L. Strauss Anselm, *Time for Dying* (Chicago: Aldine de Gruyter, 1968).

developed by Fritz Schütze and Gerhard Reimann. In their understanding, a trajectory signifies disorderly social processes and the process of suffering as well as sequences of “cumulative mess”. They explain the category in the following way:

We have in mind social processes structured by conditional chains of events that one cannot avoid without high costs, constant breaks of expectations, and a growing an irritating sense of loss of control over one’s life circumstances. One feels that one is driven, that one can only react to “outer forces” that one does not understand anymore. There are conditions or seeds for an emergence of a trajectory (first just as a potential), a step of crossing from the sphere of intentional action to the sphere of just reacting, different phases a trajectory is passing through, and of course, there are ways out, too.⁴⁴³

Thus, the trajectory denotes processes that lay outside of one’s agency and (in the context of this study) involve trauma. While this concept helps to name processes released by traumatic events, and the resulting imbalance between one’s agency and the external structures that overwhelm the individual, it was developed in relation to a specific type of open autobiographic interview. While the interviews at hand are autobiographical in some aspects, they have a largely different structure, and thus the concept of trajectory can be applied only partially, as the actual trajectory is impossible to recreate and described in full.

To summarize these theoretical reflections, the biographies presented below are based on the interviews, taking into account the “cumulative mess” of the Second World War with all its tragic repercussions and consequences for the interviewees’ identities and the relationships to the Other. However, the category of trajectory plays only an auxiliary role. The core categories are those named above pertaining to the social position of every individual. Naturally, it is not possible to include here full biographies of these interviewees, even though each one of them deserves a separate book – or even better, a movie. One reason for that is the limited scope of the study, and another is that the stories do not reveal enough in order for the researcher to reconstruct full biographies. Very often, the focus is on the wartime and the period preceding it. Instead, the attempt is made to present portraits, taking into consideration specific features that could potentially influence their perspective such as: age,⁴⁴⁴ gender, character, values, socio-economic background, education, religious observance, political orientation and the relation to the outgroup culture. Moreover, in every case,

⁴⁴³ Gerhard Riemann and Fritz Schütze, “‘Trajectory’ as a Basic Theoretical Concept,” in *Social Organization and Social Process: Essays in Honor of Anselm Strauss*, ed. Anselm Strauss and David R. Maines (New York: A. de Gruyter, 1991), 337.

⁴⁴⁴ It seemed important to include both the oldest and the youngest interviewees as the age gap between them is significant and could have shaped their views to a large extent.

an attempt is made to identify the key events in their narratives, e.g., losing a parent at a young age, the experience of solitude in hiding, their professional role. As every interviewee becomes a narrator, identifying these events helps to see their position and its reflection in the story.⁴⁴⁵

The Group

As was already mentioned in Chapter 2 when introducing the sources, the body of interviews consists of interviews with 45 people, given in Polish. In addition, three oral testimonies in Hebrew, given to Yad Vashem, were used as an auxiliary material. The oldest of the interviewees was born in 1912 and the youngest in 1934. However, the vast majority of them were born between 1918 and 1931; therefore, the interwar period corresponds to their childhood and teenage years.

The horizons of memory of this generation are undoubtedly delineated by the World Wars, the most significant event being the Holocaust (for Jews) or the War (specifically the Second World War for Poles).⁴⁴⁶ In fact, when allowed to speak freely in the unstructured parts of the interviews, the vast majority of them gravitate towards the war years and focus on these memories, most probably because they are crucial for their life stories. However, as the interviewers are interested in the interwar Jewish history of Lublin, they ask a lot of questions regarding that particular theme and thus, a significant portion of time and attention is devoted to it. Sometimes, the wartime experiences are also a subject of the interviewer's interest, especially in cases mentioning hiding, escape or witnessing the Holocaust. Therefore, the structure of the interviews and the intention of the interviewers largely shape the stories.

Social Background of the Interviewees

The interviewees come from diverse social backgrounds. Most of them were born in Lublin, and the remaining few moved there in their childhood or youth. Among the Jewish interviewees, the majority came from middle class families owning businesses and/or properties that they rented out. Most of them were culturally Jewish with varying level of religious observance, but very few are defined as "pious", which in modern terms would correspond to Orthodox. The vast majority would speak Polish

⁴⁴⁵ For example, one interviewee lost her mother prematurely and she constructs her entire story from the position of an orphan, in which the cruelties of the war and genocide are not presented with equal emphasis as the loss of her mother.

⁴⁴⁶ By the War, the interviewees understand the Second World War.

at home; some mention speaking Yiddish. No one spoke Hebrew at home but a few men learned Hebrew at school. Politically, their families would be either Zionist or Bundist, sometimes with followers of both orientations among family members. Most of the Jewish interviewees aspired to study and have a university degree.

The Catholic interviewees differ from each other to a larger extent. They come from various social classes: working class, peasants, middle class or *intelligentsia*. Similar to their Jewish peers, many of them dreamed about education and professional development. They speak less about their level of religiosity but many of them mention personal prayer and commitment to some level of religious observance. Political persuasions too are less pronounced but many of them present themselves as patriots, some leaning towards the left-wing and some to the right. The dividing factor is definitely the attitude towards communism, which for many of them is negative. Some, however, seem to have found their place within the communist regime and speak with moderate appreciation.

The Lives after the War

The interviews were conducted when the interviewees were at an advanced age, and thus the interwar period is a far removed part of their life, the memory of which is shaped by their later experiences. All of the Jews emigrated from Poland and were found by the Oral History Program in either Israel, the United Kingdom or the United States. Their common experiences are the Holocaust and emigration. Catholics spent their entire life in Poland, usually with considerable time in Lublin. Many of them contributed to the local cultural life and industry development. The key experiences of this group were the Nazi occupation and the Communist regime.

More on Representation

While the choice of the Catholic interviewees can be considered somehow representative (although not exactly quantitatively) of the local population because of the diversity of the group, Jewish interviewees misrepresent their community. The vast majority of the Lublin Jewish community was traditional and Yiddish speaking, with the youngest generation being exposed to Polish to some extent, and the elites speaking Polish and Hebrew (Zionists). Among the interviewees, ten spoke Yiddish at home but three of them mention also Polish as the second language used at home, and one mentions Hebrew. Nine spoke Polish as their main language and a few mention not knowing Yiddish at all. Out of 23 of them, 11 came from families that they describe as wealthy, six from those defined as in the middle and only six from poor families. Even though it could be assumed that only a few were actually rich, the vast majority of “wealthy” were just a middle class, and the middle were in a modest financial situation

but just not extremely poor,⁴⁴⁷ it is still a very different composition than the majority of the Lublin Jewry, where the majority were seriously economically challenged.⁴⁴⁸

Similarly, they stand out from the local community in their approach to religion, as the majority were traditionally religious with strong Hasidic following. Among the interviewees, only one mentions following a Hasidic rabbi, and the majority subscribe to a cultural Judaism rather than a religious one.

One might wonder why such a reversed proportion exists in this group, and the answer undoubtedly lies in the history of the Holocaust. Although each survivor's story is different and there is much nuance that could be further discussed, the factors enabling survival favored, directly or indirectly, the secular, Polish speaking, well-off Jews. There were two main ways of surviving this genocide. One, which statistically proved to be more successful,⁴⁴⁹ was to escape to the Soviet Union, and another one was to hide on the Aryan side. Both ways required a specific set of skills and conditions.

Those who went to the Soviet Union were eventually deported to the gulags as Polish citizens. However, without knowing that in advance, many Jews chose to escape to the Soviet Union in the first weeks of the war. They were usually courageous, young and had both the energy and the money to organize the travel and provide the necessary material security for being in a new place. In addition, they were secular and it helped if they were not opposed to communism. Those who were poor had no means to pay for the journey and bribe the smugglers bringing them to the Soviet Union through the Bug river. Finally, they had to be strong and healthy enough to survive the deportation to the gulags and the period of slave labor there. Indirectly, this factor also favored people who were well-off before the war because they were less likely to have previously suffered from the numerous diseases caused by malnutrition, so their physical shape was better than those living in poverty.

⁴⁴⁷ Having in the background terrible poverty, those living in the two-room apartments are considered "in the middle" and those having three rooms or more an upper-ish middle class, in the context of a provincial city.

⁴⁴⁸ The exact percentage of those who lived in poverty is difficult and depends i.a. on the definition of poverty. Taking into consideration the living conditions, one notices that approximately half of the apartments in the 1920s consisted of one sole room (being at once the kitchen, the bathroom and the bedroom), a quarter of two rooms, and a quarter of three rooms or more, one can assume that if that was the average applying to both Jews and Catholics, at least 50% of the population lived in extreme poverty (one room) and another quarter in very modest conditions. Andrzej Jakubowski, *Historia Lublina w liczbach. History of Lublin in Figures*, Fig. 117, p. 106.

⁴⁴⁹ It is estimated that approximately 350,000 Polish Jews had survived the war of which ca. 200,000 were in the Soviet Union and between 13,000 and 60,000 on the Aryan side. The exact numbers are still debated. See, e.g., Eliyana R. Adler, *Survival on the Margins: Polish Jewish Refugees in the Wartime Soviet Union* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2020), 27-28; Krzysztof Persak, *Zarys krajobrazu. Wiek polski wobec zagłady Żydów 1942-1945* (Warszawa: Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów, 2011), 25.

When it comes to survival on the Aryan side, in hiding or under a false Catholic name, in order to succeed, one had to look and sound perfectly “Polish” – that is, to have fair skin, light eyes and hair and speak Polish without any accent. Finally, one had to have financial reserves to pay for false documents and usually every single favor needed to survive, including paying those who kept them in their homes.

Additionally, the way in which “the final solution” was implemented in some sense favored the survival of those who belonged to the local elite, if such a conclusion can be formulated regarding a community with a survival rate standing at less than ten percent.⁴⁵⁰ The Lublin ghetto was liquidated as one of the first, in March 1942, and approximately 26,000 people were transported directly to the Bełżec death camp and 1,500 shot on the spot.⁴⁵¹ The remaining 7,000 were transferred to the transition ghetto of Majdan Tatarski,⁴⁵² and these were mostly those who had some standing in the local community. A few of the interviewees escaped from that transition ghetto and one could assume with certainty that had they not been transferred there, they would not have survived.⁴⁵³ Therefore, their prewar social status helped them in this situation, increasing their chances to survive.⁴⁵⁴

Catholic Lubliners

Serafin

Serafin, born in 1913, is the oldest of the Catholic interviewees. He was ninety-two at the time of the interview and it is worth mentioning that he was not given much liberty

⁴⁵⁰ It is not clear how many Jews of Lublin survived but the number is low, probably about one or two percent. Adam Kopciowski indicates that the number of Lubliners who came back in the first months after the liberation was as low as fifteen people; Kopciowski, “Zarys dziejów Żydów w Lublinie,” 20. The numbers of available oral histories and testimonies of Jewish Lubliners is significantly higher than that; however, it is impossible to calculate the exact number.

⁴⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁴⁵² Kopciowski indicated that only 4250 of them did so legally; *ibid.*

⁴⁵³ Bełżec became the final destination for approximately 500,000 Jews and only 50 people are known to have escaped. When thinking about the probability of surviving the death camp, besides mere statistics, one ought to consider that the liquidation of the Lublin ghetto was unprecedented and thus the victims were surprised and had no knowledge about the real destination of their journey. They thought they are being deported eastwards. Thus, there is no information about the escapes from these first deportations.

⁴⁵⁴ The chances were still incredibly low but much better than for an average poor, religious, Yiddish-speaking Jew.

in freely developing plots; rather, the two interviewers guided the conversation and intervened often. This might be connected with the perceived problems with memory he mentions. However, there is no proof of that, as when allowed to speak, he presents events in an intelligible and detailed way. Similar to some other male interviewees, he focuses extensively on his career, which seems to be the most significant aspect of his identity. He is a good representative of those inhabitants of the town who came from the villages and smaller towns in the region and knew some aspects of Lublin very well, while not being aware of some others.

He grew up in a small village near Tomaszów Lubelski, approximately 130 km south-east from Lublin. He does not speak about his family background nor the beginning of his education. He only mentions that when he moved to Lublin in 1934 to join his brother in plane factory,⁴⁵⁵ he had no high school education. Serafin drops hints of complexes he had in his youth. He says that other workers had graduated from vocational schools and he did not fit it. He mentions being bullied because of that. In fact, probably in response to the feeling of inadequacy, he repeatedly refers to the drive he had for improving his qualifications and studying: "I was more occupied with myself, to gain as much knowledge as possible, as much education, as much value".⁴⁵⁶ This passion for self-development re-emerges multiple times in the interview.

His job defined his wartime fate. In 1940, as the employee of the Lublin aircraft factory, he was arrested by the Nazis and eventually sent to the concentration camp in Mauthausen to work in an aircraft factory there. However, before getting there he spent two weeks in the infamous prison at the Lublin Castle⁴⁵⁷ and in Warsaw. The name of the latter he does not remember but he mentions it was the famous one which suggests Pawiak, the largest Nazi political prison in occupied Poland. The ways out from Pawiak lead in two directions: to the concentration camps or to execution, and Serafin was lucky to follow the first path. He mentions the hardships of the journey to the camp, walking for days while not being given food, and the murdering of inmates on the way. However, he does not refer to the time spent in the camp itself, and the interviewers do not ask. Therefore, the trajectory of his suffering remains undefined.

After the war, he continued to work as a mechanic, including repairing motorbikes. In 1956 he opened a small factory producing hair spray compressors for hair dressers

⁴⁵⁵ Although he does not name it, it can be identified with the former Plage-Lańkiewicz factory, nationalized in 1935 and renamed the Lublin Aircraft Factory (Lubelska Wytwórnia Samolotów). The factory was the first of the kind in Poland.

⁴⁵⁶ OH GGNNTC Serafin Saj, 10-11.

⁴⁵⁷ The prison was controlled by the SS and the gestapo, and it is estimated that out of 60,000 inmates, the majority was exterminated. Zygmunt Mańkowski, "Wstęp," in *Wspomnienia więźniów Zamku lubelskiego: 1939-1944*, ed. Jadwiga et al. Chmielak (Warszawa: Wydaw. Min. Obrony Narodowej, 1984). Serafin states openly that he was sure he would not come out alive.

and then breast pumps for hospitals. The factory operated until 2000 when he retired at the age of 82. Importantly, he mentions that he was never interested in politics and never joined the party (communist party).

Serafin can be seen as a representative of a working class but also the population of rural origin who made it to the city. His interests were fueled by the aspiration to advance professionally, study and become a specialist in his craft. When asked directly about the Jews before the war, he describes in detail what he remembers from interwar Lublin (shops, Jewish presence in the city space). However, he states that the Jewish community simply did not interest him. He had his work and his ambitions and they lived very removed from his everyday experience. Such an approach is worth noting as it characterized many Polish Catholics. The Jews, with their distinct looks and culture, were seen but not given attention and the relations with them were not a subject of reflection, as people had their own problems and aspirations completely unrelated to the outgroup. The Jews were thus just a part of the background.

Barbara

Similar to Serafin, Barbara was not a native of Lublin and yet lived there for the most of her life. While Serafin came from the eastern part of the region, Barbara's roots were in Greater Poland, which was considered more civilized and prosperous. Unlike Serafin, she builds her story focusing on her family history, which sheds light on her approach to the past. While she acknowledges the significant events of the universal history, such as the Nazi invasion or the Holocaust, she does that in passing and as if she had a parallel life, influenced by these "big" events to some extent but detached from them at the same time. The events she pays attention to are her education and occupation, her wedding, the births of her children, the death of one them in infancy, her friends and acquaintances or various aspects of interwar reality such as food, clothes or transport. Numerous Poles assumed such an approach to the past, avoiding narrative confrontation with trauma. The atrocities were not spoken about. Therefore, it seemed important to include this "type" of remembering here.

This concentration on family history is so strong that she reveals some extremely important information, which could be relevant for an historian, only by chance, when asked. For example, when speaking about the war, she mentions that she and her husband hid Jews in the attic of their house, but she cannot say what happened to them in the end: "and then I don't remember what happened... Maybe we left or something happened". It is a very surprising approach to the past, as hiding Jews required a lot of courage; after all, it could have resulted in the death penalty. Thus, her not remembering the end of the story sounds very surprising as one would assume that it was an extremely stressful position and one would remember in detail how it felt and

was resolved. Barbara, however, does not, which could be explained by the notion of trajectory. She was thrown into events she could not control. It could be that it was so difficult to cope with all the war-related stress that she effectively repressed this part of her life. Another possibility is that she does not want to share the end of the story. Given her concentration on family in the story, the first answer seems to be probable. As many war survivors, she might have focused on her love for family and on the future to find energy to strive for a better life for her children in the difficult first decades after the war, and this the part she wants to remember.

Barbara was born in 1918 in Greater Poland and was orphaned by her mother in infancy. Thus, she was raised by relatives, first in her native area and then, from the age of 14, in the Lublin region of Niedrzwica, where she attended the seventh grade. There she was hosted by her uncle, a parish priest, and his sister who ran the house. Then, she was accepted to the gymnasium in Lublin, and first attended *Unia*,⁴⁵⁸ which proved to be very demanding, and then Arciszowa's gymnasium.⁴⁵⁹ Barbara's education was interrupted by the outbreak of the war, which postponed her graduation for twenty years. She started a family during the war and focused on daily duties which made it impossible for her to think about completing her education. She only did so in the 1960s when her children grew up and she felt a pressure resulting from her husband's high position – he was a director of a meat factory. Then, she undertook further studies and completed a master's degree in history of art at the Catholic University of Lublin in the early 1970s, and subsequently worked as a curator of exhibitions at the Art Exhibitions Office⁴⁶⁰ until retirement.

During the war, she worked as a waitress in her aunts' restaurant, where she practiced German, as the Nazis patronized the establishment. She was married in 1942 and left Lublin for Hrubieszów, where she stayed until February 1944 when they decided to flee in order to escape the massacres inflicted on Poles by the Ukrainians. In fact, this can be seen as the most drastic aspect of the war she directly refers to. The massacres of Poles in Volhynia and Eastern Galicia were carried out in Nazi-occupied Poland by the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) against the Polish minority in Volhynia, Eastern Galicia, as well as parts of the Polesia and Lublin regions from 1943 to 1945. The massacres are still vivid in the Polish collective memory because of their unprecedented

⁴⁵⁸ A prestigious female gymnasium.

⁴⁵⁹ One of the first female gymnasia, it was the most progressive female high school in the city, of patriotic character, ideologically related to PPS and ready to accept students from lower middle class. Barbara Kalinowska-Witek, *Kartka z dziejów oświaty lubelskiej. Prywatne Żeńskie Gimnazjum i Liceum Ogólnokształcące Wacławy Arciszowej w Lublinie (1912-1949)*, *Obrazy kultury polskiej* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS, 2012).

⁴⁶⁰ Biuro Wystaw Artystycznych.

cruelty and targeting of women and children, who were the majority of victims.⁴⁶¹ Barbara mentions that she left with her firstborn and came back to Lublin because “the Ukrainians were ravaging”.⁴⁶² She stayed in Lublin for a few months until the heavy bombing started in May (1944). Then, she went to Niedrzwica to stay with her aunt and uncle until the liberation.

When asked about fear during the war, she states that she was constantly afraid that her husband would be arrested, that they would be bombed or attacked by the partisans. She mentions that “great fear” accompanied her, but her story does not reflect that fear. Instead, one gets the impression of an optimist, full of initiative and positive attitude. Barbara does not openly speak about her feelings or motivations, but one can sense she has a very affirming approach to life. Even when speaking about the loss of her infant daughter, she does it with acceptance and placidity. Maybe this is one of the reasons why she does not dwell in the traumatic memories of the wartime but prefers to speak about positive things such as family relations or professional development.

The first postwar years are marked by frequent relocations. Following the work orders of her husband, the young family moved first to Lubartów,⁴⁶³ then to Puławy, Niedrzwica again and finally back to Lublin. The family life in Lublin is presented as stable and described without much detail. Instead, Barbara offers the depiction of her professional development at a mature age and reminisces about her youth as a gymnasium student. The way in which she remembers her classmate and friends suggests that she is a very sociable and active person. The growth of the positive features of her character might have been enhanced by the general sense of security. She had a stable economic situation throughout life, owing to her uncle’s comfortable position as a parish priest and then to her husband’s career. The support of her relatives accompanied her even in the hardships. She also mentions having nannies and help when raising children. All of the above conditions were privileges that the majority of the population could not access, and they might help explain her positive outlook on life.

Danuta

Danuta has one of the most interesting, detailed and multistranded stories in the collection. She speaks about her own family, her education and school companions, the

⁴⁶¹ The number of victims is estimated at 50,000 to 100,000 but the exact numbers and proportions are not known. The massacres can be seen as a response to the aggressive politics of Polonization of the region after Piłsudski’s death, from 1935 until the outbreak of the war in 1939.

⁴⁶² OH GGNNTC Barbara Rybicka. 2.

⁴⁶³ Before the war a vibrant center of Jewish life.

challenges of everyday life and Polish underground culture under the Nazi occupation, her work in the Stadtbibliothek at that time as well as the city's topography and the Jewish minority. The focus undoubtedly is on the interwar and wartime. In her youth, she was friends with numerous people who later became well-known penmen, journalists, television show hosts, musicians, etc., and she includes her memories about them. All of the above makes her story gripping. She speaks with a calm, pleasant voice and her use of language hints at a good education and intelligence. However, her facial expression is marked by suffering.

Danuta was born in 1921 in Frampol but moved to Lublin at the age of four and stayed there permanently.⁴⁶⁴ She does not speak about both her parents with equal attention: she puts emphasis on her father, stating that he was an appreciated organist who graduated from the Warsaw Conservatoire, a known patriot and community activist, and that the community commemorated him by placing a memorial plaque in the Bernardines' Church.⁴⁶⁵ One can infer that her mother worked at home but Danuta does not speak about it explicitly. She underscores that her childhood was very happy and that she had "a real family" with both parents present and three brothers. Her primary education too is presented as a pleasure. She claims that the preschool and elementary school she attended "felt like home".⁴⁶⁶ Then, she attended the "Unia" gymnasium,⁴⁶⁷ which she remembers with affection: "I had all the time good teachers, good form mistresses, good classmates with whom I keep in touch until today."⁴⁶⁸ In

⁴⁶⁴ With an exception of five years in Poznań after the war.

⁴⁶⁵ The family's parish church.

⁴⁶⁶ OH GGNNTC Danuta Riabinin. 2.

⁴⁶⁷ Today III Liceum Ogólnokształcące im. Unii Lubelskiej (Secondary School of General Education) in Lublin – a public high school founded in Lublin in 1921 named after the Lublin Union. The school was founded in 1921 on the initiative of Fr. Kazimierz Gostyński, blessed of the Catholic Church, Polish Catholic clergyman, educator, guardian of the scouting movement and martyr for the faith in KL Dachau (1942). Due to housing difficulties, the school moved three times, until in 1933 it received a building at 12 Narutowicza Street. In 1966, the school was renamed the III Liceum Ogólnokształcące im. Unii Lubelskiej in Lublin and moved to the building at Plac Wolności (Independence Square), where it still exists today. In the interwar period, it was a female gymnasium with a very high level of education and with students coming prevalently from the families of the public administration employees as they had a significant reduction in the tuition fees. Danuta mentions that only a small percentage of students came from a different background (OH GGNNTC Danuta Riabinin, 13).

⁴⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.

fact, at school she became friends with Anna Kamińska⁴⁶⁹ and Julia Hartwig.⁴⁷⁰ She devotes considerable time to descriptions of “Unia” and various details of the school life such as the special events, the uniforms, moral standards, etc.

At the outbreak of the war, she left Lublin for a few weeks to avoid heavy bombardment of the city; luckily so, because it turned out that the bombs partly destroyed her family home and wounded one of her brothers. When she came back to the city in October (1939), the family had problems finding a new home. She recalls numerous people being in the same situation. Thanks to the kindness of some acquaintances, the family moved to the library of the Catholic University, which was soon renamed Stadtbibliothek and closed for the non-German public. However, the staff was almost exclusively Polish.⁴⁷¹ Danuta does not mention how exactly she got a job there but she mentions how much she loved it, and most importantly that it protected her from being deported to the labor camps in Germany “because the Germans were already transporting them from the age of sixteen” and she was older than that. Thus, she spent the entire occupation working there.

She recalls that although the head of the library was a German Ukrainian,⁴⁷² he turned a blind eye to many patriotic activities organized by the librarians, who turned the library into a hub of clandestine Polish cultural events as well as a secret printing house for Polish propaganda leaflets. In addition, the librarians tried to save as many books as possible from being looted and exported to Germany. Danuta mentions that the book collection from the Yeshivas Chachmei was at some point kept in their library and until 1924 the library employed a rabbi to catalogue them, and some other Jews as physical workers. In addition, she remembers the Polish janitor who hid them as long as he could.

When speaking about the wartime, she highlights the fear and the shock, especially during the first year of the war, but in the account, she focuses on the survival strategies: how they overcame fear and depression and found ways to get the most basic products such as food. Danuta elaborates on the “soft” resistance during the occupation: the

⁴⁶⁹ Anna Kamińska (1920-1986) was a Polish poet, writer, translator and literary critic who wrote fifteen books of poetry, two volumes of "Notebooks", three volumes of commentaries on the Bible, and translations from several Slavic languages as well as from Hebrew, Latin and French. In 1948 she married Polish Jewish poet and translator Jan Śpiewak.

⁴⁷⁰ Julia Hartwig-Międzyrzecka (1921-2017) was also a poet, writer and translator, and a sister of a prominent Polish photographer Edward Hartwig. She published numerous books of poetry and translations of i.a. Guillaume Apollinaire or Sylvia Plath. She also authored many radio broadcasts in the period 1952-1969. She married Artur Międzyrzecki, also a poet and translator.

⁴⁷¹ The administration was German but the librarians were Polish.

⁴⁷² The Ukrainians collaborating with the Nazis had very ill reputation. The Poles saw them as extremely cruel and hateful.

organization of various clandestine cultural events and secret classes in which she was involved. She calls it “rescuing ourselves from the hopelessness of the occupation” and “the tragedies that happened continuously”.⁴⁷³

However, she mentions also the painful and scary moments: the Soviet invasion, the German roundups (*łapanki*), sending food parcels to the inmates of the concentration camps and the first time the smoke from the Majdanek camp reached the city: “once terrible smokes appeared over the city, so acrid... and people say <<They are burning people>>. No. It is not possible that they are burning people... but later... we know from these Polish prisoners... we knew it was true.”⁴⁷⁴ Danuta adds that they did not know about any other extermination camps or the Soviet crimes at that point; they were only aware of the concentration camps where their acquaintances were, e.g., Ravensbrück. Moreover, she explicitly comments on a specific approach to the past: “When one suddenly finds oneself free, one gets back the family, then really one wants to leave it all behind”.⁴⁷⁵ As confirmed by countless cases of survivors, many chose not to speak about the war atrocities but to move forward and forget.

Her approach to the Jews can be called very open-minded, taking in account the context. When speaking about the interwar period, she describes her Jewish classmates with warm words, mentions that the family doctor was Jewish and that “almost every family had their Jew”.⁴⁷⁶ She also recalls how she confronted the economic boycott of the Jewish shops and kept on shopping there. Moreover, she relates her memories of the Jewish quarter, the characteristic Jewish foods and Jewish looks. She also utters words of critique towards the book “Mój Lublin”, which in her opinion presents a one-sided view of the Jews. One can infer she means that the Jews were not only poor and oppressed but some of them were prosperous and influential.

In the context of the war, she expresses compassion and pity towards the Jews, stating that it is “a nation whose fate is tragic since the beginning almost until the end. Even when they lived to see their state, always wars and wars”.⁴⁷⁷ She remembers distinctly how Jews flooded the streets, terribly terrified, and recalls the words of her mother-in-law: “they begged to be saved, to keep them safe, and that they will give all their possessions and valuables”, but immediately she comments that it was not possible unless someone looked “Polish” and even then, it was possible only for a certain amount of time; then “they started disappearing”.

⁴⁷³ OH GGNNTC Danuta Riabinin, 4.

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid., 30.

⁴⁷⁵ Ibid., 31.

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid., 16.

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid.

Importantly, when talking about the Holocaust, she refers to the anti-Polish discourse in the West: “It is such a great misunderstanding what the West is trying to attribute to us...”⁴⁷⁸ By that “what” she means the idea of Polish complicity in the Holocaust, something that, based on her experience, is beyond her ability to understand.

Danuta was married in 1945 and left Lublin for five years. Her postwar life is not included in the story; however, she says enough to learn that she married a man from a family well respected in Lublin who was talented in music, but eventually both of them studied biology (she also mentions ecology). It is important to note that her husband came from a Christian Orthodox background and that in general Danuta displays very positive attitudes towards religious minorities (e.g., her classmates), always speaking about them with interest and respect. It might be that her personal values and character traits, as well as being brought up in an *intelligentsia* family, make her particularly open-minded; being married for decades to a representative of a religious minority might have strengthened these qualities as well. Her own religiosity is alluded to a few times in the interview, and one can infer that she liked to pray in her youth. Nonetheless, she does not speak about it extensively, making it hard to assess how much it influenced her attitudes.

Kazimierz⁴⁷⁹

The thematic axis of Kazimierz’s story is the military. He speaks from the position of an officer, a Grey Ranks⁴⁸⁰ member and son of a non-com, and service in the military seems to have had an enormous impact on his family life for at least two generations.

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid., 19.

⁴⁷⁹ No audio or video recordings of the interview were available so the analysis refers exclusively to the transcription.

⁴⁸⁰ Grey Ranks (*Szare Szeregi*) was the underground paramilitary Polish Scouting Association (*Związek Harcerstwa Polskiego*) during the Second World War. The name was used since 1940. Although they were formally independent, in practice they worked under the Government Delegation for Poland and the Home Army Headquarters. The Grey Ranks headquarters were known under the cryptonym *Pasięka* (Eng. bee yard). The tasks of the Grey Ranks varied according to the age and gender of the scouts. The youngest *Zawiszacy* (below the age of 14) studied in secret and prepared to hold auxiliary functions, for example during the Warsaw Uprising they served in the military mail. The older ones *Bojowe Szkoły* (age 15-17) served in minor sabotage and the oldest (age 18 and above) took part in the major diversion operation and combats. The Girl Guides worked as nurses, liasons and munition carriers. *Kamienie na Szaniec* (*Stones for the Rampart*) by Aleksander Kamiński, describing some acts of sabotage and armed resistance carried out by the Grey Ranks, is a mandatory reading in the elementary school, and thus the organization has a strong position in the collective memory. Very often they are commemorated for their heroism during the Warsaw Uprising.

His first memories recalled in the story are the preschool in the Officers' Club⁴⁸¹ and the death of the marshal Piłsudski, called by him "*dziadek*" (grandpa),⁴⁸² which foreshadows the main theme of his oral history, a persisting strong identification with the military. The lion's share of the story pertains to the wartime and its consequences.

Kazimierz was born in 1928 in Lublin and lived there for the most part of his youth. After the war, he left and spent the majority of his life in Warsaw. His father was a legionary in Piłsudski's legions and fought in the 1920 Battle of Warsaw. Kazimierz mentions that because of his participation in the legions he was also delegated to take part in the funeral of the marshal. When Piłsudski died, Kazimierz remembers that the entire family cried. He also recalls numerous portraits of Piłsudski hanging in every room of their apartment, which clearly indicates a veneration of the leader. His mother was a trained post office clerk and the family's economic situation was stable. They occupied a two-room apartment before the war, which indicates a lower middle class status.

The wartime lot of the family was not as dramatic as in some other cases but nonetheless difficult. His father was mobilized in 1939 and Kazimierz with his younger brother and sister stayed with their mother. Because she worked in a state-owned company, as soon as the Nazis took over, she was left without work, and soon received a work order to move to Krasnystaw⁴⁸³ and work in a tobacco factory. She could not take the children with her, and left them with the sisters of their father. Thus, Kazimierz spent the entire war living with his aunts, illegally because he was registered in Krasnystaw with his mother. All the family members survived the war. However, his father never came back to Poland because of the communist regime. Having a father abroad, who used to be a member of the Home Army, was troublesome for his children as it was very politically sensitive. Kazimierz managed to hide that for his entire career.

As the family did not correspond with him, Kazimierz searched for him after the war and managed to locate him only in 1948 or 1949, almost a decade after he left. He had stayed in London, where he started a new family, and Kazimierz's brother managed to escape and join him in 1952. Kazimierz only met him in 1979, after forty years. He describes the meeting as very awkward and lacking in conversation topics. According to the story, his mother never remarried. It can be inferred from the story that one of the reasons why the Grey Ranks and later the military was so important for Kazimierz could be his father's occupation. Following in his footsteps was his only way of relating to this absent parent and finding a family-like community. In fact, Kazimierz does not

⁴⁸¹ A preschool for children of soldiers of various ranks, not only officers, was located there.

⁴⁸² The term *dziadek* was very popular in Polish society when referring to Piłsudski, and denotes close emotional ties of the large sections of society to this political leader.

⁴⁸³ A town in the Lublin region.

speak about his wife and children. He barely mentions their existence and they play no part in the story.

Instead, he speaks about the Grey Ranks and their actions during the war. He also describes his education and career path. Kazmierz attended *ćwiczeniówka*, a school of exercises, run by the teachers' seminary, known for the high level of education, and later, after the war, a car high school for working adults in Warsaw. Then, he joined the mandatory military service and because of his education, was kept in service. As an officer, he was able to study at a polytechnic and later the Military Technical Academy.⁴⁸⁴ He stayed in the army until retirement. When retired, he started to write about the history of the Grey Ranks and Polish Scouting. This turn highlights how important belonging to the organization was for him.

Kazmierz can be seen not only as a representative of the soldier's family (like Edward, for example, whose story is described below) but also as a person who implemented a specific, widely spread, approach to patriotism. He is related to the *Sanacja* regime through his father and follows the ideals instilled by the youth organization he joined, similar to the total engagement shown by Josef (also portrayed below) in the Bund. Both of them are good examples of the politization of the youth during this period. Moreover, the story of Kazmierz reflects the story of thousands of families who suffered on the account of their family members being in the Polish Home Army. Although Kazmierz himself does not mention any physical persecution, he mentions being harassed in the army because of that, a hint as to how such people were treated during the communist era. Their family stories were dangerous to be shared. In addition, the fact that his father served in the Home Army dismembered his family, due to him not being able to return and the family not being able to leave Poland. The emotional toll this took on him is never explicitly admitted but due to the seriousness of the situation, one can assume it was heavy.

When it comes to his attitude towards Jews, one could say that it was neutral in situations of peer interactions⁴⁸⁵ but informed by prejudice. Kazmierz refers, for example, to the blood libel and explains that as a child he believed it: "Sir, the adults joked and we took it for real".⁴⁸⁶

⁴⁸⁴ Wosjkowa Akademia Techniczna.

⁴⁸⁵ He described playing with Jewish neighbors (p. 313-314): OH GGNNTC Kazmierz Jarzembowski, 27-28. See <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/118741/edition/113065>, 23.02.2023.

⁴⁸⁶ OH GGNNTC Kazmierz Jarzembowski, 27.

Bogdan

Bogdan is the youngest interviewee, with whom two interviews were conducted, one in 2012 and another in 2013. His story is heavily colored by the fact that he grew up among Jews and his family closely dealt with the outgroup, which according to his story made them identify with them much more than the average Catholic Pole would. For example, when they were about to be evicted by the Germans from their home (when the ghetto was established), he mentions they had a chance to pick another (still inhabited) apartment belonging to the Jews, before the latter were relocated to the ghetto. His parents refused to pick apartments where Jews were still living, and rather chose a flat which had been already abandoned. It might be just a sign of decency but Bogdan makes a direct and explicit connection between the decision and the feeling of solidarity with the Jews. In addition, he mentions being interviewed by Polish Americans and says that some Poles⁴⁸⁷ claim he is Jewish because of his positive attitude towards the Jews. Thus, his position in the interviews studied here could be described as “a friend of the Jews”, and given his own comments on that, it could be assumed that this position is a conscious creation. It is also worthwhile mentioning that as an openly Jewish-friendly person he stands out among the interviewees. Even if no other Catholic interviewees display such intense declarative identification with the Jews, some elements of his attitude can be found among others, and thus his story seems to be significant in the context of this study.

His account focuses mainly on the interwar and wartime. He mentions briefly his elementary school (nr 19) and his occupation in adult life (building administration in a municipal real estate cooperative) and the fact that he published articles about the liberation of Lublin. He speaks about the latter in a way suggestive of supporting the communist system; however, there is no direct indication in the story that he was a member of the party or its supporter. It is also hard to define his religious-political worldview at the time of interview.

The way he constructs the story reveals a talent for storytelling. He includes a lot of details and funny anecdotes that make the account very enjoyable for the reader and suggest his jovial and jaunty personality. In comparison to other Catholic men, he devotes considerable time to describing interpersonal relations and offers a less “historical” and more people-oriented version of events. Below, a brief reconstruction of his biography is included.

He was born in 1934 on Krawiecka Street, one of the poorest areas of Jewish Lublin, where very few Catholic Poles lived. His father was a roofer working for a Jewish company and his mother was a homemaker. From 1936 or 1938, she became a co-

⁴⁸⁷ It is not clear if he means the Polish American interviewers or someone else.

owner of the building they lived in, serving as a janitor of the house when needed. All the other five or seven owners of the house were Jewish. Bogdan had one older brother and the family had a stable financial situation, in contrast to the majority of their neighbors.

At the beginning of the war, on September 3, 1939, he was wounded by shrapnel and suffered resulting complications for an extended period of time. Bogdan mentions that although he was very young the war experiences “were engraved” in his memory and he can remember them particularly well. One such event is the gestapo raid on the family home in Krawiecka Street when he was five years old; the Nazis were looking for a runaway, and beat his mother and shot their dog in front of him.

He also recalls numerous executions and murders he witnessed in that period. For example, he refers to the public executions that Polish school children (and other citizens) were forced to watch. He says that this is one of the reasons he would not go to school very often. He claims that the Nazis would often raid the schools and take the pupils to watch executions. The atrocities, however, were seen everywhere. His home from 1940 or 1941 was outside of the ghetto, in front of the main gate of the ghetto on 10 Lubartowska Street.⁴⁸⁸ Therefore, the family unwillingly witnessed the liquidation of the ghetto in March 1942 as well as all the preceding violence taking place in the vicinity of the gate. In particular, he mentions a few mass murders such as the murder of the patients of the hospice in Cyrulicza Street. Moreover, he was an eyewitness to the piles of bodies immediately after the massacre at Lublin Castle in 1944.⁴⁸⁹

Although he speaks about these events in a calm, emotionless way during the interview, he mentions the impact they had on his childhood. He recalls nightmares and insomnia caused by flashbacks. Undoubtedly, the war trauma stayed with him until the end of his life, even though he does not show its signs in an emphatic way. However, the mere fact that he devotes at least fifty percent of the interview to speaking about

⁴⁸⁸ Nowadays 16 Lubartowska Street.

⁴⁸⁹ The massacre took place on the morning of July 22 while the Red Army was approaching. The Nazis murdered approximately 300 of 1400 inmates before they received the order to evacuate themselves at noon. It was the first case of the extermination of the inmates of a Nazi prison in Poland during their retreat in reaction to the Soviet offensive. Other similar cases were in Łódź Radogoszcz, where 1500 inmates were burned alive and in the Mokotów prison in Warsaw where approximately 600 victims lost their lives, or Sonnenburg where approximately 800 people were exterminated. See Zygmunt Mańkowski, Róża Bieluszko-Świechowa, and Klub Byłych Więźniów Politycznych Zamku Lubelskiego i "Pod Zegarem", eds., *Hitlerowskie więzienie na Zamku w Lublinie 1939-1944* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Lubelskie, 1988).

the wartime points to how formative this experience was for his entire life.⁴⁹⁰ Importantly, he speaks much more about the war with the older interviewer.⁴⁹¹

Jewish Lubliners

Before presenting portraits of the chosen Jewish interviewees, it seems important to briefly introduce the characteristics of this generation of Polish Jews in general. Kamil Kijek situates their generation within the framework of modernism, highlighting that by the time this generation reached adulthood, modernism had entered into its final and radical phase, characterized by the strong politicization of social life.⁴⁹² Therefore, the socialization of young Jews in Poland also had a political character and took place through engagement in various political parties. Symptomatically, it was not a matter of belonging to a specific party and endorsing a specific ideology as much as political activism as a way of becoming a part of society, and finding one's place within it. This tendency to socialize through political belonging is strongly reflected in the oral histories, as most of the Jewish interviewees mention political organizations they belonged to.

Another key feature is the importance of Polish language and culture in both modernization and integration. The main platform of interaction with non-Jewish peers and the state's ideology was elementary schools, and in fact those who attended mixed schools, with outgroup classmates and teachers, very often exhibit in the stories a friendlier attitude towards the outgroup as a whole. One explanation, following Kijek's thought, would be that Jewish children who went to the mixed schools with Polish as the language of instruction were Polonized and simply integrated better into Polish society because of the exposure to Polish language, culture and the politics of identity. In short, they were more Polish than other Jews so they identified with the outgroup to a certain extent.

Another possible explanation refers to social psychology findings regarding intergroup contact. On the one hand, being classmates creates space for starting friendships. Pettigrew and Tropp mention indirect effects of cross-group friendships in

⁴⁹⁰ However, the structure of the interview makes it difficult to describe the trajectory – the dynamism of the processes he experienced.

⁴⁹¹ There were two different female interviewers conducting the interviews. The earlier one was conducted by someone who can be considered an experienced oral historian and the later one by a younger woman. It is noticeable that Bogdan opens up more in the earlier interview.

⁴⁹² Kijek, *Dzieci modernizmu*.

decreasing prejudice towards the outgroup.⁴⁹³ On the other hand, even if friendship were not initiated, superficial (extended) contact has also proven to have positive effects in decreasing intergroup prejudice. Zhou et al. state that “extended contact disseminates easily through avenues like personal conversation, observation, and mass media; in fact, merely perceiving that in-group members have cross-group friends is enough to improve intergroup attitudes.”⁴⁹⁴ Thus, one can infer that even for those who did not engage in intergroup friendships, the awareness that their friends had outgroup friends in addition, to having occasional conversations and sitting in the same classroom (and being treated equally by teachers), had a positive impact.

Finally, through participation in Polish culture, Jewish youth very often found a means to detach themselves from traditional Jewish culture and manifest their progressiveness. Some interviewees point to the importance of the Polish language in separating themselves from the older generations and becoming a part of “the modern”. Thus, even if they did not necessarily identify with Polishness for patriotic reasons, Polishness mediated progress: secular education, modern lifestyle and access to social promotion.

Mira

Mira was born in 1914 in a conservative, observant Jewish family, survived the war in the Soviet Union and moved to Israel in 1947. Her account is very rich in details describing her life, family members, friends and neighbors, Jewish cultural life in interwar Lublin, particularly the initiatives organized by Kultur-Lige,⁴⁹⁵ and her postwar life. Her memory is quite remarkable as the two interviews with her were conducted in December 2006, when she was ninety-two.

Although her way of speaking is a bit disorganized – she often stops in the middle of a word or leaves sentences unfinished, her grammar is sloppy and she often interjects words in Russian and Hebrew – she is very detailed and there is something very positive and hopeful in the way she constructs the story. She speaks with energy and without self-pity or even much sadness as if the meaning of the story was positive, in spite of all the disasters that have happened to her. In fact, she repeatedly refers to a mysterious force that saved her. When referring to her wartime experiences she states: “It was... as

⁴⁹³ Thomas F. Pettigrew and Linda R. Tropp, *When Groups Meet: The Dynamics of Intergroup Contact* (New York: Psychology Press, 2011), 120.

⁴⁹⁴ Shelly Zhou et al., "The Extended Contact Hypothesis: A Meta-Analysis on 20 Years of Research," *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 23, no. 2 (2019), <https://doi.org/10.1177/1088868318762647>.

⁴⁹⁵ A cultural organization run by the Bund.

if someone arranged it so that I could stay alive” and “I don’t know, it was some angel, which guarded me. I had a lot of happenings in life, terrible happenings and there always was, was something that they rescued me, that it ended up well for me.”⁴⁹⁶ This sense of being protected creates and gives a meaning to her suffering.

She did not know her father, who died when she was one year old, and family life was marked by financial hardship as her mother, a young widow, tried to make ends meet. Mira’s mother had her own small grocery shop located on the ground floor, where the family also lived.⁴⁹⁷ Mira had an older sister, who for most of their childhood lived with grandparents because of the difficult family situation, and later a younger half-brother from her mother’s second marriage. In fact, the second marriage of her mother significantly improved their situation because the husband was a relatively prosperous timber wholesaler.

Mira started her education in Borawska’s elementary school,⁴⁹⁸ which was dedicated to Jewish girls, but the entire education took place in Polish. Mira remembers that her fast progress and successes in learning quickly earned her the nickname of “iron head.” Then, she attended *Gimnazjum Humanistyczne*. She planned to continue her education in Paris at the Sorbonne but needed to earn some money first to cover the tuition there; thus, she opened her own kindergarten, which according to her words was very popular. She describes herself as having many friends and acquaintances and being active in youth organizations such as HaShomer HaTsair (Zionists) and in various groups under the auspices of the Bund. One can infer that she was very resourceful, had a sense of humor and an optimistic outlook on life; for example, she thought the war would not last long. She states that her goal in life was to study.

She left Lublin after three or four months of the German occupation – that is, in December 1939 or January 1940 – and escaped to Brest (then part of the Soviet Union) where she had numerous relatives; there, she reunited with her fiancé and was married. She remembers that the first months there were comfortable. Her grandparents bought them apartment and she became pregnant. She also had friends there and life went on as usual, until they were asked if they wanted to receive Soviet citizenship, and they refused. She mentions specifically that they were curious to stay and see the communist cities, as they were of socialist persuasion themselves. What was bothering them was the potential problem of coming back to Poland to join their relatives, and thus their refusal of Soviet citizenship. In result, she and her husband, along with two other couples from Lublin, were deported to the Komi Republic and spent the war there in

⁴⁹⁶ OH GGNNTC Mira Shuval, 3.

⁴⁹⁷ Such small shops serving also as the family dwelling are described in chapter 7.

⁴⁹⁸ Where attended also Róża Fiszman-Sznajdman; see Fiszman-Sznajdman, *Mój Lublin*, 68nn.

a lager. She lost her firstborn there, and then had another two children who survived. When, as she says, “Poland joined the Soviet union in fighting the Nazis”,⁴⁹⁹ they were allowed to go back to Poland. They reached Lublin upon its liberation, and continued westwards and settled for a short time in Wrocław.

Mira remembers a very hostile reception in Lublin, where they were threatened by the Polish railway clerks: “If you are Poles, welcome, but if you are Jews we will butcher you.”⁵⁰⁰ In fact, her husband was murdered in the Kielce pogrom in 1946, on his way back from Lublin after having sold the family properties. Mira mentions that she never knew what happened to that money. After this tragedy, she decided to join others on their way to Palestine. Most of the way they walked on foot and reached Marseille to embark on a ship, which brought them to Haifa in 1947.

In Israel, she was sent to a kibbutz connected to the organization HaShomer HaTsair, because of her earlier involvement with it. She was politically active in left wing organizations, remarried in the 1960s and moved to Haifa again. By the end of her life, she lived in another kibbutz. A large part of her story in Israel is the account of her arrival and settling in, and the story of her prematurely deceased daughter.

Perhaps the most interesting and complex aspect of her story is her attitude towards Poles and Polishness. She recalls how in spite of speaking Polish with her peers and aspiring to “be like Poles” she felt a profound connection to her Jewishness, while the Polish language was just a tool of cultural assimilation:

We [with friends] spoke Polish. I spoke Yiddish only at home. As soon as I went out onto the street, I no longer spoke Yiddish, but Polish. We learned Polish, we spoke, it was accepted. We lived in Poland, we wanted to be like Poles. [I felt] Jewish! Jewess! I did not feel Polish. Jewish, but I spoke Polish. It was a language that I studied, my education [was] in Polish, but I was Jewish. We had a traditional house. On Saturday, when something broke, [for example] my stocking, I was not allowed to sew. But when I was an adult later and I was not pious, I was already doing all the things that are not allowed, but so that my parents would not see. Why annoy them?⁵⁰¹

She implies elsewhere that her friends were exclusively Jewish, but indicates that they chose Polish as the language of their communication. This remark brings to the surface the multilingualism of Polish Jewry and the tensions between having Yiddish, Hebrew and Polish as their vernacular. She mentions that she spoke Yiddish at home, and therefore she could have easily chosen to speak it with her friends as they were Jewish.

⁴⁹⁹ It is an expression reflecting the Soviet propaganda.

⁵⁰⁰ OH GGNNTC Mira Shuval, 10.

⁵⁰¹ Ibid., 50; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103485/edition/98153>, 24.02.2023.

However, speaking Polish implied being modern and “civilized”. Although her social life took place in Jewish circles, and she certainly would have used at least some Yiddish to communicate in these circles – especially in the Kultur-lige as the Bund strongly supported the Yiddish language – she protests when the interviewer asks her if she spoke Yiddish, even though if she explicitly states that the lectures in Kultur-lige were given in this language.⁵⁰² However, in all this, she claims that her language was Polish. It is important to note here the relationship between her education and Polish. For her, Polish was a tool of acquiring knowledge and access to the majority culture. She mentions exclusively Polish literature as her reading material. At the same time, she acquired it in a Jewish school and her entire education and social life took place in Jewish settings. Thus, the Polish language does not make her Polish more than she is Jewish; it was simply an instrument of progress and modernization.

Moreover, in the above fragment, she highlights that she came from a very observant religious Yiddish-speaking family, who kept Shabbat in a strict manner, and that she did not follow this lifestyle but at the same time kept some appearances in order to avoid conflict with her religious family. Elsewhere, she says that as a child she was supposed to pray every day and was forced to fast on Yom Kippur. This pressure came from both her parents and grandparents, two of the “old generations” present in her family. She concluded that: “To pray is not me, when I was, I was twenty [years old], I did not pray anymore.” Breaking with religious traditions and choosing a different language of communication than the older generations might both be read within the same interpretational key: both choices might have been a way of rebelling against the old lifestyle as well as a show of independence.

At the same time, choosing the Polish language does not imply Polish identity. She quite emphatically states that young Jews speaking Polish aspired to integrate in some way (“to be like Poles”) but at the same time, she exclaims that she felt Jewish and not Polish. The complexity of this situation results not only from her teenage rebellion against “the old” but also from the Polish education she received, in spite of coming from an Orthodox home. Mira went to a Polish elementary school and the language in which she was introduced to the larger world around her was Polish. As a natural consequence, this predisposed her to consume Polish culture. In her free time, she read the canon of classical Polish books which were part of the curriculum of all Polish children at the time, such as for example “Pan Tadeusz” by Mickiewicz, “Ogniem i mieczem”, “Potop” and “Pan Wołodyjowski” by Henryk Sienkiewicz and

⁵⁰² Ibid., 16; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103433/edition/98101>, 24.03.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103658/edition/98321>, 24.03.2023.

“Chłopi” by Reymont,⁵⁰³ and learned songs only in Polish.⁵⁰⁴ In this sense she fully assimilated into Polish culture, though without assuming a Polish identity. Kamil Kijek calls such a state “acculturation without assimilation” and claims that the autobiographies of Jewish youth from the period gathered in the YIVO collection illustrate this paradigm.⁵⁰⁵

Her Jewish identity remained strong and exclusive, most probably because her contacts were predominantly with Jews. Her Jewish identity was strengthened thanks to the Yiddish and Hebrew instruction at home: “At home they taught me so that I would know how to write in Yiddish and that I would be able to pray in Jewish books.”⁵⁰⁶ Religious education and participation in home celebrations of Jewish holidays in her youth certainly also reinforced her Jewish identity. Moreover, her education took a more conservative turn in her teens, when she was not allowed to pursue her plan to attend a Polish teacher’s seminary but instead was sent to a Jewish *Gimnazjum Humanistyczne*. Her orthodox grandfather took an upper hand and forbade her to go to the Polish high school because that meant violation of Shabbat and possible scandal in front of their neighbor who was a rabbi.⁵⁰⁷ Therefore, even though in the Jewish *Gimnazjum* the classes were held in Polish, she remained in a Jewish environment.

In addition to her education, she mentions her political activity, again juxtaposing this with her parents’ generation’s passivity: “[My mother, stepfather] they were all people who believed, prayed. And they didn't [deal with politics].”⁵⁰⁸ She, instead of praying, decided to be proactive, and apart from her associations with the Kultur-lige, became a teacher during the summer camp organized by TOZ,⁵⁰⁹ working with locals

⁵⁰³ Ibid., 67; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103484/edition/98152>, 24.03.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103820/edition/98467>, 24.02.2023.

⁵⁰⁴ Ibid., 61-62; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103486/edition/98154>, 24.02.2023. <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103822/edition/98469>, 24.02.2023.

⁵⁰⁵ Kamil Kijek, "Polska akulturacja, żydowski nacjonalizm? Paradigmat "akulturacji bez asymilacji" a świadomość polityczna międzywojennej młodzieży żydowskiej na podstawie autobiografii YIVO," in *Wokół akulturacji i asymilacji Żydów na ziemiach polskich*, ed. Konrad Zieliński (Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS, 2010).

⁵⁰⁶ OH GGNNTC Mira Shuval, 61-62; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103486/edition/98154>, 24.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103822/edition/98469>, 24.02.2023.

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid., 2; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103421/edition/98090>, 24.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103647/edition/98310>, 24.02.2023.

⁵⁰⁸ Ibid., 34; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103434/edition/98102>, 24.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103792/edition/98439>, 24.02.2023.

⁵⁰⁹ Towarzystwo Opieki Zdrowia – Healthcare Society of the Jewish Population in Poland.

leaders such as Dr. Shlomo Hershenhorn.⁵¹⁰ These engagements in Bund-related initiatives point towards her sensitivity towards social problems and her political convictions leaning towards socialism. Although she does not reveal explicitly what she thought about politics, she mentions her political activism in Israel after the war, and drops hints of her convictions here and there, for example recalling Yitzhak Grünbaum's work on behalf of Polish Jewry as a Parliament Member. In fact, it is surprising how she reconciled her Bundist sympathies with Zionism (e.g., Grünbaum). There might be a few possible answers to that. Firstly, she might not have been convinced of all the Bund's postulates but supported the initiatives she found helpful to herself or other people. Secondly, her convictions could have undergone a change during the Second World War, which she spent in the USSR. Even if it is impossible to know for certain, one can infer that she was deeply concerned about the problems of the Jewish community and sought to relieve them. At no point of her narration does she mention concern for the Polish state (on the eve of the war, for example) or betray an interest in Polish political affairs. Her focus on the issues pertaining exclusively to her own community further confirms the image of being Jewish and not Polish.

When recalling her days in elementary school, Mira repeats a very telling story she heard as a girl:

They said that the children from the school had come and said there were there sheidim [Eng. demons]. That there are good angels and they are bad. That they saw in schools ... and these were religious Jews, they were Jewish children, but it was Poland, that there was not ... There is a mezuzah on every door we have, and because there was no mezuzoth there, they were sheidim. Sheydim is an angel, an angel. And this is a contrast, it is very bad that there were sheidim in these schools. It may not be [true], but it is a legend. They came and did this mezuzot [at school] and it passed. I didn't see it, other children said they saw it.⁵¹¹

This hearsay she adduces at first glance appears to be just one of the “bube maisels” (Grandma's tales) – a superstitious story of mentally stuck, poor, pious Jews, used to

⁵¹⁰ Szlomo Herszenhorn was a dermatologist, social activist and Bund party politician. He published in the Lublin press body of the Lubliner Sztyme party. He was also a member of the council of the Jewish Hospital and president of the board of the Lublin branch of the Healthcare Society of the Jewish Population in Poland (TOZ) and member of the national presidium of TOZ, councilor and vice-president of the Lublin City Council, initiator of the "Kultur-lige". He also held many other important functions in the Jewish committee both before and after the war. Jacek Jeremicz, Teresa Klimowicz, and Piotr Nazaruk, *Szlomo Herszenhorn (1888–1953)* (Lublin: Grodzka Gate - NN Theatre Centre), <https://teatrnn.pl/leksykon/artykuly/szlomo-herszenhorn-18881953/>.

⁵¹¹ OH GGNNTC Mira Shuval, 33-34; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103442/edition/98110>, 23.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103800/edition/98447>, 23.02.2023.

scare children. However, it clearly transmits the Jewish fear of being in a non-Jewish space. Jewish religious symbols (a mezuzah in this case) mark a safe space and crossing its borders puts one in danger. This deep subconscious fear of the territory external to the Jewish ghetto⁵¹² offers another explanation why some of the Polish Jews, like Mira, did not feel Polish at all. Young Jews yearned for opportunities to develop personally and professionally – Mira, for example, planned to study at the Sorbonne. Polish was a vehicle to the goal of modernization and progress. However, apart from her desire to become a member of a wider society, a secular citizen of a modern country breaking with the superstitions of religion, she was raised in a community that for centuries preferred to live isolated from non-Jewish neighbors, finding comfort and safety in this separation. The ghetto was a familiar space in a country that never stopped being foreign, made Jewish thanks to symbols and rituals, which “consecrated” the space into a protected area, a place of refuge from antisemitic attacks and a stronghold of Jewishness. In this sense, the fear of leaving the ghetto seems to be deeply embedded in the Jewish sub-consciousness. Nonetheless, many did so.

Finally, her personal experiences confirm the stereotype of the antisemitic Pole: her husband was murdered during a pogrom, Poles eventually took over the family properties, they were antisemitic before the war, etc. Mira was not exposed to much contact with Catholic Poles, and Polishness was largely only a medium of modernization, factors which explain her rather negative opinion on Poles: “in the interwar Poland, what Pole ever did anything for the Jews?”⁵¹³

Sara

Sara Grinfeld, née Zoberman, was born in 1923 in Lublin. Her father Yehoshua (Szyja) ran a sawmill in Zaklików and managed the trade and export of lumber through a business in Gdańsk from where he sent wood to England and France. His family came from Izbica. Her mother Perla (Pola) came from Zaklików. The family lived in the “new” part of Lublin, outside of the Jewish quarter, in the “untamed” space that was not so foreign to assimilated, progressive Jews. In fact, she remembers that she was unfamiliar with and seldom visited the Jewish quarter, probably because of its poverty and general unattractiveness. She would only visit if someone wanted to show her the synagogue, which in fact she mixes up with Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin.⁵¹⁴ Such a

⁵¹² Mira lived in the middle of the Jewish quarter of Lublin.

⁵¹³ OH GGNNTC Mira Shuval, 74.

⁵¹⁴ In her relation, Sara claims that there were areas of the Jewish quarter she never went to and that in her life she had never crossed the bridge on Lubartowska Street (p. 37). At the same time, she says she would only go to the Jewish quarter when someone wanted to show her Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin. As

mistake indicates that her family was not interested in religion, which can be inferred also from the fact that her pious grandparents never ate at her family house for fear of being served non-kosher food.⁵¹⁵ The generational gap mentioned in the case of Mira is clearly visible also in Sara's family. Although her parents were not observant at all, they would celebrate Shabbat and Jewish holidays at Sara's grandparents. Therefore, while she would never go to the synagogue, she was connected to Judaism through her observant grandparents. On her mother's side, both religious and secular parts of the family apparently were Zionists and even moved to Palestine in the 30s, but unfortunately came back before the war started.⁵¹⁶

Sara's family was quite well off, as her father owned an international business, and could afford a comfortable apartment first on Królewska St. and then in Aleje Racławickie, in front of the Saski Garden, the main park in the town.⁵¹⁷ They also had a maid.⁵¹⁸ She describes her mother as a "Polish-looking" modern woman following the latest trends in parenting and hygiene.⁵¹⁹ They had both Jewish and non-Jewish neighbors and maintained good relationships with all of them. Sara played with both Jewish and non-Jewish children. Although both her parents spoke Yiddish between themselves, with her they spoke only Polish. With time, she learned some Yiddish but mastered the Jewish alphabet only as a teenager. She mentions studying Hebrew only after the war.

In fact, even her looks – she had blond hair and blue eyes – seemed to facilitate her assimilation and being perceived by others as Polish. She recalls that in her *gimnazjum* a priest teaching the Catholic catechism was surprised she did not join:

the Yeshivas Chachmei was located approximately 1 km north from the bridge, I assume that she mixed the yeshiva with another building important for religious Jews of Lublin – the Maharshal Synagogue (also known as the Great Synagogue) which stood on Jateczna Street, before the bridge on Lubartowska Street (if one was coming from the south-west part of the city where she lived). For topographic insights regarding bridges in this area of Lublin, see Maciej Kowal, *Dawne mosty Lublina nad rzeką Czechówką* (2019). Rys. 14. 53; 95nn.

⁵¹⁵ OH GGNNTC Sara Grinfeld, 13; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102554/edition/97235>, 10.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103338/edition/98010>, 10.02.2023.

⁵¹⁶ Ibid., 3-4, 7; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102563/edition/97244>, 10.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103349/edition/98020>, 10.02.2023.

⁵¹⁷ Ibid., passim; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102552/edition/97233>, 10.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103335/edition/98007>, 10.02.2023.

⁵¹⁸ Ibid., 9; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102560/edition/97241>, 10.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103344/edition/98016>, 10.02.2023.

⁵¹⁹ Ibid., passim; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102561/edition/97242>, 10.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103345/edition/98017>, 10.02.2023.

This priest knew me because how many times he met me, he always asked me: "You really don't come from a Christian family?" Because I was like this tea, I was such a fair blonde. I didn't feel anything like that [because of it], I told him ... "Oh yeah, you're the one." Because it was obviously not a good spectator or something when he met me.⁵²⁰

Again, the issue was a stereotype of certain "Polish" and "Jewish" looks, and her having a Polish look, which later helped her to survive the war under a Polish name.

All of the education she received was Polish, starting from kindergarten, through elementary school and the Wacława Arciszowa Female Private Gymnasium, the latter proving both her assimilated and economic status.⁵²¹ Perhaps because of her education, Sara felt both Polish and Jewish:

I felt Jewish, but I also felt Polish. When it was Christmas, for example on May 3, and the school was marching along, I also felt that I belonged to it. Polish was my language, because I spoke little Yiddish at that time. The history of Poland, which I was studying, was also my history, because my grandparents and great-grandparents, and so on, came from Poland. And I went to a Polish school, where out of forty students there were six Jewish women in the class. I must boast that we were all good students. What was I feeling? This is understandable. I felt Jewish, but I felt Polish too, because I do not know how many generations, my previous generations, lived in this country, worked, maybe even there were people who also gave something to the country.⁵²²

Her words express a deep recognition of common Polish-Jewish history and a certain sense of patriotism when she talks about her ancestors contributing to the development of Poland or its fight for independence ("people who also gave something to the country"). She explicitly mentions her participation in the Polish national holiday of May 3 when the municipality organized marches and parades. Moreover, she identifies with Poland, stating that its history was also "my history." In her eyes, Jews are an intrinsic part of Poland and one can sense that she made efforts to be a good citizen through speaking good Polish, acquiring a thoroughly Polish education and being a diligent student. Even though after the war she immigrated to Israel, she maintained a relationship to Poland, and when speaking about it she calls Poland her homeland,

⁵²⁰ Ibid., 35; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102572/edition/97253>, 10.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103362/edition/98033>, 10.02.2023.

⁵²¹ Ibid., passim; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102552/edition/97233>, 10.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103335/edition/98007>, 10.02.2023.

⁵²² Ibid., 15, 27; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102580/edition/97261>, 10.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103370/edition/98040>, 10.02.2023.

states that she loved Poland very much and had numerous Polish friends.⁵²³ Moreover, she repeatedly states that during the war she met all sorts of Polish people, good or bad, but it is thanks to Poles that she survived.

Even though she identifies as Polish, her Polishness could be contested. Firstly, her name betrayed her: “I was not so far from Jewry, because my name was Sara Zoberman.”⁵²⁴ Moreover, her attachment to Poland made her all the more vulnerable to antisemitism. The sense of belonging to the Polish nation was in conflict with various forms of discrimination she experienced or witnessed as a Jew,⁵²⁵ and these hostile actions deeply hurt her. She speaks openly about a sense of rejection she felt: “They consider me an outcast. It doesn't mean that all Poles hated Jews, but it was there. And it's not a small matter.”⁵²⁶ In a way, those Jews who did not identify with Polishness perhaps suffered less from antisemitic behaviors because they assumed they were not a part of Polish society and did not expect to be treated as such. Assimilated Jews, on the other hand, who did integrate into Polish society, perceived the refusal as much harsher because they were not outsiders; it was their own group that was rejecting them. In the late 1930s, when antisemitic attacks grew stronger, Sara's family already knew they wanted to leave Poland:

When the Jewish Committee announced, it was in the thirty-seventh or eighth year, I think, it went on strike because they were not admitting Jews to university. And there were cases where several Jewish students were thrown out of a window in Warsaw. We decided it was not after the war, but before the war, but we decided, then Palestine was already Israel, we decided to live in our country, among our nation.⁵²⁷

In these words, she conveys a strong image of a failure of assimilation. Even though her family at first sight could be taken for Poles, and she had a sense of belonging in Poland, the increased antisemitic violence brought the assimilation process to naught.

Just before the outbreak of the war, the family moved to Zaklików because of their family origins. When the liquidation of Jews in Zaklików began, her father was taken to the camp in Budzyń, where he was eventually murdered. Sara, with her mother and

⁵²³ Ibid., passim; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102579/edition/97260>, 10.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103369/edition/98039>, 10.02.2023.

⁵²⁴ Ibid., 41; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102576/edition/97257>, 10.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103366/edition/98037>, 10.02.2023.

⁵²⁵ Antisemitic behaviors will be discussed in detail elsewhere.

⁵²⁶ Ibid., 27; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102580/edition/97261>, 10.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103370/edition/98040>, 10.02.2023.

⁵²⁷ Ibid., 3; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102552/edition/97233>, 10.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103335/edition/98007>, 10.02.2023.

aunt, fled to Lublin, and then to Warsaw, where they survived the war on Aryan papers. She witnessed both the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in April 1943 and the Warsaw Uprising in 1944. Unfortunately, the interviewer was not interested in these experiences and she did not have a chance to speak about them in detail. Sara repeats multiple times during the interview that her experiences were relatively mild, that she did not suffer the camps, the hunger or hiding in harsh conditions. She survived the war as a free person and thus, she says, she is able to speak about these experiences with calm. Maybe these experiences made her attitude towards the outgroup relatively positive. Another reason could be her character: she makes sure to present other people in a just and appropriate way, even if they are enemies. For example, she speaks about many good Germans, underscoring repeatedly that there are always good and bad people. In addition, she recalls a Nazi official whom she knew of murdering Jews for pleasure and who not only let her go unharmed but also proposed to help her escape from Lublin. Thus, she makes sure not to oversimplify her conclusions on various outgroups.

In January 1945 all three of them returned to Lublin and lived with a Jewish family they knew on Królewska 17 street. For a few months Sara worked as a secretary at the Jewish Committee. Then, she moved with her mother to Wrocław, and in January 1951 she left for Israel and settled in Holon. In Israel, she met her friend from the *freblówka*, Aleksander Grinfeld, whom she married in 1954. They lived in Ramat Gan. In Israel, she worked as a secretary in an oil company.

Moshe

Moshe was born in 1925 in Lublin. His father was a printer and his mother was a homemaker. He had six sisters. The family spoke Yiddish at home but his father worked in a Polish environment and read mostly in Polish. At the time of the interview, Moshe speaks imperfect Polish with many Russian words, probably due to the time he spent in the Soviet Union.

Moshe's childhood reflects in an interesting way various currents of Jewish life in Poland. As a three-year-old boy, he was brought to a cheder where he studied until he was sent to a Yavneh school.⁵²⁸ Then, from the fourth grade onwards, he attended a Tarbut school.⁵²⁹ Thus, his educational history reflects both traditional religious education and modern secular Zionism and Polish patriotism. The curriculum of the

⁵²⁸ Similar to cheder, Yavneh was a religious school.

⁵²⁹ A secular school with Zionist values and patriotic Polish inclination.

latter included Polish language and the history of Poland, and Moshe remained profoundly impressed by these classes:

This school taught me a lot and to this day I remember perfectly Polish history and everything that happened in Poland and between its neighbors. I remember the first, second and third partition of Poland ... When this king Jan III Sobieski fought, I remember King Casimir the Great, he was the king who took Jews to Poland thinking that it could help Poland culturally and economically... Also, when there was the Kościuszko Uprising, Berek Joselewicz formulated groups of Jews who fought in the city, together with Kościuszko, for the independence of Poland, and so on, to Józef Piłsudski. We respected this Marshal and felt that in free Poland we were Polish citizens living in Lublin. They were all my heroes for me until the war.⁵³⁰

Moshe identified with Polish history just as Sara did. Polish heroes were his heroes and Polish history was his history. Moreover, he had a clear idea of being a Polish citizen, and being responsible for the Polish state. The example of Berek Joselewicz who fought alongside *Kościuszko* points to the image of Polish-Jewish identity Moshe had. In her controversial book on Polish-Jewish relations, Ewa Kurek highlights the fact that majority of the Polish Jewry did not identify with the Polish pursuit of independence, therefore assuming the position of foreigners, not citizens.⁵³¹ Moshe, however, clearly follows Joselewicz's example when it comes to patriotism:

I remember when I was learning history, when [there were lessons about] the Polish army. For example, the Battle of Grunwald. I felt so good, I was going home, I was enchanted... How can I answer [what does it mean that I was a Polish patriot]? I was [proud] if the Polish army was victorious. I felt so good, I can't express it. When, for example, there were three partitions of Poland... And they stripped [Poland]. I was walking home as if someone in my family had died. I was not only a Polish patriot, I was very much a Polish patriot.⁵³²

The way Moshe narrates Polish history exhibits a significant emotional connection to the subject. When he speaks about how profoundly sad he was learning about the partitions, one has no doubt about his attachment to Poland. Such an approach might

⁵³⁰ OH GGNNTC Mosze Handelsman, 2;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/34110/edition/33564>, 23.02.2023.

⁵³¹ Kurek, *Poza granicą solidarności: stosunki polsko-żydowskie 1939-1945*, 49-79. For the comparison to Berek Joselewicz see esp. 64-66.

⁵³² OH GGNNTC Mosze Handelsman;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102811/edition/97490>, 23.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103984/edition/98629>, 23.02.2023.

stem from the manner in which history was taught in the Tarbut schools, or a particular teacher he had, as he expressly links patriotism with school:

Being at school, I always felt a Polish patriot and in my bones there was deeply embedded Polish patriotism. I remember Dąbrowski and Kiliński, who fought for Warsaw, I remember Rejtan with his word on veto for the partitions of Poland... I was a Polish Jew until 1939. Until this year, I went to school from Wieniawa every day, I did not miss a single day of study. It was very cold in winter, I cried at times, but I walked. It was minus twenty and I went to school, I remember that.⁵³³

Moshe repeatedly underlines how deep his love was for Poland and the knowledge of its history, by recalling many names of famous Polish patriots who fought against the partitions of Poland. He also explicitly states his identity as “a Polish Jew”. Interestingly, similarly to Sara, he sees his attitude to study as an expression of patriotism: the mention of the sacrifices he suffered to get to school might aim at underscoring his determination to receive an education and thus be as good citizen as he could be as a minor.

However, it is worth mentioning that he grew in a family appreciative of Polishness. His father had “Polish looks”, meaning he was clean-shaven apart from a mustache, unlike observant Jews, and went under Polish name “Michał”. He read only Polish books, worked in a completely Polish environment in a printing house, where his colleagues never fully believed he was Jewish and even tried to persuade him to divorce his Jewish wife and take “one of our women.”⁵³⁴ Interestingly, even his wife’s family initially thought he was Polish and it took a visit to the synagogue on Shabbat to convince them.⁵³⁵ In spite of these Polish appearances, the family observed religious traditions like keeping Shabbat and Jewish holidays.⁵³⁶ This interesting mix of religious observance and assimilationist tendencies is further enriched by Zionist sympathies that the family must have had if they sent their only son to a Tarbut school. It seems, however, that the Polish component in the family’s identity was quite important if Moshe perceived the ties between Poles and Jews as very strong in a historical dimension:

⁵³³ Ibid., 18; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/34110/edition/33564>, 23.02.2023.

⁵³⁴ Ibid., 10; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102797/edition/97476>, 23.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103974/edition/98619>, 23.02.2023.

⁵³⁵ Ibid.

⁵³⁶ Ibid., 21-22; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102805/edition/97484>, 23.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103979/edition/98624>, 23.02.2023.

Jews helped Poland a lot. I studied history, which was taught in all schools. There were very good times for Jews in Poland, there were not so good times. Jews have always tried to be good citizens of Poland, and at the same time to be Jews and patriots. I was learning this.⁵³⁷

Jews joined the army, they never made any uprising, they did not hide, they were loyal.⁵³⁸

The discussion on the character of Polish-Jewish relations remains open and quite heated among historians currently, and some claim that it was rather a history of dissociations and separations than relations.⁵³⁹ Moshe, however, takes a very clear stance on the issue, claiming that “Jews have always tried to be good citizens of Poland,” conversely to what Kurek argues.⁵⁴⁰ Naturally, his reflections are a commentary to his own relation to Polishness. It seems justified to believe that it was him who wanted to be a loyal citizen and, paraphrasing his own words, at the same time to be a Jew and a patriot. In other words, his views on Polish-Jewish history could be perceived rather as an expression of an ideal that Polish Jews should strive for.

Moshe does not speak much in the interview about his survival in the Soviet Union and he does not mention his life after the war. When asked if he told his story to his family, he says that he spoke a lot about his survival to his children and grandchildren but not about Lublin. When asked if he told them about Lublin, he answers: “About Lublin? Not. Why not? What will I say that they killed the Jews?” Thus, in spite of his patriotism at young age, one can infer that Lublin and probably also Poland has turned into a cemetery in his memory.

Edward

Edward was born in 1920 in south-eastern Poland and spent his first years in various Polish towns due to his father’s profession as an officer of the Polish Army; he was often transferred from one outpost to another, and the family followed along. Finally, from 1924 until the outbreak of the Second World War, the family resided in Lublin where

⁵³⁷ <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/34110/edition/33564>, 23.02.2023. Fragment of another interview recorded by Marta Kubiszyn in 1999, which was not made available to me.

⁵³⁸ Ibid., 23; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102811/edition/97490>, 23.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103984/edition/98629>, 23.02.2023.

⁵³⁹ See, e.g., Włodzimierz Mich, *Obcy w polskim domu: nacjonalistyczne koncepcje rozwiązania problemu mniejszości narodowych, 1918-1939* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS, 1994); Alina and Mikołaj, *Jew. The Eternal Enemy*; Cała, *The Image of the Jew in Polish Folk Culture*.

⁵⁴⁰ Kurek, *Poza granicą solidarności: stosunki polsko-żydowskie 1939-1945*, passim.

Edward and his four siblings grew up. All of them chose prestigious careers (doctor, lawyer, university professor), apart from the youngest sister who died in the Holocaust; one even became Israeli ambassador after the war. Edward received high school education in a Jewish *Gimnazjum Humanistyczne*,⁵⁴¹ whose directors were probably acquaintances of the family.⁵⁴² When speaking about his family, Edward dedicates much space to his father and his status in the military, which seems to determine the whole family's social status:

My father was an officer in the Polish army. He belonged to DOK II. DOK - Corps District Command [Pl. Dowództwo Okręgowe Korpusu]... If he did not get a higher position, it was only because they wanted him to convert to the [Christian] faith, [that] he would change his faith. My father did not agree, we did not want it because everyone knew us ... [Father] was a specialist in these military matters and that was why they wanted him everywhere, everywhere. It [was] a responsibility! DOK II. There were four DOKs all over Poland.⁵⁴³ And he was one of the primates at DOK of it. That is, he did not get the rank. Interesting thing. In 1939, that is, he was already mobilized, they gave him the rank of major.⁵⁴⁴

In the Second Polish Republic, officers of the Polish army had a high social status and the rank of Edward's father guaranteed him not only continuity of employment, a factor not to be underestimated in the interwar period, together with a batman (Fr. *ordonnance*, Pl. *ordynans*), but also a certain social prestige. In another fragment, Edward mentions that his father knew Marshall Piłsudski in person, which, combined with the information about his Galician origins, and the fact that his father was a supporter of PPS might indicate a long-standing acquaintance with Piłsudski and possible participation in the *Legions* during the First World War:

We had a saber – Honor and Fatherland⁵⁴⁵ – given by Marshal Piłsudski. I remember it was hanging on the wall. Father was in touch [with Piłsudski]. I don't know exactly what

⁵⁴¹ See OH GGNNTC Edward Skowroński-Hertz, 9.

⁵⁴² Through the Union of the Jewish Women.

⁵⁴³ Actually, there were ten DOKs, starting from 1921 onwards, which does not diminish the prestigious character of Edward's father's work.

⁵⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 4; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102219/edition/96901>, 27.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102457/edition/97138>, 27.02.2023.

⁵⁴⁵ These words were engraved on the saber. The words *God, Honor, Fatherland* are commonly seen as the motto of the military forces of Poland, dating back to the Polish service in Napoleonic army during partitions. Here, the interesting feature is that the word God is omitted, maybe in relation to the Mosaic faith of the receiver.

it was like. In any case, he was in the Polish army. And there were some relations [with Piłsudski]. I know that there was some relationship when they met in Krakow, it seems...

546

It is not certain how close the relation with Piłsudski was, but nonetheless in the context of the narrative it definitely serves the purpose of highlighting his father's Polish patriotism and the prestigious character of his military service, especially taking in consideration that Edward repeats the saber story twice, adding a mention of the awards received by his father.

Apart from bestowing social status, the army definitely served as a means and manifestation of civic loyalty to the Polish state. The family spoke Polish at home, had mostly Polish neighbors and naturally his father took Edward to see military parades on national holidays such as May 3rd.⁵⁴⁷ Edward states explicitly: "We were Polish."⁵⁴⁸ At the same time, for the Polish army, this Polishness was not enough:

I only know one thing, that the officers came to us, they would always talk about it: "Come on, Janek, sign that you are a Christian". So he would respond: "I won't do it, I don't want to, I won't. It should not be like that. I am a Pole."⁵⁴⁹

The constant nagging would perhaps break some other individuals, especially given that Jews were not welcomed in the Polish military due to almost structural antisemitism in the Polish army. In fact, Edward mentions that the Jews in the local military were so few that they knew each other by name.⁵⁵⁰ Out of many possible reasons to reject the offer of conversion, Edward brings up the argument of being well known in the local Jewish community.⁵⁵¹ However, it seems that it is not the mere fact of being recognized by other Jews but also playing significant roles in the local Jewish religious and secular organizations.

Edward's mother, Gustawa, was involved in community service, working as a vice-director of the Jewish orphanage (*Ochronka*):

⁵⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁷ Ibid., 10.

⁵⁴⁸ Ibid., 17.

⁵⁴⁹ Ibid. <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102227/edition/96909>, 27.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102591/edition/97272>, 27.02.2023.

⁵⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁵¹ Ibid.

Well, my mother was busy. She also worked in this orphanage together with Dobrzyńska. [She] was the main [person] responsible for this. And [mother] was the deputy. And there it was... it was on Grodzka Street, on Grodzka Street, I think. Yes, it was on Grodzka Street and there were eighty, I believe, ninety children. They had even more.⁵⁵²

Although Edward points to the specific address of the institution, in fact he confuses two different establishments, both referred to in Polish as *ochronka*. The orphanage on Grodzka Street was a small facility, with 15 places, established within the Old City in 1862 by the *kehilla* with the purpose of providing shelter to both orphans and the elderly, in practice favoring the latter group in the interwar period. The institution was run by Bela Dobrzyńska, a well-known Zionist and social activist, and was established in 1925 or 1926 by the Union of Jewish Women (Związek Kobiet Żydowskich) under the name *Ochronka-Przychodnia "Ognisko"*. After 1932 it was located at 41 Krawiecka Street, therefore outside of the Old City, within the poorest part of the Jewish quarter. The purpose and capacity of this facility differed from the one on Grodzka Street. *Ognisko*, which is the institution I think Edward refers to, was a form of *freblówka* (preschool/ daycare) for the needy, where indeed around 70 young children were taken care of every day, including meals and shoes.⁵⁵³ Both the name Dobrzyńska and the numbers would indicate that he rather meant *Ognisko*.

Such precision in understanding his mother's occupation helps to understand her values and understanding of her own Jewishness. As he claims she was a vice-director, it is safe to assume that she was a member of the founding organization – the Union of Jewish Women. This organization, established in Warsaw in 1927, had as its main goals cultural development, awakening a national identity among Jewish women and protection of their rights and national, economic and professional interests, help in general and vocational education, creating collegial bonds, providing help in current problems to the members, providing care to mothers and children, as well as moral and material support to women emigrating to Palestine.⁵⁵⁴

In the period of 1935-1937, the Lublin branch of the organization had approximately 200 members (a considerable size), including three types of membership:

⁵⁵² Ibid., 5-6; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102223/edition/96905>, 27.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102461/edition/97142>, 27.02.2023.

⁵⁵³ Tomasz Czajkowski, "Związek Kobiet Żydowskich i Ochronka-Przychodnia „Ognisko”," *Scriptores* 28, no. 2 (2003), 148-151.

⁵⁵⁴ Ibid., 148.

honorary, real and applicants. One could guess that Gustawa would fall under the first category, as that was the habit for the members of the board of the local branches.⁵⁵⁵

The honorary character of her appointment would confirm the status-related character of Gustawa's involvement. As the wife of a Polish officer, she definitely was not coerced to work for financial reasons but rather her work expressed her socio-political concerns and aspirations, as well as a clear sense of belonging to the Jewish community. The key characteristics of the organization, such as Zionism, secularism, socialism and a certain form of feminism inherent in the modernist *zeitgeist* might be considered the values important also for Edward's mother, and therefore conveyed to the family as well. Importantly, the organization highlighted "awakening of Jewish national identity" among Jewish women, which points to a biological-ethnic understanding of one's identity, and could indicate that Gustawa's understanding of her Jewishness was a matter of ethnicity, perhaps culture but definitely not so much religious belonging, all of which situates her quite firmly within the modernist secular paradigm.

The secular orientation of the family can be confirmed also by membership in the Zionist young movement, HaShomer HaTsair, by Edward's elder brother, Israel:

I remember the Shomer Hatzair organization, where my older brother was and he sometimes led me there... He was there *rosh haken* [Eng. head of a youth organization]...Chief, chief manager, oh, chief of this [organization]. He was responsible...He was supposed to study in Poland ... But they made it difficult for him, even when he had all the letters, that he was the best student ... in this state gymnasium ... He said: "No. It does not make sense. I want to go to Israel". And he went.⁵⁵⁶

Edward himself showed more interest in sport clubs such as HaPoel (socialist) and HaKoach (Zionist) but his brother was very involved in the local branch of HaShomer HaTsair and in the end, prompted by the *numerus clausus* and the difficulty of obtaining academic education in Poland, emigrated to Palestine. HaShomer was similar to the Union of Jewish Women in manifold ways. Firstly, it was also Zionist, therefore supported the secular nationalist-ethnic vision of Jewish identity. Secondly, it placed emphasis on the education of the youth. Thirdly, it was characterized by socialist sensitivities and even evolved towards Marxism in the 1920s. So far, one can see many similarities between Gustawa and Israel, paralleled even by the choice of sport clubs by Edward, following the Zionist-socialist key.

⁵⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁶ OH GGNNTC Edward Skowroński-Hertz, 7;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102222/edition/96904>, 27.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102460/edition/97141>, 27.02.2023.

To nuance this picture, one needs to take into consideration the traditional-religious aspect of the Jewish identity. Edward defines the family as not particularly religious but the male part (father and brothers, including himself) would attend synagogue for holidays. The attendance was perhaps partly a representative act, as it was linked to his father's high social status and social connections:

Yes, [I went to the synagogue with my father] when there were great holidays, such ... Not on Saturday, but when it was holidays, a delegation of Jews would come, they asked my father to come, because my father was very respected by everyone ... And my father was there on the board, that is, he had an honorary seat.⁵⁵⁷

They treated him with honor... It was the Kotlerszil synagogue. tinkers, the name of tinkers. And [the father] had a special place where he sat... And he was one of the representatives, they had a lot of respect for him. And for the mother. Those friends were there, so they invited him to be there. They wanted so. They asked so. There were also the Goldbergs there, there were others, there were many. I remember, it's still hard for me to say all the names. Grinberg. They were, they were, there was a lot. It was a neighborhood that had some four hundred people there, coming. Quite a large synagogue. The synagogue was ... well, Kowalska, Lubartowska. I don't remember the name of [this street]...⁵⁵⁸ [Father went to the synagogue] for holidays. That is, it was impossible... After all, he was working. It wasn't like he was going [every day]. Only for the holidays. Sometimes, when there was a need, he would go [to the synagogue] in the uniform...⁵⁵⁹

Without going into much detail, Edward highlights that his father had a special position among the congregants: he was a member of the board and thus was treated with respect; however, the nature of his connection to the guild of tinkers remains vague. Possibly, he was asked to join the board because of his social status and ability to financially support the synagogue. It is worth mentioning that Jan's readiness to help and his high position in the Jewish community ultimately proved to be very

⁵⁵⁷ Ibid., 19-20; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102225/edition/96907>, 27.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102463/edition/97144>, 27.02.2023.

⁵⁵⁸ The address of this synagogue, known also as Zvi Hirsh Doktorowicz's synagogue, was Szeroka 2/ Cyrulicza 20. It was established in 1638 by Doktorowicz who was the factor of a Polish king, Wladyslaw IV Vasa'. Within its premises took place a few sittings of the Council of Four Lands (Va'ad Arba Aratzot). In the interwar period, it was overtaken by the guild of tinkers. The building was destroyed after the liquidation of the ghetto.

⁵⁵⁹ Ibid.

unfortunate.⁵⁶⁰ When during the Second World War his two sons manage to forge Aryan papers and settle in Warsaw as Catholic Poles, they wanted to smuggle their parents outside of the ghetto. However, according to Edward's narration, the Jewish *kehilla* did not agree on the grounds that his father was their representative (it remains unclear in what capacity exactly) and spoke good German.⁵⁶¹

Clearly, Jan's position in the Polish military was an important factor in singling him out for official purposes, as Edward mentions that on some occasions there would be need of him attending the shul in his official attire (possibly on national holidays or in times of social unrest and antisemitic attacks). In addition, it seems that social circles also connected the family to this particular synagogue – their friends and acquaintances attended. Thus, based on Edward's recollection, attending the shul appears to have been a ritual of more social than spiritual or even traditional importance. Nonetheless, the home observance of various Jewish holidays sheds more light on their relationship to religious traditions:

[We celebrated the holidays] normally. Just like everybody. It was Pesach ... Pascha, we had matzahs, there was ... all that was, all the traditions we had [we kept]. We celebrated all the holidays. When it was Pentecost, we had all kinds of flowers. If Yom Kippur came, we didn't eat. And the Shabbat? On the Shabbat – the father worked. It wasn't that one could not work. It's an army after all. He worked on the Shabbat. I can say that normally the Shabbat was Friday evening, there was kiddush, and then on Shabbat he had to work. We were not allowed to... we did not write, the radio did not play... Until the evening. And then it was all right. That's how they were doing.⁵⁶²

Although the nature of his father's work did not allow him to keep Shabbat in an orthodox way, the family was bound to observe it. The whole family would start Shabbat with Kiddush and then proceed, as it was possible – his father working and the rest of the family abstaining from work. All the religious holidays were observed, probably also to the extent to which his father's job permitted. The faithfulness in keeping these traditions would point to another level of self-identification as Jewish, on top of the nationalist tropes.

The religious ties, again apparently more conventional than spiritual, to the Jewish community manifested also in maintaining a relationship with one of the spiritual

⁵⁶⁰ What exactly was the status of Edward's father in the Jewish community and how he was connected to the *kehilla* remains unclear. I did not manage to find any documents confirming the official appointment for any board or council.

⁵⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 2; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102243/edition/96925>, 27.02.2023, <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102465/edition/97146>, 27.02.2023.

⁵⁶² *Ibid.*, 5. <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102225/edition/96907>, 27.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102463/edition/97144>, 27.02.2023.

leaders of the Polish Jewry in that period, the founder of the Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin, Mayer Shapiro.

Rav Shapiro, the biggest rabbi [in Lublin], came to our house sometimes... He also refused to eat with us, because he did not know if it was kosher as much as he believed it should be. I remember that. He would come, take a pocket knife and [eat] an apple. Because it was necessary, [because] by tradition, the invited guest must eat. And it was he who took his apple, he took the apple from us and with his pocket knife... He didn't want ours, because it might not be kosher. [He came to us for] holidays and if he had any business to ask [my father for something] ... when someone was very sick in the military, that my father would intervene if he could do something... The rabbi only spoke to my father. He didn't talk to anyone. No, no. He did not talk to my mother. Nothing but: "Shalom! Shalom!"⁵⁶³

The visits of Rabbi Shapiro to Edward's house were business visits. Given the position of his father, which seems to have conditioned so many elements of the family's life and connection to Jewishness, Shapiro came to ask for favors, just as Polish officers or neighbors would do in times of trouble. The rabbi maintained strict *kashrut*, and his hosts clearly did not, and therefore in order not to offend them, he limited himself to eating *parve*. It would be interesting to know what language the rabbi spoke with Edward's father: Yiddish, Hebrew? Or even Polish? The cooperation between the Polish-Jewish officer and the orthodox rabbi did not last very long, as the rabbi passed away in 1933. Edward, who was 13 at the time, recalls his parents' attendance at the funeral:

I remember [when the rabbi died]. I remember that. There was a great funeral, there was a huge funeral. And I remember it. No, [I haven't been to the funeral]. Although we were there, we went to our friends who lived on the way to the funeral and left me [my parents] there. They left me with these friends, and they went, my father was at the funeral. I remember when he left me. I remember it. It was huge, it was a great [funeral].⁵⁶⁴

Although the connection between this semi-observant family and the rabbi is not described as cordial but rather interest-based, both Jan and Gustawa attended Shapiro's funeral on October 29, 1933, in the crowd numbering some 30,000 people.⁵⁶⁵ It is

⁵⁶³ Ibid., 11. <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102242/edition/96924>, 27.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102464/edition/97145>, 27.02.2023.

⁵⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁵ "Pogrzeb rabina Majera Szapiry - widok na Jeszywas Chachmej Lublin," Grodzka Gate - NN Theatre Centre, 1933, accessed 02.02.2023, <https://fbc.pionier.net.pl/details/nnkcmc8>.

estimated that almost a half of Lublin's Jewish population joined; thus, apart from paying homage to a great man, it can be considered a massive public event that every adult Jew would take part in.⁵⁶⁶

One of the most curious features of Edward's recollection is the predominance of his family's presence. He seldom mentions himself, focusing mostly on his family members: father, mother and brothers. Undoubtedly, the main protagonist of his interwar youth remains his father, and it seems reasonable to risk the statement that his own Polish patriotism (he joined the Polish Home Army when he lived in Warsaw, under an Aryan identity) was erased together with the memory of Poland due to his traumatic wartime experiences. This part of Edward's biography played a crucial role in how he remembers his youth in Poland, like a dark filter over his introspective story, and the omnipresence of his family in his narrative might be interpreted as a way of commemorating them. At the same time, what he says about the family life allows us to understand what type of Jewish identity they chose for themselves. They were very moderately observant of religious laws, probably half-way secular. The main axes of their bond with the Jewish community were social activism in a socialist spirit and Zionism. At the same time, they were loyal Polish citizens, even if they (particularly his father and brother) experienced antisemitic discrimination. Their connection to Polishness ran through his father's work in the Polish military and their social interactions with his father's colleagues – Polish officers and neighbors. With these characteristics, they can be seen as modernist Jewish Poles with all the problems that this double affiliation entailed.

After the outbreak of the Second World War, Edward and his brother fled to Lwów, and then returned to Lublin. After obtaining false documents, he left for Warsaw, where he lived and worked with Aryan papers. He also started to cooperate with the Polish Home Army, which confirms his strong Polish identification and patriotism, undoubtedly imparted by his father. However, what he saw during the war changed his attitude towards Poles:

... What can I say ... if my best friends knew that I am a Jew, I don't know if they would leave me [alive]. I was then in Warsaw, even in the organization, I helped in the Home Army. Whatever. Nobody knew I was a Jew. We saw people in the streets, people were going for a bottle of vodka ... because when he delivered a Jew to the police station, he would get them somewhere, he would get a bottle of vodka. They walked around Marszałkowska and looked for them [Jews]. Several times [they caught] me: "Well, no. You run away, you're okay. " Because ... "Take off your pants" - are you a Jew? They

⁵⁶⁶ "Dawny Lublin: Pogrzeb rabina Majera Szapiry w 1933 r. (FOTO)," *Kurier Lubelski*, 2012, accessed 02.02.2023, <https://kurierlubelski.pl/dawny-lublin-pogrzeb-rabina-majera-szapiry-w-1933-r-foto/ar/708993>.

watched. There came three, four of them, ... "Jasiek. Come on, show me. This one went. "You don't need you, you don't need you. You are... we know you "Who knew me? (laughs) "You are not". I always said, "What do you want? I am a noble by sword and distaff "⁵⁶⁷

He doubts that his own comrades in the Polish Home Army would have let him live, had they known he was Jewish, because he saw Jews denounced for a bottle of vodka. These memories made him disconnect from Poland:

Not. No, I don't miss [Poland]. I miss if I see someone...What can I do? I lost everything. How can I remember Poland, as I have seen only bad things [there]. I'm not telling you all these. I saw how this Jew had to be put aside... [that is,] kill him because he's a Jew, so he has to be put down. In the Home Army, I haven't seen that love for Jews anywhere, that there would be a good word.⁵⁶⁸

Eventually, it was what he saw during the war that shaped his attitude towards Poles and Poland, no matter how good the relations were before the war.

After the accidental detonation of a grenade on a street in Warsaw, he was caught and taken to Pawiak. After three weeks, together with other prisoners, he was transported to Auschwitz, and then, for lack of space, to Gross-Rosen. In the following months, Edward was transferred to other camps several times. He stayed in, among others, Halbau, Buchenwald, Mittelbau-Dora and Bergen-Belsen. In Bergen-Belsen he fell ill with typhus. He was liberated from the camp thanks to the humanitarian "white buses" organized by the Swedish Red Cross under the leadership of Count Folke Bernadotte. Taken by ship to Sweden for six months he fought for his life in the hospital. After recovering, he moved to live with the family of the nurse who looked after him in the hospital.

When he managed to make a contact with his brothers, he went to see one of them, Adolf, in France, and then in 1960 to Israel. He settled in Haifa, where he worked as a watchmaker. Edward's parents and sister stayed in the Lublin ghetto and probably died in the camp extermination in Bełżec.

⁵⁶⁷ OH GGNNTC Edward Skowroński-Hertz, 23;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102235/edition/96917>, 27.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102868/edition/97547>, 27.02.2023.

⁵⁶⁸ OH GGNNTC Edward Skowroński-Hertz, 38;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102240/edition/96922>, 27.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102879/edition/97558>, 27.02.2023.

Josef

The story of Josef is fashioned as the story of a Bundist and as such could be extrapolated to some extent to all the Jewish youth supporting the Bund at that time. In Lublin, the Bund enjoyed sizeable support and many Jewish interviewees mention their support of it; thus, it seems that including such a biography is important to understanding the local Jewish community, and in particular its younger generation. Moreover, Josef can be seen as a representative of the Yiddish-speaking working class, one who elaborates on the challenges of the poorest local Jews, who constituted a significant percentage of the local community.

In addition, his story sheds light on the fate of the Jewish survivors in the Soviet Union as well as those who decided to stay in Poland in the years following the war because they believed in the new regime, until they grew disappointed with its potential to keep antisemitism at bay:

I was not willing to leave Poland, despite the fact that, from the family point of view, it was a graveyard for me, I thought that I had got a way to make my dreams, education, and ... offering what I can, until later, when this antisemitism came from above, because it existed from below, but not from above, as long as these two elements did not meet, then it was my final decision that I had nothing else to do in Poland. I could still wait and go to another country, but I didn't want to risk it, because I knew it was like that today, and tomorrow they can close the borders, not let go any more.⁵⁶⁹

Following this disappointment, in the late 1950s he emigrated to Israel, but his life there does not take up much space in the interview – he limits the summary to approximately two percent of the time.⁵⁷⁰ The interviewer does not seem to be particularly interested in this part of the story, so the theme is not further discussed. The section below includes a short portrait of Josef, based on his story.

Josef was born in 1923 and spent the first 16 years of his life in Lublin. He came from a working class family and although he highlights the economic challenges the family faced, in fact they could be described as upper working class. They rented a two room apartment, had enough money to pay for the heating and never lacked food. His parents had a butcher's stand with kosher meat in the Jewish market and he recalls that they worked extremely hard and gained little. His father came from a village and spoke some Polish, while his mother was born in Lublin and spoke only Yiddish. In his account of his childhood years, Josef highlights poverty, hardship and the lack of

⁵⁶⁹ OH GGNNTC Josef Fraind, 7; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/121716/edition/115963>, 20.02.2023.

⁵⁷⁰ This is counted based on the transcription.

education among the Jews of Lublin. He also repeatedly mentions the divide between Poles and Jews and the economic restrictions inflicted on the Jews, such as Polish factory owners not hiring Jews, or their not being allowed into state positions. Moreover, he speaks frankly about antisemitism, pointing to the Catholic University as a cluster of the extreme antisemites in town.

The frustration with the economic exploitation made him join the Bund at a very young age. He mentions he joined SKIF, its children's organization, already in the second grade of elementary school; that is, at the age of eight. In the fifth grade, he became the secretary of the local SKIF, presiding over two or three hundred children.⁵⁷¹ Josef recalls his activism at that time, when in an attempt to answer the needs of other pupils, who faced severe economic hardship, he successfully negotiated with the trade unions. Firstly, in view of hunger among students, he asked for material support and managed to obtain sandwiches and "white coffee"⁵⁷² to feed the children every day. Secondly, addressing the problem of students not owning shoes, which prevented them from attending the classes, he negotiated with the leather trade union and received 250 pairs of shoes for them. According to the story, he conducted these negotiations at the age of fourteen, which suggests outstandingly strong character, confidence and power of persuasion.

Poverty and the ideology of the Bund are some of the most significant motifs in his story. He repeatedly goes back to the values instilled in him by the organization and refers to many people who played a significant role in his life and whom he met in the organization. As we know from the stories of other Bundists, this was not uncommon.⁵⁷³ In fact, both interviews with him, conducted in December 2006, take place on the premises of the Bund organization in Tel Aviv, which proves that he remained faithful to his youthful ideals until the end of his life.⁵⁷⁴ He also explicitly states that the Bund was a formative experience for his personality: "Sir, the organisation was not based on dancing or singing, to form a person, the direction of

⁵⁷¹ The numbers are given following his count, the verification with other sources was not possible in this case.

⁵⁷² Chicory coffee with milk.

⁵⁷³ See, e.g., the story of Marek Edelman, who displayed similar faithfulness to the Bund ideals throughout his entire life. Krall, *The Subtenant; To Outwit God*. It is the second title, *To Outwit God*, that concerns Edelman.

⁵⁷⁴ Fraind was the last secretary of the Bund in Israel. The organization functioned under the name Arbetering in Yisroel – Brith Haavoda and was disbanded when I started to work on this dissertation – in 2019. To read about the liquidation of its premises, where the interviews were given, see "Ruins of the Israeli Bund. A Photo Essay Documents the Remnants of the Shattered Home of the Arbeter Ring in Tel Aviv," *Jewish Currents*, 2019, accessed 17.10.2022, <https://jewishcurrents.org/ruins-of-the-israeli-bund>; "An Anti-Zionist Movement That Promoted Judaism as a Secular Culture Shuts Its Doors," *Haaretz*, 2019, accessed 17.10.2022.

thinking... This gave me this impetus to intervene, because... around, around me, there was only this immense misery, I was very sensitive to that.”⁵⁷⁵ He also states that he would invite his friends and comrades home to feed them.

He recalls that all the neighbors, including the family of the Polish janitor, lived peacefully and the relations between them were friendly. Particularly worth noticing is his description of numerous neighbors coming to his family home every day in the winter season to warm up, as they could not afford to pay for the heating, and eat warm soup which was always there. Josef states that his father was “very hospitable” and made sure there would be 10-15 liters of this soup available for the guests every day. This detail points to certain character traits or values (or both) that Josef apparently inherited from his father – empathy, generosity, the will to help others and solidarity. Similarly, his mother took in one of his friends whose living conditions were extremely difficult. It seems the conviction that one is responsible for their fellow human beings ran in the family. Possibly, Josef’s participation in the Bund was a way of manifesting and fulfilling the values he learned at home.

Josef attended a cheder as a young boy but speaks about it with disregard (“this school didn’t give me anything”⁵⁷⁶). He also dismisses any relation to Judaism, mentioning that he did *bar mitzvah* only for the sake of his father’s business, so that the certificate of *kashrut* would not be taken from him by the rabbinate. At the age of seven, he was accepted to the elementary school – Peretz school, an establishment under the auspices of CISZO. As he accidentally learned all the material of the first grade while accompanying one of his older cousins, proving his high intelligence, he was accepted directly to the second grade and graduated in 1937. He describes the school with affection, although underscores its terrible economic condition and the constant threat of its liquidation as it did not have the necessary sanitary conditions.⁵⁷⁷ Moreover, he graphically describes the misery of the teachers, who “lived in extreme poverty” and suffered from malnutrition.⁵⁷⁸ After graduation he worked for a knitting factory of the Krempel family as a courier and briefly as an apprentice.⁵⁷⁹

Another interesting detail connected to his education, and revealing of his character, is his account of enrolment. His mother wanted to send him to the Tarbut school but after the first day of school he categorically refused to return there because he did not

⁵⁷⁵ OH GGNNTC Josef Fraind, 24.

⁵⁷⁶ OH GGNNTC Josef Fraind, 19.

⁵⁷⁷ Similar circumstances are described also by Róża Fiszman-Sznajdman, *Mój Lublin*, passim.

⁵⁷⁸ OH GGNNTC Josef Fraind, 20.

⁵⁷⁹ To learn more about the Krempel family, see *Salvaged Stories. Interviews with Families of Lublin Jews* (Lublin: 2019), 75-84.

speak either Polish or Hebrew and felt he “found himself in a foreign world”.⁵⁸⁰ Instead, on the next day he went on his own (without communicating that to his parents) to join the classes at the CISZO school, where he simply went to the classroom with his cousin and announced to the teacher that he would be joining. Subsequently, he was sent to speak to the director of the school, and there explained his reasons for joining the school. It is remarkable that at the age of seven he seems to have been fully comfortable with making decisions regarding his education, standing up to his parents and the headmaster and explaining that his place was among children who speak Yiddish, not Hebrew. Even though the story is evidently shaped in a way presenting him as a life-long Bundist and the narrative is constructed to fulfil this function, it can be assumed that he possessed qualities of courage and assertiveness from a young age. In addition to that, he was self-sufficient and resourceful. While attending the elementary school, he gave private lessons to other students who were having difficulty following the curriculum, and in this way covered the tuition fee.

In October 1939, he left his home town because he received information that the Gestapo had a list of names of Bund activists, and he was prompted to flee. He escaped to the Soviet Union, where he first went to Włodzimierz Wołyński,⁵⁸¹ then Łuck and from there was deported to the gulag where he worked as a lumberjack, then to Kuybyshev on the oblast of Novosibirsk where he worked in a meat factory and then Tomsk where he worked in a munitions factory. In the meantime, he spent some time in a Soviet prison but was released thanks to a letter he wrote to Wanda Wasilewska.⁵⁸² Eventually, he was permitted to join the Kościuszko Division and attend a military academy to become an officer. In consequence, he was a part of the army which liberated Lublin. He mentions that as part of the car division, he was among those who liberated the Majdanek camp, where he discovered that one of his cousins survived the entire occupation there, only to be shot on the day preceding the liberation. He proceeded with the army until the war was won. After the war, he continued military service until 1957 when he left Poland in the framework of what is now called “the Aliyah of Gomułka.”⁵⁸³

⁵⁸⁰ OH GGNNTC Josef Fraind, 23.

⁵⁸¹ Currently Ukraine; Josef is using Polish names from the period.

⁵⁸² She was a Polish socialist and later communist, a journalist and a writer, and a trusted consultant to Joseph Stalin, who played a crucial role in founding the Union of Polish Patriots there and played an important role in the creation of the 1st Tadeusz Kościuszko Infantry Division.

⁵⁸³ Ewa Węgrzyn explain this term in the following way: “In the second half of the 50s, Poland was facing the first significant wave of workers’ protests. Poles were demanding changes, as the time of Stalinist terror was coming to an end and a new era in the history of the Polish People’s Republic – the time of thaw – had begun. It was this new policy that opened a previously closed door for Polish Jews: from October 1956, under the name of “uniting families”, it was made possible for Polish Jews to go to Israel. Some of them still saw their future in the Polish People’s Republic; however, the vast majority

Josef witnessed the aftermath of the Kielce pogrom. As a soldier employed in the cryptography department of the Polish army (Wojsko Polskie), he was a member of the delegation sent to Kielce to update the KBW⁵⁸⁴ by sending encrypted messages about the situation. He describes the situation in the following words: “crowds, masses, that humans could be so ferine, no, I couldn’t imagine that after the occupation such massacre could exist, and I wrote down all that”.⁵⁸⁵ When asked directly about what he saw in Kielce, he answered that he did not move around, but the only thing he saw was ferociousness and savageness that he had never encountered before, neither in the lagers nor in prisons he had been to. He claims that people had no restraints.

When asked about his attitude towards communism, he states that he was not a communist but a Bundist. Subsequently, the interviewer asks him about the Sovietization of the Polish army and his role in 1956 during the Hungarian revolution and the Poznan June, but he states that he does not remember and diverts the flow of the conversation to another topic, namely the words of Khrushchev that there are too many Jews in Poland.⁵⁸⁶ It is very interesting, because many non-Jewish Poles could see his story as an example confirming the myth of *Żydokomuna*, the Jewish involvement in building and maintaining the communist regime as members of the communist power structures.

By the end of the interview, Josef shares his attitude towards the Polish Jews who remained in Poland in a telling exchange with the interviewer:

Josef: ...In Poland there are no Jews any longer, there is nothing to talk about.

T. C. (interviewer): There are, there are.

Josef: Maybe... but let’s finish here?

decided to emigrate. Basically, it is estimated that between 1956–1960 approximately 50 thousand Jews left Poland for Israel. In the historiography this emigration wave is frequently called the “*aliyah* of Gomulka.” The name is taken from Władysław Gomułka, who at that time held the position of First Secretary of the Polish United Workers’ Party.” Ewa Węgrzyn, “Seeking a Return to Poland. The Case of the “Gomulka aliyah” Immigrants in Israel (1956–1960),” *Scripta Iudaica Cracoviensia* 16 (2018), 123. In her article Węgrzyn take a closer look at those Polish Jews who wanted to go back to Poland. According to her calculations, the requests to be allowed to return intensified between June and December 1957, when approximately 350 families (approximately 1200 people) applied for such permission almost immediately upon seeing the conditions in Israel. These requests were not granted. According to her study, this wave of immigrants had particular problems integrating to the Israeli society due to their age and resulting inability to easily learn the language or accept the Middle Eastern mentality, but eventually the major part of the *olim* managed to stay and prosper.

⁵⁸⁴ Korpus Bezpieczeństwa Wewnętrznego, i.e., Internal Security Corps.

⁵⁸⁵ OH GGNNTC Josef Fraind, 36.

⁵⁸⁶ I did not manage to identify the quotation.

It is a very telling conclusion, pointing to Josef's perception of Poland and Polish Jewry in the early 21st century. For him, the history of the Polish Jewry is a matter of the past and he does not think it is something worth discussing.

Chapter 6

Negotiating Identities

The previous chapter concentrated on the link between identity and memory. However, the Lublin collection of oral histories usually offers access to only one setting of the interview. Thus, it is difficult to judge how the circumstances of the interviews affects the narrative and the position of the narrator because one has no comparison of how and from which perspective the interviewees narrate the same events in other contexts. Fortunately for this study, three Jewish interviewees also gave their testimonies to Yad Vashem. Thus, one can compare their narratives in Polish and in Hebrew, and see how they present themselves and their life stories in both interview situations.

Particularly interesting for this study is the position of the narrator in each account. Who is the protagonist of the interview in Hebrew, and who is the protagonist of the interview in Polish? How do these stories reflect the identity of the interviewee and what kind of identity is constructed in the narrative? To some extent, these questions were addressed already in the Chapter 5. Age, gender, the level of religious observance, the mother tongue – all these factors have an impact on identity construction and the position of the narrator in the oral history. Naturally, the personal experiences also play a key role; nonetheless, they were also often conditioned by the same criteria. For example, an assimilated rich Jewish girl might feel more integrated into Polish society than a poor Yiddish-speaking boy from a religious family. In consequence, the former is perceived by the Polish Catholic majority as more Polish than the latter, so her experience of intergroup contact is better and her Polish identity is stronger because it is less challenged.

While these factors are important, only the juxtaposition of the Hebrew and Polish interviews allows for a more profound analysis of the tension the Jewish interviewees felt between their Polishness and their Jewishness. One can assume a priori that different aspects of their lives would be highlighted and the construction of their narratives in the story would play out differently. This short chapter attempts to discuss the difficult identity negotiation reflected in the stories.

The three interviewees were born in 1923 and 1926 and they all came from families of comfortable economic backgrounds; each of them survived the war in a completely different way, but afterwards all of them migrated to Israel. They will be presented by first introducing a reconstruction of their biography and then proceeding to the interview in Polish or Hebrew, depending on their chronology.

Chawa

The Outline of Her Lifestory

Chawa Goldminc, née Kerszenblat, was born in 1923 in Lublin. She lived with her family in a house at Plac Krawiecki 1 / Krawiecka 53. Her mother Gitla came from Opole Lubelskie,⁵⁸⁷ and her father Zyskind was a local. The parents had twelve children but four of them died in early childhood so Chawa knew seven siblings, being the second youngest one herself. The family was pious and well off – her father owned a three-story house in which they lived and ran a shop and glass warehouses at 8 and 20 Świętoduska Street. She describes their financial situation as “not rich but not bad”.⁵⁸⁸

Chawa went to a *freblówka* on Złota Street, and then to elementary school No. 12 located at Archidiakońska Street, and then to *Gimnazjum Humanistyczne*, but the outbreak of the war interrupted her studies there.

After the borders of the ghetto were reduced, the family moved to the apartment of her sister's friend at 6 Furmańska Street. During the German occupation, Chawa was the only one in her family to work – in a knitwear factory on Krakowskie Przedmieście 36. The whole of the Kerszenblat family was transported to the death camp in Bełżec during the liquidation of the Lublin ghetto. Chawa survived because during the deportation she went outside the ghetto to buy bread for her family. After the liquidation of the ghetto, she took the train to Chełm to see her older sister and together they returned to the ghetto in Majdan Tatarski. Just before the liquidation of the ghetto in Majdan Tatarski, they succeeded in escaping at night. They found help from the parents of Chawa's school friend. They spent one night there and received birth certificates for their two daughters – Jadzia and Stasia. The next day, they were caught in a round-up and deported as Polish women to labor to Germany. They worked in an ammunition factory in Herzberg am Harz until liberation.

After the liberation, Chawa came to Lublin for only two days and then returned to Germany. From there, she travelled to Cyprus, where she spent a year and a half, and then, together with her sister, arrived to Israel in 1948. She lived in Kfar Saba.

⁵⁸⁷ A town 50 km westwards from Lublin.

⁵⁸⁸ OH GGNNTC Chawa Goldminc, 1.

The Hebrew Interview

Chawa gave her testimony to Yad Vashem in January 2000,⁵⁸⁹ almost a decade before the Polish oral history. She speaks extensively about her life before the war, her family, her experiences in the Lublin ghetto, using a false identity as Christian in labor camps in Germany and her life in Israel. She fondly recalls her family members and childhood, describing the family's religious observance and comfortable life in an apartment with "many rooms".⁵⁹⁰ Her family was very numerous and their life was happy. They spoke Yiddish at home but knew Polish and the younger generation tended to use it more and more.

She mentions the family's Zionism. Her father wanted to immigrate to Palestine illegally but was stopped in Syria, and then again travelled a few times to Warsaw to get a permit but he never managed to go. Chawa speaks about these failed attempts with tears.

She speaks about the local community with praise, mentioning Jewish institutions and prominent Jews in the city. She refers to the Yiddish theatre and Jewish banks in the town and names a few local Jewish newspapers. She describes also her school education, her Polish classmates and assesses Polish-Jewish relations as good. Interestingly she distinguishes between *notsrim* (lit. Christians, in this context Catholics?) and *pravoslavim* (Orthodox Christians), mentioning that the latter were not many. She mentions the rise of antisemitism after the death of Piłsudski but she personally did not suffer because of it. Her father had many business relations with Christians so she does not remember antisemitic experiences herself. She claims Jewish organizations were not allowed in Poland back then.⁵⁹¹

The wartime constitutes the core of the story. Chawa focuses on the cruelty of Germans since the first days of the invasion and mentions that Jewish men were afraid to go out. Thus, her father would stay at home and she, with another Aryan-looking sister, would go out to sell things (to other Jews) and provide for the family. Their family business was inactive. Chawa mentions also a deterioration of the Polish attitude towards the Jews. She saw that they reacted positively to the Nazi persecution of the Jews; she says they wanted it and they would betray a Jew for 5 grosz – the price of a package of salt. On the other hand, she mentions also compassion. One Polish woman wanted to take her and hide her but Chawa did not want to do so.

She recalls the liquidation of the ghetto, when together with her family she was waiting for the deportation in the great synagogue of Lublin. All of her relatives but a

⁵⁸⁹ O.3./AT/11397.

⁵⁹⁰ In the Polish interview she mentions there were three rooms.

⁵⁹¹ "לא מרשים דברים כאלה בפולניה"; O.3./AT/11397.

sister and her father were taken to Bełżec. In the end of the interview she speaks about her life in Israel and conveys a message about Israel's unity.

Chawa cries frequently when telling her story and cannot control her emotions; one can easily notice that she relives the story as she is telling it.

The Polish Interview

The Polish interview was conducted in 2009 and Chawa mentions that she has already given her testimony to Yad Vashem. She is also very explicit about not being able to share her entire experience. She repeatedly states that what she says is just "a drop in the ocean" but she cannot say more, she is unable. She shows much emotion, with sadness and regret prevailing over any others.

The focus of her story is on the Holocaust; she does not mind talking about her childhood before the war but her story ends with her arrival in Israel. She does not say in the interview what her profession was, what her family life was like or how the integration in Israel went.

The account goes to the Holocaust after a few introductory sentences and her attention remains concentrated there. She accentuates that she survived because of her father's precept. She met him by chance during Pesach, after the liquidation of the ghetto. The description of this encounter is truly beautiful and moving and Chawa highlights that the meeting was a miracle and she was guided by an internal voice. She found her father in an abandoned property when he was praying and did not recognize him until he spoke to her because his beard was shaved off. She understood it was her father only when she heard his voice:

I did not recognize him. And he says to me these three words and with it I went on: "Chawcia [a diminutive of Chawa], you don't look Jewish. Save yourself! May there remain a sign of my generation!" and he pushed me: "Go" go" and thus I went.⁵⁹²

Chawa then went back to the transitive ghetto of Majdan Tatarski where she closely escaped death, fleeing the night before its liquidation. The following day, after being provided with a false Polish identity card, she and her sister were deported to Germany. Chawa recalls her coming back to Lublin, after the liberation, in August 1945:

One thing that killed me to the end. Maybe you know that, you must have studied history. It wasn't, it wasn't soiled up, it was very open. In August - I was liberated on April 11 - I went to Poland in August. And then there was a day when I couldn't be in Lublin anymore. I was at Lubartowska. And then, when the Polish army returned from the war, they selected all Jewish officers and shot them dead. And it was the Poles, the

⁵⁹² OH GGNNTC Chawa Goldminc, 2.

Home Army did, not the Germans. I ran away. I went to Braunschweig and from there I returned to Germany... it was such a slaughterhouse ... How many ... there were some Jews that came back, maybe who stayed. Those who were killed - were killed, those who could - escaped. The rest I have not been to Lublin anymore ... to Poland - I am telling the truth, that you may know - I will not return to Poland for treasures, for treasures. I know that you are not from this generation, I know everything. But you must have learned what they tell and what they don't tell, but all I say is true.⁵⁹³

She recalls the final traumatic event, a murder of approximately two thousand Jewish officers who came back to Poland in the Polish Army allied with the Soviets. According to her account, the representatives of the Polish Home Army gathered them and killed them exactly on the day she reached Lublin. She did not witness the killing but as soon as she learned about it, she escaped. She recalls that she bought a pair of new shoes and in panic lost one of the shoes and went back to Germany with one foot bare.

Chawa's attention always flows back to the Holocaust period, even when she is asked about the interwar time. For example, when asked about the topography of her neighborhood, she reminisces about the drastic scenes she saw there during the Nazi occupation. Thus, her childhood lot is interwoven with the Holocaust stories, unlike in the Hebrew interview which retains more of a chronological order.

Identity of the Narrator

Chawa's position in both interviews is that of a Holocaust survivor. She highlights the divide between Poles and Jews, pointing to the difference in their fate. However, in Polish she expresses more explicitly her grudge and resentment towards Poles. She complains about their betrayal and unwillingness to help:

My cousin lost two children, he went with two children. He had so many acquaintances, friends, Polish! ... he didn't look Jewish at all! He was a light blonde with blue eyes, she spoke Polish perfectly. And he had friends, so many Polish friends. And no one wanted to save him. They killed him with his two children and wife.⁵⁹⁴

However, she also repeats the words of gratitude towards those who saved her life, the parents of her classmate. She mentions multiple times that she searched for them after the war but she did not find them and she fears maybe they were killed for helping Jews. She cries when speaking about that fear.

Definitely, the Hebrew interview is more coherent in focusing her family's and her own story in relation to the Holocaust. She speaks to commemorate them and to leave

⁵⁹³ Ibid, 4.

⁵⁹⁴ OH GGNNTC Chawa Goldminc, 30.

a message for future generations. It must be easier for her to speak to a member of the ingroup and talk about the experiences expected to be a part of Jewish collective memory. She is adding to the picture of the past but not challenging it in any way. In Polish, it feels like she wants to share her story but she is not equally comfortable both with her emotions and with being the member of the outgroup.

In Polish, her relation to Poland and Poles is complicated. She clearly refuses to ever come back to Poland because of the hatred and hostility towards the Jews she witnessed among Poles. She seems to have a lot of resentment for Poles not helping the Jews but at the same time, paradoxically, Poles saved her life and to further complicate the situation, she survived as a non-Jewish Pole. Nonetheless, her position remains that of an outsider. A betrayed outcast.

Ichhak

The Outline of His Lifestory

Ichhak Carmi was born Izaak Wajnryb in 1923 in Lublin. His parents were secular, middle class Jews, who spoke Polish at home and had moderately Zionist views.⁵⁹⁵ He attended a Jewish elementary school and later *Gimnazjum Humanistyczne*, where he learned Hebrew.

At the beginning of September 1939, he fled to the East with his father. First, they stopped in Łuck, and then they settled in Kowel, where he attended high school and learned some Yiddish. One of his teachers there was Abraham Sutzkever.⁵⁹⁶ As they refused to accept the Soviet citizenship,⁵⁹⁷ they were taken to Siberia, where they worked in deforestation as lumberjacks. After signing the Sikorski-Majski pact, they were released from the camp and left for the south, and worked in various kolkhozes in Uzbekistan. In 1946, together with his father, he returned to Poland. The mother and brother who stayed in Lublin probably died in the Bełżec extermination camp.

In the post-war years, Ichhak collaborated with Bricha – he organized the illegal immigration of Jews from Poland to Palestine. In 1948, when the State of Israel was founded, he was hired by the Israeli delegation in Warsaw. In 1950 he went to France, and from there to Israel in 1951.

A year after his arrival in Israel, he was mobilized. After 3 months of service, he was placed in reserve. At the urging of his commander, he entered an officer school. He took part in the Suez War (1956), the Six-Day War (1967) and the Yom Kippur War

⁵⁹⁵ They supported the idea, also financially, but did not intend to leave Poland.

⁵⁹⁶ An acclaimed Yiddish poet.

⁵⁹⁷ See the story of Mira and Josef.

(1973). In the army he rose to the rank of lieutenant colonel. He was married in the first years in Israel to another Polish immigrant – Krystyna. They had two sons. In the meantime, he graduated from studies in economics and started working in an Israeli company – Israel Aircraft Industries Ltd International. He came back to Lublin in 2000 to participate in the mystery of memory “One Land-Two Temples”,⁵⁹⁸ where survivors met with rescuers. Together with his wife Krystyna, he lived in Rishon le-Zion until his death in 2016.⁵⁹⁹

The Polish Interview

The interview with him was conducted in November 2006 in his apartment in the presence of his wife, who occasionally interrupted and interjected with some remarks. He speaks elegant Polish, without switching into Hebrew or Russian and with an impeccable accent betraying very good education. He is dressed casually but formally in a way marking his comfortable social position. There is something in his pronunciation and gestures that reminds one of old Polish actors – the same tone of voice and the talent for narrating. Icchak speaks in a very orderly way, showing emotions but in a very reserved “Polish” way.⁶⁰⁰ The general impression he gives is that of an elegant, and a little sad, gentlemen.

The interview starts from his visit to Lublin in 2000. He recalls his resistance towards the idea of visiting Poland and the emotions he experienced when visiting his hometown. He also refers to the mystery of memory he participated in. Then, the story goes back to his childhood and proceeds chronologically. He mentions his education, two antisemitic attacks he suffered as a boy, support for Zionist organizations and then describes the war experiences: the escape to the Soviet Union, the stay in Kowel and his education there and finally the stay in the lager in Siberia. He underscores his will to join the Polish Army and repeats with regret that he was not accepted, even though he tried twice: first to join the Anders Army and then the Berling. After that, he mentions his stay in Uzbekistan and correspondence with family during the war.

Icchak confesses also a sense of guilt. He felt responsible for not letting his father go back through the border to fetch his mother and his brother, even though he admits that only a very few people managed to do that and survive. He only freed himself from the sense of guilt a short time before the interview took place, thanks to therapy.

⁵⁹⁸ See "Misterium Pamięci "Jedna Ziemia - Dwie Świątynie," Grodzka Gate - NN Theatre Centre, 2000, 25.10.2022, <https://teatrnn.pl/kalendarium/wydarzenia/misterium-pamieci-jedna-ziemia-dwie-swiatynie-2000/>.

⁵⁹⁹ The biography is based on the oral history and the bio available in the multimedia library of the Grodzka-NN Theatre: <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102724/edition/97404>, 25.10.2022.

⁶⁰⁰ In contrast to “Israeli” emotionality.

He then passes to postwar life, where he pays much attention to his experiences in the army. The listener can easily understand how important it was for him to join it and prove himself – as a reaction to being dismissed and unable to fight during the Second World War. He speaks in detail also about his work in smuggling Jews out of Poland, first illegally, and then legally when it was possible. He mentions that as soon as the State of Israel was created, he wanted to immigrate but was not allowed to leave his job under the threat of treason. He speaks very little about his private life, referring to his sons only in the context of the wars they fought, and briefly describing his career.

The feeling of regret characterizes his story. His misery is not explicitly expressed but permeates the narrative. The two key moments of the story are the sense of guilt and the rejection he felt when he was not accepted to the Polish army. His perception is that Poland was “fascist-sized”⁶⁰¹ and there was no place for him as a Jew in the ranks of the Polish military. When he finally proved good enough to be a soldier – in Israel – he did not have the relevant preparation and suffered more than his fellow soldiers did. Nonetheless, he was promoted and eventually had a successful career in the army and then in civil life.

In a sense, it is a bitter story of success. He survived and then adapted to the new Israeli reality but paid very dearly for it.

The Hebrew Interview

The interview recorded for Yad Vashem took place in 2012; that is, six years after the Polish one, and naturally was conducted with a different intention. Yad Vashem collects testimonies from Holocaust survivors having in mind collecting as much information about the Holocaust and its victims as possible. Icchak speaks very good Hebrew with a Polish accent. He focuses on the Holocaust, his Zionism and Jewish identity. He is asked about his family, his identity before the war and the experience of being Jewish in Poland back then. Unsurprisingly, he speaks more in detail here about his family, giving their full names and describing the profession of his father (trade in bananas and chocolate).

While in the Polish interview he highlights that the family was Polish speaking and Yiddish was not spoken, in the Hebrew interview he underscores that only the maternal side did not speak Yiddish, and his father’s family did. He describes their motivation to speak Polish at home: “because people spoke Polish”,⁶⁰² and states that their home was Polish but Zionist – they collected money for Keren Kayemeth and he belonged to a Zionist organization, Halutz Dror. Interestingly, in the Polish interview he states that he did not belong to any organization but attended the meetings of HaShomer

⁶⁰¹ Pl. *Sfaszyzowana*.

⁶⁰² See O.3./AT/11397.

HaTsair. In the Hebrew interview, it is his aunt who belonged to HaShomer HaTsair. In Hebrew, he speaks more in detail about the family's relation to Judaism. They were secular and went to the synagogue only for Pesach, Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur, and it would be rather his grandfather than his father who did. He underscores his Jewish identity saying that "it was very clear" since his childhood.

There are some details regarding his youth which he did not mention in the previous interview. One of them is having friends who were imprisoned because of their activity in the communist party; in Polish he does not mention them.

Moreover, he puts emphasis on Polish antisemitism, claiming that it was much worse than German antisemitism from the era before Hitler came to power, and that it was independent from the Nazi antisemitism. He states that the Polish-Jewish relations were "very bad" with terrible antisemitism, pogroms and anti-Jewish laws. He claims that the *numerus clausus* at the universities was actually *numerus nullus* and Jews did not have access to academic education. He gives examples of this antisemitism from his own experience: the antisemitic attacks on the street (the same he mentions in Polish) and discrimination during the examinations – he needed to repeat the high school exam (*mala matura*) because of one orthographic error, which he perceived as discrimination because of his Jewish background. However, he thinks that the older generations did not suffer because of antisemitism. When speaking about intergroup relations, he adds that his father had Polish clients and that there were Jews never once spoke to a Pole – "they did not even have a language in common because the Jews spoke in Yiddish". Thus, he notes the peaceful relations but also the segregation or divide between the groups.

In the Hebrew interview he dedicates much time to wartime experiences. The content, however, remains mostly the same; he simply puts more emphasis on Jewish life, mentioning, for example, that Avraham Sutzkever was his teacher in Kowel or stating that there was no Jewish life in the lager in Siberia. In addition, he uses more extra-contextual narration to inform the interviewer as to whether he knew about the Holocaust at various stages of the war. He also devotes less space to the attempts to enroll in the Polish army: he only mentions one occasion, when he tried to join the Anders army. Then, he proceeds to the return to Poland, to Krakow, where he became involved with a Dror kibbutz because of his former links to the organization; in Polish, he does not mention this.

The way he narrates the postwar experiences is parallel to the Polish interview but speaks more about the illegal practices related to organizing Jewish emigration to Palestine, which he does not mention in Polish.

One of the most interesting plots, which only appears in the Hebrew interview, perhaps because he was not accompanied by his wife, is a love story with Roma Lanker, who was in HaShomer HaTsair with Mordechai Anielewicz (one of the leaders of the

Warsaw Ghetto Uprising). Icchak mentions that they lived together for four years, which means that he had to have met her in the first two years after coming back to Poland. Together, they emigrated to Israel through France because of the therapy she needed to undergo there. After three months in Israel they parted ways; he was 26 when this happened. Another plot not mentioned in the Polish interview is the story of survival of his wife, Krystyna, who survived in very difficult conditions and was baptized when staying on the Aryan side in hiding.⁶⁰³

Identity of the Narrator

While in Polish, the narrator presents himself as a Pole of Jewish background, rejected by the fascist Poland, in Hebrew he is more of a faithful Zionist and a Holocaust survivor who simply happens to come from Poland. In both interviews, therefore, he highlights the aspects in common with the audience. In Polish, he highlights that Polish was his mother tongue, that he was a patriot desiring to join the army, that he wanted to be a Pole but here was no space for him in Poland. Nonetheless, he remains a Pole, the impression being strengthened by his perfect Polish.

In Hebrew, he speaks with a Polish accent. He names all the elements that make him Jewish: Zionism, knowledge of the Jewish traditions, learning Hebrew in his youth and the work in Jewish emigration. One can say that he acquired his Israeliness with his military service. He fought in all the wars until 1973. In fact, the pathos of this in many ways successful person lies in the fact that he paid very dearly for all the three identities: Polish, Jewish and Israeli, and finding balance between them seemed to be almost impossible. The outcome of this balancing is influenced by his wife's choice to stay connected to Poland, speak Polish at home, consume Polish media and culture, etc. Otherwise, the regret and feeling of being rejected might have overbalanced him, and the Polish part of his identity remained much less prominent.

Helena

The Outline of Her Life Story

Helena Grynspan, née Waksman, was born in 1926 in Lublin. Her mother, Henia, née Cwibel, came from Chełm and her father, Samuel, was born in Luboml. She had three siblings – Josef, Czesława, Nadzieja. Helena was either the youngest or second youngest among them. The family spoke mostly Polish and she did not speak Yiddish until she learned it in the ghetto. Her father was an accountant and a Bund activist. He

⁶⁰³ However, Krystyna presented her story in Polish to the interviewer from the Grodzka gate – NN Theatre Center in a separate interview.

was elected to be a councilor in the municipal council (date unknown). The family was secular, although the mother observed the major holidays. Until 1940 they lived in Lublin at 20 Narutowicza Street. Helena graduated from the Narcyza Żmichowska Elementary School No. 9. The first weeks of schooling in Czarnecka's *gimnazjum* on Bernardyńska Street were interrupted by the outbreak of World War II. She loved reading and aspired to become a Polish teacher.

In 1940, the family was thrown out of the apartment and forced to live in the ghetto in Lublin – initially at 2 Lubartowska Street, and then after the borders of the ghetto were reduced, at 5 Żłota Street. During the deportation of Jews from Lublin, the Waksman family were taken to the labor camp in Siedliszcze, where they worked in quarries. During the transport of Jews from Siedliszcze to the death camp in Sobibór, Helena, together with her older sister and cousin, jumped out of the cart. After finding her mother, who was hiding in a nearby village, all returned to Lublin. The lot of her father is not entirely clear but apparently he, in despair, denounced himself to the Nazis, after having understood that the Polish family who was hiding him wanted to poison him. In Lublin, Helena found shelter in the house of one Catholic woman, while her mother and sister lived with another in a different neighborhood, close to the Majdanek camp. She joined them shortly before the liberation (July 1944). Both her sisters survived in Lublin and her brother in the Soviet Union, later joining the Kościuszko division and returning to Poland with the Red Army.

Subsequently, she stayed in Lublin for short period. After her mother died of cancer in 1945, she left for Łódź. There she started a family – she was married and had a son. After the wave of antisemitism and anti-Jewish repression, they decided to leave for Israel in 1957 (*Gomulka's Aliyah*), where they were directed to settle in Ashdod, and thereafter moved to Ramat Gan. Her brother immigrated to Israel as well, while both her sisters stayed in Poland. She learned Hebrew by herself while taking low-paid jobs and presents the time in Israel as economically challenging.

The Polish Interview

The interview took place in 2006 in her apartment in Ramat Gan. After a short introduction, when asked to talk about her life, she summarizes the prewar time in three sentences, and from the fourth sentence, she speaks about the war. Her attention is clearly focused on that period, although later she is asked additional questions about her childhood and life before the war.

She admits it is the first time in her life she has agreed to speak about her wartime experiences. She says that she never spoke about it even to any family members. Multiple times, she repeats when speaking about various events during the war that she cannot share more details because it is too much for her. In comparison to other stories, hers is quite exceptional because of the direct experience of the Holocaust – she was

subjected to various stages of the Holocaust taking place exactly in her hometown and in the region. Moreover, her family returned and hid in their hometown, she witnessed the liquidation of the Lublin ghetto and the Siedliszcze ghetto, and escaped deportation to a death camp. Moreover, she witnessed the last weeks of the functioning of the Majdanek camp, living very close to it. In that sense, she might be the most direct witness of the Holocaust among all of the interviewees, as the others survived geographically removed from their hometowns. Maybe this is also the reason why the trauma is very visible in her case. She speaks in calm voice and does not cry but she repeats how terrible these experiences were and how she cannot remember much of what had happened before. She also mentions nightmares and flashbacks.

Moreover, she is quite explicit about the impact that the experience of hiding had on her decision to immigrate. When the situation became politically tense in 1956, Jews started to lose their jobs and people were afraid of a new pogrom. Helena remembers a particular situation that helped her to make her decision about leaving Poland:

My best friend, she said it in the best faith, because you know that when there are excesses, then the first are pogroms, well, she says to me: "Don't be afraid, we take you, we'll hide you ". When I heard that, "we'll hide you", and I already have a child here, I said: "Oh no, it's the same again, it's not." But I ... and then, because my husband wanted to leave, and my husband, and we then ... it started with those, with this job and ... and that's why I made a decision that I wanted to leave.⁶⁰⁴

When she heard the words “we will hide you” from her best friend, she knew she could not bear it again and had to flee. Additionally, her husband wanted to emigrate as well. However, she highlights that it was not easy to live in Israel because she did not speak the language, both her and her husband worked very hard and she missed Poland. Nonetheless, along with longing, she expresses her anger, regret and disappointment with Poland very explicitly:

What hurt me was this taking away [the Polish citizenship] ... It's not that ... It's Poland that is responsible, it's not, not, not the regime, but Poland. How can you take away from someone who was born there, after all, I'm not mentioning that one is there from generations, but how can you take away the citizenship? How? Neither did I sit [in

⁶⁰⁴ OH GGNNTC Helena Grynspan, 45;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102158/edition/96809>, 23.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102662/edition/97343>, 23.02.2023.

prison], I wasn't punished, I worked like anybody else, I didn't do anything wrong. How can citizenship be taken away? Please answer that for me. How?⁶⁰⁵

She is very bitter about the injustice of taking away citizenship from Jews who were leaving Poland during the communist regime, and she alludes to the conviction, often expressed in public discourse, that Poland cannot be blamed for such political decisions because it is the communist regime who bears the responsibility. She, however, objects such a point of view. For her it was her own motherland rejecting her, not the communists in power. This double trauma – of the Holocaust and being forced into emmigration – constitutes the organizing principle of the story.

The Hebrew Interview

The testimony given to Yad Vashem was recorded in 2011.⁶⁰⁶ Similarly to Icchak, Helena mentions more personal details and speaks more about her family and Jewish identity before the war because of the structure of the interview. Interestingly, she exhibits more positive outlook on life in this later interview, highlighting that she is an optimist in spite of what she lived through. Moreover, she speaks much more about her own family: her husband, son and grandchildren, and links her optimism to them (the next generations give her hope).

While in the Polish interview she repeatedly claims not to remember anything from the interwar time, even though eventually she recalls many details, in the Hebrew interview she speaks about her childhood more freely and in detail. She also feels less serious and more playful in Hebrew, maybe because she speaks to another Israeli, not with a member of the outgroup. In fact, she shows more emotion and warmth when speaking about her family. She mentions that her parents were married because of “great love” because her mother was beautiful and father was tall. She also recalls that because her mother came from Chelm, it was a source of never-ending jokes that “we can see that you are from Chelm”.⁶⁰⁷ Helena highlights also the values her father passed on to the children: respect for the working class, no matter what the person’s profession. In addition, she speaks about many relatives not living in Lublin, whom she did not mention in the Polish interview, maybe because the aim of Yad Vashem is to collect

⁶⁰⁵ OH GGNNTC Helena Grynspan, 44;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102162/edition/96813>, 23.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102664/edition/97345>, 23.02.2023.

⁶⁰⁶ O.3/VT/11736.

⁶⁰⁷ “רואים שאת מחלים”; O.3/VT/11736, Video 1. Chelm was known from folk stories as the town where wise men behaved foolishly. See Ruth von Bernuth, *How the Wise Men Got to Chelm: The Life and Times of a Yiddish Folk Tradition* (New York: New York University Press, 2016).

information about all the victims of the Holocaust, and thus every name mentioned is important.

When asked about her knowledge of Jewish culture and religion, she responds that neither she nor her sibling knew them well and that she had a mixed Polish-Jewish environment. She mentions the family had a Polish domestic servant and was economically comfortable, while in Polish she tends to present their economic situation as more modest. She does not remember any personal experience of antisemitism before the war; however, she remembers that when she was accepted to the Polish *gimnazjum*, it had a bench ghetto. She attended there only for a year because of the war.

Interestingly, in the Hebrew interview, Helena is also more explicit about her love of Polish culture and shares that she wanted to study Polish language and philology, as well as history. In the Polish interview, she mentions she loved reading Polish books but she does not share her dreams about becoming a scholar of the Polish language. She also mentions studying in secret during the war.

In general, the account of her experiences during the Holocaust is similar in both interviews. She relates the same events; however, in Hebrew she adds more details she did not mention in Polish, and offers a clearer timeline of events. Moreover, she is more emotional and cries when speaking about some particular events such as the camp for the Jews serving in the Polish army in Lipowa Street, meeting her younger sister who delivered the message about their father's death or the death of her mother. She also adds more details about the Poles who helped them to survive, including the stories of other Jews who they rescued. Helena says also that she thinks she was never young.⁶⁰⁸ She does not explicitly make the connection but the context suggests she means that the tragic experiences of her youth made her prematurely grow up and stole her youth.

Her relationship to Poles is presented in Hebrew slightly different than in Polish. In this interview, she presents the Polish attitudes towards Jews as positive before the war and during the war – she says that during the war “she met positive side of Poles”.⁶⁰⁹ For her, it was after the war when the relationship degenerated and she mentions the anger towards the Jews. Her experience of antisemitism comes from that period, when, for example, it was suggested to her to change her last name to a Polish one. She also says that economically, it was much more difficult for them just after the war than before. She does not hide how hard it was for her to come to Israel; she says “she cried day and night” when she came.⁶¹⁰

⁶⁰⁸ Video 4.

⁶⁰⁹ Video 4.

⁶¹⁰ Video 4.

Identity of the Narrator

Helena's position as a narrator in both interviews is similar, but the emotional underpinning of both is slightly divergent. In the Polish interview, the dominant feeling permeating the conversation is that of anger, regret and rejection. Helena's story in a certain sense is a history of misery and failure. She does not remember the happy times of her childhood; her memory is overtaken by the Holocaust. After having survived the genocide, she witnessed the death of her mother who was rescued only to die from cancer shortly after the liberation. Then, she had to face antisemitism in the postwar years, together with flashbacks and nightmares. Even when they decide to go to Israel, the transition is very bitter:

Emigration is very hard, sir. Emigration is hard in terms of... let's say. In general, no language, nothing, nothing, nothing, nothing... we lived like any average Polish family. We worked, we lived. You know, it was hard to make ends meet [laughs], but ... And here, it wasn't easy here. I didn't know the language, so I went to work as a waitress. And my Hebrew ... I speak Hebrew well, but it is only by hearing. I did not study here for one hour in any Ulpan... because at that time you had to pay and there was no money. We only had a bicycle, my husband sold it and he went and he went to learn Hebrew. And he was working. And I didn't know how and I worked as a waitress in shifts. And with shifts, how could you learn? It was not possible. And it was, it was more than hard... They sent us to Ashdod. It was very hard there. Well, you must know that a man survives.... This longing was killing...⁶¹¹

She describes how life was not easy in Poland but was even harder in Israel, where to economic hardship joined the lack of language and living in primitive conditions in Ashdod. In addition, Helena took very hard the deprivation of Polish citizenship:

They took our citizenship and gave us ... this ... it's not even a laissez-passer [French. travel document - ed. MR], this is ... well ... a travel document. No citizenship. To take away citizenship from a man? How? Why? Please explain to me, I can't understand it. Apart from that. They took. Let's assume a regime, suppose. Now, tell me ... If I want my citizenship back now, don't God forbid, I don't want to, but I'm just telling you, I have to submit a request, an application with a request to restore my citizenship. Tell me, why should I ask for something that was mine that has been unlawfully taken from me? Sir, even in Arab countries, even in Iran, even in the worst, anywhere, even in all those countries where Jews live, right? And in Syria and so on, they don't take away their citizenship. How is it? Can you explain to me what it is like? If I want to, I have to apply

⁶¹¹ OH GGNNTC Helena Grynszpan, 9;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102167/edition/96818>, 23.02.2023.

for restoration and pay horrendous sums for attorneys, for this and that. Why? Do you have the answer?⁶¹²

She is still overwhelmed by anger when speaking about this injustice, and compares her situation to Jews in other countries, pointing to the exceptionality of being deprived of a citizenship of her country of origin. She repeatedly states how much it hurts her, but it is more complicated than that:

HG: Well, I feel sorry. But it is my language and it is ... You know, in German it is said Muttersprache [Ger. mother tongue - ed. DG]. Do you know what this means?

TC: Mother tongue? (...)

HG: Well, it's not a language, not a mutter, it's a mother's, it's kind of sucked out of ... a mother's breast, well. There is this sentiment. There is sentiment and there is anger.

TC: How to combine it?

HG: Exactly, but there is, there is something.⁶¹³

Helena is very explicit about how much the Polish language (and Polishness probably) is constitutive for her identity. She claims it is something she sucked in her mother's milk; thus, she cannot be estranged from it. This metaphor is very suggestive as it related to the most organic and basic bond between a child and a mother. It suggests a deep rootedness in Poland, Polish language and culture and a profound identification with Polishness. One cannot unlearn to be Polish just as one cannot un-absorb what they have already sucked in with their mother breast milk. However, simultaneously, she feels anger that she was rejected from this community that she had a full right to because "she did not commit any crime".⁶¹⁴ Although she does not continue to develop the metaphor, its vicinity suggests that she feels as if she was rejected by her own parent. Thus, her relationship to her Polish identity remains stretched between anger and affection. She narrates as an outcast.

In the Hebrew interview, her position seems to be more of a member of the group. She narrates about the Jewish experience for other Jews to remember. This sense of inside-ness could explain why she feels more comfortable sharing personal details and

⁶¹² OH GGNNTC Helena Grynszpan, 46;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102162/edition/96813>, 23.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102664/edition/97345>, 23.02.2023.

⁶¹³ Ibid., 46.

⁶¹⁴ Ibid., 45.

showing more emotion. After all, she speaks to another ingroup member who is familiar with many other similar stories. Although her own integration into the new ingroup – Israeli society – was difficult and at times heartbreaking, she succeeded in making the next generations part of it and having a future there. In that sense, her account in Hebrew is much more optimistic and hopeful. Her suffering gains meaning, while in Polish she says that she is not sure whether it was worth surviving.⁶¹⁵ Apart from the possibility of her being in a different mental and emotional situation on both occasions (the interviews were given five years apart), such a gap in the overall atmosphere of the interview might be related to the specific context. Although she relates the same events, they gain a different meaning when placed in diverse contexts. When set in the context of Polish history, her personal story is a failure – it is a story of rejection and expulsion. When placed in the Israeli context, it is an account of a victory: after all, she survived and found a safe haven for herself and her family.

Conclusions

All the “double” narratives presented here bring to attention the tragic tear in the identity of the Polish Jews who grew up in the Second Polish Republic. Those born in well off families, like the interviewees in this chapter, in a certain sense had all the means to integrate into Polish society. They were acculturated. However, the society did not recognize them as “theirs”. Referring to Axel Honneth’s theory of recognition, one can say that the majority did not bestow on them the recognition of their Polishness either before the war, or during, or after.⁶¹⁶ Therefore, they remained outcasts with the subjectively felt connection to Polishness, challenged constantly by this lack of recognition, a constant reminder of their non-normativity. Such denial of recognition interferes negatively with person’s sense of self and identity formation.

Moreover, adding Judith Butler’s concept of grievability,⁶¹⁷ the lives of these Jewish Poles were not grievable in the eyes of their Polish co-citizens, at least not enough to be felt sufficiently. Grievability assumes that someone’s life is valuable and recognized as life. Clearly, that was not the case during the Holocaust. However, the interviewees in this chapter extend the feeling of not being grievable to their entire experience of

⁶¹⁵ OH GGNNTC Helena Grynszpan, 27; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102140/edition/96791>, 23.03.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102645/edition/97326>, 23.03.2023.

⁶¹⁶ Axel Honneth, *Recognition: A Chapter in the History of European Ideas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020); Axel Honneth and Jacques Rancière, *Recognition or Disagreement: A Critical Encounter on the Politics of Freedom, Equality, and Identity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016).

⁶¹⁷ Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* Radical Thinkers (London: Verso, 2016).

Polishness, or its significant part. Thus, they are not only outcasts, their human identity is questioned as well, and the narrative act is an act of restoration in that sense also.

Part 4

The Relations

Chapter 7

Spatial Relations

This chapter explores the relations between the groups at hand mostly from the perspective of sensory experiences and impressions, employing theories of spatial segregation and categories of agency, class, gender, and age. The term ‘spatial segregation’ was initially applied in the context of the relations between whites and blacks in the United States.⁶¹⁸ However, since then, as noted by Pascoal Pereira, the literature includes various terms to denote this phenomenon, such as ghetto, ethnic enclave, gated community, suburb, exurb, inner city, or edge city,⁶¹⁹ as spatial segregation is present in every society. Thus, the ghetto, in this case understood in its pre-Holocaust sense, exemplifies spatial segregation in the case of interwar Poland.⁶²⁰

The research on spatial segregation has developed considerably in the past century, starting from the study of residential patterns and moving towards the conclusion that people’s social lives happen in in various types of spaces beside residential spaces. Work, leisure, and means of transport are occasions for the daily intergroup encounters where the interactions between various groups occur with varying levels of intensity.⁶²¹ Moreover, multiple possible causes and dynamics of spatial segregation have been discussed. Following Sonia Arbaci,⁶²² this study assumes spatial segregation reflects wider social inequalities and power structures in which the privileged apply ‘conscious

⁶¹⁸ Pioneering studies of the Chicago School of urban sociology led to the formulation of hypotheses such as Ernest Burgess’ zonal hypothesis. See Quinn, "The Burgess Zonal Hypothesis and its Critics."

⁶¹⁹ Pascoal Pereira, "Spatial Segregation: The Persistent and Structural Features of Exclusionary Policies," in *Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions*, ed. Walter Leal Filho et al. (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2021), 869.

⁶²⁰ Spatial segregation in this context was particularly visible with but not limited to the ghettos. In the countryside, for example, oftentimes various villages belonged to a specific minority, e.g., the Ukrainians.

⁶²¹ Pryce et al., *Urban Inequality and Segregation in Europe and China*, 13-14.

⁶²² Sonia Arbaci, *Paradoxes of Segregation: Housing Systems, Welfare Regimes and Ethnic Residential Change in Southern European Cities*, Studies in Urban and Social Change (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2019).

socio-spatial distancing' from the unprivileged.⁶²³ Reflecting this, in the sources herein, many interviewees state that they would never go to certain areas or befriend their inhabitants, even if they were met in "neutral" venues such as school, for example. In addition to that, a concept of self-segregation is adopted to denote a situation in which spatial dispersion might not be the desired state and the group might prefer to remain in a neighborhood where other members of their social networks live in order to receive mutual support, have easier access to specific services (e.g., religious practice) or feel safer.⁶²⁴ The choices of those Jews who preferred to live in the Jewish quarter and interact mostly with other Jews could be seen in this framework.

However, one ought to remember that research shows that self-segregation is in fact more common among the majority group, usually white and/or indigenous,⁶²⁵ meaning that it is the majority that self-segregates (and possesses the agency to do so) to avoid the minority rather than the opposite, and that the divide can be of a socioeconomic nature as well as an ethnic one. Indeed, majority avoidant self-separation has been determined to often be the driving force of spatial separation. Thus, it is not only the Jews who might have self-segregated but also Christian Poles who chose to avoid the Jewish spaces, and it might be the latter who in fact had more power to enforce such division. Thus, one is left wondering whether it was a choice or constraint that produced and maintained the ghetto in the case of Lublin.

In addition to the above mentioned macro-level factors, psychological research draws attention to the micro-ecological scale of segregation (micro-segregation), focusing on everyday, interpersonal relations in informal settings such as sitting in dining halls, classrooms, leisure spaces or public transportation. The researchers concluded that in these spaces people tend to stay closer to people belonging to their social or ethnic group, and that the macro-level segregation fails to explain why people self-segregate on a daily micro-scale; various kinds of spaces either enable or constrain particular kinds of actions.

Bettencourt et al. argue that holding negative attitudes and stereotypes underpins stronger ingroup identification, making the member of the ingroup perceive higher threats to their own identity and values. Such individuals are more likely to feel anxious and uncomfortable when meeting outgroup members (intergroup anxiety). In consequence they might desire to restrict their movements to 'spatial comfort zones' where only the ingroup could be met and their feeling of safety remains unchallenged,

⁶²³ Sýkora, "New Socio-Spatial Formations: Places of Residential Segregation and Separation in Czechia," 432.

⁶²⁴ Peach, "Good Segregation, Bad Segregation"; Pryce et al., *Urban Inequality and Segregation in Europe and China*, 15.

⁶²⁵ Ibid.

which eventually might turn in a normative pattern – the development of exclusionist social norms promoting and strengthening micro-segregation patterns. This sheds light on the possible reasons why the segregation could persist over time, even after formal barriers are removed.

The third approach to spatial segregation useful for this study is known as the geographies of encounters – a research tradition drawing inspiration from symbolic interactionists,⁶²⁶ and their micro-sociological analysis of everyday behaviors in public space. The ‘encounter’ is understood as a specific form of contact, ‘where difference is somehow noteworthy’. This approach concentrates on how segregation might be eliminated in order to enhance social justice through the creation of “contact zones” – spaces that have the potential to lower segregation and bring people together. The term was first introduced by Mary Louise Pratt who intended by it spaces where “cultures, meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today”.⁶²⁷ As proved by Eugenia Prokop-Janiec⁶²⁸ the term is highly applicable to Polish-Jewish relations as a signifier of spaces where two isolated groups meet and establish socio-cultural relations. Following Pratt and Prokop-Janiec, the contact zone is understood as a sphere of perceived inequality, coercion, and conflict, but on the other hand also an opportunity to coexist, interact, experience transculturation and intergroup relations, and cultural adaptation of the minority group. In these spaces the contact occurs multiple times, on multiple occasions and with a variety of intensities in order to become “meaningful”. Such contact zones in the stories at hand were primarily shops, markets and schools.

Moreover, in this chapter attention will be paid to the common perceptions of the space in the narratives and the mobility of both groups between the spaces perceived as “ours” and “theirs”, using the conceptual framework indicated above, and moving beyond the contact zones. In particular, the study seeks to delineate each group’s spatial comfort zones and their agency in the demarcation of these spaces. Moreover, it poses questions regarding intergroup contact in the urban space: Were the borders of the spatial comfort zones permeable? If so, under what circumstances?

⁶²⁶ Such as Erving Goffman or Lyn H. Lofland.

⁶²⁷ Pratt, "Arts of the Contact Zone," 34; Pratt, *Imperial Eyes. Travel Writing and Transculturation*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2008).

⁶²⁸ Who introduced the term “contact zones” to the study of Polish-Jewish relations in: Eugenia Prokop-Janiec, *Pogranicze polsko-żydowskie: topografie i teksty* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2013), 37.

Intergroup Topography

In interwar Lublin, the segregation policies were historical rather than contemporary, as in the Second Polish Republic there were no legal restrictions regarding access to or distribution within urban spaces. Rather, the spatial relations between Jews and Catholics were shaped by the history of restrictive urban laws, which were in force almost since the first Jewish settlement⁶²⁹ until 1862, when the last prohibition of Jews settling in the Christian areas was abolished in the Russian empire.⁶³⁰

The Jewish community traditionally inhabited the area around the castle (Podzamcze) and northwards from the Old City; Lubartowska and Nowa, encompassing also the Czwartek area. After 1862, Jews started to settle also southwards from the Grodzka Gate, turning the Old City into a predominantly Jewish area and moving onwards into the “new” areas of the town. These neighborhoods were inhabited mostly by the middle class and could usually offer modern and comfortable living standards. In addition, the two suburbs of Wieniawa and Piaski had a distinctly Jewish character. However, the area referred to as the Jewish quarter (*dzielnica żydowska*) did not include these suburbs. It encompassed the Old City, the neighborhoods around the castle, and stretched up north along Lubartowska Street.

Apart from the ethnic segregation, an additional division ran along the lines of social status and wealth. The poorest areas of the Jewish quarter stretched between the Castle and the Old City in the east, while those better off could be found along the streets of Szeroka, Lubartowska, Nowa or in the new, “Christian” part of the town along the streets of Krakowskie Przedmieście, Raclawickie, and Narutowicza. Therefore, in the interwar period, the segregation policies applied in the past were still visible in the urban tissue; however, the mixing of the Jewish population with the Catholic was slowly dissolving the boundaries of the ghetto, at least to some extent. The analysis of the data presented below will seek an answer to the question of to what extent and under which conditions this mobility was taking place. Moreover, it will concentrate on Jewish and Catholic perceptions of the Jewish quarter versus the other parts of the city.

Naturally, the interviewees were children or young adults in the described period, and thus their own mobility was restricted primarily by their age. In addition, their childhood memories are not accurate in the factual sense due to the nature of memory. This is why the stories cannot serve as appropriate sources to study the past. However, they retain the memory of meanings ascribed to specific spaces and these remembered

⁶²⁹ The law *De non tolerandis Iudaeis* forbidding Jews to live and trade within the municipal limits of Lublin was issued in 1535. This led to the establishment of an *oppidum Iudaeorum* (as in other Polish towns).

⁶³⁰ The 1862 decree abolished legal restrictions on Polish Jews in the Kingdom of Poland.

meanings are a subject of the study because they indicate the directions of collective memory about the Other.

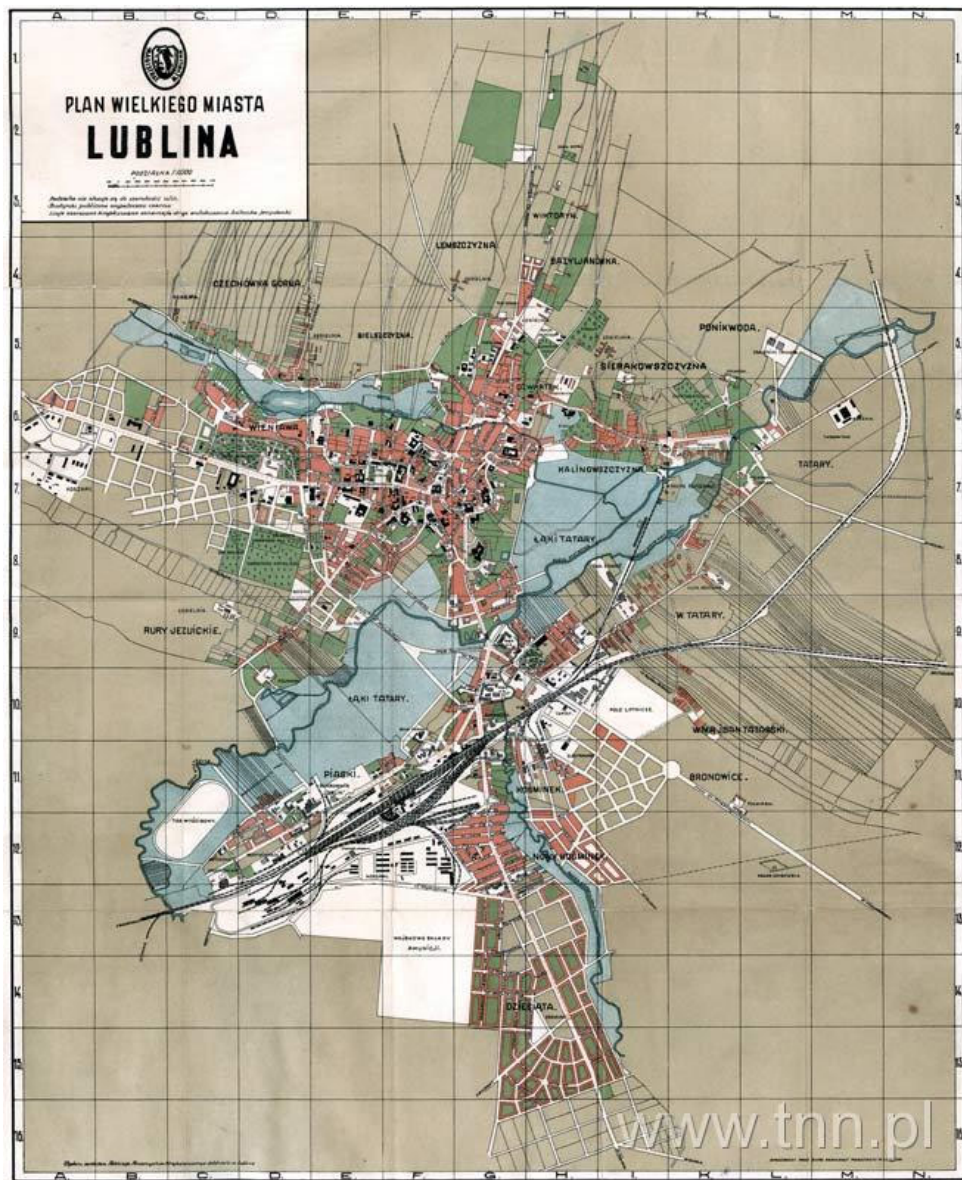


Figure 4. The map of the great city of Lublin. Source: <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/publication/18135>

Spatial Comfort Zones and the Constructions of the Jewish Space

The spatial division between the Jewish quarter and the rest of the city definitely results from historical conditions. However, three generations later, the division was still clearly perceived by the inhabitants of Lublin who continued to see the space as two separate areas: the Jewish quarter and the Polish Catholic town.⁶³¹ This section will focus on how the narratives depict the alterity of the Jewish space and what factors are presented as making it Jewish (Other). In addition, it will point to some markers of non-normativity that are not Jewish per se but are associated with the images of Jewishness. Thus, it is not always the perceived “Jewishness” that makes the space stand out as non-normative in the eyes of the narrator. Sometimes, it is another non-normative factor that adds to Jewishness being odd. Therefore, an attempt will be made to unpack these nuances in order to understand how the sense of “non-normativity” contributed to the perceptions of Jewish spaces, and how it related to the practices of othering.

Naturally, the most basic factor being seen as making the space Jewish was the Jewish presence. In the sources, the Catholic interviewees describe this presence in two ways. First, as folklore, which could be characterized as descriptive and thus not directly related to comfort but rather to stating the qualities of alterity. The second way of describing it relates to the ingroup’s discomfort with the outgroup’s spaces and states openly the reasons. The chapter follows this order, starting from relating to the accounts of folkloric presence connected to specific cultural expressions: religious, culinary or linguistic.

Folkloric Jewish Presence

When presenting such a folkloric description of the religious presence, the Catholic interviewees usually state that an area was inhabited by the Jews and then mention the presence of Jewish institutions and landmarks such as the cemeteries, synagogues or the

⁶³¹ Such a division does not imply that there were no areas seen as “mixed”, rather it highlights the attachment to traditional separation between these two groups, which was permeable but still fixed. Interestingly, a study of Jewish settlement patterns in England revealed that Jewish settlement patterns are distinctive and that they are identifiable for a longer period than expected after immigration, when compared with other immigrants; see Laura Sophia Vaughan, “Clustering, Segregation and the ‘Ghetto’: the spatialisation of Jewish settlement in Manchester and Leeds in the 19th century” (PhD diss., University of London, 1999), *Passim*. This might suggest that the segregation could be connected to some inherent features of the Jewish culture in Europe or specific conditions pertaining to the status of the Jewish minority, which influenced such a development.

impressive building of the Yeshivas Chachmei. For example, Stefania [1927], remembers her visit to the cemetery at Walecznych Street (New Jewish Cemetery) and the matzevahs.⁶³² Janina [1927] remembers another Jewish cemetery in Wieniawa and a synagogue there as well as the Jewish hospital in Lubartowska Street because she was born there and her mother worked there.⁶³³ She recalls also the Yeshivas Chachmei, which she calls the Rabbinat.⁶³⁴

Jewish Religious Institutions

Jews remember Jewish institutions that were less obvious to the non-Jewish inhabitants of Lublin. Cipora [1918] recalls the orphanage (*ochronka*),⁶³⁵ Eliezer [1919] the Jewish theatre.⁶³⁶ Some Jewish interviewees refer to the seats of various organizations such as

⁶³² OH GGNNTC Stefania Czekierda, 6;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/126424/edition/120501>, 20.01.2023.

⁶³³ OH GGNNTC Janina Grudzińska, passim;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/50242/edition/47170>, 23.02.2023.

⁶³⁴ OH GGNNTC Janina Kozak, 14;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/124574/edition/118728>, 23.02.2023.

⁶³⁵ OH GGNNTC Cipora Borensztejn, 25;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103147/edition/97824>, 21.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103957/edition/98602>, 21.02.2023.

⁶³⁶ OH GGNNTC Eliezer Orenstein, 2, 11;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103518/edition/98185>, 24.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/104835/edition/99470>, 24.02.2023.

the Bund,⁶³⁷ Kultur lige,⁶³⁸ HaShomer HaTsair,⁶³⁹ Beitar⁶⁴⁰ or a local Hakhshara.⁶⁴¹ However, the most noticeable and omnipresent signs of Jewish presence, talked about in detail by the Jewish interviewees, were numerous synagogues and houses of prayer – axes of daily or weekly religious and communal life, often related to specific social groups, in particular various guilds or fellowships. The best known and historically significant were two synagogues housed in one building – Maharshal and Maharamshul, mentioned not only by Jewish but also many Catholic interviewees who were aware of their existence and could place them near the Castle; however, they were not able to name them and none of them had visited them. The Jewish interviewees referred to them with much more detail, resulting from personal experience. For example, Mira [1914] recalls her mother and herself participating in the services in the Maharshalshul:

[My mother used to go to the synagogue]. [I remember] when I was a little girl, she was in the synagogue... From Szeroka Street you had to go down there... there was the famous *bet kneset* [synagogue] of Maharshal, that's where I went for Yom Kippur, one sat there all day, one didn't eat from morning to evening on Yom Kippur, they were just praying. So I went there and my mother had a permanent seat, the same seat every year, it costed, you paid... [In this synagogue] it was there, as you can see on TV, that the president is standing in front of such a [lectern] and he speaks, these synagogues were

⁶³⁷ OH GGNNTC Cipora Borensztejn, passim; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103145/edition/97822>, 21.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103955/edition/98600>, 21.02.2023; OH GGNNTC Josef Fraind, passim; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/121333/edition/115586>, 20.02.2023.

⁶³⁸ OH GGNNTC Mira Shuval 16, 35-36; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103435/edition/98103>, 24.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103793/edition/98440>, 24.02.2023.

⁶³⁹ Ibid, 55; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103477/edition/98145>, 24.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103776/edition/98429>, 24.02.2023; OH GGNNTC Edward Skowroński-Hertz, 18; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102222/edition/96904>, 27.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102460/edition/97141>, 27.02.2023.

⁶⁴⁰ OH GGNNTC Eliezer Orenstein, 13; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103517/edition/98184>, 24.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/104834/edition/99469>, 24.02.2023.

⁶⁴¹ OH GGNNTC Chawa Goldminc, 11-12; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/104691/edition/99326>, 23.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/105005/edition/99638>, 23.02.2023.

like that. It was a desktop to put these... You could put something there, and this chair, yes, rows like that, rows like this.⁶⁴²

Mira describes how her religious mother would go pray in the synagogue and she would just go there to find her mother, not that much to pray herself. Here, she refers in particular to the holiest day in Judaism, Yom Kippur, when one would fast all day and spend much time praying in the synagogue. Her mother had paid for a seat in this important synagogue and therefore had a guaranteed spot for the entire liturgical year. Mira remembers in particular the pulpit and rows of chairs inside the synagogue.

Regarding smaller synagogues, the Catholic interviewees usually recall only a location of a synagogue but rarely its name, while many Jewish interviewees refer to the synagogues they or their family members attended with much attention to the particulars. Josef [1923] reminisces that his father prayed in Ruska Street in the synagogue of carriers and butchery stand workers.⁶⁴³ Awigdor [1920] remembers that the building where he lived as a child in 24 Lubartowska Street would not only house families but contained also a synagogue and a ritual bath.⁶⁴⁴ Mosze [1918] places on the map yet another synagogue on Targowa Street (probably number 7),⁶⁴⁵ stating that it was built to commemorate a famous rabbi who lived 300 years before and was buried in the Old Jewish Cemetery in Lublin.⁶⁴⁶ Edward [1920] recalls another synagogue, Kotlershul, the Tinkers' Synagogue, a historical synagogue built in the first half of the 17th century by Hirsch Doktorowicz.⁶⁴⁷ While he cannot remember the name of the street, he underscores that the synagogue was well known and without giving its address, everyone would know the place. In fact, it was one of the most historically significant synagogues, located on 2 Szeroka Street.⁶⁴⁸ Chawa [1923] refers to another

⁶⁴² OH GGNNTC Mira Shuval, 31;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103436/edition/98104>, 24.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103794/edition/98441>, 24.02.2023.

⁶⁴³ OH GGNNTC Josef Fraind, 17;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/121671/edition/115918/>. The guild of carriers had two synagogues, one in in Nadstawna 20, another one in Ruska 29, the latter, where Josef's father prayed, owned by Icek Cukierfajn. See Kalwińska, "Synagogi i domy modlitwy w Lublinie."

⁶⁴⁴ OH GGNNTC Awigdor Kacenenbogen, 3.

⁶⁴⁵ The State Archive in Lublinie, Urząd Wojewódzki Lubelski, Wydział Społeczno-Polityczny, sygn. 730. Quoted in "Synagoga (ul. Targowa 7)," Wirtualny Sztetl, 03.05.2022, <https://sztetl.org.pl/pl/miejscowosci/l/264-lublin/112-synagogi-domy-modlitwy-mykwy/86614-synagoga-ul-targowa-7>.

⁶⁴⁶ OH GGNNTC Mosze Korn, 9.

⁶⁴⁷ A factor of the Polish king Władysław IV.

⁶⁴⁸ More information about the synagogue (in Polish) can be found online: "Wybrane gminne żydowskie obiekty kultowe w Lublinie w XIX w. Stan techniczny i własnościowy," Grodzka Gate - NN Theatre

synagogue, connected to the guild of tailors, therefore called the Tailors' Synagogue (*Synagoga Krawców*):

Next to us, there was a synagogue called the Tailors' Synagogue. Not far from us. So it was there that people used to go to this synagogue to pray, so it would not be too far away. Because where the Maharshal and Maharam is, it was far away on Szeroka, it was far from us.... It was at Krawiecka. I don't know where it was, I can't tell you that (exactly), because we were on 53 Krawiecka Street, and it was a bit further away... It was all in front of the prison.⁶⁴⁹

She recalls that her family would go to this synagogue due to its proximity as the synagogues of Maharshal and Maharam were too far away from where they lived. In order to put this information in perspective, one should remember that the distance from 53 Krawiecka Street to Maharshal and Maharam shuls can be estimated at some few hundred meters. Chawa's statement that these synagogues were far away from her family's house could indicate two things. Firstly, that synagogues were so numerous in this area that the distance of few hundred meters between one's house and their shul was considered too long, and secondly that the distance reflects more of a mental distance than the spatial one. Szeroka was considered the heart of the Jewish quarter, its religious and historical center, while Krawiecka was seen as a periphery of the Jewish quarter. It was a very poor and neglected area, so the distance referred to by Chawa might reflect her family's sense of belonging to specific social group. Attending the Tailor's Synagogue then would not only be convenient because of the spatial proximity but also due to their will to pray with people of equal social standing, sharing the same everyday struggles and concerns, among whom one could probably feel more comfortable than in Szeroka Street. Thus, the mobility can be seen as determined by the social class in this case.

Apart from the synagogues connected to specific guilds, there were also many private houses of prayer that were often not even referred to as synagogues but "home prayer houses" (*domowa bóżnica*) or *shtibl* in Hasidic cases. Bronisława [1932], for example, recalls that her parents prayed in one of the former in 34 Krakowskie Przedmieście, in a house owned by the Forszteter family.⁶⁵⁰ It was only one room made into a small prayer house and she describes the attendees as not very observant but with an "average"

Centre, 27.02.2023, <https://teatrnn.pl/leksykon/artykuly/wybrane-gminne-zydowskie-objekty-kultowe-w-lublinie-w-xix-w-stan-techniczny-i-wlasnosciovoy/#synagoga-kotlarzy>.

⁶⁴⁹ OH GGNNTC Chawa Goldminc, 17.

⁶⁵⁰ OH GGNNTC Bronisława Friedman, 14; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103001/edition/97680>, 15.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/104028/edition/98673>, 15.02.2023.

level of religiosity.⁶⁵¹ Josef [1923], whose parents were more traditional than religious and whose family was of rather low standing, would pray in one of the shtibls located on Ruska Street next to the Orthodox church.⁶⁵²

In addition to synagogues (and equally numerous), another important Jewish institution was that of cheder. Five of the Jewish interviewees (men) – Josef [1923], Mosze [1918], Mosze [1925], Awigdor [1920] and Abram [1922] – actually went to cheders and displayed a wide spectrum of impressions of the experience. Josef stated that he did not like going there and that the study did not give him much.⁶⁵³ Mosze [1925] remembers mostly harsh conditions in the cheder (lack of pavement) and the appearance of the teacher and his helper.⁶⁵⁴ Mosze [1918] recalls a lack of hygiene and overcrowding as the room served both as cheder and the home of the teacher and his family.⁶⁵⁵ Awigdor gives more details about the curriculum, stating that they studied only in Hebrew, but then hesitates as to whether Yiddish was also included as a language of instruction. He also remembers that he had a good teacher and that the class numbered ten or fifteen boys.⁶⁵⁶ Abram highlights that the study lasted all day long with one break for lunch.⁶⁵⁷ Mira [1914] who grew up in Nadstawna Street, recalls that:

In our house there were many cheders. Jews send the children, boys to cheder. And on our street there was a concentration of these cheders. I mean, when a child is three, he is already learning aleph, beth, these letters and to read and the numbers... So the melamed, he teaches and the little children sit and he indicates them with his hand and they learn. They studied for many hours, and little children... When one was walking all day long in Nadstawna, you would listen this music, how they taught them... Because.... when the rabbi said what were these signs, children all together like one choir

⁶⁵¹ Ibid.

⁶⁵² OH GGNNTC Josef Fraind, 17.

⁶⁵³ Ibid, 19.

⁶⁵⁴ OH GGNNTC Mosze Handelsman, 14;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102802/edition/97481>, 23.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103977/edition/98622>, 23.02.2023.

⁶⁵⁵ OH GGNNTC Mosze Korn, 5.

⁶⁵⁶ OH GGNNTC Awigdor Kacenenbogen, 20;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/101879/edition/96538>, 23.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103020/edition/97692>, 23.02.2023.

⁶⁵⁷ OH GGNNTC Abram Wyszegrod, 3.

repeated, like singing. It was wonderful to hear... And it wasn't the only cheder. It was the whole street. There was no house without a cheder.⁶⁵⁸

According to her account, the building in 20 Nadstawna Street housed multiple cheders and there were more cheders on the same street. Mira focuses on the process of learning and the sounds of children repeating after their teacher, which to her sounded a lot like music. The melody of children repeating the Hebrew alphabet was one of the basic components of the atmosphere of this place and she recalls it with nostalgia. She herself did not study in such a school, as cheders for girls were not equally popular, but numerous cheders were part of the landscape of her home.

Interestingly, one of the Catholic interviewees, Maria [1926], also refers to the “music” coming from cheders: “In front of my house was a Jewish cheder and they constantly sang in Jewish language... they were studying to become cantors and sang so beautifully that in the summer, when the windows were open, we would stand there and listen.”⁶⁵⁹ Similarly to Mira, she remembers very well the melody; however, for her it was not the melody of the language itself but the cantillations studied by young religious Jews. She could appreciate their aesthetic value even if she did not identify with their cultural context in the same way as Mira.

Another Jewish landmark, noted by both Jews and Catholics, was the Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin.⁶⁶⁰ Catholics did not always understand the nature of the institution; however, they could easily notice its outstanding building and its important role in Jewish religious life. Janina [1927] recalls the building of the Yeshivas Chachmei as “a rabbinate, like a Jewish university, where Jewish students studied.”⁶⁶¹ Although the building was not a rabbinate, as she calls it, it did provide religious instruction for Jewish students so that they could receive a formation enabling them to eventually become rabbis. In that sense, her memories reflect a certain truth about the importance

⁶⁵⁸ OH GGNNTC Mira Shuval, 46; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103470/edition/98138>, 24.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103769/edition/98422>, 24.02.20223.

⁶⁵⁹ OH GGNNTC Maria Sowa, 31; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/125803/edition/119910>, 27.02.2023.

⁶⁶⁰ According to the Yeshiva's guest book many Christians visited the institution, probably as a curiosity. The records indicate for example: ninety (!) girls from a nearby public elementary school, “Astrea” student fraternity from the Catholic University of Lublin, Catholic diocesan seminarians and students and priests from the Bobolanum Institute, as well as Mariavite priests and nuns. Wojciech Tworek claims that it was “a fairly popular destination among priests and seminary students”. See “A Different Type of Seminary: Priests, Cyclists, and Other Tourists Visit the Lublin Yeshiva,” *In Geveb. A Journal of Yiddish Studies* (2021), accessed 06.02.2023, <https://ingeveb.org/blog/a-different-type-of-seminary>. Unfortunately, there is no record of that in the oral histories at hand, therefore the visits to the Yeshiva are not analysed here.

⁶⁶¹ OH GGNNTC Janina Grudzińska, 1.

of the institution in Jewish religious learning. Stanisława [1930], another Catholic woman, also remembers that the building housed a Jewish religious school:

And here, where this large building was, next to the printing house, it used to be, before the war, it was here that ... well, the Hussites [Hasids], there was a school of those ... what are these Jews called? Well, it was here. Because I don't remember it, only when older people talked about it, I wasn't interested in it. It's the same over there now. But now the Jews took it. It is probably under the protection of the Jews. These Jews have something there.⁶⁶²

She gives the location of the place (next to the printing house) and associates it with the Hasidic movement. Janina's language is not precise and she is not sure about the details. Mistakenly, she calls the Hasids studying there (the Yeshiva was established by a Hasidic rabbi, Meir Shapiro) Hussites,⁶⁶³ which might indicate her lack of familiarity with this environment or simply her particular dialect. Her repetitive statements could confirm that she was not interested in the Yeshiva nor the Hasids, as these were topics that only the adults would talk and know about. The upbringing patterns of the time did not allow children to know much about the Other. Another Catholic woman, Daniela [1925], remembers the Yeshiva as a venue of rabbinic reunions: "one year, when I was still a girl, I stood on the balcony, there was a lot of people, because everyone wanted to see how many rabbis would come to this reunion. They all wore these black tailcoats and had side locks. It was thousands of these Jews."⁶⁶⁴ It is not certain to what event she might refer: likely the opening of the Yeshiva or maybe the death of its founder, as these were the two largest events, with thousands of participants. Therefore, also for her the Yeshiva was connected to the image of a large numbers of Hasids, although she does not use this name but instead describes their traditional garb.

Jews refer to the Yeshiva less as a building and more as a living institution, and some give much more detail about its history, purpose, and the founder. Cipora [1918]⁶⁶⁵ and Josef [1923] recall the opening of the Yeshiva. Josef says:

⁶⁶² OH GGNNTC Stanisława Podlipna, 33;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/118377/edition/112703>, 24.02.2023.

⁶⁶³ Hussites were a Czech Proto-Protestant Christian movement that followed the teachings of reformer Jan Hus. The movement was present in Poland until the end of the 15th century. Therefore, the nature of the mistake Hasid – Hussite must lay only in the phonetic proximity.

⁶⁶⁴ Daniela Ponikowska, <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/49745/edition/46722>, 24.02.2023.

⁶⁶⁵ OH GGNNTC Cipora Borensztein, 23;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103152/edition/97829>, 21.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103963/edition/98608>, 21.02.2023.

I remember the Yeshiva, I even remember when was the dedication, opening of this yeshiva – so many people came and it was black in Lublin. I remember rabbi Shapira, he was an intelligent man, he created this academy on a very high level, with dormitory, with all the modern conveniences. The poor did not study there, usually it was the better-off students or from abroad.⁶⁶⁶

He associates the Yeshiva with the opening celebrations, possibly the same event that was recalled above by Daniela as a “reunion”, as well as the figure of rabbi Meir Shapiro. He also highlights that the Yeshiva was well organized and was housed in a comfortable and modern building. His perception was, perhaps because of the good living conditions there, that the Yeshiva accepted boys from rich families and not poor local students.

In a similar vein, Mosze [1918] talks about rabbi Shapiro and the conditions of becoming a student in the Yeshiva:

It was the first house in all the world that boys studied there to become a rabbi, they slept there, ate there, and they were three hundred people. Everything there was furnished. This rabbi, Shapiro, he arranged everything...No, (I did not study there). It was required to know forty pages of Talmud and commentaries written by the great rabbis. One had to know minimum of forty pages. And who did not know, they did not accept him. I wasn't that learned.⁶⁶⁷

Presumably, Mosze knows the details about the yeshiva system because he himself also attended a yeshiva; however, a local one, that had a lower education level – he confesses that his knowledge was not sufficient to be accepted to the Yeshivas Chachmei. Mosze describes also the details of funding the synagogue, such as who donated the land and how the fundraising was conducted, and recalls anecdotes about rabbi Meir Shapira, stating that he was a man of exceptional value and goodness “like an angel.”⁶⁶⁸

Abram [1922] reminisces that he wanted to learn in the Yeshiva but he was still too young to join; he also remembers an interesting detail regarding the Breslov Hasidim:

I belonged to the Hasidim, Breslov Hasidim, Uman, Uman Hasidim. And them, because it was far to go to Uman, and one couldn't go to Russia, because Uman was in Russia, Ukraine. So from... the whole Poland, these Hasidim came for Rosh Ha Shana to gather together and we were looking for a place, large place. And for a couple of years we rented

⁶⁶⁶ See OH GGNNTC Josef Fraind, 33;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/121244/edition/115497>;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/121339/edition/115592>, 21.02.2022.

⁶⁶⁷ OH GGNNTC Mosze Korn, 12.

⁶⁶⁸ OH GGNNTC Mosze Korn, 13.

this Yeshiva where this room was, this big room where they prayed because for the holidays all of them went home, so we rented it for Rosh HaShana and we prayed there.⁶⁶⁹

He explains that he belonged to the Breslov Hasidim who due to the restrictions could not travel to Uman in Ukraine where the grave of their founder, rabbi Nachman of Breslov was. Therefore, they decided to rent the synagogue in the Yeshivas Chachmei because it was a large venue and could host such a big group as they were. It was possible thanks to the fact that during the holidays, the students went home and the synagogue was not in use. Thus, his memories of the Yeshiva are more personal as he himself knew the space and prayed there more than once. It became a part of his personal topography of Lublin.

Bronisława [1932] and Hadasa [1924] link the image of the Yeshiva with the memory of the *yeshive bochers* coming to eat with the family. Bronisława says that her parents always invited youth from the Yeshiva to join the Shabbat dinner⁶⁷⁰ and Hadasa says that two of the Yeshiva students would come to her house every day:

Two boys who attended Yeshivat Chachmei Lublin came to us every day to eat. These two people always came to eat breakfast and dinner with us. Two of them, because I remember that I was small, when someone knocked, when a woman opened it, they always passed by, so they did not want to look [at her]. Why? Because a woman! Women are not worth it... They came every day but ate separately, not with us at the table... There was someone for it, a man [who] served them and they ate it all.⁶⁷¹

These *yeshive bochers* would come twice every day, to have breakfast and lunch in her family's house. However, they were served food separately by a man, while the rest of the family ate on their own and were served by "the women there", presumably a maid and a cook or similar. Therefore, Hadasa knew the adepts of the Yeshiva, but only because she has seen them, she never talked to them. The relatively high frequency of the students' visits to her family's house resulted from the fact that her father worked as a secretary in the Yeshiva and as such was more than familiar with the students and the ways in which the Yeshiva functioned. In this way, the Yeshiva was also part of her family's history, but Hadasa does not say much more about it. Mira [1914] remembers

⁶⁶⁹ OH GGNNTC Abram Wyszegrod, 6.

⁶⁷⁰ OH GGNNTC Bronisława Friedman, 15;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103001/edition/97680>, 15.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/104028/edition/98673>, 15.02.2023.

⁶⁷¹ OH GGNNTC Hadasa Pinkus, 14;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/105297/edition/99930>, 24.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/105380/edition/100013>, 24.02.2023.

that one of her cousins studied at the Yeshiva and therefore, she went once to visit him and bring him some things he needed, but that was the only time she visited. Moreover, she refers in detail to the death of rabbi Shapiro and his merits.⁶⁷²

It is important to note that the references to religious aspect of the Jewish spaces are presented in the sources without contention. There is no discussion on their historical or cultural value. Jewish interviewees understandably speak about them in more detail, and the Catholic interviewees share the factual information they recall without much extra-contextual commentary. It seems that these places do not carry much emotional weight in the relation to the Other.

Jewish Looks and Specific Dress Code

Apart from noticing institutions marking Jewish presence in the city, both Jewish and Catholic interviewees pay attention to the difference in looks, making religious Jewish men in particular instantly stand out from the Catholic crowd. Maria [1926], a Catholic woman, describes the distinction as specifically connected to the dress code.

TC: You said that before the war Jews were a kind of folklore. Tell me how did this folklore manifest itself, that is... MS: You know, even in the very clothes, after all, no Jew went out into the street without a cap, without a hat, and with his head bare, it was unacceptable. Even if he took off his hat at home for a moment, he had to sit in the hat to eat, they all had hats, there was a custom, I don't know why, but it happened like that.⁶⁷³

When asked specifically by the interviewer what she meant by defining Jews as “a kind of folklore,” she explains that the primary reason for what can be seen here as “picturesqueness” and diversity is the way they dressed. She focuses in her account on the fact that they always had their heads covered and wore caps and hats that were not otherwise worn by non-Jews. Maria explains the difference in looks, giving a more general picture: “the old ones, the Hasids, they wore special long *chałaty* (coats), black hats, with side locks and beards. Others, educated, did not differ from Poles at all.”⁶⁷⁴ Although she states that those wearing traditional Jewish garb were “old,” all the religious Jewish men regardless of their age adopted similar look, including long coat, a hat or a cap as well as unshaven beard and side locks. Such looks differed substantially from secular Jews, as Maria notices. Helena, born in a secular Jewish family, referring to them states that “no one in my family dressed in a way those from Bnei Brak

⁶⁷² OH GGNNTC Mira Shuval, 60-61.

⁶⁷³ OH GGNNTC. Maria Sowa, 21;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/125801/edition/119908>, 27.02.2023.

⁶⁷⁴ OH GGNNTC Maria Modzelewska, 23.

(Haredim) do... they were all normal.”⁶⁷⁵ As she was raised in a secular environment, for her, just as for any Catholic Pole the traditional Jewish garb was not “normal” in the sense that it was exotic, old-fashioned and could even seem awkward.

Apart from the dress, the way of shaving also defined Jewish or non-Jewish looks. Mosze [1925] recalls that “Jews did not have mustache, Jews had beards. My father did not have a beard; he would shave so the neighbours thought he was Polish.”⁶⁷⁶ In the story he tells, his father’s moustache led to unforeseen troubles as no one believed that he was Jewish, so his mother was accused of living with a *goy*, which prompted her parents’ intervention.⁶⁷⁷

Normality for religious Jews would be not shaving at all and keeping the side locks long. Mosze [1918], who grew up religious, when sharing the details of his adolescent years, says: “until the age of sixteen, seventeen, I had side locks. I even still have a picture from when I was religious. I took this picture before leaving the yeshiva... I went to a yeshiva, I had a black *chałat* and a Jewish cap.”⁶⁷⁸ Mosze was one of the “Others” described above by Catholics and secular Jews as “folklore” and not “normal” because he was a *yeshive bocher*, yeshiva boy, who wore a long black coat, sidelocks and belonged to the traditional Jewish religious community.

Such looks kept them assigned to the Jewish quarter in some way. Mira [1914] when speaking in general terms about fashion in the interwar period, states that the norm was to dress in an elegant way when going out in the street:

Without a hat, one would not go out. Women without a hat to Krakowskie Przedmieście? Only in our quarter, then yes. But to Krakowskie? Winter or summer, elegant... These Jews did not go there, because they would laugh at them. No. These Jews who had traditional garb, they would stay in the Jewish area, they would not go there. I have never seen a Hasid there. From my family I had not seen there anyone, they

⁶⁷⁵ OH GGNNTC Helena Grynszpan, 25; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102136/edition/96787>, 23.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102630/edition/97311>, 23.02.2023.

⁶⁷⁶ Ibid., 8; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102794/edition/97473>, 23.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103972/edition/98617>, 23.03.2023.

⁶⁷⁷ Ibid., 6; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102809/edition/97488>, 23.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103982/edition/98627>, 23.02.2023.

⁶⁷⁸ OH GGNNTC Mosze Korn, 9; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102898/edition/97577>, 23.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103091/edition/97770>, 23.02.2023.

would not go there. Lubartowska Street was the border. But us, we were already progressive, liberal, intelligentsia, elegantly.⁶⁷⁹

She and her liberal family would therefore dress in a modern way, and thus felt at liberty to freely move in the city without the threat of being ridiculed. However, the religious Jews did not have such liberty and stayed within the Jewish quarter. It is worthwhile noting that in Mira's story a clear line between the two cities is drawn in a very specific place. It is Lubartowska Street that separates the Jewish town from the Catholic town but in a sense also the traditional *shtetl* from a modern Polish city.

It is also worth mentioning that Jewish women are always presented in the stories as not standing out. Zofia [1926] says that "women one would not distinguish from Polish women so much, they were usually dressed similarly to us."⁶⁸⁰ Bogdan [1934] remembers that "women would dress normally. Normally, a dress, a kerchief, something else... they did not have a specific dress that would distinguish them."⁶⁸¹ The only distinct feature would be a wig in cases of orthodox Jewish women. Maria [1926] recalls that her neighbors "were orthodox, naturally, so she wore a wig, only sometimes she would appear without a wig, but normally she would wear a wig..."⁶⁸² Therefore, one can infer that even if the dress itself was not perceived as much different from that of the Catholic women, a wig would only be worn by Jewish women. In fact, in all of the analyzed stories, a wig is never mentioned in any other context, only pertaining to Jewish women.

The "Jewish look" is another aspect of folkloric presence, recalled without much emotion by the Catholic interviewees. It is more of a problem for Jews coming from the families aspiring to "normalcy" than for the majority group. The diverse garb is therefore noticed as an othering factor, but just like other folkloric aspects of Jewish presence, it is not emotionally charged in the stories.

⁶⁷⁹ OH GGNNTC Mira Shuval, 66;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103483/edition/98151>, 24.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103819/edition/98466>, 24.02.2023.

⁶⁸⁰ OH GGNNTC Zofia Mazurek, 3;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/126998/edition/121034>, 23.02.2023.

⁶⁸¹ OH GGNNTC Bogdan Stanisław Pazur, 31;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/123690/edition/117871>, 24.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/154582/edition/148299>, 24.02.2023.

⁶⁸² OH GGNNTC Maria Sowa, 11;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/98956/edition/93312>, 27.02.2023.

Jewish Street Sellers

Another aspect of the Jewish presence remembered by the Catholics were Jewish shops, Jewish peddlers and street sellers.⁶⁸³ While the former will be discussed more in detail in Chapter 8, here I will focus on the latter. Ludwik [1930] recalls Jewish street sellers in Lubartowska Street: “The accent of such (Jewish) presence was (...) here, on Lubartowska Street. There, the vendors were selling, you know, these herring, as they say, in the street, and these mandarins. (..) This street trade was probably also such a folklore ... of that time.”⁶⁸⁴ He describes Jewish street sellers as a part of *genius loci*, not only making the space Jewish but also special to him. Street vendors included also newsboys and those dealing with various sorts of entertainment such as balloon vendors or street photographers. However, many interviewees recall in particular Jewish food sold on the street:

One would go places on foot. And people there were selling all kinds of stuff on the way. Bubalech. There was one lady standing in this gate and she was selling such kind of bread, but it was hot and with a piece of butter. And she would sell it. It costed five grosze. So there was this one lady.⁶⁸⁵

Chawa [1923] tells of a very popular baked good – bubalech – that was only sold within the framework of street food and was produced only by local Jews, and therefore is not to be found anymore.⁶⁸⁶ It was a form of buckwheat muffin that together with *cebularze*, a type of onion and poppy seed focaccia, were typical local Jewish dishes. Such food would be purchased especially in the morning when one would walk to school or work, or in the afternoon when one would go back home. In that sense, it was an inherent part of the landscape and *modus vivendi*, just as is the case today with street food booths. Danuta [1921] remembers that the food was kept in big baskets in the bakery and in buckets when it came to pickled apples,⁶⁸⁷ and Bogdan [1934] describes the complicated system of keeping the food warm on winter days and fresh in the summer:

⁶⁸³ About Jewish shops, see pp. 288-291.

⁶⁸⁴ OH GGTNNC Ludwik Kotliński, 8.

⁶⁸⁵ OH GGNNTC Chawa Goldminc, 9;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/104673/edition/99308>, 23.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/105003/edition/99636>, 23.02.2023.

⁶⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 14; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/104673/edition/99308>, 27.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/105003/edition/99636>, 27.02.2023.

⁶⁸⁷ OH GGNNTC Danuta Riabnin, 15;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/37839/edition/36603>, 24.02.2023.

Because in winter, Jewish women would sell, would sit and trade. They did it so that she would have one cast iron pot, a pot with coals. There was a blanket over this, some sacks and a Jewish woman on it. She had a large skirt and under the skirt was another pot of charcoal. And there were those bagels. Also covered with some fabric, and she pulled it out, put her hand under her skirt, took it out of the pot and gave the *bubalech*... They were selling sausage, Jews were selling herring, that was typical. They served, they had herring in crates, in summer it was filled with ice like real ice... They also sold pickled apples.⁶⁸⁸

As he describes it, when it was cold, Jewish women would wear large skirts and would keep under them warm baked good in special pots with hot charcoal inside. In the summer, an alternative solution was implemented for keeping the fish fresh – it would be sold on ice. While, the details per se as not very important for this study, the fact that the street sellers are described in such detail suggests that they are perceived also by Bogdan as an integral part of the local atmosphere and an important element of everyday routines. It is also noteworthy that the majority of the stories analyzed here include at least a short section on street vendors, often with descriptions as detailed as that of Bogdan, which allows an extrapolation that most of the interviewees identified this element of the local “folklore” as one of the most important components of interwar Lublin’s *genius loci*.

In addition to this form of trade, Lublin had also a few markets, one typically Jewish and called simply the Jewish market or the fish market, some mixed. The biggest venue for everyday Jewish-Catholic encounters was the market in Świętoduska Street, described by some as a “Catholic” market⁶⁸⁹ but with a very significant Jewish presence:

There was a market on Świętoduska Street and a whole community of Jewish traders... And there was one line of Jewish butchery, and the other line was barrels with herring and Jews sold them on the sidewalk, such huge barrels like this and there were plenty of herrings, so there were these herrings and meat, everything what you wanted, only there was no money to buy.(..) [And these butchery stands had] such compartments, such rooms and in each of these butchery stands there was... either kosher or pork, veal, beef, there were various things, whatever you wanted, various things, and usually they were

⁶⁸⁸ OH GGNNTC Bogdan Stanisław Pazur, 38;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/123685/edition/117866>, 24.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/154577/edition/148294>, 24.02.2023.

⁶⁸⁹ OH GGNNTC Regina Kucharska, 7;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/119336/edition/113651>, 23.02.2023.

Jewish, I don't think there was a single Pole. And the herring was remarkably sold by the Jews.⁶⁹⁰

Janina [1927] remembers in particular butchery stands and herring stands owned exclusively by Jews who would sell various meats, including pork and salted herring kept in large barrels which were put directly on the sidewalk. Another Catholic woman, Stefania [1927], recalls how Jews would also sell at this market “various tables” and other articles,⁶⁹¹ highlighting the versatility of the offerings and politeness of the Jewish sellers. On the other hand, the market was a venue where local farmers could sell their produce, as mentioned by Adam [1923], then a Jewish boy:

I remember this market, for example, near [our] shop near Lubartowska. I remember that when I was a little boy I used to go out with my mother. It was ... the peasants brought ... for example, there was a mountain of butter. I remember my mother taking her finger and tasting the butter, whether the butter is fresh or not. Or when you bought a hen fresh, you took a hen and puffed her ass, you could see if that hen was yellow or if it was fat. Because what was greasy was good. And this fish was bought... live fish. And chickens were bought alive in the same way. Live chickens, then. This market was ... peasants came from the vicinity of Lublin and sold eggs on this market, butter, on this market.⁶⁹²

Therefore, some articles would be bought from the Jewish sellers while fresh produce such as fruits and vegetables, hens, eggs or butter would be bought from the Catholic farmers. In this sense, the market was a place of economic exchange between these communities and was probably one of the most equal spaces in the city, indiscriminately welcoming Jews and Catholics, as all of them needed to purchase food.

Finally, it is also worth mentioning that according to the interviews, Jewish recipes were not shared with the outgroup which made Jewish food one of the most recognizable and characteristic features of Jewish separateness. While one can assume it stems from the Halachic rules, one should bear in mind that food can serve as a community building factor, introducing and maintaining intergroup borders.⁶⁹³ Again,

⁶⁹⁰ OH GGNNTC Janina Grudzińska, 23.

⁶⁹¹ OH GGNNTC Stefania Czekerda, 6;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/126424/edition/120501>, 20.01.2023.

⁶⁹² OH GGNNTC Adam Adams, 38;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/100943/edition/95390>, 28.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/121708/edition/115955>, 28.02.2023.

⁶⁹³ Matthew Kaemingk and James K. A. Smith, *Christian Hospitality and Muslim Immigration in an Age of Fear* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2018), 288-299.

like in other folkloric aspects, the difference between the groups is noticed in the stories but the Other is seen with curiosity rather than fear or hostility.

Yiddish

Apart from the characteristic street atmosphere, another othering aspect was the Yiddish spoken by the majority of the local Jewish community. Sara [1923], who herself did not speak Yiddish and was raised in Polish, recalls that behind the Grodzka Gate, in the Jewish quarter, she “usually heard Jewish language and one would see Jews wearing *kapotas*. These were long black coats. And little casquettes. And sometimes I saw young boys with sidelocks.”⁶⁹⁴ Zofia [1926], then a Catholic girl, claims that “one heard there only Jewish language”⁶⁹⁵ and Bogdan [1934], then a Catholic boy raised in the heart of the Jewish quarter and among the Jews, recalls that “Jewish children spoke very little Polish” and that “they did speak Polish but murdered it.”⁶⁹⁶ He and his family learned Yiddish and spoke both languages with the neighbors, but neither side was fluent.

The above impressions of Yiddish dominating in the area are in line with the data collected during the Second National Census in 1931. The vast majority of local Jewry spoke Yiddish as their mother tongue.⁶⁹⁷ Therefore, Yiddish significantly dominated the audio landscape of the Jewish quarter, and undoubtedly, the contrast between hearing Polish outside of the Old City and Yiddish after crossing the passageway under the Krakowska or Grodzka Gate must have been striking. The presence of Yiddish was deeply embedded in the landscape, just as the smells of Jewish food. For the most part, Yiddish was the local Jews’ natural linguistic habitat, the melody of their private and professional lives. For Catholic Poles the melody was still there but not heard as clearly and definitely not appropriated. Stanisława [1930] says that “one was used to it, it made

⁶⁹⁴ OH GGNNTC Sara Grinfeld, 40;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102576/edition/97257>, 10.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103366/edition/98037>, 10.02.2023.

⁶⁹⁵ OH GGNNTC Zofia Mazurek, 3;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/126998/edition/121034>, 23.02.2023.

⁶⁹⁶ OH GGNNTC Bogdan Stanisław Pazur, 33;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/123695/edition/117876>, 24.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/154587/edition/148304>, 24.02.2023.

⁶⁹⁷ These numbers, however, should not be interpreted always as exclusive in terms of being able to speak these languages. The fact that someone declared Yiddish their mother tongue does not mean they did not speak Polish or/and Hebrew. In fact, most of the younger generation would have had good Polish skills and some rudimentary Yiddish, and these languages were used contextually. On the other hand, those declaring Hebrew as their mother tongue would usually not speak Yiddish but would speak Polish, and those declaring Polish their mother tongue usually would not speak Yiddish but in some cases knew Hebrew, depending on their relation to Zionism. See OH GGNNTC Maria Sowa, Hadasa Pinkus, Mira Shuval, Sara Grinfeld, Edward Skowroński Hertz, Josef Frajnd.

no difference. They gibbered [Pl. *szwargotali*], one would listen to it.”⁶⁹⁸ It could be inferred from her statement that Polish familiarity with Yiddish could be compared to one’s familiarity with white noise, a flat soundtrack in the background that, even if cannot be properly understood, is considered part of the place and scenery.

Conclusions Regarding Folkloric Presence

In the stories, all the above aspects (religious institutions, looks, food, language) of Jewish uniqueness are undoubtedly seen as making them non-normative in comparison to the Catholic minority, but they are described by both Catholic and Jews in neutral language, without signs of emotional involvement. It could be said that the Catholics seem to view these facets of Jewishness with curiosity and accept them as part of the landscape of their childhood. Moreover, they express appreciation for some of these aspects, for example, Jewish food. In a sense, the folkloric presence of the Other is accepted and does not have a direct relation to the spatial comfort zones. In other words, the oral histories do not provide a proof that the comfort zones are related to the specific cultural expression of the Jewish minority. This, in turn, implies that the remembered meaning regarding the division of the space into Jewish and non-Jewish is not related to the above mentioned factors but something else. What constitutes the uncomfortable space is therefore not related to Jewish culture per se but something else.

Uncomfortable Non-Normativity: Poverty as an Othering Factor?

The perceptions of Otherness discussed above relate to very basic sensory impressions. They could be summarized in the simple statement that Jews looked and sounded different than Poles and their food smelled and tasted different. However, the perceptions of their alterity extend beyond the simple sensory level. In fact, one of the main themes in speaking about the Jewishness of the urban space is poverty, which does not appear in relation to other spaces. Although many interviewees describe economic difficulties their families had to face in the interwar period due to economic crises and resulting unemployment, the area of the Jewish quarter is directly linked in the narratives of both Catholics and Jews to the images of extreme poverty, manifested in various ways. Such images do not appear in other contexts, and they are clearly linked to the feeling of uneasiness and discomfort. This section focuses on the way poverty is depicted and on the role of such depictions in the processes of constructing otherness.

Importantly, before going back to the sources, one has to be reminded of the social structure the interviewees grew up within. The society of interwar Poland was strongly

⁶⁹⁸ OH GGNNTC Stanisława Podlipna, 31;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/118372/edition/112698>, 24.02.2023.

stratified. Three quarters of citizens inhabited rural areas, and 55% of the country's population were peasants. The urban population included workers (27.5% of the country's population), petit bourgeoisie (11%), *intelligentsia* and free professions (5%), significant entrepreneurs (1%) and landowners (0.4%).⁶⁹⁹ The latter were the remnants of nobility and had a very influential position in society. During the interwar period, dreams of social advancement and economic pressures made peasants migrate to the cities, joining the working class. Growing access to education opened opportunities for the intelligentsia to grow in numbers, while the number of landowners was steadily decreasing. In this period, especially in the case of a slightly provincial city like Lublin, class was the basis of social organization and stabilization, and stratification was based on the amount and quality of one's income. Thus, unsurprisingly, the aspect that seems to bother the majority the most about the minority is not their culture but the socio-economic aspect.

Jewishness and Poverty

As already mentioned, the "Jewish town" of Lublin was a being of its own. Janina [1927], describes the heart of the Jewish quarter as a separate *shtetl*⁷⁰⁰ within the premises of the town:

Ruska Street, all the way to the Orthodox church, in general it was Jewry. In the middle of the grounds, there were only Jewish shacks, right up to the Castle, on all sides. There was a town in the city, as if only the Jews themselves lived there. People there were of various kinds, but mostly poor, hardly anyone was educated or intelligent there.⁷⁰¹

She calls the houses in the area of Ruska street shacks, pointing to the rundown character of the area and explicitly states that it was poor and inhabited by an uneducated population. Interestingly, she highlights the distinctly Jewish character of the neighborhood almost as if it was a separate urban entity, a Jewish world. Therefore, three adjectives that might succinctly describe this part of the city would be: Jewish, separate and poor. Another person, Eliezer [1919], states that he "cannot believe how much poverty there was then" as if it is a miracle that people managed to survive in

⁶⁹⁹ Główny Urząd Statystyczny Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, *Pierwszy powszechny spis Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej z dnia 30 września 1921 roku*, Główny Urząd Statystyczny Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej (Warszawa); idem, *Drugi Powszechny Spis Ludności z dnia 9 grudnia 1931 r.*, Główny Urząd Statystyczny (Warszawa).

⁷⁰⁰ A shtetl or (rarely) shtetel is a Yiddish term for small towns in Eastern Europe with large percentage of Jewish inhabitants.

⁷⁰¹ OH GGNNTC Janina Grudzińska, 4-5;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/50252/edition/47180>, 23.02.2023.

spite of the terrible living conditions.⁷⁰² In this section, I will try to unpack perceptions of poverty as an othering factor, constituting the discomfort zone and keeping the outgroup away.

Poverty and Living Conditions

Many interviewees, both Jewish and Catholic, describe the streets of the Jewish quarter as rundown and sleazy⁷⁰³ and living conditions as difficult.⁷⁰⁴ Maria [1926], recalls how this area of the city has changed, mentioning that in the interwar period, the streets were not paved and one had to walk in the mud, full of puddles and slough.⁷⁰⁵ The houses were neglected and many of them were of poor quality. Regina [1926], a Catholic girl at the time, who visited the quarter from time to time, remembers the houses in the Jewish quarter in the following way:

[Were the houses in the Jewish quarter painted any colors?] It was just, as you say, this mortar, this cement or something, it was stuck to it. It was just makeshift stuff. They had these balconies upstairs, but they were all wooden huts, as I say, these houses. I don't know, a terrible misery, a terrible misery. No, it wasn't timber! It was plastered, because how would the wooden houses were supposed to be like that, because of the fires, and in general, no, no, it was plastered from the outside, but the plaster fell off, you know how it happens, neglected, dirty, ugly, to tell you the truth. The stench, dirt and poverty, as I say. And bedbugs and various insects, it was horrible there, it was horrible.⁷⁰⁶

She emphasizes the bad quality of the construction, which was wooden but plastered outside in order to avoid catching fire. Nonetheless, because the plastering was old and half-fallen off, the houses had “makeshift” appearance. The word she uses to describe the building is the Polish equivalent of a mud hut, indicating very primitive living conditions, devoid of any comfort. Another Catholic, Ludwik [1930], refers to the wooden buildings in the area of Krawiecka as “primitive” and “chaotic”⁷⁰⁷ in the sense

⁷⁰² OH GGNNTC Eliezer Orenstein, 7-8;

<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103518/edition/98185>, 24.02.2023;

<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/104835/edition/99470>, 24.02.2023.

⁷⁰³ Aleksander Mazur, <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/50435/edition/47348>, 27.02.2023.

⁷⁰⁴ OH GGNNTC Chana and Mosze Wasag, 21.

⁷⁰⁵ OH GGNNTC Maria Sowa, 30;

<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/125804/edition/119911>, 27.02.2023.

⁷⁰⁶ OH GGNNTC Regina Kucharska, 15;

<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/119362/edition/113676>, 23.03.2023.

⁷⁰⁷ OH GGNNTC Ludwik Kotliński, 9;

<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/119141/edition/113457>, 23.02.2023.

that they were built without a plan, in a semi-temporary way. He remembers their distinct features such as porches, which Regina called “balconies upstairs” and the tarpaper roofs.⁷⁰⁸ She connects this image of the wooden plastered shacks with poor sanitary conditions and poverty. In particular, the motifs of the stench and insects being inseparable parts of the Jewish quarter will be often repeated in other stories discussed below.

Even though the bad living conditions are attested to by other sources,⁷⁰⁹ it is worth noting that racialized theories often present dirt, poverty and deprivation as specific examples of the “failures” or “vices” of the ethnic/racial Other. Andrei Oișteanu states the existence of a “strong prejudice throughout all of Europe concerned the filth of the Jews and the foul smell they were said to give off.”⁷¹⁰ He mentions many proverbial expressions referring to Jewish stench, dirt, Jews having lice or scabs. Jews themselves were compared to lice and bedbugs as well. Oișteanu points to the racial explanation of such linguistic matrices, mentioning the belief in “Jewish diseases” – including blood and skin diseases and male menstruation, resulting in Jewish filth.⁷¹¹ The blood motif links, therefore, on the one hand to the blood libel (discussed in Chapter 9), and on the other to the “Jewish stench.”

The trope of Jewish physical and moral filthiness was used abundantly by the Nazis, as well as the imagery of lice, and in consequence racist, antisemitic violence was presented as an act of purification.⁷¹² There is yet another aspect of the “Jewish stench” and that is the smell of garlic and onion which were considered to abound in the Jewish

⁷⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁰⁹ For example, photo documentation of the Building Inspectorate (*Inspekcja Budowlana*), published partly in Ewa Zielińska, *Fotografie dawnego Lublina z akt Inspekcji Budowlanej*, ed. Piotr Dymmel, vol. 5, Ikonoteka Lubelska (Lublin: Archiwum Państwowe, 2021).

⁷¹⁰ Andrei Oișteanu, *Inventing the Jew*, ed. Robert S. Wistrich, *Studies of Antisemitism* (Lincoln: The University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 66; Jay Geller, “The Aromatics of Jewish Difference; or, Benjamin’s Allegory of Aura,” In *Jews and other differences*, *The New Jewish Cultural Studies* 222 edited by Jonathan Boyarin and Daniel Boyarin, 203-256 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997). Note that the trope of Jewish stench goes back at least to the medieval polemics; see, e.g., M. Perlmann, “Eleventh-Century Andalusian Authors on the Jews of Granada,” *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 18 (1948), <https://doi.org/10.2307/3622201>.

⁷¹¹ Regarding the myth of Jewish male menstruation, see, e.g., N. R. Maor, A. Roguin, and N. Roguin, “Medieval Roots of the Myth of Jewish Male Menstruation,” *Rambam Maimonides Medical Journal* 12, no. 4 (Oct 25 2021), <https://doi.org/10.5041/rmmj.10454>; Irvn M. Resnick, “Medieval Roots of the Myth of Jewish Male Menses,” *Harvard Theological Review* 93, no. 3 (2000), <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0017816000025323>.

⁷¹² Oișteanu, *Inventing the Jew*, passim.

diet. Many folklore tales preserve the trope of the smell of garlic emanating from the Jews.⁷¹³

In parallel, many *Ostjuden* did live in precarious conditions and suffered from the “diseases of the ghettos,”⁷¹⁴ as it is mentioned in the oral histories at hand. Thus, it is possible that as other lower strata of the society with limited access to sanitation, Jewish paupers did not have a chance to maintain any hygiene standards. However, it is important to note that the trope of a dirty or stinking Jew goes back to the early Middle Ages, thus making it part of anti-Jewish prejudice rather than just a mere observation in the context of this study. Oişteanu claims that the poor living conditions strengthened the stereotype but did not engender it.⁷¹⁵ Moreover, for him the smell is simply a tool of othering: a Jew, as *homo alienus par excellance*, smells different because ontologically he is different.⁷¹⁶ Oişteanu notes that the reason for this difference can be motivated theologically and that often the foul smell is linked to the curse put on Jews to punish them for deicide, or it is a direct consequence of them dealing with some diabolic powers.⁷¹⁷ Although in the context of this study, such far-reaching conclusions cannot be confirmed, one should bear in mind the entire context of the trope, to understand that when gentiles speak about Jewish filth, there is a profound baggage of meanings underpinning their statements, even if the speakers are not aware of that.

Finally, one could argue that the motives of poverty, dirt and disorder are very common in the racialized narratives not only of Jewishness but of otherness in general. Carl A. Zimring in his book on the stereotype of clean whites and dirty non-whites in the United States⁷¹⁸ presents the historical development of environmental racism – the association of ethnic “purity” and cleanliness, thus showing how and when hygiene became a central aspect of white identity. However, environmental racism is part of the narratives of Otherness worldwide, extending beyond the white-black dichotomy. In modern state of Israel, local Arabs are portrayed as dirty, for example, in children books⁷¹⁹ and many other contexts.⁷²⁰ Interestingly such portrayal functions in Israeli

⁷¹³ Ibid., 79.

⁷¹⁴ Ibid., 70.

⁷¹⁵ Ibid., 81.

⁷¹⁶ Ibid., 82.

⁷¹⁷ Ibid., 83-85.

⁷¹⁸ Carl A. Zimring, *Clean and White: A History of Environmental Racism in the United States* (New York: New York University Press, 2016).

⁷¹⁹ Ismael Abu-Saad, "The Portrayal of Arabs in Textbooks in the Jewish School System in Israel," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 29, no. 1 (2007), 32.

⁷²⁰ Daniel Bar-Tal and Yona Teichman, *Stereotypes and Prejudice in Conflict: Representations of Arabs in Israeli Jewish Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

society also in relation to Arab Jews.⁷²¹ In these cases, it is the privileged majority that acquires cleanliness as their characteristic feature and the adversary by default is represented as the opposite – dirty, disorganized and in general moving in the direction opposite to the civilized world.⁷²² The Catholic narratives of Jewish poverty, dirt and crime could be seen in this perspective. The majority ascribes these undesirable characteristics to the othered minority to highlight the difference and bolster the image of the ingroup and discredit the outgroup. Often, such a process is a part of the justification mechanism for the majority group to defend certain negative prejudices about the outgroup or even violence against it, which can be then seen as preventive or defensive.

In addition, Edward Said's orientalism could be a helpful category in understanding the depictions of Jewish space.⁷²³ Kalmar Ivan Davidson and Derek Jonathan Penslar argue that since the Middle Ages, Jews have been seen in the Western world as both occidental and oriental, and thus the orientalist attitude towards them was widely applied. In the context of this research such findings suggest that the image of the Jewish spaces could be reinforced by (un-?)willing orientalization – further differentiation from the normativity of Christian spaces and attributing qualities such as backwardness, disorderliness or dirt to Jewish "exoticism". Again, if so, that mechanism would contribute to the creation and perseverance of already existing divides between the groups, as well as maintaining spatial distance.

While Catholic interviewees who were outsiders of the Jewish quarter focus mostly on the overall perception of the area, often ascribing general features to the whole quarter, those who lived inside it offer a more nuanced view and focus more on the details of particular houses or neighborhoods

Bogdan, who was born in the Jewish quarter, recalls that there were some differences between various neighborhoods of the Jewish quarter in the quality of the buildings, according to the financial situation of their inhabitants:

⁷²¹ Maria N. Yelenevskaya and Larisa Fialkova, "My Poor Cousin, My Feared Enemy: The Image of Arabs in Personal Narratives of Former Soviets in Israel," *Folklore* 115, no. 1 (2004), <https://doi.org/10.1080/0015587042000192547>, 80.

⁷²² Another discussion that could be mentioned here is when and how Jews became white. This discussion started within the context of American Jewry – see, e.g., Karen Brodtkin, *How Jews Became White Folks and What That Says About Race in America* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1998) – but continues with the discussion of Israel as a colonial venture; see Ronit Lentin, *Traces of Racial Exception: Racializing Israeli Settler Colonialism* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2018); Uri Dorchin and Gabriella Djerrahian, *Blackness in Israel: Rethinking Racial Boundaries*, Routledge African Studies 38 (Abingdon: Routledge, 2021).

⁷²³ Ivan Davidson Kalmar and Derek Jonathan Penslar, *Orientalism and the Jews*, The Tauber Institute Series for the Study of European Jewry 24 (Lebanon, NH: University Press of New England, 2005).

(Szeroka Street was) the most exclusive street... All the buildings in Szeroka Street were made of brick. Contrary to Krawiecka, where there were a lot of wooden, some such individual cubicles, which was neglected ... it was a street of the Jewish and Polish poor. Szeroka was an exclusive street. Well, it was definitely not like Chopin St., where a lot of Jews lived, it was a street in the city center, moreover, the street was already modern, and the street was wide and really and very long, because it was walking here from Grodzka Street, that is, here, let's say, from the Gate only downstairs from this Psia Górka, it reached Ruska Street ... And indeed rich Jews lived there, there were bakeries, there were some larger shoemakers, meaning "factories"; studios, because these were not factories, because they were private squares. However, as I say, Krawiecka Street was a street of the poor Jewish people.

Krawiecka Street, where he was born, was among the poorest areas of the city, and many houses there were wooden with small rooms. People lived even in very small huts similar to sheds. Then, Szeroka St., the historical heart of the Jewish quarter had, in comparison to Krawiecka, an "exclusive" character. The historical houses there were large, made of brick and contained many shops. In comparison to the modern part of the city (e.g., Krawiecka) it was not as rich, but in Bogdan's opinion it had a decent character, and importantly on its two ends there were water-wells, key-points for the survival of the quarter.

Mosze (1918) remembers that he lived in "an impossible situation" in Szeroka St.⁷²⁴ and describes the living conditions of his family as "poverty on a very high level":

We lived in one room and the floor was earth. And there was a carpenter and he saw how we live. And when it rained, even in the house the ground was cool. He gave us this cull (scobs?). He gave it twice a week and we put it on the ground twice a week and that's how it was.⁷²⁵

His family was poor; they had enough food to survive but mostly ate bread and potatoes, and walked barefoot from the spring to the autumn to save shoes for the winter. Their apartment was a room of twenty-five square meters with a stove in the corner, in a little house of ten rooms. Every room would be inhabited by a different family. Moshe's family included six siblings, and their parents; however, two of the siblings died very young. The family's situation improved when one of his sisters married well and started to support the family financially. This is when the apartment

⁷²⁴ A little outside of the "main" Jewish quarter, on the back of Lubartowska Street.

⁷²⁵ OH GGNNTC Mosze Korn, 11;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102897/edition/97576>, 23.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103090/edition/97769>, 23.02.2023.

gained a wooden floor that she paid for.⁷²⁶ Most of the local population lived in similar conditions, no matter whether they were Jewish or not. However, as noticed before, the association with poverty and dirt would be highlighted in the narratives about the Jewish minority, interestingly both by the outgroup and the ingroup members.

Josef [1923] who grew up in a Jewish home in the Czwartek area, recalls how he lived with his parents, four siblings, grandmother and two uncles in a small flat of two rooms and a kitchen, and assesses the conditions as “quite proper” for the time. He also claims that the house was inhabited by people of various economic situations, “poor and rich”; however, the majority was poor.⁷²⁷ The house did not have a central heating system (as was common then) nor electricity but the family used ceramic stoves to heat the apartment and kerosene lamps to light it. Josef remembers that when he would come back home in the evening, they would use the kerosene lamps:

Let me tell you, we had no electricity at home, there was a lamp, kerosene, kerosene lamps, when I came from the collections of this SKIF, always with a book. And when you came, at ten or eleven o'clock, when the gates were closing, I read a book by the moonlight, because I did not want to, firstly I did not want to light the kerosene lamp, and secondly, I did not want to disturb sleeping, ... it was like this.⁷²⁸

As the house was crowded, he avoided lighting the lamp so as not to disturb those who were already asleep. In addition, he was trying to help the family's budget, saving on kerosene.

For many Jewish families active in petty trade, a typical living solution would be to have their shop in the front, accessible directly from the street, and live behind it, usually in a single room. Regina [1926] describes this setting as a specifically Jewish solution:

The Jews had this arrangement... it had to be that a Jew lived next to the shop, because it was crowded, he had a shop at the front, and he lived with his family at the back, and so that this Jew would not be sitting in this shop all the time, he had a bell next to the door. When you opened the door, the bell rang - the Jew was coming out.⁷²⁹

⁷²⁶ Ibid.

⁷²⁷ OH GGNNTC Josef Fraind, 21-22;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/121669/edition/115916>, 22.02.2023.

⁷²⁸ Ibid.

⁷²⁹ OH GGNNTC Regina Kucharska, 7;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/119364/edition/113678>, 23.02.2023.

She describes the space of the shop as crowded and one can easily imagine that both the shop and the adjacent apartment were of modest size. In reality, sometimes the space of the shop and the living part were merged, as mentioned by Mira [1914], whose mother owned such a little grocery shop:

We lived on the ground floor [at Nadstawna 20], and there was an entrance [to the apartment] from the shop. Besides, there was a room a little bigger than this one, but one room - an apartment and a shop. And by the entrance to the store there was a bell and mother had to be home, she was supposed to clean and she needed to cook for us.⁷³⁰

The arrangement, therefore, was that the family to some extent lived in the shop. Due to poverty, they could not afford to rent a separate space for the shop and therefore, they had to live in overcrowded flats, without much privacy as at any time a client could come in. Maria [1926] recalls that Grodzka St. was full of such shops, and she underscores their small size:

... but it was all so tiny, so primitive, some little shops like that. I remember that there was a hatter there on the Grodzka street. Caps, hats, it was a Jewish shop. Certainly, there was a grocery, the photographer was a Jew, judging by his name, he was a Jewish photographer. It had a display case outside, facing the street. They were all little streets, little shops. There was no big store. Everything like that ... because they usually lived there and had a shop in the front, and in the back they already had their apartment there. And they lived there.⁷³¹

In Polish such small shops would be called the “kneeler shops” (*sklepy kłęcznikowe*) because they were not only small but also had very low ceilings so that one would need to bow or “kneel” to enter,⁷³² all of which points to the precarious financial situation of their owners. Many such shops were under constant threat of being closed, as they did not meet sanitary regulations. Róża Fiszman-Sznajdman describes the struggle for survival of the owners of such shops in her book “Mój Lublin”, referring to the shops of her neighbors:

⁷³⁰ OH GGNNTC Mira Shuval, 26;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103431/edition/98099>, 24.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103656/edition/98319>, 24.02.2023.

⁷³¹ OH GGNNTC Maria Sowa, 29;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/125804/edition/119911>, 27.02.2023.

⁷³² Adam Sulak, <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/33841/edition/33329>, 27.02.2023;
<https://teatrnn.pl/leksykon/artykuly/zydowski-handel-we-wspomnieniach-mieszkanow-lublina/>, 20.04.2022.

The shops of Brucha and the Alters, like all the others in this and other streets of Lublin, had to fight a fierce struggle for their existence. They did not sin with special cleanliness. The cramped conditions and the lack of time were not conducive to hygiene. Where the shop was served by several family members, like at Alters', the situation was better, but lonely Brucha had no means of keeping it clean. For her, each visit of the sanitary commission ended with a protocol and a punishment, therefore she treated such an inspection as some kind of disease or a divine act. After the visit, the mood was similar to that of the day of judgment - the sentence was awaited. There were commissions that took pity on the poor woman and looked through their fingers at all the shortcomings, but others were ruthless.⁷³³

In her account, the sanitary commission raids are presented with compassion towards the shop owners. Their lack of hygiene was not intended to bring any harm but rather resulted from their hopeless economic situation and the unrealistic requirements of the inspection. The shopkeepers did not see the inspection as an act needed to keep the quality of their merchandise at a level safe for the customers but rather as a divine punishment, that they have no means of avoiding. Although in the above quotation, Fiszman-Sznajdman focuses on the dynamic of the encounter, she confirms the notions mentioned beforehand such as the lack of hygiene and overcrowding, so often repeated by other interviewees when referring to the Jewish community's living conditions.

Some Catholic accounts mention cases of extremely difficult conditions in which Jews they knew lived.⁷³⁴ Stanisława [1930] remembers how once she visited the Jewish quarter with her father because of the business he had with a Jewish milkman. What she saw was a room without a window, with no electricity, with Jews sleeping on a sort of mezzanine. The fact that they had to climb the ladder to go to sleep particularly shook young girl.⁷³⁵ Maria [1926] remembers her neighbors, the Rak family, who lived in a tight space without a window:

Mr. Rak fell seriously ill, he had a terrible fever, so his wife brought in a doctor known in Lublin, Dr. Szpiro. When he got in there, I mean he didn't come in at the beginning because he didn't have the courage. He opened that door. This apartment was such a narrow place, where six people lived and there was no window, so only a door, a narrow door through which one entered. He came in and at once the stuffy stuff had intoxicated

⁷³³ Fiszman-Sznajdman, *Mój Lublin*, 35.

⁷³⁴ The Jewish poverty was described as an othering factor by all the interviewees.

⁷³⁵ OH GGNNTC Stanisława Podlipna, 30-31;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/118379/edition/112705>, 24.02.2023.

him, so to speak, and he said: "What's that stink here, what's going on in this house! Here the horse would die, not just a human."⁷³⁶

This family's dwelling had no access to light and no ventilation, so when the father of the family got sick, the doctor had trouble entering the place because of the terrible smell. Most probably, it was a mixture of food smells, smoke and maybe urine and sewage. Such a living situation resulted from poverty but led to further problems like diseases.

Lack of access to sanitation was a common problem in the area. Bogdan [1934] remembers that one had to buy water from the well a few streets away and there was "no access to water nor toilets."⁷³⁷ He also mentions that when walking in the morning, one had to be very careful: "it was a commonplace there that when you went to work in the morning, you had to shout: *One is walking! One is walking! One is walking!* Because the Jews poured their potties out of the windows onto the street."⁷³⁸ Regina [1926] also recalls inhabitants of the neighborhood shouting that they were passing lest nobody opened their window and poured sewage upon their heads.⁷³⁹ Ludwik [1930] also mentions street gutters full of water and the poor sewage system in the Jewish quarter.⁷⁴⁰ All of these images contribute to a picture of a rundown, dirty slum, permeated by the stench of sewage. Such living conditions resulted in a very low level of personal hygiene leading in turn to many diseases.

Especially disturbing was the lack of toilets and the need to use outhouses. As remembered by Zofia [1926], a Catholic girl who grew up in the Jewish quarter, at Lubartowska St, the outhouses were sometimes placed directly in front of people's windows: "Oh, [the house I lived in] looked terrible. The toilet was right by the window. They were coming. They did not go to the toilet, but relieved themselves near the toilet. Even the window couldn't be opened. And I used to live there."⁷⁴¹ The description indicates that probably the outhouse was in such a state that it was not

⁷³⁶ OH GGNNTC Maria Sowa, 11;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/98956/edition/93312>, 27.02.2023.

⁷³⁷ OH GGNNTC Bogdan Stanisław Pazur, 18-19;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/123678/edition/117859>, 24.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/154570/edition/148287>, 24.02.2023.

⁷³⁸ Ibid.

⁷³⁹ OH GGNNTC Regina Kucharska, 14;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/119363/edition/113677>, 23.02.2023.

⁷⁴⁰ OH GGNNTC Ludwik Kotliński, 9;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/119141/edition/113457>, 23.02.2023.

⁷⁴¹ OH GGNNTC Zofia Mazurek, 1;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/126997/edition/121033>, 23.02.2023.

possible to enter, as people decided to urinate or defecate next to it, in the courtyard, and in front of her apartment's windows. One can easily imagine how unsanitary such a situation was and how unbearable the smell was.⁷⁴² Mira [1914], Jewish herself, shares how in her view these conditions eventually led to associating Jews in general with dirt and stench:

They said, they said ... all over the world they stuck it to us that the Jews were dirty. That's not true. But there were of course families that lived in such harsh conditions that it could not be clean, because the conditions were so difficult. There was nowhere to wash, there was no toilet, it was necessary [to go] to the third courtyard. We had such a huge house on Nadstawna Street. Sixty tenants. It took two yards to come to [the toilet]. It was like that. Well, these were difficult conditions, and they had no food, they had nothing to wear. The conditions were very difficult.⁷⁴³

Another Jewish woman, Cipora [1918], refers to the same problem while talking about difficult access to water in some parts of the Jewish quarter:

Why did they say - the Jews are dirty? If a man had no water, he had nothing. When [the child] came to school, this hygienist [said]: "Dirt." She [treated] them as if they were some lepers... she was disgusted with the child, the child felt as if she had such a complex. The Jews were very poor. Poles were also poor.⁷⁴⁴

Cipora explains that the poverty was debilitating and excluding because of having no access to hygiene. In this way, already underprivileged children growing up in the Jewish district were subjected to further discrimination "as if they were some lepers". The poverty of the ghetto in a certain way petrified the already existing prejudices and separations, as it led to the exclusion of the Jewish youngsters on yet another level: because they presented a sanitary threat.

The words of Mira and Cipora are a commentary on Polish antisemitic discourses of that time, and probably also (maybe even more?) on the Nazi German discourses during

⁷⁴² A quite extensive study of the smellscape of Lublin was conducted by Stephanie Weismann from the University of Vienna; Stephanie Weismann, "The 'Lublin of the Future' – Clean, Hygienic, Orderly. Making a Clean Sweep with the Jewish Neighbourhood and its Sensescape," *European Review* 30, no. 4 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1062798722000229>; Weismann, "Scents and Sensibilities: Interwar Lublin's Courtyards," *Contemporary European History* (2021), <https://doi.org/doi:10.1017/S0960777320000648>.

⁷⁴³ OH GGNNTC Mira Shuval, 67; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103468/edition/98136>, 24.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103765/edition/98420>, 23.02.2023.

⁷⁴⁴ OH GGNNTC Cipora Borensztejn, 21; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103145/edition/97822>, 21.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103955/edition/98600>, 21.02.2023.

the war. In Polish popular discourse, the word *parch* is symptomatic, as it was often used in reference to Jews and signified a kike, scabs or dermatophytosis. Michał Głowiński, Polish professor of literature (and personally a child survivor of the Holocaust, saved by Irena Sendler), notes that the term “parch” was absent in theoretical antisemitic discourses, due to its colloquial character. However, it was very popular in daily Polish and as such was preserved in Polish literature. Głowiński quotes Bolesław Prus and Antoni Słonimski and notes that from mid-19th century the word was used exclusively as a contemptuous way of referring to the Jews.⁷⁴⁵ *Parch* evokes connotations of something dirty and repulsive, and such was a mental stereotype of Jews in popular *imaginare*, as discussed above.⁷⁴⁶ Naturally, this word is not used in the narratives at hand, because of the circumstances of the interviews and the highly pejorative connotations of the word. However, it is certain that every interviewer was exposed to this kind of a discourse due to its wide dissemination.

The Nazi German discourse on Jews being dirty to the point of posing an epidemiological threat is well known, and its visualizations can be easily noted, for example, on the infamous posters warning against the Jews as carriers of lice and typhus.⁷⁴⁷ In a German guidebook from the General Government from 1943, *Das Generalgouvernement. Reisehandbuch von Karl Baedeker*,⁷⁴⁸ the Jews symbolize a gloomy, dirty reality that now is being liberated by the Germans. Both Poles and Jews are described as dirty and style-less but Jews to a much higher extent. The authors of the guidebook assure readers that in the ghetto “living in dirty holes, burrows, hideouts and catacombs, Jews feel at home.” They feel at home because these dirty, neglected and sleazy places are their natural environment, so to speak. The argument was not that Jews do not deserve better but rather that this is where they naturally belong. In the oral histories such extreme views are not expressed but one ought to remember that the interviewees were exposed to such racialized narratives of dirt, if not before the war, then surely during the Nazi occupation.

⁷⁴⁵ Michał Głowiński, "Tutaj działa sam język," interview by Rafał Pankowski, no. 16, 2008.

⁷⁴⁶ Ewa Jakubiak, "Stereotyp Żyda w dowcipach z przełomu XIX / XX wieku," *Etnolingwistyka. Problemy Języka i Kultury* 15 (2003), 135; Halina Pelcowa, "Swoj / obcy w świadomości mieszkańców lubelskich wsi," *Etnolingwistyka. Problemy Języka i Kultury* 19 (2007), passim.

⁷⁴⁷ "Propaganda Poster: "Jews Are Lice: They Cause Typhus"," (Poster), U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, accessed 20.04.2022.

⁷⁴⁸ It is important to note the propagandist character of the guidebook, which most probably was compiled by the Nazi administration of the General Government. See Edyta Nowak, "„Żydowski problem”. Żydzi na łamach niemieckich przewodników po Lublinie z czasu drugiej wojny światowej," *Kultura i Historia* 35 (2019), 135.

Diseases

Lack of the access to sanitation as well as overcrowding, no access to fresh air, light or running water led in many cases, as one can easily imagine, to the spreading of various diseases. In the oral histories analyzed in this study, diseases are often mentioned in the context of poverty and as one of its ugly faces. For example, Cipora [1918] narrates:

It was scary. Today, the sick person is not as powerless as he was then. Man died of every stupid disease. [At Szeroka Street] there was water. Waterworks. There was no water on Ruska Street. There was this water basin, you had to go. People stood in lines to take water.⁷⁴⁹

To her, sickness is related to lack of hygiene and basic commodities such as water. At the same time, she presents sickness as scary because in that period one had no control of illnesses that nowadays can be easily cured. Therefore, one's life was threatened by poverty on yet another level. On the one hand, one was risking their life due to malnutrition, while on the other hand the probability of catching a life-threatening disease was much higher than in the world where the interviewees were getting old.

Vicious Circle of Poverty: "Poor Professions," Beggars and Crime

Cipora's story sheds more light on other aspects of poverty in the Jewish quarter. She was born in the heart of Jewish quarter in a family that struggled to make ends meet because their widowed mother was the only breadwinner. In her depiction of the Jewish quarter, Cipora underscores the destitution of her neighbors that led them to despair:

[When we lived] on Ruska Street, I was little. I can't talk much. All I can do is family that lived vis-à-vis. Their father dealt with [funerals]. He was a religious man. Sometimes people came and said that they were giving half a litre of vodka to bury them alive, because they didn't want to live anymore, they had a hard life. He talked about various things.⁷⁵⁰

According to her story, people felt so overwhelmed with their hopeless economic situation that they sought death as a liberation from the hardships of poverty. While it is impossible to know if this particular story happened, it surely functions as a figure of speech emphasizing the degree of poverty among the inhabitants of the Jewish quarter.

⁷⁴⁹ OH GGNNTC Cipora Borensztejn, 21; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103145/edition/97822>, 21.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103955/edition/98600>, 21.02.2023.

⁷⁵⁰ OH GGNNTC Cipora Borensztejn, 21; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103144/edition/97821>, 21.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103954/edition/98599>, 21.02.2023.

In another fragment of her story, Cipora refers to the struggle to earn a living while having a “bad” profession:

There was misery, great misery. On Ruska Street there was misery and on Szeroka Street there was misery. Everywhere there was misery... Do you know what a *kamashnik* (boot maker) is? The upper part, this leather ... There were tailors, and there were shoemakers, and when someone was a watchmaker it was already an intelligent profession. And what kind of ... locksmith. Mostly there were tailors and shoemakers. And if someone wanted a good profession ... for example, my brother did not want to be a no, not a tailor, not a shoemaker - he said, I want to be a dental technician. You had to pay extra, not everyone had the money to pay extra to go to some profession.⁷⁵¹

The number of times Cipora repeats that “there was misery” emphasizes the image of extreme privation in the Jewish quarter. She proceeds then to explain that this misery was connected to specific professions, widespread among the Jewish population, which did not pay well. Bootmakers, shoemakers and tailors were the core of Jewish artisan community⁷⁵² and their professions were not profitable enough to allow them to improve their financial status and climb above the poverty line.⁷⁵³ At the same time, if one did not earn enough, one could not educate their children to have a better profession and pay for their training, as even the professions that did not require much study, per se, required a period of apprenticeship when the apprentice would have to pay to the master. Therefore, without earning enough, one was risking to be stuck in the vicious circle of destitution. At the same time, even though the earnings were not enough to climb the social ladder, even “poor” professions allowed for a level of stability. It was a very precarious stability, not satisfying most basic needs, yet it allowed people to eat and pay rent. Cipora herself did not grow up with an abundance of food, recalls contact with those who fell below the line of such precarious stability:

One blind Jew would come every day. I always took some salad with me, I always gave him. I said, "Yeah, I'm going to starve a little, but he's hungry all the time." There was immense poverty. Beggars came. What were they given? A piece of bread, some sugar. It

⁷⁵¹ Ibid.

⁷⁵² See Chapter 4, p. 123.

⁷⁵³ The same applies to majority of the most popular jobs taken up by the Jewish population such as shopkeepers, petty traders, street vendors, etc.

was written in Lublin: "Do not enter, beggars are not allowed to enter". There was immense poverty.⁷⁵⁴

Risking staying hungry for some time, Cipora says she shared with the beggar the food she planned to eat herself. Begging was prohibited in the city, but apparently was quite widespread nonetheless, due to the economic crisis. People who did not have any source of income would turn to begging and somehow managed to survive and least for some time on the donations, which Cipora defines as very modest. According to her, a beggar would normally receive a slice of bread and a little sugar, not more, which only strengthens the image of the Jewish quarter as a very poor area. In a similar vein, a bit later in her story, she talks about Jewish elementary school pupils, her classmates, who were always hungry and begged for food during breaks.⁷⁵⁵

In the narratives analyzed here, begging was one of the solutions for those finding themselves in desperate financial situations. Another solution that appears in the stories was turning to crime. Cipora recalls also how in the Old City "poor, very poor people live underground, in semi-basements",⁷⁵⁶ and how poverty pushed Jewish women to prostitution:

Where this street, Jezuicka Street, was, where the clock was, there were prostitutes. I knew it was said that prostitutes were hanging around there. The prettiest women. And it was said, you want to see a pretty woman - go to the clock. What does the poor come to, the poor comes to this.⁷⁵⁷

Cipora states the facts but does not condemn the women, rather she repeats that it was their misery that forced them to resort to dramatic means of making money. For her, prostitution resulted from poverty and ultimately, it is poverty to be blamed for the moral defeat of Jewish women in this case.⁷⁵⁸ Another Catholic woman, Janina [1927],

⁷⁵⁴ OH GGNNTC Cipora Borensztejn, 34;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103146/edition/97823>, 21.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103956/edition/98601>, 21.02.2023.

⁷⁵⁵ OH GGNNTC Cipora Borensztejn, 26;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103147/edition/97824>, 21.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103957/edition/98602>, 21.02.2023.

⁷⁵⁶ OH GGNNTC Cipora Borensztejn, 25;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103147/edition/97824>, 21.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103957/edition/98602>, 21.02.2023.

⁷⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁵⁸ A fascinating study of Jewish crime in the Lublin voivodship by Mateusz Rodak reflects the complex realities of the criminal activity of the Jewish minority in the Lublin area in the interwar period, discussing extensively also the problem of prostitution. Mateusz Rodak, *Mit a rzeczywistość:*

completes the picture of prostitution in the Jewish quarter conveyed by Cipora, by adding further aspects of it: “It was also dangerous there, because each of them (prostitutes) had their defender, who protected her, and besides, a lot of drunks were there, usually everyone went there drunk.”⁷⁵⁹ Therefore, prostitutes, procurers and their drunk clients dominated the area near the Krakowska Gate, the western gate leading into the Old City. Surely, this area could not have been seen as safe, and thus decent people avoided passing nearby. Adam [1928], a Catholic man, mentions that although prostitution was particularly well developed in the Old City, it could be encountered also in his neighborhood, on Narutowicza Street.⁷⁶⁰

Conclusions Regarding Dis-Comfort Zones

In interwar Poland, as in many segregated societies, intersectionality is a key aspect of understanding the position of the Other. The analyzed stories point to the economic and class aspects of discrimination and othering. Interestingly, both Catholics and Jews associate poverty with the Jewish spaces, casting them outside of the comfort zone and making them into zones of discomfort. In the stories, the discomfort is not related directly to Jewishness but rather to poverty and resulting conditions, that are presented as if they were inherent to the Jewish space. The integration of that image also by the Jewish interviewees can suggest that they internalized some stereotypes – but above that, that the class system was the main framework defining the comfort and discomfort zones.

The Jewish Quarter as a Comfort Zone

Although most of the interviewees paint a very vivid picture of the misery and distress reigning in the Jewish quarter as a zone of discomfort, some remember also the better off neighborhoods within it, and these accounts come exclusively from the Jewish interviewees. Eliezer [1919], who grew up in Lubartowska Street, depicts the house where his family lived as well maintained and special: “I still remember that, there were such coloured panes there. It was the only house that had these coloured glasses.”⁷⁶¹

przestępczość osób narodowości żydowskiej w II Rzeczypospolitej: casus województwa lubelskiego (Warszawa: IH PAN, 2012), 59-93.

⁷⁵⁹ OH GGNNTC Janina Grudzińska, 13;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/50248/edition/47176>, 23.02.2023.

⁷⁶⁰ OH GGNNTC Adam Tomanek, 19;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/120042/edition/114329>, 27.02.2023.

⁷⁶¹ OH GGNNTC Eliezer Orenstein, 13-14;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103514/edition/98181>, 24.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/104829/edition/99464>, 24.02.2023.

Usually, such stained glass windows were placed in the stairwell of rich houses to adorn the common spaces used by all the tenants. He also underscores that their family apartment was nice and spacious enough for their needs: “[In our apartment] there were two and a half rooms. My parents lived in the bedroom and we slept in the other room, and the maid lived in that half of the room. And there was a very large kitchen.”⁷⁶² As Eliezer’s father owned a mill, the family was in a good economic situation, and therefore could afford a comfortable apartment and even a house servant. Even though for a reader today two and a half rooms might not seem impressive, one ought to remember that the majority of the population of Lublin lived in one-room apartments with an average of four inhabitants per room. Within such a perspective, one can easily note the privileged situation of Eliezer’s family, especially when comparing to the previous stories depicting extremely difficult living conditions.

Hadasa [1924] lived in a comfortable apartment of four rooms with numerous family members, but nonetheless the living conditions were very comfortable as the house was in good area (Lubartowska Street). She recalls that this part of the Jewish quarter was enjoyable and always busy:

Here in Lubartowska it was almost only the Jews, who lived there, and there were nice houses, really nice houses, there was a school, there was a Jewish school, and there were a lot of people there, and you always went there and it was a good, a pleasant street it was, really.⁷⁶³

She reminisces that the street was very Jewish and had impressive buildings; including “a Jewish school”, that is, Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin. It could be seen as a “good” street in contrast to the areas of Krawiecka or Ruska which were full of wooden huts and without paved streets. Lubartowska was a truly urban environment bustling with life: many big tenant houses, small-sized factories, manufacturers and shops. Awigdor’s [1920] memories of his childhood house, discussed above, convey a similar picture of large houses, as he describes his house as “a castle”.⁷⁶⁴ His house was also located in Lubartowska Street; therefore, the positive image of the Jewish quarter refers to this particular neighborhood.

⁷⁶² Ibid.

⁷⁶³ OH GGNNTC Hadasa Pinkus, 33;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/105313/edition/99946>, 24.02.2023,
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/105418/edition/100052>, 24.02.2023.

⁷⁶⁴ OH GGNNTC Awigdor Kacenenbogen, 6;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/101875/edition/96534>, 23.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103016/edition/97695>, 23.02.2023.

Jewish interviewees who lived in the “Christian” part of the city recall being comfortable and “at home” in their own neighborhoods.⁷⁶⁵ This could confirm the hypothesis about comfort zones being strongly linked to social class. One should also take into consideration the Polonization of Jewish individuals, as a factor impacting the perception of the space as being a comfort or discomfort zone. However, in order to draw conclusions, one should first have a closer look at the dynamics of mobility, and the permeability of the borders between the zones of comfort and discomfort.

Comfort Zones and Mobility

As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, segregation is a complex phenomenon, reflected also in group mobility, including access to various spaces besides the residential areas. The sources focus on two types of group mobility: inward movement, that is, mobility within the ingroup’s spatial comfort zones, and outward mobility – crossing over outside of the spatial comfort zones into spaces perceived as belonging to the outgroup. This section will concentrate on these motions.

Outwardness – Out of the Comfort Zone

Jews

Although the sense of separation between the Jewish quarter and the rest of the city permeates most of the stories, in particular in the emphasis on its exceptional poverty and the highlighting difference in garb, smell and language, the borders of the *ghetto* were quite permeable, as was already suggested in some of the above-cited fragments of the stories. Those Jews who wanted to live outside could do so,⁷⁶⁶ and Poles lived inside the Jewish quarter for various reasons: because of the cheap rent, their profession (e.g., most janitors in Jewish houses were Poles), etc.

Narratives indicate a few streets were popular among Jews living outside of the Jewish quarter (and Jewish suburbs): Krakowskie Przedmieście (the most elegant), Narutowicza and Aleje Raławickie (the closest to nature). Bronisława [1932] grew up in an elegant apartment in Krakowskie Przedmieście, and remembers that in the

⁷⁶⁵ OH GGNNTC Sara Grinfeld, Bronisława Friedman, Edward Skowroński-Hertz.

⁷⁶⁶ Out of 24 Jewish interviewees, seven lived in the “modern” part of the city, far from the Jewish quarter.

building most of the families were Jewish, which is confirmed by archival records.⁷⁶⁷ Irena [1927], then a Catholic girl living a couple of blocks away on the same street, recalls that a few Jewish families lived in their building, and that the owner was Jewish.⁷⁶⁸ In fact, some Catholic interviewees (Janina [1927], Regina [1926], Aleksander [1934] and Serafin [1913]) recall a notion that Jews owned a lot of buildings in the “Christian” part of the city and that the saying “your streets, our buildings” (*wasze ulice, nasze kamienice*) would be heard often. It highlighted the popular Polish/Catholic impression that even in the non-Jewish neighborhoods Jews owned more real estate than the Catholics. The recorded number of Jewish real estate owners in 1939 was 293 while the number of properties was slightly over four thousand; however, there is no statistic on how many properties were owned by these 293 Jewish owners.⁷⁶⁹ Nonetheless, as (according to the oral histories) usually one person or family would not own more than two or three buildings, the statistics suggest that the saying was more an expression of a perception of Jews overstepping unsaid boundaries and transgressing into “Polish/Catholic” space than a reflection of a real dominion in real estate. Having referred to this popular prejudice, I will now proceed to the expressions of a sense of belonging or its opposite expressed by those Jews who lived in the non-Jewish part of the city towards their own neighborhoods, as well as the Jewish quarter.

Sara, born in 1923 in Królewska Street and raised in the modern Aleje Racławickie, recalls that she was rather detached from the Jewish part of the city:

I only went there if someone took me to show this synagogue ... what was the synagogue called? Ah, Yeshivat Chachmej Lublin. Very rarely, very rarely [I went there]. It's just that I used to go there, and I had friends there in front of the bridge on Lubartowska. But farther across the bridge, it seems like I've never been.⁷⁷⁰

Sara's family was relatively well off, progressive and not religious. She was not drawn to the Jewish quarter for religious motives such as visiting one of the oldest local synagogues; apparently, she even confused the Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin with the great

⁷⁶⁷ OH GGNNTC Bronisława Friedman, 6; <https://teatrnn.pl/leksykon/artykuly/krakowskie-przedmiescie-30-w-lublinie/>, 13.05.2022; <https://teatrnn.pl/miejsca/miejsce/lublin-ul-krakowskie-przedmiescie-30/>, 13.05.2022.

⁷⁶⁸ OH GGNNTC Irena Korolko; 4.

⁷⁶⁹ Andrzej Jakubowski, *Historia Lublina w liczbach. History of Lublin in Figures*, 105, Tabl. 113.

⁷⁷⁰ OH GGNNTC Sara Grinfeld, 37; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102576/edition/97257>, 10.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103366/edition/98037>, 10.02.2023.

synagogue of Maharshal.⁷⁷¹ As a young secular Jewish woman she had no reasons to go there; the only reason for visiting the Jewish quarter at all were visits to her friends' houses. She also states that she would rarely pass the Grodzka Gate (the Old City) and that although she "was not so far from Jewry (...) nothing attracted her there, because the area of the Saski Garden was prettier."⁷⁷² Sara's story reflects the mobility of the Jewish middle class, who not only preferred the modern part of the city for its comfort (access to parks, sewage system, electricity, etc.) but also felt awkward in the Jewish quarter. The feeling stemmed from the sense of separation from the traditional Jewish way of life, speaking a language different than Yiddish and leading a comfortable and secular lifestyle, not in sync with the religious calendar organizing the life of the majority of the inhabitants of the Jewish quarter. Her namesake, Sarah [1922], mentioned that she went to elementary school in the Jewish quarter and also visited the Maharshal synagogue. However, her main point of focus was the poverty of the Jewish quarter around the Castle. When asked if she had ever gone there, she answered that she had not at all. Because she was from a wealthy family, she walked on "all the beautiful streets" where Jews also lived such as Krakowskie Przedmieście or Aleje Racławickie.⁷⁷³ For her, the area around the Castle was a location of mythical misery and neglect and there were no reasons why she would have to confront herself with that as a young girl from a wealthy home.

Such impressions were also expressed by some other interviewees who grew up in the modern "Polish" neighborhoods. Edward [1920] claims that he did not have any contact with people living in the Jewish quarter: "people lived there but I didn't know them and had no contact with them. If I had, it was only with children my age, maybe a little bit more."⁷⁷⁴ The mixture of religion and poverty made the Jewish quarter into foreign and maybe even dangerous country for secular Polish Jews like Sara and Edward, growing up with some relation to Jewish traditions but in a Polish setting and with secular ideas of education, emancipation and progress.

Thus, the main motor of Jewish motion out of the ghetto in these cases was the aspiration for social advancement, and ultimately it was the social class that defined the potential for mobility. Such advancement was possible for those with considerable

⁷⁷¹ She never crossed the bridge, which means that most probably she has actually never seen Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin.

⁷⁷² OH GGNNTC Sara Grinfeld, 41;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102576/edition/97257>, 10.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103366/edition/98037>, 10.02.2023.

⁷⁷³ OH GGNNTC Sarah Tuller, 97.

⁷⁷⁴ OH GGNNTC Edward Skowroński-Hertz, 18;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102229/edition/96911>, 27.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102593/edition/97274>, 27.02.2023.

income and took place through moving to a better, non-Jewish, area of the city, learning good Polish and education. These areas had better living conditions and bestowed a “good reputation” on their inhabitants, they were a token of a social status and “modernization”. Polish was the main language spoken between the interviewees and their parents, while the parents would in most cases speak Yiddish between themselves and definitely with their own parents’ generation. Therefore, one can easily notice the dynamics of Polish acculturation strengthening with every generation.

It is also worth noting that all of these families were not observant in a strict, traditional sense of the word. Bronisława’s [1932] parents would attend a synagogue weekly but they were not considered observant enough by their religious parents (Bronisława’s grandparents), Sara’s [1923] parents were secular but did not object to celebrating all of the religious feasts with their parents. Sarah’s [1922] parents struggled between secular and religious lifestyles as her father consciously distanced himself from religion, while her mother tried to maintain some religious traditions and education. Edward’s [1920] parents were moderately observant and his father attended services in the synagogue due to his social position in the community, to show support and a sense of belonging, but did not observe the religious regulations in everyday life. Three more interviewees who lived in the non-Jewish areas of the town but do not refer to their relations to the space – Adam [1923], Helena [1926] and Henrika [1931] – also came from families transitioning towards a secular lifestyle. Adam’s father would attend synagogue on big holidays and the family would have Shabbat dinner but he would not pray more often than that. Helena’s father would not attend synagogue at all but the family would have a solemn Shabbat dinner, and Henrika’s father was completely secular. All of these families are described as very religious one generation back, meaning that the grandparents of all the interviewees were “pious” (*nabożni*), very often related to the Hasidic tradition.

Therefore, one can conclude that the outward movement out of the *ghetto* was related to the processes of secularization and modernization within the Jewish society, described, for example, by Kamil Kijek.⁷⁷⁵ As the families were increasingly acculturating into Polish life, living a less observant Jewish religious life, their choices of address reflected their wish to become more integrated into a larger society and live a more modern and comfortable life, liberated from the mentality of the *shtetl*. In consequence, their comfort zones in the city space overlapped with traditionally non-Jewish spaces.

This transition towards secular lifestyle translated into many visible signs that allowed these families to fit into the Polish/Catholic context and be accepted, at least

⁷⁷⁵ Kijek, *Dzieci modernizmu*.

to some extent, by the outgroup.⁷⁷⁶ One aspect would be “non-Jewish looks”, which equals leaving the traditional garb – black coats, hats, side locks and long beards for men and wigs for women – and adopting the “normal” Western dress code. Another aspect would be keeping religion private – not celebrating the feasts in a way that would be obvious for an outsider (such as non-Jewish neighbor, for example) and speaking good Polish. This last aspect in particular played a key role in establishing intergroup contacts, friendships and being able to function in the wider Polish society.

Catholics

In general, very few Catholics lived in the Jewish quarter, including three Catholic interviewees: Bogdan [1934], Janina [1927] and Zofia [1926]. However, all of the interviewees remember the Jewish quarter and are able to describe at least certain areas or aspects of it. This section will focus on the accounts of crossing into a space considered Jewish and the reasons for doing so.

Crossing through the Jewish Quarter to Get to the City or the Suburbs

One of the most popular reasons to venture into the Jewish quarter was the need to get to another part of the city, crossing through the area. Danuta [1928] remembers that her everyday walk to school from Kalinowszczyzna to Niecała Street crossed through the Jewish quarter.⁷⁷⁷ Another Danuta [1921] recalls occasional walks to the cemetery in Kalinowszczyzna and sporadic visits to the Castle.⁷⁷⁸ Wiesława [1931] remembers that she would only walk on two streets in the Jewish quarter because she was afraid that she might be caught and taken away from her parents:

I would only walk on Ruska Street and then Franciszkańska Street. [Other streets no] The neighbours and inhabitants of this Catholic part would say that I cannot turn from Ruska Street because I would be caught for matzah. They would scare us, so no children would not go in there. [I believed] that they can catch me but I am not sure if for matzah. [More] that they can catch me and take me away from my parents.⁷⁷⁹

⁷⁷⁶ It is worth noting that all of the interviewees described their relations with the outgroup neighbours as good when asked explicitly about it. However, as Chapter 7 shows, the picture is more nuanced than that.

⁷⁷⁷ “Through a part of Kalinowszczyzna, then I turned around behind the Orthodox church, going towards the city, I turned into Szeroka Street and through the Grodzka Gate..., Grodzka Street, a section of Krakowskie Przedmieście to Niecała.” OH GGNNTC Danuta Sontag, 2.

⁷⁷⁸ OH GGNNTC Danuta Riabinin, 15. Most probably, she intends the cemetery in Unicka Street.

⁷⁷⁹ Wiesława Majczak, <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/101014/edition/95477>, 23.02.2023.

Interestingly, in a way parallel to the way in which some Jews narrate the non-Jewish space, in her account the Jewish quarter is presented as a space that is not safe for the outgroup. She employs the trope of blood libel,⁷⁸⁰ underscoring that she was not exactly afraid of being killed for matzah but rather to be kidnapped and taken away from her parents. One can sense that this antisemitic trope was used in the narrative heard at home from the older generation to maintain the separation and maybe prevent the children from venturing into distant neighborhoods, beyond their parents' reach. At the same time, repeating such stories contributed to the feeling that the Jewish quarter was not a safe space for Catholics. It adds another aspect to the already discussed "dangerous" features of the Jewish quarter presented in the oral histories such as poverty, lack of hygiene and criminality. Some of the Catholic interviewees' descriptions of Jewish space imply that upon entering that space one can be infected with infectious diseases, could become a victim of crime or finally, in the case of children, could be even kidnapped. All these images construct the Jewish quarter as not only foreign and inferior but also perilous for non-Jews.

History Lessons in the Urban Space

Another interesting reason for visiting Jewish quarter were trips organized by local schools. Cecylia [1921] and Maria [1926] recall that their history teachers took them for guided tours in the Old City to show them historical landmarks:

I would not visit the Old City often. Actually even... these were rather school trips. Because for example when during the history lesson our teacher told us about the court or tribunal, about the devil's paw,⁷⁸¹ so then one wanted to see it with one's own eyes. But usually there was a lot of Jews there. And somehow the parents would warn their children not to deal with Jews.⁷⁸²

Cecylia remembers that a rare occasion to visit this area were the school trips organized to show the students places mentioned during classes. As her parents would warn her

⁷⁸⁰ Which will be further discussed in Chapter 9.

⁷⁸¹ Local legend has it that in the 18th century a local tribunal had a very unjust judge; once upon a time, he issued an unjust sentence against a poor widow who in her outrage exclaimed that a devil would issue a more just sentence. The devil in fact appeared and forced the judge to change the sentence, signing it with his own burning paw. The paw-shaped sign was imprinted on the court table, which has been preserved to this day in a local museum (now a branch of the National Museum).

⁷⁸² OH GGNNTC Cecylia Czarnik, 36;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/117664/edition/112002>, 16.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/155038/edition/148749>, 16.02.2023.

against going to the Jewish quarter alone or dealing with the Jews there,⁷⁸³ she would not visit the area otherwise. Maria, in contrast, claims that she visited the Jewish quarter many times:

I knew the Old City before the war. When I was still in school, when we had history classes, one had to tell something, for example about the Klonowic palace – so one had to see it first, so the teachers would take us for a walk in the Old City and told us various stories about this Old City. Many times I walked Grodzka Street. These old houses, also lots of Jewish shops were there... I would not go further only in the area around the Castle.⁷⁸⁴

For her, the school trips were one of many visits to the Old City and she had no problem going there on her own. These particular visits illustrated local history. Maria's account brings an interesting perspective on children's agency in mobility. It seems that her movement as a (probably older) child was not restricted by her age or gender, maybe because she came from a lower social strata and thus had to take care of herself from an early age. On the other hand, Cecylia also had a similar background but her mobility was restricted, suggesting that maybe more personal factors played a part in these children's mobility.

Business

The most referred-to reason for visiting the Jewish quarter by Catholics is undoubtedly business.⁷⁸⁵ Edward [1928] remembers that he accompanied his grandfather on his visits to Lubartowska Street. He would take some metal merchandise from there to his workshop to tin-coat it, as tin coating was his profession.⁷⁸⁶ Regina [1926] tells a similar story about buying paint from Jewish traders: "We would go there and he [a friend] would buy various paints from these Jews, in these shops, this is how I know what it looked like. Otherwise there was no reason to go there."⁷⁸⁷ In her story, the only reason for visiting the Jewish neighborhoods was shopping. Otherwise, the area was poor and

⁷⁸³ She herself and her family had some Jewish friends, therefore the prohibition of contact with the Jews seems to be limited to solitary trips to the Jewish quarter.

⁷⁸⁴ OH GGNNTC Maria Sowa, 28;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/125804/edition/119911>, 27.02.2023.

⁷⁸⁵ A more detailed analysis of the nature of trade contacts between Catholics and Jews will be carried out in Chapter 8. An interesting form of business-based relations were sanitary and price inspections described by Róża Fiszman-Sznajdman but not reflected significantly in the sources.

⁷⁸⁶ OH GGNNTC Edward Soczewiński, 33.

⁷⁸⁷ OH GGNNTC Regina Kucharska, 7;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/119364/edition/113678>, 23.02.2023.

uninteresting. Many Catholics also mention visiting the Jewish market and shopping there, as well as using services of Jewish tailors and shoemakers or even psychics:

Once it happened that my cousin came, older than me, I was already in *gymnasium*, she wanted to be told fortunes and she says: "Listen, I can go with it to this Jewess, but I am afraid to go alone – she says – come, we will go together!" I do not know exactly where it was... when I set off and saw, I was afraid, it was such a huge concentration of these Jews.⁷⁸⁸

Janina [1924] tells a story of how she went to the Jewish quarter around the Castle for the first time in her life, accompanying her cousin to see a psychic. She was shocked at how many Jews lived there, as probably it was the first time she saw them in large numbers. The purpose of the visit is very interesting in the context of other narratives, as it adds yet another aspect to the image of the Jewish quarter as a dark and obscure place. In this case, a new aspect is the suspicious profession of the Jewess psychic, as the story suggests that there were no respectable Polish people dealing with such things. Therefore, the association with the psychic somehow taints the image of the Jewish community, evoking notions of magic, esotericism and involvement in suspicious activities. It also worth noticing that the notion of Jewish inferiority again links to the class system and hints at the primacy of economic factors in judging the Other. Janina was an educated girl from a family that could afford a visit to a psychic; thus, her judgement on the Jewish quarter is based also on her perception of poverty.

Inwardness – Staying in the Comfort Zone

Jews

On the other hand, one can notice a corresponding tendency among those Jews who grew up in the Jewish quarter, and would not venture into the more modern "Polish" part of the town. Awigdor [1920], who lived in Lubartowska Street until 1933 when at the age of 13 he immigrated to Palestine, remembers that he would not cross into Krakowskie Przedmieście, outside the premises of the Jewish quarter:

I remember [Lubartowska] Street. We did not go any further, because I could not go alone on Krakowskie Street, because they would beat me [they would] accost me. So I didn't go. But I went with my mother or my brother once, I don't remember. But we lived in Lubartowska Street and we, I lived at home. Because this house was 100 children

⁷⁸⁸ OH GGNNTC Janina Kozak, 13;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/124574/edition/118728>, 23.02.2023.

and football and ping pong, and everything was in this house, this castle, everything was there. All the colleges, mates, were in this house.⁷⁸⁹

For Awigdor, the Jewish quarter meant safety. The threat of antisemitic attacks that he perceived to happen often, especially towards Jewish boys from their Polish Catholic peers, shaped Awigdor's attitude towards the parts of the town outside of the Jewish quarter. There, he was considered "the Other", would be easily singled out and could become subject to physical violence. Naturally, it is not uncommon for young boys to form gangs and confront boys from other neighborhood stepping over their boundaries, even if antisemitism is not involved. It is the alien element that is attacked in this case. However, the choice of the alien is undoubtedly related to antisemitism.

In his account, Awigdor does not focus on poverty or other discomforts of life in this area but rather highlights that it was his entire world, pointing to the idea of comfort zones. His house was huge and safe like a castle and did not lack anything he needed as a boy: family, religious life, social life or entertainment. In that sense, for him the Catholic or Polish Lublin could not exist. He lived in the Jewish Lublin, which in his experience had little overlap with the Polish one. Moshe [1925], his peer, also reports antisemitic attacks he experienced on the street:

Sure [that I felt antisemitism]. There was no one who didn't feel it. For example, when I went from school or to school, always children, not adults, children with briefcases beat me over the head. They saw a sign, there was a sign on the cap. They knew I was a Jew and I should always have to run away from [them]. I saw the boys walking there, I went to the other side [or] ran. It was not so good for us.⁷⁹⁰

He says that it was a common experience for Jews to be attacked and that on his way to and from school other children would beat him because they could see a sign on his cap indicating he went to a Jewish school. Because he lived in the Wieniawa quarter and went to the Tarbut school in Niecała, he had to cross non-Jewish neighborhoods and the fact that he identified as a Polish patriot did not help him, he was tagged as a Jew and the Polish neighborhoods were not a safe space for him. In this case, it was the cap that betrayed him and thus the beating seems to have a clearly antisemitic character.

⁷⁸⁹ OH GGNNTC Awigdor Kacelenbogen, 16;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/101876/edition/96535>, 23.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103017/edition/97696>, 23.02.2023.

⁷⁹⁰ OH GGNNTC Mosze Handelsman, 22-23;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102815/edition/97494>, 23.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103987/edition/98632>, 23.02.2023.

Another aspect that his namesake Mosze [1918], who would seldom venture into the Polish town, briefly alludes to was the dress code.⁷⁹¹ He states that he would not be dressed in a proper way to go to the Polish side of the city and that he would wear better garments on Shabbat and holidays but not on an everyday basis, which makes one think that maybe he would be targeted not only for his Jewish looks but probably also for his poverty.⁷⁹² Therefore, for him the separation line would be drawn on not only between Jewishness and non-Jewishness but also between various social classes and those better off frowning upon the economically underprivileged.

Catholics

It seems from the descriptions of the Jewish quarter discussed above in the section dedicated to the spatial comfort zones that Catholics had a different experience of inwardness. Due to the fact that they were the majority, their space was not confined, there was no threat related to trespassing the borders of their urban spaces. Rather, they perceived the Jewish spaces as non-normative and simply not belonging to them; so, as showed in the section on outward movement, they would venture into the Jewish quarter only when having a specific errand there.

Street Violence

As already signaled in the stories of Awigdor and the two Moszes, in some cases, outward mobility created forms of territorial conflict, such as in cases of those Jews who stepped outside of the Jewish spatial comfort zone into spaces regarded as “Polish”. Some Catholic Poles perceived such a crossing over as invasion because they wished to marginalize Jews spatially and restrain their physical presence to specific sections of the town. The research on contemporary interracial assaults finds that spatial segregation increases the likelihood of interracial assaults.⁷⁹³ The analyzed sources seem to confirm this also in the studied cases through the stories of antisemitic street violence occurring when Jews appeared in the spaces that were perceived as “Polish”.

The accounts of such assaults come predominantly from the Jewish interviewees, who experienced them first hand. Awigdor [1920] recalls that before leaving Poland for Palestine, he found it hard to be a Jewish boy in Lublin:

⁷⁹¹ OH GGNNTC Mosze Korn, 11;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102897/edition/97576>, 23.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103090/edition/97769>, 23.02.2023.

⁷⁹² Ibid.

⁷⁹³ Rebecca Ann Bucci, "The Impact of Spatial Segregation and Isolation on Violent Victimization" (M.A. diss, Pennsylvania State University, 2017).

There was a lot of antisemitism, as children, from [other] children. I couldn't go to the football game because I couldn't enter their stadium. Every time I was [close to] the door, they pushed [me] and did not let me enter. And every day, when I went to school, I had to think about how I go to school, which street, because small Poles - 10, 12, 14 years old - waited and beat, and beat. I had to walk a different street each day. This is how people lived in 1926, 1927, 1928, 1929 until 1930.⁷⁹⁴

He describes how Polish boys would not let Jewish boys enter the football stadium and how they attacked them on the streets on a daily basis. Thus, he had to plan a different route every day to avoid the beatings. In the fragment already quoted above, he mentions which streets were safe and which were not: "I remember [Lubartowska] Street. We did not go any more, because I could not go alone on Krakowskie Przedmieście, because they would beat me [they would] accost me. Then I didn't go."⁷⁹⁵ He indicates that within the Jewish quarter, he would walk freely but when he wanted to cross over to the city center, he would not go alone lest he be beaten.

Icehak [1923] too, was attacked by Polish boys. He recalls two such cases, including a stabbing:

I had two nasty incidents, antisemitic incidents. I remember it was a year or two after Marshal Piłsudski's death. And I was giving a talk in class. And I was coming home late and a group of boys met me, one of them sprinkled sand in my eyes and the other stuck a knife in the back. They took me to the emergency room, there and this ... It wasn't deep. So it passed peacefully. I do not know [how this happened]. I was just coming home from school, just on the street. It was almost an evening. They sprinkled sand in my eyes, I was stunned, and someone stabbed me ... I don't know who they were at all, they were strangers. I had the second such incident when I was already in high school. Another group of students was passing by, I didn't even look at them, suddenly I felt someone slap me in the face. I looked, it was a group of students in these corporate hats. This was the second accident. [Then I felt] insult. Back then, I wasn't thinking about Poles in general, I was thinking about these people.⁷⁹⁶

He was attacked twice. The first time, presumably when he was still in elementary school, he was stabbed in the back, luckily not fatally. The second time, he was just

⁷⁹⁴ OH GGNNTC Awigdor Kacenenelbogen, 4;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/101877/edition/96536>, 23.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103018/edition/97697>, 23.02.2023.

⁷⁹⁵ Ibid., 16; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/101876/edition/96535>, 23.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103017/edition/97696>, 23.02.2023.

⁷⁹⁶ OH GGNNTC Icehak Carmi, 5;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/101644/edition/96305>, 21.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103681/edition/98341>, 21.02.2023.

slapped in the face. Both times the attackers were unknown, which strongly suggests the antisemitic grounds of the assault, of which he is certain. He had “Jewish looks” and came from a well off family, and thus his social class would not have been a problem.

Mosze [1925] had less serious yet very unpleasant misadventures, as mentioned above.⁷⁹⁷ Just as with Awigdor and Icchak, he was attacked by Polish peers simply because he was Jewish. All the three men refer to the same type of assault: a Jewish boy walks alone and is attacked by a group of Poles his age because he finds himself in a space where he does not belong, according to the young antisemites.

One might wonder whether only Jewish boys were victimized. Sarah [1922] mentions that the violence targeted both genders equally, although in a slightly different context. The only city park became a battle field, as the antisemitic youth, according to her the Catholic university students, made it a point of honor not to let the Jews use this public space.⁷⁹⁸ Josef [1923] recalls a particular case of revenge on the Catholic attackers:

Well, these students of the Catholic University of Lublin attacked them, but they did not receive [right away] an answer, because it was planned together with the PPS to drag them through Krakowskie Przedmieście and the Krakowska Gate on Grodzka Street, then close them in the Jewish district and teach them a lesson. All I remember is that the ambulance service ran from both sides all day. They were taking these students away.⁷⁹⁹

He refers to the organized defense action, coordinated between the Bund and the PPS, when the socialist youth from both parties (Poles and Jews) prepared a response to the violence inflicted on the Jewish youth in the park. They maneuvered the antisemitic youth into the Jewish district, where they were deprived of any reinforcements, and beat them. From the concluding remark about ambulances, one can assume that the beating was quite violent, as apparently it resulted in the need to hospitalize many of the victims. The accounts of Sarah and Josef are further discussed in Chapter 9 when looking closer at the antisemitic activity of the Catholic University’s students.

⁷⁹⁷ OH GGNNTC Mosze Handelsman, 22-23;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102815/edition/97494>, 23.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103987/edition/98632>, 23.02.2023.

⁷⁹⁸ OH GGNNTC Sarah Tuller, 77;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/101291/edition/95957>, 27.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/101546/edition/96208>, 27.03.2023.

⁷⁹⁹ OH GGNNTC Josef Fraind, 34;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/121245/edition/115498>, 18.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/121340/edition/115593>, 18.02.2023.

In spite of this account of revenge, in all the described cases, the violence seems to originate from the majority group seeking to “discipline” the minority for “invading” the majority’s spaces. Naturally, only a fraction of the majority group resorted to violence, but nonetheless, they were not penalized by the authorities or ostracized by the remainder of the majority group; therefore, the remainder in some way authorizes them to inflict such violence. In fact, it is interesting to see how the Catholic interviewees describe antisemitic violence, being a part of the majority that inflicts it.

Irena [1927] mentions harassment of Jewish religious men by her Catholic friend:

It was also so that two Jews in hats were walking through the yard and there was a wind. Miecio took advantage of it and ran from behind, and there was a cut like this, and he grabbed one flap and the other, one way and the other, tore the cloak and ran away. Maybe he went a little too far...⁸⁰⁰

Irena’s friend, Miecio, harassed a Jewish man by ripping his coat into halves. Irena does not say why he did it, apart from being willing to accost them because they were Jewish. Janina [1924] remembers harassment of Jewish people in public spaces:

Maybe there was tolerance, but there was also a period before the outbreak of the war ... I remember that there were such situations, on Saturday, for example, everything is dressed up, the whole street is busy, that's where the children came and smashed those [Jews] walking. And, for example, students, I know this from the story, because I did not see it. When Jewish girls sat on the benches nicely dressed, then one of them sat down on one side of the bench, the other on the other, the students talk, talk, at some point they take the bench, they raise it up, oh they scream, the Jewish girls lie overturned on the grass. And it was often, it was repeated.⁸⁰¹

She claims that the Jews would be attacked while walking on the main street of the town and in the park but later she also claims that they were chased by the police. Nonetheless, these assaults happened, according to her, regularly but exclusively in public spaces. She says in school such things never happened, which points to various spaces of segregation. Apparently public spaces were intended by some antisemitic members of the majority group to be segregated but schools were not segregated in a similar way, probably because of the hierarchical structure and close supervision. One could not act at school with equal freedom as in the park. Nonetheless, antisemitic violence at school was also present, which will be described in Chapter 8.

⁸⁰⁰ OH GGNNTC Irena Korolko, 17; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/49766/edition/46741>, 23.02.2023.

⁸⁰¹ OH GGNNTC Janina Kozak, 17; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/124575/edition/118729>, 23.02.2023.

Edward [1928] normalizes intergroup conflict and describes local antisemitism as “moderate” because it was not “murderous” like the German one:

We treated them normally, there were no differences. Perhaps there were some conflicts in the city, there was some, one might say, moderate antisemitism. Not as murderous as German, but there was a certain reluctance due to the foreign language, foreign religion, foreign writing. An older friend told me that they were playing such pranks on the Jews, but there were no beatings or attacks. He told me a story that, for example, they caught two crows and let them into the synagogue. There was a big brawl then.⁸⁰²

In fact, he does not refer directly to any form of street violence but only to the pranks on religious Jews.⁸⁰³ Interestingly, he first claims that the Jews were treated normally and in the next sentence says that there was antisemitism, thus (probably) subconsciously implying that moderate antisemitism, such as reluctance towards their culture and throwing crows into the synagogues, remains within the norm of intergroup relations.

In general, one can thus note that the Catholics do not relate to the street violence inflicted by their group and tend to convey a softened image of the conflict in public spaces, in comparison to the Jewish interviewees. This can result from the divergent personal experiences but it is also probable that the victims describe the violence differently than those who belong to the same group as perpetrators.

Conclusions

The oral histories at hand recall the segregation of the urban space not only following the ethno-religious divide but very strongly aligned with the social class. The cultural expressions of Jewishness, defined here as “folkloric presence” are not mentioned as making the space into a comfort zone for the Jewish minority and discomfort zone for the Christian majority. It is rather the poverty and associated sanitary risks that are recalled as the factors of discomfort. The semantic weight of alterity is thus placed on poverty, and it seems that the image of the Jewish Other is heavily underpinned with the tropes of filth, dirt, stench and disease, which brings up a question of the later influence of Nazi propaganda on the memories conveyed. Naturally, the economic challenges of the Jews of Lublin are not to be questioned. However, the narrative of Jewish Otherness and inferiority goes beyond the factual.

⁸⁰² OH BBTNNC Edward Soczewiński, 34;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/128938/edition/122912>, 27.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/125510/edition/119640>, 27.02.2023.

⁸⁰³ This category of interaction will be described in Chapter 9.

The accounts of mobility strongly suggest the prevalence of the class paradigm in addition to the existing antisemitism. Stepping outside of one's economic class territory seems to be equally if not more important than the divide between the Jewish and the Christian space. Importantly, it is only the minority that is punished over crossing these borders, apart from one situation of revenge described in the sources. Moreover, although the stories relate antisemitic violence targeting both genders, it is clear that in the accounts, young Jewish men were victimized to a higher degree than young women.

This analysis of the memories of spatial relations aimed at preparing the ground for studying the next level of the intergroup encounter, personal interactions in specific everyday situations.

Chapter 8

Interpersonal Relations within Secular Framework

This chapter analyzes accounts of interpersonal relations and encounters taking place in a secular framework, from anonymous contacts, to more personal ones, to intimate relationships. Its goal is to present the images of the context within which the interreligious relations were taking place. The main assumption underpinning this section is that religion is just one aspect of the socio-cultural context, and that economy, power relations, affective ties and other aspects of social life affect interreligious relations (and vice-versa), creating a basis for their development (or underdevelopment). Naturally, this study deals only with the representations of these relations and the connections the narrators, consciously or not, make between various aspects of socio-cultural context.

The classic approach to intergroup contact theory⁸⁰⁴ guides the analysis in this chapter, serving as a tool organizing the content of the oral histories. Given the nature of the sources,⁸⁰⁵ they are not an adequate material on which to test any of the versions of the intergroup theory. However, this theory helps to thematize the motifs present in the sources and assess the plausibility of described intergroup dynamics. In Allport's original proposal, four main conditions are to be met for the intergroup contact to be successful in decreasing the intergroup stereotypes and tensions: equal group status

⁸⁰⁴ Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice*.

⁸⁰⁵ Their inadequacy is at least threefold. Firstly, the delay between the time of the narrated events and the time of constructing the narrative suggests a possibility of inaccuracy of the memories. Secondly, the narratives are influenced by multiple metanarratives present in public discourses in Poland, Israel and the West, which developed in the decades between the time of the narrated events and the construction of the narrative. Thirdly, in the context of the interviews, the interviewees speak from the position of a witness and therefore also an advocate of a specific metanarrative. Although their stories are personal, they constitute their contribution to the public debate on Polish-Jewish relations in the context of the Holocaust. The trauma of the Shoah is another factor with great potential for distorting the perceptions of the past relations.

within the situation, common goals, intergroup cooperation and authority support.⁸⁰⁶ Chapter 3 shows clearly that in the larger context of interwar Poland, the status of both groups was far from equal (legally, for example), they had very few common goals (depending on the political orientation) and the authorities did not support Jewish-Catholic cooperation.⁸⁰⁷

It is worth noting that even though the general picture of Catholic-Jewish relations in interwar Poland seems dark, there certainly is more nuance to it. In some situations, the intergroup contact took place with more friction, while in others it proceeded in a peaceful way. This chapter will attempt to find out which particular circumstances function in the narratives as facilitators of intergroup contact. In order to understand that, the chapter zooms in on the above four conditions in specific contexts such as economy (especially trade), the educational system, personal relations between neighbors as well as affective ties such as friendships and romantic relationships. In addition, the analysis will refer to various findings, adding to Allport's understanding of the intergroup contact theory. It will take into consideration interviewees' approach to the ingroup and outgroup metanarratives,⁸⁰⁸ intergroup contact among children⁸⁰⁹ and the role of the emotional factors in the intergroup contact.⁸¹⁰ Finally, it will also seek to take into consideration the possibility of self-selection.⁸¹¹

The material will be presented thematically, following the frequency with which it appears in the analyzed narratives. All the interviewees mention anonymous or semi-anonymous interactions within the framework of trade and business. The majority also address relations with neighbors. Fewer speak about intergroup relations at school. An even lower number mention intergroup friendships, and finally very few recall intergroup romantic engagements. It is reasonable to assume that the frequency of mentions corresponds to the frequency of exposure for each of these types of contact.

⁸⁰⁶ For the discussion on the contact theory, see Chapter 1, pp. 54-6.

⁸⁰⁷ In other words, Poland during this time seems to be an excellent negative example demonstrating the efficacy of the intergroup theory. If one wants to create and maintain intergroup conflict, one could look at the example of interwar Poland and could easily create and maintain intergroup divide, tension and prejudice.

⁸⁰⁸ Andrew Pilecki, "Negotiating the Past, Imagining the Future: Israeli and Palestinian Narratives in Intergroup Dialog."

⁸⁰⁹ Lindsey Cameron and Rhiannon N. Turner, "Intergroup Contact among Children," in *Intergroup Contact Theory: Recent Developments and Future Directions*, ed. Loris Vezzali and Sofia Stathi (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), 151-168.

⁸¹⁰ Linda R. Tropp and Thomas F. Pettigrew, "Differential Relationships Between Intergroup Contact and Affective and Cognitive Dimensions of Prejudice," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 31, no. 8 (2005), <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167205274854>.

⁸¹¹ Bertrand and Duflo, "Field Experiments on Discrimination," 381.

Commonality of superficial interactions and decreased frequency of more engaging intergroup relationships such as those of friendship or romantic love point to relatively strong segregation and separation between the two groups.

Economy

Undoubtedly, the most frequently mentioned relations between Jews and Catholic are meetings in the context of trade, which usually is thought of as a one-way type of relation (Catholics buying from Jews).

Due to historical circumstances, Jews of Lublin had limited access to many professions,⁸¹² and they traditionally specialized in trade and craftsmanship. According to the statistical data, almost two-thirds of the trading plants (one assumes this name encompasses all sorts of shops) belonged to the Jewish owners and altogether between 2,500 and 3,000 of Jews worked as tradesmen and vendors.⁸¹³ Another 5,000 or more worked as artisans.⁸¹⁴ In order to put these numbers in perspective, one ought to remember that the number of the Jews working in professions other than these two did not exceed 600-700.

Catholic Poles also dealt in trade and craftsmanship; however, the numbers of trading plants and craftsmanship workshops were lower than those owned and run by the Jews. Catholic Poles ran approximately 1,200 trading plants and 1,100 workshops.⁸¹⁵ Many interviewees mention that the major part of the society preferred to go to the Jewish shops and workshops rather than the Polish ones because of lower prices, good service and the flexibility of the Jewish tradesmen and artisans.

⁸¹² Mosze Handelsman recalls for example that no Jews worked in the printing houses and his father was an exception. OH GGNNTC Mosze Handelsman, 8; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102794/edition/97473>, 23.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103972/edition/98617>, 23.03.2023.

⁸¹³ Andrzej Jakubowski, *Historia Lublina w liczbach. History of Lublin in Figures*, 105.

⁸¹⁴ In 1939, there were 1726 registered Jewish tailors and 595 shoemakers (see *Historia Lublina w liczbach*, 105). However, one should remember that the real numbers could have been much higher because according to some testimonies many Jewish artisans did not register their businesses due to very low income and inability to pay taxes (see Fiszman-Sznajdman, *Mój Lublin*, 39).

⁸¹⁵ Andrzej Jakubowski, *Historia Lublina w liczbach. History of Lublin in Figures*, 104.

Market

There were a few markets in Lublin, but the most often mentioned is the one on Świętoduska Street, the largest market for groceries and fresh produce, recalled in detail by twelve Jewish and Catholic interviewees.⁸¹⁶ Interestingly, the oral histories portray the venue as a place where both Catholics and Jews would buy and sell goods. Adam [1923] remembers going to the market with his mother. For him it was one of very rare occasions to meet peasants who brought fresh produce and meat (still alive) straight from the villages.⁸¹⁷ Another Adam [1928], a Catholic who came from a little village close to Lublin, describes how he would accompany his father to the market to sell fruits and vegetables.⁸¹⁸ Celina mentions that her family had two stands on the market (one with buttons, needles and threads, and one with fabrics) and remembers that in the upper part butter and poultry was sold, while the butchers' stands were located in the lower part.⁸¹⁹ These descriptions portray the market as a place of cooperation and relative equality. Both Jews and Catholics were sellers and buyers, there were no restrictions on any of the two groups in that regard (which might be counted as support from the authorities or at least indifference, positively understood); therefore, both groups enjoyed equal status within the situation. In addition, they had common goals – to successfully finalize transactions. Thus, one can infer that the conditions for positive, prejudice-decreasing contact were fulfilled. In fact, none of these interviewees mentions any case of intergroup tension or conflict within the situation of shopping at the market. Presumably, the fact that trade is a universal activity *per se*, not engaging people's beliefs or prejudices, plays a role here. One can successfully trade with people from different cultures, religions and languages as long as the basis of common measures and forms of payment is accepted.

However, not every interviewee saw the market as a joint venture. Stefania [1927] depicts it as dominated by Jewish vendors: "Jews sold various tables and shoes there. You could get everything, because trade was in the hands of Jews."⁸²⁰ Janina [1927] also

⁸¹⁶ OH GGNNTC Adam Adams, Adam Augustyniak, Celina Chrzanowska, Stanisława Czekierda, Janina Grudzińska, Helena Kucharska, Aleksander Mazur, Stanisława Podlipna, Danuta Riabinin, Serafin Saj, Mira Shuval, Zdzisław Suwałowski.

⁸¹⁷ OH GGNNTC Adam Adams, 38; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/100943/edition/95390>, 28.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/121708/edition/115955>, 28.02.2023.

⁸¹⁸ Augustyniak, Adam, <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/128155/edition/122152>, 23.02.2023.

⁸¹⁹ OH GGNNTC Celina Chrzanowska, 10-11; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/125724/edition/119852>, 21.02.2023.

⁸²⁰ OH GGNNTC Stefania Czekierda, 6; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/126424/edition/120501>, 20.01.2023.

remembers the market as a Jewish one.⁸²¹ Neither Janina nor Stefania mention Polish sellers, and they focus on Jewish vendors of food and other goods. In this, they echo the populist perspective advertised in the rightwing press of the time, claiming that trade was in Jewish hands. As numbers show, in the case of Lublin, almost 40% of the trade was in Polish hands⁸²² – which does show Jewish dominance, but at the same time, the claim that the trade was exclusively in the Jewish hands cannot be supported. Therefore, in this case, their statements are an expression of a certain perception or belief about the Jewish dominance in trade, coloring their story. At the same time, it is also possible that they were in contact with petty vendors who were predominantly Jewish, hence their impression that the trade was dominated by them.

Interestingly, other Catholic interviewees explicitly call the market a Catholic or a Polish market, in contrast to the Jewish market located a few blocks north-east. Regina explicitly says that all the Christian trade was at his Catholic-Polish market:

The Catholic market, the Polish market, it was here like Hanki Sawickiej St. and Lubartowska St, here like the Krakow Gate, on the left there is this square, right?... Peasants from the countryside came here, with dairy products, poultry, with rural goods, flour, groats and so on.... Carts drove there, peasants placed their horses and carts there, and the goods were brought to this square, and all Christian trade was here. But the Jews there with barrels, with herring packed there to sell these herring, the Poles somehow let them go there, but it was an eminently Christian market for Poles, they brought all dairy products from the villages, and so on. The whole market was like the town hall here.⁸²³

Regina [1926] claims that Jews were allowed to sell at this market but it was “an eminently Christian market for Poles,” which contrast the accounts of Janina and Stefania, and suggests that they echo a metanarrative of “Jewish trade” rather than refer to an actual state of affairs. Apparently, the market was open for Jewish sellers but they were far from dominating it. Instead, the sellers were primarily Christian peasants bringing fresh produce, with some Jewish sellers joining them with their own merchandise. From the way Regina speaks about it (“the Poles somehow let them go there”) one can conclude that such a peaceful cooperation was not a given in the period of economic boycott of the Jews and can be counted as an exception.

⁸²¹ OH GGNNTC Janina Grudzińska, 23;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/50251/edition/47179>, 23.02.2023.

⁸²² The total number of trading plants in Lublin was 3083 and of Polish (Christian) plants was 1186, which makes about 38% of the total. Andrzej Jakubowski, *Historia Lublina w liczbach. History of Lublin in Figures*, 105.

⁸²³ OHGGNNTC Regina Kucharska, 7;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/119336/edition/113651>, 2.02.2023.

Jewish Shops

Another very popular experience mentioned in the Catholic accounts was buying in Jewish shops, often very small. According to Ewa Zielińska, approximately 3,500 shops operated in Lublin the interwar period and most of them were run by “poorly assimilated Jews”.⁸²⁴ Many interviewees refer to these shops.⁸²⁵ Some mention *sodówki* – kiosks with sweets and fruits and soft drinks, owing their name to *woda sodowa* (soda).⁸²⁶ Others elaborate on the reasons Jewish shops were so popular: the prices were low and one could bargain or even postpone the payment.

Daniela [1925], for example, recalls that in Jewish shops the merchandise was cheaper and the sellers were more customer friendly:

It was always cheaper in the shops of Jews. The cost of sugar was one zloty, and from a Jew ninety groszy. And they gave a *burg* [credit]. It was possible to live with Jews better and they were more sympathetic; a Pole never gave anything (without payment).⁸²⁷

She explicitly mentions that Polish shopkeepers were different and they would never give any credit to a client. If one had no money, one would not buy anything. Serafin [1913], too, remembers that he had an open credit in Jewish shops.⁸²⁸ Zofia [1927] states that in a shop next to her house “this Jew, he knew everyone and everyone would go there, with money, without money, I mean he would give the money back, but

⁸²⁴ Zielińska, *Fotografie dawnego Lublina z akt Inspekcji Budowlanej*, 5, 20-21.

⁸²⁵ Aleksander Baranowski. Oral History 1, 14.

⁸²⁶ OH GGNNTC Danuta Sontag, 56, 58-59; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/122126/edition/116347>, 27.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/122130/edition/116351>, 27.02.2023; OH GGNNTC Regina Kucharska, passim; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/119335/edition/113650>, 23.02.2023; OH GGNNTC Maria Modzelewska, 23, 38; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/123624/edition/117810>, 24.02.2023; OH GGNNTC Bogdan Stanisław Pazur, passim; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/123684/edition/117865>, 24.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/154576/edition/148293>, 24.02.2023; OH GGNNTC Stanisława Podlipna, passim; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/118433/edition/112759>, 24.02.2023.

⁸²⁷ Daniela Ponikowska, <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/49742/edition/46719>, 24.02.2023.

⁸²⁸ OH GGNNTC Serafin Saj, 12; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/123729/edition/117910>, 24.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/155833/edition/149543>, 24.02.2023.

everyone would go there.”⁸²⁹ According to her account, the shopkeeper would sell merchandise agreeing to postpone payment if needed, because of the close relationship to the customers – he knew them well.⁸³⁰ Thus, under such circumstances, the power relations between the majority and the minority were reversed and followed instead the social class divisions, as the poor majority members depended on the richer minority members.

Cipora [1918], whose mother had a fabric store, recalls such situations from their shop: “Let’s say they wanted to buy a linen ... a linen cloth. They bought it, they had no money, they made a down payment and they gave them back in instalments. It is called instalment.”⁸³¹ When the clients did not have enough money to pay for the product they wanted, her mother would offer them an option to pay in instalments. The goal was to sell it. Janina [1927] remembers that when her father needed fabric for a new suit, he would go to a Jewish shop and negotiate the form of payment without problems:

When it comes to payment, he [the clerk] wrote down but my father did not pay him right away, only in instalments. He would come once a week, he would sit, talk for a long time and he would receive two zloty of an instalment. Later, there was some little interest, but it was small. It must be admitted that they [the Jews] helped us Poles, the poorer, because the richer, they immediately paid in cash.⁸³²

This account sheds a lot of light onto relations between Catholics and Jews. Janina speaks about Jews helping the poor Catholics to purchase what they needed. By allowing instalments, Jewish sellers enabled many clients to acquire goods they otherwise would not have been able to afford. The majority of the Lublin’s population was poor; therefore, such a strategy fueled trade but also gained Jewish sellers a great deal of popularity among Polish clients. Janina’s story points to a certain horizontal solidarity between Jews and Poles, which (interestingly!) was lacking within the Polish community. A Pole preferred not to sell rather than to negotiate the price or form of payment. A Jew was flexible (for variety of reasons) and that worked well and seems to have positively influenced the intergroup contact. In addition, some mention the

⁸²⁹ OH GGNNTC Zofia Hetman, 7;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/50353/edition/47271>, 24.02.2023.

⁸³⁰ No interviewee mentions such behaviour in reference to Polish shopkeepers.

⁸³¹ OH GGNNTC Cipora Borensztejn, 54;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103139/edition/97816>, 21.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103950/edition/98595>, 21.02.2023.

⁸³² OH GGNNTC Irena Korolko, 16;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/49766/edition/46741>, 23.02.2023.

politeness of Jewish clerks. Stefania [1927], for example, says that they “gained their clients with courtesy”⁸³³ and “were very kind”.⁸³⁴

Numerous Catholic interviewees refer also to bargaining as one of the reasons they would prefer Jewish shops from the Polish ones. Maria [1926] recalls:

Of course, my mother took me shopping and very often, she bought in Jewish stores on Lubartowska Street. Because a Jew had his way that when he said the price, you said half the price, and then he added [to it]. These were the bargains, but he would never let you go. If you left the store and he gave you half the price, then he would get it his way, he would make you come back from the street and said: "Let me be at loss now, take it". And you paid half the price. And in Krakowskie Przedmieście, you would have to pay twice as much.⁸³⁵

Her description of bargaining reminds of the Oriental *souk*. One could discuss the prices and if one was unhappy with them and left, the owner of the shop would make him come back by giving a significant discount. Maria adds that Jews “preferred to sell more but cheaper,”⁸³⁶ while Poles preferred to keep fixed prices even at the cost of losing customers. In fact, according to her account many Polish shops went bankrupt because of this Jewish skill in trade.

Danuta [1921] adds that “it was known that in the Jewish shops one had to bargain.”⁸³⁷ However, it seems for her it was not a first-hand experience but rather other’s people narratives that she absorbed:

When you came and heard that the shoes cost so much - I am telling you from my memories rather - you would leave the store. The owner came out and asked, "But why are you leaving so quickly?" Please come back, we can come to an agreement ... how much are these shoes worth to you? – This and that. - No, it is impossible, I would not earn anything on it ... - Well, you know, I can't afford more. - Well, add a little extra

⁸³³ OH GGNNTC Stefania Czekerda, 7; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/126424/edition/120501>, 20.02.2023.

⁸³⁴ OH GGNNTC Stefania Czekerda, 20; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/126326/edition/120409>, 20.02.2023.

⁸³⁵ OH GGNNTC Maria Sowa, 25; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/125786/edition/119903>, 27.02.2023.

⁸³⁶ Ibid.

⁸³⁷ Danuta Riabinin, <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/124557/edition/118711>, 24.02.2023; OH GGNNTC Kazimierz Jarzembowski, 26; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/118739/edition/113063>, 23.02.2023.

money and I'll let it down a bit ... And, from what I heard, very often you got a lot of discount.⁸³⁸

Others also describe bargaining between Polish Catholic clients and Jewish sellers in detail,⁸³⁹ highlighting the flexibility of Jewish sellers and general tendency to buy from Jewish shops, even during the period of the economic boycott. The economic challenges of the era undoubtedly forced the working class to seek the cheapest products and prevailed over antisemitic prejudice in this context.

Economic Boycott

The first calls for economic boycott of Jewish businesses appeared already in the late 19th century in Galicia, and starting from 1907 permanently entered the National Democracy's propaganda. However, the significant spike in the boycott took place in the mid-1930s when the actions became more violent, at times escalating into pogroms, like in Przytyk.⁸⁴⁰ In 1936, Felicjan Sławoj Składkowski, the Minister of the Interior, officially approved the boycott, at the same time condemning anti-Jewish violence. On the local level, the boycott was encouraged and implemented by nationalist organizations such as Młodzież Wszechpolska and Ruch Obozu Wielkiej Polski and the Green Ribbon League (Liga Zielonej Wstążki) which was founded specially to limit Jewish trade. These organizations were very active in Lublin and successfully shaped the socio-political life of the city. Marek Czyrka claims that they controlled a number of organizations gathering the students of the Catholic University of Lublin.⁸⁴¹ Thus, the students of the Catholic University often organized and implemented the boycotts, which is often mentioned in the interviews.

⁸³⁸ Danuta Riabinin, <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/124557/edition/118711>, 24.02.2023.

⁸³⁹ E.g., OH GGNNTC Kazimierz Jarzembowski, 26; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/118739/edition/113063>, 23.02.2023; OH GGNNTC Janina Kozak, passim; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/124571/edition/118725>, 23.02.2023; OH GGNNTC Bogdan Stanisław Pazur, 41; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/123692/edition/117873>, 24.02.2024; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/154584/edition/148301>, 24.02.2023.

⁸⁴⁰ Kamil Kijek, "Zanim stał się Przytyk. Ruch narodowy a geneza zajęć antyżydowskich w wojewódzkie kieleckim w latach 1931–1935," *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały*, no. 14 (2018); Joshua Rothenberg, "The Przytyk Pogrom," *Soviet Jewish Affairs* 16, no. 2 (1986), <https://doi.org/10.1080/13501678608577536>.

⁸⁴¹ Czyrka, "Związek Akademicki Młodzież Wszechpolska i Ruch Młodych Obozu Wielkiej Polski w Lublinie w okresie II Rzeczypospolitej," 120.

Josef [1923] states that there was a period when there was no physical persecution of the Jews but in front of every Jewish shop there was a paramilitary group who would not let the Poles buy there. But “it did not help, they continued to buy from the Jews. And this is how it ended.”⁸⁴² Although he does not specify the time, he mentions other antisemitic endeavors in the period such as *numerus clausus*,⁸⁴³ which allows the listener to locate the events in the 1930s.⁸⁴⁴ Other interviewees are more specific regarding the time. Danuta [1921] remembers that in Lublin the first signs of the boycott appeared approximately two years before the war:

There were students [of the Catholic University] who boycotted Jewish shops. Kestenbergs stationery shop was like that, we liked it very much, because there was always tissue paper [Pl. *bibula*] in the notebook there - then you used to write with pens, there were no ballpoint pens. They were standing like this [in front of this shop]: - And why does my friend want to buy here? I say: - Because here they give tissue paper for notebooks! - Well, yes, but they are Jews, and we must [support] our merchants. And these "our" merchants were very few. I remember that the Czapskis were like that - a cloth store, but most of the stores were Jewish, especially with ready-made clothes and shoes.⁸⁴⁵

She also recalls that two-to-three years before the war there was a movement to have more Polish stores and some Polish merchants came from Poznan to establish their own shops in Lublin.⁸⁴⁶ Ludwik [1930] mentions that there were inscriptions “Don’t buy from a Jew” in the city but otherwise he cannot remember any discrimination against the Jewish merchants.⁸⁴⁷ Josef [1919] recalls pamphlets calling for the boycott in Polish shops.⁸⁴⁸

⁸⁴² OH GGNNTC Jodef Fraind, 34;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/121245/edition/115498>, 18.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/121340/edition/115593>, 18.02.2023.

⁸⁴³ Following violent demonstrations by Polish radicals, in 1937-8 most Polish universities introduced anti-Jewish segregation policies. By 1939, most institutes of higher learning in Poland implemented a *numerus clausus* system.

⁸⁴⁴ OH GGNNTC Josef Fraind.

⁸⁴⁵ OH GGNNTC Danuta Riabinin, 9;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/124559/edition/118713>, 24.02.2023.

⁸⁴⁶ Ibid.; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/123852/edition/118030>, 24.02.2023.

⁸⁴⁷ OH GGNNTC Ludwik Kotliński, 7;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/119143/edition/113459>, 23.02.2023.

⁸⁴⁸ OH GGNNTC Josef Wakszul, 27.

Others, too, recall that the boycott took place in the last years before the war. Sara [1923], for example, refers to the same shop Danuta talks about, and states that the picket there took place in 1939:

In the spring of 1939, students of the [Catholic] University of Lublin began picketing the shop and stuck the words "Don't buy from a Jew" to the glass window. Whenever I was passing by, I would enter this store because their son was my friend. They [the picketers] told my friends what is written here. So I said, "It doesn't concern me." They didn't understand. They introduced themselves to me, shook my hand. They introduced themselves to me, so I introduced myself. And I said out loud, "My name is Sara Zoberman." They turned pale and felt very, very unpleasant.⁸⁴⁹

Because Sara looked very "Polish" – she was a modern young woman not standing out in the crowd of Poles – the picketers assumed she was a Polish Catholic and warned her not to buy in the Jewish stationery shop. She, however, answered that the boycott did not include her. The picketers did not understand and proceeded to having a polite conversation and introduce themselves. When she said her name, it became clear to them that she was Jewish and they felt embarrassed.

This account shows an interesting dynamic. According to Sara, the picketers had a certain stereotype of Jews into which she did not fit. She was an elegant girl, she did not have "Jewish" facial features, so no one assumed she was Jewish. To them, the stereotypical Jew would probably have dark hair, a big nose and not look very modern or elegant. Such stereotyping relates to the conclusions of Chapter 7, namely the racialization of poverty and a certain immunity of higher social classes.

The story accentuates the cowardice of the picketers. When faced with a Jewess, they did not attack her or explain their reasons. Rather, their reaction is to "turn pale" – they felt embarrassed. Finally, Sara says that she did not feel antisemitism before, maybe because of her "Polish" looks: "This antisemitism popped up just before the war. I don't know why. I didn't feel that in the preceding years so much like during this year or two before the war."⁸⁵⁰

Mosze [1925] recalls that the rise in antisemitism, which he links to the boycotts, took place after the death of the Marshal Piłsudski.⁸⁵¹ In fact, he relates a similar

⁸⁴⁹ OH GGNNTC Sara Grinfeld, 26;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102577/edition/97258>, 10.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103368/edition/98038>, 10.02.2023.

⁸⁵⁰ Ibid., 36; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102574/edition/97255>, 10.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103364/edition/98035>, 10.02.2023.

⁸⁵¹ OH GGNNTC Mosze Handelsman, 22;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102815/edition/97494>, 23.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103987/edition/98632>, 23.02.2023.

situation (to Sara's) when his father, also of very Polish appearance, was addressed by the antisemitic picketers: "In 1939, antisemites gave such .. as it is called... "Don't buy from a Jew", "Down with the Jews." They thought he was Polish. He came home with these flyers, with antisemitic [slogans]. They thought he was Polish, he didn't look like a Jew."⁸⁵² His father was given the antisemitic flyers, probably upon an attempt to enter a Jewish shop. Mosze, however, does not share any details about the encounter between the picketers and his father.

Contrary to this, Eliezer [1919] recalls how a few months before the war he had a confrontation of one the employees of his family's mill:

I was walking around Krakowskie Przedmieście, I saw one of our workers, he stood and picketed, he did not let the Poles enter the Jewish shop. On Wednesday I came to him and said: "You can go now, you work for Jews. You live by work. We are satisfied, but also conscience ... How can you stand? I am not asking if you like me or not. But how is it done, how can it be, I ask? " And I warned him that [if I] saw him again, I would unfortunately not ... "You don't have a place here with us." There was a shop there, the Kestenberg brothers, stationery, machines ... I don't remember everything anymore. And he was standing there [picketing]. On Wednesday I said, "How much do we owe you?" I paid him.⁸⁵³

The chaotic flow of this fragment could suggest that Eliezer's emotions connected to the subject resurface during the recounting. He remembers how he saw a Catholic employee of his family's business picketing in front of a Jewish shop. He was shocked that this man worked for them and yet participated in the boycott. He asked him how could he do it and fired him. From Eliezer's perspective, it was a painful experience of betrayal and he still feels the emotions while he recalls the events.

While Jews talk about the boycott with pain or irony, the Catholic narratives differ. Some describe the boycott as rather mild or irrelevant while some spare more detail and assess it as more severe. Regina [1926] refers to boycotting, breaking windows and writing on walls "when Hitler came to power":

Naturally, it was also visible in Lublin, I say, student youth drove some cars and threw leaflets to boycott, not to buy, so on, but I think it was when Hitler came to power, because until there was no such thing as I say enlargement - just to separate, to hate, it

⁸⁵² OH GGNNTC Mosze Handelsman, 9-10;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102797/edition/97476>, 23.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103974/edition/98619>, 23.02.2023.

⁸⁵³ OH GGNNTC Eliezer Orenstein, 4;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103520/edition/98187>, 24.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/104837/edition/99472>, 24.02.2023.

was only created under Hitler, I think, because before the war I will not say that there is such a hatred, that it would be so bad.⁸⁵⁴

In her opinion, the relations were generally good and the economic boycott started to be more visible and violent in the time when Hitler came to power – which in her perception was just before the war. She associated that period with a deterioration of Jewish-Catholic relations, and increased separation from and hatred towards Jews. Józef [1927] mentions that sometimes the attitudes towards economic boycott of the Jewish businesses varied within the same family:

Trade in the city was dominated by Jews, for example at Lubartowska (Street) there were probably 70% Jewish stores, while at Bychawska there were a little less... The Jews also had slaughterhouses and they had cheaper prices there than Polish traders, but we were warned not to buy anything in these Jewish butcheries. It was said that Jews bought from unknown sources and as cheaply as possible. Apparently, there was a big risk. I do not know if it's true. Sometimes my mother wanted to buy something, because it was always cheaper with them, but my father would not let her.⁸⁵⁵

His mother was willing to buy from Jewish shops due to low prices but his father would not allow her. Józef specifies the rumors spread about the Jewish sellers – they bought from unknown sources, therefore, the quality was no good and it was risky to buy such products.

Maria [1926] highlights the significance of the boycott; she calls it a powerful campaign and describes the specific means of the Polish militias (paramilitary formations fashioned in the likeness of the fascist ones in Italy and Germany):

In 1938 it was such a powerful campaign against the Jews. Various advertisements like that: "Beat the Jew", breaking windows in Jewish shops. It was such militias who already walked around and photographed who entered the Jewish shop, because there was this boycott that you cannot buy from a Jew, I already remember it as a child. Well, I was already quite a big girl, so I remember such things that the Jews were already boycotted in such a way. There have already been such campaigns against them.⁸⁵⁶

⁸⁵⁴ OH GGNNTC Regina Kucharska, 8;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/119370/edition/113684>, 23.02.2023.

⁸⁵⁵ OH GGNNTC Józef Sadurski, 52;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/50233/edition/47163>, 24.02.2023.

⁸⁵⁶ OH GGNNTC Maria Sowa, 20-21;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/125805/edition/119912>, 27.02.2023.

She explicitly names hostile behaviors toward both Jewish shopkeepers and their clients. The former were threatened by instigating antisemitic violence and breaking windows of their shops. The latter were photographed when entering Jewish shops. These photos were used to publicly shame Polish Catholic clients, as recalled by another Maria [1921]: “When these militias started [to work], they photographed [my mother] and posted in the pre-war *Kurier Lubelski* that Mrs. Warrant Officer [Pl. *chorążyna*] supported the Jews by buying [from them].”⁸⁵⁷ A local newspaper published her mother’s photo to shame her for buying in a Jewish shop. As the wife of a military officer she was not supposed to show support for Jewish trade, therefore the militia used this strategy to publicly humiliate and punish her.

Other Catholics show somewhat ambivalent attitude towards the boycott. Wanda [1911] says that:

The slogans "Don't buy from a Jew" were in every city. It was everywhere before the war. One paid attention to it, the other ignored it. I absolutely never cared about antisemitism. Sure, I thought that if I had to buy something, it was better to get a Pole to earn money than to earn a Jew, but if I would weasel [Pl. *kombinować*] anything towards this Jew, I absolutely would not.⁸⁵⁸

Her account is full of polarized tensions. She accentuates the omnipresence and normalcy of the boycott: the slogans were everywhere. They did not surprise her. However, she finds it important to underscore that she was never connected to antisemitism. Another tension lies in the fact that she presents herself as a non-antisemite and yet she states openly her preference towards Polish trade. She would prefer the Poles to make money, not the Jews, but for her the boundary was human honesty. She would not “weasel” against the Jews but she would rather not support them either.

Another interesting account comes from Ludwik [1930], who recalls one of the main streets of Lublin as full of Jewish shops and describes that “one could not feel any anti-Jewish atmosphere there, although the inscriptions in a certain period just before the war said: "Don't buy from a Jew". But there was no such discrimination.”⁸⁵⁹

The contradictions in this short passage are very clear. There were anti-Jewish slogans but atmosphere was not anti-Jewish. The slogans said not to buy from Jews but there

⁸⁵⁷ OH GGNNTC Maria Modzelewska, 78; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/123638/edition/117824>, 24.02.2023.

⁸⁵⁸ Wanda Grzebalska., <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/119303/edition/113618>, 28.02.2023.

⁸⁵⁹ OH GGNNTC Ludwik Kotliński, 7; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/119143/edition/113459>, 23.02.2023.

was no discrimination. To understand the accounts of Wanda and Ludwik better one has to resort to literary tools and the method proposed by Kuncewicz et al.,⁸⁶⁰ who claim that the contradictions point to important tensions within a narrator who is, consciously or not, trying to hide something important. This “something important” points to additional layers of meaning not obvious in the narrative from the beginning.

It seems that both Wanda and Ludwik have to negotiate in their narratives two opposing perspectives. On the one hand, as inter-contextual narrators they undoubtedly describe an antisemitic boycott. However, they feel a need to add extra-contextual comments, which indicate to the listener what they are supposed to understand from the narrative. Thus, the listener is being taught that even though there was antisemitic violence, they are not allowed to call it so (“there was no discrimination”), they need to take into account the variety of Polish attitudes (“one paid attention to it, the other ignored it”) and that the narrators are not antisemites (“I absolutely never cared about antisemitism”).

The effort to blur the seriousness of the described situation stems most probably from the focus on their own perspective and the sense of loyalty towards the ingroup. The interviewees are probably aware that through the act of sharing their story and allowing it to be recorded and made public, they participate in the public debate on Polish antisemitism.⁸⁶¹ Thus, some Poles answer to defend themselves from the accusations of antisemitism, and ultimately of being complicit in the Holocaust. Their strategy is to avoid admitting antisemitism. Others admit it but still soften the representation. Danuta [1921] claims that the antisemitic violence:

did not reach me ... yes, it did reach me a bit when it comes to antisemitism, because the brothers were in Warsaw at the university, and when these riots started, they would come home. There were breaks. Well, they were very outraged by what was happening. But at the same time, it was such a campaign that the only point is that trade should also be in the hands of Poles.⁸⁶²

Her brothers studied in Warsaw, which means they experienced first-hand antisemitic riots at the University of Warsaw in the 1930s,⁸⁶³ and apparently they talked about

⁸⁶⁰ Kuncewicz et al., *Po cizy*.

⁸⁶¹ On the public debate about Polish antisemitism, see Robert D. Cherry and Annamaria Orla-Bukowska, eds., *Polacy i Żydzi. Kwestia otwarta* (Warszawa: Więź, 2008).

⁸⁶² OH GGNNTC Danuta Riabinin, 16; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/123856/edition/118034>, 24.02.2023.

⁸⁶³ Izabela Mrzygłód, "Uniwersytety w cieniu kryzysu. Radykalizacja polityczna studentów Uniwersytetów Warszawskiego i Wiedeńskiego w okresie międzywojennym" (PhD diss., Uniwersytet Warszawski, 2021).

them with her. After admitting that, Danuta changes her position from intra-contextual narrating to extra-contextual, presenting the riots as non-continuous, commenting that her brothers were outraged about the situation and pointing to the fact that the sole motive of the antisemitic campaign was to transfer trade into Polish hands.

Thus, she firstly makes a point of her family not being a part of the antisemitic campaign, that they were “clean” of hatred. Then, she diminishes the importance of the riots, saying that they were not continuous, they were temporary. Finally, she explains that the goal was not antisemitic, it was simply to support Polish trade. In such a short fragment, she manages to distance herself from antisemitism (through her family), show the riots as non-threatening and whitewash the intentions of the persecutors who, according to her narrative, were not antisemitic per se, they simply cared about Polish interests. In fact, the riots lingered for a long time, constituted a serious threat to Jewish students and destabilized academic life in the 1930s. Danuta might lack historical knowledge but as a narrator, she takes on the responsibility to protect the ingroup she represents. Therefore, her account protects a positive image of Polish Catholics.

Barbara [1918] is the only Catholic interviewee openly claiming that Poles oppressed Jews. Importantly, she mentions the interwar period in the context of the Holocaust:

But I remember before the war, we also oppressed these Jews a bit, because yes - there, at twenty-eighth (street number) where I lived, there were such Polish shops and such, such a boy there advertised: "Don't buy from Jews", here he advertised these new shops, he boycotted these Jews, and it was so in several places, so that they were not, we were not without guilt, because somehow we were not very kind towards the Jews. **Only now it is said that we were very much...** Yes, they often hid these Jews, but also for some kind of payment it was often, not so selfless. There have been cases, yes, selflessly, but to a large extent, it was somehow ascribed to profit, yes.⁸⁶⁴

She refers to the economic boycott and says that Poles were “not very kind” towards the Jews, and then jumps to the time of telling the story: “only now it is being said that we were very much...” Very much what? She avoids finishing the sentence, which might point to the fact that she is not ready to do so. She might be afraid to say too much. Her argument is in fact very complex. After the suspension, she changes the direction of her thoughts and brings to the attention of the listener (as an extra-contextual narrator) what the Poles did right. Thus, she proceeds to reporting the opinions that Poles hid Jews selflessly, but changes the direction again by correcting this (again with

⁸⁶⁴ OH GGNNTC Barbara Rybicka, 18; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/123665/edition/117851>, 24.02.2023. Emphasis mine.

balance between the intra-contextual and extra-contextual narrator): most Poles hid Jews for profit.

Barbara reveals the real question to which Catholics answer in their accounts. Did we as a group fail to help Jews during the Holocaust? She says that “now it is said”, meaning that there is an intersubjective discourse, a metanarrative to which all the members of the ingroup have access. In fact, there are at least two significant metanarratives at work here, one claiming that Poles were good (“We hid Jews. We were not antisemites. Morally we have no blemish”) and another one, accusing Poles of antisemitism and even complicity in the Holocaust. The narrators show a deep need to position oneself regarding these metanarratives and many of them seem to need to confirm that we (the ingroup) are not guilty.

Business Partners

In spite of the economic boycott, as many as eight interviewees mention business partnerships between Catholics and Jews. Danuta [1928] remembers trade with the Jewish owner of a brickyard.⁸⁶⁵ Celina [1931] says her father “had good relations with Jews because he did business with them.”⁸⁶⁶ Regina [1926] tells a story of her father working in a Jewish migration office and his Jewish boss convincing him to emigrate before the war.⁸⁶⁷ Bogdan’s [1934] father worked for a Jewish boss in a company specializing in roof making.⁸⁶⁸ Stanisława’s [1930] father had an ongoing cooperation with a Jewish milkman.⁸⁶⁹ All the above accounts present the cooperation in a positive light as peaceful and respectful. The only negative account comes from Józef [1927], who claims that his family would buy cattle from Jews and they would always lie about the cows’ quality.⁸⁷⁰

⁸⁶⁵ OH GGNNTC Danuta Sontag, *passim*;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/122099/edition/116320>, 27.02.2023.

⁸⁶⁶ OH GGNNTC Celina Chrzanowska, 17;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/125729/edition/119857>, 21.02.2023.

⁸⁶⁷ OH GGNNTC Regina Kucharska, 4;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/119326/edition/113641>, 23.02.2023.

⁸⁶⁸ OH GGNNTC Bogdan Stanisław Pazur, *passim*;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/123679/edition/117860>, 24.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/154571/edition/148288>, 24.02.2023.

⁸⁶⁹ OH GGNNTC Stanisława Podlipna, 30-31;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/118379/edition/112705>, 24.02.2023.

⁸⁷⁰ OH GGNNTC Józef Sadurski, 48;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/50233/edition/47163>, 24.02.2023.

Jewish interviewees also present the cooperation in a positive light. Bronisława [1932] calls the relations between her father and his co-operators “wonderful.”⁸⁷¹ Mosze [1925], too, presents a rather positive image; however, he accentuates that his father’s colleagues were convinced he was a Polish Catholic, which raises a question as to whether the situation would have changed had they known about his Jewish background.⁸⁷²

Polish Servants in Jewish Houses

Another specific type of professional relationship were Catholic domestic servants in Jewish homesteads. In her doctoral thesis dedicated to this topic, Blanka Górecka claims that overall, Jewish households had a higher rate of employing servants than Christian households and that the socio-economic structure of Jewish and Christian community favored “inter-ethnic recruitment of staff in Jewish houses.”⁸⁷³ Jewish domestic servants worked in Jewish houses only and the numbers of the former were in disproportion to the demands of the latter. In addition, gentile servants could work on Shabbat, which was desirable.⁸⁷⁴

⁸⁷¹ OH GGNNTC Bronisława Friedman, 17;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103011/edition/97690>, 20.02.2023
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/104038/edition/98683>, 20.02.2023.

⁸⁷² OH GGNNTC Mosze Handelsman, *passim*;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102797/edition/97476>, 23.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103974/edition/98619>, 23.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102794/edition/97473>, 23.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103972/edition/98617>, 23.03.2023.

⁸⁷³ Górecka, “Christian Domestic Servants,” 40-43.

⁸⁷⁴ For centuries, religious rules deemed extra-communal domestic servants controversial. In Western Europe as early as the 12th century the Church formulated theological arguments against Christian domestic servants at Jewish or Muslim houses, especially wet nurses. In Poland, the ecclesiastical ban on the Christian wet nurses in Jewish homes was introduced in 1267, and then in the 16th century it was broadened to include all forms of serving Jews. The ban was motivated by fear of proselytism, intermarriage and in general intergroup sexual relations. It is worth mentioning that at the very beginning of the Jewish presence in Poland, “the domestic service was linked with concubinage, potential conversion or conversion of the offspring and intermarriage” and until the 16th century the tradition of converting slaves and servants by their Jewish masters was still vivid. Górecka notes that the Christian restrictions were not observed and that the topic vanished from parliamentary discussions by the 18th century only to reemerge under partitions in the 19th century. In the Russian partition, it was forbidden for Christians to work at Jewish houses as servants (under punishment by the police) and the bishops were ordered to refuse the transgressors the sacraments. Again, the most contentious category were the wet nurses. The Jewish opinion, on the other hand, had mixed views, depending if they were conservative or assimilatory. The latter accepted Christian domestic servants as facilitators of the exposure to the majority culture. The former saw them as a threat to religious observance and identity. Górecka pays attention to the feminization of the profession. *Ibid.*, 30-45.

Górecka sees the interaction between the Christian domestic workers and their Jewish employers as a rare occasion to achieve a “close and intimate contact with the other, their language, religion and culture.”⁸⁷⁵ In fact, she refers to cases of deep bonds forming between the live-in servant and the employers, as well as bridging between the Catholic and Jewish world and finally depending on each other across the boundary of intergroup separation.

In this study, five Jews (approximately 20% of the group) refer to the experience of having Catholic domestic servants and none of the Catholic interviewees mentions the experience of being one.⁸⁷⁶ The five Jewish interviewees who speak about their Catholic servants do not include much detail but rather mention them in passing. Bronisława remembers the names of two Catholic women who worked at her family home. One was in the kitchen, which caused problems for Bronisława’s grandparents when they were visiting because they were pious and could only eat kosher (and therefore could not eat what the Catholic maidservant prepared).⁸⁷⁷ She recalls that the cook was “a very nice person; when we went on a trip or vacation, she would always go with us.”⁸⁷⁸ Another one was “a miss” (*panienka*) who played the role of a nanny: “I had a lady who always walked with me and my sister, who was three years younger than me - Halina. And we always went to the Saski Garden or to the swings in Litewski Square.”⁸⁷⁹ Górecka mentions that the title “miss” was reserved usually for a governess.⁸⁸⁰ The

⁸⁷⁵ Ibid., 120.

⁸⁷⁶ According to the National Census 9.4% of Jewish households in the Lublin region employed servants; thus, one should bear in mind the misrepresentation in the sources. These interviewees came from middle class families with good income and stable economic situation, which is not representative of the entire Jewish population of Lublin. On the contrary, the remaining 90% of the inhabitants were poor and could not afford help. Most probably, only a few percent of Jewish homes could afford servants and the number of those who hired non-Jewish help is impossible to estimate. It is also worth remembering that the figures for Lublin or Lublin district do not reflect the figures in other regions of Poland. In Central districts the percentage was higher, e.g., in Łódź it was 15.7%, and in the former Galicia even higher – in Kraków 26.4% of Jewish households employed servants. Poznań had the highest rate of servant employment standing at 39.5%. In comparison, Christian households employed servants less often with the servants’ employment rate standing at 8-10% in the central districts, 13-17% in Galicia and only 9.5% in Poznań.

⁸⁷⁷ OH GGNNTC Bronisława Friedman, 6; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102998/edition/97677>, 20.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/104021/edition/98666>, 20.02.2023.

⁸⁷⁸ Ibid., passim; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102983/edition/97662>, 19.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/105688/edition/100320>, 19.02.2023.

⁸⁷⁹ Ibid., 6. <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102984/edition/97663>, 16.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/105689/edition/100321>, 16.02.2023.

⁸⁸⁰ Górecka, “Christian Domestic Servants,” 162.

narrative shows some hints of affection between Bronisława and her domestic servants but she does not elaborate on that.

Hadasa [1924] too recalls multiple maidservants working at her family house simultaneously (in Bronisława's account it is not clear). One was Jewish to cook kosher food and keep the Jewish religious observance and another was Catholic, for the work that could be performed by non-Jews. The family was numerous and multi-generational and she says that "there was always a nanny with us, who raised these four children"⁸⁸¹ (herself and her siblings). Hadasa describes in detail her relation to the nanny and another Polish servant:

Michałowa was a nanny, and then was Marysia, and there was one more, but I don't remember [what her name was], because I was always with this Marysia. They were very nice, very nice, I always liked them, their children, and Michałowa stayed with us, [that is] she lived with us. She raised all the children. And I still remember that she used to say to me: "Stretch out your legs, or you will not grow", and I stretched out my legs in a minute: "Grandma, I'm already growing!" I remember it today, for so many years, I am 82 years old, but these are all such things that a man, I still remember everything exceptionally.⁸⁸²

According to her account, their relations were cordial, family-like and they were almost a part of the family. One of them lived with the family, and another one was Hadasa's favorite. Sometimes the children would stay for a couple of days only with these two servants, which points to the trust Hadasa's parents had in these Catholic women and close emotional ties between Hadasa and the Catholic servants.

Awigdor [1920] recalls vague memories of two live-in Catholic servants in his family house:

[in the apartment] there was also a large bathtub and a large, very large kitchen, and there also lived one Polish woman from the village, who worked there for a year, two, three, five, ten. I do not know. I remember two [Polish] women. One was, maybe she had already gone and [later] there was another one. I remember two of them because they gave me food and this and that.⁸⁸³

⁸⁸¹ OH GGNNTC Hadasa Pinkus, 18;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/105305/edition/99938>, 24.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/105400/edition/100033>, 24.02.2023.

⁸⁸² Ibid.

⁸⁸³ OH GGNNTC Awigdor Kacenenbogen, 14-15;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/101875/edition/96534>, 23.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103016/edition/97695>, 23.02.2023.

He calls them “Polish women from the village” and cannot define for how long each one of them worked for his family. They would probably cook and clean, and certainly feed him. He adds that they played an important role on Shabbat: “There was a Polish girl, a Pole. She lived with us, she did everything, not us.”⁸⁸⁴ She would perform all the forbidden works on Shabbat, therefore being a live-in Shabbat goy for them. Awigdor distances himself from the servants by not using their names, and pointing to the difference in position (Polish woman from the village). Thus, he introduces a double differentiation: both ethno-religious and classist.

Eliezer [1919] mentions his family having various maidservants, both Jewish and Catholic, but spares no details.⁸⁸⁵ Sara [1923] refers to meeting her servant after the war and seeing how she had changed from a simple girl that had to be taught how to take care of the house, to a lady.⁸⁸⁶ Her account, however, similar to Awigdor’s, says more about the relation between various social classes than Jews and Christians.

Undoubtedly, the narratives about Catholic domestic servants reveal the power relations and allude to emotional ties between the servants and the Jewish children of their employers. However, it is hard to draw conclusions from the sources as they dedicate very limited space to this specific type of professional relationship between Catholics and Jews.

Conclusions

The image of Jewish-Catholic relations in the transactional context appears to be prevalently positive and meets the four basic assumptions of intergroup theory. The groups are shown as enjoying equal status, meaning that each group voluntarily took up a defined role and drew benefits from it. In addition, both groups are presented as having common goals (either providing goods and services or purchasing them) and cooperating to achieve them (intergroup transactions). The stories do not mention legal restrictions limiting these relations, apart from the economic boycott which posed a threat to the positive development of the transactional relations between Catholics and Jews. However, in spite of this external threat, many reported continuous cooperation.

⁸⁸⁴ Ibid., 9; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/101873/edition/96532>, 23.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103014/edition/97693>, 23.02.2023.

⁸⁸⁵ OH GGNNTC Eliezer Orenstein, 13;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103514/edition/98181>, 24.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/104829/edition/99464>, 24.02.2023.

⁸⁸⁶ OH GGNNTC Sara Grinfeld, 9;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102560/edition/97241>, 10.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103344/edition/98016>, 10.02.2023.

Following the ruptures in the story and transitions between the intra-contextual and extra-contextual narrator, the reader can find reflections of metanarratives either from the past or from the present. The former is illustrated in the trope of the “Jewish trade.” A belief that Jews were particularly talented in trade and that in Poland most trade was in Jewish hands re-emerges repeatedly in the stories. On the other hand, one hears echoes of more contemporary metanarratives about Polish antisemitism. The Catholic interviewees respond to this metanarrative by creating confusing accounts of antisemitic events. One way of doing this is describing anti-Jewish discrimination and violence but refusing to name it. Another way is changing the subject and avoiding uttering conclusions or offering justifications – softening the suggested meaning of the described events.

Neighbors

One of the most organic types of intergroup interactions are neighborly relations. Although the past segregation was still very visible in the urban tissue of Lublin, in the narrated period many Jews moved to traditionally Christian neighborhoods, because they sought either assimilation or a more comfortable life, or they worked in industry and wanted to stay closer to the factories. Thus, two social classes tended to live in the direct vicinity of Christians: the middle class and industrial workers. In addition, according to the oral histories, there was a small percentage of Catholics living in the Jewish quarter.

The accounts of neighborly relations come from these two groups, and they are relatively often included in the oral histories. Fourteen Catholics and eleven Jews speak about them, which accounts for almost half of the interviewees. I will present first the Jewish accounts of the relations and then the Catholic ones. As the image is less complex than in the case of economic relations, it is easier to maintain this division, and thus compare the Jewish and the Catholic perceptions.

Jewish Voices

Some Jews mention their Catholic neighbors but without going into much detail.⁸⁸⁷ Adam [1923], for example, remembers that the majority of his neighbors⁸⁸⁸ were Polish but “absolutely doesn’t remember having Polish friends”⁸⁸⁹ among them. Even after many additional questions from the interviewer, he cannot remember such cases and even states openly “you can make friends only in school.”⁸⁹⁰ He states that he never had time to play with the neighbors’ children because of the busy schedule he had as a child (after school Judaism classes at home). His account seems to present a strong conviction that making friends with the neighbors was not an obvious choice and rather something extraordinary. One can speculate that perhaps the position of being one of the only two Jewish families in the building contributed to the need for or feeling of separation. On the other hand, relatively high social position (his father owned a prosperous company) might have contributed to the separation from other children. His mother preferred him to study at home rather than to go out and play with other children, maybe not only for the sake of study but saving him from their undesirable influence, as they probably came from families with lower social positions.

Others mention negative experiences of the relations with Catholics and the resulting isolation from the outgroup. Mira [1914], for example, remembers that:

One and only Polish family lived there in the yard upstairs. He was a postman, and the janitor was also a Pole. The caretaker was very, very ... I don't understand how [the townspeople] didn't complain about him. He harassed all women. And at eleven o'clock he closed the gates and it was time to ring the bell. So he came from the yard, there was

⁸⁸⁷ OH GGNNTC Awigdor Kacelenbogen, *passim*; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/101876/edition/96535>, 23.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103017/edition/97696>, 23.02.2023; OH GGNNTC Eliezer Orenstein, *passim*; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103513/edition/98180>, 24.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/104828/edition/99463>, 24.02.2023; OH GGNNTC Fosef Fraind, *passim*; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/121230/edition/115483>, 22.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/121321/edition/115574>, 22.02.2023; OH GGNNTC Chawa Goldminc, *passim*; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/104698/edition/99333>, 23.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/105006/edition/99639>, 23.02.2023; OH GGNNTC Mosze Handelsman, *passim*; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102813/edition/97492>, 23.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103985/edition/98630>, 23.02.2023.

⁸⁸⁸ Families living in the same building.

⁸⁸⁹ OH GGNNTC Adam Adams, 64-65; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/122266/edition/116486>, 28.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/100957/edition/95404>, 28.02.2023.

⁸⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

the bell attached and he came to open it. The girls were terribly afraid to come late at night for him to open up, because ... And they didn't know what it meant to complain. Now, if the man only moves, puts his hand on the woman, it will be to the police [you are going] and he will have a mishpat [Eng. court]. And it should be so. We had no relations with him. He lived in the yard, there was an outbuilding there and there were two apartments. This postman and the Jew lived. They were on good terms, they said. But we did not have [contacts] with them. I mean, he wasn't a postman in our house, he was a postman in another neighborhood, but that was his job. I remember him, he and his wife, they didn't have kids.⁸⁹¹

Her account refers to two Catholic families. One was the janitor's and the other the postman's. The former sexually harassed women and in consequence, Mira's family did not relate to him at all. She does not make any specific statements linking his Polishness or Catholicism to his offensive behavior; however, the accusations of immorality and sexual perversion are a common trope in the narratives about the outgroup both among Catholics and Jews speaking about each other.⁸⁹² The situation described by Mira includes also hints towards the unequal class status of the protagonists (her family is wealthy and educated, the janitor is poor and uneducated), the violation of common values by the janitor and lack of cooperation on his side. Thus, the contact is described as negative.

However, three others speak about positive experiences and friendly relations with their Polish neighbors. They come from well-off families, educated and exposed to Polish culture. Edward [1920], whose father was in the army, remembers that all the neighbors were army officers and they were Catholic. He mentions their names and says that his first friends were their sons, and that they all played together.⁸⁹³ In addition, he reveals some particularities of the relationship between his father and the other officers:

Well, one interesting thing is that everyone came to us very often, because [father] was in a very high position, everyone came when they were in big trouble. It was Monday and Tuesday where all the senior officers were coming.

⁸⁹¹ OH GGNNTC Mira Shuval, 45-46;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103469/edition/98137>, 24.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103768/edition/98421>, 24.02.2023.

⁸⁹² Robert S. Wistrich, *Demonizing the Other: Antisemitism, Racism and Xenophobia*, Studies in Antisemitism (Amsterdam: Routledge, 1999), 7; Górecka, "Christian Domestic Servants," passim.

⁸⁹³ OH GGNNTC Edward Skowroński-Hertz, 1, 19;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102220/edition/96902>, 27.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102458/edition/97139>, 27.02.2023.

"I have such a problem, I lost at cards." He lost it, they stole it from him, [or some woman] stole his money. Anyway, everyone came to us.⁸⁹⁴

According to the story, the officers liked gambling. During the weekends, they played cards and would often lose significant amounts of money, or let it be stolen from them, most probably when they were under the influence of alcohol. Then, at the beginning of the week, after getting sober, they would come to Edward's father, who had a position higher than they did, to seek help did. The narrative suggests a high level of familiarity and trust between these Polish Catholic officers and Edward's father in spite of their different ethno-religious background. The Polish officers were not ashamed to ask for help and they would come to Edward's apartment, which implies bonds of friendship and solidarity. Probably, common military experience created lasting bonds of friendship, solidarity and loyalty that extended outside the professional spectrum to their private lives. In fact, Edward highlights that these bonds survived the outbreak of the war – he proceeds to say that his brother and the son of one of the neighbors escaped together to Romania and, although their ways parted, they remained friends until the death of one of them at the battle of Monte Cassino.⁸⁹⁵

Thus, in Edward's story common profession and military experience (implied patriotism?) are seen as the foundation for good relations with neighbors. Moreover, he mentions repeatedly that his parents had wide social circles and good relations with everyone, so one can assume that their likable characters facilitated good relations with the neighbors. These relations are described explicitly as "good",⁸⁹⁶ and based on the description quoted above could also be named familiar, equal or even brotherly. In this account, the Jewish family has an equal or slightly higher status in comparison to their neighbors, they share common values (patriotism) and experiences (army service), they belong to the same profession and social class and so have at least some common goals and seem to cooperate (officers asking for help receive it). Finally, there is no external pressure; they are free to shape the relations as they please.

Sara [1923] remembers positive intergenerational relations with her Catholic neighbors. As a girl, she lived in a building in the new, modern and fashionable part of the city, owned by a Jew but with mixed tenants. In particular, she mentions an old Catholic couple:

They were very devout, she walked with a large cross on her chest and went to church every day. But they related to us [well], because there were several Jewish and a few Polish

⁸⁹⁴ Ibid., 37-38.

⁸⁹⁵ Ibid., 2, 26, 36.

⁸⁹⁶ Ibid.

families living there, the neighbours were on very good terms... And it was an older, childless marriage. And because I was a girl, they liked me very much and invited me and offered me candy and chocolate. And my mother yelled at me, "Your teeth will go bad so you don't eat so much chocolate."⁸⁹⁷

In her account, Sara presents the Catholic couple as friendly towards her in spite of their religiosity, because of their family situation. Being childless, they felt affection to a little girl next door and fed her sweets. Their bond was based on their need to take care of (spoil?) a child. However, even if other neighbors did not have a personal interest in her, she assesses the relations between all the neighbors as very good. One can assume that in their case, there was a certain community of language, culture and social position, even if their religious background was diverse. Both Jews and Catholics seem to have enjoyed equal status in the building, none of the groups is presented as privileged, they also appear to have common goals and cooperate (being on good terms) and there are no external disturbances (authorities) to their peaceful coexistence.

The most moving account of positive relations between intergroup neighbors comes from Bronisława [1932], who describes the friendship between her mother and a Catholic janitor:

I want to tell you why there were such good relations between this Mrs. Feliksa Muciek and my mother. My mom wasn't too big for her boots, she was an average person. She always greeted everyone with a smile on her face. And when the son of this Mrs. Felixa died - she lived in a basement and was in a very bad financial situation - my mother helped her to have a coffin and a funeral, and so on. When we came back from Russia, she did not forget it and wanted to repay it. It was she who told me after my mother died. I asked her: "Why were you so affectionate and kind to my mother?" She says: "She deserved it, she earned it with me."⁸⁹⁸

Bronisława does not share many details about her family and the neighbors but instead she focuses on one particular relation – with a female janitor. She says that her family was in a comfortable position but her mother was not uppish. Instead, she was friendly and accessible. According to the story, she financially helped the janitor who remembered the favor and returned it after the war, when the family returned from the Soviet Union. Bronisława might idealize her mother whom she lost early and the motif

⁸⁹⁷ OH GGNNTC Sara Grinfeld, 29, <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102559/edition/97240>, 10.02.2023, <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103343/edition/98015>, 10.02.2023.

⁸⁹⁸ OH GGNNTC Bronisława Friedman, 9, <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103003/edition/97682>, 18.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/104030/edition/98675>, 18.02.2023.

of this loss is the central compositional axis of her oral history; however, it seems that her mother's personal qualities facilitated intergroup relations and are exceptional. It can be better understood in comparison to the account of another Jewish interviewee, Sarah [1922] who mentions that the relations between her well-off parents and the Polish janitors were very formal:

There were janitors, but we had little in common with them. He, for him I was a young lady, I was the owner of the house, daughter. That's when he saw me "Good morning, madam", "Have a good day," "God be with you."...The hierarchy was very strong then. I don't know how it is now. Hierarchy. If you are a teacher, this student does not dare to say something to the teacher. Not today. He does not dare. Whether I agreed with the teacher or not. I would not dare to say something... And the same with employees at home. I was the daughter of the Feldzamens and it was a lot that I didn't get what I felt a bit like... not with friends, not with friends, with girlfriends. There I was equal. Equal to that too ... I had the more ten cents I was giving them. So that they could use me, that's why when I wanted to go somewhere on purpose, let's say they wanted to go right, I wanted to go to the left, they said: "Okay. Let's go left. Because Sala wants to go left. " Because they knew they would get something for it.⁸⁹⁹

Sarah's story sheds a lot of light on a possible alternative. Her family owned the building where they lived. Thus, the janitors always greeted her and respected the hierarchy. She openly states that her family had little in common with them; that is, were not interested in them as people. One can infer that they were on the top of the social ladder and expected others to respect that hierarchy. In fact, she explains that this class hierarchy played a crucial role in organizing social life. Moreover, she is open about using her privileged position among her friends. Unlike in the case described by Bronisława, the social status was an important impediment in personal relations and maintained the existing divisions. Moreover, in general her story presents a negative image of the Catholics and intergroup relations, which could be caused by her personal experience, the attitudes she grew up with as well as her postwar life in the US, where she might have been exposed to the public discourses of Polish antisemitism. Each of these factors (or the combination of them) could contribute to the way she presents the Catholics in her narrative.

In Bronisława's case, the intergroup cooperation and support made the intergroup contact positive, in spite of the inequality of the status of two women. The mother recognized the need of the Christian neighbor and reacted in spite of multiple divisions: the difference of the social class, economic situation and ethno-religious background. Both the mother and the janitor also seem to share values of altruism and solidarity

⁸⁹⁹ OH GGNNTC Sarah Tuller, 90.

with those in need. Most probably these values, first displayed by Bronisława's mother and then shown in return by the janitor, played a key role in the positive development of their relation and crossing over intergroup boundaries.

Catholic Voices

Similarly to Jews, a few Catholics too simply refer to the Jewish neighbors without speaking much about the relations with them.⁹⁰⁰ The interviewees tend to present the relations as positive, especially when explicitly asked about them and very rarely mention intergroup tensions among neighbors. In fact, only one account presents negative intergroup contact.

Maria [1926] recalls how once a boy badly kicked a daughter of Jewish neighbors but the situation was immediately resolved: "And her mom came to complain to her parents. It was the parents who reacted very decently, because they said: "You are to apologize to her right now and you are never to do anything like that. You are not allowed to do this. What if she did the same to you?"⁹⁰¹ The described situation cannot be clearly marked as intergroup violence as it is not clear if that was children's fight – a common phenomenon in general, also in intragroup contexts. Even if it was so, Maria describes the parents' intervention, which prevented future violence among the children.

All the remaining accounts describe relations as friendly. Regina [1926] remembers that in the building her family lived there were many Jewish neighbors.⁹⁰² She claims that her family would greet them and engage in small talk but they would not visit each other's houses:

So we did not invite each other, because somehow, as I say, they did not have room for any hospitality at all. They were always busy in this trade until late hours, always watching over there until the evenings... I mean we were friends as neighbors - good morning, what's up and so on, but if some kind of hospitality wasn't there, such things did not happen. Because there were some wishes that the parents made for each other, right? But any such invitations, no. I do not know at all if they had any parties, I do not remember if there were any such guests as our family comes together, true, whether on

⁹⁰⁰ Teresa. Piątkowska, <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/128560/edition/122538>, 28.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/125266/edition/119398>, 28.02.2023; OH GGNNTC Maria Sowa, 13-14; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/125780/edition/119898>, 27.02.2023.

⁹⁰¹ OH GGNNTC Maria Sowa, 21; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/125805/edition/119912>, 27.02.2023.

⁹⁰² OH GGNNTC Regina Kucharska, passim; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/119322/edition/113637>, 22.02.2023.

Christmas Eve or Easter, or ... I did not notice such guests there, despite the fact that they were wealthy and those who had large apartments, large rooms, I have not heard that any family would come there to visit.⁹⁰³

She describes the Jewish neighbors as extremely busy with their trade and not inviting over any guests nor having a social life. In the narrative, it could be seen as an explanation why her parents would not be invited to the homes of the Jewish neighbors. Nonetheless, the basic rules of peaceful coexistence were kept by both sides, who displayed politeness in their communication.

Maria describes three Jewish families of her childhood neighbors and states that everyone lived in harmony and that they were “very decent people”.⁹⁰⁴ She describes them in detail, defining their financial situation and social position, and informs the interviewer that she was good friends with one of the Jewish girls, a daughter of well off parents, living one floor up from her.⁹⁰⁵ She would visit this Jewish girl often and they would play in the nice, big apartment the family inhabited. Another family was poor and Maria states that she would never visit them because “there was no place to stand.” However, this poor Jewish family was very friendly and the relations between them and Maria’s family were close and cordial. They would invite her to eat at their place (which her mother told her not to because of the poor sanitary conditions at their home), and she would play outdoors with their children.⁹⁰⁶ Finally, there was a French Jew who converted and married a Catholic Pole. Maria highlight that all these Jewish neighbors were “nice, honest, decent people. Such people with principles. All great Poles, patriots. I was a child, I had no anger towards Jews yet, no hatred. I treated them just like Poles.”⁹⁰⁷ In her account, these positive personal traits are presented as the basis of good relations. Although the neighbors’ financial and social situations were diverse, they were all “kind, honest and decent” and that kept the peace.⁹⁰⁸

⁹⁰³ Ibid., 10; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/119365/edition/113679>, 23.02.2023.

⁹⁰⁴ OH GGNNTC Maria Sowa, 11; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/125781/edition/119899>, 27.02.2023.

⁹⁰⁵ OH GGNNTC Maria Sowa, 12; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/125780/edition/119898>, 27.02.2023.

⁹⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁰⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁰⁸ On the other hand, she differentiates between the relations with Jewish neighbors and Jewish classmates. When speaking about the classmates she includes a reference to verbal discrimination against them, mentioning that the Catholic children (“we”) would call assimilated or secular Jews *cybulizowani* which is a word play on the Polish words civilized and onion, referring to stereotypes about Jews smelling of onion. For discussion the onion smell, see p. 215, and for more about relations with the classmates, see p. 289-298.

Józef [1927] recalls friendship with the family of a Jewish shoemaker from the neighborhood:

When I lived on Bychawska Street before the war, a shoemaker called But lived there. He wasn't doing well at all. He probably had three children, the youngest, Humka, slept in the cupboard, because they had no place to sleep. She came to us because you could eat better food here. She was always happy when she came for breakfast, and when she stayed for dinner, she didn't know how to thank my mother. It was very modest with them...⁹⁰⁹

The account accentuates the difference in economic situation of both families. The Jewish neighbors were in a precarious position and one can say that Józef's family helped them to some extent. The shoemaker's youngest daughter, aged two, was a frequent visitor in Józef's family home. To her contentment, they would feed her better than her parents could, and in another fragment of his story, he mentions that it was an everyday custom.⁹¹⁰ The Catholic family would also let her stay overnight when it was needed:

And once, she sat, sat, talked and fell asleep with us. This mother had something to do with it, I say, we are not going to go anywhere, and my mother put her off, covered her, she woke up in the morning.... So we played with them for the most part completely normally.⁹¹¹

Thus, Józef portrays the relations between these two families as cordial. He also mentions that the shoemaker, seeing that his children, not only the youngest one, were often eating at Józef's house, invited Józef and his siblings over to return the favor:

Once we were invited to dinner by our neighbour But, whose children sometimes came to eat with us, and then we tried Jewish cuisine. There was a lot of garlic in these dishes,

⁹⁰⁹ OH GGNNTC Józef Sadurski, 96;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/50233/edition/47163>, 24.02.2023.

⁹¹⁰ Feeding neighbors or "lending" them food is a part of local culture of neighborly relations still today. It is well described by Janina: "We had neighbors, it was this little Jewess, he (her husband) had a barbershop, so she always came to my mummy, for one onion, another day for one carrot, and in general they were very good people." OH GGNNTC Janina Kozak, 12;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/124576/edition/118730>, 28.02.2023.

⁹¹¹ OH GGNNTC Józef Sadurski, 96.

this garlic repelled me, besides, it was all very greasy, and we couldn't eat it, we were not used to it. We didn't like this kitchen very much.⁹¹²

His statements about the taste of the dishes highlight cultural differences manifested also in culinary traditions. However, the main point of the story is that the families were close enough to eat at each other's homes and that in spite of the financial problems, the Jewish neighbor had his pride and wanted to return the favor: he was not sending his children to his Christian neighbors just so that they could eat their food. Although the status of two families is not equal in this story, the mutuality of their relationship is underscored. They probably shared the same values regulating the neighborly relations: solidarity, willingness to help if the other is in need, belief in mutual support. Possibly, the community of fate facilitates this solidarity. Even if their economic status differed, the difference was not significant enough to make them members of different social classes. It might be that because the Catholic family experienced poverty and saw it as a plausible option for themselves, they were more sensible to the precarity of others. After all, they were all manual workers and artisans whose economic situation in that period was very insecure.⁹¹³

Irena [1927] mentions the opposite inter-class dynamic, similar to the one described by Mira, in which it is the Jewish neighbor that helps the Catholic one:

We lived at 48 Krakowskie Przedmieście. The tenement house belonged to Mrs Zajdman, she was of Jewish nationality. Several Jewish families lived in this tenement house. We had perfect coexistence [Catholic families with Jewish families]. The rent was 10-12 zlotys, because we only had one room. She [Mrs. Zajdman] met us halfway, she waited: "You don't, you will pay the next month, you will pay me a little."⁹¹⁴

The account bears a resemblance to the stories of Jewish traders willing to accept instalments or give credit. The Jewish property owner was flexible with their rent payments because she saw they were in financial trouble. She would wait until they could pay the rent, which could be seen as another example of mutual help and cross-class solidarity. Another interesting theme appearing in the accounts is friendships

⁹¹² OH GGNNTC Józef Sadurski, 50;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/50233/edition/47163>, 24.02.2023.

⁹¹³ Róża Fiszman-Sznajdman often speaks about this intra-group solidarity among the Jewish proletariat. As a socialist coming from preoletariat herself, she displays high sensitivity to the problems of poverty among Jews of Lublin and repeatedly refers to situations of mutual help and support among the poorest class of the Jewish society. Fiszman-Sznajdman, *Mój Lublin*, passim.

⁹¹⁴ OH GGNNTC Irena Korolko, 4;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/49751/edition/46728>, 23.02.2023.

developed among the Jewish and Catholic children who were each other's neighbors. This topic will be discussed in the section devoted to intergroup friendships.

The phenomenon of reverse minority-majority dynamic, meaning Catholics being a minority in Jewish quarter, adds further nuance to the already described dynamics. A few Catholic interviewees, Regina [1926], Celina [1931] and Bogdan [1934] narrate from the position of a Catholic whose childhood was lived among Jews. Bogdan is the most eloquent one, speaking in detail about various neighbors and the relations among them.

According to his account, only two Catholic families lived in his building and the remaining tenants were Jewish.⁹¹⁵ He describes the relations as good⁹¹⁶ and facilitated by speaking common languages – Polish and Yiddish. He states that his neighbors would “murder the language” but they spoke Polish well enough to understand each other “without problem.”⁹¹⁷ On the other hand, the Jewish children he knew and played with spoke very little Polish.⁹¹⁸ Thus, as a boy he learned some Yiddish, while his older brother and mother were fluent. Definitely, the ability to communicate was the first step towards the intergroup contact.

Bogdan describes more details regarding these contacts; for example, the neighborly visits of a Jewish female neighbors to see a newborn Catholic boy (himself):

However, they had such a custom when I was born, I remember as it was today, no Jewish woman came with a bare hand. Each Jewish woman – it was half a kilo, a kilo of sugar. They showered me with sugar. Our Polish neighbor, on the other hand, as my mother that said: "She took your happiness and fortune". She came running: "Oh, what a lovely child, what a lovely child" - she still says - "So naked." She kissed me naked. My mother says: "Well ... that's it ..." - she says - "... he will not have happiness in life." And every Jewish woman brought something sweet, she never came with ... bare hand. And almost all the Jewish women who lived there came to our ... at my birth ... birth.⁹¹⁹

Bogdan re-tells the story he must have heard from his mother, even if he claims that “he remembers it as if it was today”: Jewish neighbors came to admire the newborn

⁹¹⁵ He lived in Krawiecka Street, the heart of the Jewish quarter and one of the poorest areas of the town.

⁹¹⁶ OH GGNNTC Bogdan Stanisław Pazur, 23;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/123682/edition/117863>, 24.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/154574/edition/148291>, 24.02.2023.

⁹¹⁷ OH GGNNTC Bogdan Stanisław Pazur, 33;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/123695/edition/117876>, 24.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/154587/edition/148304>, 24.02.2023.

⁹¹⁸ OH GGNNTC Bogdan Stanisław Pazur, 33.

⁹¹⁹ OH GGNNTC Bogdan Stanisław Pazur, 33-34.

baby boy and each of them came with a gift, usually sugar. Such behavior has at least a double meaning. On the one hand, from the perspective of the working class, sugar was an expensive commodity and thus a valuable gift. On the other, it was a symbolic way to wish the best of luck to the newborn. According to some folk traditions, it would make his life sweet and easy in the future. Bogdan's mother appreciated the gifts and criticized the Catholic neighbor who came empty-handed. She just kissed the naked baby and commented on the fact he was naked. In his mother's interpretation, such a comment would bring a bad luck – poverty and unsuccessfulness. Thus, Bogdan absorbed the appreciation of the sweet gifts and included that in his story.

In the narrative, this episode serves to illustrate the proximity and cordiality between his family and the Jews. In fact, he presents his family as having better relations with the Jews than with other Catholics living there. The account about his birth suggests some jealousy on the part of the Catholic neighbor and some hidden tensions between her and his mother. On the other hand, later on he mentions that already during the war his mother bought a part of the house they lived in from the Jewish owner. Eventually during the communist regime, she lost it. However, among other possible reasons, it might be important for Bogdan to present his family as friends of the Jewish neighbors to avert any suspicion that his family profited from the liquidation of the ghetto and the death of the neighbors by taking their real estate.

Moreover, among cases of cooperation, he mentions a unique case of Jews requesting the intervention of a bishop. One of the tenants in their building was the infamous Szama Grajer, later one of the most well-known Jewish Nazi collaborators, who already before the war was a known procurer.⁹²⁰ At some point, he wanted to open a house of ill repute in their building and the neighbors united against the idea. They brought the case to the Jewish council and eventually, according to the story, the representatives of the council came to talk to Bogdan's father:

Well, probably three of those ... from this council, the kind of Jewish one, came to my father and said: "Mr. Stanisław. You are a decent man. Do you want a brothel here?" Well, the father says: "No, no, I don't want to ..." - he says - "How come!" - he says - "Little children, what brothel?". "Then we have to work together." "Well how to act?" Father asks. "You will go to the bishop. You will talk to the bishop. The bishop will not agree to this!". Well, father, he was still ... naive. And ... the father says: "Well, what ... well, what does the bishop have to say?" "Well, the bishop ..." he says, "... he can do anything." And they did go. My father took an appointment with the bishop, said that

⁹²⁰ His fame translates also into research, see Adam Kopciowski, "Szama Grajer–„żydowski król” z Lublina," *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały*, no. 16 (2020); Dariusz Libionka, *Zagłada Żydów w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie: zarys problematyki* (Lublin: Państwowe Muzeum na Majdanku Lublin, 2017); Jakub Chmielewski, "Zagłada Żydów lubelskich–początek Akcji Reinhardt," *Rocznik Lubelski*, no. 39 (2013).

he would like to come here with the Jews (*starozakonnii*), as he calls them, that they have such and such a case, and ... the bishop's curia stopped it.⁹²¹

The intervention proved effective and the bishop did stop the implementation of the idea. It is the only story in the sources describing such a cooperation between Jews and Catholics where Jews request the mediation of a bishop. Naturally, its factual accuracy cannot be assessed but the main point is that it portrays the relations between the neighbors as positive regardless of their ethno-religious belonging.

Bogdan describes as well family-like relations with the owner of a small shop, Pini. When he was walking down the street, Pini would call him to enter his shop and would present him with a few candies.⁹²² It is an example of intergenerational friendship, similar to the described above case of Bronisława. An elderly person takes interest in a child from the outgroup and offers them fish-shaped sweets (Pl. *rybki*). However, unlike Bronisława, Bogdan does not offer any explanation of the reasons Pini had to spoil him. Nonetheless, *rybki* play an important role in his stories of Catholic-Jewish relations:

I had such an ordeal with a Jew. Jews drove such carts on iron wheels and bought junk, rags, rags, junk, "I will buy, exchange, give pots", he walked, he had such a thin, gray nag, such a horse and he rode down this Krawiecka street, and we: "Jews! Jew! Jew, you boo! Jew, scab! Your life on the line!"⁹²³ Jew! ". And the Jew: "Rrrr, *chojta* guys". Come on. "You have a *rybka*." He gave candies, a *rybka*, from this Pini and he would buy: "If I go one more time, you have to shout so loud, you will get two *rybki* each". Well, we are waiting, we hear "turturtur", a car goes: "E!" - we scream incredibly, and the Jew: "Rrrr ... you have two fish. Even louder!" Well, we are already walking, we are waiting for this Jew to go, he is going, we call: "A Jew is coming!" Come on, we run. And again: "Jew, Jew, Jew ...", "Wow, you have four fish." Four fish is a lot of money for such a child. "Well, but even louder ... get your friends together." So also the Jews shouted: "Jew!", Not only Poles, there were more Jews than us. Well, this Jew is coming. And we are screaming! "Jew, Jew!" And a Jew: "Uuu!" - he drove. We say, "No, shit. We will not scream, he will not give fish, we will not scream". The Jew was calm. He outsmarted us.⁹²⁴

⁹²¹ OH GGNNTC Bogdan Stanisław Pazur, 25-26.

⁹²² OH GGNNTC Bogdan Stanisław Pazur, *passim*;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/123680/edition/117861>, 24.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/154572/edition/148289>, 24.04.2023.

⁹²³ Pl. *Twoje życie na kantarku*. *Kantarek* is a kind of feather.

⁹²⁴ This quotation is based on the interview done in 2012. In another one, done in 2013, Bogdan presents a slightly different version of the event, highlighting that it was both the Jewish and the Polish boys harassing the peddler. OH GGNNTC Bogdan Stanisław Pazur, 39-40;

Bogdan relates how Catholic kids from Krawiecka would gather to insult a Jewish peddler. The latter found an intelligent way of making them stop. First, he told them to scream the insults louder and they would be rewarded with candy. Then, every time they did it, he would increase the reward a little bit. The reward became so attractive that even the Jewish kids would join in. Eventually, he stopped giving them candy, and the children, disappointed, completely lost interest in screaming insults. He resolved the conflict in a calm and peaceful way.

This account is extremely interesting for multiple reasons. Firstly, it brings up a tension between Bogdan's initial statement that the relations between Catholic and Jews were very good. On the one hand, one can think that children were screaming insults at the Jewish peddler because his looks stood out: his horse was old and thin and he looked poor and unattractive. They sensed he was an outsider or even an outcast and they thought they were allowed to bully him. Such behavior does not have to be connected to the fact he was Jewish.

However, in the story they use a typical antisemitic vocabulary. "Jew" is used as an insult and combined with the term "scab". They also add an expression: *Twoje życie na kantarku* which can be translated as "your life is on the line." Such a strong statement probably should be interpreted in the light of developmental psychology. It is known that in general children do not respond well to Otherness, and either abuse or withdraw from those they perceive as non-normative.⁹²⁵ This happens in peer groups but also towards adults perceived as inferior – the old, handicapped or dressed in an odd way. Therefore, the expression should be taken with a pinch of salt, even though it is also clear that children model their behaviors on those of adults and antisemitic inspiration cannot be excluded.

Another question coming to mind regarding this language is whether Bogdan relates a story he remembers or rather puts together pieces of the stories he heard from older family members and his own memories about the Holocaust. In any case, the account proves that even if nominally the relations were described in this story as good, specific examples included in the story allow for questioning the meaning of the adjective "good" in this context. After all, it is the member of the majority that describes the relations in such way, which implies many problems stemming from the power (im)balance.

<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/123694/edition/117875>, 24.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/154586/edition/148303>, 24.02.2023.

⁹²⁵ See, e.g., Ross Vasta, Marshall M. Haith, and Scott A. Miller, *Child Psychology: The Modern Science* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 1998).

Bogdan's story is not interesting only for this reason. It is also worth noting that it can certainly be seen as another incarnation of a folklore trickster story, present in Jewish narratives as well, quoted in the following way by Blanka Górecka:

In general, we lived with the neighbors.... My father wore a shtreimel on Sabbath. It happened once, when I walked with my father, that some boy throws a stone. A little boy. The next day we went. The boy stood there. My father took 10 cents, gave it to the boy, and said: "When I pass by, you should throw the stone!" The children stood there and heard. The boy went and threw [the stone]. When we walked again – here he stands and waits. "What are you waiting for?" asks my father. And the children were there together. He says: "You didn't give me money." "And I will not give you each day." And this is how it ended.⁹²⁶

Górecka repeatedly encountered this type of narration among her informants. The anecdote is "meant to present the mechanisms of forging proper relationships with the Polish neighbors is built according to a folktale structure."⁹²⁷ According to her analysis, the trickster story refers to the assumption "that non-Jews do things only for profit, and that the gentile will not want to make any effort for the Jew if not paid for."⁹²⁸ In the story quoted above it is a non-Jewish narrator who, according to Górecka, is presented as stupid, naïve and hostile to the Jews. Yet his hostility can be overcome thanks to the unsophisticated character of his hatred.⁹²⁹

Surprisingly, Bogdan is using this story to talk about himself and the ingroup, which stands in contrast to what Górecka says about the trope. If this is essentially an anti-gentile story, why is he using it? Would it be a case of auto-irony or a further confirmation of gentile stupidity? Is he telling the story because he does not realize it presents him unfavorably? Undoubtedly, he uses it to underscore the stereotypical Jewish "smartness" but it seems he is not aware of simultaneously borrowing from Jewish folk traditions.

In the context of other oral histories, it might be assumed that insulting the peddler could possibly fit in the category of pranks. Often violence or hostility towards the Jews are labeled in the Catholic narratives as "pranks". Daniela [1925] recalls that "Poles were angry with the Jews because they had nice hair. And we would go to the tollbooth, catch beetles and put them in their hair, so the Jewish women squealed. And the Jews

⁹²⁶ Górecka, "Christian Domestic Servants," 148.

⁹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 148.

⁹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 149.

⁹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 150.

always had their hair smeared with kerosene.”⁹³⁰ The story presents jealousy of beautiful Jewish hair as a main reason for the prank. In fact, it is not clear if in this case some form of antisemitism or just childish animosities among peers motivate the hostility; undoubtedly, however, the hostility is directed against Otherness. This Otherness happens to be Jewish but there seems not to be a causal connection, rather a contingent one in this case. Numerous stories portray “pranks” targeting specific Jewish customs or looks, and they are analyzed in the next chapter within the framework of interreligious relations.⁹³¹

Conclusions

Similar to the previous topic, both Jews and Catholics present neighborly relations mostly in a positive way. Jewish interviewees construct their image of positive relations in a rather coherent way. Either they describe cordial relations and mutual help between Jewish and Catholic neighbors or the distance between the two groups. In cases of distance, they always hint at the factors of social position and education as having impact on the relations. As members of a higher social class, they describe their distance from Catholic neighbors as motivated by classist motives rather than any other reason. Interestingly, Catholics also often describe their Jewish neighbors as more wealthy but they highlight the instances of intergroup solidarity and help, thus showing Jewish neighbors as benefactors.

The status of the two groups is presented as equal in the sense of being submitted to the same rules and challenges and the intergroup cooperation is shown or suggested in most of the stories. None of the groups is being shown as privileged because of their Jewish or Catholic identity. Certain stories present solidarity based on fraternity among practitioners of the same profession (Edward). In some cases (e.g., Bogdan), the common economic situation is shown as a source of horizontal solidarity and mutual help, and in some others (e.g., Bronisława), it is the difference in social position that enables solidarity across the borders of social classes. It is important to mention that some stories present common values as a source of peaceful coexistence, adding a fifth condition to positive contact factors proposed by Allport.⁹³²

⁹³⁰ Daniela Ponikowska, <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/49745/edition/46722>, 24.02.2023.

⁹³¹ See pp. 409-411.

⁹³² The problem of values can be seen as crucial in regulating the intergroup contact in extremely hostile environment, for example during the Holocaust and in the concentration camps. Pawełczyńska, *Values and Violence in Auschwitz: A Sociological Analysis*.

One of the interesting metanarratives echoed in an unexpected way is the trickster story told by Bogdan. He presents an example of a widely spread stereotype of Jewish smartness, unknowingly repeating a Jewish folk story. Overall, however, this curiosity does not change the image of the neighborly relations presented in the oral histories.

School

Eugenia Prokop-Janiec, a Polish scholar researching Jewish-Polish relations from the point of view of literature and ethnology, points to the fact that since the turn of the 20th century, public school and the classroom has become an important contact zone for Poles and Jews.⁹³³ As discussed in Chapter 3, the interwar period brought changes in the education system, which resulted in increased exposure of Jewish children to the Polish language and culture, intensifying the processes of transculturation mediated by the school. It was a new platform for intergroup interaction with the potential for social integration and inclusion.⁹³⁴

When analyzing narratives about Polish-Jewish contact, Prokop-Janiec distinguishes four types of narrations: integrationist, separatist, narrations of persecution and multicultural narrations.⁹³⁵ Although this section does not follow this typology but rather distinguishes between the peer relations and student-teacher relations, to focus on the possible power plays, the typology she proposes is helpful, and is referred to in the conclusions. Thus, this section is organized thematically and within each theme, Jewish narratives are presented first, and then the Catholic ones.

Many interviewees mention attending mixed classes or having teachers from the outgroup, but only a few describe the relations with them in detail going beyond the names of the outgroup representatives.

⁹³³ Prokop-Janiec, *Pogranicze polsko-żydowskie: topografie i teksty*, 51.

⁹³⁴ Kijek, "Stracona szansa na polską żydowskość"; Kijek, *Dzieci modernizmu*.

⁹³⁵ Prokop-Janiec, *Pogranicze polsko-żydowskie: topografie i teksty*, 60n.

Relations with Classmates

Jewish Voices

Helena [1926] remembers attending the Narcyza Źmichowska school in Strażacka Street and being one of only five Jewish girls in the class.⁹³⁶ She mentions their names, describes their families and immediately links these memories to the Holocaust, indicating that only one of the other four survived. In addition, she reflects on the relation between the Jewish girls and the rest of their classmates:

Another thing is that we were these five friends rather together, we were more friends than with Polish girls, this is true. Still alienated. Probably, if I think now, it would be that we were ... because I was at each of them at home. I also visited Polish girls, they also came to me, but less often. We did not invite each other, Polish and Jewish girls, but probably Jewish girls and Jewish girls neither. No, we were too young to invite each other to one's home. Oh, one would visit etc. but not so much. We would come, one would take a book, another would take "Płomyk", and this one took this, you know how it is, and the lessons, and here you didn't come to school, you had to do your homework.⁹³⁷

Helena first states that the Jewish girls were close and kept together more among themselves than with the Polish (Catholic) girls. The gauge of proximity between the classmates in her story is visiting each other's homes. She remembers doing that with her Jewish classmates. She adds subsequently that she also visited Polish classmates and received their visits but less often; thus, one is supposed to infer that the relations were less cordial. Finally, she adds a statement contradicting her previous memories – that probably no one visited anyone else, neither Polish girls and Jewish girls nor Jewish girls among themselves, because they were too young for that. Then, she rectifies this again: she means that the visits were not frequent and they would spend their time reading or doing homework.

In her testimony given to Yad Vashem, Helena mentions having both Jewish and Polish friends and when asked directly whether her best friends were Polish or Jewish she responds that it is hard to say.⁹³⁸ As her family spoke Polish at home, consumed Polish culture and was secular, she had a background that made it easier for her to

⁹³⁶ OH GGNNTC Helena Grynszpan, 55-56;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102130/edition/96781>, 23.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102615/edition/97296>, 23.02.2023.

⁹³⁷ Ibid.

⁹³⁸ Yad Vashem O.3/VT/11736.

integrate with the outgroup. Polish was her first language,⁹³⁹ thus she could communicate without problems and without a Jewish accent that made those Jewish children having it a subject of bullying by their Polish peers. She grew up with some Jewish traditions, but as she maintains that her Jewishness was cultural only, she probably seemed less “exotic” to her Polish peers than religious Jews. In addition, she read the same books and journals that her Polish peers did. She was immersed in Polish culture, which made her have many things in common with her peers. Finally, her family was relatively well off and cultured, which can be seen as another factor favoring her integration in this case. It is much easier to other a poor, religious Jew, who looks and smells different, than a daughter of a Polish-speaking merchant, a niece of a theatre director, whom one can visit and be served nice food and pass time with reading books or children magazines. Helena claims she did not personally experience antisemitism before the war.⁹⁴⁰

On the other hand, Sara [1923], who had a similar socio-economic background (speaking Polish at home, well off secular family), mentions a different experience:

There was a student two grades higher, to whom I was very similar. They asked her if she had a sister, that they had seen a girl who is very similar to her. She said, "No. I only have a brother, but he doesn't attend school." I went, I found out about it, I went to see my double. It was indeed a similarity. And I came to her and said: "I heard that you are asked if I am not, my name is this and that, from this class and I wanted to see you, we are kind of sisters." It was she who said: "I don't need such sisters." Because she knew I was Jewish. It was a small matter, but otherwise I felt so comfortable in this *gimnazjum*.⁹⁴¹

She describes how in her *gimnazjum* there was a Catholic girl very similar to her to the point that Sara was often asked if she was her sister. When she confronted the girl, introducing herself and telling her about the experience of being considered her sister, the girl answered that she did not need such (Jewish) sisters. This points to the interesting dynamics described by Zygmunt Bauman as a combination of diminished cultural distance while maintaining cultural distance.⁹⁴² The Catholic girl refused to decrease the social distance to Sara, although culturally they were to a very large extent

⁹³⁹ She mentions that she dreamed of studying Polish philology and was constantly reading Polish literature (ibid).

⁹⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁹⁴¹ OH GGNNTC Sara Grinfeld, 27-28;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102572/edition/97253,10.02.2023>;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103362/edition/98033,10.02.2023>.

⁹⁴² Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991).

parts of the same universe. At the same time, Sara claims that overall she felt good in this school, which suggests a high level of integration. In her class of forty, there were six Jewish girls (including herself) and she mentions that all of them were “good students and quite popular.”⁹⁴³

In particular, she remembers her friendship with one Catholic girl, who would invite her to come visit, have lunch and do homework together at her home. Although they were close friends at school, Sara was reluctant to visit because her friend’s younger brother would bully her, saying to his sister: “And you are again in love your Jewess.”⁹⁴⁴ Naturally, it made Sara uncomfortable. She links this memory to the account of the economic boycott of the stationery shop and the wartime, to present her ambivalent attitude towards Poles and her own identity. On the one hand, she highlights that she had Polish friends and Poles saved her during the war; on the other that she was not welcomed. When asked by the interviewer how she felt about the antisemitism, she answers:

What was I feeling? This is understandable. I, who feel, I felt Jewish, but I also felt Polish, because I do not know how many generations, my previous generations, lived in this country, worked, and maybe there were even those who gave something to the country. And they consider me an outcast. It does not mean that all Poles hated Jews, but that ... but yes, but it was. And it's not a small matter.⁹⁴⁵

She underscores that her identity was both Jewish and Polish and that there were people refusing her Polish identity because she was Jewish. She felt like an outcast because of that, and she considers it a serious issue, even though “it does not mean that all Poles hated Jews.”

Thus, Sara’s account suggests that all the factors named above when analyzing Helena’s account were not enough for one to feel welcomed and integrated. In fact, it brings in mind Celia Stopnicka Heller’s concept of assimilation without integration.⁹⁴⁶ The growing assimilation and acculturation of the Jewish middle class in particular did

⁹⁴³ OH GGNNTC Sara Grinfeld, 2; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102552/edition/97233>, 10.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103335/edition/98007>, 10.02.2023.

⁹⁴⁴ Ibid., 25; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102579/edition/97260>, 10.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103369/edition/98039>, 10.02.2023.

⁹⁴⁵ OH GGNNTC Sara Grinfeld, 27; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102580/edition/97261>, 10.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103370/edition/98040>, 10.02.2023.

⁹⁴⁶ Celia Stopnicka Heller, "Poles of Jewish Background: The Case of Assimilation Without Integration in Inter-war Poland," in *Studies on Polish Jewry*, ed. Ed Y. Fishman (New York: City University of New York, 1974).

not coincide with integration, because of the hostile attitudes of the Polish Catholic majority. At the same time, it is worth noting that Sara's Jewish identity was probably a bit stronger than Helena's. Some members of her family went to Palestine and had Zionist sympathies. In addition, she describes in detail participating in religious observance of the holidays at her grandparents' house and studying Hebrew. However, there is no clear evidence if this could be connected to her experiencing more antisemitism than Helena, because she never mentions exposing non-Jewish acquaintances to these aspects of her Jewishness.

Chawa [1923], in both her oral history and her Yad Vashem testimony, claims that she did not experience antisemitism at school.⁹⁴⁷ She says that she had Polish Catholic friends whom she visited at home and vice versa. She claims that "there was no difference at school. No difference".⁹⁴⁸ In fact, one her classmates, an Orthodox Christian girl, helped her to survive the liquidation of the ghetto.⁹⁴⁹ It might have been a case of a friendship between two outsiders, as Chawa recalls that during the Catholic catechism classes "a priest would come to teach the religion to the children, both of us would go out to the corridor. And so we befriended each other."⁹⁵⁰ Possibly, the experience of staying together during these lessons made them feel closer as they were both "the Other" in this context. Creating affective ties might have been the reason for offering help during the Holocaust.

Thus, the factors described in the accounts or inferred from them that could indicate promoting positive intergroup contact would be equal status either through integration (becoming one of "us") or, within the minority groups, through exclusion from the majority outgroup (e.g., Chawa's case).

Catholic Voices

Many Catholics mention their Jewish classmates. Some link it to the Holocaust; typically, they would say how many Jewish classmates they had and then proceed immediately to the assessment of whether they survived the Holocaust or not.⁹⁵¹

⁹⁴⁷ OH GGNNTC Chawa Goldminc; 18; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/104665/edition/99300>, 23.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/104994/edition/99627>, 23.02.2023; Yad Vashem O.3/VT/11397.

⁹⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁴⁹ Ibid., passim.

⁹⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁹⁵¹ OH GGNNTC Marian Sobczyk, passim; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/98961/edition/93317>, 27.02.2023; OH GGNNTC Kaliksta Socha, 12; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/123643/edition/117829>, 27.02.2023; OH GGNNTC Stanisława Podlipna, passim; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/118372/edition/112698>, 24.02.2023;

Stanisława [1930], for example, recalls two Jewish classmates (girls), one who was poor and had lice and another one who was rich and had red hair. Interestingly both features she mentions are also stereotypes about the Jews (see Chapter 7). She shares the name of the rich girl but when referring to the poor Jewish girl she mentions she does not recall her name because she attended the same class only for a year and “later they already liquidated her.”⁹⁵² Others would dedicate more time to descriptions of their families but very few speak about the actual relations, and if they do, they often limit themselves to the statement that the relations were good.

Kaliksta [1924] remembers two Jewish girls attending her class: “I played with them but I don’t remember (their names).”⁹⁵³ Edward [1928] summarizes the quality of the relations as normal: “In my class there was a Jewess and a Jew - children, but there were no distinctions. They were normally among the students... We treated them normally, there were no differences.”⁹⁵⁴ He does not explain what normal means in this context, assuming that it is clear. It is also probable that he does not want to encourage a discussion on these relations or simply does not see them as problematic. Janina [1924] mentions Jewish classmates and claims that there were no situations when Poles would make Jews feel bad or vice versa but she adds: “Outside of school, I do not know if there were any such situations.”⁹⁵⁵ Thus, she assumes it was possible outside.

Ludwik [1930] mentions that in his school “for sure there must have been Jewish children” but they were probably few and he does not remember. What he remembers is that “there was no problem” because “no one revealed themselves with their nationalities.”⁹⁵⁶ This short statement uncovers a certain way of thinking about

<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/118366/edition/112692>, 24.02.2023. OH GGNNTC Danuta Riabinin, 32;

<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/124558/edition/118712>, 24.02.2023.

⁹⁵² OH GGNNTC Stanisława Podlipna, 46;

<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/118372/edition/112698>, 24.02.2023. Also in other fragments of her oral history, she uses the same expression to predicate the murdering of the Jews. The usage of the Nazi terminology can suggest that Jews in her account become partly de-personified as victims. It could be also a distancing strategy. One wonders if the social status of the poor girl is another factor facilitating forgetting.

⁹⁵³ OH GGNNTC Kaliksta Socha, 12;

<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/123643/edition/117829>, 27.02.2023.

⁹⁵⁴ OH BBTNNC Edward Soczewiński, 34;

<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/128938/edition/122912>, 27.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/125510/edition/119640>, 27.02.2023.

⁹⁵⁵ OH GGNNTC Janina Kozak, 6;

<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/124568/edition/118722>, 23.03.2023.

⁹⁵⁶ OH GGNNTC Ludwik Kotliński, 19;

<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/35890/edition/34767>, 23.02.2023.

minorities: there are no problems with them as long as they keep their otherness private and hidden. Ludwik's account suggests that the problems start when Jewishness is manifested and the nationality "is revealed".

Others speak about the relations in more detail, focusing on the following topics: visiting each other's homes, exchanging food with Jewish classmates, Catholic catechism lessons and violence against Jewish students. Interestingly, only female interviewees include such details in their accounts. It remains unclear why exactly, but it seems one of the reasons could be that in general they appear to have had more cordial relations with their Jewish peers. Numerous Catholic women mention having Jewish girlfriends, and only a few men narrate friendships with Jews, male or female. One of the possible explanations is that the classes were not co-educational and Jewish girls were more exposed to intergroup contact, including through education, as they were sent to regular schools, while Jewish boys were sent in high numbers to religious Jewish schools. It is also worth noting that according to the stories, childhood friendships were predominantly with the same gender. Thus, Christian boys would have more exposure to Jewish boys as classmates and they would not make friends with Jewish girls.

Similar to the Jewish stories, among Catholics visiting each other's home was also a sign of proximity. Janina [1924] and Danuta [1921] describe such visits. Janina focuses on the food when she was invited to the dinner: "Once, I was invited to this Lusia... and I stayed there for dinner, but they did it normally, there were no Jewish dishes there, there was a Polish cook, so I did not have the opportunity to try some such *kosher* dishes."⁹⁵⁷ Apparently, she took an interest in food and remembers this part of the visit well because she was intrigued by the *kosher* food; maybe she heard that Jews eat differently than non-Jews, so most probably she was disappointed that the food was "normal". It seems that *kashrut* was for her a sign of Jewishness, a feature distinguishing her classmate from herself.

Danuta mentions the birthday party of one of the Jewish classmates, coming from a well off family: "I went to her birthday party; I remember there were very tasty sandwiches, no ham, of course, eggs, some kind of radish and so on. It was very nice." Again, like Janina she immediately points to the dietary differences ("no ham"). However, she adds to the description with other details – that her mother would always ask her daughter and other non-Jewish classmates how the day had gone, which Danuta seems to appreciate.⁹⁵⁸ The mention of that creates an image of mutuality and kindness in intergroup relations.

⁹⁵⁷ OH GGNNTC Janina Kozak, 17; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/124568/edition/118722>, 23.03.2023.

⁹⁵⁸ Danuta Riabinin, <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/124558/edition/118712>, 24.02.2023.

Food is important not only in the context of home visits but also lunch boxes.⁹⁵⁹ Maria [1926] recalls that one of her classmates would bring matzah to school and she would exchange her sandwiches with cold cuts: “he ate this bun with pleasure, that is, he violated these customs in this way, and I ate the matzah.”⁹⁶⁰ She adds that she adored matzah, and that for Jews “it was a sin to eat cold cuts”.⁹⁶¹ Thus, the food is presented as another factor distinguishing Jews from non-Jews.

Stefania [1927] remembers another situation concerning food:

Three Jewesses attended our class and wanted to make friends, and especially one... wanted to be friends with one of us so much that she even brought fruit, sweets, chocolates and wanted to buy her way. Perhaps they wanted friends in the classroom, the groups returned from school together, and they probably wanted the same. I remember that one of them liked me and she always had something in her bag for me. Once the boys noticed that she had sandwiches, and during the break they got to those sandwiches and ate them. She comes, she wants to eat, it's gone - she cried, and they laughed at the fact that they did such a trick to her. The teacher pointed out that this could not be done, but he did not punish, he only pointed out, embarrassed them.⁹⁶²

In her account the food plays a double role. On the one hand, it is a tool enabling buying one's way into a group and on the other, it is stolen goods through which bullying is executed. She recalls that one Jewish classmate would bring her all sorts of tasty treats to bridge the intergroup gap and become her friend. Stefania tells this from a privileged perspective of someone who had more power in the given situation. She does not reveal her attitude towards the Jewish girl but only talks about her efforts to become friends. Then, she proceeds to the story of Christian boys stealing the sandwiches of the Jewish girl just as a prank (as it is shown in Chapter 9, the term prank is often used to indicate instances of actual anti-Jewish violence). According to her description, the situation might have been just a case of boys bullying girls but at the same time, it bears a certain resemblance to the other pranks inflicted on Jews by Catholics, where the former suffer and the latter laugh at them.

Only Maria [1926] explicitly mentions antisemitic violence in school. She describes multiple examples of such behavior:

⁹⁵⁹ As one can note, food plays a very important part in the accounts of Jewish otherness. Almost all the Catholic interviewees highlight the difference between the Jewish food and the Polish traditional food.

⁹⁶⁰ OH GGNNTC Maria Sowa, 23;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/125802/edition/119909>, 27.02.2023.

⁹⁶¹ Ibid.

⁹⁶² OH GGNNTC Stefania Czekierda, 18-19;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/126324/edition/120407>, 20.02.2023.

There were children who were already antisemitic then (at school), because they would beat Jewish children during the breaks. The boys would beat the Jews, their classmates. Apparently, they got it out of their homes. On the other hand, I was brought up in such a way that no one should be discriminated against. My father was such that he would not let ... we never talked about it, I never heard that this one was a Jew, that he had to be humiliated or beaten... However, there were such stories that in the older grades - already in the fifth, sixth grade, boys were beating Jews. And there, they locked them in the toilet, and they lit something for them in the toilet, threw some lit paper or something, threw it in the toilet, poked them, they called them, "You Jew" or something like that. So there were different children, but there were also children who were absolutely fair to the Jews. And there were really a lot of these Jews in our school.⁹⁶³

Her account focuses on the children who replicated the attitudes of their parents and already at a young age attacked their Jewish classmates. She mentions Catholic boys beating Jewish boys during the breaks and the older ones attacking the Jewish ones in the toilets. They would lock a Jewish student in the toilet and throw in burning paper or something else and call them names.⁹⁶⁴ She underlines that not everyone was like that and there were many Jewish students in their school, implying that not all of them were attacked. The question here is how antisemitic per se these acts of bullying were. It could be a case of intersectionality, where a couple of factors made Jewish boys vulnerable to victimization.

The point of her story is that children came to school having already absorbed specific attitudes towards otherness, in this case Jewishness. She distances herself from the antisemitic violence at school, indicating that her father brought her up in an open and tolerant way, excluding spite or hatred of the Jews. She suggests the bullies were brought up in a way that imparted antisemitism, thus their personal responsibility for attacking Jewish peers is somehow transferred to their parents.

Another topic featured in oral histories is that of Catholic catechism and Catholic prayers versus Jewish classmates. Catechism was mandatory only for the Catholics,⁹⁶⁵ and therefore in the scholastic setting attendance constituted a clear line of demarcation between the ingroup and the outgroup. Non-Catholics were clearly distinguished, as remembered by Danuta [1921]:

It was simply known about the confession [religion] because these girls did not have to attend religion lessons. When they had their holidays, then they didn't just come to

⁹⁶³ OH GGNNTC Maria Sowa, 16;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/125782/edition/119900>, 27.02.2023.

⁹⁶⁴ "You Jew" was perceived and intended as an insult.

⁹⁶⁵ Other confessional groups had their own religious instruction either provided by the school (if the group was numerous enough or within their own religious community).

school. I don't remember how it was with the Jewesses on Saturday, because it would be a bit too often if they didn't come every Saturday, but I know that there was full tolerance.⁹⁶⁶

In her account, the Jewish identity of the classmates, and classmates' confession, is a matter of public knowledge. She uses the occasion to interject a comment on the intergroup relations: "there was full tolerance".

In general, the Catholic interviewees recall that their Jewish classmates either stayed in or left the classroom for the catechism class. Eugenia Prokop-Janiec mentions that in literature narrating Polish-Jewish relations at school this trope points to "the inviolability of religious difference and demonstrates its enduring power of exclusion."⁹⁶⁷ In the oral histories at hand, religion definitely establishes the intergroup border but it is hard to say that it overcomes the prevailing overall integrationist or multicultural type of narrative.

Kazimierz [1928] states that his Jewish classmates simply left the room and "took walks in the corridor."⁹⁶⁸ While for a contemporary reader leaving the room might seem the most intuitive solution, other interviewees mention that Jews would stay in. Janina [1927] says that "when there was the religion class, the Jewish children did not leave the classroom, but sat quietly and calmly."⁹⁶⁹ Likely, the way of arranging the situation of Jewish students during the catechism depended on each particular school and possibly additionally on the will of their parents. Maria [1926] remembers that there was a free choice of what to do during the catechism:

There was even such a slack, so to speak, that Jewish children who wanted to stay in for the religion class could sit and attend religion lessons. Mostly, Jewish children went out, but there were a few children, for example this Kuba, the son of this jeweler, he always

⁹⁶⁶ OH GGNNTC Danuta Riabinin, 23;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/124563/edition/118717>, 24.02.2023.

⁹⁶⁷ Prokop-Janiec, *Pogranicze polsko-żydowskie: topografie i teksty*, 75.

⁹⁶⁸ OH GGNNTC Kazimierz Jarzembowski, 24;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/118737/edition/113061>, 23.02.2023. Sara recalls: "We, however, did not attend, twice a week we had a free hour, because we didn't study the Catholic religion but had once a week the Jewish religion. A teacher would come from the Jewish *gimnazjum* and taught us not so much the religion but rather Jewish history." OH GGNNTC Sara Grinfeld, 35;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102572/edition/97253>, 10.02.2023.

⁹⁶⁹ OH GGNNTC Janina Grudzińska, 3;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/50242/edition/47170>, 23.02.2023.

stayed and he sat and listened. He just took it as history. There were no Jewish religion lessons in our school.⁹⁷⁰

She refers to the situation in her elementary school and describes that most Jewish classmates took the decision to leave the room but at least one chose to stay and listen because it was interesting for him. In her perception giving the students such a choice was a sign of “slack” and tolerance. Danuta [1921], too, presents a similar approach, when referring to the situation in her high school: “there was no difference in the treatment of the students. Nobody forbade them to go to religion lessons - if they wanted, let them go, it was definitely for their benefit.”⁹⁷¹ In her opinion too, the possibility to stay in the class for the catechism was a sign of tolerance and openness. Unfortunately, there is no Jewish account commenting on this practice that would allow insight into the Jewish perceptions of the habit.

In addition to the catechism, many schools⁹⁷² practiced opening and closing the classes with Catholic prayers (Pl. *pacierz*). Maria [1926] recalls that “during the prayers, some Jewish children just said this prayer because they already knew it, and some simply stood...”⁹⁷³ Her memory that Jewish children would say a Catholic prayer is quite surprising and in the context of this study it might be a unique case of interreligious prayer occurring in the interwar period. It would be interesting to understand the motivations and perceptions of that experience but no Jewish interviewee refers to it. One possible explanation is suggested in the account of Janina [1924] who remembers that “during prayers, in the morning or after lessons, they stood quietly, it was forbidden to speak, God forbid to smile, because it was immediately punished.”⁹⁷⁴ Her words might imply that saying the prayers was an act of obedience enforced by school discipline, indicating a power balance, although probably it depended on the teacher or headmaster.

Nonetheless, it appears that the accounts of Jewish relations to the religion class and Catholic school prayers are predominantly positive. Although Catholics notice how the catechism divided the students into Catholics and non-Catholics, they do not see a

⁹⁷⁰ OH GGNNTC Maria Sowa, 17;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/125782/edition/119900>, 27.02.2023.

⁹⁷¹ OH GGNNTC Danuta Riabinin, 24;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/124558/edition/118712>, 24.02.2023.

⁹⁷² I did not manage to find out whether the Catholic prayers were a mandatory part of the opening and closure of every schoolday in the Polish interwar schools.

⁹⁷³ OH GGNNTC Maria Sowa, 17;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/125782/edition/119900>, 27.02.2023.

⁹⁷⁴ OH GGNNTC Janina Kozak, 5;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/124568/edition/118722>, 23.03.2023.

problem with it and accentuate the open and voluntary character of participation, which did not have to follow one's religious belonging. At the same time, they speak from the majority perspective and similar Jewish accounts are not available. Therefore, the image remains one-sided. Importantly, Jews are not pictured in this context as threatening Catholic religion in any way but rather respecting it and even at times interested in it from a secular perspective. This is important to note because some other tropes, presented in Chapter 9, point to opposite views. Importantly, the tropes of Judaism being a false religion, the deicide charge and supersessionist views are not included even though they could be mentioned when speaking about such a topic.

Relations to the Teachers

According to the stories, and the literature on the subject⁹⁷⁵ relations with teachers were very formal and based on discipline and order. Many interviewees mention the teachers very briefly and in the context of punishments and restrictions. In the Second Republic of Poland, the profession of a teacher was well respected and well paid, as the teachers were state officials.⁹⁷⁶ Their high social position, in connection to the pedagogical ideas of the time, explain the character of their relations with the students.

However, the situation with teachers in Jewish schools diverged from the general picture. Róża Fiszman-Sznajdman, who wrote in detail about the Jewish schools she attended in Lublin,⁹⁷⁷ highlights that many of the Jewish teachers working in private Jewish schools were not remunerated well at all:

The teachers of the Jewish school (CISZO) worked there [in the summer camp] in the most difficult conditions, in the open air. They could not quit their holiday job, because their salaries were very low, and they never received them on time, and often even in the form of promissory notes from payers of the Jewish community, quite often not redeemed by debtors.⁹⁷⁸

Such a position naturally reflected negatively on their relations to their students, who respected impecunious teachers less, although for this study it is just a nuance helping to understand the general tendency and position of a teacher in this society. Both the

⁹⁷⁵ Małgorzata Kozłowska, "Wychowanie małego dziecka w Polsce w pierwszej dekadzie okresu międzywojennego na łamach wybranych czasopism pedagogicznych – ciągłość i zmiana," *Wychowanie w Rodzinie* 13, no. 2 (2015).

⁹⁷⁶ "Ile nauczyciele zarabiali przed wojną? Płace, obowiązki i przywileje w oświacie okresu II RP," *Historia.org.pl*, 2019, accessed 10.10.2022.

⁹⁷⁷ Fiszman-Sznajdman, *Mój Lublin*, passim.

⁹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 22. Translation mine.

Jewish and the Catholic voices studied here refer to teachers from the public schools, who did not face such challenges.

Jewish Voices

The only account, luckily for this study quite extensive, about relations with a non-Jewish teacher come from Sarah [1922], who went to the Jewish elementary school. Although the general tone of her story is often harsh on Poles, she describes her Catholic teacher with certain affection and clear appreciation. She states that she spent the entire seven years of elementary school with this teacher and that her memories from the school were good because of her.⁹⁷⁹ Sarah mentions the particular attention of the teacher to the poor children, who made up the majority of the class.

It was this teacher, Mrs. Dobrzyńska, who taught them how to wash in the morning, when you don't have water, and how you can wash yourself. You can take whatever cloth you have, dip it in water, hold it in your hand, or close to your body to warm it up. Take that piece of soap you have, smear it and rub it all over your body with the soap. Later, I still remember this lesson, then take the same piece of this... this cloth, rinse it and wipe that soap off the body, then you won't be dirty. You don't have a bathtub? Some of the kids didn't know what a bathtub was. They didn't know the word, bathtub. So that she taught them. She taught them how to sit at the table ... She taught them how to hold a spoon or a knife, which they never did in their lives. She gave them these basics of life.... And in Poland there was a system that she got a class from the first year, to the seventh, to the last. Yes, she was our teacher for seven years... Did the other teachers do that? I do not know.⁹⁸⁰

The main point Sarah makes is the teacher's sensitivity to the challenges of the poor students with the most basic issues such as hygiene or behavior at the table. She claims that the teacher provided the necessary tools to enable them to function in society, because elsewhere she claims that their parents had no possibility of doing so because of their extreme poverty and harsh working conditions, resulting in their inability to even spend time with their children, not to mention proper upbringing. Sarah, who came from a rich family, treats them with pity but also with some contempt or disgust. She cannot understand how they could live this way. Maybe because of her own feelings of disgust, she admires the teacher's attitude even more:

⁹⁷⁹ OH GGNNTC Sarah Tuller, 94;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/101333/edition/95999>, 27.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/101572/edition/96233>, 27.02.2023.

⁹⁸⁰ Ibid. Sarah mentions that the class numbered approximately forty students and between five and seven were from rich families while about twenty were from the poorest families, meaning they would come to school hungry and dirty.

These kids didn't have anything to eat and she always brought something to school. This candy for children ... There were almost forty of us. This a candy for kids ... not every day, once a week or something. She did ... bring a cookie once. And some of the kids wouldn't eat it because the kids were saying, "It's not kosher and we can't eat it." They starved and did not eat.⁹⁸¹

Sarah seems to be unable to understand why some of her classmates did not use the help they were offered and did not eat the sweets brought by the teacher. She explains they did that because it was not kosher but clearly, for her it was not a valid reason.

Moreover, she also includes in the story her assessment of the teacher's motivation: "she was very Catholic, Polish... She believed that it is necessary to help."⁹⁸² The relations with her were so cordial that Sarah remained in touch with her after graduation:

I went to visit her, or wrote to her for two years ... and then she stopped writing. I don't know what happened, whether she left or it happened... She was great. I only knew her. I can't say much about the school... Because I fell into this good teacher. I was with her from the first ward to the seventh. After the seventh grade, I went to private, to a private Jewish school.⁹⁸³

According to the story, Sarah's good experience with this teacher defined her entire elementary school education. She adds that religion was a forbidden subject and that it was not discussed.

Another interviewee, Sara [1923], refers to her friendship with the Catholic staff of her high school. She does not say anything about the relations with them specifically before the war but recalls both the school secretary and the headmaster hugged and kissed her when she returned to the city after the war:

When I came to Lublin in 1945, this gymnasium existed, and this secretary met me. And she called me not Sarah, but Sarusia [a diminutive]. Lovingly. It was a Pole. And apart from seeing her at school, I had no contact with her. And in 1945 I entered the school and I wanted them to give me a copy of my last certificate. This secretary hugged me, she started to cry, I said, "Why are you crying?" "You are alive!" She remembered me as a Jew. And she was glad and this old Arciszowa [the headmaster] came, half-blind, and she heard a little, so she came. And she heard that a student of her school saved herself

⁹⁸¹ Ibid., 95.

⁹⁸² Ibid.

⁹⁸³ Ibid.

during the occupation, she hugged me too and kissed me. It was very touching, very touching.⁹⁸⁴

Although this fragment of her story pertains to the postwar period, it definitely points to cordiality of relations between the staff of the school and the students before the war as well.

Catholic Voices

Two Catholics speak about the teachers being members of the outgroup. Zofia [1926] does not say much, even when asked specifically. She mentions that in her (elementary) school “there were many Jewish children and even a Jewess, named Szejmanowa, taught us... a very pretty lady, she was our form mistress. And Poles and Jews [together] lived not bad. They didn’t argue, no...”⁹⁸⁵ Maria [1926] shares more details. She had two Jewish “wonderful teachers”:

Ms. Klarman was such an excellent Polish teacher, so she paid attention to her speech and expressing herself. Back then, when I was going to school, it wasn't "gymnastics" or "physics", it just had to be "gymnastics", it had to be "physics" [different accents], and we chanted it, she taught us that, required it [comments on the accent] Besides, I had parents who spoke and write beautiful Polish, so I got something from home, but Ms. Klarman was a great Polish teacher. And this geography gentleman was also a very good teacher.⁹⁸⁶

Ms. Klarman taught Polish, which Maria highlights that she did in an excellent way. It is possible that a Jewish teacher of the Polish language was a rare find in the local context, thus Maria remembers it well – maybe because it was an exception. Moreover, she underscores her teaching of a correct accent, most probably because the popular opinion on Jews was that they could not speak Polish without a Yiddish accent.⁹⁸⁷ Later, Maria also remembers the name of the geography teacher:

⁹⁸⁴ OH GGNNTC Sara Grinfeld, 35-36;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102572/edition/97253>, 10.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103362/edition/98033>, 10.02.2023.

⁹⁸⁵ OH GGNNTC Zofia Mazurek, 10;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/126997/edition/121033>, 23.02.2023.

⁹⁸⁶ OH GGNNTC Maria Sowa, 15;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/125782/edition/119900>, 27.02.2023.

⁹⁸⁷ In fact, in the context of Lublin, some members of the older generation at the time would speak very little Polish.

My primary school teacher who taught geography was a man of Jewish origin - his name was Zoner. He was a very nice gentleman, a very good teacher in general, nice, he loved young people very much. We all liked him, but he was a bit funny, because when someone, a boy in particular, would answer, he would grab his head and, despite the fact that he spoke great Polish - I emphasize it - beautiful, perfect Polish, but when he got angry or something he didn't like, he would grab his head and say: "Ay vay! Ay vay,"⁹⁸⁸ you don't know anything! You finally start learning!" And it made us laugh so much. But the man was okay.⁹⁸⁹

She presents him as a nice person and a good teacher who loved the youth and thus was "the right person in the right place." According to the story he was liked by his students but there was one thing about him that they would find funny. Even though he spoke fluent, unflawed Polish, in emotional moments, when he lost patience with his students' ignorance or laziness, he interjected a Yiddish exclamation "ay vay!" The Polish students found it very funny and laughed at him when he did that. They saw the contrast between his perfect Polish and the Yiddish expression as comical. Possibly, also his gestures (grabbing his head) seemed to them exaggerated, "oriental" and foreign.

Thus, one can infer from this fragment that certain expressions and elements of the body language were seen as typically Jewish and mixing them with what was perceived as Polish was not easily accepted. Such mixing did not provoke in this case open hostility but rather laughter. As explained by various theories of humor, laughter can result from the perception of incongruity.⁹⁹⁰ In this case, the expectation was that the teacher would keep on behaving like a Pole but his Jewishness would unexpectedly show in situations when he was overcome by emotion. Emotionality and extravertism were also perceived as typically Jewish features, which were probably seen in contrast with his composure displayed most of the time and the seriousness expected from a teacher.

Conclusions

Similar to the relations with neighbors, the intergroup relations at school are presented in a prevalingly positive light, within a narrative that could be called either integrationist or multicultural – the intergroup relations are presented as rather friendly

⁹⁸⁸ A version of a Yiddish exclamation "oy vey!"

⁹⁸⁹ OH GGNNTC Maria Sowa, 34;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/128045/edition/122042>, 27.02.2023.

⁹⁹⁰ Salvatore Attardo, "The Semantic Foundations of Cognitive Theories of Humor," *Humor* 10, no. 4 (1997), <https://doi.org/doi:10.1515/humr.1997.10.4.395>.

and respectful, the minority as either integrated or part of a diverse society; however, there are some exceptions. The problems mentioned include antisemitic peer violence, ostracism and prejudice towards Jewish students. It seems, however, that the physical peer violence was limited to boys while ostracism and exclusion touched also Jewish girls. Importantly, it appears that such behaviors are recalled only within the peer relations and not with teachers and headmasters.

Another interesting dynamic is that of the teacher-student relation when they belonged to different groups. It seems that personal qualities of the teachers mattered a lot but nonetheless the students belonging to the majority group had an upper hand in the relations with the minority-group teachers, pointing to a power imbalance. Although students had to be very obedient and subjugated to their teachers, they found a way to manifest their attitude towards the non-normativity by laughing at the “Jewish” features of their teacher (Maria’s story).

Naturally, the limited mentions of these relations in the sources do not allow for generalizations but rather point to some possible dynamics taking place when two groups meet within the education system that is supposed to be a neutral meeting space. Whether it was, remains for another study to explore.

Political Parties

Another interesting area of intergroup contact, although present in the sources as a marginal theme, was common participation in certain political parties or organizations, or cooperation between Polish and Jewish ones, briefly mentioned by three Jewish interviewees, Dawid [1912] from Poalei Zion-Left, Josef [1923] who was related to the Bund, and Edward [1920] whose father was initially connected to PPS. In spite of its marginal character, the reference is worth noticing because of the privileged and formative character that political parties and organizations had in the life of youth growing up in that era.

Dawid mentions spending time in prison together with Polish communists, and becoming friends particularly with one of them.⁹⁹¹ Josef speaks extensively about the Bund and clearly points to his devotion to the party. His political affiliation is the axis of his narrative and reflects his strong identification with the party. He grew up in SKIF

⁹⁹¹ In the period he refers to communism was illegal and communist activists were arrested. He mentions that many Jewish non-communist but socialist activists were arrested along with them, including him. OH GGNNTC Dawid Sztokfisz, 3-4; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/104007/edition/98652>, 27.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103628/edition/98292>, 27.02.2023.

and was highly aware of the developments inside the organization as well as its various interactions with non-Jewish organizations. One of the most interesting examples he mentions is the PPS-Bund cooperation against the attacks on the Jews organized by the students of the Catholic University (National Democrats):

Well, these students of the Catholic University of Lublin attacked them [the Jews], but they did not receive [right away] an answer, because it was planned together with the PPS to drag them through Krakowskie Przedmieście and the Krakowska Gate on Grodzka Street, then close them in the Jewish district and teach them a lesson.⁹⁹²

According to his story, the members of the Bund and PPS together organized revenge on the antisemitic students who harassed and beat Jews, and beat them heavily in response (the story is referred to with more detail in Chapter 7). The most important element of this story for this section is the cooperation between the two socialist parties, the Jewish one and the Polish one, which points to the common goals and values they shared. For the members of both parties antisemitic violence was unacceptable and they both chose to counter it by using physical force. The cooperation is referred to as successful and proves that ideological commonalities could be the factor facilitating intergroup contact. Even if two involved groups have unequal status – it was Jews who were persecuted, not Catholic Poles – they had a common goal to eradicate antisemitic violence and cooperated together to achieve it. In addition, their cooperation was not impeded by any external regulations or interventions coming from the authorities (one could imagine the police making the cooperation more difficult or impossible).

Josef mentions cooperation between these two parties also on other levels: organizing common parades on the Labor Day (May 1st),⁹⁹³ organizing common trips between SKIF and the Red Scouts (*Czerwone Harcerstwo*) of PPS and spending time together.⁹⁹⁴ Moreover, he recalls that thanks to a PPS member who directed the Bund orchestra, which is a very telling example of intergroup cooperation, it was arranged that *Dom*

⁹⁹² OH GGNNTC Josef Fraind, 34; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/121245/edition/115498>, 18.02.2023.
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/121340/edition/115593>, 18.02.2023.

⁹⁹³ Ibid., 29; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/121238/edition/115491>, 22.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/121333/edition/115586>, 22.02.2023.

⁹⁹⁴ “[We had contacts] with the PPS Red Scouting. We went on excursions together, bathe on Saturday, eat young potatoes with sour milk in the villages on Sunday, it was a good thing. And we spent time together. In addition, on May 1, we met in one demonstration - Polish and Jewish children, Red Scouts and SKIF.” OH GGNNTC Josef Fraind, 29; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/121234/edition/115487>, 22.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/121327/edition/115581>, 21.02.2023.

Żołnierza (a cultural center for soldiers) would be made available to the Bund members for their gymnastic classes on Saturdays.⁹⁹⁵

In fact, it seems that this PPS-Bund cooperation was one of the entry points for Josef, who grew up in a Yiddish-speaking environment and without exposure to Polish culture, to Polish culture and society. He mentions positive contact with Catholic Poles alluding to their belonging to PPS: a Polish janitor who made heroic efforts to keep the school clean⁹⁹⁶ and a Polish friend whose father was a PPS member, and thus she was tolerant and open-minded.⁹⁹⁷

Although there is not sufficient data to assert with certainty that common political ideas are a basis for positive intergroup contact based on these sources, it is known from other studies that undoubtedly common ideological standpoints facilitate intergroup contacts. A good example of this, although far from obvious, could be the support of the right wing Zionist organizations of Lechi and Irgun by the Polish military.⁹⁹⁸

Friendships

Many researchers of intergroup contact theory point to the role affective ties play in creating positive intergroup contact and decreasing prejudice.⁹⁹⁹ Anja Eller and Dominic Abrams state that “quality of contact (i.e. friendship potential) appears to be pivotal. Moreover, learning about the outgroup and behaviour modification seem to be important at initial stages of contact, whereas the generation of affective ties gains importance over time.”¹⁰⁰⁰

⁹⁹⁵ OH GGNNTC Josef Fraind, 26; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/121236/edition/115489>, 20.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/121331/edition/115584>, 22.02.2023.

⁹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 20; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/121675/edition/115922>, 22.02.2023.

⁹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 22; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/121231/edition/115484>, 22.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/121323/edition/115576>, 14.02.2022.

⁹⁹⁸ Edyta Czop and Krzysztof Mroczkowski, "Między mitycznym antysemityzmem, politycznym pragmatyzmem i sojuszem, którego oficjalnie nie było. Wybrane aspekty współpracy polskich władz wojskowych i żydowskiej prawicy w latach 1938–1944," *UR Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* 5, no. 4 (2017), <https://doi.org/10.15584/johass.2017.4.2>.

⁹⁹⁹ Thomas F. Pettigrew, "Intergroup Contact Theory," *Annual Review of Psychology* 49 (1998), <https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.49.1.65>; Pettigrew and Tropp, "A Meta-Analytic Test of Intergroup Contact Theory."

¹⁰⁰⁰ Anja Eller and Dominic Abrams, "Come together: longitudinal comparisons of Pettigrew's reformulated intergroup contact model and the common ingroup identity model in Anglo-French and Mexican-American contexts," *European Journal of Social Psychology* 34, no. 3 (2004), <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.194>, 253.

As the exposure to the outgroup was definitely prolonged, the result is that affective ties would have the potential to change the intergroup relations with time. The following section takes a closer look at the narratives of intergroup friendships and of lack thereof, assessing the factors facilitating the intergroup friendships and those inhibiting them.

Moreover, the section explores the way in which these ties or lack thereof affect the overall representation of the outgroup in the entire oral history given by a specific person. The intergroup contact theory suggests that it should be so and the friendships should improve the image of the outgroup.

Jews about Their Friendships with Catholics

Absence of Intergroup Friendship

Among the intergroup friendship narratives, the first possible option is a narrative of absence, important because it sheds light on possible challenges to intergroup friendship. Adam [1923] for instance, claims he cannot remember having any Polish friends:

I don't remember having Polish friends. I absolutely don't remember. I remember attending a humanities gymnasium, which was a Jewish gymnasium. It was very difficult to get into Polish school being a Jew at the time. They admitted very few Jews - it was exceptional, when a man got into a Polish gymnasium - it was very little. The same was true of my studies as well. Because I remember, my sister wanted to study, she could not enter the university. So our surroundings were typically Jewish and our friends were also Jewish.¹⁰⁰¹

He links not having Polish friends to attending a Jewish school. In his perception friendships were made mostly in school, which he expresses explicitly a few sentences later:

As a boy, I did not deal with Polish boys because I did not go to school with them. It all started with school. Mostly Poles lived in our tenement house, but I absolutely do not remember having Polish friends. My friend was the boy from the opposite side, the son of my father's business partner.¹⁰⁰²... And my friends were mostly from school... You

¹⁰⁰¹ OH GGNNTC Adam Adams, 30; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/121703/edition/115950>, 28.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/100938/edition/95385>, 28.02.2023.

¹⁰⁰² Thus, presumably a Jewish boy.

only make friends at school, sir. In the yard as well, when they play, but I don't know if my mother let me go to the yard.¹⁰⁰³

In the first fragment, he states that his surroundings were Jewish, suggesting that the absence of intergroup friendship was not intentional but rather an outcome of the circumstances. In fact, he implies it was the discrimination against the Jewish students, who were admitted to a Polish gymnasium or university only exceptionally, that made him and his sister have only Jewish friends. Thus, although implicitly, he makes a conclusion about the Polish system of education – that it did not create opportunities for intergroup acquaintances and thus maintained the intergroup divide and separation.

Awigdor [1920], too, recalls that he was not exposed to Polish peers: “Polish peers? No. There was not one Pole who lived in Lubartowska Street. It wasn't there. There wasn't, I don't remember one. Only Jews were there, there were no Poles in Lubartowska Street, no.”¹⁰⁰⁴ In his opinion, there were no Poles in the part of the Jewish quarter he lived in. Thus, he would never meet them and in consequence had no chance of becoming friends. Implicitly, he suggests that segregation was the factor contributing to such situation.

Both Adam and Awigdor came from relatively prosperous families and felt that the segregation was somehow imposed on them or at least existent independently of their choices, but Mosze [1918], raised in very modest conditions, adds another aspect to the problem:

I was walking [in the Jewish quarter], in Zamkowa [I was], but I wasn't in the Polish neighborhood, I didn't go [there], I had no reason to go [there]. Friends, I didn't have friends [there]. And I wasn't dressed like that either. I dressed better on Saturday and holidays, because I had different clothes for holidays.¹⁰⁰⁵

While for Adam and Awigdor the divide is between their Jewishness and external Polishness, Mosze recalls a self-imposed segregation stemming from poverty. He does not mention the ethno-religious factor as the source of the division but rather sees the Polish neighborhoods as richer and himself as not fitting in there. Apparently, he also

¹⁰⁰³ OH GGNNTC Adam Adams, 64-65;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/122266/edition/116486>, 28.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/100957/edition/95404>, 28.02.2023.

¹⁰⁰⁴ OH GGNNTC Awigdor Kacelenbogen, 18;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/101876/edition/96535>, 23.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103017/edition/97696>, 23.02.2023.

¹⁰⁰⁵ OH GGNNTC Mosze Korn, 11;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102897/edition/97576>, 23.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103090/edition/97769>, 23.02.2023.

assumed that there were no Poles living in the Jewish quarter and that to meet some he would have had to go to the Polish areas, where he was not comfortable going because of his poor clothes (“I wasn’t dressed like that”). Therefore, in his case the main impediment (as he perceives it) in the intergroup friendships lays in economic inequality.

When it comes to the possible impact of these friendships on the images of the outgroup, the connection is not clear because of the multiplicity of factors shaping the stories and the view of the outgroup. Adam, for example, did not have any Catholic friends before the war but survived thanks to a Catholic woman, an acquaintance of his Jewish friend who decided to hid him in her basement. He speaks about her with much affection, highlighting her selflessness:

This woman, I must tell you, was illiterate, she couldn't read or write. But she had a very kind heart. And she was a very believing Catholic... very believing Catholic, very. She... she believed... that human life is very precious... And she put us in that cellar... And she kept us in that basement. Or one day turned into a week, a week turned into two weeks, and we dug ... in this ... in the wall ... such a - how we did it, I don't remember anymore - a hole, a hole and two people, me and him, went in and as I remember, this hole was so big that we couldn't stretch our legs completely...And she took us and we were in this hole...And this woman was very poor... And we didn't have a lot of money with us... I remember, I only had one such coin, a twentieth... a gold coin... But we didn't have a lot of money with us. So we didn't have her... this woman did it all... out of her good heart rather and out of her faith which... not for profit, right?¹⁰⁰⁶

When recalling his hiding he cries and repeats that the woman was poor, illiterate and in addition had a relative who was a *volksdeutsch*¹⁰⁰⁷ and lived in the same building. Thus, she risked a lot taking in two Jewish men, one of whom (Adam) she had never seen before. Adam expresses his gratitude towards her and her family multiple times in the story and narrates his efforts to reciprocate the favor and help the family financially for many decades after the war. Moreover, he repeats a few times in the story that her motivation stemmed from her faith and conviction that human life is precious and should be protected.

Therefore, it could be assumed that his overall image of the outgroup is colored more by this experience than the lack of friendships before the war. The wartime experiences overshadow all the pre-war past.

¹⁰⁰⁶ OH GGNNTC Adam Adams, 6.

¹⁰⁰⁷ The term signified in Nazi ideology a person whose language and culture had German origins but who did not hold German citizenship. In occupied Poland signing a *volksdeutsch* list was a possibility to get better treatment but it was commonly perceived as betrayal.

Awigdor's situation is quite different because he left for Palestine in 1933, and thus his encounters with the outgroup in his childhood had a decisive impact on his image of the outgroup. The fact that he grew up in the Jewish quarter with very little contact with Poles shapes his way of seeing them. He mentions being exposed to the Catholics on two occasions. One was his domestic servants, whom he mentions in passing, which suggests no emotional attachment to them.¹⁰⁰⁸ Another was the beatings by Polish boys when crossing the borders of the Jewish neighborhoods to the "modern" part of the city.¹⁰⁰⁹ Naturally, for him these encounters are more formative than for Adam, and although he does not refer explicitly to his current opinions on Catholic Poles, it could be inferred that he simply thinks them alien. His entire story is very concentrated on the Jewish experience, almost as if it could be anywhere in central Europe. Even though the family spoke Polish, it seems that it was a vehicle of modernization just like in many other cases in this study.

Mosze has yet different life trajectory and thus the lack of friendships with the outgroup members plays out differently in his story. He grew up in a very poor and very religious family that had little contact with Catholic Poles.¹⁰¹⁰ Until the age of eighteen, he had only a religious education and when he was 21 the war broke out and he escaped to the Soviet Union and left the religious lifestyle. After the war he settled in Germany and became a successful businessman. The main characteristics of his story are joy and gratitude. He keeps on highlighting how lucky he was in his life, and the account focuses on the transition from poverty and a closed religious mindset towards prosperity and education.¹⁰¹¹ Given that he had very little contact with Poles before, during and after the war, the outgroup remains on the margins of his story, similarly to Awigdor. The only instances when he mentions Poles is when he says he would not go to the Polish neighborhoods and when recalling a Polish neighbor who would protect his religious father from nasty pranks because he recognized his holiness.¹⁰¹² These are incidental details and thus in Mosze's story the lack of friendships with the outgroup is related to the perceived low relevance of the outgroup in his life, and to the main plot in the story.

¹⁰⁰⁸ OH GGNNTC Awigdor Kacelenbogen, 9.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Ibid., passim; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/101877/edition/96536>, 23.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103018/edition/97697>, 23.02.2023.

¹⁰¹⁰ OH GGNNTC Mosze Korn, passim.

¹⁰¹¹ Mosze is very proud not only of his successful business in multiple countries but also pays a lot of attention to his sons being educated and achieving high social position thanks to their exquisite intellectual abilities.

¹⁰¹² Mosze repeatedly refers to his father as a learned and holy man.

Before continuing to the accounts of intergroup friendships, it is worth noting that all the above cases regard Jewish men, which might confirm the hypothesis expressed earlier, on the increased difficulty in intergroup contact for Jewish males, due to lower exposure.

Accounts of Intergroup Friendships

Those who mention intergroup friendships refer to multiple factors facilitating them. Mirroring the order of the above section, I start from the friendships born in school. Helena [1926] mentions being friends with her Polish classmates but she describes the relations as less cordial than with her Jewish peers.¹⁰¹³ Conversely, Chawa [1923] states that she had Polish friends and names one particular girl who seems to have been one of her closest friends. Chawa remembers, "I went to visit her and she came to visit me."¹⁰¹⁴ Sara [1923] presents a more nuanced view of her friendship with a Catholic classmate:

From the school bench [I remember] there was a police officer, his name was Ruciński, who had a daughter and a son. And his daughter went to the same class with me, and his brother was one class lower than me. And with this friend, we often left school together. She lived on Kościuszko Street, on her way to Wieniawska Street, and she asked me a lot to go [to her place]. She knew that I lived with strangers, not in my family, so she asked me to go with her to her house and eat lunch with her. "We'll do lessons together, we'll go for a walk later." I liked her very much and we were friends at school.¹⁰¹⁵

The Catholic girl is pictured as a close friend from school, who was compassionate of Sara's situation (she lived in a rented room without her family). Therefore, she would invite her to have lunch and do homework together. Sara admits she liked her very much. Unfortunately for their friendship, the girl's brother commented on her inviting a Jewish girl in a way that was uncomfortable for Sara. In this case, the school became the facilitator of the friendship but the antisemitism of Catholic family members became the main obstacle.

¹⁰¹³ OH GGNNTC Helena Grynszpan, 55-56;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102130/edition/96781>, 23.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102615/edition/97296>, 23.02.2023.

¹⁰¹⁴ OH GGNNTC Chawa Goldminc, 18;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/104665/edition/99300>, 23.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/104994/edition/99627>, 23.02.2023.

¹⁰¹⁵ OH GGNNTC Sara Grinfeld, 25;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102579/edition/97260>, 10.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103369/edition/98039>, 10.02.2023.

Apart from the school friendships, some mention friendships born on other grounds: Josef [1923], as explained above, remembers playing together with a Polish girl whose father was socialist, just like Josef:

I remember one girl, a Pole, very pleasant, with a positive attitude towards the poor. Later it turned out that her father was a PPS member and she was brought up in the spirit of tolerance and coexistence with Jewish neighbours. She went to a different school, I went to another school, so as much as we used to meet on the ice rink in winter, because Thursday is such a mountain, we used to go downhill, and because there was no sledge, everyone found a worn-out bowl, and that's how it turned out and they were sliding.¹⁰¹⁶

Josef brings in two more factors – ideological and economical. He implies that the factor facilitating contact was the girl's open-minded attitude towards the poor, shaped by her father. Thus, he implies the poverty might have been a dividing factor but in this case was not because of her ideological background. Therefore, he sees socialism as a uniting factor facilitating friendship in this case.

Other cases of friendships are discussed in different sections. Bronisława's mother's friendship with the janitor and Edward's friendship with his Polish neighbor is featured above in the *Neighbors* section,¹⁰¹⁷ Mosze's father's friendship with a Catholic colleague is mentioned in Chapter 9, when discussing attending Christmas celebrations.¹⁰¹⁸

Overall, one could make a conclusion that Jewish girls would make friends with Catholic girls at school and among neighbors but the success of the relationship depended also on external factors such as family attitudes towards the outgroup. It was more complex for Jewish boys but social class equality and exposure seem to have facilitated intergroup friendship (both for Edward and Josef).

Those Jewish interviewees who were exposed to Catholics in their youth and formed friendships seem to display a more nuanced narrative of the Other and pay more attention to the relationship with the outgroup but this is related to the fact that the outgroup was present in their lives to a much higher degree.

Helena, Chawa and Sara survived thanks to Poles, Catholic and Christian Orthodox.¹⁰¹⁹ As Sara puts it:

¹⁰¹⁶ OH GGNNTC Josef Fraind, 22; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/121231/edition/115484>, 18.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/121323/edition/115576>, 18.02.2023.

¹⁰¹⁷ See pp. 306-7.

¹⁰¹⁸ See pp. 403-404.

¹⁰¹⁹ Chawa was given a birth certificate of her Christian Orthodox friend and classmate. OH GGNNTC Chawa Goldminc, 3.

But when I was in Warsaw... in Warsaw on the Aryan side as a Pole and I had, Poles helped me to get a job. The Poles obtained my work documents so that the Germans would not catch me and send me to Germany. Poles, when they invited me to... even to their home, were not afraid, because I did not look Jewish. And if it weren't for the Poles, I wouldn't be sitting and talking to you right now.¹⁰²⁰

Thus, similar to Adam's story, it is the wartime experiences that ultimately shape their image of the Other. Not surprisingly, the traumatic memories carry much more weight than the previous experiences of intergroup friendship. However, one could ask whether the prewar intergroup friendships facilitated finding help from Christian Poles during the Holocaust. Adam's story suggests a positive answer, as what saved him was the friendship of his Jewish friend with a Catholic woman. If he was alone or his friend had not have been friends with that outgroup member, most probably he would have perished. In that sense, one could draw positive conclusions about intergroup friendship.

Catholics about Friendships with Jews

In general, Catholics tend to speak more about their intergroup friendships than Jews. Naturally, it could be seen as part of the tendency to present intergroup relations in a positive light. The structure and circumstances of the interviews, including the questions asked, appear to be the main reason for that. Moreover, they focus on friendships among neighbors. None of the Catholic interviewees explicitly mentions a close friendship which started at school. Finally, it is more women (five) than men (two) who remember such friendships, which would confirm the hypothesis raised above about girls having more exposure to their Jewish peers and thus more chances of forming intergroup friendships.

Neighbors

Celina [1931] recalls Jewish families living in her building and in particular the family living in the apartment in front of hers:

A family lived in front of us and there was a girl, a Jewish girl of my age, and I often went there and watched the monks from the balcony, because their balcony overlooked... the monastery gardens and we were staring there from this balcony when these monks walked around this garden, I remembered it more or less. I know that with

¹⁰²⁰ OH GGNNTC Sara Grinfeld, 26; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102587/edition/97268>, 10.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103377/edition/98047>, 10.02.2023.

this Jewish family it was very nice, very clean, but I can't say anything more, because we left before the ghetto, before all that, I lost contact with them. But before that, I played with this girl, we were friends of course. I was at their house, she was with us. I don't remember her name. I do not know what her parents did, but they had to be well off, because they could afford a fairly large apartment, because ours was not big, that is, it was large, but it consisted of one large room. On the other hand, there were probably two or three rooms for them, so quite large, so I assume that they must have been well off ... I don't remember her mother and father at all.¹⁰²¹

She was friends with their daughter and they would spend hours together observing the monastery garden from the Jewish family's balcony. Although in her perception they were in a better economic situation than her own family, the girls played together and visited each other's homes. In this particular case, it seems that their friendship was possible because of the similarity in age, physical proximity and the open-mindedness of their parents.

In fact, the friendship could be perceived as surprising given the fact that Celina's father was in charge of opening Polish shops in towns with a Jewish majority, in order to make the Jewish shops lose their clients. In other words, he was engaged in the action of the economic boycott of the Jews. Thus, Celina's friendship with a Jewish girl and her compassionate attitude towards the Jewish minority, expressed repeatedly in her oral history both in reference to the Holocaust and the March '68 antisemitic campaign, seem to be her personal choice. On the other hand, she does not mention her parents having anything against the friendship, which adds further nuance to the problem. Did her friendship with a Jewish neighbor make her more prone to have a positive attitude towards the outgroup? Was it that her family had complex views on the outgroup, for example believing that the economic boycott was right but at the same time not having personal animosities toward specific members of the outgroup? All of these are possible answers.

Kazimierz [1928] recalls friendship with his grandparents' neighbors:

In a neighboring building there was a tailor, a Jew called Goldberg, he had two sons, Ezra the younger and Chaim. And we were about the same age, Ezra was younger than us, and Chaim was older. Chaim helped my father and my grandmother sewed everything she needed there with this Goldberg, especially if I needed a winter coat or clothes, Goldberg sewed it. So that even such a good Jew was, and there was an event before the war - there were beer rings, for beer under a mug, you know what they were, we made such rings, just like those coasters. And the backyard was big too, we made cardboard so big and we played foo, foo, foo, it was flying for 20-30 meters, right? And

¹⁰²¹ OH GGNNTC Celina Chrzanowska, 8;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/125721/edition/119849>, 21.02.2023.

this Ezra was standing there on the other side and someone was throwing on the other side and the cardboard hit him in the side, the boy curled up: "Ay vay, ay vay, *giewatt*". Father and mother flew out, grabbed him by the legs and carried him to the house. Then my father: "You thugs hit the side with his iron piece, hit the side with his iron piece", but after an hour he was over it... Well, we didn't want to hurt him, and he was such a nice boy, he followed us there. Because Chaim is already, he is more a Sabbath, not a Sabbath, he already participated there, he was already two or three years older than us, he was already there, he didn't stick with us, but this Ezra did. I used to go to Goldberg so that he would make my clothes, and not there ... With his son, with this Ezra, I was friends, and he had ... Ezra was two or three years younger than us. I was 11, so Ezra was 8.¹⁰²²

He remembers that the neighbor of his grandparents was a tailor whose services his parents and grandparents would often use, for example to get clothes for him. This tailor had two sons, one a little older and one a little younger than himself, and he would play with them. Kazimierz remembers how once by chance, a flying cardboard puck they made with friends hit the older boy, and his parents reacted with anger. However, the situation calmed down quickly, as the boy was not injured. The main point of the story seems to be that the older boy, Chaim, did not play together with them but stayed a bit away, which Kazimierz suggests was because he was more religiously observant. The other boy, Ezra was playing with Kazimierz and according to the story was a part of the group of children who stuck together. In the story, the factor that facilitates the intergroup friendship is this lack of religious observance. One can imagine that the older boy could have had a more "religious" look or simply felt that he needed to behave in a more serious way; however, the younger one who was not bound by such concerns, apparently was accepted in the peer group without problems.

In Kazimierz's story it is hard to make a connection between this friendship and an overall view of the relations before the war because he links it to the time when his friends were moved to the ghetto. His uncle sent him once to bring some products to their father but when asked clarifying questions regarding their situation and the type of contact they had after their relocation to the ghetto, he gets upset and needs to be convinced to speak. As he tends to present Jews in a stereotypical way, referring to their feasts, trade and the unsanitary living conditions, especially during the Holocaust, one could assume that the intergroup friendship did not make a significant impact or that it was overshadowed by the trauma of witnessing the Holocaust, and perhaps his feeling "entangled" by or implicated in that.¹⁰²³

¹⁰²² OH GGNNTC Kazimierz Jarzembowski, 27; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/118741/edition/113065>, 23.02.2023.

¹⁰²³ I refer here to the concept of implicated subjects proposed by Michael Rothberg. He goes beyond the victim-perpetrator-bystander distinction and offers instead the notion of an implicated subject, which

Regina [1926] remembers her friendship with Jewish siblings, a boy and a girl, living next door, who inhabited a small one-room apartment in spite of their parents owning a lemonade factory in the Old City:

These closest neighbors were called Zyngier - the Zyngiers. And they had two children - son Bolek and Maryla, they were the closest ones. They were not poor, because they had a factory of sparkling water, various lemonades and so on in the Old Town, right behind the Kraków Gate, and so on. They weren't poor, but they lived in one single room. Their two children, two parents, and such an uncle. He was a Hussite [Hasid], a real Hussite, because they weren't like that, they didn't keep their faith so much, so to speak, but this Hussite is like that. He sent Marylka for cigarettes more than once, we went to buy cigarettes and she says: "You know what? We'll brush them with your bacon." They were doing such mischief to this Hussite. I was very much friends with this Marylka and this Bolek.¹⁰²⁴

A striking feature of the story is the diversity within the Jewish family, who according to Regina was rather secular but lived with an uncle who was a pious Hasid.¹⁰²⁵ Another important part of this narrative seems to be the cooperation of the two girls in mischief. Although Regina says that "they were doing such mischief" in fact she was the one providing the bacon, that is, she took part in these pranks. The story might serve to highlight that the friendship of the two girls was very close. In a way, Marylka is more honest with her Catholic friend than with her Jewish uncle. As in many childhood friendships, in this story, the affective ties with peers prevail over the kinship with the adults.¹⁰²⁶ Regina mentions also other Jewish children she was friends with but without details.¹⁰²⁷ She just says that the relations were good and they would visit each other's homes.

helps to understand that under these circumstances there is no *Dinge an sich*, and that being implicated contributes to perpetuation of the legacy of violence. Michael Rothberg, *The Implicated Subject: Beyond Victims and Perpetrators*, ed. Hent de Vries, Cultural Memory in the Present (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019).

¹⁰²⁴ OH GGNNTC Regina Kucharska, 10; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/98884/edition/93240>, 23.02.2023.

¹⁰²⁵ At the same time in another part of the story she claims they were all Hasids, but she probably means that they still observed the Jewish holidays and some rules of *kashrut*.

¹⁰²⁶ Interestingly, Regina mentions that during the war, Bolek, Marylka's bother, asked Regina's parents to take Marylka to save her but they refused. Regina seems to perceive it as the only possible answer as they were surrounded by new neighbors and the family would find themselves in danger of death, in case the neighbors denounced them. OH GGNNTC Regina Kucharska, 8-9; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/98884/edition/93240>, 28.02.2023.

¹⁰²⁷ OH GGNNTC Regina Kucharska, passim; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/119331/edition/113646>, 23.02.2023.

As in other cases, with Regina it is also not easy to determine whether the friendship was a mediating factor or a result of other factors facilitating acceptance and openness towards the outgroup. Regina's father worked for a Jewish man and with Jewish people, and he also spoke Yiddish. The family lived in a predominantly Jewish area, although away from the Jewish quarter. The owner of the building where they lived was Jewish and so were most of the neighbors. Her family was thus exposed to the outgroup on multiple occasions and it could be assumed that the four conditions of positive intergroup contact were met. Thus, it is not surprising that she befriends a Jewish girl – maybe because she perceived Jewishness as not deviating from the norm, or because there were no other Catholic children in the vicinity, and maybe because the family did not impart prejudice against relations with Jews.

Janina [1926] and Maria [1926] too mention having Jewish friends and visiting them at home.¹⁰²⁸ Neither of them, however, shares details bringing new insights on the theme. Janina seems to have been exposed to contact with Jewish children both from school and outside of school and she speaks about Jews with compassion when referring to the Holocaust; however, she also replicates some stereotypes, e.g., about Jewish filth or Jews owning most of the real estate. It is possible that these notions are connected to her family situation. On the one hand, her mother worked in the Jewish hospital (exposure to the outgroup); on the other hand, as the family was working class, they were maybe more susceptible to the narratives of Jewish economic dominion (property). However, just like with Regina and Celina, it seems that the parents' exposure to the outgroup increased the probability of intergroup friendships for their children and decreased the prejudice towards the outgroup, which is reflected in the stories, although to varying degrees.

Bogdan [1934] is the only Catholic living in the Jewish quarter and describing friendships with neighbors in the context of reversed minority-majority relations. He presents an image of a close-knit community of children from the neighborhood where there is no distinction between Jews and non-Jews:

There was one Bejchło, there was Aaron, Josek. They were Jews. Somehow I had such an inclination towards Jews, they were pre-war Jews. Well, there were a lot of them there. What did we play the most?¹⁰²⁹ Ene, due, rike, fake, bag, burbe, ósme, smake, deus,

¹⁰²⁸ OH GGNNTC Janina Grudzińska; passim; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/50252/edition/47180>, 23.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/50251/edition/47179>, 23.02.2023; OH GGNNTC Maria Sowa; passim; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/125781/edition/119899>, 27.02.2023.

¹⁰²⁹ The interview story (OH GGNNTC Bogdan Stanisław Pazur) has a somewhat confused timeline but due to the fact that he mentions that there were a lot of Jews, one can infer that the description of the games refers to the interwar period.

meus, kosmateus, baks. Hide and seek most often. There was a place to play ... We played classes, the girls had skipping ropes, cars ... I know that we even once dug up half of the yard, because we used to transport sand in cars. There was such a song and we were having fun with this song in the background: "Neither you nor I like the work, we will buy a pram, we will carry sand" - and we were carrying sand. "And on this sand we will plant beets, all the women are bastards."¹⁰³⁰

Bogdan seems to be a great storyteller and his stories are always filled with vivid details. The above fragment is very rich and vibrant. He quotes a counting rhyme, a song and describes precisely the way the children played. One can almost hear the jumping and feel the sand he talks about. The story constructs an image of a happy, playful childhood with elements of mischief with which the children can get off. It could be seen as an idyllic convention of representing the past, where the pleasant, joyful elements are brought to the foreground and the problems are not mentioned much. In fact, the whole interview bears the characteristics of an entertaining narrative, which distinguishes it from other stories. Bogdan focuses on funny details such as counting rhymes and constructs the story into a form slightly resembling a monodrama – entertaining turns of events, anecdotes and humorous interjections are its core.

Naturally, such a form of the story reflects his personality; however, one is left wondering how much of the presented image of the organic smooth coexistence between Jews and Catholics is a creation made for the purpose of entertaining and how much it corresponds to the past events. It seems that Bogdan's story is constructed in a way that does not allow for showing much intergroup friction but rather focuses on accentuating the solidarity along the class line.

Friendship of Unclear Context

Cecylia [1921] and Zofia [1926]¹⁰³¹ mention their friendships with Jewish girls but without including information about where and how they met. They both focus on the relationship. Cecylia shares a story filled with very interesting details:

I even had a Jewish friend. Her father had a pharmacy store on Zamojska Street, and I was at her house only once, but I was afraid to go there... This dirt, such a smell, all of it. But she was such an intelligent Jewish girl. Well, they had a pharmacy warehouse. And her mother also had a Polish friend. I called her Baška, I don't know what was her

¹⁰³⁰ OH GGNNTC Bogdan Stanisław Pazur, passim; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/123693/edition/117874>, 24.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/154585/edition/148302>, 24.02.2023.

¹⁰³¹ Zofia refer to her friendship with Jewish girls but in an unclear context and points to visiting them at home only during the wartime. OH GGNNTC Zofia Mazurek, passim; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/126998/edition/121034>, 23.02.2023.

Jewish name, she was Baśka. Baśka was very kind to me. And she says: "You know, I will not marry a Jew, I will absolutely not marry!" And there was an acceptable boy, she says: "Oh, this boy I like." We were fourteen. But I don't know what happened to the poor girl, because I didn't see her anymore.¹⁰³²

She describes that the family's father had a good occupation but at the same time, Cecylia indicates that their apartment was not inviting. Its smell and dirt made her afraid to enter or visit her friend. At the same time, she points to the features distinguishing her friend from other Jews. Firstly, she is intelligent. Secondly, she and her family show the signs of assimilation: the girl's Polish name and her mother's Polish friend. In the unedited version of the interview, Cecylia states:

But, but yes, she, she was so... she wasn't that very Jewish. Her father was not one of those sidelock Jews either, so orthodox,... he was a bit civilized already [laughs].... It was a kind of family a little bit, a little bit different. That you could get used to them completely.¹⁰³³

It seems that this tension between Jewishness and normativity is crucial for Cecylia's understanding of the friendship and relation to this particular Jewish family. She states that the family was not very Jewish but rather "civilized" meaning normal, not very different from the Polish majority. This lack of strong "Jewishness" enabled the relationship and made Cecylia feel that one could "get used to them completely." What Cecylia is not saying is that had they been more Jewish, the relationship could have not been possible. Thus, it is conforming to the majority's vision of normativity that makes the friendship possible.

Baśka herself is presented as a person who is seeking assimilation. She confesses she would not like to marry a Jew but rather a Pole, which might point to her aspirations to live a modern, secular life. In this case the implied basis for friendship is similarity between the girls. Baśka's unwillingness to lead a Jewish life and wish to assimilate to some (normative) form of Polishness certainly makes the connection easier. In addition, it seems that at the age of fourteen, indicated in the story, the girls had common interest – they were discussing boys and romantic plans, which can be considered a unifying factor as well. Moreover, it is important to note that mentioning this friendship

¹⁰³² OH GGNNTC Cecylia Czarnik, 23-24; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/117645/edition/111983>, 16.02.2023; Ibid., 36; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/117668/edition/112006>, 16.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/155042/edition/148753>, 16.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/154915/edition/148628>, 16.02.2023;

¹⁰³³ OH GGNNTC Cecylia Czarnik, 36; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/117668/edition/112006>, 16.02.2023.

immediately evokes the context of the Holocaust (“I don't know what happened to the poor girl, because I didn't see her anymore”).

Elsewhere Cecylia states openly that “somehow, parents warned their children not to associate with Jews” and when asked if there were any “reasons given why you shouldn't associate with Jews” she answers that “there were some rumours going around” and immediately diverts the direction of the conversation stating that she didn't pay attention because she had this friend.¹⁰³⁴ The way she narrates suggests that the rumors going around had serious weight, and that her parents would not be happy about this friendship. Nevertheless, she made a choice to be friends with this girl. At the same time, her parents' attitude and warnings made an impact on her because she was afraid to go inside her flat.

She is also one of the most vocal Catholic interviewees when speaking about Poles helping Jews during the Holocaust and she insists that Poles are the nation that helped the Jews the most during the war.¹⁰³⁵ She speaks about the Holocaust with compassion towards the Jews but at the same time, she also pays attention to her own hardships and losses during the war (she lost her husband). The experience of intergroup friendship might have made her more sensitive towards the ingroup during the Holocaust but ultimately she had to focus on her own survival, and it is hard to assess the extent to which her narrative is shaped by this friendship.

School

Befriending classmates seems to be a topic among the Catholic girls.¹⁰³⁶ They simply mention their Jewish classmates and refer to one occasion of positive contact with them like visiting them at home or exchanging lunch at school. Because their accounts suggest that the friendships did not go beyond some instances of positive interaction, and did not evolve repeated or extended interactions, it is hard to treat them as friendships, and assess their impact. Undoubtedly the quality of the impact was positive and made them more open towards the outgroup but it is impossible to measure that influence, or draw serious conclusions regarding the interaction between this contact

¹⁰³⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰³⁵ Ibid., 51; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/117673/edition/112011>, 16.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/155047/edition/148758>, 16.02.2023.

¹⁰³⁶ OH GGNNTC Janina Kozak, 17; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/124575/edition/118729>, 23.02.2023. OH GGNNTC Danuta Riabinin, passim; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/124558/edition/118712>, 24.02.2023. OH GGNNTC Barbara Rybicka, passim; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/123659/edition/117845>, 24.02.2023. OH GGNNTC Maria Sowa, passim; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/125782/edition/119900>, 27.02.2023.

and the image of the Other in the oral history, apart from noticing that there is a positive correlation.

Conclusions

It seems that the childhood intergroup friendships had a positive influence on the image of the Other in oral history. However, other factors influenced this image to a greater extent. It seems that for the Jewish interviewees, not surprisingly, their wartime experiences with the outgroup play a decisive role in the image of the Other they convey. The Catholic interviewees, on the other hand, appear to be more influenced by the childhood friendships, but other factors should be taken into consideration as well, such as the upbringing patterns, parents' attitude towards the outgroup and their individual character.

Romantic Engagements

In addition to friendship, another dimension of affective ties is manifested in romantic relationships. Jennifer Paterson et al. argue that although initially “cross-group romantic partners encounter greater disapproval toward their relationships than same-group partners and, as a result, their relationships are perceived more negatively”, with time the environmental tolerance towards the cross-group relationships increases, as well as the tolerance towards the outgroup through the extended contact.¹⁰³⁷ This form of intergroup contact is deemed by the researchers the most fruitful in reducing prejudice in society; however, it comes at very high personal cost to the cross-group couples who face rejection, ostracism and other forms of prejudice.

Undoubtedly, the challenges of the cross-group romantic relationships are well reflected in the sources analyzed here. In fact, they focus almost exclusively on the difficulties and rarely present positive outcomes of such romances, and because of this it is hard to determine whether and to what extent they impacted the ingroup's relation to the outgroup. Where possible such implications will be explored, but within a very limited scope.

Moreover, one should bear in mind the double weight of the cross-group romantic relationships in the interwar period. On the one hand, there is a strong resistance towards mixing with the Other but in addition to that, what one tends to forget is the

¹⁰³⁷ Jennifer L. Paterson, Rhiannon N. Turner, and Mark T. Conner, "Extended Contact through Cross-Group Romantic Relationships," *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 45 (2015).

suspicion toward romantic love in general among some social groups. For centuries, Jewish communities founded their social structure on marriages arranged by a matchmaker. Thus, the romantic element was not a decisive factor. Similarly, although in a less formalized way, arranged marriages were not uncommon in Polish society. The notion of marrying for love is in some ways quite radical and started to be accepted on a wider scale only by the end of the 18th century.¹⁰³⁸ In the first decades of the 20th century, this idea was gaining prominence thanks to new media (especially cinema) and it was linked also to new, more free approaches to sexuality,¹⁰³⁹ which were of concern for the older generations or more conservative sections of society, including Orthodox Jewry. The interviewees seem to largely have followed the new model (marrying for love); none of them mentions having been in an arranged marriage but they refer to such marriages with respect to their parents and grandparents.

Before delving into the stories, let us turn to the local press to gain some insight into the historical context. According to Adam Kopciowski, multiple “interfaith romances” were described by *Lubliner Tugblatt*,¹⁰⁴⁰ a prominent local newspaper in Yiddish, as cases of “forbidden love” which might suggest an increasing tendency among the younger generation, reflecting the trend mentioned above regarding the prominence of the romantic love ideal in the younger generations. In the stories described by the newspaper it was usually Jewish women engaging in romantic relationships with Catholic men, and very often these stories would end tragically with the suicide of one (or both) of the lovers who did not agree to conform to the pressures of their respective environments to break up. As signaled above, this could be seen as both a condemnation of cross-group love, and of following desire and romance against old social conventions. These reports, although they were written usually as a form of “sensation”, are important to bear in mind as a background to the oral histories because they show how much interfaith romantic relationships were opposed in the interwar time, and how romantic love was possibly seen as problematic.

A few interviewees mention the phenomenon of intergroup relationships in various contexts and with diverging conclusions. Józef [1927] claims that in the interwar period:

...after all, mixed marriages were very numerous. Let's face it, sir. These were not exceptions at all, they were very often. Anyway, let's not look far, Marshal Piłsudski...

¹⁰³⁸ Stephanie Coontz, *Marriage, a History: From Obedience to Intimacy or How Love Conquered Marriage* (New York: Viking, 2005), 4, 11.

¹⁰³⁹ See, e.g., Dagmar Herzog, *Sexuality in Europe: A Twentieth-Century History*, *New Approaches to European History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 1-83.

¹⁰⁴⁰ Kopciowski, *Was hert zich in der prowinc?* 486-489.

Sir, I also knew a lot of these marriages, but it was mostly the case that Jews adopted Polish surnames, so nobody paid any attention to it. I do not remember that the wedding... he did not take or took her, right, a surname, or they adopted a surname. And he was Jankowski, right, or Jabłoński. Anyway, let's not look too far, at that time the minister who was in that government was Jabłoński, and yet he was ancestral ... and later was Minister Jabłoński.¹⁰⁴¹ They were numerous then, but as a kid I was just not interested, I was too young and that didn't interest me. But I know that they were numerous, and I know them to this day. Well today, today I was at the lecture of the University of the Third Age, and the lecture was also given by a doctor, also of Jewish origin, and he said that everyone who signed up for a Pole means that he is a Pole. Well, yes, yes, yes. This is what it looks like. I did not know this topic closely, and as a delicate one I would not like to develop it, because it can ...¹⁰⁴²

In his view, the marriages between Jews and Poles were very frequent and very visible even among the political elite of the nation. His story clearly reflects some of the *Endek* narratives about Jews hiding under Polish names to fool Poles. He mentions that Jews would marry Polish women to get their surnames, or that they would simply change their surnames into Polish ones. In particular, the last sentence ("it is a delicate topic") points to the implied accusation of deception and hiding. Many anti-Jewish conspiracy theories feature this element of Jews pretending to be non-Jews to deceive "normal" citizens. Thus, in this context, Józef's story says more about his ideological persuasion than the intermarriages he actually encountered and observed in person.

In fact, he recalls elsewhere that his family supported the economic boycott of the Jews, and when referring to March '68 he claims that 90% of directors in big companies were Jews and implies that this was the real reason for the antisemitic campaign. Therefore, it could be assumed that his perception that mixed marriages were numerous is colored by his rather negative attitude towards the Jews.

Janina [1927] points to a perceived principle organizing these romantic relations, parallel but maybe contradictory to the one pointed to by *Lubliner Tugblatt*: "There were mixed marriages between Poles and Jews, but I did not meet such a marriage that a Jew would convert to Catholicism, only mostly Polish women went to their side, went to Israel."¹⁰⁴³ She highlights that as a rule it would be Polish Catholic women converting to Judaism and going to Israel and not Jews converting to Catholicism. The context

¹⁰⁴¹ It is not entirely sure whom he means, possibly Jan Stanisław Jankowski (1882-1953) Minister of Work and Social Care in Wincenty Witos' government. The interviewee's conviction that he was originally Jewish is not founded on historical evidence but seems rather to reflect the accusations of the National Democrats who tended to label all their political adversaries "Jewish".

¹⁰⁴² OH GGNNTC Józef Sadurski, 51.

¹⁰⁴³ OH GGNNTC Janina Grudzińska, 7;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/50252/edition/47180>, 23.02.2023.

strongly suggests that she means the interwar period, but no other sources mention such a tendency, or even a unique event, and thus it is plausible that maybe she projects the postwar *aliyot* onto interwar history.¹⁰⁴⁴ It is also worth pointing out that all the above instances refer to women converting for the sake of love.

Helena [1926] mentions a Jewish janitor of her building “who converted and married a Polish woman, and had kids with her.”¹⁰⁴⁵ This would be a case opposite to both the narrative of *Lubliner Tugblatt* and Janina’s story. Helena, however, does not share more details apart from recalling that reportedly “they murdered him as a Jew because for the Germans, baptized or not” made no difference.¹⁰⁴⁶

Stefania [1927] refers to her cousin who married a Jew whom he met on the train to Warsaw. He was prosperous and lived in Lwów. They had children who were baptized but there is no mention of his conversion.¹⁰⁴⁷ Zofia [1927] remembers that her “aunt had a Jewish lover, she dumped her husband and lived with this Jew. The husband had a good position, and she dumped him. Reportedly, this Jew was very handsome.”¹⁰⁴⁸ In this short fragment, Zofia reveals that the supposed cause of her aunt leaving her husband was that the Jewish lover was very handsome. According to the story, it proved more important that the husband’s respectable profession. Again, it is mostly women who transgress the boundaries of social contracts and violate decency.

Others focus on specific aspects of intergroup romances and often reveal more details regarding the couples and the circumstances. One popular theme, for example, is the attitude of the lovers’ families towards their relationship. Mosze [1925] gives a detailed account of his parents’ story, marked by the prejudices and apprehensions of his mother’s family. Although both his parents were Jewish, his father had a distinctly Polish look (sporting a moustache) which made many people think he was not Jewish but Christian. His wife’s family thus thought that he was not Jewish and decided to intervene: “[My mother’s] father came to Lublin [because] they thought that my

¹⁰⁴⁴ I refer here to the Jewish immigration to Palestine in the first years after the war, the *Aliyat Gomulka* and 1968 March immigration.

¹⁰⁴⁵ OH GGNNTC Helena Grynszpan, 17;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102132/edition/96783>, 23.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102620/edition/97301>, 23.02.2023.

¹⁰⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴⁷ OH GGNTC Stefania Czekierda, 8;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/126425/edition/120502>, 20.02.2023.

¹⁰⁴⁸ OH GGNNTC Zofia Hetman, 11.

mother married a Pole.”¹⁰⁴⁹ On the spot, however, to their relief, it turned out he was Jewish:

My father goes to the synagogue and they will say what needs to be said for Saturday. My grandmother was crying. Then she saw that it was a Jew. Then she knew he was a Jew. And she was on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday and thought he was Polish. It was impossible to recognize him because he looked more like a Pole [than] Poles.¹⁰⁵⁰

This short story shows that the intergroup marriage or relationship was very hard for the family to handle. They were very worried about a non-Jew marrying their daughter, but the core of the problem is not explained here. In another place, Mosze simply states that “Among Jews when a girl lives with a non-Jew, doesn’t matter if a Pole or an Italian, a non-Jew, how to say this, it is not good. Not good at all” and adds that there are laws regulating it.¹⁰⁵¹ Thus, he points to religious tradition prohibiting intermarriage.

In another fragment, Mosze mentions also that his father’s colleagues at work commented on his mother: “Michał, dump this Chajka and take one of ours”¹⁰⁵² because they also thought he was not Jewish. In general, both the family and the colleagues in the story oppose the idea of the intermarriage but for various reasons. The colleagues at work simply want to keep the ingroup together and do not give any reasons for that.

Additionally, two interviewees, a Catholic man and a Jewish woman, present detailed stories of intergroup romance. Adam [1928] recalls a love story between his uncle, the Polish poet Józef Łobodowski, and a Polish-Jewish poet, Zuzanna Ginczanka:¹⁰⁵³

¹⁰⁴⁹ OH GGNNTC Mosze Handelsman, 10; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102809/edition/97488>, 23.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103982/edition/98627>, 23.02.2023.

¹⁰⁵⁰ Ibid., 10; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102797/edition/97476>, 23.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103974/edition/98619>, 23.02.2023.

¹⁰⁵¹ Ibid., 7; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102809/edition/97488>, 23.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103982/edition/98627>, 23.02.2023.

¹⁰⁵² Ibid., 10.

¹⁰⁵³ Ginczanka (1917-1945) was an iconic figure in Warsaw’s literary circles, admired both for her talent and for personal qualities (beauty and virtues). Her apartment turned into the premier literary salon of Poland. The scale of her own talent can be inferred, for example, from the fact that she was a protégée of Tuwim. Her poetry can be seen in the context of the Skamander group. She was involved with Łobodowski for a couple of years, between 1933 and 1937 or 1938. To find out more about her work and life, see Marta Zająć, “Zuzanna Ginczanka: krytyka, poezja, życie. O tym, jak otwierają się znaki.,” *Judaica Russica* 2 (2020); Karolina Koprowska, “„Tuwim w spółnicy”? Poetyka Skamandra w twórczości Zuzanny Ginczanki,” *Zeszyty Naukowe Towarzystwa Doktorantów UJ Nauki Humanistyczne* 5, no. 1 (2014). Łobodowski (1909-1988), sometimes called “the last of the Skamandrines” worked as an editor of several avant-garde literary periodicals, translator, novelist, radio personality and an

He had this love adventure in Równe. When he was in the army, he met a young writer of Jewish origin [Ginczanka]. It was maybe the year [19] 35. In the mid-1930s, anyway. She fell in love with him. I know that she came here to Lublin and the family was against it. Family, that is, mother and grandmother. At that time, there were these national antagonisms - "How is it?! That a Jewish woman would join the family?" Out of the question. They did everything to disgust Łobodowski, this Sulamit - as he called her - this Jewish woman, very beautiful - such a black one. Because I remember she was [visited] at Chopina Street; she would come. A beautiful young girl, indeed worthy of a man's attention. Supposedly capable, reportedly she wrote poetry nicely. Since she was interested in poetry, she became interested in Łobodowski. When he was in Równe - she met him. An affair ensued, they wanted to get married, but the mother and grandmother did not allow it simply and they quickly arranged Łobodowski with Miss Jadwiga Kuryłówna; in Lublin. And he married her in 1937.¹⁰⁵⁴

It is known that Ginczanka and Łobodowski met in Równe, when she was 16 and still attending gymnasium. As their romance could be the subject of a separate study, both in history of literature and intergroup relations, here I will focus on Adam's account and the way he saw the reasons for the breakup. According to the story, Józef brought Zuzanna to Lublin to meet his family because he wanted to marry her, and she visited their home in Chopina Street multiple times. Nonetheless, his family, namely his mother and grandmother, were against the marriage; "they didn't allow it" and instead made another match for him. He married the other woman, and although Adam does not mention it, divorced her in 1950.

Apart from reporting the facts of the romance, Adam interjects also his opinions (extra-contextual narrator) on Ginczanka, that she was a beautiful woman "worthy of man's attention" who reportedly was also a good poet. Apparently, he did not read her poetry. In addition, he also comments on the context of the family's firm veto. He points to the "national antagonisms" as the main reason for their opposition and explains that they could not imagine a Jewish woman would join their family. Thus, explicit nationalist antisemitism (racism?) is shown as the quality conditioning their attitude.

This story brings to our attention an important factor shaping Jewish-Catholic relations in the period. Even though Józef and Zuzanna had a lot in common – they

opinion writer with clearly defined anti-totalitarian and pro-minorities political views. He was known for defending ethnic minorities in Poland, especially the Jewish, the Ukrainian and the Lemko ones. He called himself a Ukrainophile and devoted considerable space to Ukraine in his writings. From 1940 he was writing only in the émigré press, as he spent his postwar life in exile in Spain. To learn more about his life and work, see, e.g., Waław Iwaniuk, "Ostatni romantyk. Wspomnienie o Józefie Łobodowskim," (Toruń: Uniwersytet Mikołaja Kopernika, 1998).

¹⁰⁵⁴ Adam Tomanek, <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/40359/edition/38742>, 27.02.2023 (a fragment of an interview that was not accessible as a full transcript).

were both poets with similarities in their worldviews, and many common aspirations – it was not possible for them to marry because of the antisemitic prejudice of his family. At the same time, one could think of many possible reasons to point to when objecting someone’s marriage: for example, the age difference (she was eight years younger than Józef and very young) or her Russian origins, but it is only her Jewishness that raises objections. In this case, it can be proposed that the family could be seen as the fourth contact factor – “the authorities’ support” – as in fact they played a controlling role in Józef’s life, regulating and influencing his life decisions. As they did not allow him to marry a Jewess, he married a Catholic.

Moreover, this account brings to the fore the problem of romantic love in general. It seems that it almost did not matter to the matriarchs of the family who Józef would marry, as long as she is Catholic and probably of a certain social position. Thus, the friction mentioned in the introduction to this section, between the concept of an arranged marriage and marrying for love, is quite prominent in the story. The idea of intermarriage thus leads to an increased tension because it provokes a double reaction: hostility to Otherness and prejudice or suspicion against the idea of marrying for love.

Mira [1914] tells two stories about intergroup romantic engagements, where similar tropes can be found. The first focuses on the family of rabbi Szlomo Eiger, who lived at the corner of Szeroka and Nadstawna Street and came from a respected dynasty of rabbis going back for centuries.¹⁰⁵⁵ As he was Mira’s neighbor, and in addition her grandfather worked with him, she knew quite well all the gossip concerning his family and in fact wrote a short story recounting the events she talks about during the interview.¹⁰⁵⁶ According to Mira’s words, he had a daughter who in turn had three daughters (the rabbi’s granddaughters). The oldest one “had an affair with this officer, all of Lublin knew about it but their family.”¹⁰⁵⁷ Probably because of the rabbi’s prominence in the local religious community, no one wanted to tell the family about it. It is implied that it was a source of ineffable shame. Mira mentions that this woman was married but kept the relation with the Polish officer and had a son with him.

The whole plot of the intergroup romance is used in a twofold way. On the one hand, Mira explains the twisted romantic life of the family, reflecting some concerns about the idea of following romantic love. The Polish-Jewish affair is juxtaposed with the story of a middle sister who fell in love with her uncle. Both relations were forbidden but the middle sister eventually succeeded, married her beloved and had children. Her difficult romantic relationship is presented as unorthodox but legitimized by the happy

¹⁰⁵⁵ OH GGNNTC Mira Shuval, 50.

¹⁰⁵⁶ I did not manage to find the text of the story.

¹⁰⁵⁷ OH GGNNTC Mira Shuval, 51.

end, which suggests that when one marries for love within one's community it results in many complications but might end happily after all. In contrast, the story of her older sister is shown as unhappy and unresolved. Thus, it implies that as long as the relationship developed among Jews (the ingroup) even if it was incorrect or inappropriate, in Mira's perception there was hope for a successful conclusion. However, the intergroup relation is seen as transgressive in so many aspects (romantic love and crossing the intergroup boundaries) that a happy end is impossible. The older sister in the story remains a miserable adulteress whose love cannot be fulfilled.

Moreover, Mira points to intergenerational contrasts and the change in the walk of life reflecting the changes in the Jewish community at large. As she sums it up: "It happened in the house of a rabbi, who is so pious that a crowd of Hasidim followed him and his granddaughters went on other paths."¹⁰⁵⁸ Thus, she highlights the divergence between the traditional piety of the grandfather, so strong that he would attract a crowd of followers, and the "other paths" of his granddaughters who had troubled love stories.

In addition to that, Mira tells also another, even more gloomy, story of intergroup love. Apparently, it has deep meaning for her because she insists on telling it to the interviewer.

It would ... it was during my mother's time. There was a family in our neighborhood that they had a son and a daughter. This daughter was the same age as my mother. My mother was born in 1890...And there was a daughter in the neighborhood of the same age, friends. If my mother was twenty, that means it was 1910.... Then my mother got married and she married a Pole...¹⁰⁵⁹

The first part of the story locates the events in 1910 when both Mira's mother and her girlfriend were married. However, the friend married a Pole. What is not explicitly said but is clear from the context is that in order to do that, the friend had to convert to Catholicism. Mira proceeds to explain what effect it had on the Jewish family of the convert and what the social consequences of her choice were:

Among Jews... when a daughter goes to Christianity, it is worse than death, worse when she has died. She died, she died. But she is alive and gone, converted to Christianity, to the Catholic faith. This is awful. They deny it. There is a ritual that we renounce our daughter, child, that is, such a prayer and one wears a blouse ... one wears a blouse with a knife ... it means *kriah*, that is, the daughter died... on low tables, not on chairs, but

¹⁰⁵⁸ Ibid., 52.

¹⁰⁵⁹ OH GGNNTC Mira Shuval, 53;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103492/edition/98160>, 24.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103827/edition/98474>, 24.02.2023.

on low tables or on the floor. That's how one mourns in the old days. Well, but that was the ritual that still remained if the Jewish woman converted to the Catholic faith. And they renounced her completely, she died for us... She died. They had a son, and that son was in touch with his sister. She ... and this Polish family welcomed her very well, they accepted her, they got married and they bought them an apartment, they arranged everything there....She, these parents, they didn't come out to light all their lives. They couldn't go to the synagogue to pray, they don't let them enter. They stayed home and cried all their lives. This son brought them, he worked, he brought them food. They had a shop, they closed that shop. A tragedy in the family. And this, this news spread not all ... in Lublin, all over Poland, that in Lublin, with this family, a Jewish woman converted to the Christian faith, it is [unintelligible]. It couldn't be more horrible. Then.¹⁰⁶⁰

Mira describes in detail the customs of the *shiva*¹⁰⁶¹ applied also in cases of someone's conversion out of Judaism.¹⁰⁶² This custom features, for example, in Sholem Aleichem's *Tevye the Milkman* when Tevye mourns his daughter's escape with a Christian. During the *shiva* the family would tear their clothes (*kriah*) and sit on low chairs or on the floor to mark their mourning. Mira explicitly states multiple times that for the family, the convert is dead, meaning severing all contact and denouncing her. She mentions that the parents of the convert were so ashamed they completely gave up social interactions: closed their shop, their only source of income, would not go to the synagogue and stayed home lamenting until the end of their lives. Thus, she presents the conversion as a calamity, a source of shame, ostracism or even self-imposed ex-communication. The convert brought sorrow, misery and isolation to her family. Mira adds that it was the worst imaginable misfortune and that their shame was publicized (it is impossible to check whether this was true). Mira hints that these consequences of conversion cannot be seen as a universal rule but rather as a matter of course in the traditional, religious communities back then.

In fact, subsequently, she unfolds even more tragic aspects of the story, continuing to report the fate of the family during the Holocaust:

And then the outbreak ... the war broke out, her children were the same age as us, me and my sister. And there was war and there was nothing to eat. And this daughter who converted to Christianity knew that her parents were sitting there starving. This son also could not go out and bring them, because it was not allowed to leave the ghetto. And

¹⁰⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶¹ Mourning in Jewish traditions which extends for seven days, thus the name (*sheva* = seven, *shiva* = seven days of mourning).

¹⁰⁶² It is an Ashkenazi development, still practiced in Hasidic and Haredi communities. Interestingly, among Mitnagdim in the early 19th century, it was a custom to sit *shiva* also when a family member joined Hasidism.

those children of hers... They brought food to their grandparents that they didn't know them at all. They did not enter the house. This son was waiting in front of the house, they came by bicycles and they were always riding their bicycles. Bicycles. When ... they brought it ... It was in our house, where we lived, where our parents lived. And they brought ... they brought them food. One day this one ... and he was there ... apart from the Germans, there were also Poles that cooperated with the Germans. They knew they were bringing food to ... bring ... they brought a German. When these children - these children are older now - had already arrived with their bikes with products, this German threw this food on the road and these two - she was already twenty-four then, and this boy was younger for one year, they made them undress, took off their clothes. Naked, in the street. Here they gave them tablets around their necks and wrote Jehudim that they had converted to the Christian faith... they renounced the Jewish faith, converted to faith, now they help the Jews. That's what they wrote to them here. She is naked, and so is he, that girl, and that boy. And so they chased them all over our neighborhood... and finally they shot them. It was a story... a tragedy that a Jewish daughter married a Pole. The parents cried all their lives that these children were already twenty, if they were already over twenty. So they sat at home and cried and mourned her. And finally they were murdered, these children because they brought bread and something else, eggs for, for these Jews.¹⁰⁶³

Mira claims that she saw how the children were chased around the Jewish quarter. It seems that for her, the fate of these children confirms the fatal character of the story. The conversion of their mother, that might have been seen as a way out of the oppressed community, in the end brings even more tragedy to the family. Mira is not explicitly stating this; however, the way in which she constructs her account suggests that she thinks that the woman's decision to convert added to an already difficult story. As all of the protagonists were murdered in the Holocaust, the convert added to suffering of the family, that otherwise at least would have lived a relatively happy life before the war. Instead, her decision ruined her family in the prewar period and killed her children during the war. Mira presents the story as if there was no possible positive end to it, implying that mixed relationships were a mistake.

However, in contrast, she recalls briefly also a happy example of intergroup romance. A girl she knew from school had a Catholic boyfriend:

And I can tell my friend, not my friend, she studied with me at school one grade lower and she had a Polish friend. Kazik. I remember her, her name was Dorka. She was so little and he was so tall and they loved each other... And her family did not resist. She brought him home. There were the parents, there was the grandmother, they liked this

¹⁰⁶³ OH GGNNTC Mira Shuval, 54;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103492/edition/98160>, 24.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103827/edition/98474>, 24.02.2023.

Kazik very much. Here it was like this and here it was like this. There were various turns of events. There weren't many cases where the Jews were ...Everyone would rather go to their own...¹⁰⁶⁴

Thus, one cannot infer that Mira's opinion on intergroup romance was exclusively negative, but she underscores that the happy cases, where the family did not object, were rare. It is also clear that the attitude of the family plays a crucial role in the success or misery of the couple. In fact, in the previous two stories, the family's veto, just as in the case described by Adam, was the main obstacle.

The question is, naturally, why the families opposed such relations. Based on the sources, on the Catholic side, the answer seems to be antisemitism, and on the Jewish side, a tradition whose main purpose for centuries was to preserve the Jewish community by maintaining a strong Jewish lineage and identity. Jewish communities repeatedly facing persecution and the threat of coerced conversion were very rigid in maintaining their boundaries and not tolerating any forms of intermarriage. Moreover, conversion meant weakening the community that as a minority was always already under threat. For both communities, the idea of marrying for love was a certain *novum* and a source of intergenerational tensions.

Conclusions

Many studies highlight intermarriage, next to friendship, as the most important indicators of immigrants' social integration.¹⁰⁶⁵ Perhaps not surprisingly, the accounts of intermarriages and intergroup romances above point to a relatively low level and strong social resistance towards heterogamy, both in the majority and the minority group, which reflects the high level of mutual prejudice, and possibly suspicion towards the idea of marrying for love, especially among the older generations.

When looking at the accounts of intergroup romances, three features are striking. Firstly, the overall impression that these relationships did not have much chance for a happy end. Second, the fundamental role played by the family in decision making for the interested persons. Thirdly, the prevalence of women as the agents of transgression. While the first and the second point are strictly related to the historical circumstances

¹⁰⁶⁴ OH GGNNTC Mira Shuval, 64;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103488/edition/98156>, 24.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103824/edition/98471>, 24.02.2023.

¹⁰⁶⁵ Sarah Carol, *Social Integration and Intermarriage in Europe: Islam, Partner-Choices and Parental Influence* (London: Routledge, 2016); Kate H Choi and Marta Tienda, "Intermarriage and the Lifecycle Timing of Migration," *International Migration Review* 52, no. 3 (2018).

– that is, rising antisemitism and the traditional, patriarchal set up of the family unit based on arranged marriages – the third point requires further elaboration.

Amelia Stillwell and Brian S. Lowery discovered that in cases of interracial marriages in the US, women faced more severe consequences from engaging in interracial relationships.¹⁰⁶⁶ They faced differential social penalties for intimate intergroup contact; namely, they were perceived as gender deviant and their status within the ingroup was lowered. Interestingly, the same situation for men did not affect their status, nor the status of their partners. Even more fascinating, the findings indicate that these perceptions project onto the couple as a unit, leading to greater prejudice toward interracial relationships involving White women than White men. In other words, if a woman belonging to the majority group marries a minority-belonging man, both she and the couple face more prejudice than when a majority man marries a minority woman.

The stories recalled in this chapter reveal a similar pattern. It is predominantly women who are portrayed as those engaging in heterogamy, and they face dire consequences, reaching also their children (Mira's story). None of the men mentioned in the stories are seen as a victim of their love, or portrayed as a traitor to their community, while, especially in Mira's story, there are hints of that way of thinking about women. Perhaps women are also considered less rational and therefore more prone to follow their heart over reason or social conventions. Clearly, they are judged more harshly in the stories, which points to the position of women in society and gender imbalances. Women are blamed for falling for men from the outgroup but men are not. Especially in the stories pertaining to Jewish women, they are ostracized and bring shame to their families. In the story about the rabbi's granddaughters both women are shown as the agents and responsible for engaging in forbidden relationships, and within the framework of the story they are punished for that, one by having a miscarriage (divine punishment) and another one by ostracism (community punishment). The men they fall for are not presented as agents in the stories; they are just an object of their love but no action of theirs is mentioned. Even Adam, referring to the love story between his uncle and Zuzanna Ginczanka, does not present his uncle as an agent in the story. He does fall in love with a Jewish poet but when the family opposes, it seems as if he has nothing to do. He just marries someone else. This interesting way of presenting women as agents and men as passive participants of events requires further analysis in the light of gender theories, for which unfortunately is beyond the scope of this thesis.

¹⁰⁶⁶ Amelia Stillwell and Brian S. Lowery, "Gendered Racial Boundary Maintenance: Social Penalties for White Women in Interracial Relationships," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 121 (2021), <https://doi.org/10.1037/pspi0000332>.

The last important issue is the relationship between the way cross-group romantic relationships are presented and the overall attitude towards the outgroup exhibited by the interviewees. In one case it was clear that antisemitic bias colored the perception of the frequency of intermarriages, while in all the others the relation is more complex. Mira's observations of cross-group romance brought her to negative conclusions and her attitude towards the outgroup correlates in the sense that she describes multiple instances of discrimination and intergroup tensions. Adam, on the other hand, might have been positively influenced by his uncle's romance with a Jewish woman because his overall representation of the outgroup, although marked by stereotypes, can be assessed as positive, and free of overt antisemitic allusions. Certainly, having access to accounts coming directly from people being in a cross-group relationship could shed more light onto the problem.

Chapter 9

Interreligious Relations

This chapter focuses on the analysis of the accounts of interreligious relations, understood both as what one thinks about the members of the religious outgroup and how one acts when encountering them. Almost two decades ago, Michał Galas claimed in his chapter on interreligious relations in the shtetl that many studies “stress the lack of inter-religious contacts between Jews and Christians”¹⁰⁶⁷ and implied that the research of everyday interreligious relations is a desired direction for future research. This chapter, in a particular way, answers to the need he pointed out, a need which, in spite of almost two decades’ distance, remains mostly unheard not only in the studies of shtetls but of Polish-Jewish relations in general.

Intergroup contact theory serves as an organizing principle – the chapter follows Thomas Pettigrew’s distinction of four consecutive processes taking place during the intergroup contact leading to decreased prejudice: learning about the other, changing behavior, generating affective ties and ingroup reappraisal.¹⁰⁶⁸ In other words, learning about the Other should be followed by decreased prejudice towards the outgroup, which impacts behavior towards it and consequently enables friendships. As a result, one is transformed and changes not only their approach to the outgroup but also the way one thinks about the group they belong to. In Pettigrew’s presentation of intergroup contact theory, knowledge about the other seems to be the first stage of lessening intergroup tensions and accepting the other. The reader ought to bear in mind that the task of this chapter is not to verify or falsify this theory but rather to apply it to the sources in order to bring to the fore how complex realities of intergroup contact in the past are presented by the interviewees. Thus, the four steps indicated by Pettigrew organize the content of the narratives, helping to draw conclusions both about the nature of the intergroup contact in the past and the memory thereof.

¹⁰⁶⁷ Michał Galas, "Inter-Religious Contacts in the Shtetl: Proposals for Future Research," in *The Shtetl: Myth and Reality*, ed. Antony Polonsky (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2004), 41.

¹⁰⁶⁸ Pettigrew, "Intergroup Contact Theory."

In the first section, the chapter presents knowledge about the other; in the second section, the attitudes towards the outgroup; in the third part, it focuses on the accounts of intergroup interactions; and in the fourth one it addresses the rare cases of reassessment of the ingroup, sometimes with far reaching conclusions. The analysis of the oral histories is deepened by linking them to some tropes present in metanarratives about Jewish-Christian and Polish-Jewish relations. As explained earlier (Chapter 1), this chapter is the heart of the study, for which the previous chapters prepared the ground.

One can easily notice that the type of sources used in the study forces a certain asymmetry between the Catholic accounts of Judaism, Jewish religious rituals etc., and the Jewish accounts on Christianity, the Catholic Church and Jesus. While the first group eagerly present their knowledge of Jewish religious traditions, Jews do not speak much about Christianity. This results from the fact that they were not asked directly, unlike the Catholic interviewees, who were asked to speak about their knowledge and experiences of meeting the Jews of Lublin, the culture of Lublin Jews, their religious practices etc. Jews were also asked about the Jewish community and not about their knowledge or experience of Catholicism. In addition, Catholic interviewees might have felt more at ease revealing openly their thoughts about Jews and Judaism to fellow Poles and Catholics. All of the Jewish interviewees left Poland shortly after the end of the Second World War, if not earlier, and they were interviewed by representatives of the outgroup; therefore, they might have felt less freedom to reveal all of their thoughts about the outgroup. Finally, it is worth remembering the majority-minority power play in this setting. The oral histories go back to the time when Jews were more openly discriminated against and persecuted, so they perceived Christianity as an oppressing power. Some of them might have retained reservation or even hostility towards it. Most of them did not have a chance to update these images as they lived their lives in entirely Jewish settings in the State of Israel where the changes in the Catholic teachings about Jews and Judaism were not a widely discussed topic. Thus, their image of Christianity is often that of a pre-dialogical, rigid and supersessionist Church. They might not be comfortable presenting it to the Catholic interviewees, especially if they are not explicitly asked.

Before diving into the topic, it might be worth noting that for both Jews and Catholics in the 1920s and 1930s religion was an important point of reference, organizing their everyday life. Even if someone's personal beliefs did not align with the rabbinical interpretations or *magisterium Ecclesiae*, the lived religion on a cultural level provided a framework for celebration of life cycle events, political identity projects and stabilization of ingroup/outgroup dynamics. Even in school, prayers were often part of the modern secular education, and for the Catholics, attending Sunday masses or the

celebration of first communion were school-related events.¹⁰⁶⁹ In that sense, all of the interviewees, even those who highlight their secular background, grew up in a religious world.

Drawing from Margaret Archer's analytical dualism and her concept of morphogenetic sequence,¹⁰⁷⁰ one can assume that the structures provided by religion both on a hierarchical and cultural level shape the interactions of the agents (both groups in question, understood as communities and a body of individuals). In this case, the institutional Church and Synagogue through their internal customs, legislation and teachings set in motion a morphogenetic sequence for their respective faithful. They provided a language and a ritual framework within which the groups operate and from which they address the Otherness of the outgroup – what one could call a habitus, if one wanted to follow Erwin Panofsky and Pierre Bourdieu.¹⁰⁷¹

However, the individuals have their individual and collective agency, and the stories at hand are treated as an expression of it on two levels. Firstly, they had agency in the past, although that was at times limited by their age, social class, gender and other factors. Secondly, they have agency as storytellers, and how they present the interreligious relations in the stories is not only conditioned by the interview setting but also by their decisions: what events they recall, how they describe the events and what kind of extra-contextual comments they provide.

When it comes to the content of the stories, iconographic and iconological interpretation is offered, following the already established *modus operandi*.¹⁰⁷² Thus, the texts are presented thematically (following the intergroup contact theory as an organizing principle) and then the content is analyzed, taking into account cultural and theological contexts. Finally, an attempt is made at iconological interpretation; that is, searching for the intention of the speaker, which can be explored by resorting to the concepts of narrative construction of identity and exploring the three-way relationship between the memory, the narrative and the identity.

¹⁰⁶⁹ Many Catholic interviewees mention attending the Sunday mass as a part of the elementary school *kinderstube* and their social life as children. This implies for example a possible exposure to the antisemitic content of the sermons.

¹⁰⁷⁰ Archer, *Realist Social Theory: The Morphogenetic Approach*.

¹⁰⁷¹ Apparently, Bourdieu borrowed the notion of *habitus* from Panofsky. Pierre Bourdieu, *La Distinction: Critique sociale du jugement* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1979); versus Erwin Panofsky, *Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism* (Latrobe, PA: Archabbey Press, 1951).

¹⁰⁷² Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1939).

Observing the Other's Religion – Personal Narratives

Learning about the outgroup can take various forms. In this chapter, learning is understood in a twofold way. Firstly, it is the meeting of the Other and the observation through which one produces knowledge. This section focuses on this kind of learning. Another kind of learning – what one is taught by their own community about the outgroup – is discussed in section 2.

Catholics about Judaism

Background Information

Throughout history Jews were presented in Christian theology as those who rejected the salvific divine plan and broke the covenant, and in consequence deserve to be discriminated against and oppressed. Jules Isaac called this type of theology of Judaism the teaching of contempt.¹⁰⁷³ The main idea was that because Jews have not kept the covenant and instead killed the Messiah, their position as the chosen people is replaced by the Church (supersessionism). Katharina von Kellenbach in her book on anti-Judaism in feminist theology¹⁰⁷⁴ distinguishes three main ways in which Judaism is presented within this supersessionist teaching of contempt: as antithesis of Christianity (favoring law over grace, justice over love, etc.), scapegoat (Jews as guilty of the deicide charge are presented as guilty of all the evil of the world because of their inherent depravation) and as a prologue to Christianity (old covenant that prepared the way for the new one).¹⁰⁷⁵

Undoubtedly these ideas were reflected in the theology of the local Catholic clergy. Judging by the literature of the subject, the main sources to learn about this theology of Judaism were the Catholic press¹⁰⁷⁶ and publications of the Catholic theologians, as

¹⁰⁷³ Jules Isaac, *The Teaching of Contempt: Christian Roots of Anti-Semitism* (New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston, 1964).

¹⁰⁷⁴ Katharina von Kellenbach, *Anti-Judaism in Feminists Religious Writings*, American Academy of Religion Cultural Criticism Series 1 (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1994).

¹⁰⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷⁶ Dariusz Libionka, "Obcy, wrodzy, niebezpieczni. Obraz Żydów i „kwestii żydowskiej” w prasie inteligencji katolickiej lat trzydziestych w Polsce," *Kwartalnik historii Żydów / Jewish History Quarterly*, no. 3 (2002). Libionka, ""Kwestia żydowska"."; Pollmann, "Kwestia żydowska w prasie katolickiej lat trzydziestych. Badania empiryczne prasy biskupiej metropolii krakowskiej na bazie ilościowej"; Modras, *The Catholic Church and Antisemitism*; Landau-Czajka, "The Image of the Jew in the Catholic Press during the Second Republic." Landau-Czajka, "Żydzi w oczach prasy katolickiej."

well as textbooks on pastoral theology.¹⁰⁷⁷ The studies dealing with the topic present a rather somber picture of omnipresent antisemitism and anti-Judaism.

The pastoral theology textbooks convey an image of Jews who are inherently hostile to Christianity and the Church, and the source of moral corruption (scapegoat paradigm).¹⁰⁷⁸ Thus, the new generation of priests formed in the Second Republic of Poland received an instruction which implied that the only good Jew is a converted Jew. Two of the most prominent theologians publishing about Judaism, Fr. Józef Kruszyński and Fr. Józef Trzeciak presented a deformed picture of Judaism as a Christian-hating, materialistic and separatist religion. In this line of thinking antisemitism is not denied but explicitly admitted and justified by the fact that Jews are contemptuous about Gentiles, support freemasonry and want to destroy the morals of the Catholic Polish nation. The Catholic press presents Jews in a similar way, highlighting the Jewish-Masonic alliance, perpetuating the narrative of Jewish hegemony drawn from *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, the link to bolshevism as well as perilous impact of Catholic morals through production of pornographic materials, indecent literature and unauthentic devotional articles. One can easily notice that proper knowledge of Judaism as religion is absent, and the information received is colored by the ideological trends of the era.

Finally, official statements of the Catholic bishops also shed some light on the prevalent attitude towards the Jews among the local clergy. Anna Łysiak lists five official bishops' letters pertaining to the Jews.¹⁰⁷⁹ They oppose aggression and violence against the Jews, pointing to their human dignity and constitutional rights, but at the same time, some of them mention that Jews are harmful or are a threat to Poland. Thus, the overall picture corresponds mainly to the paradigms of Judaism as a scapegoat and the antithesis of Christianity.

Taking into consideration the above sources and existing research, there is little doubt that the overall attitude towards Jews and Judaism was negative, if not hostile. Although no study was conducted on the content of sermons at the time, it is very reasonable to assume that the faithful attending Sunday masses were exposed to the ideas represented in the Catholic press and by the leading theologians and the bishops. This was the structural conditioning and metanarrative they all absorbed to some extent, and if not accepted as their own, then at least had as a persistent point of reference.

¹⁰⁷⁷ Pałka, "Żydzi w polskich podręcznikach teologii pastoralnej (1874-1939)."; Pałka, *Kościół katolicki wobec Żydów w Polsce międzywojennej*.

¹⁰⁷⁸ Pałka, "Żydzi w polskich podręcznikach teologii pastoralnej (1874-1939)," *passim*.

¹⁰⁷⁹ Łysiak, "The Rev. Kruszyński and Polish Catholic Teachings about Jews and Judaism in Interwar Poland," 71.

General Impressions on Judaism among the Interviewees

The popular knowledge of Judaism among the Catholic interviewees seems predominantly basic. They know about the Shabbat and some Jewish feasts and rituals but they err with the details, mixing them together.¹⁰⁸⁰ In some cases, the accounts are colored by anti-Jewish prejudice. The information they have about Judaism stems from their everyday encounters with Jewish neighbors and acquaintances. Often, they are a bit confused when speaking about specific customs and fail to grasp the meaning of them, which suggests that there was a lack of intergroup communication regarding religious rituals.

A few Catholic interviewees expressed general reflections on Judaism, which betray a certain level of confusion when it comes to what its tenets are and how it relates to Christianity. A good example of such confusion could be found in Henryka's [1932] story:

I don't know, when it comes to Christmas and Easter, for example, I have wondered often and could never pick up on whether they observed it. Besides, I did not delve into such topics, and I was not interested in it anyway. I don't know if they observed it and how they did? They celebrated this (sic!) holiday¹⁰⁸¹ in their own way, they certainly did because they believed in God and probably believe in God. What is their true religion, I don't know either ... They didn't manifest their religious feelings very much about these things.¹⁰⁸²

She clearly exposes her main question regarding Judaism: "What is their true religion, I don't know". She supposes that they (probably!) believe in the same God in which Christians do but fails to grasp what their holidays were, apart from the Shabbat. She wonders whether they observe the same festivities that Christians do but finds no answer to that, partly due to the secretiveness of Jews and partly due to her own lack of interest when she was young. Henryka comes from a village, from a working class background and her education was not very thorough, which might explain her narrow views, but at the same time most probably a prevalent percentage of Catholic Poles would share her ignorance. Jews were known as an adversary on economic and political grounds but their beliefs were not understood, and even less so, taught. The knowledge of the religion of the Other thus is more generally based on the observation of religious rituals.

¹⁰⁸⁰ This tendency was noticed in the study of Blanka Górecka, "Christian Domestic Servants," 136.

¹⁰⁸¹ It is not clear which holiday is intended here, probably Shabbat.

¹⁰⁸² Henryka Jaworska, <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/115752/edition/110200>, 28.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/116699/edition/111122>, 28.02.2023.

Shabbat

Regarding the particulars of Judaism, it seems that all of the Catholic interviewees had a good understanding of what Shabbat is and what it entails. Many of them explained that Shabbat started on Friday evening but some remembered that it is the entire day of Saturday and did not include Friday evening in their understanding.¹⁰⁸³ The majority mentioning Shabbat would also indicate that Jewish men would pray in the synagogue. In addition, all the stories mentioning Shabbat agree on the fact that it was a Jewish day of rest when it was forbidden to work.¹⁰⁸⁴ Józef [1927] remembers that he learned it firsthand when he was sent to shop on Saturday:

When it comes to contact with the Jewish religion, I remember once my mother told me to go fetch something from the Jew's (shop). I went on Saturday and it's a Sabbath - Saturday, so they chased me out. I was angry then, but it was their holiday, so I had nothing to say.¹⁰⁸⁵

When coming to the house of this Jewish man, who most probably had his shop in the same place, Józef was not only left empty handed but was even chased away for disturbing the Saturday rest. Similar to him, Maria [1926], too, recalls her encounter with the idea of resting on Shabbat through the fury of the Jewish baker disturbed by her on Shabbat:

(He was) so orthodox, when sometimes we lacked bread on Saturday, mum would send me with money, he was furious, he always said: "Why are you coming only now, couldn't you buy bread yesterday? Tell your mother I won't sell any more." And he never touched the money because it was the Sabbath. "Put the money over there somewhere on the box, or somewhere on the counter ...". I had to put the money myself and I had to take the bread myself. He did not touch the bread, he did not give it to me. Only I took it myself and paid it myself, but he did not touch it, because he was not allowed, because it was already work. Because when it was the Sabbath, they already had candles, fish, and it was forbidden to work.¹⁰⁸⁶

¹⁰⁸³ OH GGNNTC Irena Korolko, 15-17; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/49766/edition/46741>, 23.02.2023. OH GGNNTC Regina Kucharska, passim; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/119365/edition/113679>, 23.02.2023.

¹⁰⁸⁴ *Ibid.*; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/49766/edition/46741>, 23.02.2023.

¹⁰⁸⁵ OH GGNNTC Józef Sadurski, 49; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/50233/edition/47163>, 24.02.2023.

¹⁰⁸⁶ OH GGNNTC Maria Sowa, 19; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/125800/edition/119907>, 27.02.2023.

She describes in detail how the baker got angry the purchase was not made a day before the Shabbat but how he found a solution not to send her away empty handed. In spite of the frustration, he would allow her to take the bread and leave the money but she would have to do it herself. Thus, she learned he could not work or touch money during the Shabbat, which might be an important detail, given how widespread were the narratives of Jewish parsimony and materialistic mindset.

Two of the interviewees connected celebrating Shabbat also to public spaces. Stanisława [1930] remembers Jewish people strolling in the fields,¹⁰⁸⁷ and Henryka [1932] shares her perception of Jewish Shabbat observance as something private, if not mysterious, that Jews did not want to share with the non-Jewish population:

They didn't manifest their religious feelings very much about these things. It was their great secret if they were doing it in secret somewhere in their nooks and crannies. And on Saturdays, there were simply no Jews on the street, they were at home, yes. They didn't reveal their holiday. Because they knew that people knew about it, but there were no such people on the street, like with us for example, there is a procession, some mass, right, you go to church. They all sat in their places where they would go to pray, I did not notice, I did not hear, at least, that Jews were doing something like that, so that everyone would know. They prayed, no one knew what it was about, they knew that they were praying like that, in their own way, and it is confirmed, because, for example, I often see how there are snapshots in Palestine, there are various things, there are these prayers, they are focused, in silence, they say something sometimes but no one would understand it.¹⁰⁸⁸

For Henryka, Jewish festivities were limited to Jewish homes and synagogues (“their places where they would go to pray”) and they were not obvious in the public space, but most probably it is so because she comes from a village. The Jewish holidays were not as easy to read for her as the Catholic festivities with their public processions and big masses that could be observed “on the street” but she doesn’t reflect on the possible reasons for such secrecy such – feelings of threat from the majority. Others add to their descriptions of Shabbat also the aspect of festive garb worn on Shabbat, namely *chalat*,¹⁰⁸⁹ and the special means taken to beautify the home for Shabbat and prepare delicious food:

¹⁰⁸⁷ OH GGNNTC Stanisława Podlipna, 26; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/118372/edition/112698>, 24.02.2023.

¹⁰⁸⁸ Henryka Jaworska, <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/115752/edition/110200>, 28.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/116699/edition/111122>, 28.02.2023.

¹⁰⁸⁹ OH GGNNTC Irena Korolko, 17-18; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/49766/edition/46741>, 23.02.2023.

Once, when they were getting ready for the Sabbath, I was at Luśka's, in my house, upstairs. I already knew that the table was covered with a white tablecloth, that there was some stuffed fish on the platter, because this basic dish was Jewish stuffed fish. And there, the broth with this so-called “pipek”, home-made pasta kneaded with eggs. And I saw two candlesticks, standing on the table, the tableware was nice, so festive. Well, but later, when they sat at the table, I was gone. In any case, they treated it very seriously and celebrated this Sabbath very festively. I only know that Jews, men, went to that synagogue, but I have never been there again.¹⁰⁹⁰

In the above quotation, Maria [1926] focuses on the description of the table: white cloth, candlesticks, tableware and specific Shabbat dishes. She has these memories even though she was not actually invited to the Shabbat dinner but had quite close relations with the neighbors, so had a chance to see the preparations but had to go just before the dinner would start. In fact, Jewish food connected to the Shabbat and other holidays is a common motif in the oral histories analyzed in this chapter.

Jewish Food Connected to the Holidays

Alicja [1925] in some ways contradicts Henryka's story about Jewish secrecy, claiming that Catholics knew the Jewish holidays. She focuses on the description of the food related to the festivities and recalls various sorts of fish and the challah bread her Jewish neighbors had for Shabbat. In addition, she describes in detail the differences in the Shabbat menu between the rich and the poor houses:

We knew their holidays. I have to say they had good things. Because a rich Jew had a carp obligatorily - challah and fish. There had to be a fish. There were no sea fish back then. There were freshwater fish back then. It was a rich Jew who had a carp and a challah, and the poor one had to have a challah and a fish as well. But he had stuffed, chopped fish. These are the smaller fish, because they costed less. And the fish had to be chopped with a cleaver on a board, because the fish is better chopped, and they had very good stuffed fish. Besides, I really liked this fish. And the challah was good, because the challah was specially baked. There was a huge bun, it's such a braided bun, but now these braids are small, and they had very big, such enormous buns, these buns were beautiful, very pretty.¹⁰⁹¹

It seems like she has tried the Shabbat food herself, as she does not only mention carp, chopped fish and challah bread but also gives an opinion on their taste. It is worth

¹⁰⁹⁰ OH GGNNTC Maria Sowa, 19-20; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/125803/edition/119910>, 27.02.2023.

¹⁰⁹¹ Alicja Łazuka, <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/126824/edition/120873>, 28.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/124975/edition/119110>, 28.02.2023.

noticing that in her perception, her Catholic family knew Jewish holidays but in reality, this knowledge was very limited. They knew some Jewish dishes served during the holidays but it does not follow from her story that there would be a deeper understanding of the meanings of these holidays. Other Catholics too display a similar level of reference to Jewish holidays, mentioning specific foods, like *matzah*, but not much more than that,¹⁰⁹² as can be seen, for example, in Janina's [1927] account:

I remember from Friday to Saturday they carried it in such pots, I don't know what was there, some peas, such dishes baked in stoves. A dozen or so families gathered and baked, so that on Saturday they did not even cook food but from these pots, they ate heated dishes, and on Saturday they did nothing. In any case, there was absolutely no meat in the dishes, not a hint of pork.¹⁰⁹³

She remembers that Jews did not eat pork and describes *cholent* without knowing its proper name. However, she can only note the external and superficial level of the festivity – going with pots to the bakery, the content of the pots or the fact that Jews do not cook on Saturday and do not eat pork. However, none of the interviewees mentioned the reasons why Jews observed such commandments, most probably because they did not know. The Catholics knew what could be observed from outside but not the justifications of such customs. This focus on the external aspects of celebrations and lack of understanding of the theology behind them is symptomatic of the Catholic narratives about “the Jewish religion”.¹⁰⁹⁴

Knowledge of Specific Holidays

Apart from general knowledge of Jewish holidays, some of the Catholic interviewees seem to distinguish specific Jewish holidays and traditions connected to them. Maria [1926], for example recalls the festival of *Kuczki* (Sukkot), which she describes in the following manner:

I was only once at the Bystrzyca river, I think before Easter, there were the so-called *Kuczki* and they prayed there over the water and there they submerged in this water.

¹⁰⁹² OH GGNNTC Irena Korolko, 17-18;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/49766/edition/46741>, 23.02.2023; Aleksander Baranowski, oral history 2, 26.

¹⁰⁹³ OH GGNNTC Janina Grudzińska.,7;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/50242/edition/47170>, 23.02.2023.

¹⁰⁹⁴ The term “Jewish religion” is often used in the stories. Another food related to the Jewish holidays that is mentioned quite often is *matzah*. However, as it usually appears in the context of blood libel, it will be presented further on in the section dedicated to the blood libel.

Some went into the water, some just poured the water over themselves and sang these ritual religious songs there. And I went there once with my friend. It made us laugh a bit, because it looked a bit grotesque. Because those Jews with these sidelocks, and these Jewish women in these wigs, and young Jewish children, and that's...the kind of splashing in the water. These were the so-called *Kuczki*. And that was always before Easter. It was also such a very important rite.¹⁰⁹⁵

What makes her account complicated is the mixing of three holidays: Rosh HaShana, Sukkot and Easter/Passover. The time she indicates (before Easter) could correspond to Passover in the Jewish calendar. However, the ritual of *Tashlikh* she describes, *nota bene*, quite accurately, does not take place in the spring but rather in the autumn. Again, of all the autumn holidays, she mistakenly chooses Sukkot as the context of it, while it is Rosh HaShana when Tashlikh takes place. So she gives an accurate description of Rosh HaShana but misnames it and misplaces it in the calendar, mixing it up with two other holidays. It is on the Jewish New Year, when Jews would go to the natural flowing water to pray and symbolically cast one's sins into the water. Once again, one can note correct observation of the religious rituals but also considerable confusion with details because of the lack of familiarity with the meaning and the context of these rituals, possibly in addition to being interviewed long after one witnessed them. Another example of reference to specific Jewish holidays, ironically also Sukkot, and even more ironically, also rather confused, appears in Bogdan's [1934] story:

So, it was probably for the Sukkot, after this feast, that they would throw away for luck or something, they would throw away wooden spoons, such large wooden spoons, wrapped in some paper, and they threw them away, and we collected these spoons. Because they were throwing away those spoons. These spoons were just lying around.¹⁰⁹⁶

He remembers the throwing away of wooden spoons and he connects it, with a certain dose of doubt ("probably"), with Sukkot. While there is no link between this festival and getting rid of wooden spoons, there are three possible explanations of the phenomenon he refers to. Most of what he remembers reflects the custom of cleaning the house before Passover and getting rid of *chametz*. Ethan Allen describes the custom when the father of the house would put all the crumbs of bread on a wooden spoon,

¹⁰⁹⁵ OH GGNNTC Maria Sowa, 20;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/125803/edition/119910>, 27.02.2023.

¹⁰⁹⁶ OH GGNNTC Bogdan Stanisław Pazur, 30;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/123688/edition/117869>, 24.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/154580/edition/148297>, 24.02.2023.

wrap them in linen cloth and then burn them.¹⁰⁹⁷ Another possible explanation, also relating to Passover, would be that the wooden spoons could not be made kosher,¹⁰⁹⁸ so they would just be thrown away before Pesach, when everything in the house should be koshered and without even a trace of *chametz*.

Therefore, also in this case, the observation of the custom most probably is correct, however the lack of understanding of the larger theological explanations and Jewish tradition make the custom not only unintelligible but also impossible to be remembered correctly. Whatever religious ritual Jews do, it remains just part of folklore, which from the Catholic interviewee perspective might be fascinating, absurd or otherwise, but in any case its justification and context are never clear. In the case of Bogdan, who was just a very young child before the war, it is also possible that the confusion stems from the memories relying more on the stories he heard afterwards than on what he actually remembers. Nonetheless, the lack of understanding remains the common denominator in the accounts of Jewish holidays. The Catholic stories of Jewish prayer garments can provide further insight into the ignorance separating the two groups.

Jewish Prayer Garments

Kazimierz [1928] recalls how in spite of him being very young and never having entered a synagogue he saw Jewish men putting on *tefillin* to pray, and he connects it to Shabbat.¹⁰⁹⁹ Although he does not know its proper name, he refers to the *tefillin* as “a cube they put on their heads.”¹¹⁰⁰ He knows the visual appearance of the object and is aware of its importance during Jewish prayer but does not know the details of the role it plays, which suggests that he had never had any occasion to discuss this tradition with anyone knowledgeable, such as a member of the outgroup; most probably neither had any member of his close environment. Another Catholic, too, Regina [1926], recalls the *tefillin* that raised her interest and that of other Catholic peers; however, the occasion to quench their curiosity came only after the liquidation of the ghetto:

When the Jews left the ghetto, we went there to check what they had, and we were curious what that square was, that a Jew was praying with it, he had a square on his

¹⁰⁹⁷ Ethan Allen, *An Introduction to Hebrew Customs of the Bible* (Morrisville, NC: Lulu Press, 2008).

¹⁰⁹⁸ There are varying opinions on whether wood could be made kosher or not. Some claim that because of the porous nature of wood, chametz can penetrate really deep into wooden handles and cutlery, while others claim that the regular means undertaken to make other dishes kosher works also for the wooden ones.

¹⁰⁹⁹ In fact, it is not customarily worn on Shabbat.

¹¹⁰⁰ OH GGNNTC Kazimierz Jarzembowski, 27;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/118739/edition/113063>, 23.02.2023.

forehead and some leather straps, wrapped around it somewhere. And then he wore this black and white scarf with such embroidery. And this is how the Jew prayed. I thought, we'd go, find it, then we'd see what's in that block, what he was wearing on his head. We found one somewhere in this abandoned house, "Guys, what are we going to do?" "We'll break it down and see what it is." We broke it open, and there were the Ten God's Commandments on the skin of a cow, probably, written, such a long stripe, and there were written Ten God's Commandments. So we professed one religion ... It was terrible, terrible.¹¹⁰¹

Apart from *tefillin*, Regina and her friends (the "we" in the story) knew about a prayer shawl, tallit, which is worn by Jewish men during prayers. However, in her account, Regina focuses on the discovery of what was inside the *tefillin*: a piece of parchment with, as she puts it, "the Ten God's Commandments." The children decide to break the phylacteries not because of anger but rather out of curiosity. It is like a dissection of a rare dead animal, usually seen from a distance – to see how it is built and what its entrails hide.

It is impossible to understand how a group of Polish Catholic children were able to decipher a Hebrew text written on the parchment and come to the conclusion that it is the Ten Commandments of God. Traditionally, the texts placed within *tefillin* are not the Ten Commandments but rather biblical texts referring to the commandment of *tefillin* (Ex 13:1–10, 13:11–16, Deut 6:4–9, 11:13–21); therefore, also in this context, one may assume with very high probability that was the case. However, the fact that Regina is able to produce some knowledge about the content of the "long stripe" shows that she had to consult with someone more experienced than her – maybe a parent, a teacher or a priest.

It is worthwhile noting that this happened after the liquidation of the ghetto, which points to the fact that she did not receive the information from members of the outgroup but rather refers to someone from the ingroup. One of the questions that comes to mind is why she and her friends did not have such knowledge before? Why is it that they were not able to interact with Jews on a level that would allow them to pose questions about each other's prayer? Most probably, the separation between these two groups was too strong for such an encounter.

At the end of the quoted passage, she confesses her surprise or shock that both groups professed one religion. She bases that conviction on the fact that both groups shared the Ten Commandments, a common moral compass and guideline. Discovering that common norm made her think that both Jews and Catholics believe in the same God, and therefore have "one religion". For her, this realization is bitter ("terrible, terrible")

¹¹⁰¹ OH GGNNTC Regina Kucharska, 10;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/98885/edition/93241>, 23.03.2023.

as it comes only after the Jews are no longer there, they are not her neighbors but rather the victims of the Holocaust. Therefore, she realizes the spiritual kinship only after they are gone, which leaves her filled with dread.

Regina's story can illustrate a relatively open approach to the religious Other and a will to learn more. At the same time, it points to serious problems, reflected in all the above stories, in getting to know the Other: a profound chasm between the two groups, that were only allowed to observe each other but not really talk to each other about their religions or faith; it brings to mind the Buberian distinction between the I-It and the I-Thou relation. In the I-It relation, one observes and is being observed but does not engage in dialogical encounter. Such a way of relating to the Other is asymmetrical as the observing part is the only agent, although the observation could be mutual. However, the Other remains only an object of observation and not a partner in dialogue. The type of interreligious relations described in the above stories referring to the knowledge of Catholics about Judaism suggests exactly this type of relationship, essentially with a potential towards othering rather than encountering the members of the outgroup. Even though the stories are based on childhood memories and one could say that in that sense they do not offer a mature reflection on the relation with the Other, they can be seen as a reflection of the larger society's views on Jews if one takes into consideration the notion of multiplying the upbringing patterns.

Jews about Christianity

Background Information

For an average Jew of Lublin religion remained the main framework of reference because for centuries the Jewish community (*kehilla*) fulfilled not only a religious role but also an administrative and governing one. Although the 20th century witnessed growing secularization, Jewish social life still elapsed in the rhythm of Jewish holidays, and the rabbis were widely respected as leadership figures, even though politicians and activists started to join them. The younger generations were less interested in keeping the religious precepts and very often joined secular socialist movements such as the Bund; nonetheless, their commitment to their families usually prompted them to keep some relation to Judaism, even if they personally opted for a non- or areligious version of Jewishness.

Unlike in cases of Catholic or broader Christian relations to Jews and Judaism, Jewish relations to Christianity are not explored often, if one thinks about the emic perspective. No studies address the Jewish theology of Christianity or Catholicism in interwar Poland, so in that sense one can only estimate. Certainly, Jews knew and felt growing antisemitism in the Catholic Church, and that could not help them in forming

a positive image of the Catholic Church. In fact, the references to Catholic antisemitism seem to be the only constant and recurring impression of the religious Other that the interviewees share.

Interviewees' Opinions

As mentioned above, Jewish interviewees do not express any observations regarding Catholic religious rituals and do not reveal their knowledge of Christianity in their stories. As they were not explicitly asked about it, it is very plausible that the absence of such topics stems from the way the interviews were planned and carried out. Moreover, as Catholics formed the majority their customs were part of a tradition that might be taken for granted. An important part of the context is that the interviewees were (at least culturally) Catholic, therefore, the interviewees might have assumed there was no need to tell them about their own traditions. The only exception are two accounts of Jewish interviewees having contact with Christmas celebrations, which will be discussed in the section dedicated to intergroup behaviors.

However, in one of the Catholic accounts appears a claim that Jews in general were not interested in Catholic religious traditions: “[Interviewer: Were the Jews curious about Polish customs, such as celebrating Christmas?] We never, never had a chance for them to be or be interested in it, never.”¹¹⁰² In this narrative, Jews and Poles coexist without problems and even with mutual help; however, Jews are private and focused on keeping their way of life on one hand, and uninterested in Polish customs on the other hand. Historically, such a claim can be justified by the long tradition of Jews focusing on maintaining their identity and religious tradition in spite of persecution.

Conclusions

Nowadays, we often talk about information bubbles in the context of social media; however, it might be useful to apply this term also to other contexts, and see it in relation to religious illiteracy. Multiple studies in interreligious relations, for example, show that religious groups tend to have their own bubbles, and not only limit interreligious contact but avoid increasing their knowledge about the Other.¹¹⁰³

¹¹⁰² OH GGNNTC Bogdan Stanisław Pazur, 33; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/123689/edition/117870>, 24.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/154581/edition/148298>, 24.02.2023.

¹¹⁰³ See, e.g., Ben Johanan, *Jacob's Younger Brother: Christian-Jewish Relations after Vatican II*; Christoph Novak et al., "Religious "Bubbles" in a Superdiverse Digital Landscape? Research with Religious Youth on Instagram," *Religions* 13, no. 3 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13030213>; Muthuraj Swamy, *The Problem with Interreligious Dialogue: Plurality, Conflict and Elitism in Hindu-Christian-Muslim Relations* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2016); Jesper Svartvik and Jakob Wirén, *Religious Stereotyping and Interreligious Relations* (New York: Springer, 2013). Jakob Wirén, *Att ge plats för den*

Predominantly, the narratives recalled above fit into this scheme, portraying, at least to a large extent, mutual ignorance. However, there is more to it.

According to the stories, one can assume that religious literacy¹¹⁰⁴ among these groups was low, which is typical for the period, but interestingly it seems not to have changed from the diegetic world to the day of telling of the story, which can be inferred from the lack of correcting comments. The majority of the interviewees limit themselves to intra-contextual narration, which suggests that either their knowledge did not increase significantly or they did not consider corrections important. They stay within the world they recall. Only Regina adds an extra-contextual narrative element, commenting on the past events she constructs in the story. When she says that they broke the *tefillin* she is an intra-contextual narrator but when she adds that she realized “there were Ten God's Commandments” there and that “we professed one religion”¹¹⁰⁵ she is an extra-contextual narrator. Thus, she adds these explanations (what she realized) as someone who knows better than the girl protagonist of the story (herself in the past) does. Such an operation hints at the change in her knowledge and awareness towards the outgroup religion. Such a juxtaposition between an intra-contextual and extra-contextual narrative is not visible in other cases of Catholics describing watching Jewish religious rituals. Therefore, a conclusion can be made that (with the exception of Regina) they did not manifest agency in finding out about the Other's religion but accepted the preexisting knowledge coming from their upbringing.

According to Diane L. Moore, who propagated the term “religious illiteracy”, it results in fueling intergroup friction on cultural level, e.g. culture wars and promoting religious bigotry.¹¹⁰⁶ One can assume that this was also the case in interwar Lublin. Religious illiteracy affects the image of the Other as separated, non-negotiably diverse and non-normative. Interestingly, the stories do not negotiate such images,¹¹⁰⁷ taking into account current knowledge, but rather preserve this image of religious Otherness, thus perpetuating the stereotypes and distorted knowledge absorbed in childhood. One

andre?: Religionsdialog, ersättningsteologi och Muhammed som profet, Svenska kyrkans forskningsserie 43 (Stockholm: Verbum, 2021).

¹¹⁰⁴ Religious literacy here is understood as an ability to discern and analyze the fundamental intersections of religion and social/political/cultural life through multiple lenses such as the history, central texts, beliefs, practices, and contemporary manifestations of various religious traditions. For the concept of religious literacy versus illiteracy, see Diane L. Moore, *Overcoming Religious Illiteracy: A Cultural Studies Approach to the Study of Religion in Secondary Education*, 1st ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

¹¹⁰⁵ OH GGNNTC Regina Kucharska, 10; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/98885/edition/93241>, 23.02.2023.

¹¹⁰⁶ Moore, *Overcoming Religious Illiteracy: A Cultural Studies Approach to the Study of Religion in Secondary Education*, 3-8.

¹¹⁰⁷ Apart from Regina's story.

might ask why that would be. One explanation could be that given the postwar history of Poland, it is plausible that their level of religious literacy did not increase much because they did not have a chance to learn about the Other. Instead, they remained limited to fading memories of what they observed as children. On the other hand, is it possible that their level of religious literacy did not increase at all? An attempt to answer this question in more detail is attempted in the last section of the chapter.

Pre-Existing Knowledge – Metanarratives and Collective Memory

Following the dynamics depicted by Pettigrew,¹¹⁰⁸ if the conditions are favorable, one would pass from cognitive change (learning about the other) to behavioral change (changing behavior towards them). However, creating images of the Other is a crucial step mediating behavioral change, which Pettigrew fails to note or name. For this study such a realization is necessary. All the processes he delineates relate to the images of the Other created in the intersubjective context of the ingroup through shared narratives.¹¹⁰⁹ Therefore, in intergroup contact theory, learning about the Other assumes that apart from the knowledge derived from observing the Other, there is a pre-existing pool of intersubjective knowledge or collective memory¹¹¹⁰ from which one is drawing their conviction – the image of the Other, or the stereotype of the Other – and that through the process of learning about the outgroup, the ingroup's image of the outgroup changes and the stereotype is dismantled. Thus, a new, more nuanced image of the Other is forged which eventually leads to changed behavior.

This particular section is an exercise in archaeology of the collective memory of Jewish-Christian relations. Going back to the pre-existing knowledge about the Other, revealed in metanarratives, it is trying to bring to light the elements of the collective memory the interviewees “inherited” from previous generations and from public discourse; for example, antisemitic, anti-Judaic and anti-Christian or anti-Catholic

¹¹⁰⁸ Pettigrew, "Intergroup Contact Theory."

¹¹⁰⁹ The human need of creating shared narratives is accurately and concisely described by Noah Harrari's *Sapiens*, where he states that what distinguished homo sapiens from other animals and gave us enormous advantage over other species is the ability to unite around the shared imagined – nation, god, corporation – through the ability to produce and share inspiring stories.

¹¹¹⁰ I link this idea of intersubjective knowledge with collective memory, a controversial term, which received much criticism. However, it seems that the term can be saved with the right definition. Thus here, collective memory is a form of communicative memory preserved in narrations. Assmann, *Shadows of Trauma*. 16-18.

tropes. These tropes, similar to the antisemitic ones discussed in previous chapters, are reflections of the metanarratives in which the interviewees partake, and which belong to their cultural memory. By participating in the culture, through symbols, rituals and social communication, the interviewees are given their starting point in speaking about the outgroup. Let us attempt to understand this starting point.

Antisemitism and Anti-Judaism

In the studies of Jewish-Christian relations, very often a distinction between antisemitism and anti-Judaism is introduced.¹¹¹¹ Antisemitism is understood often as a form of hostility towards the Jews motivated by secular ideologies (e.g., modern racial thought), while anti-Judaism is contempt, depreciation and denigration of Judaism and its followers, based on theological arguments.¹¹¹² In this section of my study, I have decided, convinced by the arguments of Sander L. Gilman and Joanna Tokarska-Bakir, not to follow this distinction.¹¹¹³ Instead, I see both as dynamic phases of the same phenomenon – anti-Jewish prejudice feeding on the tropes stemming from both the secular ideologies and Christian theology.¹¹¹⁴ In the analyzed narratives, antisemitism and anti-Judaism appear together, tightly interwoven in the accounts of both the secular and the religious aspects of life. This prompts a conclusion that in the minds of the narrators the antisemitic tropes are not differentiated from anti-Judaic tropes; therefore, such a differentiation in the analysis would be artificial.

The following section focuses on expressions of anti-Jewish prejudice found in the narratives of the Catholic interviewees describing their preexisting knowledge of the Jewish religion. The main vehicle for these expressions turned out to be the blood libel/legend of the blood. Tokarska-Bakir makes a very important point, noting that ritual murder never took place, and yet it conditions the present.¹¹¹⁵ In this sense, the presence of the motif in the narratives of everyday people (implying also collective

¹¹¹¹ Gavin I. Langmuir, *History, Religion, and Antisemitism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

¹¹¹² To read more about this distinction, see, e.g., Robert S Wistrich, *Anti-Judaism, Antisemitism, and Delegitimizing Israel* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2016); Susannah Heschel, "Historiography of Antisemitism versus Anti-Judaism: A Response to Robert Morgan," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 33, no. 3 (2011); Guy G. Stroumsa, "From anti-judaism to antisemitism in Early Christianity," in *Contra Iudaeos. Ancient and Medieval Polemics between Christians and Jews*, ed. Ora Limor and Guy G. Stroumsa (Tübingen: JCB Mohr, 1996).

¹¹¹³ Joanna Tokarska-Bakir, *Legenda o krwi: antropologia przesądu* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo W.A.B., 2008), 59-63.

¹¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 63.

¹¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

memory) is more important than the historical reality. What people believe and talk about matters much more than what actually happened.

Although many antisemitic tropes are discussed in the previous chapters, they pertain mostly to cultural values or characteristics displayed by the Jewish people. The following section adds another aspect and focuses instead on the notions touching upon the Jewish religion and Jews as followers of the mosaic faith. Thus, it will address the attitudes towards Judaism and Jews seen as its believers as well as Jewish religious rituals.

Blood Libel

As mentioned above, one of the prevalent anti-Jewish tropes, repeatedly resurfacing in the history of Jewish-Christian relations in Europe is the accusation of ritual murder (blood libel). The history of the blood libel had been thoroughly researched both in the wider context¹¹¹⁶ and specifically in Poland.¹¹¹⁷ As noted by Jolanta Żyndul, the transmission of this long-lived legend has continued for at least eight centuries, always adapting to new conditions.¹¹¹⁸ Joanna Tokarska-Bakir claims that “in the interwar period, the legend no longer lived its own life, but still had the strength to unleash social tensions and mobilize anti-Jewish moods”,¹¹¹⁹ which was possible due to leaving the question of the actual existence of ritual murder unresolved (in spite of the repeated papal repudiation).¹¹²⁰ According to Żyndul, this situation seems to continue today, and even in the 21st century collective memory or public *imaginaire* the issue is not always clear.¹¹²¹ Such a claim could be confirmed by the relatively recent developments at the Catholic University of Lublin, when in 2018 Prof. Fr. Tadeusz Guz publicly spoke about ritual murder, stating:

We know, ladies and gentlemen, that the facts of ritual murder cannot be erased from history. Why? Because we, the Polish state, in our archives, in the surviving documents,

¹¹¹⁶ Eugene M Avrutin, *The Velizh Affair: Blood Libel in a Russian Town* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); Emily M. Rose, *The Murder of William of Norwich: The Origins of Blood Libel in Medieval Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); Raphael Israeli, *Blood Libel and Its Derivatives: The Scourge of Anti-Semitism* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017); Robert Weinberg, "The Blood Libel in Eastern Europe," *Jewish History* 26, no. 3/4 (2012).

¹¹¹⁷ Tokarska-Bakir, *Legandy o krwi. Żyndul, Kłamstwo krwi*.

¹¹¹⁸ Tokarska-Bakir, *Kłamstwo krwi*.

¹¹¹⁹ Tokarska-Bakir, *Legandy o krwi*, 191.

¹¹²⁰ *Ibid*, 191.

¹¹²¹ Żyndul, *Kłamstwo krwi*, 8.

have had over the centuries - when Jews lived together with our Polish nation - we have legally valid sentences after ritual murders. "¹¹²²

What is surprising is not only his public statement that the ritual murders are a matter of fact but also the result of the investigation undertaken by the university. In the final statement of the Disciplinary Commission for Employees of the Catholic University of Lublin, one reads the following assessment of Guz's utterance: "in his lectures based on the source material, he presented his own interpretation of historical facts with professional care."¹¹²³ Although the final statement rejects the historicity of ritual murder, the inclusion of such an evaluation of the above-quoted words of Guz suggests that his conviction about the historicity of ritual murder is, if not widespread, widely acceptable. In this sense, blood libel is not just a figment of the past but a vivid element of the present memory about Jewish-Christian relations, shaping the way the ingroup portrays the Other.

If this trope still holds such strong power over the collective imagination today, when the Jewish minority in Poland is minuscule and no one would ever treat seriously a ritual murder accusation, one can assume that in the interwar period, when the accusations of ritual murder still happened relatively often,¹¹²⁴ this trope was even more powerful in shaping the images of the Other.

In fact, a significant number (eleven) of the Catholic interviewees refer to the blood libel as an element of knowledge about the outgroup conveyed to them by the older generation. The mentions of the blood libel appear in the narratives in three forms: either (a) as a statement of the fact that such a narrative was circulating, without any extra-contextual narration; or (b) as a statement with extra-contextual narration expressing doubt; or (c) as a statement with extra-contextual narration expressing decisive repudiation of the narrative. The accounts are presented following this order, from the descriptions confirming familiarity with the trope to the ones including critical reflection on it.

¹¹²² "KUL umarza postępowanie w sprawie wypowiedzi ks. Guza o mordach rytualnych," *Wież.pl*, 2020, accessed 19.07.2022, <https://wiez.pl/2020/12/01/kul-umarza-postepowanie-ks-guz-mordy-rytualne/>.

¹¹²³ "Enigmatyczne oświadczenie KUL o żydowskich mordach rytualnych," *Wież.pl*, accessed 19.07.2022, <https://wiez.pl/2021/04/07/enigmatyczne-oswiadczenie-kul-o-zydowskich-mordach-rytualnych/>.

¹¹²⁴ Jolanta Żyndul mentions ten cases of a blood libel in interwar Poland, all of them in her opinion of regional significance and not present in the wider public discourse. At the same time, she refers to a few publications discussing the issues of ritual murder as one of the side plots in the antisemitic discourse. Her final conclusion is that during the interwar period the narration of the ritual murder was almost non-existent in comparison to the previous decades (late 19th and early 20th century). However, ten accusations is still a considerable number. Żyndul, *Kłamstwo krwi*, 191-217.

a) *A statement of the fact that the narrative was circulating without any extra-contextual narration*

All the eleven Catholic interviewees mention that their adult family members, usually parents or grandparents, used reference to ritual murder to limit their interactions with the Jews and/or to scare them and prevent them from roaming the streets alone. Storytelling is the oldest pedagogical tool, and it was no different in the interwar period.¹¹²⁵ Scary children's stories are not a new invention either, and it is worth remembering that scary stories about *xénos*,¹¹²⁶ the Other, were a persisting element in the upbringing pattern of the era, particularly among the lower social strata. Jews, Roma or *dziad* – wandering beggars – populated these scary stories, crafted to discipline children and show the terrible consequences of disobedience or wandering away from home. The Other is employed in the function of a kidnapper and a child-eater. As pointed out by Jerzy Cieślowski, this child-eater bogeyman personifies one of the archetypical childhood fears of being eaten and often plays a central figure in scary stories.¹¹²⁷ One can see how the blood libel provides content for this narrative pattern.

Typically the interviewees would just mention that they were told not to walk into the town areas far from home (i.e., the Jewish quarter) because if they did they would be “caught for matzah”.¹¹²⁸ This implies they would be killed and their blood would be eaten inside the matzah – a new rendering of the old child-eater story. Some added more details such as the context of these warnings. However, only one narrative includes reference to ritual murder without any rectifying verbal comment.

Stanisława [1930] mentions her grandma's reaction to the search for a shabbas goy by their Jewish neighbors: “Stasiu [diminutive], may you never go [to light a fire in a Jewish house] because then the Jews would catch you for matzah. They take the blood for matzah, so that it would have Polish blood.”¹¹²⁹ Then Stanisława adds that small children, when approached by the Jews, would be scared and run away. Interestingly,

¹¹²⁵ Kozłowska, “Wychowanie małego dziecka w Polsce w pierwszej dekadzie okresu międzywojennego na łamach wybranych czasopism pedagogicznych – ciągłość i zmiana.”

¹¹²⁶ The *xénos* literally means the stranger (on the spectrum from enemy to guest friend) but in this case the Jews are internal strangers, who remain foreigners to the majority group, even if they have been neighbours for centuries.

¹¹²⁷ Cieślowski Jerzy, *Wielka zabawa*, Folklor dziecięcy, wyobraźnia dziecka, wiersze dla dzieci, (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1985).

¹¹²⁸ OH GGNNTC Zofia Hetman, 7; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/50353/edition/47271>, 24.02.2023; OH GGNNTC Stefania Czekierda, 19; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/126424/edition/120501>, 20.01.2023.

¹¹²⁹ OH GGNNTC Stanisława Podlipna, 26; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/118372/edition/112698>, 24.02.2023.

she finishes this section of her story with laughter, which suggests that (from the perspective of a few decades) she does not take seriously her grandmother's precepts and dismisses her concerns. She takes it as a child-eater story. Nonetheless, one can infer from her narrative that the blood libel had an impact on indurating the divisions between Catholics and Jews, instilling fear or suspicion towards the Jews in the youngest generation of Catholics.

b) A statement with extra-contextual narration expressing doubt

Other stories give further insight into the function of the blood libel in the discourse and in the petrification of the intergroup separation. They also recall the words of the older generation directed to children but include an explicit expression of a doubt regarding the veracity of the accusation. Wiesława [1931], who lived in the Kalinowszczyzna neighborhood and had to cross the Jewish quarter to go to the city center, remembers that she was warned to use only certain streets and not wander into the Jewish streets:

I only walked down Ruska Street and then Franciszkańska Street. [No other streets.] The neighbors and the inhabitants of this Catholic part [said] that I was not allowed to turn off Ruska Street, because [the Jews] would catch me for matzah. After all, they scared us, so no child went in there. [I believed it] that they could catch me, but because of the matzah, I don't know. [More like] they can catch me and take me away from my parents.¹¹³⁰

Although she is not sure if the argument of being kidnapped for the production of matzah made her believe she would have been killed, she admits that the warnings instilled in her a fear of the Jews. She believed that they could kidnap her just to take her away from her parents, which is not a rational fear but one of the “archetypical” ones in Ciesielski's approach. Thus, the kidnapper and child-eater motif is very vivid in her story and fulfils its pedagogical role – as she recalls it, she did stay away from the Jews because the story had instilled fear in her, even though she did not fully believe the story.

Zofia [1926] is another person expressing doubts about the stories of blood she heard as a child. She recalls how she would eat matzah many times in spite of the fact that “others said that one should not eat this matzah because it contains Polish blood. But what do I know? I was a little child...”¹¹³¹ She does not seem entirely convinced that

¹¹³⁰ Wiesława Majczak, <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/101014/edition/95477>, 23.02.2023.

¹¹³¹ OH GGNNTC Zofia Mazurek, 5; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/126998/edition/121034>, 23.02.2023.

there was Polish (sic!) blood in it;¹¹³² however, she dismisses a final judgment, referring to her young age and inability to judge accurately at the time.

c) A statement of the fact that the narrative was circulating with an explicit rebuttal

Apart from these few voices, the majority of the interviewees mentioning the blood libel add at some point in their narrative its explicit rebuttal. Janina and Regina both refer to the blood libel as murmurings. Janina [1924] says: “Ah! About matzah, it was said that they kill children and add their blood to matzah, but that is not true. It wasn't true, and you hadn't heard of any child missing or anything, but it was a rumour.”¹¹³³ She therefore quotes the rumors but at the same time immediately corrects them, stating that there were no grounds for such convictions.

Adam [1928], just like Stanisława in the first section, had heard the blood libel in the context of a Shabbat goy and mothers preventing their children from performing services to Jews on Shabbat. He is the only one who mentions details of the kidnapping and production of the matzah from Christian/Polish blood, thus adding the content to the kidnapper/child-eater pattern:

There were rumors that they were throwing a child into some pot with nails, collecting blood for matzah, because it is ritual food. It's not true. In any case, there was matzah, of course, but not made of human blood. [Did I believe these stories?] Well, as a child I could believe, I was even afraid, I was careful.¹¹³⁴

He states that it was not true but also admits that as a child he could believe it and was apprehensive of the Jews because of this story; thus, the story fulfils its goal of separating from the outgroup. Moreover, he is reproducing here one of the typical images of a Christian child in a pot or barrel bristling with nails serving to drain their blood. This imagery goes beyond the child-eater from children's stories but refers to the established imagery of blood libel going back to the death of William of Norwich and Thomas of Monmouth's description of his body being stabbed with countless thorn points.¹¹³⁵

¹¹³² It is interesting to note that the interviewees never speak about Christian blood but always use the expression “Polish blood”, which shows how the stereotype evolved from a motif in religious anti-Judaism but in the end was incorporated into secular antisemitic discourse, and as such was conserved and kept in the contemporary language.

¹¹³³ OH GGNNTC Janina Kozak, 18; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/124575/edition/118729>, 23.02.2023.

¹¹³⁴ OH GGNNTC Adam Tomanek, 9; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/120048/edition/114335>, 27.02.2023.

¹¹³⁵ *The Life and Miracles of St William of Norwich by Thomas of Monmouth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), XVI-XVIII.

Therefore, Adam unknowingly reproduces this image and proves the longevity of the motif. Undoubtedly, he would not know about William nor Simonino of Trento but he is familiar with the afterlife of their stories – an image of a Christian child pierced with thorns or nails to drain out their blood.

It is important to note that the reference to such imagery not only implies the longevity of a certain *imaginaire* but points to specific theological anti-Jewish stances. Naturally, Adam has no idea about them. Most probably he has never reflected on them consciously. However, the theological underpinning of this image is quite involved and was not absent from the Polish theology of Judaism – it refers to the deicide committed by perfidious Jews who persecuted Christian children not just because but to replicate the passion of Christ. While the blood libel is not a strong point in the Polish Catholic theology of the era, the deicide is an important point in the reflection on Judaism.¹¹³⁶

Similarly to Adam, Regina [1926] first refers to the reports “that they add Polish blood” to matzah but then immediately adds that it was not true and that “such a slogan was used, no one knows why and for what, we lived there, after all, nothing unpleasant happened to us at all on their part.”¹¹³⁷ Therefore, her arguments are based on her pragmatic experience of living among Jews. Her Jewish neighbors baked matzah in the basement she visited often. She also ate matzah many times and saw no blood or anything suspicious. Hence, she laughs when the interviewers ask her about the blood libel. Probably, had the question not been asked, she would have limited herself to talking about matzah as a tasty snack made by her Jewish neighbors. In fact, many interviewees remember matzah in this context; Maria [1926], for example, says that:

Jewish matzah was delicious, really. And all Polish children liked matzah so much. We heard stories that children were caught and killed, and that Polish blood was put to the matzah. But no, this is really a figment of some fantasy, an abnormal fantasy. I used to meet people who said that, "Don't eat matzah because this matzah is baked on Polish blood," but it was nonsense. It was only said like that, but you did not hear any fact that a child had been murdered, that a child was missing, caught by the Jews and then used for matzah. They were fantasies, some sort of delusions, absolutely delusions. Anyway, my mother always said: "Come on, don't believe it, this is nonsense, what people won't come up with".¹¹³⁸

¹¹³⁶ Łysiak, "Judaizm rabiniczny i współczesny w pismach teologów katolickich w Polsce w latach 1918-1939," 78-85.

¹¹³⁷ OH GGNNTC Regina Kucharska, 9;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/119368/edition/113682>, 23.02.2023.

¹¹³⁸ OH GGNTC Maria Sowa, 23;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/125802/edition/119909>, 27.02.2023.

She highlights that matzah was a popular snack among Polish children. Although she refers to the narratives of blood libel, she explains that her family did not believe it and her mother would straighten out the narratives she heard as a child. In addition, Maria, like Regina, speaks about the “reality check”: she has never heard of a real case of a child gone missing and murdered by the Jews.¹¹³⁹

Celina [1931], who first describes the situation in which she heard the blood libel and then indicates the potential sources spreading it, brings to the fore another interesting aspect of popular Catholic press. As with some other interviewees, she remembers that when she would go to another part of the city, she encountered Jews. In this case, it was an old Jew dressed in a peculiar way who would always sit in the same spot on the street. She recalls that she was afraid of him: “I was just afraid of him. Because, unfortunately, we were constantly made afraid of the Jews when we were little. That Jews will kidnap us for matzah, that Jews will do this, that Jews will do that etc.”¹¹⁴⁰ Probably she would have already been apprehensive of this odd-looking man even without the warnings, which clearly served to indurate the intergroup separation, and according to her assessment fulfilled the task well. She sees the narrative of ritual murder as a part of a larger antisemitic campaign and points to specific sources spreading the libel:

And ... we were scared, sir, it was a whole campaign, that Jews kidnapped children, that they add blood to matzah, that that, that, it was all disgusting. One did not believe it, because our dad explained to us that it was not true, but what it helped, as there were even magazines from... this one from Niepokalanów, which also spread such nonsense.¹¹⁴¹

In her perception, the source of the conviction that Jews perpetrated ritual murder of Christian children were Catholic magazines, especially *Rycerz Niepokalanej*, published by Father Maximillian Kolbe, today a saint of the Catholic Church.¹¹⁴² She, therefore, acknowledges the existence of an official platform and the presence of the trope in

¹¹³⁹ In fact, during this period, there were no allegations of ritual murder in the Lublin region, apart from one case in Zaklików, a small town approximately 90 km from Lublin. According to Żyndul the case was not discussed in the press and remained very local, maybe because there were no victims and the missing child was found alive and well. Żyndul, *Kłamstwo krwi*, 202.

¹¹⁴⁰ OH GGNNTC Celina Chrzanowska, 12; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/125728/edition/119856>, 21.02.2023.

¹¹⁴¹ OH GGNNTC Celina Chrzanowska, 15; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/125731/edition/119859>, 21.02.2023.

¹¹⁴² In fact, there were many other magazines she does not name in her story that spread the legends about ritual murder, among them, e.g., “Polak-Katolik”, “Pro Christo” or “Słowo Pomorskie”. Modras, *The Catholic Church and Antisemitism*, 206-207; Żyndul, *Kłamstwo krwi*, 205-206.

public discourse. She does not treat the content seriously and judges these stories as nonsense. Thus, it seems that although initially the blood libel made her afraid of the Jews, it did not have a lasting impact on her intergroup behavior as later in her childhood she would make friends with her Jewish neighbors.

The judgment on the blood libel varies among the interviewees who repudiate it. Unlike Celina, Kazimierz [1928] assesses the stories of blood as a form of joke. He recalls that he was warned by the adults not to go to the synagogue or walk among the Jews because they need young blood and make matzah from it. He remembers that he was afraid and in consequence, he would not go into the Jewish neighborhoods. However, his conclusion differs from that of Celina. He thinks that “the adults joked and we took it seriously... because when they made a kid afraid, that they kidnap for matzah, then we were afraid.”¹¹⁴³ Thus, for him, the blood libel was just a form of scary story that was entertaining for the adults and a tool for controlling children and preventing them from talking to strangers. Calling it “a joke” can be also a rhetorical tool used to decrease the seriousness of the allegation, just as antisemitic violence is sometimes called “pranks” by some interviewees.

This quick glimpse into the accounts of the blood libel in the analyzed narratives points to the vitality of the trope. Although Żyndul and Tokarska-Bakir argue that the blood libel was much more diffused and vivid in the decades preceding the interwar period, one can note that it was still significantly present in the everyday Catholic narratives about the Jews. This implies in turn a strong impact on the images of the Other (Jew) and an important role in maintaining already existing intergroup separation. The younger generation received the inheritance of this stereotype together with other “basic” details about the Jews, discussed in previous chapters: that they stink, are dirty and good with money. Such stereotypes contribute to social representation and stagnation of the existing social divisions, and in this particular case are a strong selfing strategy, building an image of the ingroup as civilized through the conservation of negative stereotypes of the Other who is the exact opposite of the idealized ingroup: cruel, wild and unprincipled. Thus, the social order is maintained: the privileged ingroup keeps their distance from the vilified outgroup.

Jews about Jesus and Christianity

As Jewish interviewees were not explicitly asked about their knowledge of Christianity, very few of them refer to Christianity in any way. Those who do, do so in a threefold way: referring to Jewish Jesus, relating to Jewish fear or hostility towards Christians

¹¹⁴³ OH GGNNTC Kazimierz Jarzembowski, 27;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/118739/edition/113063>, 23.02.2023.

and/or Christianity, or commenting on the immorality of the Catholic Church. Overall, only four Jewish interviewees include these topics in their accounts.

When commenting on Polish Catholic antisemitism, and explaining that probably there would not be many Jews who would risk their lives to save Christian Poles, Cipora [1918] mentions that Jesus was a taboo topic among Jews: “Among us, Jews, it wasn’t allowed to speak about Jesus. If I had said in Poland, that Jesus was Jewish, they would have killed me.”¹¹⁴⁴ “They” in this context are not pious Polish Catholics but pious Jews. From these words, one might infer that in her perception, the hostility between the religions was mutual. She confirms that Catholicism played a role in the development of antisemitism but the fact that it was forbidden to mention Jesus as a Jew points to a fear of Christianity present among Jews. As was widely discussed in the literature, the history of coerced conversions undoubtedly played the major role in rabbinical (as well as popular) hostility towards the Church and the mere idea that the two religions have something in common.¹¹⁴⁵ The exclusion of Jesus from the Jewish people seems therefore to be a tool aiming at enhancing Jewish identity through a complete separation from Christianity.

However, one should bear in mind that acknowledging the Jewishness of Jesus was an issue not only for the Jewish community but also in the Catholic one. Although the scholarly reflection on the Jewish Jesus among Christians had already started, it was explored more among Protestant scholars,¹¹⁴⁶ and the general awareness of the Jewishness of Jesus and its implication remained low among the Catholic faithful.

In a similar context (commenting on the roots of antisemitism) Mosze [1925] refers to the story of Jesus as he knew it:

Today I think I know the cause (of antisemitism). This happened when the Romans occupied Judea, this [was] Palestine then. We had a very religious Jew. It was Christ, Jesus Christ. He was a very pious Jew. He was so pious that he came to our Beit Midrash. This [is] the main synagogue in Jerusalem. And he, he shouted at them that they [are] not religious enough. He was very religious. And what happened? ... the Romans [killed] him now. And who gave that order? Pontius Pilatus, you know. Pontius Pilatus was a *shalit* ... how do you say? Military leader in Jerusalem. He [gave the order], the Jews don't hang [others] on [the cross]. We don't do it. And that's how they stuck it on the

¹¹⁴⁴ OH GGNNTC Cipora Borensztejn, 22; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103153/edition/97830>, 21.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103964/edition/98609>, 21.02.2023.

¹¹⁴⁵ Edward Kessler, *An Introduction to Jewish-Christian Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

¹¹⁴⁶ Such as, e.g., Travers Herford, George Foot Moore, Herman Strack, Paul Billerbeck, Franz Delitzsch or James Parkes. Among Catholic scholars, of note is Jesuit priest Joseph Bonsirven, who focused on the Jewish roots of Christianity and had friendly relations with a number of rabbis.

Jews. And in all churches, priests did this. On the Jews, on the Jews, they killed him. And it didn't help that the Jews did not do it, not the Jews. The hands of the Jews are not in this. No, nothing has helped. And so this hatred of the Jews came out of us killing [Jesus].¹¹⁴⁷

In general, one can say that Mosze grasps the idea of Jesus the Rabbi quite well, and is very aware of the Jewish roots of Christianity. It remains uncertain whether he acquired this knowledge already as a young Jewish boy but given that he has received a thorough and secular education, it is probable, and not surprising. He links the crucifixion to the deicide charge saying that it was repeated in all the churches and by all priests that Jews killed Jesus. This in turn contributed greatly to Catholic antisemitism and hatred towards the Jews. Sarah [1922] confirms that she remembers churches as very antisemitic but she suggests that the entire institution was corrupt:

And the churches were eminently antisemitic... These orphanages, children's homes, were full of children from priests and nuns. This, it was known. They are human... so that [the orphanages] were full of these children. Who brought these children to the world? Jewish doctors. Then those nuns or women who worked for this priest, every priest has a woman who worked for him. And who knows, this woman gets fat then becomes thin. She would be gone for a couple of weeks. So where was she going? To Jewish doctors. So that we knew everything. But this was not talked about.¹¹⁴⁸

As if to add to the explanations of the causes of Catholic antisemitism, Sara says that priests and nuns or domestic servants had children together and the Jewish doctors received the births of these children. Even though she doesn't explicitly assess the morality of this, it is implied the Catholic clergy was not only corrupt but also hypocrites, who pretended nothing immoral was going on by hiding the fruits of their illicit affairs.

Of all the interviewees, Sarah expresses her negative attitude towards the Catholic Church and the clergy in the clearest way. She recalls more expressions of anti-Judaism than any of the other interviewees and in addition remembers sharing her thoughts about Jesus with a Catholic boy:

(Christians) forgot that Jesus was a Jew, but the Jews killed (Jesus)... I once said to one boy that Jesus was a Jew and later he didn't like what the Jews did, what the people did,

¹¹⁴⁷ OH GGNNTC Mosze Handelsman, 24; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102814/edition/97493>, 23.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103986/edition/98631>, 23.02.2023.

¹¹⁴⁸ OH GGNNTC Sarah Tuller, 94; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/101333/edition/95999>, 27.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/101572/edition/96233>, 27.02.2023.

he was a very decent man and he wanted to change it for the poor, that's why he changed some things in religion, some are the same... - this boy beat me black and blue because... how could I say that Jesus was a Jew. Since then, I didn't say it again.¹¹⁴⁹

Her experience was very negative, as the Catholic boy beat her when she said that Jesus was Jewish and he just changed some things in Judaism to improve the situation of the poor. He did not accept her opinion on the subject and according to the story got angry, possibly because it was impossible for him to believe that his religion had something in common with Judaism, which the story implies he hated. Within the framework of the story, it is clear that he thought Christianity was better than Judaism and that admitting the Jewish roots of Jesus was somewhat offensive and denigrating for the Christian religion. After all, the fragment (not quoted in its entirety above) starts with the mention of the deicide charge repeated in churches on Christmas. In Sarah's story, the Catholic boy gets angry because he believes Jews killed Jesus but were not his kin. He sees them only as murderers of Christ and does not want to acknowledge that Jesus was also part of this people.

Finally, Awigdor [1920] mentions a story about his pious grandfather who would refuse to pass by the Polish girls on the street, even on an important errand. Although he does not explicitly mention Christianity, it is clear from the context that the problem lies not in the ethnicity but in religion:

[I remember this story], when my grandmother was very sick, she sent [her] husband, my grandfather, to go to the doctor, because she was very sick. So he run and did not come, he did not come back. Yes. We [thought] what happened, why doesn't he come? Because the doctor was on the same street. It is my brother or my sister who went [to see] what happened to my grandfather. The grandfather is standing at the gate and he is not going, he is not coming out of the gate. She asks, "Why aren't you coming out? The doctor is right here on the same street. He says: "I cannot go out, because there are two Polish girls standing here, I cannot go. The way they are standing, I cannot go". But I told you, grandmother is sick. "If she is very sick, I would go. But if not, I can't be playing,

¹¹⁴⁹ OH GGNNTC Sarah Tuller, 9;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/101228/edition/95844>, 27.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/101932/edition/96587>, 27.02.2023.

between, between two girls, *Polaczki*. If they were Jews, okay, he would have gone, but Polish women, he would not have gone.¹¹⁵⁰

The religious old man was afraid to pass by non-Jewish girls just as today in some parts of the modern State of Israel, Haredim cross the street and turn their heads so as not to look on immodest women. It is a God-less, heathen hideousness for them. In this case, the hostility has more general religious background; it is not directed against Christianity *per se*, rather the Gentiles in general. However, it definitely builds the atmosphere of animosity and dislike towards Catholics, and particularly towards Gentile women.

Conclusions

The above analysis suggests that both groups had a negative pre-existing knowledge about the outgroup and even suspected the Other of murderous potential. Catholics express it more overtly with mentions of the blood libel and the referral to the deicide charge. The blood libel stories in childhood memory function as scary stories of a child-eater, a bogeyman, and the interviewees usually do not explore deeper meanings of the story. Only a few link it to wider antisemitic discourses or widely known imagery of the blood libel that bears theological weight. The majority stay within the mode of treating the blood libel as one of the stories used to discipline children. Conveniently, this allows them to dismiss the seriousness of the accusation.

In order to realize that these stories might have more profound significance, a link is made to the history of the imagery of the blood libel, to show that certain anti-Jewish tropes persist in European culture for centuries, even if the speakers are not aware of their origin. Ignorance does not preclude multiplication. One might ask whether replication of these tropes implies replication of anti-Jewish theological convictions regarding the deicide charge, and the reference to the Catholic theology of the era implies that it might be so, even if there is no direct proof of that in the story. If one follows the idea of morphogenetic sequence, it might suggest that the Catholic interviewees were shaped by the Catholic theology of the era, even though they do not explicitly express theological opinions on Judaism.

Jewish interviewees speak much less about the Catholic Church or Christianity. They focus on the Jewishness of Jesus, as well as antisemitism and the immorality of the Church. While Catholic takes on blood libel can be described as folklore-ish, the

¹¹⁵⁰ OH GGNNTC Awigdor Kacelenbogen, 13; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/101874/edition/96533>, 23.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103015/edition/97694>, 23.02.2023.

Jewish way of speaking about Christianity resorts to historical and ethical considerations. They see Jesus as a good rabbi and reformer, killed by the Romans (but Jews are blamed) and the Church as violent, antisemitic and immoral. One can sense that Jews remember the pogroms and the violence perpetrated against them by the Catholics. They do not mention this, but the shadow can be perceived. After all, they have already discussed antisemitism of Catholic Poles elsewhere.

Behavior – Accounts of the Interactions

Following Pettigrew, the next step in the development of intergroup contact after learning about the Other is changing behavior and generating affective ties. As the affective ties were already discussed in the previous chapter, where they belong as non-religious relations, this section will focus on behaviors of both communities when encountering the Other in religious contexts. Thus, it will address the participation in each other's religious ceremonies, reactions to the Other's rituals and other expressions of religious belonging and religiously justified behaviors towards the Other.

Participation in the Other's Religious Ceremonies Related to the Life Cycle Events

Lifecycle events organize the lives of families and entire communities, and as such are a stable and repeated point of reference for the members of the group involved. At the same time, they can provide a lot of information about the customs and values of the group, and in the context of this study can serve to measure the familiarity of both groups with each other's religious traditions. The oral histories at hand refer only to funerals and reveal only the Catholic perspective due to the reasons mentioned beforehand (Jews are not asked about Catholicism or Christianity). Two of the Catholic interviewees mention that they did not see Jewish weddings and they do not know anything about them, and the rest do not refer to Jewish weddings at all. Other Jewish lifecycle events are not mentioned.

Funerals

Daniel M. Rosenthal claims that Jewish forms of mourning in the interwar period diversified and borrowed from the Catholic burial practices and “modern aesthetic

trends that had penetrated the Polish Jewish population.”¹¹⁵¹ In his opinion these phenomena, together with the rise in Jewish suicide, reflected the process of decomposition of traditional Jewish identities in spite of the stability and inflexibility of Jewish religious authorities.¹¹⁵²

In the data at hand, the details of Jewish mourning are not treated with much attention. Jews do not speak in detail about funerals, mostly because they did not have much experience attending them as children and youth. Catholics mention Jewish funerals mostly as observers, not participants; thus, they notice the elements they identify as distinctly Jewish but do not report the diversity in funeral and mourning practices most probably because they did not have enough familiarity with the customs. In addition, it is probable that they saw all the members of the outgroup as equal in this regard, simplifying the picture, as it often happens in the intergroup contact.

In general, the Catholics were familiar with some Jewish funerary customs from the preparation of the body in the morgue to the funerary processions. Janina [1927] describes a Jewish morgue in the following way:

On the other side of the house where they lived, there was a morgue and I saw Jews lying (there) after their death. He was lying naked on the floor, he had a little mattress under his head, a blanket was put under him and two candles were standing, and a Jew was sitting there all the time, watching him all night. I was terribly afraid to go there, but this is how I saw them burying a Jew, because Poles did not attend their funerals.¹¹⁵³

The situation Janina refers to is a part of *tabarah* – ritual preparation of the body for burial,¹¹⁵⁴ after the body is cleansed and purified but before it is dressed. Usually the body is not kept naked so it can be assumed that she witnessed only a stage in the process and thus remembered it that way. It is customary that watchers stay with the deceased to recite psalms during the time between the death and the burial, as recalled in her account. As a young girl, Janina was scared by the image she saw, probably

¹¹⁵¹ Daniel Moses Rosenthal, "Decomposing Identities: Shifting Perceptions of Death and Burial among Jews in Interwar Poland" (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 2014), 258.

¹¹⁵² Ibid.

¹¹⁵³ OH GGNNTC Janina Grudzinska, 6; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/50251/edition/47179>, 23.02.2023.

¹¹⁵⁴ The term *tabarah* can be confusing as it refers both to the overall process of burial preparation (consisting of washing – *rechitza*, ritual purification – *tabarah* and dressing – *halbashah*) and to the second step of this process. Hillel Halkin, *After One-hundred-and-twenty: Reflecting on Death, Mourning, and the Afterlife in the Jewish Tradition*, vol. 9 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018), 153-155; Geoffrey W Dennis, "Purity and Transformation: The Mimetic Performance of Scriptural Texts in the Ritual of Taharah," *Journal of Ritual Studies* 26 (2012); Samuel C Heilman, *When a Jew Dies: The Ethnography of a Bereaved Son* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2001), esp. 31-71.

because death was not a part of her everyday experiences. Possibly, the fact that the deceased was the Other made the situation even more uncomfortable and scary for her. Perhaps she remembered the horror stories she heard about the dead and ghosts, which populate numerous folk stories. She mentions explicitly that she was “terribly afraid to go there”¹¹⁵⁵ but nonetheless it happened: “I have seen it several times; I saw a dozen such dead bodies there”.¹¹⁵⁶ Although she mentions that the deceased was watched all night, it is quite clear that as a girl she could not witness that; rather, it is knowledge she has received from someone else. She also adds that she did not see any coffin and she could not say whether the corpses were buried naked or dressed.¹¹⁵⁷ Thus, her knowledge was very fragmentary and her interaction with the Jewish deceased fully accidental.

She claims that Polish people would not attend the Jewish funerals, so her knowledge was somehow exceptional and maybe added to the general feeling of horror as she was trespassing both on the borders between the religious communities (a Catholic taking a peek into a Jewish ritual space) but also stepping into the liminal zone between life and death. She observed Jewish corpses in the time between death and burial, one that in many cultures, including Polish folk culture, is seen as a liminal state. The soul is still in vicinity of the body and the deceased is considered still in passage between life and death, often supported on their way by the prayers of their family and friends. Thus, her seeing a Jewish deceased person is almost inappropriate – she gains access to what should be hidden from her eyes. She is a foreigner both to their Jewishness and their state of not being a part of the world of the living any more.

Stanisława [1930] reminisces about the funeral procession, focusing on one of its aspects, although she states that she did not participate in the funeral, which is understandable because she was a very young girl and not Jewish:

I saw [the Jewish funeral]. When I went to school, this school was just over this wall, and there was the cemetery. We just saw them when weeping, they ... Because it was the Jews who hired the weepers. They did not cry, but rented Jews to weep for them, the richer ones. He walked and did not cry, someone would cry for him. "Oy, oy, oy," they shouted, "Oy, oy, oy." They held each other like that, walked all the way, their heads were covered with black veils... And I wasn't at the funeral.¹¹⁵⁸

¹¹⁵⁵ There would be the house of her Jewish friend, Rutunia, which neighbored the morgue.

¹¹⁵⁶ OH GGNNTC Janina Grudzinska, 6;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/50251/edition/47179>, 23.02.2023.

¹¹⁵⁷ As Jews were buried usually in shrouds.

¹¹⁵⁸ OH GGNNTC Stanisława Podlipna, 30;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/118375/edition/112701>, 24.02.2023.

She remembers that the cemetery was just on the other side of the wall of her school. She speaks about the weepers who were hired to weep at the funerals. In her opinion, rich Jews would not weep themselves but delegate the task to these female weepers who did the job. They would hold each other tight and shout “oy, oy, oy” while weeping. Their faces would be covered with veils. Stanisława, born in a small town, might have had some knowledge of the custom from the Catholic context but describes the custom as if it was a distinct Jewish tradition to hire weepers, and links it to the social status of the family of the deceased. In times of severe economic crisis, most people did not have the funds to build a decent grave, and some Catholic interviewees mention not even having enough to pay the priest for the funeral. Under such circumstances, hiring mourners seems to be a sign of prestige and wealth unattainable for most of the population.

The institution of professional mourners is well known in many cultures, starting from ancient Egypt and the Middle East, and is still popular in modern days, for example in China. In the Jewish tradition, the first mentions of professional mourners appear in the Bible (e.g., Chronicles 35:25, Amos 5:16, Jeremiah 9: 17-18). In Poland, professional mourners were an important part of both Catholic traditional funerals in the villages (part of the folklore) and Jewish funerals.¹¹⁵⁹ In his book reporting the findings of the famous ethnographic expedition led by Szymon An-ski in the Pale of Settlement, Abraham Rechtman mentions female professional mourners (Yid. *klogmutter* or *klogerin*¹¹⁶⁰). The introduction to the English edition of these findings highlights the social importance of this profession and the central role of the cemetery in the life of a Jewish town.¹¹⁶¹

Maria [1926] recalls seeing Jewish funeral processions very often and states they were different from the Catholic funeral corteges. She depicts the procession in a similar way to Stanisława, focusing on the paid mourners:

Of course, the Jewish women had their entire faces covered with a black, opaque pall. They were dressed in black and they were followed by those mourners, paid ones, I don't know if they were paid, but I think so. And they lamented like that, wailed like that, all

¹¹⁵⁹ In Galicja, the professional mourners were popular among the Ukrainian population. Samuel Koenig, "Mortuary Beliefs and Practices among the Galician Ukrainians," *Folklore* 57, no. 2 (1946), <https://doi.org/10.1080/0015587X.1946.9717816>.

¹¹⁶⁰ Nathaniel Deutsch, *The Jewish Dark Continent* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 68.

¹¹⁶¹ Abraham Rechtman, Nathaniel Deutsch, and Noah Barrera, *The Lost World of Russia's Jews: Ethnography and Folklore in the Pale of Settlement* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2021), 28-29.

the time the procession went on, and they wailed and lamented like that. And it was so particular...¹¹⁶²

These paid mourners were apparently a clear sign of the “Jewishness” of the funeral, a distinctive feature differing from a Catholic funeral. In addition, the black opaque veils seem to be an element unfamiliar to Maria from different settings.

Unlike the interviewees quoted above, Regina [1926] claims to have participated in a Jewish funeral procession, although she did not enter the Jewish cemetery. In her depiction, she refers to some Polish Catholic stereotypes about the Jewish funerals:

So we went to such a funeral once, and the Jewish women were walking and crying terribly. And we did not reach the grave there, only to the gate, to the access point, but it is said that they were buried there seated, I do not know how much truth there is, but they said that they are buried seated. They carried them there in such a trough but certainly did not bury them in this trough, such, such like a coffin but it was not covered. They would carry them on this wagon to the cemetery and people would laugh that Jews would be the first ones to be judged because they sit in their graves, but whether that was true or just a legend, I cannot say...¹¹⁶³

Her attention was brought to the fact that she heard that Jews were buried seated, not lying down like Christians. She immediately adds that she is not sure whether that was the custom or just a legend spread among Christians. In fact, the belief that Jews are buried seated or squatting was very popular.¹¹⁶⁴ However, the source of this stereotype remains unclear and unresearched. It might be that the Christian witnesses of the Jewish burial saw the Jewish bodies being placed in a grave in a way that suggested to them that the final position in the grave would be such. Probably they did not have a chance to see that the corpse was just lowered down to be laid down in a horizontally stretched position, just as in Christian burials, but without a coffin.

A very particular case of a Jewish funeral was the funeral procession of Rabbi Meir Shapiro, the rector of the Yeshivas Chachmei, referred to by many Jewish interviewees but not described in the Catholic narratives. Finally, there were also cases of public funerals of people important for the local community, that both Jews and Christians would have attended. Stanisława [1930] speaks about the funeral of Kazimierz Graf, a landowner:

¹¹⁶² OH GGNNTC Maria Sowa, 30; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/125803/edition/119910>, 27.02.2023.

¹¹⁶³ OH GGNNTC Regina Kucharska, 11; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/119367/edition/113681>, 23.02.2023.

¹¹⁶⁴ Karolina Koprowska, Mirosław Skrzypczyk, and Anna Wieczorek, *Szczekociny w opowieściach mieszkańców: czasy przedwojenne i wojna* (Szczekociny: Zespół Szkół, 2016), 88-89.

There, all Jews from Lublin attended the funeral. He was a very, very good man. I remember that they were carrying him on a ladder wagon, full of flowers. What year it was, I don't remember. Well, I was still little. It was before the war, maybe I was five or six years old, when this Graf died. But I was at the funeral with my grandmother. I remember the Jews were going and we were going.¹¹⁶⁵

The Graf family was most probably seen as benefactors of the local Catholic and Jewish population because their estate provided many jobs, allowing numerous families, especially in the suburban villages of Tatary and Kalinowszczyzna, to survive.¹¹⁶⁶ Thus, all the employees and beneficiaries of the estate attended the funeral to express their gratitude, regardless of their ethno-religious affiliation. No particular "Jewish" behavior is recalled by the interviewee regarding the Jewish mourners.

Festival's Celebrations

Participating in each other's festival celebrations was extremely rare. On the Jewish side, this was dictated most probably by lingering fear and religious precepts, and on the Catholic side, by contempt and lack of interest. Thus, the two communities celebrated their festivities in separation. Adam Kopciowski, who thoroughly researched the main local Jewish newspaper, *Lubliner Tugblatt*, states that:

Contrary to the Jewish holidays, described quite in detail, the newspaper reported rather cautiously and briefly about the celebrations of Catholic holidays. As a rule, readers were not explained either their origins or the meaning of individual ceremonies associated with them. The only exception were the ceremonies that went outside the walls of the churches, and their course could be observed in the open space of the city. They included, among others Corpus Christi processions, often traversing the streets of Lublin inhabited to a large extent by the Jewish population. As it can be presumed, the closer attention of *Tugblatt* focused on this type of ceremonies was dictated by concerns about the safety of local Jews. As the long-standing, disgraceful tradition taught, quite often antisemitic excesses took place during them, consisting mainly in verbal or - in rare cases - physical acts of aggression against Jewish passers-by. In order to avoid similar situations, many Jews during this type of ceremony preferred not to leave their homes and not show up in the streets, which was also encouraged by *Tugblatt* himself.¹¹⁶⁷

¹¹⁶⁵ OH GGNNTC Stanisława Podlipna, 17; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/118371/edition/112697>, 24.02.2023. Kazimierz Graf died in 1938.

¹¹⁶⁶ Kazimierz Kamiński, "Dzielnice. Tatary," *Scriptores* 31 (2007), 46.

¹¹⁶⁷ Kopciowski, *Was hert zich in der prowinc?* 403.

It is safe to assume that the way of thinking presented by the newspaper was quite prevalent among the local population. Sarah's accounts, for example, confirm the habit of staying at home during Christian holidays.¹¹⁶⁸ Although, as Kopciowski mentions, cases of physical aggression were rare, the narrative preserved by the newspaper builds on the memories of "a longstanding, disgraceful tradition" of pogroms and attacks on Jews happening on Christian holidays.

However, in spite of such a situation, the oral histories mention a few cases of celebrating each other's holidays. Two Jewish interviewees speak about Catholics inviting their Jewish friends for Christmas. No mentions of Catholics being invited to celebrate Jewish festivals occur in the accounts. Nonetheless, Catholics played a role in the Jewish celebrations as *Shabbas goy*, which in fact was the most common form of intergroup interaction in the religious context.

Jews Celebrating Christmas

Most probably, the majority of the Lublin Jews could repeat after Henrika [1931] that "I paid no attention to Catholic Christmas",¹¹⁶⁹ at least as long as it was not a source of violence. Only two Jewish interviewees, Mosze [1925] and Sarah [1922], mentioned experiencing Christmas. Mosze recalls how his family would celebrate Christmas with his father's friend and his wife:

Father had a good friend who worked with him... They were good friends... His wife was very pious. What is the name in Polish of these holidays that are on the twenty-fifth... Christmas. They had no children and they decorated the Christmas tree, and there was no one at home. This is not a holiday for Jews, for us, but always on Christmas day, father took all the children and we went to him and sang there. And we made them feel a little better at heart, because there were no children [with them]. What have they done for us? There was no cross on it. They knew the Jews couldn't be with the cross. We are not allowed with the cross. There weren't any crosses on the Christmas tree. She was very pious and for us to make us feel better, she did not arrange a [cross] on the Christmas tree.¹¹⁷⁰

¹¹⁶⁸ OH GGNNTC Sarah Tuller, 37.

¹¹⁶⁹ During the war she hid with a Catholic family and for a period became a genuinely pious Catholic, therefore after the war she observed Christian holidays. OH GGNNTC Henrika Shvefel, 37; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/120083/edition/114370>, 24.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/155324/edition/149035>, 24.02.2023.

¹¹⁷⁰ OH GGNNTC Mosze Handelsman, 9; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102807/edition/97486>, 23.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103981/edition/98626>, 23.03.2023.

As his father's friend and his wife had no children, Mosze's father would take his children and visit them on Christmas to cheer them up so that they would not feel lonely. According to Mosze this happened every year ("always"). Interestingly, he mentions that they would sing there, which might suggest that they knew Polish Christmas songs because this was the standard repertoire for Christmas. If so, their fluency in Polish Catholic tradition can be assessed as very high, perhaps not surprisingly, as Mosze often mentions the polonization of the family. The most fascinating detail of this account, however, comes at the end of the quoted fragment. He states that the Catholic family was so considerate of them, that they would not put any crosses on their Christmas tree because they knew their Jewish friends could not "be with the cross". This seems to be an important act of kindness.

In fact, however, no one even superficially familiar with Catholic Christmas tradition would expect any cross-shaped decoration on the Christmas tree. The mere idea of decorating it with crosses seems very odd. It was never a part of the Christian tradition in Poland and one wonders why it would be expected. This concluding remark shows how little Mosze knew about Christmas tradition, and raises the question of the Jewish relation to the symbol of the cross. One wonders how threatening that symbol was, as apparently its absence on the Christmas tree, where it would not usually be found in any case, was seen as an act of kindness and respect. Unfortunately, other accounts do not refer to the symbol of the cross, so further discussion on this fascinating topic is impossible. A conclusion, however, could be made that the even in cases of familiarity with religious holidays, the level of ignorance was quite high.

Sarah, too, had an experience of participating in Christmas celebrations because she was invited by her Catholic teacher.¹¹⁷¹ She describes the experience in the following words:

However, for Christmas, she invited us to her house and there was always a tree and then a little lesson came: "If you were Catholic, a priest would help you and you wouldn't be so hungry." And I will never forget, there was one girl in my class, she was very talented, very bright, but she was the oldest of seven children, and she was my age. She says, "What would I do with our God then? After all, I cannot reject our God for another God. " She says, "I'm not telling you to reject. But I am telling you, what are the changes in life." She wasn't pushing, but she was teaching these children.¹¹⁷²

¹¹⁷¹ She was a teacher in a Jewish school.

¹¹⁷² OH GGNNTC Sarah Tuller, 95;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/101333/edition/95999>, 27.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/101572/edition/96233>, 27.02.2023.

Although Sarah's account is not very clear, one can understand that the invitation for Christmas celebrations served as an occasion for the teacher to speak about Catholicism and encourage the Jewish pupils, at least to some extent, to convert in order to have an easier life. In spite of that, Sarah repeats in her account that this woman was a great teacher and one cannot sense that she was very uncomfortable with her teacher's attempts. Possibly, she was used to Jewishness as non-normativity, as she describes many episodes of othering and singling out because of her Jewishness. She also does not say much about Christmas itself and it is not clear how much of the Catholic traditions for this festival she knew.

What is clear in her account is the perception that Christmas was not a safe time for the Jews: "At Christmas, you knew that you would not leave the house, because when they leave the church, they come out screaming: "The Jews killed our God." And it was ... It was sanctioned, ordained by a priest."¹¹⁷³ She claims that the Catholics would scream that Jews were guilty of deicide and were aggressive towards the Jews. In fact, such cases seem to have occurred more often in the context of Easter when there is more focus on the death of Jesus than during Christmas, and when the warm weather enables outdoor violence in comparison to frosty winters.¹¹⁷⁴

Later in her account, Sarah shares the story of attending the Catholic mass in the first weeks of the German occupation. Her family had a Catholic maid who worked for them for many years, Zosia. She proposed Sarah to teach her how to pray so that she could pretend to be Polish, if needed: "I will teach you I will take you to church, I will teach you to pray, so that when they catch you, you say: "I am Polish", if you know prayers, it is easier." Sensing the danger, Zosia wants Sarah to learn how to make an impression of being a Polish Catholic. Sarah continues:

And she taught me catechism. One Sunday I went to church and it's all right ... ceremony and everything, the next week I'm going to church with her and there's another priest and he was more political. And this priest first says: "We live in Poland now, we do not have freedom now and we have everything to do is keep our pride ... proud, proud that we are Poles, help ourselves what we can, let them think that we do what they want but do what is right for us. The only good thing will come out of this, they will ... they'll

¹¹⁷³ OH GGNNTC Sarah Tuller, 36; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/101252/edition/95918>, 27.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/101964/edition/96618>, 27.02.2023.

¹¹⁷⁴ While there is a history of pogroms on both Easter and Christmas (note, e.g., the pogrom which erupted on Christmas day in 1881 Warsaw), it is also worth noting particular superstitions regarding Christmas in Jewish religious traditions and folklore, expressed for example by the custom of not studying Torah on Christmas Eve, practiced among many Ashkenazi communities. Marc Shapiro, "Torah Study on Christmas Eve," *The Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 8, no. 2 (1999), <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1163/147728599794761635>.

cleanse us from Christ-killers [Pl. *Chrystozabójcy*]. These are Christ-killers. " It began all over the church: "Death to the Jews! Death to the Jews! Death to the Jews!". I was sitting on my knees by her side and when they started like that, she hugged me. I pushed her away, said, "Leave me alone," and I didn't want them to do something to her. We left, then I never went to church anymore. I never forgot it.¹¹⁷⁵

Sarah attended Mass at first without problems but the second time the priest started to preach antisemitic ideas, claiming that Germans would cleanse Poland from Christ-killers. Sarah was scared for herself and the maid and decided never to return to the church. In fact, she was determined not to set her foot there anymore:

I said: "If they kill me, they will kill me, but I don't go into church anymore... And if this is to save me, I rather want to die. " It was such a shock back then. Because I was still ... I was sixteen, I kept thinking that there is a world in it, there will be a world, and that people are better here. And especially the priest, because he persuades, he has a church full of people, they are intelligent, themselves not, themselves, that they know what the priest will say, this is holy. And how can he say that the only good thing is that they will cleanse us - those were his words - that they would cleanse us from... Christ Killers.¹¹⁷⁶

She shares her deep disappointment with the violence of the antisemitic discourse and with the figure of the Catholic priest who was uncritically listened to by the faithful. Naturally, one ought to remember that her experience quoted above comes from the wartime; however, she states it was the very beginning of it. It is known that the blame for deicide was a common antisemitic trope in interwar Polish theologies, as mentioned earlier in the sub-section on blood libel. Therefore, the situation when a priest used this trope in a sermon could happen easily also before the war, maybe with less ominous consequences, as it most probably would not lead to open acts of violence against Jews in the same way it could during the war. Under the Nazi occupation, the new laws were antisemitic which encouraged anti-Jewish violence among Poles, and such charges bore even more weight.

Finally, her attitude is a great example of agency, Sarah does not hesitate to go to the Church when she is offered an opportunity. However, she has no doubt she cannot stand being in such a hostile environment, and thus chooses the risk of not learning the Catholic prayers. The choices during the war, however, are part of another story.

¹¹⁷⁵ OH GGNNTC Sarah Tuller, 36-37;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/101252/edition/95918>, 27.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/101964/edition/96618>, 27.02.2023.

¹¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

Shabbat Goy

In the data, much more popular than Jews attending Catholic celebrations were Catholics performing works forbidden for the Jews on Shabbat, e.g., lighting the fire or turning on electric objects. One way of not engaging in forbidden works was having a Catholic maidservant who would not be restricted by the laws of Shabbat. Awigdor [1920], for example mentions, that “there was a Polish girl, she lived with us, she did everything, but we didn’t”.¹¹⁷⁷ When the girl was not there, they alternatively engaged the janitor: “He, when this Polish girl was not with us, he used to come to our home and shut down the electric ones, because we couldn’t. It was he, who came to open the electric or close the electric [appliances].”¹¹⁷⁸ The janitor thus was the alternative person asked to switch on and off the electricity or the electric objects in their apartment during the Shabbat.¹¹⁷⁹

Many Catholics describe their own experience of being a *Shabbat goy*, or seeing others doing it. Janina [1927], for example, remembers that:

The Jew did not light the fire under the stove on the Sabbath, but always preferred to give 2 grosze to a Polish kid, boy or girl to set this fire on for him, this is how they respected their holidays. There was no electricity that they cooked on electric stoves or gas stoves, but you had to light a match.¹¹⁸⁰

She explains that Jews respected their holidays so much that they did not want to light the fire themselves but instead would give a small sum of money to a Catholic child to light the fire for them. Bogdan [1934], who grew up in the Jewish quarter, claims that “many Jews used the help of Poles”¹¹⁸¹ in the context of the Shabbat:

¹¹⁷⁷ OH GGNNTC Awigdor Kacelenbogen, 9;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/101873/edition/96532>, 23.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103014/edition/97693>, 23.02.2023.

¹¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 18; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/101876/edition/96535>, 23.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103017/edition/97696>, 23.02.2023.

¹¹⁷⁹ A similar situation is also mentioned by Chawa. OH GGNNTC Chawa Goldminc, 7;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/104667/edition/99302>, 23.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/104996/edition/99629>, 23.02.2023.

¹¹⁸⁰ OH GGNNTC Janina Grudzińska, 7;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/50242/edition/47170>, 23.02.2023.

¹¹⁸¹ OH GGNNTC Bogdan Stanisław Pazur, 25;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/123689/edition/117870>, 24.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/154581/edition/148298>, 24.02.2023.

Let's suppose, when the Jews went to the synagogue, when they went to prayers, they had candles, well, it was some Pole, when the candle went out, he was lighting the candle. Let's also say – stoking in stoves. On Saturday, the Jew did not stoke, because it was a Sabbath and he did not stoke anymore. Then most often, they were such adult boys, I mean adults, well, a ten-year-old boy could stoke. They went and stoked in stoves. In stoves, in ovens. So there was some kind of symbiosis, somehow we lived together.¹¹⁸²

He says that Polish Catholics in some way were an indispensable element of the Jewish Shabbat, serving to light the candles, even in the synagogue, or the fire under the stove in Jewish houses. Those engaged as Shabbat goys would be usually older boys, from the age of ten upwards and would get 10 gorsze for their service.¹¹⁸³ Why they would be children or youth remains unclear in the stories. However, one could assume that adults were busy with their own jobs and household chores, while children were more available and eager to help. Another explanation was that the sums paid for these small services could seem uninteresting for adults while for children and youth they were a good pocket money. It also seems that it was not only boys who were involved. Stanisława [1930] mentions a girl she knew who would also do this every Saturday.¹¹⁸⁴ Daniela [1925] too recalls being asked by her Jewish neighbor to light the fire.¹¹⁸⁵ Thus, one can conclude that the gender of the child or youth played no role. In fact, this phenomenon could be seen in the framework of the “widespread involvement of the city's teenagers in little daily exchanges with Jews, including domestic services.”¹¹⁸⁶ Bianka Górecka writes about these exchanges and often forgotten dependencies between the Polish lower class and Jewish middle class, affecting the images of the Other on both sides. The function of the Shabbat goy seems to be a great example of such an exchange, a case of cultural transmission, that had an impact of the mutual images and attitudes, even though the oral histories studied here focus more on the Christian perceptions.

These accounts attest to an aspect of the Catholic-Jewish relations that took a peaceful turn. Most of the above quoted fragments appears in a positive context and

¹¹⁸² Ibid.

¹¹⁸³ Ibid., 30; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/123688/edition/117869>, 24.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/154580/edition/148297>, 24.02.2023.

¹¹⁸⁴ OH GGNNTC Stanisława Podlipna, 26; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/118372/edition/112698>, 24.02.2023.

¹¹⁸⁵ Daniela Ponikowska, <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/49745/edition/46722>, 24.02.2023.

¹¹⁸⁶ Górecka, "Christian Domestic Servants," 138.

the interactions are portrayed as calm, natural and transactional. Just as in the case of trade, analyzed in the previous chapter, this type of intergroup contact seems successful, that is, not increasing intergroup tensions. In addition, it enables some members of the outgroup to observe the customs of the ingroup. There is an equal group status in the way that no one is discriminated against in the situation. The roles are clear – Jews ask for a service and Catholics perform a service for a specific remuneration. Thus, there is a common goal and intergroup cooperation on this micro-level. Moreover, this type of contact is sanctioned by long tradition and is not questioned by the authorities. Interestingly, there is no mention of any relation of increasing antisemitism in the 1930s to this form of contact. While Jewish shops were boycotted and Jews were beaten on the streets by the students of the Catholic University, Catholics seem to have continued to light the fire for the Jews on Shabbat, maybe because it comes with financial remuneration, maybe because it is a gesture of neighborly help and support. As noted in the previous chapter, help among Jewish and Catholic neighbors was a rather common phenomenon.

“Pranks” on Religious Jews

Not every form of contact with Jewish religious observance, however, was as peaceful as being a *Shabbat goy*. A few Catholic interviewees mention what they usually term as “pranks” by children or youth on religious Jews while they were praying. In reality, one can easily label these practices as a form of violence towards the religious Other. Janina [1927], for example, recalls when Catholic boys were throwing stones at Jewish (synagogue?) windows to interrupt the Jewish prayer: “More than once I saw the rabbi swaying and praying, and the boys, such bullies from school, threw stones at the window and said: - “Will you buy a rabbi's skin?” and this Jew would chase them and curse them: “damn you bastard, you...!”¹¹⁸⁷ Regina also mentions boys interrupting Jewish prayers:

Well...among young people, when they had their Jewish holiday, they put these little *kuczki*¹¹⁸⁸ on the balcony, our boys there were like that, they would let a cat in order to organize these festivities for them, such pranks, but for such hatred to arise as it was created under Hitler it was not like that.¹¹⁸⁹

¹¹⁸⁷ OH GGNNTC Janina Grudzińska, 7;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/50242/edition/47170>, 23.02.2023.

¹¹⁸⁸ Succot.

¹¹⁸⁹ OH GGNNTC Regina Kucharska, 8;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/119370/edition/113684>, 23.02.2023.

In the case she mentions boys would throw a cat inside a sukkah in order to disturb the celebrations of the feast of Sukkot. They considered it a joke and “organizing a festivity” for the Jews. The way she portrays it, the Catholic boys wanted to animate the Jewish holidays, adding a little prank. She mentions the story in the context of the perceived change in Polish attitudes towards the Jews when Hitler came to power.¹¹⁹⁰ Her impression was that in general Catholic Poles and Jews lived without animosities before that. Throwing a cat into a sukkah for her was not an example of antisemitism but rather an innocent prank, maybe because she compares it to later atrocities during the war, and maybe because this is what young boys did in general. Within the framework of her story, such pranks do not express any hostility towards the Jews.

Edward [1928] presents a similar perspective but nuances it further, calling the attitude moderate antisemitism:

We treated them normally, there were no differences. Perhaps there were some conflicts in the city, there was some, one might say, moderate antisemitism. Not as murderous as German, but there was a certain reluctance because of the foreign language, foreign religion, foreign writing. An older friend told me that they were playing such pranks on the Jews, but there were no beatings or attacks. He told me a story that, for example, they caught two crows and let them into the synagogue. There was a big brawl then.¹¹⁹¹

He claims that Jews were treated normally, with no discrimination. He mentions that there were some conflicts “in the city” which might allude to the beatings of Jews by the students of the Catholic University (which is discussed in one of the following sections and in Chapter 6); however, neither he nor his friends engaged in antisemitic violence. Interestingly, one of his friends with his companions threw crows into the synagogue, which is very similar to the situation described by Regina. Edward uses an equivalent of the word used by Regina – a prank (*dowcip, psikus*). In his view, what they did was not violent, it was a prank. Still, he goes further than Regina in admitting that there was antisemitism; it was not murderous, but it existed.

Stefania [1927] is even more critical as she tells the story of children throwing stones at praying Jews:

¹¹⁹⁰ It is known that antisemitism in Poland was common well before the 1930s but it is also true that after 1933, and especially after Piłsudski’s death in 1935, it became louder and more violent.

¹¹⁹¹ OH BBTNNC Edward Soczewiński, 34;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/128938/edition/122912>, 27.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/125510/edition/119640>, 27.02.2023.

It was summer, Czerniejówka,¹¹⁹² the windows in our buildings were all open and one of the children shouted: "Jews pray!" No one from the adults heard, the windows were open, because it was summer, and it was the day of their prayers, when they came out on Czerniejówka from the First May Street and the men themselves prayed by the river. "Jews pray!" The children who had at hand collected stones in their laps, in pockets, and ran down the hill, across the meadow, and threw stones at the Jews. Without a word, the Jew turned and walked away. Without a word. Well, I was surprised later, when I was an adult, that no one paid attention from the adults and said, "You mustn't do that, it's their day of prayer, and how would you go to church and someone would tease you praying?"¹¹⁹³

She describes a situation that she does not qualify as a prank anymore. Catholic children saw from a window that Jews were praying by the river, and instantly collected stones and ran to the river to throw them at praying Jewish men. Most probably, the context of this event was the ceremony of *tashlikh* when Jews would pray at the river and cast pebbles and crumbs into the river to symbolically "throw away" their wrongdoings from the past year.¹¹⁹⁴ She does not explain the urge of the Catholic kids to attack praying Jews but she expresses her opinion in a certain way, underscoring her surprise (when reflecting on it as an adult) that none of the adults corrected this behavior by showing a parallel between the Jewish prayers and the Christian ones. Stefania clearly sees the event she depicts as a form of religious violence, not a prank, and at the time of telling the story applies moral judgement to the behavior of the Catholic children.

Based on these three excerpts, one can notice that some Catholics did not see attacks on praying Jews as violence or antisemitism. Even though the account of Regina describes it quite literally, she still maintains that the relations between Catholics and Jews were good, and the attacks were nothing serious; in fact, they were jokes. The insistence on the term prank might result from the childhood memory of the recalled events, when she did perceive them as a joke, and she chooses not to reassess the events from an adult perspective. On the other hand, other accounts show more criticism and do not avoid using the term antisemitism (Edward and Stefania). However, the proper moral assessment of such attacks appears only in one out of three accounts, and one should remember that such assessment is introduced while telling the story, therefore long *post factum*.

¹¹⁹² A small local river.

¹¹⁹³ OH GGNNTC Stefania Czekierda, 5; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/126424/edition/120501>, 20.01.2023.

¹¹⁹⁴ Thus, it would not be in the summer but rather in the early autumn as *tashlikh* is done on the first day of Rosh HaShana.

Antisemitism at the Catholic University of Lublin

An even more harmful type of interaction were the encounters between the students of the Catholic University of Lublin with the local Jews. Four of the interviewees, three Jews and one Catholic, elaborate on the attacks perpetrated by the students of the Catholic University of Lublin (hereafter KUL).¹¹⁹⁵ Such violence should be seen in strict relation to the street violence discussed in Chapter 7 and the boycotting of Jewish shops described in Chapter 8. Because of the religious character of the university, the acts of violence perpetrated by its students are discussed separately in this section. No targeted research has been done so far on the engagement of KUL and its students in antisemitic discourses and campaigns, and I have found no traces of the antisemitic activity of its students in the University's archive. However, one of its rectors during the period (1925 – 1933), Fr. Józef Kruszyński, was a known antisemite.¹¹⁹⁶ Undoubtedly, his opinions were very formative for the students as he published in abundance, his works were easily accessible, and he spoke in public about the harmfulness of the *Talmudic Judaism*.

Lubliners recall the University as an alma mater to antisemitic rowdies. Josef remembers it this way:

There was the Catholic University of Lublin in Lublin and there was a concentration of these extreme antisemites there. I remember that the students decided that Jews were not allowed to enter the Saski Garden. Then came a very bloody answer.¹¹⁹⁷

He starts from indicating KUL as a hotbed of antisemitism, and then continues to describe a specific example of an antisemitic attack. According to his account, KUL students forbade Jews to enter the Saski Garden (the major park of the town) and Jews wanted to take revenge for that. Sarah's [1922] account helps to understand the details of the prohibition and the typical behavior of the students towards the Jews:

¹¹⁹⁵ Two more mention them without adding much detail: Mira and Josef (Fraind).

¹¹⁹⁶ Łysiak, "Judaizm rabiniczny"; Anna Jolanta Majdanik, "Pomiędzy fascynacją a potępieniem. Żydzi i judaizm w pismach oraz biografii ks. prof. Józefa Kruszyńskiego (1877–1953)–przedwojennego rektora Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego [Between Fascination and Reproach: Jews and Judaism in the Writings of Rev. Prof. Józef Kruszyński (1877–1953), Pre-war Rector of the Catholic University of Lublin]," *Studia Litteraria et Historica*, no. 8 (2019); Łysiak, "The Rev. Kruszyński and Polish Catholic Teachings about Jews and Judaism in Interwar Poland."

¹¹⁹⁷ OH GGNNTC Jofef Fraind, 34;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/121245/edition/115498>, 18.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/121340/edition/115593>, 18.02.2023.

Saturday in Lublin, especially Saturday afternoon, was a day when all Jewish servants had a few hours of their vacation after lunch, young people, we did not go to school on Saturday, only on Sundays, [so] in the afternoon we also went to the Garden. Everyone [went] to the Saski Garden. Before the war, the Saski Garden was beautiful for us then. But the youth of the university, that we called them *Endeks*, had an entertainment. On Saturday afternoon, between two and three they would go to the park, to the Saski Garden with these [clubs] - there was that stickball game, it's like baseball, it's just flat [the club], not round, just flat. When you get it on your head, it hurts. And they chased the servants and they were chasing the young people. As for the youth, the girls were always surrounded by boys who also had these [clubs] and beat them back. And these maidservants were always in their twenties or thirties. It was very easy to beat them, they couldn't run that fast. And they always caught and hit them. The police were there to look after us. But when these Polish youth beat these Jews, everyone looked at the sky. But when these Jewish youths would beat back, the police always came and arrested them. "Because you guys started beating." That, it was every Saturday.¹¹⁹⁸

Sarah depicts a certain status quo in the 1930s, probably after 1935.¹¹⁹⁹ She says that every Saturday the Jewish youth and maidservants coming to the Saski Garden would be attacked by the students of KUL, who were coming there to play stickball, or just using the excuse of playing to carry clubs with them. They would chase and beat Jewish maidservants and youth in spite of the presence of the police. The latter pretended they did not notice the violence as long as Jews, not Poles, were the victims. Only when the roles were reversed they would start arresting the attackers. This is how she remembers these Catholic-Jewish encounters.

Josef refers to this state of affairs and offers a detailed description of the response once taken by some young Jews:

Those from the Jewish militia¹²⁰⁰ dressed up as Hasidim and entered the Saski Garden on Saturday, because on Saturday all the people wanted some greenery, they all went there. Well, these students of the Catholic University of Lublin attacked them, but they did not receive [right away] an answer, because it was planned together with the PPS to drag them through Krakowskie Przedmieście and the Krakowska Gate on Grodzka Street, then close them in the Jewish district and teach them a lesson. I only remember that the ambulance ran from both sides all day long. They were taking these students away. And since then it has been quiet in Lublin. There was a period [when they did not persecute] physically, but there was such a militia behind each shop, Poles were not

¹¹⁹⁸ OH GGNNTC Sarah Tuller, 77; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/101291/edition/95957>, 27.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/101546/edition/96208>, 27.03.2023.

¹¹⁹⁹ After the death of Piłsudski antisemitic violence increased significantly.

¹²⁰⁰ Jewish militia was a self-organized group with the aim of defending Jews from antisemitic attacks.

allowed in, so that they would not buy from Jews. It was at that time that it was accepted all over Poland - not allowing Poles to buy from Jews. But it did not help, they continued to buy from Jews. And it ended there.¹²⁰¹

These young Jews decided to dress up as ultra-Orthodox because the Haredim were considered physically weak and were more often than others the subject of ridicule and attack. Once the students attacked them, these fake Haredim ran back towards the Jewish neighborhoods (Grodzka Street), baiting the students into a trap. When they entered the area, they were surrounded and beaten (“taught a lesson”). In consequence, there were numerous wounded who had to be taken to the hospital, but after that there was no anti-Jewish physical violence in the park. He mentions other forms of violence; however, not the beatings.

Sarah adds that the students knew how to beat the Jews in a way that would not show up afterwards and therefore would be more difficult to prove in case of prosecution:

They beat us not enough to really send us to the hospital, but enough that you came with bumps on your head, bumps on your hands, beaten up, your nose, your nose was bleeding. And it was like that every Saturday, except when it was raining... So it was every Saturday. It was always my mother waiting at home when I came. Will I be beaten, will I have time to escape if they won't hit me? And usually I didn't get hit in the head with a stick. They were very smart, they didn't hit the head. Shoulders, from the front, hands that was not so visible. So that these young people were smart. And why did they hate us? I don't know if they really hated us or if it was fun.¹²⁰²

She also concludes with a surprising question: Did they really hate us or it was fun? From today's perspective the answer seems to be clear but it might be more nuanced than that. Attacking the Other can be simply named a prank so that the oppressor is safe, the majority can avoid the examination of conscience and the victim can be informed that they exaggerate and should move on. However, one should also remember the general tendency of youth to create smaller groups. It is not uncommon to have gangs and usually violence thrives where there are strong social and ethnic divisions. Thus, maybe even without the Jews, the students would have found other victims.

¹²⁰¹ OH GGNNTC Jodef Fraind, 34;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/121245/edition/115498>, 22.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/121340/edition/115593>, 23.02.2023.

¹²⁰² OH GGNNTC Sarah Tuller, 78;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/101291/edition/95957>, 27.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/101546/edition/96208>, 27.03.2023.

Janina [1924], the only Catholic referring to the cases of Catholic students attacking Jews, mentions she did not witness herself such situations but she heard stories about it:

And, for example, students, I know this from the story, because I did not see it, when the little Jewish girls sat down nicely on the benches, one on one side, the other on the other there, the students talk, talk, at some point they take the bench, they raise them up, oh gosh, the Jewish women on the grass lie overturned. And it was often, it was repeated, they then ran away no longer from the front, because the police were there, but towards our building, there were stairs built like that, an additional entrance and they would run away through these stairs, but they were rather not so common accidents, but I just heard that they did ... I didn't see.¹²⁰³

She says that from what she heard the students would often turn over the benches on which Jewish girls would sit in the park, so that the latter would fall on the ground. Such behavior, although aggressive, undoubtedly seems less violent than hitting people with clubs. Apart from these forms of anti-Jewish violence, the students of KUL would also take part in boycotting Jewish shops, as was mentioned by Sara (Chapter 8), who recalls confronting the students and making them feel unpleasant.¹²⁰⁴

Perceived Reasons for Antisemitism among Jewish Interviewees

Five Jewish interviewees shared their reflections on the perceived reasons for the antisemitic behavior they and their peers experienced. Most of them related it to religion, some also to racial ideology, lack of education and economic reasons. Mosze [1925], quoted above, links antisemitism to the *decide charge*.¹²⁰⁵ Sarah [1922], also quoted above, claims that the Church was very antisemitic.¹²⁰⁶ Adam [1923], too, names religion as one of the reasons but he explicitly claims he does not understand why it was so because Jesus was Jewish. Another reason he mentions is economy;

¹²⁰³ OH GGNNTC Janina Kozak, 17; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/124575/edition/118729>, 23.02.2023.

¹²⁰⁴ OH GGNNTC Sara Grinfeld, 36; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102577/edition/97258>, 10.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103368/edition/98038>, 10.02.2023.

¹²⁰⁵ OH GGNNTC Mosze Handelsman, 24; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102814/edition/97493>, 23.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/103986/edition/98631>, 23.02.2023.

¹²⁰⁶ OH GGNNTC Sarah Tuller, 37; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/101252/edition/95918>, 27.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/101964/edition/96618>, 27.02.2023.

however, he does not specify the problem. In addition, he claims he did not experience antisemitism before the war, only afterwards under the Nazi occupation, and therefore his explanations relate to Nazi-inspired antisemitism.¹²⁰⁷

Similar to Adam, Cipora [1918] gives a very succinct explanation: “Of course, antisemitism also comes from ignorance (*ciemnota*) and also for the rationale (*racja bytu*). Because Poles said that Jews took all of these, Jews traded, and so on. And religion too.” It could be understood that for her, the reasons are primarily the lack of education, the fight for the improvement of the status of Poles in society (rationale) and the economy, stemming from the Polish conviction that Jews monopolized trade. Finally, the last reason she gives is religion, but she does not add any details.

Edward [1920] is even more unclear, stating that: “After all, there were times in Poland when there was more friendship between Jews and [Poles]. [And then] there came [such a moment], I don't know if it's the church or all that, or if that... has changed. Because between us... What differences? There was no difference. I didn't see it.”¹²⁰⁸ He underscores that in his perception the relations were good until a change came. He is not sure where it came from and he points to the Church as a possible source of the change. However, he is a bit undecided and concludes with the idea that Jews and Catholics were alike, which might reflect his experience as an assimilated Polish Jew.

In addition to these two Jewish interviewees, two Catholic ones share (also limited) reflections on the subject. Danuta [1921] thinks that: “It turns out that this antisemitism was really often something like this - I do not want to say that it was out of whole cloth, but rather it came somewhere from the Poznańskie, from the west.”¹²⁰⁹ For her, antisemitism is an imported attitude. She does not recognize it as a Polish, or at least eastern-Polish, problem. Unintentionally, through such a way of thinking, she makes it easier to dismiss the validity of the issue. Regina [1926], too, claims that antisemitism increased significantly after Hitler came to power, therefore indicating it as the reason:

...students travelled there, I remember, propagated, they had slogans such as not to buy from Jews, boycott and so on, then I think they hated it so much, Poles, I mean -

¹²⁰⁷ OH GGNNTC Adam Adams, 9, 34.

¹²⁰⁸ OH GGNNTC Edward Skowroński-Hertz, 38;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102240/edition/96922>, 27.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102879/edition/97558>, 27.02.2023.

¹²⁰⁹ Danuta Riabnin, <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/124557/edition/118711>, 24.02.2023.

Catholics with Jews because of this ... Hitler, it seems to me that when he came to power, there was just such a turn, such hatred aroused towards these Jews.¹²¹⁰

She says that economic boycott of the Jews and hatred towards Jews only started in the 1930s in the era of Hitler “because before the war I would not say that there was such a hatred, that something would be so bad.”¹²¹¹

It is very interesting to have these two accounts as a point of reference because once again it points to the fact that Polish Catholics did not recognize themselves as antisemites nor antisemitism as a problem in interwar Poland. Within such a framework, attacking praying Jews is a prank, and students of the Catholic university beating Jews in a park are just a creation of Nazi antisemitism, not a reflection of Polish Catholic attitude towards Jews. Polish Catholics are therefore not to be blamed. It is not easy to understand whether they do so with the intent to whitewash the ingroup, or simply that they share idealized memory of their childhood.

Conclusions

The intergroup behaviors described above are limited and rather negative; however, not exclusively. It seems that the most egalitarian and peaceful interactions occur when they are transactional (Shabbas goy) or based on affective ties (Mosze’s family celebrating Christmas with Catholic friends). Going back to the intergroup contact theory and the four conditions of successful intergroup contact, these examples reflect equal group status within the situation, common goals, intergroup cooperation and authority support or at least lack of interference. Thus, the power imbalances are alleviated, a sense equality is provided either by transactionality or friendship, and both parties have agency.

Participation in funerals can be seen as an indifferent example. The members of the outgroup simply observe but do not interact much, even if they march within the funeral procession. Moreover, even if funerals are religious rituals, they are also part of secular life. Therefore, the reflection on that kind of participation in the Other’s religious rituals does not bring much insight.

Finally, most of the behaviors described in this section fall easily under antisemitic violence or some form of persecution. The power imbalance is clear. Catholics are portrayed as privileged aggressors (even by themselves, although they do not name it so) and Jews as victims, and both groups speak from these positions: the former

¹²¹⁰ OH GGNNTC Regina Kucharska, 8;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/119370/edition/113684>, 23.02.2023.

¹²¹¹ Ibid.

defending themselves, e.g., by avoiding the term antisemitism or presenting it as a foreign phenomenon, the latter often with a sense of trauma and with little agency. An interesting exception of this lack of agency is the account of a Jewish answer to the beatings in the Saski Garden, mentioned by Josef. For him, as a Bund member, this example of agency is particularly important – he is proud of it and it affirms his identity as a Bundist, as it was the Bund who organized the defense.

In general, it could be said that the interactions were rare and apparently informed by the stereotypes of both religious and non-religious provenance, and that the perceived reasons for Catholic antisemitism are the lack of education, religion in general or Catholic sermons in particular, as well as economic motives.

Reassessing the Ingroup and the Outgroup

Pettigrew mentions that at the end of successful contact, reassessment of the ingroup takes place. As the results from this study indicate that contact brought exactly the opposite results from those discussed by Pettigrew, one would not expect any reassessment to take place. Nonetheless, some images of such reassessment of the ingroup are conveyed in the narratives, namely those of conversions.

Conversions to Catholicism

Five interviewees, four Jews and one Catholic, mention Jewish conversions to Catholicism. Before delving into their stories, it is worth mentioning that the traditional Jewish society had very strong feelings about conversions. In his book on *Lubliner Tugblatt*, Kopcowski mentions that the local newspaper raised the topic very often.¹²¹² Usually, it saw the acts of conversions not as individual choices but rather “an ominous, externally controlled movement aimed at weakening the internal cohesion of the Jewish community.”¹²¹³ Thus, usually the convert was not condemned but rather seen as “a victim of evil intrigues, machinations and insidious suasions.”¹²¹⁴ The decision was always seen as a betrayal and disowning of one’s community and was used by the editors to create an atmosphere of horror, danger and threat.¹²¹⁵ In fact, the

¹²¹² It might suggest the growing scale of the phenomenon or the intensity of the fear displayed by the editors of the journal.

¹²¹³ Kopcowski, *Was hert zich in der prowinc?* 419. Translation mine.

¹²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 419. Translation mine.

¹²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 419. Translation mine.

newspaper placed the responsibility for the conversions to Christianity on missionaries, coming to Lublin from time to time. Kopciowski writes that,

this group was characterized most often as a sinister community with no resources, waiting only for an opportunity to lead stray Jewish souls astray. In many respects, the description of this milieu resembled that of the human trafficking milieu. Both groups were similarly cunning and malevolent. Even the vocabulary used by the newspaper in both cases was almost identical.¹²¹⁶

The oral histories¹²¹⁷ tend to present the problem of conversion in a less dramatic light and never refer to the activity of any missionaries. They rather mention socio-economical or romantic motivation for doing so. Edward [1920] recalls that his father was asked to convert in order to receive better position in the Polish army.¹²¹⁸ He was an experienced soldier who personally knew Piłsudski but his professional development hit a glass ceiling – promotions for Jews had their limit. Therefore, he was asked to reassess his belonging to the ingroup and he chose to stay a member and refuse the promotion due to his position in the Jewish community (“everyone knew us”). Edward recalls that his father was not religious *per se* but due to his social position was in the board of the *Kotlershil*. As a Jew integrated into Polish society he still had to suffer discrimination (he could not be promoted) but could serve as an intermediary between his Jewish community and Polish society, and he chose to maintain such a position. It is worth noting that the conversion was seen as an acceptable way of assimilation because he was already integrated into Polish society and his social class enabled that.

Another reason that according to the oral histories was more convincing than socio-economic reasons was love. Maria (Catholic) [1926] simply states that she had a neighbor “a French Jew, whose name was Lurie, who got baptized (*przechrzcił się*) because he married a Polish woman and actually he felt like a Pole.”¹²¹⁹ Helena (Jewish) [1926] recalls the janitor of her house:

I remember the janitor, but I don't [remember] what his name was. But I only know one thing, it was a Jew who converted and married a Polish woman and had children with her. And I know, it's not that I know, I just heard that they murdered him as a Jew. Because it was not the case for the Germans, it did not matter if he converted or did not

¹²¹⁶ Ibid., 420. Translation mine.

¹²¹⁷ With the exception of Mira.

¹²¹⁸ Ibid., 1; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102219/edition/96901>, 27.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102457/edition/97138>, 27.02.2023.

¹²¹⁹ OH GGNNTC Maria Sowa, 11; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/125781/edition/119899>, 27.02.2023.

convert. And these daughters, I don't know if they survived or not. One daughter married a Pole, I remember. But what his name was, I don't remember.¹²²⁰

She does not remember the details well but she remembers that the janitor was a Jew who converted to marry a Polish woman and apparently managed to have a successful marriage. The main problem with his conversion for Helena is not the fact of changing religion but rather the grave consequences of being Jewish in the context of the Holocaust. In spite of his conversion, the janitor might have not survived the war because according to the Nazis both him and his baptized children were Jewish. In her story, the Holocaust dominates the short account of the conversion.

Another story told from a similar perspective of the bitter end is the narrative of Mira [1914]. She recalls that her mother had a neighbor, a girl who married a Pole, and therefore converted. Her family took it very badly, as it used to be the custom (see Chapter 8). The family of the convert treated her as if she died. In addition, her conversion brought shame to the family to the point that they were unable to continue their social and economic activities and spent the rest of their lives locked up at home:

These parents, they didn't come out to light all their lives. They couldn't go to the synagogue to pray, they don't let them enter. They stayed home and cried all their lives. This son brought them, he worked, he brought them food. They had a shop, they closed that shop. A tragedy in the family. And this, this news spread not all ... in Lublin, all over Poland, that in Lublin, with this family, a Jewish woman converted to the Christian faith... It couldn't be more horrible.¹²²¹

According to Mira, the conversion of their daughter was an ultimate tragedy that ruined the reputation of the parents, which prevented them from leaving their home. The Christian family of her husband, on the contrary, “received her very well, they accepted her, they got married and they bought them an apartment, they arranged everything there.”¹²²² Thus, she had a safe life among Christians, which perhaps sweetened the estrangement from her own family. However, during the Nazi occupation, the adult children of this woman were helping their Jewish grandparents in the ghetto, which was discovered and they suffered a humiliating death, shot naked in the streets of Lublin.¹²²³

¹²²⁰ OH GGNNTC Helena Grynszpan, 17; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102132/edition/96783>, 23.02.2023; <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/102620/edition/97301>, 23.02.2023.

¹²²¹ Ibid.

¹²²² Ibid.

¹²²³ Ibid.

In this story, conversion can be seen as seeking a way out of the traditional Jewish society. The main accent is on the intensity of mourning and rejection on the side of the Jewish family, and the tragic end of the story. What happened to the convert herself is not clear; however, her children were murdered by the Nazis just like any other Jew of Lublin. In spite of their mother's decision to convert, they also perished. It might point to the conclusion that any attempt to become someone else was, under the historical circumstances, doomed to fail. Even if the convert found strength to follow her heart outside of the borders of her community, even if she was well received in the Catholic community, in the end her Jewishness was not erasable and brought a tragic end to the life of her children. It is not clear if Mira thinks that the convert left Judaism in order to have a better life, to integrate into Polish society. The prevalent motive seems to be romantic love and the will to be able to marry the beloved. However, Mira evidently uses the story to underscore the impossibility of merging and intermingling between the two groups. Any attempt simply brings suffering (to the Jewish family) and destruction (to the children of the convert).

Finally, Henrika [1931], who grew up in a non-observant Jewish house, recalls her own semi-conversion during the war. She survived the Holocaust hiding in the house of pious Catholics. Impressed by their religiosity she "was a very pious Catholic for some time, very pious".¹²²⁴ She does not reveal what it actually meant, whether she got baptized or not, but in the end she un-converted when "she went to a summer camp when she fell in love and stopped being pious."¹²²⁵ Her story goes beyond the scope of this study because the wartime conversions require a different set of tools to be analyzed. Nonetheless, she is the only interviewee who speaks about conversion in the first person, and as such is worth mentioning.

Conversions to Judaism

None of the stories mention conversions to Judaism; however, *Lubliner Tugblatt* mentions one such case from 1936, where the motivation was romantic, as in the above mentioned accounts.¹²²⁶ Moreover, an article dedicated to the guestbook of the Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin recalls Abraham Sumiga, who converted to Judaism following his religious conviction. He came from Krakow and initially intended to become a priest but had a change of heart and instead converted to Judaism. Later, he joined the Jewish

¹²²⁴ OH GGNNTC Henrika Shevel, 37;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/120083/edition/114370>, 24.02.2023;
<https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/155324/edition/149035>, 24.02.2023.

¹²²⁵ Ibid.

¹²²⁶ Kopciowski, *Was hert zich in der prowinc?* 488.

community in Lublin, found a *shidukh* from Chełm and eventually settled in Łódź.¹²²⁷ These two cases prove that conversions to Judaism took place, although extremely rarely.

Conclusions

Based solely on these sources, one could conclude that conversions are a much less contentious topic than one would think, or alternatively that a lot has been omitted. In the analyzed oral histories, the actual conversions are motivated by romantic love and when mentioned by the Jewish interviewees they are always linked to the Holocaust. The interviewees explain how becoming the member of the majority did not protect the converts and how their Jewishness was ineradicable for the Nazis. Only one story (Mira's) presents conversion in a very dramatic way, somehow similar to the images present in the local Jewish press.

It is very significant that conversion is never presented as the actual reassessment of the ingroup stemming from religious conviction. Apart from love, and alternative motive would be career development and social advancement, as in Edward's story. Therefore, in the stories, conversion is seen as a means of achieving personal goals – either enabling marriage to the member of the outgroup or passing through the glass ceiling keeping the Jews from attaining certain social and professional positions. In that sense, it can be compared to the situation when Jews chose Polish as their first language not because of particular patriotism but as a means of modernization – in order to be able to make their dreams of education and career come true. One could ask what it says about the Jewish perceptions of Polishness and Catholicism.

Iconology of the Oral Histories

Introducing the concept of iconology, Erwin Panofsky proposes the search for the intrinsic meaning of an art piece. As explained in the theoretical part of this study, in this context, his proposal is applied to the texts of culture, to see them as a product of a historical environment, and explore the meaning of the stories beyond the literal. After the stories have been analyzed, taking into account the aspect of Jewish-Catholic relations, one can ask why the narrators chose to present them in such a way. This subchapter seeks answers to such a question.

¹²²⁷ Tworek, "A Different Type of Seminary: Priests, Cyclists, and Other Tourists Visit the Lublin Yeshiva."

Theory of Literature to the Rescue

The interpretation offered here is based to a large extent on the theories presented by Kuncewicz et al. in their publications dedicated to the psychological interpretation of narratives with tools taken from the theory of literature. Although this is not a study in psychology, it seems that the tools they propose can be applied to all kinds of narratives.¹²²⁸ The main assumption of this approach is that in addition to the consciously constructed subjective vision of the world and personal meaning attached to various elements of this world, narratives always also include sub-meanings, of which the narrator is not always aware:

We think that the author of the statement (*wypowiedź*) is not always aware of these personal meanings, he is not always able or does not always want to express them directly, but they are always included in the way the statement is constructed and the rules of speech. Even though the person speaking on the one hand reveals what he wants to reveal and presents and auto-image he finds appropriate, on the other hand full control over this revealing is not possible.¹²²⁹

According to their theory, the language code (the words), the context and the meaning can (should?) be only perceived as various aspects of the same event.¹²³⁰ Meaning is constructed and conveyed in experience, in culture, in the history of the word, in its shaping by generations of users. For example, the word Jew in Polish has many connotations to the point of becoming an insult, and losing its basic meaning denoting a member of the Jewish nation and/or a follower of the Mosaic faith.¹²³¹ Michał Głowiński, a Polish philologist, historian and literary theorist indicates that:

This word it is dominated by negative connotations, treated as an insult, in the speech of those who refuse to yield to the pressures of language, in some cases it turned into a kind of taboo. It is not the place to describe this process, it would require extensive consideration materials, but it cannot be ignored. Especially since it shows what

¹²²⁸ They assume that all the communication can be interpreted using the tools taken from the theory of literature, which naturally stems from their conviction about the universal rules of using language, appearing both in literature and oral communication. From my perspective, it is a precious insight, helping to uncover the meanings that escape the analysis of the plots and tropes already done in the previous sections.

¹²²⁹ Kuncewicz, Sobkowicz, and Sokołowska, "Usłyszeć niewypowiedziane, czyli o interpretacji psychologicznej za pomocą narzędzi teorii literatury."

¹²³⁰ Kuncewicz et al., *Po ciszy*, 55.

¹²³¹ Michał Głowiński, "Mowa i zło," *Ethos*, no. 1 (1992).

complications arise in social communication as a result the fact that certain elements of speech become messages of attitudes unequivocally evil, hateful, unacceptable.¹²³²

If this meaning is conveyed, a form of intergenerational memory is constructed, a type of cultural memory that can exist as a meaning in the language without the memory of the facts. This theory at its core assumes that it is the memory of meanings, not events, that shapes the perception of the world and eventually also the responses to the real events.¹²³³

What does this mean? In the context of the Jewish-Catholic relations in interwar Poland, this theory implies that the interviewees convey the memory of meanings. Their stories, even if fashioned in a way that is supposed to relay the events, in fact cannot escape the meanings that their culture and the historical context in which they lived (the structures) impose. In fact, they relate events but what they convey is a certain approach to the outgroup, expressed in a conventional way, enforced by the language. Most probably, they do not realize the presence of these conventions (or some of them) because they absorbed them naturally during the process of acquiring the language. Their membership in the group (Catholic Poles), even though not consciously chosen, dictates these conventions.¹²³⁴ When some Jewish interviewees claim that Poles “sucked antisemitism with their mother’s milk,” they sound exaggerated and unfair but they are not entirely mistaken with the idea. Catholic Poles inherited their attitudes towards Jews not only by observing the older generations but also by learning the language applied to the other. At the same time, subjected to various political pressures, they had to modify or hide certain attitudes; however, in the stories one can observe that they did not disappear.

Let us look for example at the accounts of attacks on Jews. First of all, many of them are called “pranks”. For some reasons Catholics refuse to label these attacks violence, and many of them also refuse to state the existence of Polish Catholic antisemitism. They explain it as an import from Nazi Germany, as something inherently foreign to the Polish Catholic culture. What is not immediately visible in the narrative but is very clear to those familiar with the context is that they in fact say: we are not antisemites. We, Catholic Poles, are not antisemitic. They insist on that, which is visible in the correcting statements (e.g., it was a prank, it was an import from Germany, it was not very serious, etc.) so often included in the descriptions of antisemitic violence and aiming at diminishing the seriousness of the described violence in the eyes of the

¹²³² Ibid., 101.

¹²³³ Kuncewicz et al., *Po ciszy*, 55.

¹²³⁴ Assmann, *Shadows of Trauma*. 9.

listener. They instruct the listener not to believe that the Catholic Poles inflicted antisemitic violence.

Why would they do so? Firstly, because even if on the intra-contextual level (the story) they claim that these occurrences were not serious, they might realize that the mere reporting of the violence, even if accompanied by expressions aiming at diminishing their seriousness, makes Catholic Poles look bad. Thus, they are risking their loyalty to their own group, which is not desirable. They cannot do it because their loyalty is based on the intersubjective narratives of victimhood, strongly engrained in the collective memory. Generations of Poles after the Second World War grew up with the conviction that the international community did not treat Poles fairly, which consists of a few main points. First, the West abandoned us when the Third Reich attacked us in September 1939.¹²³⁵ Second, our suffering under the Nazis and the Soviets, unlike that of the Jews, was not universally recognized.¹²³⁶ Third, the Nazi camps in Poland were called the Polish camps, thus implying that Poles contributed to their establishment and operation.¹²³⁷ Fourth, Poles were repeatedly accused of

¹²³⁵ These views are reflected for example in the following texts: "Prof. Grzegorz Górski: Wojna o czas. Wszystko w naszych rękach," Tysol.pl, 2022, accessed 19.01.2023, <https://www.tysol.pl/a90054-tylko-u-nas-prof-grzegorz-gorski-wojna-o-czas-wszystko-w-naszyc-rekach>; "Polska zdradzona przez sojuszników. Francusko-brytyjska konferencja w Abbeville i jej konsekwencje," Historia.org.pl, 2021, accessed 19.01.2023, <https://historia.org.pl/2021/09/04/polska-zdradzona-przez-sojusznikow-francusko-brytyjska-konferencja-w-abbeville-i-jej-konsekwencje/>; "Norman Davies o tym, kto kogo zdradził podczas II wojny światowej," Polityka, 2014, accessed 19.01.2022, <https://www.polityka.pl/tygodnikpolityka/historia/1590719,1,norman-davies-o-tym-kto-kogo-zdradzil-podczas-ii-wojny-swiatowej.read>; See also Jonathan Walker, *Poland Alone: Britain, SOE and the Collapse of the Polish Resistance, 1944* (Cheltenham: The History Press, 2011). The notion of betrayal was also used in Andrzej Nowak, *Pierwsza zdrada Zachodu* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2015) describing "the first betrayal" done by the West in the Treaty of Riga. See also Nowak, "Czy w politycznej historii jest miejsce na kategorię „zdrady”?", *Dzieje Najnowsze [kwartalnik poświęcony historii XX wieku]*, no. 3 (2017); Artur Kula, "Zdrada jako kategoria interpretacji historycznej," *Historyka. Studia Metodologiczne* 5 (2021).

¹²³⁶ About the perception of Polishness as a community of suffering and victimhood and "martyrdom identity" in Poland, see Barbara Jedynak, "Niepokorna martyrologia," *Niepodległość i Pamięć* 5/1, no. 10 (1998); Krystyna Skarżyńska, "Grupowa martyrologia: psychologiczne funkcje przekonań o narodowej krzywdzie," *Psychologia Społeczna*, no. 23 (2012); Katarzyna Zechenter, "The Need to Suffer: The Case of Poland," *The Polish Review* 64, no. 2 (2019), <https://doi.org/10.5406/polishreview.64.2.0007>. According to a poll conducted by independent medium OKO Press, 74% of Poles thinks that the Polish nation has suffered more than other nations, "Polacy wycierpieli najwięcej ze wszystkich narodów świata. Tak uważa 74 proc. badanych (Polaków)," OKO.press, 2019, accessed 20.01.2023, <https://oko.press/polacy-wycierpieli-najwiecej-ze-wszystkich-narodow-swiate-tak-uwaza-74-proc-badanych-polakow>.

¹²³⁷ See the Polish death camp controversy, e.g., "'Polish death camp' controversy," Wikipedia, 2022, accessed 09.09.2022, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/%22Polish_death_camp%22_controversy; "Zwrot „polskie obozy zagłady". Rzecznik do SN: polskie sądy mogą rozstrzygać takie sprawy," Rzecznik Praw Obywatelskich, 2022, accessed 09.09.2022, <https://bip.brpo.gov.pl/pl/content/rpoz-zwrot-polskie-obozy-proces-sn-stanowisko>; "Poland's Death Camp Law is Designed to Falsify History," Financial Times, 2018, accessed 09.09.2022, <https://www.ft.com/content/1c183f56-0a6a->

antisemitism and not doing enough to help save the Jews during the Holocaust.¹²³⁸ The interwar antisemitism was extrapolated to the wartime, and Polish “innocent” antisemitism was mixed with “murderous” Nazi antisemitism. Fifth, after all this we were sold by Western leaders in Yalta (abandoned again) to Stalin and thus remained under the communist regime for further decades of semi-occupation.¹²³⁹ These are the main points of the inter-subjective narrative the Catholic interviewees share.¹²⁴⁰ Thus, ultimately they speak from the post-Holocaust position of those who want to defend themselves against the unfair accusations that during the Holocaust they helped to murder Jews or at least drew benefits from their extermination (receiving post-Jewish properties). That is why they, probably without realizing it, are bound to reject the notion of antisemitism in relation to Catholic Poles, even if the facts they describe can be easily labelled antisemitic. However, within the metanarrative they absorbed, admitting that Catholic Poles were antisemitic would mean agreeing with the unfair accusations mentioned above, and betraying their community. I argue that this is not done in a conscious way but rather is a result of being trapped in a morphogenetic sequence.

To some, it might seem farfetched; however, the presence of certain dynamics easily triggered in Polish society would confirm this explanation. For example, one could

11e8-bacb-2958fde95e5e; "In Response to Comments Regarding Death Camps in Poland", Yad Vashem, 2015, <https://www.yadvashem.org/blog/in-response-to-comments-regarding-death-camps-in-poland.html>.

¹²³⁸ When it comes to the Polish-Jewish relations during the Holocaust, the Polish researchers tended to initially study positive relations and the instances of saving Jews, and it took time to develop a more critical approach and research more difficult issues. This turn was related especially to Jan Tomasz Gross' book *Neighbors*, which came out in Polish in 2000. However, the turn in academia has not been followed by a change in collective memory, nor politics. Poles want to remember themselves as the Righteous Among The Nations, and many support Ewa Kurek's claims that if the roles were reversed, no Pole would be saved by a Jew; "Ewa Kurek: Gdyby to Żydzi mieli ratować Polaków, to nie ocalały ani jeden Polak," *Gazeta Wyborcza* Kraków, 2018, accessed 20.01.2023, <https://krakow.wyborcza.pl/krakow/7,44425,23542516,ewa-kurek-gdyby-to-zydzi-mieli-ratowac-polakow-to-nie-ocalalby.html>. Moreover, some state openly that the Jedwabne affair is just a provocation aimed to denigrate Poland in the international arena, "Krzysztof Wyszowski: pogromy w Jedwabnem i Kielcach były prowokacjami," *Program Pierwszy Polskiego Radia*, 2016, accessed 20.01.2023, <https://jedyneka.polskieradio.pl/artukul/1636235>. The latter opinion has strong backing among the conservative sections of Polish society.

¹²³⁹ This is how the event is addressed in the contemporary media, for example, "Jałta była zdradą naszych sojuszników," *Polska Zbrojna*, 2020, accessed 20.01.2023, <https://polska-zbrojna.pl/home/articleshow/30345?t=Jałta-była-zdrada-naszyc-sojusznikow>; "Jałtańska zdrada", *Rzeczpospolita*, 2020, accessed 20.01.2023, <https://www.rp.pl/historia/art9054011-jaltanska-zdrada>; "Konferencja Jałtańska - symbol zdrady," *Portal historyczny Dzieje.pl*, 2019, accessed 20.01.2023, <https://dzieje.pl/aktualnosci/konferencja-jaltanska>.

¹²⁴⁰ Such convictions are addressed as aspects of collective memory and the discussion on their legitimacy and historical accuracy is not a subject of this study but should rather be a fruit of the reader's own judgement based on a thorough knowledge of Polish history.

consider why the scholars studying the cases of Polish crimes against the Jews are often calumniated. Jan Grabowski, Tomasz Jan Gross or Barbara Engelking are often presented as the enemies of the state.¹²⁴¹ In fact, the latter two were accused of defamation of the Polish nation in court.¹²⁴² The case ended with the court demanding the rectification of inaccuracies regarding one of the Poles who they claimed betrayed to the Nazis a group of Jews hiding in the forest, but not addressing the problem of defamation of the Polish nation. Nonetheless, in many “patriotic” circles these scholars transgress the borders of the taboo. Polish perpetrators during the war are a taboo because of the social contract and collective memory – Poles want to see themselves as victims, not oppressors. Thus, there is no social consent to break this taboo and speak not only about Polish complicity in the Holocaust but (in retrospect) about anything that could imply Polish complicity. Speaking about Polish antisemitism before the war could prompt one to think that during the war Polish antisemitism increased and Poles were complicit in the Nazi crimes against the Jews. Dropping such hints is unacceptable from the perspective of Polish collective memory. Hence, the Catholic interviewees auto-correct when speaking about antisemitic violence. Naturally, the interviewees have agency, and some of them show signs of finding a way out from this trap such as acknowledging antisemitic attitudes and condemning them. However, most of them remain within the structural conditioning.

In addition, it is worthwhile mentioning that the circumstances of the interviews make them comfortable in staying within the structures they know, as the interviewees share in the collective memory of the ingroup. Thus, the above-mentioned inter-subjective beliefs are not challenged.

In contrast, Jewish interviewees are challenged by the circumstances of the interview. They agree to speak to the members of the outgroup who come with reconciliatory intention but remain the Other, and share in the inter-subjective narratives of

¹²⁴¹ Catholic press: "Antypolska nagonka trwa. Gross obraził polski naród," *Frona*, 2019, accessed 09.09.2022, <https://www.frona.pl/a/antypolska-nagonka-trwa-gross-obrazil-polski-narod,122676.html>. "Antypolski seans w Paryżu," *Niedziela*, 2019, <https://www.niedziela.pl/arttykul/141605/nd/Antypolski-seans-w-Paryz>. Rightwing press: "Bezczelność! Kanadyjski pseudouczony Jan Grabowski opluł i szkalował Polskę a teraz pozywa Polską Ligę Przeciwko Zniesławianiu. Poszło o mordowanie żydów," *Tygodnik Najwyższy Czas*, 2018, accessed 09.09.2022, <https://nczas.com/2018/11/20/bezczelnosc-kanadyjski-pseudouczony-jan-grabowski-oplul-i-szkalowal-polske-a-teraz-pozywa-polska-lige-przeciwko-znieslawianiu-poszlo-o-mordowanie-zydow/>. Polish minority in Lithuania: "Słowo o żniwiarzu Janie Tomaszu Grossie," *Tygodnik.lt*, accessed 09.09.2022, <http://tygodnik.lt/201210/aktualia6.html>.

¹²⁴² "Proces o badania nad Zagładą Żydów: historycy Engelking i Grabowski mają przeprosić za niecisłość," *OKO.press*, 2021, accessed 09.09.2022, <https://oko.press/prof-engelking-i-grabowski-musza-przeprosic-za-niecisle-informacje>; "Proces ws. książki Engelking i Grabowskiego. „Chciałabym, żeby pisali prawdziwą historię”," *TVP info*, 2021, accessed 09.09.2022, <https://www.tvp.info/55071289/proces-ws-ksiazki-engelking-i-grabowskiego-chcialabym-zeby-pisali-prawdziwa-historie>.

victimhood competing with the Jewish narratives. In addition, the position of the Jewish interviewees is more complex because they had to negotiate their identities throughout their lifetime and now they are required to present a coherent narrative, while in fact most of them had a few separate lives: as Polish Jews, the Holocaust trauma period and life after the war in Israel or elsewhere. Some of them put together a life story for the first time, and they do it facing the Other. Naturally, this affects the content and the form of the stories, as they are aware of possible expectations on the side of interviewers.

Thus, the Jewish interviewees find themselves bound by multiple loyalties: towards their murdered families and communities of childhood/youth, towards their post-war communities and towards their interviewers embodying some form of Polishness and thus provoking a reflection on the interviewees' own relation to their Polishness and the Polish nation as such. The intricacies of their identities were touched upon in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the main theme in the Jewish stories is the Holocaust and the life before the war. The first reason for that is structural – they were asked questions about that. However, most of them speak from the position of a Holocaust survivor, meaning that this identity shapes their account of the past. Assuming this position often implies reducing one's own agency in the story. One presents what happened to them and their family rather than what they did in their life. It is a very natural and understandable reaction to the trauma. It results from seeing the Other as an agent and oneself as an object of their actions. This is why the Jewish interviewees speak more about the structures of persecution, antisemitism and hurtful attitudes of the Poles – because they remember the past through the lens of the trauma.

In addition, post-trauma memory has its own characteristics. Unintentional re-experiencing of trauma symptoms probably accompanied all the survivors throughout their lifetime. During the interview, they are asked to intentionally recall traumatic events that, according to the research on PTSD memory:

may be characterised by confusion about temporal order, and difficulty in accessing important details, both of which contribute to problematic appraisals. Recall tends to be disjointed. When patients with PTSD deliberately recall the worst moments of the trauma, they often do not access other relevant (usually subsequent) information that would correct impressions/predictions made at the time.¹²⁴³

¹²⁴³ Anke Ehlers, Ann Hackmann, and Tanja Michael, "Intrusive Re-Experiencing in Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder: Phenomenology, Theory, and Therapy," *Memory* 12, no. 4 (2004), <https://doi.org/10.1080/09658210444000025>, 403

As this is not a study in psychology, there is no place here to discuss the nuances of the processes of forming post-traumatic memories, the dissociation or the doubling the self.¹²⁴⁴ The important conclusion for this study is that, again, we deal with the memory of meanings, not events. The Jewish interviewees might be confused about the factual details but they do remember well the interwar discrimination of their community, the Holocaust, and the postwar pogroms (e.g., Kielce 1946) and these are the bonding elements that shape their narratives.

The status of the victim is undoubtedly the main organizing principle. However, as mentioned above, it overlaps with the narratives about one's own identity, which is more complex in case of the Jewish interviewees. What binds the interviewees with the interviewers is their common Polishness, expressed, for example, in the Polish language. Although when asked explicitly about their relation to Polishness, the interviewees express doubts and many of them choose to highlight their Jewishness, the mere fact that the interviews are conducted in Polish brings to the attention that the Jewish interviewees acquired some "Polishness". The Polish language and participation in the Polish culture were vehicles of modernization (and often secularization) and were accepted as such even by those who protest being called Polish. The widespread discrimination and rejection of Jewish citizens in interwar Poland, in connection to Holocaust trauma, resulted in the rejection of the Polish part of their identity among the vast majority of the Jewish interviewees. Just as Poles feel betrayed by the West, Jews feel betrayed by Poles. Yet, they agree to speak to the Catholic Poles, which means that they still feel some connection.

This connection, however, is disrupted not only by the traumas of the Holocaust but also by their life in Israel. Although they do not speak much about their post-war lives, it is well known that the survivors reaching Palestine or the State of Israel were not given space to process their traumatic memories but rather pushed to quickly adapt to the new reality full of challenges and pressing emergencies.

Hanna Yablonka explores the experiences of the survivors who fought in the War of Independence.¹²⁴⁵ In the beginning of her article, she compares three statements regarding the experience, one coming from Yitzhak Sadeh, the commander of the Palmach, another one coming from the poet Nathan Alterman, and finally a poem penned by Holocaust survivor Benjamin Harshav. The first speaks about the partisans and ghetto fighters as an asset ("This is heroism of the highest order, pure heroism, and

¹²⁴⁴ Pamela Ballinger, "The Culture of Survivors: Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Traumatic Memory," *History and Memory* 10, no. 1 (1998).

¹²⁴⁵ Although I am aware of the tensions around this term, I decided to follow the emic names in this context instead of applying the neutral term 1948 (or First) Arab–Israeli War. This decision does not express my stance on Israeli–Palestinian conflict.

they are bringing their asset with them.”).¹²⁴⁶ Alterman speaks about them as “the silver plate on which the Jewish state was served” to future generations.¹²⁴⁷ Harshav, finally, speaks about David Ben Gurion paving the way to the capital (Jerusalem) “with the bones of young men from the Holocaust.”¹²⁴⁸ Yablonka comments on the latter in the following way:

The words of the third speaker, a Holocaust survivor, were written—not by chance—only several decades later, in a different era, by which time Israeli society had become sectorialized, more ‘privatized’, and incomparably more sober. His poem tells a story of institutional and emotional alienation from the survivors who had been conscripted to fight in the War of Independence, as well as a widespread misunderstanding of the Holocaust and insensitivity to the survivors.¹²⁴⁹

She points to the fact that the experience of the Holocaust survivors immediately after their arrival to Israel was unrecognized or invalidated. Quoting historical sources, Yablonka mentions how the new immigrants who were recruited to the army were negatively assessed by their commanders for having “no sense of joy of [being in] the Land of Israel” as well as being unimpressed by the might of the Israeli army and unforgiving of the hardships. In addition, they spoke Yiddish, not Hebrew, and had “a second-class-citizen complex”.¹²⁵⁰ The new *olim* were humiliated in the beginning of their army service and their *morale* declined. However, Yablonka proves that although army service was rather an experience of discrimination and othering, with time the survivors bought into the narrative of “national revival as an act of revenge” and their acquired love for their new homeland.

Although most of the interviewees do not mention their engagement in the War of Independence, the examples analyzed by Yablonka give an insight into the dynamics of adaptation and collective memory in Israel. In the beginning, the Holocaust experience was not recognized apart from the attitude of heroic resistance of the partisans or ghetto fighters. The burning need to fight for the establishment of the new state required the newcomers to dedicate all their energies to that task, leaving no space for their past trauma. Thus, their pain, loss and suffering were pushed away to fight for a brighter

¹²⁴⁶ Hanna Yablonka, "Holocaust Survivors in the Israeli Army during the 1948 War: Documents and Memory," *Israel Affairs* 12, no. 3 (2006), <https://doi.org/10.1080/13537120600744982>, 462.

¹²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 463.

¹²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 463.

¹²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 464.

¹²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 468.

future. In this sense, the disassociation from the trauma was stronger than it might have been otherwise.

In addition to this, the survivors lost their ties to Poland also because of the political situation. They were no longer citizens. They became a part of the Israeli society and had to invest their energy in the process of their own integration and its development. The focus became securing a safe space for their children and grandchildren and in this world, there was no place for their past and the Polish aspects of their identity. Their life before Israel was far removed.

The Victim Paradigm

Manuela Consonni, a Holocaust and memory scholar, points to the dynamics in postwar politics and practices of memory and placing the victim “as an agent of history and memory”.¹²⁵¹ She delineates the chronological phases of these developments, indicating two phases: the birth of the victim paradigm (1985-2000) and victimhood, identity politics and politics of memory (from 2000 onwards). Following her distinctions, it is easily noticeable that the time when the interviews are recorded implies familiarity with the victim paradigm politics among the interviewees. Both in Poland and Israel, “suffering entered into, or rather interfered with, the formation of contemporary identities by intersecting with trajectories of memory”.¹²⁵²

Consonni claims that Jewish suffering in the Holocaust became a model or a template for the victim paradigm in the West (in opposition to other genocides on post-colonial realities), and that:

all groups now look up to the Jewish sufferings in claiming their unique status of victims, finding in it a welcome model for the way the memory of collective persecution can cement their present sense of identity through which each community can easily exonerate itself from its real political responsibilities and the necessity of addressing unresolved problems, both in the past and in the present.¹²⁵³

These words are very incisive and definitively summarize the Western politics of memory. However, some communities, like the Poles, have developed a sense of a community of suffering, as was alluded to before, long before the Holocaust. Polish history and especially the romantic historiosophy provided grounds for finding

¹²⁵¹ Manuela Consonni, *The Ethnicization and the Deterritorialisation of Genocide. An Inquiry into the Shoah Discourse, Victims and Victimhood*, 3.

¹²⁵² *Ibid.*, 20.

¹²⁵³ *Ibid.*, 18.

legitimacy and scarification of the nation based on being a subject of oppression. In that sense, it seems that Consonni's claim could be further nuanced in the case of Poland. While there already existed a victim paradigm in the collective memory, it was strengthened with the transition to the post-communist era, a new epoch requiring new politics of memory. In that pivotal moment, the victim paradigm in the sense described by Consonni was accepted and absorbed as a useful tool for the public discourses on identity in Poland, which later passed to the second stage centered on victimhood as a cornerstone of the politics of identity and memory.

Thus, when analyzing the oral histories at hand, one has to be aware of these intricacies, and of the ways in which the narratives of victimhood gained prominence in the politics of memory and identity both in Israel and in Poland. Because of the common *locus* of memory for both communities, the competition between these narratives is unavoidable.

Moreover, psychologically speaking, both communities did not have a chance to confront their trauma and the collective memory of it. The pressing need to build a new country/rebuild the country after the war, start new life with new political challenges (the communist regime in Poland, the Arab-Israeli conflict, and everything they entailed) did not allow the survivors to process their trauma. Instead, their suffering in both cases is weaponized for a certain vision of politics of identity and memory, which ultimately serves the goal of exonerating the ingroup from any responsibility towards the outgroup, as Consonni states.

Naturally, the interviewees have agency, and how they choose to tell their stories tells us a lot about themselves as much as it does about the structural entanglements in which they are caught. Nevertheless, they are aware that their stories need to comply with the demands of their ingroup and the expectations of the interviewers. These limiting factors might impact not only their language and the memory of meanings but also the content and the form of the story as a narrative created under specific circumstances. However, the mere fact of being able to speak to the Other and about the Other gives hope that there is a way out of the victim paradigm. The remaining question is how to translate that into the politics of memory and identity so that both communities can be freed from these self-revolving memories of meanings significant only to the ingroup, and excluding the outgroup's memory of meanings as threatening.

Recognition as an Alternative to the Victimhood Identity

The most perilous trap of the victim paradigm is “depending on others in one’s relation to oneself” and becoming dependent on recognition.¹²⁵⁴ The latter became a fundamental concept in Axel Honneth’s social philosophy, which can be very helpful when thinking about uses and abuses of collective memory in politics of identity and history. Honneth points to non- and mis-recognition as a basis of social and interpersonal conflict.

Clearly, this lack of appropriate recognition is the core problem in Polish-Jewish relations. It results in an obsessive attachment to the victimhood identity, which paradoxically requires constant validation and thus makes one dependent on the Other’s recognition in relation to oneself. In result, the ingroup remains tied to the outgroup by a constant expectation to validate and recognize their suffering. In the case of Polish and Israeli politics of memory and mutual diplomatic relations, this manifests as recurring crises triggered by political decisions perceived as non-recognizant of the Other’s victimhood identity and thus threatening.¹²⁵⁵ In a sense, Poland and Israel remain in a deadlock, needing the Other in order to maintain the victimhood identity, and in reality providing a rationale for strengthening the xenophobic politics of identity. Naturally, for both communities, the victim status is not monodirectional and does not depend on recognition by only one agent. However, due to the common past and common *loci* of memory, the relation and the conditioning remain unique.

The results of this study suggest the need to include the concept of recognition as a hermeneutical tool and a possible way out of the deadlock. The connection between intersubjective recognition and social change, promised by Honneth, implies that inclusion of the narratives of the Other, recognizing their experience, might lead to a significant improvement – liberation from the dictatorship of recognition of external agents, including the outgroup. In other words, recognizing that one’s own community is not the only victims but acknowledging and accepting the narratives of suffering and victimhood competing with one’s own victimhood status seems to be a way forward. As much as this trend is visible in academia,¹²⁵⁶ it needs to be implemented also on

¹²⁵⁴ Heikki Ikaheimo, Kristina Lepold and Titus Stahl, eds., *Recognition and Ambivalence* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2021), 1.

¹²⁵⁵ By that, I mean for example the reactions to the Amendment to the Act on the Institute of National Remembrance in 2018 or to the Amendment to the Code of Administrative Procedure in 2021 resulting in the practical expulsion of the Polish Ambassador from Israel.

¹²⁵⁶ Numerous publications attest to that. See for example: Tadek Markiewicz and Keren Sharvit, "When Victimhood Goes to War? Israel and Victim Claims," *Political Psychology* 42, no. 1 (2021), <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12690>; Diane Enns, *The Violence of Victimhood* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2012); Daniel Bar-Tal et al., "A Sense of Self-

political level. Moreover, as proposed by Risto Saarinen, from the perspective of Christian theology recognition, in its transformative aspect, can be seen as a part of personal conversion,¹²⁵⁷ and perhaps this is a notion that should be further explored in the field of ethics and moral theology, serving as a moral compass in encounters with Otherness and towards personal spiritual growth.

Perceived Collective Victimhood in Intractable Conflicts," *International Review of the Red Cross* 91, no. 874 (2009).

¹²⁵⁷ Understood as a change of heart not a change of religion. Risto Saarinen, *Recognition and Religion: A Historical and Systematic Study*, 1st ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), esp. Chapter 4.

Chapter 10

Conclusions

Writing conclusions is such a brave and maybe even arrogant act. It implies the work has been finished and the answers to the questions are now clear and obvious. In fact, the researcher is actually often left puzzled and asking even more questions than in the beginning. The main research question of this study was how the intergroup relations between Jews and Catholics in the interwar period are portrayed in oral histories, and why. The analysis of these oral histories felt at times like opening Pandora's box – which might be the case for any thorough research – and the first answer to the research questions that come to mind is that it is complex and complicated. This concluding chapter seeks to summarize the findings in relation to the main research question and point to possible future directions for research on this topic. In addition, it offers some reflection on the research process and the main issues placed in a broader context of relation to Otherness.

Oral Histories as a Source for the Study of Intergroup Relations

Before going into the findings of the study, I would like to briefly reflect on the sources. During the research process, numerous historians I spoke to questioned the choice of the oral histories as valid and trustworthy sources of information about Jewish-Catholic relations, pointing to their inaccuracy, the imperfections of human memory and the resulting distortions of the past. Proving the adequacy of these sources for my study was a very gratifying process. Oral histories are one of the richest and most complex expressions of collective memory and invite countless methodological approaches. They have not been used extensively in the study of Jewish-Christian relations. Moreover, the study has shown that while the memory of events can be faulty, the memory of meanings remains coded in the language and thus, oral histories are appropriate sources to study the meanings in memory. Although one's recollection of the events might be inaccurate or imperfect, the memory of what was good, wrong, beautiful or hostile, who was the friend and who the enemy does not change over time, and if it does, the change is narrated. Hopefully, these sources will be further explored to study intergroup

relations in further contexts, as well as the mechanisms of collective memory, especially in post-genocidal and post-traumatic communities.

The Image of the Relations in the Sources

The images of the relations are very contextual, but they always reflect the basic tenets of intergroup contact theory. Wherever in the described situations the four basic factors (equal status, common goals, intergroup cooperation and authorities' support) were met, the relations were described as positive and the contact as peaceful. In addition, many stories pointed to common values as another factor facilitating intergroup contact. One could also add that belonging to the same social class was explicitly or implicitly indicated as a facilitator as well. The overall picture of the relations, however, is that of significant social and cultural distance between the groups. The distance varied in different contexts and seemed to be reinforced by the class division. Such an observation, facilitated by the concepts of contact zones and comfort zones, brings nuance to the overall negative view of the relations between the Catholic Poles and Jewish Poles in the interwar period, presented in the literature on the subject.

It is true that the oral histories at hand present intergroup relations as difficult, often referring to antisemitism, particularly to economic boycott and street violence, as a challenge to coexistence. They also reveal relatively high level of stereotyping of the Other among both groups. In the Catholics' eyes, Jewish spaces become *loci* of folklore, and Jews are often presented as bearing a specific smell, dressed in a particular way and being more skilled in trade than the Catholic population. The Jewish interviewees present Catholic Poles as antisemitic and simply foreign, removed from the Jewish universe. Understandably, the attachment to specific negative narratives about the outgroup is related to the overall more negative view of it, and intergroup relations. For example, those interviewees who seem to have believed the Endekian narrative of Jewish economic dominion display more critical view of the Jews in general. Similarly, those Jewish interviewees who grew up with a strong separation from Catholic Poles show more negative views of Catholics and Christianity in general, which corresponds to the general tenets of intergroup contact theory.

However, the stories also describe other mechanisms, which so far have not been systematically explored and introduce more complexity to the subject. Taking into consideration intersectionality and Tajfel's theory of social identity enables the study to note the essential meaning of social class in the stories. The narratives reflect a system of social networks based to a very large extent on power and wealth, where often the class divisions are superimposed on the ethno-religious ones. Thus, solidarity and loyalty are not distributed only within the ethno-religious group but also directed at those who find themselves in a similar social position. Such a mechanism is described

particularly often regarding the working class, where close cooperation across ethno-religious line occurs among neighbors. The social distance between the Jews and the Catholics diminishes even if cultural distance remains, and such rapprochement is mediated by common class (shared economic challenges). In addition, one can see similar solidarities among the middle class. Jews display higher levels of acculturation and in many stories this is presented as a reason for lessened social distance and prejudice among Catholics Poles towards Jews from the same class. However, it is not always the case, and it remains unclear why.

Class also plays a role in the reverse mechanism: it can be a factor of exclusion. The privileged discriminate against the underprivileged because of their lower social status, for example, persecuting beggars or showing contempt to those who are dressed poorly. Interestingly, the Jewish spaces overall are described very often as poor and dirty, which racializes poverty and dirt, pointing to the fact that social class played a key role in the process of othering. The dominance of the Polish Catholic minority was expressed in denigrating descriptions of Jews *en masse* as unable to maintain standards of hygiene, and ultimately being a threat to the standards of modern society, represented by the minority. Such thinking can be regarded as a discursive operation, not only a description of Jewish poverty, because the vast majority of the Polish citizens at the time were struggling economically too. Yet, the poverty is seen as an inherent characteristic of the Jewish community – in this way, uncomfortable features of one social class are extrapolated to the entire ethnic minority.

Moreover, class played an important role in the delineation of the contact zones and comfort zones of Jews and Catholics. When describing most of their interactions with the outgroup, the cultural distance does not seem to bother the interviewees very much, especially when it comes to the majority. Catholic interviewees speak with interest and maybe even enjoyment about the cultural diversity of Jews: different garb, customs or food. This folkloric presence is not assessed negatively in the stories. The uncomfortable aspects of Otherness are linked to an internalized classist outlook: poverty and the resulting conditions are seen as the main sources of discomfort when crossing over into Jewish spaces. Thus, the comfort zones do not necessarily correspond to the ethnic character of urban spaces. Furthermore, Jewish interviewees from the middle class would not cross over into poor traditionally Jewish areas but would stay in the neighborhoods inhabited by people who sharing their social standing. Therefore, again, social distance is based more on class than ethnic background. The intersectionality is reflected in the accounts of Jewish interviewees of modest background, who felt uncomfortable crossing over into “Christian” and more well off spaces, where in fact they could be beaten and humiliated for both being Jewish and being poor. Undoubtedly, further research on intersectionality in this context would bring a deeper

understanding of the relationship between class and ethno-religious background in Catholic-Jewish relations in interwar Poland.

Even though the boundaries between the zones are permeable, crossing comfort zones is punishable – which is recalled especially by the Jewish men, who speak about street violence directed against Jews when they crossed into spaces that were perceived by the Catholic majority as “ours”. The Catholic interviewees, even if they mention antisemitic violence, always highlight that it was not serious or it was not an innate Polish attitude but rather an import, and connect it to Hitler’s rise to power. Thus, the perceptions of the violence between the two groups are contrary to some extent, which leaves the reader pondering the mechanisms of whitewashing the ingroup, a problem that can be undoubtedly be further explored in future research.

The contact zones, where the contact takes places in a prevalently peaceful and uninterrupted way, are described in the chapter dedicated to interpersonal relations, and include: shops, markets, schools, neighborly relations and political parties. Overall, these contact zones are described by both groups in a positive way, as spaces where the groups were able to cooperate for common goals, the asymmetry of power was somehow balanced by clear rules and there were no structural obstacles for cooperation, or they were not strong enough to affect it negatively. For example, in business, the transactional character of contacts and benefits both sides drew from it overcame the growing structural obstacles such as the systematic economic boycott. Many interviewees conveyed that, in spite of the boycott, trade continued because of the competitive prices in Jewish shops, their readiness to give credit to economically challenged customers and their kindness. In school, although some mention antisemitic violence or prejudice among classmates, the general picture of intergroup contacts is positive, maybe because according to the law, all students had equal rights and the teachers mentioned did not encourage antisemitic behavior. Then, all the students had to cooperate to achieve common goals. Thus, the stories portray fair intergroup relations in school, with limited manifestations of antisemitic behavior or prejudice – because the conditions for positive contact were met.

On the other hand, it is worth mentioning that the relations between teachers and students are also portrayed as peaceful and respectful but pointing to possible problems with authority if a Jewish teacher taught predominantly Catholic class. The perspectives for future research could include study of this interesting position of having power over the majority while being a part of underprivileged outgroup, and the way it is perceived by a majority group that finds itself subdued in this particular configuration.

The relations among neighbors are presented either as non-existent or as rather peaceful and cordial, and overlapping with the above-described ways of seeing otherness: intergroup relations are facilitated by belonging to the same class but also by a set of common values that enable crossing the class boundaries. Thus, one can make

a conclusion that those who speak about having good relations with neighbors belonging to the outgroup were exposed to such contacts and thus went through the processes described by intergroup contact theory. They speak well about the outgroup because they have observed them, learned about them and as a result changed their image of the outgroup and usually developed some somewhat personal, affective connection to its members.

In fact, profound affective ties to the members of the outgroup are described in the first person much less often than other interpersonal encounters. Intergroup friendships are narrated as born in school or among neighbors and not very deep, which might result from the young age of the interviewees at the time and the following trauma of the Holocaust. One might not focus on childhood friendships or remember them as significant if one suffered so much in the following years. Then, one might place more emphasis on the lost family members or personal experiences. Factors that are seen as facilitating such friendships are spatial proximity and similar social status. On the other hand, especially among Jewish interviewees, mentions sometimes appear of not having friends at all because of the strict upbringing patterns, favoring passing the time at home, studying.

Intergroup romantic relationships are mentioned rarely and never in the first person. These references present predominantly women as the active party in engaging in intergroup romances, and portray the love stories as tragic or too complicated to end with marriage. The gender bias appearing in the stories calls for further research in the area, as findings from other parts of the world suggest there might a general bias against ingroup women engaging in heterogamy, while men retain their previous status and are not judged in the same way. Thus, it might be possible that the representation of women as the “transgressors” in this matter does not correspond to the actual events but is a reflection of a patriarchal system integrated by the interviewees.

The Jewish interviewees in particular present the heterogamy as a disaster for the family of the (Jewish) women and a public humiliation for them. While they acknowledge that sometimes the Catholic side accepted the relationship and welcomed the Jewish woman to their family, they point to the tragic consequences and the fate of the Jewish women and their families during the Holocaust. Both Jews and Catholics point to structural challenges for such relationships, personified by the strong opposition of family to heterogamy, which either managed to lead to a break up or a disowning of the trespasser. Moreover, one should bear in mind the intergenerational tension between the idea of marriage for love versus arranged marriage, which only added to the hostility towards heterogamy. Summing up, the way these love stories are narrated reflects a profound gap separating the two groups. While they met in contact zones, these were only zones, and the meaningful, prolonged exposure to Otherness was apparently not the experience of the interviewees. Undoubtedly, it would be

desirable to further fathom the problem of heterogamy in this context, both in the social history of Jewish-Christian relations and the memory of the intergroup relations in post-genocidal landscapes.

When it comes to the descriptions of interreligious relations, they come predominantly from Catholics describing Jewish religious practices and their own reactions and attitudes towards these Jewish rituals or other expressions of religiosity. They eagerly and in detail share their observations of Jewish religious rituals, although they are usually mistaken when it comes to connecting specific rituals to particular holidays. However, they usually narrate in a very vivid way these “folkloric” religious activity. They talk about Shabbat and recall Jewish food very well. When it comes to interactions with Jewish religious expressions, they speak about observation, peaceful cooperation (being a *Shabbat goy*) or about “pranks”. The latter are an interesting concept because even if the content of the story attests to acts of anti-Jewish violence like attacking praying Jews or throwing rocks at a synagogue’s windows, these actions are always described as pranks. The overwhelming majority of the Catholic interviewees refuses to define attacks on Jews both in religious and secular contexts as antisemitism and thus assume responsibility. Rather, they add extra-contextual comments explaining to the interviewer that these events are not to be understood as antisemitism or should not be taken seriously. Moreover, blood libel remains present in the narratives about Jews, and usually is narrated as a part of upbringing patters and a motif in the popular stories using fear to control children. The study suggests that the vitality of the trope might be connected to what some pedagogues claim to be the primal fear of every child – being eaten. This trope could benefit from further investigation.

Jewish interviewees mention Christianity and Jesus mostly in the context of antisemitism and anti-Judaism. Some of them refer to situations involving older generations showing diffidence and maybe even contempt towards Catholics; however, this type of data is scarce and does not allow for drawing reliable conclusions. Conversions are usually portrayed by both groups as motivated by romantic feelings and thus a means for marriage. Naturally, conversions to Catholicism are mentioned more often, while conversions to Judaism remain an exception, which corresponds to the historical circumstances of the era.

The Role of the Holocaust in the Narratives

The stories analyzed in this study are both formally (composition-wise) and content-wise a part of the Holocaust/wartime stories. Thus, the composition ties together interwar memories and wartime memories, which means that the interwar stories function and make sense only in the context of the Holocaust. Even if the interviews are often structured in a way that focuses on interwar Jewish Lublin, the Holocaust or

the Second World War are ubiquitous. The narrators always refer explicitly or implicitly to the Holocaust. As this was a thematic study, I did not focus on the flow of the narrative within each oral history. Doing that, which I leave for another study, would allow a presentation in a more detailed way, in which the relationship between the stories and the Holocaust unfolds. Nevertheless, this problem is raised in Part 3 of the study, which is dedicated to the identity of the interviewees to an extent sufficient to achieve an understanding of the main topic.

Unsurprisingly, Jewish interviewees are given more space to share their wartime experiences of loss, hiding, escape and survival. They often narrate the entire story from the perspective of the victim, and thus prewar Polish antisemitism is presented either as an introduction or in contrast to the wartime atrocities. Their relation to Polishness is often complex and the Holocaust in their stories serves to underscore the impossibility of being a Pole and a Jew at the same time; the failure of a Polish Jewish identity, in a sense. This is often amplified by postwar experiences of murderous Polish antisemitism – the Kielce pogrom, where one of the interviewees lost her husband, witnessing the murder of other Jews after the liberation or death threats received upon going back to Lublin. Thus, overall in the narratives, the Holocaust is the ultimate test for Polish/Catholic-Jewish relations, and even for those who survived in hiding or on the Aryan side, the overwhelming perception is that of failure. Even if the interviewees survived, the amount of evil they saw inflicted on Jews by Catholic Poles casts a dark shadow over the relations. In a sense, it is surprising how positive the image of interwar relations is, given how much trauma they survived during the Holocaust. One could expect the image to be far more somber. Maybe the fact of being interviewed by Catholic Poles made them want to present a softer image of the intergroup relations. To sum up, the victim paradigm in these stories is not as salient as one could expect. It is also very important to note that the personal experiences during the Holocaust (particularly for those who were rescued by Poles or survived on the Aryan side) shape the overall image of the Catholic Poles to a larger extent than the previous interactions with them.

The Catholic interviewees have a far more complicated relationship to the Holocaust, manifested in their denial of Polish antisemitism and habit of adapting narratives of victimhood in a non-obvious way. As repeatedly mentioned above, the Catholic interviewees refuse to admit Polish antisemitism and the textual analysis of the stories points to hidden sense of guilt and a need to defend the ingroup. Certain extra-contextual statements can hardly be explained otherwise. As many previous studies have shown, including for example M. Steinlauf's *Bondage to the Dead*, Polish collective memory is stained by the Holocaust, and in fact many stories at hand reflect this stain – a sense of guilt and a need for self-defense. In result, the Catholic interviews often assume the position of innocence, which can be seen as one of the guises of the

victim paradigm. This study raised the problem only marginally, due to its scope. A thorough study of autobiographical interviews would be able to shed light on the ways the victim paradigm was internalized and manifested in narrations.

Overall, there is a palpable sense of the competing narratives of these two groups, each one being focused on their own victimhood, which creates problems for recognition of the Other's experience. The Catholic interviewees' resistance to admitting the antisemitism of the ingroup could be seen as a lack of recognition that the actions they describe are perceived by the Other as antisemitic violence. It remains unacknowledged and thus pushed under the surface – reduced to half-understandable excuses, allusions and sentences suddenly interrupted in the middle. On the other hand, the experience of non-Jews during the war is not often mentioned in the stories of the Jewish interviewees because of the magnitude of their own tragedy, which creates a similar detachment from the Other. It might be possible that for trauma survivors such recognition is simply not within their reach. Ultimately, however, the problem of mutual non-recognition remains. It is desirable that future research addresses this lack of recognition from the point of view of social psychology and genocide studies to obtain a more nuanced picture of the problem and suggestions for possible remedies.

The study touched marginally on the problem of politicization of the narratives and the problem of mutual recognition. These two issues are of utmost importance and should be investigated further, possibly by juxtaposing texts of collective memory such as oral histories and the discourses present in the contemporary politics of history, memory and identity both in Poland and Israel. Such a study in uses and abuses of collective memory in politics would be very helpful in understanding how memories can be weaponized and what use tropes of collective memory could be to promote open attitudes towards Otherness and combat xenophobia.

Agency

One of the main research problems, re-emerging every once in a while during the analysis, is the agency of the interviewees in creating the stories and the agency of people involved in intergroup relations. The personal experiences of the interviewees are a result of both structures, understood in morphogenetic sense, and contingency. Then, their memories are shaped by the narratives expressing collective memory. In that sense, they are trapped in certain narratives (of victimhood, for example) resulting from structural conditioning and by their trajectory of suffering, none of which they chose. One cannot help but ask what kind of agency did the interviewees have?

One could argue that the study shows their agency on the level of recollection of everyday stories. In spite of the structural conditioning, that is, growing up in an antisemitic atmosphere, both the Catholic and the Jewish interviewees chose to present

not only the hostility and separation but also peaceful coexistence and instances of intergroup cordiality. Such a choice could be motivated by the circumstances of the interview, and meeting the assumed standards of the interviewers. If they ask about the Jewish Lublin, they must value the Jewish heritage, so one should appreciate it and not speak too badly of Catholic Poles (if one is Jewish) or curb one's antisemitic opinions (if one is Catholic).

On the level of history, the stories, even if predominantly describing intergroup separation, show agency of individuals who break from the structural conditioning by showing intergroup solidarity or befriending the outgroup neighbors – the acts of kindness and recognition that usually escape the historians because of their everyday character, lack of political meaning and the impossibility of measuring their impact. They are often described as guided by a personal system of values, which seems to always be a way out of structural conditioning and a step into the sphere of freedom and agency; making individual choices about one's attitude to the Other.

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The Memory of Meanings

Jewish-Catholic relations in Poland remain a thorny issue for all the parties involved. How can these two groups remember the past intergroup relations so differently? What happens when competing narratives do not find a meeting point?

This dissertation concentrates on the memory and attitudes towards each other of Catholic and Jewish inhabitants of Lublin in the interwar period. It uncovers the gap between the memories of coexistence between these two groups and attempts to explain it.

Magdalena Dziaczkowska works at the Centre for Theology and Religious Studies, Lund University, Sweden. This is her doctoral dissertation in Global Christianity and Interreligious Relations.

