

Volume 03

Cross-Roads.

Polish Studies in Culture,
Literary Theory, and History

Edited by Ryszard Nycz
and Teresa Walas

Maria Janion

Hero, Conspiracy, and Death: The Jewish Lectures

Translated by Alex Shannon

With *Hero, Conspiracy and Death: The Jewish Lectures*, the author has written a book of sweeping significance for readers interested in Polish history, Jewish history, and the Holocaust in which she asks troubling questions: Can a Jew be both a Jew and a Pole? Are we right to talk of “worthy” and “unworthy” death in the Holocaust? What are the implications of Adam Mickiewicz’s philo-Semitism? In Zygmunt Krasiński’s anti-Semitism, do we see the “specter of elimination”? Are humanist and enlightenment values useful in analyzing the Holocaust, or did the experience of Nazi genocide render them obsolete? Tracing the history of anti-Jewish stereotypes in early nineteenth-century Poland (and beyond), the author offers answers to these questions that are bold, clear and compassionate.

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I.
THE JEWISH COLONEL

To Zofia Stefanowska

1. A Biography Romantic and Unromantic

With his book *Berek Joselewicz i jego syn* (Berek Joselewicz and His Son, 1909), Ernest Łuniński was the first to pen a coherent, colorful, and captivating biography of this modern, mournful Polish-Jewish war hero. Łuniński was able to combine erudition with the lofty rhetoric of the vigorous Polish language to narrate a story of great literary value punctuated with scenes from climactic moments in the hero's life. This was a romantic biography, the highest standard for which had been set by Szymon Askenazy in *Książę Józef Poniatowski* (Prince Józef Poniatowski, 1905), which itself enjoyed an exceptionally wide readership and was written with extraordinary cognitive and artistic passion. The Napoleonic Era – which lived on in historical and literary works written in the age of the Revolution of 1905 and the Great War from which Poland regained its independence, including Stefan Żeromski's *Popioły* (Ashes, 1902-1903) – fostered the perpetuation of the model of the romantic hero fighting for freedom and sacrificing his life at the altar of fatherland and humanity. Battle, combat, and military service were the essential elements of a hero's biography. Łuniński, Askenazy, and Żeromski cultivated common heroic narratives found as often in historical works as in literary and semi-literary works.

Two equestrian portraits (*Berek Joselewicz* and *Berek Joselewicz at Kock*) painted by Juliusz Kossak¹ helped bring the “Jewish Colonel” into the gallery of Polish national heroes. Berek was picturesque in his “dark-green cloth coat, his shoulders gleaming with epaulettes, decorated in glory, and because he belonged to an ‘elite company,’ he wore a round bear-fur cap, widened at the top, protecting a thoughtful countenance [...] adorned with a bushy moustache that stretched from ear to ear.”² Berek was known as an excellent cavalier, and in Kossak's portrait we see the officer in full Napoleonic dress mounted on a beautiful and well-groomed steed, all of which is quite typical of this artist's work. Even Adam Skałkowski, who was generally hostile toward the Berek legend, had to question the joke told by Prince de Ligne, namely that Jews conscripted into the light cavalry “feared their horses before they could fear their enemy.” Skałkowski stated that “Jewish horse traders knew how to ride, though to be sure they did not always present themselves well on their mounts.”³ But who knows? One can presume that Berek, from an early age and before he began working as an agent in the horse

1 A color reproduction of Kossak's portraits, Henryk Pillati's “Śmierc Berka Joselewicza w bitwie pod Kockiem,” and detailed information appear in the album *Żydzi w Polsce. Obraz i słowo, część I*, ed. M. Rostworowski (Warszawa, 1993).

2 Ernest Łuniński, *Berek Joselewicz i jego syn. Zarys historyczny* (Warszawa, 1909), 35.

3 Adam Skałkowski, *Z dziejów insurekcji 1794 r* (Warszawa, 1926), 32.

trade, worked as a horse-breaker for his “horseman” cousin, and that he knew his way around horses perfectly well.

A romantically conceived and personalized biography had to include some sort of psychological riddle involving the hero’s transformation: how was it that Prince Józef Poniatowski transformed himself from a ladies’ man at the salon into a flawless knight? how did it happen that Bishop Ignacy Massalski’s Jewish broker – that is, Joselewicz – developed into a heroic colonel in the Kościuszko Uprising? Various answers to these questions have been offered; I will turn to them shortly. But the fact is that in each of the two cases, serious difficulties emerged that became a barrier to heroic metamorphosis: Prince Józef was a nephew of King Stanisław August Poniatowski; he was an aristocrat, and thus born and destined – in the eyes of revolutionary patriots – to become a “traitor to the nation.” Berek Joselewicz was a common small-town Jew who, in his youth, attended a cheder and later occupied himself with his Polish lord’s businesses; he never renounced his religion and customs, so – by birth and destiny – he was not at all suited, in the eyes of soldiers and the nobility, to serve in the military, let alone in the cavalry. Nonetheless, with time, he rose to the rank of staff officer.

Biographies of “romantic” military heroes characteristically contain climactic, myth-creating moments: participation in some sort of decisive battle or campaign and a heroic death. Prince Józef distinguished himself above all as a leader in the victorious campaign of 1809, and he met death – during the Battle of Leipzig in 1813 – in the White Elster River. As a colonel under Tadeusz Kościuszko, Berek Joselewicz took part in the defense of besieged Warsaw in November 1794, and he died – as an officer in the army of the Duchy of Warsaw – on 5 May 1809 in a skirmish with the Austrians at Kock. Such events were well-suited to the aura of a heroic biography, for they involved the abandonment of oneself in the battle for freedom – until death.

There are numerous references to the heroism of Berek Joselewicz in various types of nineteenth-century publications, and in the twentieth century he remained in the pantheon of Polish heroes. Admiration for him between the two world wars was such that his name was joined with the romantic cult of Józef Piłsudski’s Legions. The ceremonies in 1935 surrounding the transfer of some soil from Berek Joselewicz’s grave in Kock to Piłsudski’s memorial mound in Kraków became the symbolic expression of this union.⁴ The mournful hero, Colonel Berek Joselewicz, became part of the immortal glory that was the Polish army, and he took his place alongside its greatest legend, Józef Piłsudski, who was known – not incidentally – as a “friend of the Jews.”

4 See “Ziemia z grobu Berka Joselewicza na kopiec Marszałka Piłsudskiego” in *Nasz Przegląd*, 12 July 1935, and “Uroczystość u grobu płk. Berka Joselewicza” in *Nasz Przegląd*, 25 July 1935.

An abbreviated version of Łuniński's original monograph was published in 1928 in Kock, without footnotes and entitled simply *Berek Joselewicz*, appearing under the "imprint of the Citizen's Committee established to build a vocational and grammar school in the name of – and in memory of – Berek Joselewicz" under the aegis of Marshall Piłsudski. Among the members of the Citizen's Committee, alongside the Reverend Father Marcel Glinka, the parish priest of Kock, and Count Józef Żółtowski, there was Josef Morgenstern, rabbi; Moszek Goldband, a city magistrate in Kock; Mojżesz Dawid Wajnberg, chairman of the Jewish community in Kock; and Jójna Zygielman, a city councillor in Kock.

But let us complete this portrait sketch of Berek Joselewicz from the other, non-romantic side with an essay written in 1939 by Isaac Bashevis Singer entitled *Pulkownik [Colonel] Berek Joselewicz*. Singer, in painting his own image of "his Poland," was mildly condescending toward Polish romantic impulses. He liked to juxtapose Polish nobles and Jews, although he recognized that they were entangled in a complex relationship. In his essay on Berek, Singer claims that "Polish lords were always romantics and dreamers. Just as pious Jews saw in every event a sign heralding the coming of the Messiah, Poles saw in every tumult, war, or revolution a portent of the liberation of the fatherland." They shared a common messianic trait, Singer writes, though he also points to a fundamental distinction: "Jews contented themselves with penance, reading the Psalms, and studying the Torah, because – after all – what else could they do? Poles, on the other hand, tried to act, though not always in a way that was practical. Men volunteered for the military and shed their blood on battlefields often hundreds of kilometers from home." Poles with a more realistic mindset criticized this conduct. "But," Singer argues, "this gallant and romantic Polish spirit never accepted the idea that Poland had ever perished."⁵ Singer emphasizes that, living in France after the failed Kościuszko Uprising, Berek Joselewicz – "as a former colonel and commander in the Polish army" – kept in close contact with precisely these romantic Poles.⁶ How did this come about? The road was long and fraught with obstacles.

5 Isaac Bashevis Singer, *Felietony. Eseje. Wywiady*, trans. from the Yiddish T. Kuberczyk, intro. Ch. Shmeruk (Warszawa, 1993), 71. In parentheses I provide the page numbers from this edition.

6 Monika Adamczyk-Garbowska, in her book *Polska Isaaca Bashevisa Singera. Rozstanie i powrót* (Lublin, 1994), cites a profile – given by the narrator of *Rodzina Muszkatów* – of Legion officers during the First World War: "They drank, they sang patriotic songs, they gave their moustaches a twist, they kissed Masia on the hand and, while drinking, bemoaned the fate of their fatherland, which had been partitioned for an entire century by the Russians, Prussians, and Austrians. They knew that Masia was a Jewess, so they always talked about the famous Polish, patriotic Jews Szmul Zbytkower and Colonel Berek Joselewicz, and they swore that Poland would be heaven for the anguished Jewish nation,

In his unheroic biography, Singer places great emphasis on the fact that Berek Joselewicz came from the shtetl Kretynga near Połaga in Lithuania. “A pious Jewish boy from a small town made a great career for himself in the army” (64), which was amazing in light of the fact that Jews at that time were reluctant to join the military for religious reasons. In drawing a picture of the legendary childhood of the future warrior, Singer – much like other biographers – highlights the boy’s early predilection for soldiering. “In his time free from classes at the cheder, he most enjoyed playing war with friends. During stick battles with boys from other cheders, Berek was always commander” (65). In this way Joselewicz shaped his own destiny, rather as a Polish child than as a Jewish child.

It is important to remember, however, that the heroic tradition in which Berek’s story was told survived in various milieus. One of the earliest instances where he is mentioned came in 1817: “In his youth, at the Jewish schools, he showed great interest in the art of war, creating sabers and pistols out of wood, and with these weapons he could be quite a nuisance to his fellow pupils, about which some still remember to this day.”⁷ Similarly, in 1861, at a time when joint Polish-Jewish patriotic demonstrations were taking place in Warsaw, one author recognized that Joselewicz felt his high calling at an early age. Without a doubt, that author got carried away by fantasy, but it is interesting in which direction: “When other children were wasting their free time in thoughtless play, he – like a despot – would force them, wooden saber in hand, to listen to orders and form a military patrol.” Even at an early age “his heroic spirit yearned to join the military ranks on distant battlefields.” We see what image was being – indeed had to be – carved out by romantic military rhetoric. There is a Jewish tone to this work, but it is also heroic, which runs contrary to Singer’s particular brand of realism. Joselewicz represented “*a kind of biblical hero* who was to establish a new era in the convivial existence of his nation.”⁸

Let us return to Singer’s essay. He emphasizes that, at the end of the eighteenth century, a military career for Jews was exceptional; they treated military matters as something foreign. And the deciding factor was lifestyle: Piety demanded the scrupulous fulfillment of religious obligations and the maintenance

as Mickiewicz, Norwid and Słowacki had predicted” (p 61). Adamczyk-Garbowska added that, from Singer’s *Miłość i wygnanie*, we learn that none of these predictions came true.

7 *Dziennik Wileński*, 1817, no. 32, 189. It is worth paying attention to this expression: “about which some still remember to this day,” which suggests the existence of some sort of local, oral tradition.

8 Z. Rappaport, “Berek Josielowicz [sic!]. Szef szwadronu ułanów wojsk b. Księstwa Warszawskiego” in *Pamiętniki wampira, czyli Wampir w świecie artystyczno-literackim*, vol. II (Warszawa, 1861), 225-226. Images, sketches, episodes, biographies, essays, entries on customs, minor comedies and poetry, and translations. Author’s emphasis – M.J.

of a god-fearing life in the midst of many children. The cultural model of a young Jew was a far cry from that of a young Pole. A young Jew “of around twenty years of age was a serious family man, and nothing was more foreign to him than the idea that he would strap on a saber and run off to war” (64). Berek’s father, like all Jewish parents – Singer maintains – dreamed that his son would become a rabbi. When the father realized that nothing would come of this, he prepared his son for business. Soon Berek moved to Warsaw, where he pursued his interests as a trader. He lived a life appropriate for a Jew, holding true to his religious customs. With the uprising of 1794, his life took an abrupt turn. Singer does not devote much space to Kościuszko’s program, though he notes that “everyone was fighting – it was therefore natural that Jews were in the arena,” and he asks: “But how were they supposed to fight? Who would turn them into soldiers? It was there, at [the Warsaw district of] Praga, that the world first heard of Berek Joselewicz” (67). Maintaining only the slightest distance from his subject, Singer states that “patriotic sentiments within the Jewish community flared so dramatically that even aging men, distinguished property holders and wise men of the Torah, volunteered for service.” They all met defeat.

Berek survived, he participated in the Napoleonic military campaigns, and – as Singer writes – “good times” came for him in the Duchy of Warsaw. “Currently, Berek Joselewicz did not look like a Jew: He had shaven his beard and grown a full, twisted Polish mustache” (73). Singer’s point of view allowed him to identify and comment on moments in Berek’s life which would not play a large role in a biography constructed according to romantic rules. For example, Singer empathizes with Berek’s wife, Rebeka: “This Jewish woman wore a wig, followed the principles of her religion, and could not live with the colonel, who preferred to live and enjoy life according to the ways of the military.” So she left Warsaw and moved in with her daughter, who was married to an *arendarz*⁹, and lived near Kretynka. The pious son-in-law “led a kosher Jewish home and concerned himself little with the fact that his father-in-law was a colonel in the Polish army” (73).

With his passion for extracting realistic details, Singer does not neglect to point out the irony in the way Berek dressed (his famous golden epaulettes on a dark-green coat and his cap trimmed with bear fur) and exactly how much he earned: “Each week he received more than hundred-thirty Polish złoty soldier’s pay which, for those days, was a handsome sum. In Poland, a basic living was not expensive – for a single grosz one could buy a quart of milk or a couple eggs, and for four or five groszy, a pound of beef. Berek Joselewicz was able to lead a sumptuous life” (74).

9 Translator’s note: An “arendarz” was a leaseholder who ran an enterprise, often a tavern or an inn, usually on behalf of a nobleman.

Certainly, over time, Berek's position in society changed, as did his manner. Singer emphasizes that Berek received many commendations, including the *Virtuti Militari*, and he was accepted as a Freemason (specifically, into the Polish branch of the French Masonic organization, Grand Orient de France, among whose members were many Jews). But Singer also attaches great meaning to the fact that Berek Joselewicz remained true to his faith. Though many Jews wanting to build a career for themselves took baptism in order to "avoid distress and obstruction," Berek did not. He never concealed his background, always used "his Jewish folk name," and never disowned either his wife or daughter, both of whom were Orthodox Jews. For this reason, Singer praises Berek's "brave stance" and calls him "*the first modern Jew in Poland*" (76, author's emphasis – M.J.).

Things did not work out so well for his son, Józef Berkowicz: as a Jew, he suffered great hardship, as had – in fact – his father before him. He followed in his father's footsteps and served in the army, but because of injuries sustained in battle, he had to withdraw from military service. Nevertheless, "when the uprising broke out in 1830, Józef – despite all he had suffered under Polish lords – joined the rebellion, and like his father, he attempted to create a Jewish legion" (82).¹⁰ He died as an immigrant in France, "forsaken by Jews and Poles" alike. "He fought for Poland," Singer concludes, "as a hero, but he was treated so poorly and unjustly" (83). One can be comforted only by the fact that many Polish heroes were treated in a similar way.

Writing his essay just after the September defeat of 1939, Singer points out the similarity between Poland's situation at that time and its history, when – in such troubles – Poles took up arms for the liberation of their country and, after years of great struggle, found success. But Singer had to ask: Would the future Poland change its character? What he writes about Berek Joselewicz's son at the end of his essay impinged on his vision of Poland. Contained therein is a great deal of bitterness and disappointment, which he confirms in his 1944 article *Żydzi i Polacy – żyli razem 800 lat, ale się nie zżyli* (Jews and Poles – They Lived Together for 800 Years but Never Became Acquainted), in which he emphasizes the distance that separates the two nations, the lack of a common history.

Singer viewed Berek Joselewicz as an absolute exception, and he did not submit to romantic rapture, as others had. He did not turn Berek into another Prince Józef Poniatowski. And therein lies the great distinction of the realistic – such is the word Singer himself would use – portrait of Berek Joselewicz.¹¹ Nonetheless,

10 The idea of a Jewish legion will weave its way through the history of the nineteenth century, at least up to Adam Mickiewicz's attempt to form one in 1855.

11 Yet another narrative – this one post-Holocaust – was put together by Hanna Krall. She spins a fragmentary, scattered tale about Kock, the place where Berek Joselewicz died, who was presented as one of the heroes of Polish defeats; Kock, the place where the famous

in order to find one's place in Polish history, one had to be admitted into something about which Singer cared very little: namely, heroic discourse. And that is precisely what happened in the case of Berek Joselewicz.

2. Ridiculed and Humiliated

The features of a good soldier – his attitudes and behavior traits – were considered entirely alien to the *Izraelita* (Jew).¹² Such features were contrary to the Jew's guarded, cowardly, timid, and fearful "nature"; contrary to his "tendency" to run and hide in the face of difficult situations; contrary to his "congenital" aversion to the art of soldiering, to his cosmopolitanism and egoism. And all of this was revealed in the Jew's lack of attachment to any fatherland, in his inability to devote himself to "a cause." Essentially, the Jew was predestined to a life of espionage and treachery. It is enough to read quotes selected by Artur Eisenbach from statements made during the November Uprising (1830-1831), as a discussion was taking place in Poland about Jews and military service. "The people of Israel do not possess the required physical and moral strength for the honorable calling as defenders of the fatherland... they have not yet ascended to the great heights from which they could be included in the ranks of national defenders." Jews are marked by "indolence and a lack of morality and noble goals." They are venal and greedy, and adhere to various superstitions. They are slaves to the "golden idol." Calling them into military service would endanger the security of the nation. Jews are the incarnation of the internal enemy, and granting them the civil rights that come with military service would only allow them to damage the country with even greater success.¹³ This catalog of accusations had not changed for two hundred

"Kocker Rebe" lived, Tzadik Menachem Mendel Morgenstern, as did his great-grandson, Rabbi Josef Morgenstern, who was killed by a bomb in 1939; Kock, the place from which Jews were transported to Treblinka in 1942, and the place where they were massacred in 1943. See "Narożony dom z wieżyczką (fragmenty)" from the volume *Hipnoza* in Krall, *Żal* (Warszawa, 2007).

- 12 Translator's note: In the Polish language, especially before World War II, various forms of the word "Israel" were often used to describe things Jewish. For example, an "Izraelita" could be used in place of the more common Polish term for a Jewish man, namely "Żyd." Because the English term "Israelite" conjures up images of the ancient Israelites, it would be awkward to always translate such terms as "Izraelita" literally. Thus, except in cases where such a term as "Israelite" is useful, I will use a more common English term, such as "Jew."
- 13 See Artur Eisenbach, "Ludność żydowska Królestwa a powstanie listopadowe," *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego w Polsce* 1 (1976), 15, 19, 9.

years. The “Jew in the military” or the “Jewish military” are immortal subjects of jokes and caricatures of all kinds.¹⁴

These stereotypical qualities, persistently ascribed to Jews over the course of centuries, often served as justification for not admitting them into active military service. Those Jewish and Polish elites – especially in Congress Poland (created in 1815) – who demanded that Jews be conscripted into the army were also demanding that equal rights be granted to all citizens, that equal “privileges and liberties among all creeds” be established, as had been the case in other European countries.¹⁵ But the fact was that a special tax was levied on Jews in return for release from the obligation of military service, which was something traditional Jews agreed to pay in light of their objection, for religious reasons, to military service, which they feared might lead to secularization.

None of this means, however, that Jews were not involved in military affairs. Jakub Goldberg has shown that, for example in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, “Jews settled in areas vulnerable to Tartar and Cossack attacks and to military expeditions from Moscow – that is, in Eastern Małopolska, Red Ruthenia, and of course on the eastern frontier of the country – where the military of both the Crown and Lithuania would set up camp; these Jews were seasoned in the wielding of weapons and, if necessary, were obliged to use them. From the second half of the sixteenth century, the way of life for an increasing number of Jewish settlers in the Ukrainian and Belorussian voivodeships demanded that they be proficient in the use of firearms and be ready to participate in the defense of the borderland *stanitsas* [...] In the seventeenth century the first Jewish commanders appeared, who were leading groups of their fellow-believers in urban defense.” As Goldberg shows, with increased social status came the obligation for Jews to participate in the building of fortifications and in the defense of cities. That having been said, to enlist Jews into the ranks of the Polish army was something altogether different; for that to happen, longstanding “social and cultural barriers” would have to be broken.¹⁶

14 Janusz Tazbir writes about notions most prominent in the sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries, but which in fact had a very long life: “The Jew was supposed to be, according to common beliefs, a weak and timid person by nature, who ran not just from his armed opponents, but even from a dog. A Jew going to war became just as much the subject of proverbs and anecdotes as the priest, and in the same manner.” See “Obraz Żyda w opinii polskiej XVI-XVIII w.” in ed. Tazbir, *Mity i stereotypy w dziejach Polski* (Warszawa, 1991), 78.

15 Quote from Eisenbach, *Emancypacja Żydów na ziemiach polskich na tle europejskim* (Warszawa, 1988), 272.

16 Jakub Goldberg, “Żydzi wobec wrogów Rzeczypospolitej” in *Żydzi w obronie Rzeczypospolitej*, ed. J. Tomaszewski (Warszawa, 1996), 9-10, 13. Goldberg’s work also offers

Stereotypes do not have to take into account facts, and stereotypes about Jews are well illustrated by a folk song transcribed by Oskar Kolberg from the Krakowian *Moška wzioni pomjendze szolnjerze*. It describes the humorous and artful machinations of Moška, who wants to avoid learning the art of shooting, and who thinks only of business. The last stanza contains a summary of the Jewish philosophy toward war, expressed in a quite different language than in the rest of the song, more ironic-intelligent:

<i>And this honor, this kind of bravado,</i>	<i>A ten honor, te jakiś brawura,</i>
<i>Which sits, which comes out of a hole,</i>	<i>co siedzi, co wylazi z dziura,</i>
<i>And moves close to the cannon,</i>	<i>co podlazi pod same harmata,</i>
<i>This is necessary for the Jewish world!</i>	<i>potrzebne-z to dla judzkiego świata!¹⁷</i>

In Polish culture, indeed in the cult-like military, the words “Jew” and “soldier” were diametrically opposed concepts. Nathan M. Gelber cited a reform project involving Jews drawn up at the time of the Great Sejm (1788-1792) by Salomon Polonus, who made it clear: “A *ban* must be introduced in the army against the *ridicule of Jews* because of their religion since it makes no difference if it is a Jew or a Christian who gives his life for his country.”¹⁸ The phenomenon of ridicule must have thus been nagging. It was well known, after all, what difficulties Jews had to face who wanted to “strictly observe Jewish religious practices” (especially kosher food and Shabbat).¹⁹ However, the abovementioned project remained on paper only and was never even printed for circulation. History repeated itself when, during the November Uprising, a Warsaw Municipal Guard was created made up of Jews, and when – as one historian wrote – the “guards did not enjoy the respect of Polish society. With every step they felt inferior. They were exposed to constant ridicule and laughter. But they served faithfully. [...] As one observer reported, during the storm of Warsaw (7 September 1831) they fought ‘with great bravery’ in the trenches of the capital.”²⁰ But as we will point out more than once again, facts could not prevail over the power of degrading and derisive stereotypes.

information about the foundational literature on this subject. See also the chapter on the active service of the Jews in the military in Eisenbach, *Emancypacja Żydów*, 267-74.

- 17 Quote from *Żydzi w Polsce. Antologia literacka*, ed. H. Markiewicz (Kraków, 1997), 213.
- 18 Nathan M. Gelber, “Żydzi a zagadnienie reformy Żydów na Sejmie Czteroletnim,” *Miesięcznik Żydowski* 10 (1931), 342. Author’s emphasis – M.J.
- 19 See Ignacy Schiper, “Dzieje Żydów na ziemiach Księstwa Warszawskiego i Królestwa Polskiego (od 1795 r. do 1863 r. włącznie)” in *Żydzi w Polsce Odrodzonej*, vol. I (Warszawa, 1932), 430.
- 20 S. Warszawski, “Gwardia Miejska m. stół. Warszawy podczas powstania listopadowego (1830-1831). Na podstawie źródeł archiwalnych,” *Miesięcznik Żydowski* (1930), zeszyt 1, 67.

3. The Military Glory of Israel and Kościuszko

Berek Joselewicz appears before our eyes for the first time precisely at a moment of military glory, and it is the glory of ancient Israel. Kościuszko mentioned this in his *Uwiedomienie o formującym się pułku starozakonnych*²¹ (Proclamation on the Formation of a Jewish Regiment) found in *Gazeta Rządowa* and signed: “On this day 17 September 1794.”²² In this official pronouncement, Kościuszko presents his abbreviated history of man generally, and of the Jews specifically, invoking arguments both historical and political.

Anna Grześkowiak-Krwawicz – in a superb article devoted to the concept of liberty as defined during the Kościuszko Uprising – presents the evidence, arguments and slogans used at that time in defense of liberty, and she points to notions of liberty taking shape which had a decisive influence not only on the nineteenth-century romantic battle for independence, but also on demands for equal civil rights for peasants and Jews.

Here, liberty was pushed to the forefront of all values. It was treated as the “most cherished,” “sacred,” and “inestimable” good. Without it, even familial

21 Translator’s note: Much like the term “Izraelita” discussed above, the old Polish term “starozakonny” and its variations really mean “Żyd” (Jew) or “Żydowski” (Jewish).

22 I make use here of integral texts found in the *Zalączniki* to Łuniński’s *Berek Joselewicz*, 113–115. Kościuszko’s role has been an issue of debate for a long time. Magdalena Micińska recently summarized the state of our understanding in this way: “Niemcewicz’s role alongside Kościuszko during the uprising has raised contradictory opinions. An extreme judgment was formulated by Adam M. Skalkowski in his book, which was shocking in its time (1924), *Kościuszko w świetle nowszych badań*. In his opinion, the *Naczelnik* [commander, leader] in 1794 was just a figurehead, and the real leaders of acts that comprised the uprising were Niemcewicz, Franciszek Dmochowski, Aleksander Limanowski, and Hugo Kołłątaj. ‘The manifestos came from their pens, carrying the name Kościuszko’ (Skalkowski). But since there is little trustworthy source material to support the various opinions regarding the *Naczelnik*’s personal role, it is not obvious to us who made up the small group of men making the most important decisions in the uprising” (“‘Pióro i szabla.’ Związki Juliana Ursyna Niemcewicza z Tadeuszem Kościuszką” in *Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz – pisarz, historyk, świadek epoki*, ed. J. Wójcicki [Warszawa, 2002], 47). Since Niemcewicz’s name is most often mentioned in the context of leadership, the differences in views between Niemcewicz and Kościuszko need to be mentioned. Irena Grudzińska-Gross accurately defined Niemcewicz as a reformer, and Kościuszko as a radical politician, which revealed itself, in part, in America. Niemcewicz, whenever he came upon an Indian or an African, saw a suffering human, and he was able to record that suffering. [But] he never questioned that very system of slavery and the extermination of the Indians” (see “‘Jedź do Francji, jedź do Europy’. Niemcewicz i Ameryka” in *Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz*, 86). It is highly doubtful, in this context, that Niemcewicz’s attitude toward Jews would allow him to write the *Uwiedomienie*.

happiness was not possible.²³ The battle for liberty meant the liberation of both the nation from foreign invaders and citizens from tyranny (32). There was thus an intimate connection between liberty and independence. “Dare to be free” – Kościuszko demanded in a proclamation dated 24 March 1794, which was guided by the belief that “no one can vanquish those who want liberty” (41), and which was, of course, an example of extreme voluntarism. “Knights of liberty” have to contend with “miserable slaves” and a “herd of abject despots” (43). The free citizen-soldier must be victorious in battle against the soldier of slavery. “Liberty cannot be defended by the hands of free people alone” – Kościuszko’s words here were a call for the liberation of peasants (45). The republican army was presented as standing far above “heaps of frightened slaves” (43).²⁴ The motto “liberty or death,” famous also from the French Revolution, was in common usage; it was better to die in the defense of liberty than to live in slavery, “to prefer a noble death over the yoke of an insulting life” (49). At the same time, the Poles’ battle against foreign invaders was not just a particular issue, rather it was part of a wider battle with despotism. War was celebrated as the struggle of “virtue against crime,” “justice against violence,” “liberty against tyranny.” Despotism – it was said – was waging a battle against the “rights of man” (59), which is precisely why it had to be overthrown.

The idea of liberty united everyone, and it made everyone equal. After taking his oath at the Kraków City Hall, Kościuszko said: “Gentlemen, in defense of the fatherland, equality to me is most valuable, which is why the Jew, peasant, nobleman, priest, and burgher have my equal respect.”²⁵ This faith is graphically portrayed in the following list, in which – because of the Kościuszko Uprising – others are shown to have “entered the national pantheon” alongside the noble heroes: “The peasant Wojtek Bartos from Rzędowice, the cobbler Jan Kiliński, the butcher Józef Sierakowski, the merchant Krieger, and the Jew Berek Joselewicz.”²⁶ Jules

23 Anna Grześkowiak-Krwawicz “Wolność w propagandzie powstania kościuszkowskiego” in *Kościuszko – powstanie 1794 r – tradycja*, ed. Jerzy Kowecki (Warszawa, 1997), 31. In parentheses I provide the page numbers from this work. Compare, from the same author, *Regina libertas. Wolność w polskiej myśli politycznej XVIII wieku* (Gdańsk, 2006).

24 Much like other historians, Mirosław Frančić, in his monograph on the Kościuszko Uprising, asked whether “Kościuszko’s faith in victory had a real foundation.” It is clear that he estimated his own military numbers too highly and the strength of his opponents too low. But he also believed in “the moral advantage of the Polish soldier and the depth of demoralization – as he believed – among the Russians” (Frančić, *Insurrekcja kościuszkowska* [Kraków, 1988], 101). Here, Kościuszko made a mistake, a mistake inherited by romantic conspirators and insurrectionists later, in the nineteenth century.

25 Quote from Frančić, *Insurrekcja kościuszkowska*, 49.

26 See Henryk Kocój, “W 190. rocznicę powstania kościuszkowskiego” in ed. Kocój, *Zwyczajstwo czy kłeska? W 190. rocznicę powstania kościuszkowskiego* (Katowice, 1984), 15.

Michelet was indeed right when he called Kościuszko the last knight and the first citizen of Eastern Europe.²⁷

All of the abovementioned ideological motifs appear in Kościuszko's *Uwiadomienie*. Human history is the struggle for liberty against tyranny. The current Polish uprising is one manifestation of the eternal struggle against despotism. Kościuszko, referring to the bible, places great value on the "brave deeds of the ancestors" of the Jewish nation, who did not want to serve the despots. Not being able to bear the presence of tyrants, the ancient Jews even went so far as tyrannicide, of which Kościuszko approved. He lavished praise on the "heroic deeds of Jewish soldiers" and the courage of "Hebrew women." Of particular importance was the fact that "a handful" of courageous Jews were able to resist "the largest military among the eastern powers." Unfortunately these ancient Jews lost their battle for freedom – Kościuszko maintains – as the result of internal quarreling.

At this point the *Naczelnik's*²⁸ reasoning ventures into a dark space – the rule of tyrants – but after a moment, he returns. "Precisely [author's emphasis – M.J.] in the current year on the days of 17 and 18 April 1794, just as Warsaw was fighting a bloody battle against the *Moskal*²⁹ raiders, Jews living in that city rushed to take up arms and valiantly confronted the enemy, thereby proving to the world that, where humanity can gain, they are willing to risk their own lives." Kościuszko is referring to the courageous behavior of Jews during the Siege of Warsaw, who – according to contemporaneous reports – everywhere "served with distinction," during the building of the ramparts and in repelling the enemy attack with weapons in hand. In his famous *Rozprawa o Żydach* (Treatise on the Jews), Tadeusz Czacki also highlighted the heroism of the Jews in battle: "As the capital city in 1794 fell into despair, the Jews did not fear death; they joined with the army and the people and proved that they are not frightened by danger, and that the cause of the fatherland is dear to them."³⁰ One observer stated that, from the beginning of the uprising, Jews established a unit "dressed as Jews, armed with sabers and pistols."³¹ Some historians view this as a reference to a Jewish militia

27 See Michelet, *Pologne et Russie: légende de Kosciusko* (Paris, 1851).

28 Translator's note: "Naczelnik," in this context, means "Chief," "Commander" or "Leader." The two most prominent Poles often called Naczelnik are Kościuszko and Piłsudski.

29 Translator's note: "Moskal" is a derogatory term for a Russian, similar to the English "Russki."

30 Tadeusz Czacki, *Rozprawa o Żydach* (Wilno, 1807), 103. Lelewel, in discussing Berek's regiment, repeated Czacki's words, adding grandiloquent emphasis at the end: "As the capital city in 1794 fell into despair, the Jews did not fear death; they joined with the army and the people and proved that they are not frightened by danger, and that the cause of the fatherland is dear to them. And then at Praga, with the blood of their own regiment, they did a great service to their fatherland" (*Polska, dzieje jej i czyny*, vol XIX [Poznań, 1865], 258).

31 Quote from Łumiński, *Berek Joselewicz*, 14.

or to the Jewish unit created by Berek Joselewicz that fought in the defense of Warsaw in the spring of 1794.

Jews showed themselves worthy of freedom. This was not a given thing; one had to deserve it, it had to be won, there had to be a “sovereign people.” Within three days after Kościuszko’s September *Uwiedomienie*, the editor of *Gazeta Rządowa* commented on the fact that Jews had taken up “the defense of liberty.” It happened rather unexpectedly, after centuries of passivity. Grzeškowiak-Krwawicz has pointed out that the editor at *Gazeta Rządowa* raised the question of “why the nation of Israel, which had been so brave in biblical times, later so carefully avoided participation in all wars and battles, and even military service. The Jews fought as long as they had their own state and were defending their own freedom. But ‘since then freedom has vanished practically everywhere in the world, and that nation has completely distanced itself from the gory games of tyrants’ because it did not want to be a servant of despotism. That situation changed only with the April insurrection in Warsaw, in which they participated actively.” With their own blood – the *Gazeta Rządowa* editor wrote – they proved that “they were reluctant to fight under the orders of tyrants,” but they knew how to spare no life in the defense of humanity.³² They belong, therefore, to a noble people, deserving the highest respect.

In light of how Jews “were applying themselves for liberty,” the initiative taken by Berek Joselewicz and Józef Aronowicz becomes entirely understandable: As Kościuszko reported in his *Uwiedomienie*, “they submitted their demands to me and desire to form a Jewish light cavalry regiment.” Kościuszko defined the motive behind their actions as a recognition of the “land in which they were born” and the conviction that “everyone will benefit from their liberation, and from the liberation of others.” Therefore, Kościuszko stated: “I commend them for their zeal,” at which point he gave them “permission to recruit for that unit” and he issued Berek Joselewicz a colonel’s commission.

Kościuszko was fully aware (as he writes at the beginning of his *Uwiedomienie*) of the fact that Jews were set apart from Poles by both “religion and customs.” He had no intention, he declared, of either converting or changing them. They were voluntarily supporting his uprising, joining his ranks; they wanted to fight and – if the need arose – sacrifice their lives. For Kościuszko, this attitude of Jews toward the Polish struggle for freedom was proof that the cause was sacred, and the revolution was righteous. Indeed, “sacred and righteous” were the criteria by which the justness of the battle for Polish independence could best be judged. Much later, Major Bałaban wrote that, in the Kościuszko Uprising, Jews “for the first time actively took up arms and, in great numbers, answered the call,

32 Grzeškowiak-Krwawicz, “Wolność,” 55.

as befits a true citizen.” And they did so despite various “medieval chicanery” that weighed down on them (including a duty to pay for the right to stay in Warsaw: a so-called ticket-tax for a five-day stay). The active participation of Jews in the uprising – Bałaban stressed – belies “a notion that courses through our old historical literature about the indifference, even the treachery, of the Jews.”³³

Bałaban repeated arguments made during, for example, the November Uprising, when it was Jews who made clear that they were eager to sacrifice blood and money for the good of the country, that they wanted the chance to participate, “along with their Christian brothers, in the glorious battle for a common political existence, and for the liberties and privileges of a free people.”³⁴ Unfortunately, it did not get that far.³⁵

Jewish participation in national military action undoubtedly represented a triumph for Kościuszko’s modern, democratic republicanism. The distinguished historian Jakub Szacki highlighted the emotional reasons behind Kościuszko’s attitude toward the Jews of Poland, and believed that Kościuszko’s time in America had had an influence on him; black slavery awakened in him an “unwavering sympathy for disadvantaged and underprivileged peoples and nations.” And it was for this reason that the issue of “granting citizenship to Jews was so close to his heart.”³⁶ In his noted work on the *Naczelnik*, Andrzej Walicki stated that “Kościuszko clearly separated liberty from faith [in contrast to the

33 Majer Bałaban, “Polskie żydostwo w okresie Sejmu Wielkiego i powstania Kościuszki” in *Księga Pamiątkowa (Album) ku czci Berka Joselewicza pułkownika wojsk polskich w 125-letnią rocznicę Jego bohaterskiej śmierci 1809-1934*, ed. Professor Majer Bałaban (Warszawa, 1934), 33, 36.

34 Quote from Eisenbach, “Ludność żydowska Królestwa,” 17-18.

35 Daniel Grinberg has shown that, “while Berek Joselewicz in 1794 had no great chance to make Jewish public opinion aware of his ‘cause,’ which was just then beginning to take shape, the November Uprising did have such a chance. Immediate, full, and unconditional ‘granting of citizenship’ for the Jewish people – implemented on its own initiative long before it became a common solution in civilized parts of the continent – could have assured the uprising not only incomparably greater support from those directly interested in such a step, but also lasting and significant support from Jewish circles abroad, despite their understandable concerns about the dominant authority and prestige of the Russian Empire. The fact that it did not happen, however, was no accident. The political consciousness of the uprising leadership did not allow it; nor did – and this cannot be forgotten – resistance from traditional Jews, who feared the consequences of secularization.” See “Diaspora żydowska w Europie i w Stanach Zjednoczonych Ameryki wobec polskich zrywów narodowych w XIX wieku” in *Żydzi w obronie Rzeczypospolitej*, 24-25.

36 Jakub Szacki, *Kościuszko a Żydzi. (Notatki historyczne)* (Warszawa, 1917), 1-2. Aleksander Hertz wrote an especially interesting profile of Jakub Szacki, describing him as a “Jewish nationalist” and a “Polish Jew” (see Hertz, *The Jews in Polish Culture*, trans. Richard Lourie, foreword Czesław Miłosz [Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988], 31).

Bar Confederates]. He proclaimed equal rights for followers of every faith, not just for Christians, but also for Muslims and Jews, and during the insurrection he put his ideas into action. On his orders the Supreme National Council, within a week, had to establish in Warsaw an orthodox chapel and organize church services for protestant prisoners of war.” His concept of the nation embraced “all residents of the divided Republic, regardless of the estate into which they had been born, the size of their fortune, their faith, or their ethnic background.” “He considered national affiliation a matter of political loyalty, and not of language, ethnic background, or religion.”³⁷ Tadeusz Korzon provided this excellent Kościuszko quote: “Fear not, that differences in opinion and ritual would prevent us from loving you as brothers and compatriots.” This notion marked the “recovery of the principle of the Jagiellonian union.” Korzon argued that the Kościuszko insurrection did not end in catastrophe; it was not “Finis Poloniae,” but rather “Resurge, o Polonia!” Poland’s resurrection was founded on the liberty and equality of its citizens. “Here, the miraculous word of life emerged from the ideal of the new society that he [Kościuszko] established in place of the old noble republic.”³⁸ In Kościuszko’s Republic there was room for everyone, with equal rights for all faiths and nationalities. Joachim Lelewel drew a similar and consistent conclusion, referring to battles fought by Jews in the Kościuszko Uprising (see page 20, fn. 30).

An opposing argument was made in May 1831 by Franciszek Morawski, who was Minister of War during the November Uprising. To be sure, he mentioned the name of the brave Berek, but he treated him as an exception among the Jewish people, who – over the course of generations – had lost the taste for the burdens

37 Andrzej Walicki, *Idea narodu w polskiej myśli oświeceniowej* (Warszawa, 2000). See chapter: “Ideologia narodowa Tadeusza Kościuszki,” 115, 132, 117. In a particularly interesting work, *Stereotyp Żyda w publicystyce polskiej w drugiej połowie XVIII w.*, Krystyna Zienkowska argues that “in the eighteenth-century Republic only two groups had a high level of national and cultural consciousness: The nobility and the Jews.” When the bourgeois elite began to pretend to be common partners with the nobility in national political life, the negative stereotype of the Jews grew in strength. At the moment when the Christian bourgeoisie wanted to make its way into the “nation, which was no longer noble, but rather Polish, it began to increasingly point to the spiritual closeness and the common goals of the Catholic nobility and the non-Catholic bourgeoisie, and to the spiritual foreignness of the Jewish people.” The national foreignness of the Jews was increasingly well defined, as was the opposition of the Jew to the nation of Poland. Staszic enjoins: “So let the nobility from now on endeavor to enlarge the Polish nation, and not the Jewish nation” (in *Lud żydowski w narodzie polskim*, ed. J. Michalski [Warszawa, 1994], 96-97). This is an entirely different view of the national idea than Kościuszko’s, one which is inherent in the origins of Endecja [the pre-World War II, right-wing National Democrats] nationalism.

38 Tadeusz Korzon, *Kościuszko. Biografia z dokumentów wysnuta* (Kraków, 1894), 318, 453.

of war, had grown uninterested in the battle for independence, had become cowardly, and were now inclined to treachery and retreat. He said: “The national army should be animated by a single feeling, a single fervor and, if one could, a single creed. [...] A battle is now taking place that is a matter of life and death; it requires the blood of a homogeneous, elemental people.”³⁹ It is difficult not to view this position as regression relative to the views and actions of Kościuszko. Morawski, famous in literature as a classicist, became an adherent of national-conservative romanticism. Jews – he and others like him argued – could not serve in the military because it was necessary to create a national army composed of Catholic Poles alone.⁴⁰

4. The Jewish Light Cavalry Regiment

Bolstered by Kościuszko’s ideas, Berek Joselewicz – the “colonel in charge of a Jewish light cavalry regiment” – issued a proclamation to his confreres on 1 October 1794 which, according to Antoni Wieniarski at the monthly *Biblioteka Warszawska*, was “among the best documents of its time based on the strength of its wording.”⁴¹ It was first published in *Gazeta Rządowa*, and according to Łuniński, it was reprinted many times in various publications and transcribed by hand. Łuniński’s description of the proclamation’s significance was solemn: “For the first time a Jew declared loudly and sincerely that Poland was his fatherland.”⁴²

Joselewicz’s proclamation appealed directly to the “children of the tribe of Israel.” It called on them to fight for Poland. The guarantor of the righteousness

39 *Diariusz sejmu z r. 1830-1831*, vol. IV, published by Michał Rostworowski (Kraków), 8.

40 In this context (“Ludność żydowska Królestwa,” 29), Eisenbach analyzes the conservative-romantic views of Maurycy Mochnacki, who maintained that “our nation is tribal, of one nest, without sharp divisions [...] which everywhere else divide one estate off from the other [...]. Poland is a native mass,” and the peasant is in fact a “nobleman.” This mystification emerged from Mochnacki’s article “O rewolucji społecznej w Polsce.”

41 Antoni Wieniarski, *Berek Joselewicz [sic!], szef szwadronu lekkiej jazdy*, vol. II, *Biblioteka Warszawska* (1861), 74. In his study “Prawdziwe imię Berka Joselewicza i przebieg jego służby wojskowej” (*Księga pamiątkowa ku czci...*), Bałaban explains the various versions of his given name (Berek, Berko) and his surname (Joselewicz, Joselowicz, Josielewicz, Josielowicz, Joszelewicz). “Berek was called in Hebrew Ber-Dow (bear) or Dow-Ber; his father was named Jósef, which was then pronounced *Josel*, by which the patronym of our Ber, Berl, or (more commonly) Berek sounds like Joselewicz, though it should rightfully be pronounced Jósefowicz” (80).

42 Łuniński, *Berek Joselewicz*, 18. I cite the *Odezwa Berka Joselewicza, pułkownika pułku lekkonnego starozakonnego, do współbraci, d 1 października 1794 roku* from the *Zalączniki* in Łuniński’s book, 116-117.

of the cause was “The Almighty,” and its messenger was Tadeusz Kościuszko. The apologia of the *Naczelnik* and his projects is highly significant: “This great man, and so many other great men, already in possession of so much liberty, still desire both more freedom and the return of their fatherland.” So what can one say about the Jews, “since we are the most oppressed of all peoples of the world?” Joselewicz’s line of reasoning was persuasive: Great people already have so much freedom, and they want still more. Being entranced by freedom and the battle for freedom can be the best remedy for Israel’s grievances. Other fragments from the proclamation have similar features. For example, at one point Joselewicz asks rhetorically: would he, a Jew, want to expose his people to destruction? He also refers to his own bold leadership, which ensures the protection of his fellow Jews: “Wherever it is most dangerous, I will go there, and you will be right behind me.” Many times he repeats the words: “Rise up!” and “Wake up and help free Poland from oppression.” And finally he includes biblical comparisons: “Rouse yourselves like lions and leopards.” The proclamation, as we know, had great power of persuasion; it spoke both to common sense and to an imagination shaped by the Old Testament.

Dawid Kandel attempted to explain the intra-Jewish genesis of this amazing proclamation. He argued that Berek Joselewicz found a new path to salvation for Jewry under threat. Jews had lost – in Kandel’s opinion – their symbolic synagogue after the massacres led by Bohdan Khmelnytsky in the late 1640s and early 1650s, and after attempts by Sabbatai Zevi (d. 1676) and Jacob Frank (d. 1791) to reform the Jewish religion had failed (Kandel interpreted Frankism as a path leading through the acceptance of Catholicism to assimilation with Poles). Berek Joselewicz spontaneously thought up something quite different. He wanted Jews to remain in their faith. “He himself, according to sources, would separate himself from his regiment on Saturdays and other Jewish holidays and go with his wife to the synagogue to pray. In his view, a difference in religion prevented no one from being as good a citizen as any another person. To be that good citizen, one had to earn it socially and politically. A good opportunity had presented itself in 1794. Poland was in a critical situation. Jews, in their desire to secure a better future for themselves, had to fight for the country that had taken them in like sons. This would be the best guarantee for their existence.”⁴³ We might add that, in making his argument, Kandel did not take into account Kościuszko’s non-ethnic view of the nation, which is precisely what allowed Berek Joselewicz to appear on the scene, and which stood in stark contrast to the other, “Polish-Catholic” view of the nation. Nor did he appreciate something taking shape – from the intra-Jewish perspective – that was entirely original, namely a new type of Hasidic, “eastern

43 Dawid Kandel, “Berek Joselewicz,” *Przegląd Historyczny* (1909), 296.

Judaic” folk piety, a new type of “eastern Jew” as a “cultural entity closed in on itself,”⁴⁴ immersed in religious life and finding therein a certain sense of security.⁴⁵

Gershon David Hundert has depicted eastern European Hasidism as a movement of religious enthusiasts that supported a “sense of spiritual possibility available to every man” and was beyond the control of the Jewish administrative community. In the face of deep cultural transformations taking place in Europe at the end of the eighteenth century, which affected Jewish intellectuals as well, it became necessary to rethink ways in which government actions were “making Jews equal to the Gentiles in custom and manner” within the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth. The potential integration of Jews into the larger population presented a distinct threat to the traditional faith and value system. “These fears, born of awareness, may be part of the reason why Hasidism enjoyed such an enormous and *continuing* success among eastern European Jews.”⁴⁶ Hasidism thus created yet another possibility for the Jewish people.

Berek Joselewicz’s fellow Jews responded eagerly to his appeal. Within four weeks he was able to form a regiment made up of five-hundred Jews. Singer wrote that “those who joined the regiment were mainly wagon drivers and butchers – strong, healthy men who knew their way around horses and did not fear hard work and pain. Young people enlisted with great enthusiasm, some of them just after their wedding and still under the custody of the parents and in-laws.”⁴⁷ The Jewish regiment under Berek’s command was a shining example. They diligently guarded the entrenchments and stood watch, even on Shabbat. Łuniński reports: “Ritual chants fell silent under the pressure of all the tasks at hand, candle flames did not burn on Friday nights, Saturday prayers grew quiet.”⁴⁸ But of course this does not mean

44 See Heiko Haumann, *Historia Żydów w Europie Środkowej i Wschodniej*, trans. C. Jenne (Warszawa, 2000). The original appeared in 1990, and a reworked version appeared in 1998 under the title *Geschichte der Ostjuden*. Jerzy Tomaszewski has justifiably pointed out the fact that the Polish title does not convey the term, generally accepted in historical literature, *Ostjuden*, which “defines not just a territory, but also significant cultural features. While some have expressed contempt and reluctance to use this term, for others it contains a vast world of valuable associations and memories” (“Dzieje ‘Ostjuden’ popularnie wyłożone,” *Midrasz* [wrzesień 2000], 49). In his chapter entitled “Powstanie ‘wschodniego judaizmu,’” Haumann cites Elie Wiesel, *Celebrations hassadique* (66). See also the essay by L. Heid “Wizerunek Żydów z Europy Wschodniej (Ostjuden) w Niemczech” in *Nowy leksykon judaistyczny*, ed. J.H. Schoeps (Warszawa, 2007), 631–634.

45 On Hasidim, see the excellent work of Marcin Wodziński, *Oświecenie żydowskie w Królestwie Polskim wobec chasydyzmu. Dzieje pewnej idei* (Warszawa, 2003).

46 Gershon David Hundert, *Jews in Poland-Lithuania in the Eighteenth Century: A Genealogy of Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 209–210.

47 Singer, *Felietony*, 67.

48 Łuniński, *Berek Joselewicz*, 21.

they gave up their religious customs. Singer vividly depicted how they were observed: “Berek led his men to the synagogue [in Praga] two times a day for prayers, and soldiers filled the temple, where they set aside their guns, pikes, and sabers, and donned tallits and phylacteries. Immersed in prayer, they swayed to-and-fro over the holy texts. Afterwards, the soldiers strapped on their sabers, picked up their guns and pikes, and set out for the barracks. Shabbat was different than other days only in that they did not carry their weapons.”⁴⁹ Zdzisław Libera gathered numerous contemporary accounts describing the “peculiar phenomenon” that was the “Jewish regiment commanded by Jews themselves” (Franciszek Karpiński). Jan Duklan Ochocki noted that, among the protagonists in the events of 1794 in Warsaw, “the burgher Kiliński [...] and the Jew Berko – who was colonel of the Jewish regiment – were calling the shots.” Others highlighted the fact that Jewish “support for the Polish endeavors was heartfelt, a fact which eradicated congenital hatreds.”⁵⁰

After the defeat at Maciejowice and the capture of Kościuszko, Warsaw went into deep mourning. Henryk Mościcki cites several eyewitness accounts: “At that time one could see people approaching each another; everyone wanted to somehow say something, to ask something, but the very idea of speaking about such a dreadful event, and of hearing its confirmation, was abhorrent. People could be seen wandering through the streets, confused and not knowing where to go or what to do. Everywhere there was a gloomy silence, everywhere faces were covered in tears, human figures everywhere were bewildered by the magnitude of the common loss.”⁵¹ Everyone was overcome by uncertainty, and by premonitions of catastrophe. The Supreme National Council had invoked the “sacred words liberty and independence” in vain. No one believed in the possibility of victory any longer; above all else, there was despair.

On 4 November 1794, the Russian storm of Praga began. It had been carefully planned by Alexander Suvorov, who knew the terrain well and enjoyed numerical superiority in terms of battle-tested troops.⁵² Bartłomiej Szyndler described

49 Singer, *Felietony*, 68.

50 See Zdzisław Libera, “Berek Joselewicz w legendzie literackiej” in *W literaturze i legendzie (o judaikach polskiego Oświecenia). Szkice literackie* (Łódź, 1999), 46. Daniel Kalinowski, while reviewing the literary traditions about Berek Joselewicz, focused especially on the processes included therein of myth-creation, which he defined as “a will to absorb into the Polish tradition a representative of a foreign culture” (“Berek Joselewicz – egzystencja i literacki mit” in *Kwestia żydowska w XIX wieku. Spory o tożsamość Polaków*, eds. G. Borkowski and M. Rudkowski [Warszawa, 2004]).

51 See Henryk Mościcki, “Szturm i rzeź Pragi w r. 1794” in *Pod berłem carów* (Warszawa, 1924), 4.

52 Krzysztof Bauer discusses the battle in detail from the military point of view in his “Szturm Pragi 4 listopada 1794 r.” in *Studia i Materiały do Historii Wojskowości* (1969), vol. 15, part I, 91-164.

that part of the defense that interests us: “Lithuanians defended it valiantly under the command of Jasiński. Surrounded on all sides by the enemy, Generals Paweł Grabowski and Tadeusz Korsak, along with Colonels Józef Górski and Walenty Kwaśniewski, Lieutenant Colonel Feliks Grabowski and Major Suchodolec, all died a hero’s death. Almost the entire Jewish regiment led by Berek Joselewicz was killed while putting up resistance. [...] Jasiński, with nowhere to escape, repelled the Russian infantry with his sword until he fell on his back, pierced by an enemy bayonet.”⁵³ Two things stand out from this and other⁵⁴ such accounts: they do not provide the names of those who died among Joselewicz’s regiment (among them were several officers), and they do not place the annihilation of the regiment alongside the heroic death of Jakub Jasiński. Of course, this reflects the natural sequence of historical events, but these events could be rearranged, in which case one would have to emphasize the fact that, while around seven thousand people lived in Praga at the time, at least five thousand of them were Jews. Berek’s regiment was the emanation of the Jewish milieu, which – as we know – lent the regiment its full support, and which, like the regiment, died at the hands of the band of victorious Russian soldiers. All writers recalling these events took note of the bodies of Jewish civilians piled in the streets of Praga after the Russians overran that Warsaw suburb.⁵⁵

Over time the regiment’s destruction became immersed in heroic legend. Singer emphasized that “Young Jews looking like rabbis fought like lions and

53 Bartłomiej Szyndler, *Powstanie kościuszkowskie 1794* (Warszawa, 1994), 352.

54 Mościcki reports: “Berek Joselewicz’s entire Jewish regiment is perishing. Next to them are Lithuanian regiments cut down, with their blood in Praga uniting Lithuania once again – through years of good and bad – with the [Polish] Crown. [...] Jasiński, struck down onto the cannon, bleeding with many wounds, shot back at the attacking grenadiers with his last energy, never thinking about surrender. He was stabbed to death while on the cannon... his saber frozen in his hand” (*Szturm*, 20-21).

55 From oral tradition there is memory of this noble act: “There was a rich Jew from Praga, Szmul Jakubowicz Zbitkower, (great-grandfather of the Berson family), a supplier to the army of Stanisław August, who was struck by the view of a field strewn with corpses. So he placed outside his house two kegs, one filled with ducats, the other with silver rubles, and he promised a silver ruble to anyone who buried a dead fighter, and a ducat to anyone who brought in a wounded fighter. Quickly, people went into action, bringing in the wounded and burying the dead. Within a few hours, both kegs had been emptied” (Bałaban, *Historia i literatura żydowska ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem historii Żydów w Polsce*, vol. 3 [Lwów, 1925], 431; quote from A. Michałowska, “Szmul Jakubowicz Zbitkower,” *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego* 2-3 [1992], 29. The author adds: “Szmul Zbitkower saved hundreds of people from the Cossack slaughter, including Jews and Christians. The memory of this action almost completely overshadowed not only his other merits, but also his not always honest business practices”).

distinguished themselves even among elite troops,”⁵⁶ and it was their commander who inspired them in their leonine courage. The legendary “spirit of the Maccabees,” Kandel wrote, was revived among young Jews who joined the “Jewish legion” under the leadership of Berek Joselewicz. “As Maccabees, they did not like to retreat from the field of battle. Their motto was: Victory or Death. Unfortunately it came to the second; to the last man, they met a valiant and beautiful death in battle.”⁵⁷ A commemorative article devoted to Joselewicz published just over two centuries later in the “Jewish periodical” *Midrasz* strikes a very similar tone: “They consumed only kosher food provided by Jewish residents of Praga. When Suvorov started the attack with an artillery barrage on Shabbat, Berek Joselewicz asked a rabbi in Praga for permission to fight, which he received. Throughout the entire battle the people were not able to bring in kosher food, so the soldiers fought hungry. Colonel Joselewicz fought alongside his soldiers and issued orders to withdraw only when twenty were left alive.”⁵⁸ In 1830, the French Deputy A.J.E. Salvete (in his *History of the Jews*, Graetz wrote that Salvete was an eyewitness to the defense of Praga), resisting the virulence of anti-Semitism, remembered that “the Warsaw suburb of Praga, protected by the Jewish regiment, was taken by storm; all of them died by the sword. The next day the entire regiment was found on the fortifications in eternal sleep; not one of the soldiers fled as death called. Those people deserved to be Frenchmen!”⁵⁹ That is, in the republican sense of “citizen.”

Maria Konopnicka extolled the virtues of patriotic action in a simple and naive national tune meant for the people:

*Jews, they heard the call
They took their courage in both hands.*

*Posłyszeli Żydzi,
Nabrali odwagi.*

56 Singer, *Felietony*, 64.

57 Kandel, “Berek Joselewicz,” 297. The Maccabees rose up against the Syrians in the second century before Christ. The sons of the priest Mattathias (among them, Judas Maccabeus) succeeded in rebuilding a sovereign Jewish state, for the first time in four hundred and fifty years; they established a new Jewish royal dynasty. Historians through the years have written about the relentless twenty-five years of armed struggle for the independent Jewish state; these heroic military actions are also described in the First and Second Books of the Maccabees.

58 “Berek Joselewicz,” *Midrasz* (październik 2000), 13. Joselewicz learned something about his Jewish religious identity from his experiences in the Kościuszko Uprising. After the defeat of the uprising, he was in Austria. “A former member of the Kościuszko uprising, who viewed Austria as a friend, if no longer an ally,” E. Kipa wrote, “Berek at this time conceived the idea of creating a unit of Jewish volunteers.” He envisioned calling into its ranks field rabbis (“Berka Joselewica projekt legionu ochotniczego w roku 1796” in *Księga pamiątkowa ku czci...*, 67-77).

59 Quote from Łuniński, *Berek Joselewicz*, 23.

*They go to fight for their country
In the trenches of Praga.*

*There were four hundred of them,
And four hundred fought,
Only a few, with their wounds
Ever returned home.*

*At the trenches of Praga
A monument will stand
With the inscription: Fatherland –
To Berek's command!*

*Idą za kraj walczyć
U okopów Pragi.*

*Czterystu ich było,
Czterystu walczyło,
Kilku ledwie w ranach
Do domu wróciło.*

*U okopów Pragi
Pomnik tam stać będzie
Z napisem: Ojczyzna –
Berkowej komendzie!⁶⁰*

As I mentioned earlier, Joselewicz and his cavalry regiment were often compared to those relentless warriors – the Maccabees. But they were not the only ones then compared to biblical heroes. Verses from the Books of the Maccabees helped popularize the character of Kościuszko as well. In Warsaw in 1794 his effigy was accompanied by the inscription: “For it is better for us to die in battle, than to behold the calamities of our people and our sanctuary [1 Maccabees 3:59].”⁶¹ The aura that surrounded the 1794 uprising was easily associated with Maccabean tenacity. Grzeškowiak-Krwawicz cited examples taken from contemporary sermons designed to convince listeners that the will to be free foreordains victory. “The oldest evidence of this was the Maccabean uprising in the Old Testament, in which the Israelites liberated themselves from the rule of Antiochus.”⁶²

During the November Uprising, Berek Joselewicz’s son, Józef Berkowicz, attempted to call forth a Jewish cavalry unit. In *Odezwa do Izraelitów polskich* (Appeal to the Polish Jews, 21 December 1830) he justified his actions using the following traditions: “Comfort the shadows of the immortal Maccabean heroes with a devotion to the fatherland equal to theirs. Follow the example provided by my father, Berek, who fought as a lieutenant colonel for the entire nation in 1794.”⁶³

This legendary Jewish model of the heroic battle-to-the-end was to be revived many times, for example, in the patriotic demonstrations that preceded the January Uprising (1863-1864). However, references to the heroism of Jews in 1794

60 Jan Sawa [Maria Konopnicka], *Śpiewnik historyczny, 1767-1863* (Lwów, 1905). This verse is from the cycle *1794* and is entitled “O Berku pułkownika,” 86.

61 Andrzej Woltanowski, “Kult Naczelnika Tadeusza Kościuszki w grafice warszawskiej 1794 r.” in *Kościuszko – powstanie 1794*, 252.

62 Grzeškowiak-Krwawicz, “Wolność,” 41. The author cites, among others, a fragment from a sermon by Father Michał Karpowicz: “The Jewish people were not more cruelly tormented by Antioch in the time of the Maccabees than our Polish nation has been destroyed and oppressed right in front of our eyes” (38). The only answer to oppression of freedom was to fight for it.

63 Quote from Eisenbach, “Ludność żydowska Królestwa,” 5.

made by a witness to the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising of 1943 were particularly significant, whose bitter words were contained in an extraordinary document published sixty years after the extermination of the Warsaw Jews. The author, Stefan Ernest, about whom we know nothing today, was in hiding beyond the ghetto walls as he wrote about the 1943 Uprising in the following way: “With their actions they recalled the history of a nation long ago which, having been stripped of its statehood, shook off the Syrian yoke at the hands of Maccabeus and, in the defense of this statehood, held out against the might of the Imperium Romanum under Vespasian and Titus for four years, until it finally succumbed. It did not hesitate to rise up again against Roman legions several decades later.” In a later section he offered a significant historical analogy: “They buried themselves in the ruins of the Warsaw ghetto from the year 1940-1943, as they had in the rubble of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., and as the biblical Samson had under the ruins of the Philistine temple. And as they did many centuries later, on this very territory, in the Warsaw suburb of Praga, where they died in Suvorov’s slaughter. As their blood marked the battlefields of Kostiuchnówka, Nadwórna, and Konary [three battles waged by the Polish Legions during the First World War], in order to win the right of true citizenship for everyone. They all died, as the defenders of Thermopylae had died.” In another passage the author writes about “the hopeless but honorable resistance, tied to common sacrifice, to save that very honor.”⁶⁴ The Jews’ struggle emerges here in a series of images depicting heroism of the highest order, whose beginning was marked by the Maccabean uprising. Similarly, in the pages of *Wolność* (Liberty), an underground publication associated with the Polish Socialist Party (PPS), the Maccabean tradition was revived during the Ghetto Uprising, mixed here with Polish virtues. This tradition “did not die out entirely, rather it smoldered. Indeed, it smoldered for hundreds of years, even thousands – after which it hissed, sparked and burst into flames among *Polish Jews*, who thus paid off a debt, built up over centuries, to one of the most significant elements of our culture, that is, a well-conceived sense of chivalry and heroism in the struggle for a just cause.”⁶⁵ The underground National Party (Stronniectwo Narodowe, SN) – on the other hand – expressed misgivings, writing that “propaganda was concocting a legend of a new Berek Joselewicz.”⁶⁶

Ernest treated the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising on equal terms with Jewish participation in the Kościuszko Uprising, and he – like writers at *Wolność* – presented it with an emphasis on Jewish action. Participants in the Ghetto Uprising saved

64 Ernest, *O wojnie wielkich Niemiec z Żydami Warszawy 1939-1943*. Preface, edited and notes by M. Młodkowski (Warszawa, 2003), 13-14, 21. See also p. 223.

65 Quote from *Wojna żydowsko-niemiecka. Polska prasa konspiracyjna 1943-1944 o powstaniu w getcie Warszawy*, ed. P. Szapiro (London, 1992), 169.

66 Ibid., 300.

the honor and dignity “of those who died earlier *without a fight*, and of those who survived, *without a fight*, on the other side of the ghetto walls” (author’s emphasis – M.J.). The motif of the Jew who survived by hiding will soon return in the pages of this book – in the context of the overt nature of the Jewish uprising – the point here being that the defenders of Jewish Thermopylae died “for those who survived beyond the walls living the life of a hunted animal, in hiding and waiting for the war to end, like modern Marranos, pretending to be ‘Aryans.’”⁶⁷ The author himself was hiding “on the Aryan side,” but also in a phantasmal world. He was writing in order to “lift up hearts” – including his own.

Ernest drew a distinction between two categories of survivors (whom – as one might suspect – he judged harshly alongside Jews who had not concealed their identity and had died): Either they were hiding in some miserable space or they were pretending to not be Jews. They remained safe by “taking on a non-Jewish identity,” by “hiding their true identity in the face of a threat to their lives,” by concealing their true identity “under Aryan papers.”⁶⁸ Obviously, Ernest’s accusations are self-critical in nature, and beyond that, we cannot fail to take into consideration the testimonies of Jews who experienced the Ghetto Uprising “beyond the walls” but had to control the overwhelming impulse to join the insurgents. One of the most important scenes in *Wielki Tydzień* (Holy Week), a film by Andrzej Wajda based on the novel by Jerzy Andrzejewski, shows the main character, a Jew in hiding, setting off toward the battling ghetto.

Beginning with the year 1794 at Warsaw’s Praga district, Stefan Ernest integrated clear examples of heroic Jewish sacrifice into the course of ancient and modern history. In a kind of outburst of emotion amidst circumstances that threatened his very existence, Ernest recognized the “road of honor” taken by the war hero Berek Joselewicz, about which so much had been written, the open struggle against the deadly enemy with weapons in hand, as the only dignified way of life and death for Jews. Ernest’s account constructs a distinct Jewish heroic discourse; it exalts fighters and soldiers, and subordinates civilian death, mass death, and anonymous death.

Unlike Ernest, Marek Edelman (one of the leaders of the 1943 Warsaw Ghetto Uprising) consciously resisted allowing himself to be drawn into this heroic discourse and, in a balanced way, tried to create a different sort of narrative. He expressed mistrust toward the language used to create history. When he talked about the Uprising (as he did in his famous discussions with Anka Grupińska⁶⁹)

67 Ernest, *O wojnie*, 13-14.

68 I have made use here of Małgorzata Melchior’s terms (see *Zagłada a tożsamość. Polscy Żydzi ocaleni „na aryjskich papierach.” Analiza doświadczenia biograficznego* [Warszawa, 2004]).

69 Anka Grupińska, *Ciągle po kole*, notes by P. Szapiro (Warszawa, 2000).

he emphasized that he was looking for other modes of communication.⁷⁰ Edelman defended himself against the heroic discourse, but also against the Zionist discourse. In the Zionists' view, the Uprising warriors had picked up arms for the national cause. Zionists in the state of Israel separated the Uprising from the Holocaust and created their own romantic narrative of the honorable, "beautiful death." It is not irrelevant to mention here that Zionism and ideas at the heart of Polish romanticism were connected; in both views, neither those who were murdered in the gas chambers, nor those who survived the Holocaust could be called heroic, as that term is widely understood.⁷¹ Marek Edelman – that heroic anti-hero – viewed those who participated in the Uprising more as insurgents than as soldiers, though he was at the same time wary of using heroic vocabulary. Nonetheless, in Hanna Krall's *Zdążyć przed Panem Bogiem* (translated into English under the title *Shielding the Flame: An Intimate Conversation with Dr. Marek Edelman*), he had to vigorously defend himself so that his arguments would be treated on an equal footing with others.⁷²

Let us return to Berek. Some believed that Joselewicz had died at the Battle of Praga. But – through a strange twist of fate – he survived, to continue the struggle for liberty.

5. Did He Really Even Exist?

In the twenty-year period between the world wars there was a series of disputes about the Jews' military abilities and the legitimacy of allowing them into the Polish heroic canon, and one of those disputes involved the existence of the Jewish colonel, Joselewicz. His very being was put into doubt. In *Kościuszko. Biografia z dokumentów wysnuta* (*Kościuszko: Biography from Selected Documents*,

70 See the master's thesis of Olga Orzeł under the title *Narracje Marka Edelmana. Autobiografia i świadectwo*, submitted at the Polish Studies Department [Wydział Polonistyki] of the University of Warsaw.

71 See Idith Zertal, *Israel's Holocaust and the Politics of Nationhood*, trans. Chaya Galai (Cambridge University Press, 2005), 25-51. The author emphasizes the distinct nature of Edelman's discourse, which rejected the notion that the creation of the Jewish state is a fact giving *a posteriori* "meaning" to the Holocaust. Edelman did not want to participate in the creation of a consoling myth that focuses on showing the "Zionistic heroism" of the uprising (according to official, state interpretations). After all, he was not a Zionist, but a Bund activist, and the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising was directed by members not just of Zionist organizations, but also non-Zionist and anti-Zionist organizations. Edelman's resistance to the accepted interpretation of events explains why his account was ignored by the State of Israel, and his role in the uprising under-appreciated.

72 See also the section (below) entitled "Addendum on the Holocaust."

1894) and in the first volume of *Wewnętrzne dzieje Polski za Stanisława Augusta* (Internal History of Poland in the Times of Stanisław August, 1897), Tadeusz Korzon stated, though only in passing, that the regiment had never been formed because – between Kościuszko’s *Uwiedomienie* and the siege of Praga – there was simply not enough time. Adam Skałkowski expressed a similar view in a book published in 1926. After trying to debunk stories “about the importance of people’s arms in the Kościuszko insurrection,” he went on to question “the legend of the significant participation of Jews in the battles of 1794.” Famous for his ability to demystify historical events, Skałkowski wrote: “A few documented references make for sparse branches, even if they are full of all sorts of ornaments and baubles, hung later with a loving hand, as if on a Christmas tree. For this little tree was planted on the first feast celebrating the brotherhood of the Polish people with Israel, and with each subsequent celebration it was decorated with new trinkets. But it has always lacked roots, and with every blast of wind, more brittle needles fall to the ground.”⁷³ This decrepit tree had been decorated for ideological ends, and Skałkowski was determined to give it a good shake.

Skałkowski emphasized that the insurrection had treated the Jews as if they were a passive mass; they were not an important factor in the battles for the capital city. “The insurrection authorities” even had to “restrain outbreaks of anti-Semitism.” It was Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz who “no doubt” wrote the extensive introduction to Kościuszko’s Proclamation of 17 September, with his own political goals in mind and making free use of literary rhetoric.⁷⁴ Berek sought promotion: “He was drawn to the profession of a soldier, and of course he could rise most easily and quickly through the ranks by organizing his fellow Jews.” But it did not work out very well for him. “Certainly he did not have many volunteers, and even they ran at the sound of the thunder at [the Battle of] Maciejowice.”⁷⁵ We should mention here that similar comments were written in the nineteenth century about Adam Mickiewicz’s Jewish legion from the year 1855. “The formation never assembled, the legionnaires ran off, the legion burned itself out, and nothing remained.”⁷⁶ This was, of course, not true.

73 Skałkowski, *Z dziejów insurekcji*, 29.

74 See footnote 22 above.

75 Skałkowski, *Z dziejów insurekcji*, 31, 32, 34. “Berek Josielowicz and his regiment did not fight in the entrenchments of Praga. Much Jewish blood flowed there, but of innocent victims.”

76 “Przyjaciel Mickiewicza. Opiekun jego dzieci,” *Czas* 220 (17 September 1876). I discuss the issue of Mickiewicz’s Jewish Legion and judgments about its activities in two studies (*Legion żydowski Mickiewicza* and *Sprawa o Pigońia*) found in *Do Europy – tak, ale razem z naszymi umarłymi* (Warszawa, 2000).

Łuniński could not pass over Skałkowski's hostile conjecture in silence. In the pages of *Wiadomości Literackie* (Literary News) he questioned the "fundamental contradiction" found in the argument made by the author of the work on the Kościuszko Uprising. Quoting from contemporaneous memoirs and from letters by Jan Henryk Dąbrowski to Berek Joselewicz, he maintained that a legion's creator could not, merely out of a sense of brotherhood, invite a person to join who had not already "gotten a baptism in blood with a military unit." In Łuniński's opinion, Skałkowski provided no historical evidence to support the argument that only a small number of Jews were interested in the battle for Polish independence, or that they deserted in the face of defeat. In a desire to fill a gap – that is, to make up for a lack of evidence to prove his hypothesis – "the scholar [Skałkowski] manages quite simply by modestly adding 'likely' or 'surely' to his claims and, with a light heart, builds a castle of sand, covered with a semblance of assertions."⁷⁷

Skałkowski, in turn, did not leave Łuniński's comments unchallenged. In the pages of the same *Wiadomości Literackie* he called Łuniński's view "emotional and, as journalists say, imprecise." He continued to maintain that his own speculation was "simpler and more likely" than hypotheses put forward by Łuniński and "other admirers of the heroic actions of Berek and his fellow Jews in the battles of 1794." He emphasized that everything Łuniński wrote was "just another contribution to the rise of the *legend* surrounding the participation of Polish Jews in the 1794 insurrection."⁷⁸ Legend was supposed to have collided with harsh, historical truth. It was as if that tree decorated with illusory trinkets had been toppled by the winds of historical truth.

Marian Kukiel returned to Korzon and Skałkowski's reservations in a 1934 article under the indicative title "Czy istniał pułk Berka Joselewicza [Did Berek Joselewicz's regiment really exist]?"⁷⁹ He reminded his readers that General Karol Kniaziewicz wrote to Józef Wybicki on 16 June 1800 about Berek, "who was a colonel in Poland." "Kniaziewicz would not have written this," Kukiel states, "had it involved an initiative that was never realized and a fictional title." But the most significant evidence, in light of new archival documents, has proven to be analysis of Kościuszko's famous decree. On this basis Kukiel asserted that the cost of fielding a light horse regiment and its maintenance until it was broken up was to be covered by the Qahals and synagogues; that "not only did the regiment not disperse after Maciejowice, there was thought given to significant expansion of the unit" (Antoni Skotnicki proposed to the new uprising commander, Tomasz Wawrzecki, the organization of a Jewish regiment of up to 1800 people); and

77 Łuniński, "Legenda o Berku," *Wiadomości Literackie* (28 November 1926).

78 Skałkowski, "Słowo o pułku Berka," *Wiadomości Literackie* (12 December 1926). Author's emphasis – M.J.

79 Published in *Księga pamiątkowa ku czci ...*, 61–65.

that – in order to reduce the cost of fitting them out – plans were made for their clothing color to be changed to black so that orthodox coats (*chalaty*) could be turned into uniforms. Regarding the regiment’s numbers, one man who had fled Warsaw and was interrogated at the end of September 1794 by Suvorov Cossacks talked of 50 thousand armed burghers, and added that “from those numbers a Jewish cavalry regiment was created made up of 500 people, whose leader was also a Jew.”⁸⁰ “This statement,” Kukiel states, “extends the existence of the regiment into September and ties it to the militia,” into which the Jewish troops were integrated. “Berek’s regiment must have emerged from this Jewish unit of the Warsaw militia,” and his absence in military reports “appears to indicate that this unit was treated as a part of the city militia.”⁸¹ In any case, Berek’s Jewish regiment existed!

6. A Knight’s Posthumous Glory

After the collapse of the 1794 uprising, Joselewicz was in search of a place where he could realize his ideals and the means by which he could do so. When he reported to General Jan Henryk Dąbrowski in a letter from 1798, Dąbrowski responded with the following words: “I received your letter with great satisfaction – Citizen Colonel – I always knew that you, who was the first to encourage his compatriots during the last revolution to take up arms in defense of the nation, would not abandon the path of service to the fatherland that is the legions.”⁸² Somewhat later, as a “Colonel, Captain of the Polish Cavalry” in the Dąbrowski Legions, Berek requested, among other things, permission to expand his oversight over the entire cavalry, arguing that “with the horses always under my control I am better able to train them.”⁸³ With the reorganization of the destroyed Italian legions in 1800, he

80 The above quoted account from 1817 mentions a 500-member “Jewish light horse regiment” (*Dziennik Wileński* 32 [1817], 189). I quote from the newer, highly competent work of K. Bauer: “Almost the entire Jewish regiment under Berek Joselewicz – 500 strong – died” (*Szturm*, 155).

81 Emanuel Ringelblum, in his book *Żydzi w powstaniu kościuszkowskim* ([Warszawa, 1938], 55–69), questioned Kukiel’s thesis that there is no evidence to support the idea that the Jewish regiment emerged from the city militia. In Ringelblum’s opinion, recruitment into the Jewish regiment was voluntary in nature, though over time it became more obligatory in tone. Ringelblum argued that the regiment was the product of the people: “The enthusiasm of the Jewish poor and their active cooperation with uprising authorities gave Berek the idea of forming a regiment” (69). Ringelblum also believed that thousands of Jews actively supported the liberation struggle through various support services.

82 “Z korespondencji Berka i o nim” in *Księga pamiątkowa ku czci ...*, 158.

83 *Ibid.*, 159.

was redeployed along with the rest of the regiment to the newly created Kniaziewicz legion on the Rhine.⁸⁴ Reports have survived describing the unpleasant experiences he endured because of his ethnic background. In his letter to Wybicki of 16 June 1800, General Kniaziewicz (commander of the legion along the Danube) wrote bitterly of the “jealousy over rank and superstitions about social class and birth” that was poisoning life in the legions and continued to preoccupy soldiers. A particular section of the letter is devoted to Joselewicz, “who was a colonel in Poland and who led two campaigns in Italy, and having come here, handed his seniority over to those who have led no campaign; but they have not stopped persecuting him, even though you cannot accuse him of anything except that he was not born a nobleman.”⁸⁵

One historian writes that Berek “took part in the battles of Hohenlinden and Salzburg; later, he led a significant part of the Polish cavalry across the Alps. Upon hearing of the creation around Poznań of a national army, he hurried back to the fatherland; he fought at Tczew, Gdańsk, and Friedland; after those battles, the Cross of the Virtuti Militari medal was added to an honor he had already received, the Legion of Honor.”⁸⁶ After the Duchy of Warsaw was established in 1807 Berek was transferred to the regular army and became head of a squadron in the fifth regiment of mounted riflemen.⁸⁷ An anonymous song set to a folk tune praised Kościuszko’s “sturdy warrior”:

*When the Naczelnik was no longer,
Berek did not become enthralled
When the Naczelnik was no longer,
In his hand a pike, he was on his horse.
He soon befriended the French.
And Bonaparte made him commander,
So he fell upon Moskal again,
tearing him to pieces,
Those wounds would surely never heal.
Then under Prince Joseph,
When it came to battle the Austrians,*

*Gdy nie stało Naczelnika,
Nie dał się pan Berko zdurzyć.
Gdy nie stało Naczelnika,
W rękę pika, na konika.
Z Francusami wnet się zbratał.
Bonapart zrobił go szefem,
Więc Moskala znowu loił,
A którego tylko splatał,
Ten się pewno nie wygoił.
Potem pod księciem Józefem,
Gdy przyszło na Austryjaka,*

84 Jan Zbigniew Pachonński, “Berek Joselewicz (1764-1809)” in *Polski słownik biograficzny*, vol. 11, part 2 (Kraków-Wrocław, 1965), 446.

85 *Listy znakomitych Polaków wyjaśniające historię legionów polskich* (Kraków, 1831), 90. In the quoted letter there is an allusion to the fact that, in the legions, Joselewicz took a “voluntary demotion” in rank, and “on his own initiative gave up his rights of seniority and took the rank of captain” (Łuniński, *Berek Joselewicz*, 29).

86 Kandel, “Berek Joselewicz,” 297.

87 Pachonński (in “Berek Joselewicz”) writes that that honor was “compensation for his distress in the legions. Respected and popular, he was accepted into the Freemason lodge of the ‘Bracia Polscy Zjednoczeni’ as a ‘brother of high degree’” (447).

*He fought as if two men, eye for an eye,
As a Jew and a Pole!*

*Bił się w dwójnasób, bo wet za wet,
Za Żyda i za Polaka!⁸⁸*

He died in battle at Kock on 5 May 1809, “slashed to death by Austrian hussars,” as General Henryk Dembiński wrote.⁸⁹ Others talked of him having been “hacked to pieces.” His death led to a proverb: “He died like Berek at Kock” (which means that he died completely, thoroughly), and it made its way into a popular saying: “W tem to zajściu huncwockiem / Zginał Berek pod Kockiem [In this rotten incident / Berek died at Kock].”⁹⁰ The people – it is said – immediately built a grave mound at Kock in honor of the fallen hero.

In the contemporaneous press and in posthumous memoirs, expressions of official grief were mixed with a deep appreciation for the great personality that was Berek Joselewicz, now included in the Polish heroic discourse. He was most often called a “knight,” and much was written about the “road of honor” he had taken, setting an example for his nation. On 19 June 1809 in the *Monitor*, he was characterized thus: “Here is the first Polish Jew who showed his fellow Jews the path of honor, who was the exemplar of heroic devotion in the service of the Fatherland.”⁹¹ *Gazeta Warszawska* printed an obituary containing these words: “He departed this world as a true knight who, over the course of fifteen years, served in every campaign in Italy, Germany and Poland. He was the first among Polish Jews to open the path of honor to his fellow Jews, and he made of himself a wonderful example of bravery.” In *Pochwale walecznych Polaków w wojnie 1809 r. poległych* (In honor of the brave Poles who fell in battle in 1809), which was presented on 22 December 1809 at a public session of the *Towarzystwa Przyjaciół Nauk* (Society of the Friends of Science) in Warsaw, Stanisław Kostka Potocki also praised the leadership of the “brave Berek”: “You were the first among us to set an example for your nation of well-nourished bravery, and you resurrected the image of those knights whose death was once mourned by the daughters of Zion!”

I have already written about how the Jewish fighters were compared with the Maccabees during the Kościuszko Uprising. After Berek’s death, biblical comparisons were revived and often appeared in portrayals of the Jewish hero; Juliusz Falkowski even called Joselewicz “the first begotten in our land – perhaps the first since the Maccabees.”⁹² Much later, Samuel Hirszhorn wrote of the “brave Mac-

88 “Berko Żyd” in *Żydzi w Polsce*, 214. The publisher reprinted the text from “*Tygodnik Polski* devoted to peasants” (Pszczyna), 1846, nr. 8.

89 Quote from Libera, “Berek Joselewicz w legendzie literackiej,” 48.

90 Some justified the repetition of this word (“huncfot” or “huncwot,” which amounts to “scoundrel”), which is something of an insult or expletive.

91 Quote from Pachoński, “Berek Joselewicz,” 447.

92 All three quotes from Libera, “Berek Joselewicz w legendzie literackiej,” 49.

cabeus” in lofty verse, attempting already to put up resistance against the “band of Jew-haters.”⁹³

In the view constructed by one democrat active in the Great Emigration, Leon Hollaenderski, who wrote a history of the Jews in Poland, Berek Joselewicz was at the forefront. “A glorious death and the devotion to the regiment he led” served as an example to Jewish and Polish youth alike.⁹⁴ In 1861, in the age of patriotic demonstrations, Berek was praised as a romantic hero of the “epic that was Napoleonic times,” when the transition had not yet been made into mundane positivism: “From the sword to the steam engine, from honor to the dear grosz.”⁹⁵ Of course, Berek wielded both sword and honor. Konopnicka set the name “Joselewicz” to rhyme with “królewicz [prince].”⁹⁶

For a half-century the romantic legend of Berek Joselewicz was at the heart of various discussions (both political and social) concerning the place of Jews in the Polish community. Debates and polemics, accusations and speeches became more intense just as the concepts put forward by Kościuszko and Lelewel began to give way under the rising tide of nationalism and anti-Semitism. The figure of Berek Joselewicz was debated and discussed in a variety of contexts, and much of what was concluded depended on particular emotional and political circumstances, and on whether the issue at hand was Jewish assimilation, demands for autonomy for

93 Samuel Hirszhorn, “Berek Joselewicz” in *Berek Joselewicz, pułkownik...*, 2-3. The author was an activist for cultural autonomy for the Jewish minority in the interwar Second Republic.

94 Leon Hollaenderski, *Les Israélites de Pologne* (Paris, 1846), 75-76. Leon (Leib) Hollaenderski (1808 or 1812-1878), who was forced to flee abroad because the police had discovered Polish patriotic publications printed by him in Lithuania, moved to Paris in 1843. He was active in politics and journalism, wrote poetry, and published articles in the *Archives Israélites*. Abraham G. Duker called his book, *Les Israélites de Pologne*, “the first history of the Jews in Poland in a western language.” In 1847, Hollaenderski wrote a letter to Prince Adam Jerzy Czartoryski, who was the inspiration behind a committee on the issue of Jewish Poles, giving notice that he was withdrawing from that group – because of an anti-Semitic reading given by one of the committee members at the Literary Society in Paris. If there was not such hatred for Jews, Poles could – Hollaenderski believed – take up a noble task: “They would remind Europe of the golden age of the Jagiellonians and Kazimierz the Great, they would reawaken – so to speak – in the spirit of the immortal Kościuszko the now latent energy for the common, sacred battle against the northern tyrants, they would give new life to the spirit of the famous Berek Joselewicz, the colonel [...] and of other Jews who fought honorably for Poland” (see Duker, “Leon Hollaenderski’s Statement of Resignation. A Document of the Polish Great Emigration” in *Jewish Social Studies*, vol. XV [1953], 293-302).

95 Z. Rappaport, “Berek Josielowicz,” 220.

96 “And a Jew can shine / With bravery – like a prince [królewicz]! / He fought under Kościuszko / Berek Joselewicz,” Jan Sawa, *Śpiewnik ...*, *O Berku pułkownika*, 85.

the national-cultural Jewish minority, or more generally, the concept commonly defined as the “Jew-Polish patriot.” How could one maintain simultaneously a Jewish and Polish identity? Questions like this were directed at the shadows of Berek Joselewicz. His myth appeared on the borderlands of Jewish-Polish contemplation, and in debates over the possibility of affiliation in both communities. The impulses radiating from his personage allowed one to view him as the patron of various ideological aspirations, and as the inspiration behind a spectrum of literary creations.

7. Literary Metamorphoses and Motivations. The Prototype of Jankiel?

After the collapse of the Kościuszko Uprising, Joselewicz did not abandon the idea of enlisting in the service of freedom. What was it that so often pushed him in this direction? Łuniński placed great weight on the importance of French revolutionary ideas, with which Berek had become acquainted as a young man during his travels from Lithuania to Brussels and Paris, where he represented the business interests of Bishop Ignacy Massalski. Somewhat later, he relocated to Warsaw, more specifically to the Gołędzinów neighborhood of Praga, where Jews were allowed to live. Here, he was able to follow the reforms – which included the Jewish question – then being proposed in the Great Sejm (1788-1792). Lively debates were taking place, brochures were being published, and petitions were being written about enlightened ways to extend citizenship to Jews in Poland. “Free-thinking voices penetrated the ghetto – that closed, musty circle – a new, life-changing revelation.”⁹⁷ Łuniński drew a vivid image – a metaphorical abbreviation: After Bishop Massalski was hanged for treason (28 June 1794), the struggle for freedom finally crystallized in Berek Joselewicz’s mind: “The former manor-clerk [*ex-oficjalista*] Jew went to light candles of national sentiment at the grave of the traitor-bishop.”⁹⁸

Similarly, in his novel *Pulkownik Berek, Opowieść o Berku Joselewiczu* (Colonel Berek, A Novel about Berek Joselewicz, 1959), Karol Koźmiński has the title character, in his youth in Vilnius, carry on a debate with a representative from the Jewish community of Oświęcim [Auschwitz], and in Warsaw that char-

97 Łuniński, *Berek Joselewicz*, 12. “The debates, pamphlets, discussions, memoranda, and petitions [during the Great Sejm] ultimately had no effect. No new law on the status of Jews was adopted” (Hundert, *Jews in Poland-Lithuania in the Eighteenth Century*, 230).

98 Łuniński, *Berek Joselewicz*, 15.

acter encounters a reformist member of parliament, Mateusz Butrymowicz.⁹⁹ In a fragment of prose *Berek Joselewicz w Paryżu* (Berek Joselewicz in Paris), Józef Opatoszu presents Berek in a conversation with the revolutionary activist and captain in the French national guard (born in Lublin), Załkind Hurwic¹⁰⁰, who in the novel sets forth this principle: “Since one wants to gain his rights in the country and become a citizen, then one must learn how to pay for that citizenship with his own blood.”¹⁰¹ For Walery Przyborowski, the author of popular historical novels for young readers who published, in his Napoleonic cycle, *Berek pod Kockiem*

99 Libera characterizes Karol Koźmiński as a former “legion officer, secretary to Józef Piłsudski when he was premier of the Second Republic, editor of *Polska Zbrojna*, and author of stories and historical novels about Kościuszko, Sułkowski and Sowiński” (“Berek Joselewicz w legendzie literackiej,” 62-63).

100 Frances Malino has written a profile, based on original source materials, of this unconventional thinker in *Zalkind Hourwitz, Juif polonaise (Dix-Huitième Siècle)*, 1981, nr. 13). The title is a reflection of how Załkind signed his numerous articles, letters, and books. He lived from 1740 to 1812. He worked in the manuscripts department at the Royal Library in Paris, and during the French Revolution he cooperated with revolutionary periodicals and was active in the battle for Jewish emancipation. In France he is regarded as a great philosopher of the Jewish question. Interest in him is currently going through something of a renaissance. Malino characterizes Załkind’s 1789 work *Apologie des Juifs* as “perhaps the most excruciating example of the difficulties involved in the defense of the integrity of Judaism and Jews, and at the same time the tasks of reform, which would reshape Judaism” (82-83). In 1789, his *Usprawiedliwienie, czyli apologia Żydów, pismo które nagrodę otrzymało od Towarzystwa Królewskiego Sztuk i Umiejętności, napisane przez Zalkind Hurwicz Żyda polskiego, z francuskiego przetłumaczone* appeared in Warsaw. It is a “summary and very loose translation of some fragments from the original French.” Once, when asked if there is a way to make Jews more happy and useful, Hurwic responded by saying that “there is one very simple way that I see, and that is to give them the right of citizenship” (*Materiały do dziejów Sejmu Czteroletniego*, vol VI, selected and prepared for print by Eisenbach, J. Michalski, E. Rostworowski and J. Woliński [Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków, 1969], 113-115).

101 Józef Opatoszu, “Berek Joselewicz w Paryżu” in *Księga pamiątkowa ku czci...*, 204. In his novel about the January Uprising, *W polskich lasach* (a fragment of which appears in a translation from the Yiddish by B. Szwarzman-Czarnoty, *Midrasz*, październik 2000), Opatoszu presents an old, war-horse Jew, who was once a soldier in Berek’s regiment battling at Praga. For Opatoszu, Berek was the figure who initiated the modern Jewish struggle for liberty. Opatoszu (born in 1886 near Mława, died in New York in 1954) wrote prose in Yiddish. His most famous work is the “independence” Jewish-Polish trilogy, published in 1919-1926 and covering events from the beginning of the nineteenth century to the January Uprising. One of the volumes, translated into Polish in 1931, carries the title *Żydzi walczą o niepodległość Polski. Powieść na tle powstania 1863 roku* (see also *Polski słownik judaistyczny*, eds. Z. Borzymińska and R. Żebrowski, vol. II [Warszawa, 2003], 263-264).

(Berek at Kock, 1911), the most important motif in Joselewicz's conduct was the fact that he had emancipated himself from the backward Jewish environment and accepted Polish independence ideals. In a similar spirit, Zenon Parvi presents Berek in the historical drama *Rok 1794 (Berek Joselewicz)* and makes abundant use of the romantic inspiration of both Juliusz Słowacki's *Ksiądz Marek* (Father Mark, 1843, whose characters Judyta and Kossakowski especially sparked the imagination) and Stanisław Wyspiański's *Warszawianka* (Varsovian Anthem, 1898).

The roads of literary imagination that lead from the historical Berek Joselewicz to the lofty poetry emanating from the character of Jankiel in Mickiewicz's *Pan Tadeusz* are thought-provoking. They provide evidence that Berek was a distinguished, unforgettable, extraordinary character, whose originality no one could eclipse. Helena Romer tried to get at these qualities in her prose work *Dlaczego walczył? (Why Did He Fight?)*.¹⁰² "The history of this Jewish colonel is strange," she began her text, "from whom – in an uncommon manifestation of heredity – came an effusion of military zeal and bravery worthy of David, Abner, Joab and Avishai. Which is all the more strange given that his patron, the mitred prelate of Wilno, was a notorious traitor paid by Moscow and guillotined by the people of Vilnius in June 1794." The knowledge of the world that Berek gained by virtue of his travels representing the interests of Bishop Massalski merged with a dormant potential for heroism derived from examples from the Old Testament. He was drawn most powerfully to Kościuszko, in whom he recognized "a leader of the country and of all the peoples living there," and whom he trusted completely. He grew an appetite for armed struggle, which emerged in Berek as the most appropriate way to declare his attachment to the Polish fatherland. Much like Singer, Romer emphasized that Berek Joselewicz "did not deny the faith of his ancestors, he did not cast off the Jewish stigma, even though this could have blocked the path of his career in the military. Perhaps for this very reason he was so deeply respected and loved."

Another matter related to Berek's metamorphosis was presented in a more mysterious and complex way. Leo Belmont, whose research interest was Jewish aspects of Polish romanticism, published an essay in 1918 entitled "Monumentalna postać Berka Joselewicza" (The Monumental Figure of Berek Joselewicz)¹⁰³, which treated Berek "as a particular incident of the flowering of a miraculous soul." He also used the word "uncanny" to describe the hero. Kościuszko, along with Joselewicz – against the background of both the Polish and Jewish masses – bloom like "two miraculous, mantic signs." Treated as a "wonderful Jew," Berek Joselewicz became – in Belmont's view – someone who yields "beautiful flowers of Polish poetry," and gives "life blood to the amazing character Jankiel-patriot."

102 Included in *Księga pamiątkowa ku czci ...*, 206-208.

103 Published in *Berek Joselewicz, pułkownik wojsk polskich. W 109-tą rocznicę zgonu bohatera narodowego na polu walki o niepodległość* (Warszawa, 15 May 1918), 4-6.

It was obvious to Belmont that the historical Berek Joselewicz was the inspiration for that fictional character in *Pan Tadeusz*. In the comparative article “Wielka poezja rosyjska i polska w stosunku do Żydów w epoce najbliższej po czynie Berka Joselewicza [Great Russian and Polish Poetry Related to Jews in Recent Times in Light of the Actions of Berek Joselewicz],” Belmont asserted: “Where ever Berek Joselewicz trod, it was there that the Castalian spring of poetry burst open, lifting the character Jankiel onto waves as an immortal example for future generations from Jewish blood – an example of sacrifice for the motherland.”¹⁰⁴ In Belmont’s opinion, such a figure as Berek Joselewicz could not grow in Russia, which waged wars of conquest; and therefore, it also could not call forth poetic consequences as it would in Poland – in Mickiewicz’s character Jankiel.

This view of the connection between the literary character and the real character was not an isolated one. Wilhelm Feldman emphasized the fact that, in the pages of *Pan Tadeusz*, we find “the first and most well-defined Jewish type in Polish poetry; the most noble kind of Polish-patriot among Jews. Despite the great idealism that shrouds this figure, it is not the product of pure fantasy. It is drawn – using lines of powerful realism, as if from a photograph – from an image of what the Jew often actually was before the year 1813.” Mickiewicz, who had an excellent knowledge of the Kościuszko movement and the storming of Praga, knew of Jews “quite often in armor and with sword in hand” in the trenches of Praga and at Kościuszko’s side; he knew of the Jewish cavalry regiment under Berek Joselewicz.¹⁰⁵ It was to be the historical germ for the character Jankiel. Chaim Lów, describing Jankiel’s literary genealogy, drew attention to a comic opera written by Alojzy Żółkowski and staged in the National Theater in Warsaw in July 1812. The reconciliation of a nobleman and a count with a Moses-Jew-Polish patriot was preceded by mention of the “noble shadows” of Berek Joselewicz, who “brought to our fatherland the fame he had gained on the Tiber, as a gift, and died defending it in its entirety.”¹⁰⁶

We are not talking here about similarities in kind, but rather analogies of character structures. The demeanor of the Polish-Jew patriot is a common denominator in both the historical and literary hero. We read in *Pan Tadeusz* expressions which made their way into colloquial speech: “He had a good Pole’s reputation,” or “the worthy Jew loved his country like a Pole!”

104 *Berek Joselewicz, pułkownik wojsk polskich*, 21.

105 Wilhelm Feldman, *Stosunek Adama Mickiewicza do Żydów* (Kraków, 1890), 6-8.

106 Chaim Lów, “Rodowód Jankiela. W stulecie ‘Pana Tadeusza’,” *Miesięcznik Żydowski* (1934), zeszyt 5, 397. Mieczysław Inglot also points to the appearance of the Jew-patriot character in the occasional political comedy from the Napoleonic times (*Okopy na Pradze* in 1807 by Dmuszewski and *Wkroczenie do Litwy* by Żółkowski). He connects that character with the “achievements of Berek Joselewicz” and sees therein a possible prototype of Jankiel (*Postać Żyda w literaturze polskiej lat 1822-1864* [Wrocław, 1999], 19-20, 46-50).

The patron of Mickiewicz's way of thinking was Herder. Indeed, the Polish poet's interest in that which was distinct and different bears a romantic, Herderesque mark. Isaiah Berlin emphasized the fact that Herder, throughout his entire life, was fascinated with the various paths by which civilizations develop, both past and present, European and Asiatic, which is why Berlin called Herder a "champion of variety." This remarkable historian of ideas stressed the significance of the new belief that what is individual and unique – indeed diversity itself – has value and meaning, and that uniformity produces something repressive and deeply repulsive. While variety brings vitality, the opposite brings gloomy, dead monotony. Berlin regarded the glorification of variety as the essence of romanticism, both in art and philosophy.¹⁰⁷ Herder was able to set the foundation for an understanding of the Other.

Mickiewicz did not fear Jewish otherness, and he was not afraid of the supposedly "insincere" Frankists who – as Jews in disguise – would seek the insidious destruction of the Poles. Jankiel – Aleksander Hertz stated – plays a key moral, political, and military role in *Pan Tadeusz*. He reconciles those who have quarreled. He is respected by everyone on all sides. He is a man trusted by Father Robak. Supporters both of the family Soplica and of the Count respect him. At the same time, he never stops being a Jew; he maintains his faith and follows Jewish customs.¹⁰⁸ In the Mickiewiczian space, fraternization is possible in the common battle for freedom without requiring that Jews "renounce their national-religious identity."¹⁰⁹ Jankiel is an Alien – understood as Different – but by no means an Alien who has to either be "brought to his senses" (by depriving him of the strength of his "dark superstitions" – that is, above all, the Talmud) or regarded as an enemy. Jankiel is a Jew-Polish patriot who maintains his distinctive Jewish features.

But one must take note of the fact that Jankiel appears individually in Mickiewicz's work. The backdrop for him consists of the manor houses he visits and his tavern.

*Having settled with his children in the inn, he occupied himself with trading in spirits
At the same time, in the nearby town, he was an under-rabbi.*

*Osiadłszy z dziećmi w karczmie, zatrudniał się szynkiem
Przytem w pobliskim mieście był też podrabinkiem.*

And that is all we learn about Jankiel's family and his familial environment. Treated as an "emblematic Jew," Jankiel cannot be strewn with too many realistic details from his Jewish milieu.

107 Isaiah Berlin, *The Crooked Timber of Humanity: Chapters in the History of Ideas* (New York: Knopf, 1991), 57-59.

108 See Hertz, *The Jews in Polish Culture*, 29-30.

109 Ignacy Schiper, *Żydzi Królestwa Polskiego w dobie powstania listopadowego* (Warszawa, 1932), 52.

In a work published on the fiftieth anniversary of the January Uprising, Bertold Merwin maintained that, at the end of the eighteenth century and beginning of the nineteenth century, there were “German and Polish” forms of assimilation in Europe. Whereas “German assimilation, the Mendelssohn type, was associative and cultural,” Polish assimilation, Merwin argued, was not based “in the salons, not on the fraternization of capital with spirit, not on bringing itself in tune with the external, but rather on action, on the spilling of blood on the fields of glory, with that blood running over the common womb of mother-earth.” At the beginning of this process of assimilation, defined as such, one could find Berek Joselewicz, and Mickiewicz recognized this tendency with the intuition of a genius by presenting Jankiel as having been assimilated not in the “German way,” but rather “by way of the heart.”¹¹⁰ He made use of an understanding of community as blood spilled together in the defense of the same land. In this case, patriotic brotherhood was not the result of racial homogeneity, but rather of a symbolic gesture of dedicating blood. Setting aside for a moment the use of the term “assimilation,” let us say that the author’s intention was to juxtapose the enlightened and romantic paths to the understanding of Judaism. And here, Berek Joselewicz found himself on the romantic side.

The figure of Berek Joselewicz emerges from a variety of contexts. On its basis, the argument was made that emancipation and assimilation – understood as identification with Polishness – was necessary, but it was also sometimes used as evidence that one could keep and maintain one’s Jewish identity. Editors of the book *Ortodoksja, emancypacja, asymilacja* (Orthodoxy, emancipation, assimilation) believe that the interpretation of Berek Joselewicz symbolically encompasses different perspectives on the same question. One writer we already mentioned above, Józef Opatoszu, presented Berek from two perspectives, as a character “whom even Christians believed was devoted to Poland,” and as a character damned by the Hasidim as an “outcast from Israel” for not strictly following the rules of his religion.¹¹¹ In interwar Poland, the cult of Berek was patronized by those who wanted to consider themselves both Poles and Jews.¹¹²

110 Bertold Merwin, *Żydzi w powstaniu 1863* (Lwów, 1913), 5-8.

111 K. Zieliński and Adamczyk-Garbowska, eds., *Ortodoksja, emancypacja, asymilacja. Studia z dziejów ludności żydowskiej na ziemiach polskich w okresie rozbiorów* (Lublin, 2003), 9. Kalinowski discusses the literary myth of Berek Joselewicz above all in the context of the idea of assimilation: “Literary means of presenting the Jewish Colonel persistently show him as the first to propagate the assimilation of Jews into the spirit of Polish culture” (“Berek Joselewicz – egzystencja i literacki mit,” 76).

112 See Anna Landau-Czajka, *Syn będzie Lech... Asymilacja Żydów w Polsce międzywojennej* (Warszawa, 2006), 155. The author clearly illustrates the paradoxes, complexities, and ambiguities of assimilation in the interwar period. Her deliberations come to the following conclusion: “The heart of the matter lay in the fact that, while anti-Semitism and na-

8. Civil Rights

In an anonymous tune, Joselewicz was removed from the Jewish professions and raised to the dignity of a Pole:

<i>Once there was Berek, a famous Jew,</i>	<i>Był to Berko, sławny Żyd,</i>
<i>A conscientious man, an honest Pole,</i>	<i>Człek sumienny, Polak prawy,</i>
<i>Neither with a pint nor as a card sharp,</i>	<i>Nie kwaterką ni szulerką,</i>
<i>But with his blood he earned his fame!</i>	<i>Lecz się krwią dorobił sławy!</i>

In the end, he was christianized for his service:

<i>And though he was an unconverted Jew,</i>	<i>A choć to był Żyd niewierny,</i>
<i>God almighty, the merciful</i>	<i>Bóg wszechmocny, miłosierny</i>
<i>Will consider him christened for</i>	<i>Za chrest mu poczytda</i>
<i>the blood he shed</i>	<i>krw jego przelana,</i>
<i>Eternal rest</i>	<i>Wieczne odpocznienie</i>
<i>Grant him, O Lord,</i>	<i>Racz mu dać, Panie,</i>
<i>An eternal light</i>	<i>A światłość wiekuista</i>
<i>Let it shine on him forever!</i>	<i>Niech mu świeci na wieki!¹¹³</i>

As one can see, Polish glorification of the Jewish hero sometimes traveled dark paths. Askenazy believed that, in 1808, Berek Joselewicz was “an exception almost entirely detached. Shared military service was no longer bearable for Polish

tionalism were growing, both the Poles and the traditional Jewish community adopted the assumption that the ‘Pole’ and the ‘Jew’ are separate. A person could be only a Jew or a Pole – while the notion, so common in the nineteenth century, of the ‘Pole of the Jewish faith’ stopped existing in the minds of the majority of Polish society. The only ones who did not agree with such an assumption, namely the assimilated Jews, were thus left hanging, in the end belonging nowhere. And that motif of existing ‘between,’ uprooted, appeared in many memoirs [...] It brought about a mechanism by which assimilated Jews closed themselves into their own social circle. Though it is nowhere stated directly, they created their own separate society, a third nation – assimilated” (440-441). R. Szerbakiewicz portrayed the tragedy of assimilation in the life and work of the great historian Szymon Askenazy – of being attacked in the interwar era by both members of the *Endecja* and Zionists. It is revealed in the following statement: “The peculiarity of the historian’s biography is the unusual connection of fidelity to his inherited identity – as a Jew – and to his chosen identity – as a Pole” (“Sprytny dostawca optymizmu narodowego”?. Ostatnie lata Szymona Askenazy na uboczu historii, *Polski I Europy*” in *Kwestia żydowska w XIX wieku*, 331).

- 113 “Berko Żyd,” 214-215. J. Kolbuszewski quotes from an inscription placed in 1909 at the foot of the memorial mount in Kock containing the remains of Berek Joselewicz. That inscription is a paraphrase of the above-cited verse: “Neither with a pint nor as a card sharp, but with his blood he earned himself fame! On the hundredth anniversary of his death. Nowa Kolonia Białobrzegi, 1809-1909” (J. Kolbuszewski, “Tragizm i groteska. O pewnych osobliwościach wierszowanej epigrafiki nagrobnej” in *Problemy współczesnej tanatologii. Medycyna – Antropologia kultury – Humanistyka* [Wrocław, 1997], 487).

Jews, and the Polish army no longer wanted it.”¹¹⁴ Nonetheless, historians cite many examples of Jews who participated as volunteers in the Kościuszko Uprising, the November Uprising and the January Uprising, even though their participation in military actions did not translate into civil rights. Ignacy Schiper wrote: “As applications submitted by volunteers [from the Kościuszko Uprising] and preserved in later years indicate, those who stayed in the country received various concessions, but none of them was allowed full *citizen rights*. What is more, those Jews who did not live in Warsaw before 1796 but wanted to stay there had to pay a ticket-tax. ‘Do we not see Jews’ – we read in a brochure published in the first years of the Congress Kingdom entitled *Rzut oka na stan Izraelitow w Polsce* [A Glance at the Condition of the Israelites in Poland] – ‘bearing witness that they willingly joined the military and served fearlessly as people attached to their country and yet, if they have business to conduct in Warsaw, they have to pay 1 zloty for a 24-hour stay.’ [...] And those Jews who did not have a total wealth of at least 60,000 złp [Polish zloties] could not live in Warsaw on so-called exempted streets.”¹¹⁵ It reflected well on Prince Józef (one historian has claimed) that in July 1809 – in connection with Joselewicz’s recent death on the battlefield – he requested that the Council of State postpone “temporarily the displacement of Jews from important streets of the capital.”¹¹⁶ It was not postponed. Mercy was shown only to Joselewicz’s widow and his sons.

During the November Uprising, the Minister of War, Franciszek Morawski, made the argument that the tree of liberty, planted on 29 November 1830, should not be inoculated with “exotic juices, which might produce bitter fruit.” In order to avoid misunderstanding, the minister explained, “it would be pleasant for a Pole to hear that, in the struggle for independence, the assistance of foreign peoples was not needed, but it would be sad to have to tell him that, in this struggle, we could not succeed without the help of the Israeli people.”¹¹⁷ Morawski’s statements provoked a series of counter-arguments, in which it was commonly emphasized that Jews made up one-eighth of the country’s population; that they had lived in Poland for centuries; and that it was “appropriate to treat them like compatriots.” One author condemned decisions made by uprising leaders to not

114 Askenazy, *Książę Józef Poniatowski, 1763-1813* (Warszawa, 1978), 171. By this, the author meant above all opposition coming from faithful Jews against obligatory military service, “because they could not fulfill their religious duties.”

115 Ignacy Schiper, “Dzieje Żydów,” 431. Author’s emphases – M.J.

116 Jerzy Skowronek, *Książę Józef Poniatowski* (Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków-Gdańsk-Łódź, 1984), 182. Civil rights for Jews were restricted, which created, for example, districts in cities where Jews were forced to concentrate themselves (see Haumann, *Historia Żydów*, 81-82).

117 *Diariusz Sejmu z r 1830-1831*, 8, 22.

allow Jews into military service and to pass a recruitment tax, asking: If all Jews accepted baptism, would they then be more worthy to die in defense of the nation? By imposing a tax on Jews – instead of granting them their civil rights – the Sejm clearly “prefers 4 million złp over 400 thousand free people gratefully attached to the country for the charity it showed them, for which they would be willing to shed their blood.” The author continued: “Minister Morawski fears that someday Poles will say they could not have made it without help from the Jews, and yet the minister cannot make it without Jewish money!” At the same time, the author noted that over the course of the previous 15 years the Jewish people had paid 45 million Polish złoties into the public treasury, and that – in addition – they had come to the defense of the country.¹¹⁸ Ludwik Ozjasz Lubliner described Morawski’s position as “absurd” and “unpatriotic.”¹¹⁹ During the uprising, Antoni Ostrowski led the National Guard, within which a City Guard was created for Jews. Referring “to the patriotism of the Jews, who proved their devotion and bravery during the Kościuszko Uprising,” he argued harshly against Morawski, whom he accused of deviating from the truth. “Why would we pronounce, ahead of time, before our own closer experience, that Polish Jews are cowards, unfit for military service?”¹²⁰

Morawski’s statements made a deep impression on the Jewish consciousness; this humiliation of the Jews was perceived as a terrible, personal misfortune. H. Warszawski, in a 1935 article about his grandfather – who was one of Berek Joselewicz’s soldiers – wrote that, during the November Uprising, his grandfather had wanted to be accepted into the army along with his old brothers-in-arms (“a certain Berek Chwat, Józef Wajsblum, and many others”), but General Morawski “did not allow Jews to join the Polish army, and in doing so is said to have spoken these ugly words: ‘How am I supposed to allow vile Jewish blood to mix with the noble blood of Poles?’” Warszawski’s grandfather could have been accepted into the city militia, but he did not want to join, saying “I have never been a militiaman and I never will be.” He returned to Działoszyce, and “from that time forward, he never left home. As he used to say, what had happened in Warsaw struck him both in the mind and the heart.”¹²¹

118 See Eisenbach, “Ludność żydowska Królestwa,” 18-19.

119 Ibid., 23.

120 Antoni Ostrowski, *Pomysły o potrzebie reformy towarzyskiej, a mianowicie co do Izraelitów w Polsce* (Paris, 1834), 76. In other passages in his work Ostrowski refers again to the “full hope” of the Kościuszko times and remembers the man famous within his native ranks, “Berek from Kock” (293). See also Ostrowski, *Pamiętnik z czasów powstania listopadowego*, published by K. and W. Rostowski (Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków, 1961).

121 H. Warszawski, “Z pamiętnika wnuka żołnierza Berka Joselewicza. Fragmenty,” *Nasz Przegląd*, 11-12 July 1935.

Polish racial pride, or rather deranged noble pride, was breaking all records here, even though in the last phase of the Polish-Russian war appeals were made to the Jewish poor to form a *Straż Bezpieczeństwa* (Security Guard). It was nicknamed the “Un-safety Guard,” though it fought during the defense of Warsaw with “true courage.”¹²² Unlimited courage.

In 1918, the year Poland regained its independence, an important article entitled “Berek Joselewicz a żydostwo narodowe” (Berek Joselewicz and National Judaism) by M. Friszlender appeared in a book published in honor of Berek Joselewicz on the hundred-ninth anniversary of his death. Friszlender located the heroic warrior at the beginning of an extremely important historical process – the recognition of Jewish minority rights in Poland. He claimed that “there is a long tradition of respect for the cultural distinctiveness of minority peoples in Poland.” This principle was recognized in old Poland. Indeed, it was in this spirit that Kościuszko brought the Jewish colonel to life, and though Jews in the Republic were treated as a separate people both in terms of religion and customs, they were not excluded from Poland. In 1918, Friszlender proposed that independent Poland follow in the footsteps of Berek Joselewicz – “that passionate Pole and, at the same time, a model Jew” – and implement within the Polish state the formula by which every Jew would fall into a single category: Citizen of Poland. The goal was not assimilation, but rather national-cultural autonomy according to the assumptions and actions – Friszlender argued – of Tadeusz Kościuszko and Berek Joselewicz.¹²³ Of Lelewel as well.¹²⁴ From these old inspirations emerged the impulse to shape an innovative, twentieth-century program of real equality for the Jewish minority.¹²⁵

122 Ignacy Schiper, “Dzieje Żydów,” 449. Non-Jewish plebians were also in the *Straż Bezpieczeństwa*.

123 M. Friszlender, “Berek Joselewicz a żydostwo narodowe,” in *Berek Joselewicz, pułkownik...*, 12-13.

124 See the work by R. Centnerszwerowa, *Stanowisko Lelewela wobec dziejów i spraw Żydów polskich* (Warszawa, 1911). Lelewel persistently insisted that Jews should be given citizenship, which would help lift the existence of the Polish nation. Regardless of faith, a native born inhabitant must have the right to place his name in the register of citizens so he can enjoy full civil and political rights.

125 See Jolanta Żyndul, *Państwo w państwie? Autonomia narodowo-kulturalna w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej w XIX wieku* (Warszawa, 2000), along with the items “Autonomia narodowa i kulturalna” and “Traktat mniejszościowy” in Alina Cała, H. Węgrzynek, G. Zalewska, *Historia i kultura Żydów polskich. Słownik* (Warszawa, 2000). Żyndul thoroughly and accurately presents attempts to implement national-cultural autonomy for the Jewish minority during the interwar Second Republic. After the Second World War, she states, there was growing “interest among international institutions in defending national minority rights, implemented on an individual basis.” Currently, “thinking derived from

9. Genealogy

A moment ago I mentioned the name Berek Chwat, who was among the soldiers who had survived Joselewicz and wanted to join the army of the November Uprising. He was an ancestor of the poet Aleksander Wat. In his poem *Próba genealogii* (*Szkic do dwóch pierwszych stanc*), or An Attempt at Genealogy (a Sketch of the First Two Stanzas), Wat mentions his “great-great-grandfather Izrael, a maggid from Kozienice,” a “magician and clairvoyant” whom Prince Adam Jerzy Czartoryski turned to for advice.¹²⁶ And later in this genealogical register and autobiographical confession we read:

*The family was robust. Moskal gave the name Chwatt, the peasant estate.
In the grandfather's mill, in Truskolaski, weapons for the insurgents were forged,
Among them was killed his brother brave, Berek (about whom Korzon writes).*

*Ród był krzepki. Moskal nadal nazwisko Chwatt, stan włościański.
W hucie dziadka, w Truskolaskim, kuto broń dla powstańców,
Śród nich zginął waleczny brat jego, Berek (o tym Korzon pisze).¹²⁷*

Wat was proud of the fact that he descended from such great rabbis and insurrectionists – of the Kościuszko and January Uprisings. It happened over the course of a “300-year-old episode along the cold river Vistula” (*Próba genealogii*).

That was a fine heritage, but it was not always helpful. In recent years we have been able to read what Holocaust survivor Abraham Cykiert remembers his mother saying. When it happened that someone said something bad about Poles/anti-Semites, the outraged mother admonished the speaker: “How can you talk like that? After all, you are of the clan of Berek Joselewicz!” It was her great conjuration, intended to ward off contempt and hatred. But how could “something bad” not be said? We can again quote Cykiert:

American concepts of the multi-ethnic society” is popular, “in which the deciding factor is national perception as a private matter of the specific individual.” The author believes that “individual national rights are no worse in quieting minority needs than national-cultural autonomy.”

126 Based on *Polski słownik judaistyczny*: Hofstein Izrael Icchak from Kozienice, called Izrael [Icchak] from Kozienice, maggid from Kozienice, Rebe from Kozienice (1733-1814), Tzadik and preacher, one of the most important proponents of Hasidism in Poland; an expert on the Kabbalah (vol. I, 606-607). Aleksander Wat's mother came from the family Luria, whose ancestor was Izaak Ben Salomon Luria, a famous mystic and Kabbalist, creator of the Lurianic Kabbalah.

127 Aleksander Wat, *Poezje zebrane*, eds. A. Micińska and J. Zieliński (Kraków, 1992), 432. Tomas Venclova wrote about Wat's family in *Aleksander Wat. Obrazowca* (Kraków, 1997). See also Sławomir Jacek Żurek, *Synowie księżycy. Zapisy poetyckie Aleksandra Wata and Henryka Grynberga w świetle tradycji i teologii żydowskiej* (Lublin, 2004).

“At a congress of Orthodox Jewish schools [before the Second World War] little Abram in a blue yarmulke recited the ‘Mowa Mościckiego nad trumną marszałka na Wawelu [Mościcki’s Speech at the Marshall’s Coffin at the Wawel Castle].’ He had chosen it himself. There was consternation among those listening. As he stepped off the stage, the minister [of education, who was in attendance] stopped him and said: ‘You spoke beautifully, but you have to admit, kid, that you do not understand Polish’. Abram responded: ‘I can assure you, honorable Minister, that I know Polish as well as you, so please do not offend me’.”¹²⁸

Will Polish ministers – since the days of Franciszek Morawski’s memorable statement – always have a tendency to cover us in shame?

10. The First Since Ancient Times

Piłsudski was widely considered the representative of the old idea of *Rzeczpospolita* (Republic), and from this came his patronage of projects designed to honor Berek Joselewicz on the hundred-twenty-fifth anniversary of the hero’s death. Under the auspices of Józef Piłsudski, Marshal of Poland, a work of fundamental importance was published in 1934, *Księga pamiątkowa*, to which I refer often in this book. Berek Joselewicz – as a Jew-wanderer, legionnaire, Maccabee, Polish soldier – was testimony to the ideas of the old Republic and presaged a new citizenship for all. “For years,” the editor of this collection, Majer Bałaban, wrote in the “Przedmowa” [Foreword], “Berek Joselewicz has been for us a symbol of the Jew-citizen who, though he remained true to his religion and his community, sacrificed his health and gave his life for Poland. That symbol was a beacon for future generations, and from him was born the Jews-soldiers of the national uprisings and the Jews who, along with Piłsudski, set out on 6 August 1914 from Oleandry.”¹²⁹ But despite all that, citizenship for Jews remained a problem.

One could think that Kościuszko got carried away by his own rhetoric when he declared that in Warsaw in 1794, for the first time since the “heroic actions of

128 Iwona Hałgas, “Przeżyłem, bo byłem poetą,” *Tygodnik Powszechny* 4 (26 January 2003).

129 Bałaban, “Przedmowa,” in *Księga pamiątkowa ku czci ...*, 7. On Jewish participation in the legions, see the article by W. Konic, “Żydzi w Legionach (1914-1917)” in *Żydzi w Polsce Odrodzonej*, vol. I, 542-550. See also *Spis Żydów poległych w Legionach (1914-1917)*. This is a register of those names, the author states, “that we have been able to establish so far.” Among them is “Motel Lewinson, son of Samuel, veteran of the year 1863, mortally wounded, died on 13 July 1916 as an old soldier.” See chapter X, “Żydzi polscy w czasie wojny światowej i w Legionach” in *Żydzi bojownicy o niepodległość Polski. Ilustrowana monografia w opracowaniu zbiorowym*, eds. N. Getter, J. Schall and Z. Schipper (Lwów, 1939).

Jewish soldiers” in biblical times, Jews demonstrated that they knew how to fight for freedom in an organized fashion with weapons in hand. But this is confirmed by Jakub Goldberg, who highlights the fact that two hundred years ago it was only in Poland where conditions were right, “during the first Polish patriotic uprising [in 1794],” for the “creation of the *first Jewish regiment since ancient times*.”¹³⁰ That regiment was led by Berek Joselewicz, heir to the valor of the ancient Hebrews, the modern “lion of Judah,” the legendary Jewish colonel.

11. The Specter of Conspiracy

Joselewicz has also been viewed this way in the canons of heroic tradition; he was allowed into the Polish discourse as one of the national heroes. Jews-participants in the nineteenth-century national uprisings fought for their place in that discourse, as did Piłsudski’s interwar Jews-legionnaires in connection with the *Związek Żydów Uczestników Walk o Niepodległość Polski* (Association of Jewish Participants in the Struggle for Polish Independence).

But the fact remains that another discourse has been significantly more common, in which Jews appear as Poland’s scheming enemies, excluded from its history. In the coming pages, I will devote further study to several variants of this discourse, at whose center is the claim that Jews are Poland’s misfortune, a disaster for the country – this is anti-Semitism’s founding myth. And the question arises: can such an insidious “misfortune” be part of the heroic history? Of course, it cannot. The gloomy Jewish conspiracy, which is supposed to have accompanied Poland’s heroic history, originated on the margins of history; in fact, that conspiracy has no history. It is always the same; it is a pattern that constantly repeats itself – from Father Stanisław Staszic (1755-1826) to Father Henryk Jankowski (1936-2010). The “Jewish conspiracy” is supposed to be measured against Polish History (in capitals), Polish society, and the heroic history of the Polish people.

12. Addendum on the Holocaust

Although we do not always realize it, the extermination of the Jews defines today’s entire cultural system; it encompasses all of the questions and dilemmas of post-modernity. In Poland, in many disciplines, serious thinking has not sufficiently taken root by which conclusions are drawn about the Holocaust, which

130 Goldberg, “Żydzi wobec wrogów Rzeczypospolitej,” 15 (author’s emphasis – M.J.). See also: Hundert, *Jews in Poland-Lithuania in the Eighteenth Century*, 231.

– in a terrible twist in history – was carried out “on Polish soil.” “The Holocaust was a unique phenomenon. Throughout the history of the world, from time immemorial, imperial wars have been waged, battles instigated with one regime or another. But never in modern history did it ever come to such a powerful explosion of hatred and destruction. Such a statement involves no abstraction or metaphor; it was destruction in the literal meaning of the word. The Nazis’ goal was the annihilation of an entire people using such methods as starvation, execution by shooting, gassing, burning of bodies. [...] An entire culture was supposed to disappear from the face of the earth.” This explains why all attempts “to relativize or play down the Holocaust, or (by comparing it to the actions of other dictators) to lend it a semblance of ‘normality’” provoke such strong opposition.¹³¹

The exceptional nature of the Holocaust forces us to work on revising many basic beliefs. Old, heroic-martyrological patterns from the nineteenth-century often weigh far too heavily on us, stereotypes about “worthy” and “unworthy” death, attitudes regarding the “heroic” and “unheroic,” etc. It seems that especially the traditional humanistic issues and humanistic approaches to thinking about lies and lying demand that we remind ourselves of certain facts about the Holocaust and their interpretation. Only in this way can we fulfill Zygmunt Bauman’s demand that conclusions drawn from the Holocaust be introduced into the mainstream of our study of the present.¹³²

13. “Worthy” and “Unworthy” Death

No road leads from death at Auschwitz to Death in Venice

Jean Améry

That magnificent story (*O wojnie wielkich Niemiec z Żydami Warszawy*, or *On the War between Great Germany and the Jews of Warsaw*) discussed above, told by an author who is otherwise unknown to us today, Stefan Ernest, was written in May 1943. Ernest was hiding in a German district of Warsaw, from which standpoint he observed the Ghetto Uprising. His work – completed after the uprising had been routed – raises a dramatic problem that weaves its way through hundreds of memoirs, novels and academic works: namely, the juxtaposition of the passive attitude of the majority of the exterminated Jews (“lambs to the slaughter”) and the active resistance of the insurgents, who – as it were – saved the honor of those

131 N. Orland, “Żydzi w obliczu nazizmu” in *Nowy leksykon judaistyczny*, 588-589.

132 See Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and The Holocaust* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1989). See especially the chapter entitled “The Holocaust as the Test of Modernity.”

who had been massacred with impunity. Statements from the other side – that is, from the Polish underground press¹³³ – collected by Paweł Szapiro also reveal a contrast between the masses, who were passively led to death, and the Uprising's heroes. "Those who died under the rubble were those who did not want to hand themselves over to the executioners without a fight." They died "choosing a fate more beautiful than the one faced by their fellow Jews carried off to their deaths in Treblinka or Belzec. They died like people in battle, like people inspired by the spirit of Warsaw, which had many times called its citizens onto the road of honor and battle."¹³⁴ Others wrote that those who had put a "soldier's death over a slave's death," who gave true life to the slogan "die with honor," were to be eulogized.¹³⁵ A grandiloquent article from April-May 1943 in *Prawda Młodych* (Truth of the Young), an organ of the Front Odrodzenia Narodowego (Front for National Rebirth), put up a telling interpretation, lined with anti-Semitic prejudices, of the armed resistance of ghetto Jews, which juxtaposed those who took up arms with the mass of contemptible Jews: "For a year now Polish society has watched with indignation and pity the monstrous crime being carried out and met with no attempt at resistance on the part of those being murdered. Tens of thousands of Jews have gone passively into the gas chambers or fallen under a bullet, groveling abjectly in the face of the enemy. And here, suddenly, this very Jewish nation is taking up arms. This very nation is battling heroically." The tone of the anti-Semitic propaganda was audible, which was based – as was so often the case – on a comparison of Jews with insects: They were fighting "in order to die like humans, not like vermin." And the recital of stereotypes about the low, cowardly and deceitful character of Jews continued: "For the first time in eighteen centuries they have risen from degradation." Over the course of those eighteen centuries Jews had been little more than parasites on the body of European nations. "They fought with everyone, but only through artifice, never openly, never with weapon in hand. [...] On the surface, they did not participate in anything. Jewish cowardice became proverbial. They had lost human dignity." Terrible, hard words. Here, praise for taking up arms shares a border with contempt for the defenseless. But the Jews have a chance at redemption – the argument goes – when they reject their parasitic way of life, sacrifice themselves on the altar of burnt offerings, make from their torment a "sacrificial pyre that accelerates rebirth, removing the curse imposed on them. Because in the face of death they can convert to the true faith and redeem themselves in a baptism of blood."¹³⁶ These elevated messianic delusions drew inspiration from the example of romantic military heroism, but also from the spirit of a crusade.

133 Paweł Szapiro, in a conversation with me.

134 Szapiro, ed., *Wojna żydowsko-niemiecka*, 241.

135 Ibid., 264, 336.

136 Ibid., 218-219.

The claim that Jews in the 1943 uprising took up arms in battle for the first time in eighteen centuries (counting from the Bar Kokhba revolt against the Romans in the second century; the much earlier Maccabean revolt was mentioned as well¹³⁷) appeared in underground journalism. But *Głos Demokracja* (Voice of Democracy), put out by the *Stronnictwo Polskiej Demokracji* – the Polish Democratic Party – took strong issue with this opinion, arguing that “the Jewish proletariat in Russia and Poland, pulled into the orbit of battle against tsarism, could boast numerous representatives in fighting organizations, who either perished with guns in hand or gave their lives after assassinations carried out in the name of freedom.”¹³⁸ The article from *Prawda Młodych* quoted above remembered no such militant heroism.

Statements collected by Paweł Szapiro from the underground press, which pretended to be an expression of opinion representing all of Polish society (“us Poles”), share a certain trait, regardless of political nuance, namely the characteristic juxtaposition of Polish and Jewish attitudes: The Poles are marked by the cult of battle and honor, and the Jews – by pusillanimous passivity bordering on degradation, proverbial cowardice and effeminate softness and acquiescence. The *Biuletyn Informacyjny*, put out by the *Armia Krajowa* (AK, the Home Army resistance movement), often praised the Jews in the uprising for their unexpected demonstration of resistance, their “manly, soldier-like decision,” their “manly, determined protest.” “They made the choice between an honorable death and life at all cost”; such are the typical formulations. Especially the *narodowa* (nationalist) press contrasted the two positions with words that were harsh and arbitrary. “The Jews think only about survival, while we Poles are focused on a single idea, and we know that the life of an individual is nothing compared to the sacred issue for which we are fighting.”¹³⁹ The underground press treated Jews locked in the ghetto as citizens of the Polish State, but that was accompanied by the opinion that they could be citizens only when they took up arms, at which point they would take on the features of true citizens of the Republic. Armed struggle could give meaning to Jewish death. “The passive death of masses of Jews created no new values – it was useless; death with a gun in one’s hand can bring forth new values in the life of the Jewish people, giving the agony of Polish Jews a brilliance that comes with

137 Idith Zertal, in her presentation of the Zionist interpretation of the Ghetto Uprising, widely propagated within the Israeli state, emphasized that Zionists combined the armed actions of 1943, the Maccabean revolt and the resistance at Masada in the same “symbol system.” Motions taken by ghetto insurgents were presented as an act of atonement for the passivity of the Jewish masses in the Diaspora (*Israel’s Holocaust and the Politics of Nationhood*, 30).

138 Szapiro, ed., *Wojna żydowsko-niemiecka*, 331.

139 *Ibid.*, 46.

armed struggle for the right to live.”¹⁴⁰ Once again, the Polish heroic myth confirms its profound influence, dividing death into “valuable” and “un-valuable.”

The call for armed heroism from Jews imprisoned in the ghetto indicates a complete lack of understanding about the mental and emotional circumstances of this particular civil society. At the same time, it indicates a lack of awareness – or perhaps appreciation – of the tremendous activities being carried out in the Warsaw ghetto: educational, social, charitable, academic, cultural, and political.¹⁴¹ And the “Jewish war” for survival being carried out behind the scenes has been greatly underestimated. As usual, it is Henryk Grynberg, author of the brilliant *Żydowska wojna* (Jewish War), who expressed this truth most clearly and sharply, recalling the places “where we fought in the spring of 1943, my mother and I, during the Jewish war of survival, in constant retreat.” Grynberg cited a report, put out by General Tadeusz Bór-Komorowski, describing robberies carried out on estates and farms by armed bands hiding in the forest, including Jewish bands, to which Grynberg added this comment: “Sometimes Jews came with weapons to take food and clothing (often left behind by already displaced Jews), much like the partisans under the general’s orders, but while the partisans had a right to do it because they were fighting for Poland, the Jews did not, because they were fighting only for their lives.”¹⁴² This powerful statement reflects the dimensions of the Polish understanding of battle and heroism. At the heart of Grynberg’s work is his effort to describe the Jews’ brave battle for survival – in opposition to the calumny that “they went like sheep to slaughter.” Yet another dimension of this Jewish heroism, this heroism of death, was often explored by none other than one of the leaders of the 1943 Ghetto Uprising, Marek Edelman: “Those who did not fight were heroes, too. Someone who joined his mother so she would not have to die alone is just as much a hero as the one who died with a gun in his hand.”¹⁴³

140 Ibid., 69. This passage from the *Biuletyn Informacyjny* AK is repeated in many other underground publications.

141 Agnieszka Arnold – creator of a 1993 film about the extraordinary work achieved in the ghetto in connection with the Ringelblum Archives – has said: “From memoirs and diaries from the ghetto, and from records in the Ringelblum Archive, one gets a glimpse of tremendous intellectual and cultural resistance just before the Holocaust. [...] There was an eruption of talent and human skill. And in this I recognized an extraordinary kind of heroism and humanity – realized in the midst of social resistance. I was surprised that no one other than Ruta Sakowska had written about it, that it was so hidden. That is why I made the film about the Ringelblum Archive” (“Nienazwane i nieusłyszane. Z Agnieszką Arnold rozmawia Sebastian Matuszewski,” *Kos*, Jubilee edition, 2007).

142 Henryk Grynberg, *Monolog polsko-żydowski* (Wołowiec, 2003), 110, 117.

143 Quote from Witold Bereś, Krzysztof Burnetko, *Marek Edelman. Życie. Po prostu* (Warszawa, 2008), 128.

The most far-reaching ambitions are found in the work of Julian Tuwim, who – in his well-known manifesto, *My Żydzi polscy* (We Polish Jews), which was written in New York in April of 1944 – made a prediction: “The armbands you wore in the ghetto were painted with the star of David. I believe that, in the future Poland, that star, the one from the armband, will be one of the highest honors handed out to the bravest Polish soldiers and officers. They will wear them on their chests with pride, alongside the old *Virtuti Militari*.”¹⁴⁴ It is hardly worth mentioning that Tuwim’s dream had no chance at all of ever coming true. Nonetheless, it indicates that he believed it was clear that the memory of the fate of the persecuted Jews would fall into the category of heroism, which coincides with feelings described by the author of a moving diary from the Warsaw ghetto: “Life under Hitler’s boot, along with the desire among Jews for life to continue, is undeniable heroism. Each of us is a true hero – ordinary, quiet, decorated with no cross of merit.”¹⁴⁵

Ewa Hoffman has accurately pointed out the difference between soldiers affected by battle fatigue and haunted by a sense of humiliation from the First World War and victims of the Holocaust. “The victims of the Holocaust were forced into a greater passivity, subjected to deeper violations. They were not, after all, engaged in a war, and most of them were not in a position to fight in any way. *They were assaulted not for reasons of state, or as enemy combatants, but simply because of who they were* [author’s emphasis – M.J.]. There is no framing of *that* in any meaningful structure, and there was mostly no meaningful action through which they could respond.”¹⁴⁶ In order to survive beyond the concentration camps, their only choice was to hide in the most degrading conditions.

It is significant that some within the Israeli state, juxtaposing the rebels and the masses, have drawn a “total conceptual and existential split” between the insurgents of 1943 and the rest of the Jewish people, who did not take up arms,¹⁴⁷ a split they are able to accomplish – as Idith Zertal has pointed out – because the “Zionist ‘theory of death’ was projected from afar on to the unprecedented circumstances of both existence and annihilation in the ghettos and the death camps,

144 Julian Tuwim, *My, Żydzi Polscy... We Polish Jews ...*, ed. and intro. Ch. Szmeruk (Fundacja Shalom, 1993), 16-17.

145 Piotr Weiser, ed., *Patrzyłam na usta... Dziennik z warszawskiego getta* (Kraków-Lublin, 2008), 77.

146 Ewa Hoffman, *After Such Knowledge: Memory, History and the Legacy of the Holocaust* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004), 43-44.

147 “It was as if to say that the rebels had not emerged from within this people, had not been raised on its traditions; as if it were not in protest against the oppression and murder of this very people that they had risen up and died” (Zertal, *Israel’s Holocaust and the Politics of Nationhood*, 30). Contemporary Zionist ideologues, many of whom have Polish roots, were inspired by concepts from Polish Romanticism.

of which people in Palestine could not have had the slightest understanding."¹⁴⁸ In Poland, the imposition of heroic ideals and a soldier's demeanor onto the mass of civilian Jews imprisoned in the ghetto was consistent with romantic views that called for the necessity of death in heroic battle. Heroic death, as a dignified and aesthetic death, was placed in sharp contrast with undignified death, which was – as described in the *Prawda Młodych* article quoted above – abject and cowardly.¹⁴⁹

The experience of the Holocaust demands that we seriously consider the meaning of civilian death. The division of death into that which is "valuable" and that which is "un-valuable" has to be redefined. Michał Głowiński has rightly opposed "unwise and poorly thought out" opinions on the issue of death during the Holocaust, and believes that it is necessary to state that "everyone who died under the verdicts of criminals died with dignity."¹⁵⁰

Roman Polański understands this well. There is a scene in his film *The Pianist* in which Władysław Szpilman is observing the Ghetto Uprising through the window of his Warsaw hiding place-apartment. Alongside him is a noble-minded Polish woman, who expresses her amazement at the heroism of the Jewish insurgents. She mentions that Jews had always been regarded as cowards, and she assures Szpilman that Poles would soon be taking up battle. Jews who fought died with dignity, Szpilman hears, who then remains silent. The viewer, who has accompanied him from the first days of the war and occupation, knows what the

148 Zertal, *Israel's Holocaust and the Politics of Nationhood*, 26. Author's emphasis – M.J.

149 The stereotype of the Jew-coward, who did not know how to handle a weapon, who was indeed afraid of it, also played a role in decisions about the conspirators' supply of guns in the ghetto. The head commandant of the AK, General Grot-Rowecki, when asked about "handing over arms to Jews in the country for self-defense," answered: "As a test, I handed out a couple of pistols, but I am not sure that they are even using those weapons." In January 1943, an AK counter-intelligence officer reported: "We cannot count on the kind of resistance from the Jews which would warrant giving them guns. The loss of Germans cannot compensate for the value of the guns, and resistance from the Jews does not even deserve mentioning the 'honor of Polish Jews'" (Andrzej Żbikowski, ed., *Polacy i Żydzi pod okupacją niemiecką 1939-1945. Studia i materiały* [Warszawa: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2006], 61, 158). Dariusz Libionka, in his study (included in *Polacy i Żydzi*) entitled "ZWZ-AK i Delegatura Rządu RP wobec eksterminacji Żydów polskich," specifically discusses "factors of a tactical, ideological and psychological nature" which played a role in the issue of arming the *Żydowska Organizacja Bojowa* (ŻOB, the Jewish Combat Organization). Among them was the "stereotype rejecting the notion that Jews had any sort of military aptitude, and the conviction in military circles that Jews had an indifferent attitude toward military service" (ibid., 62). Significantly, the dictionary of Judaism states that "Jewish opposition to Nazism is documented by the fact of Jewish participation in the defeat of Hitler's Germany. More than 1.5 million Jewish men and women fought in anti-Fascist allied forces" (*Nowy leksykon judaistyczny*, 623).

150 Michał Głowiński, *Czarne sezony* (Warszawa, 1998), 33.

Polish lady does not know – and does not want to know. By granting dignity to battling Jews, she has denied that same dignity to Szpilman’s father, mother and siblings, who have already been led to their deaths at Treblinka.

14. Lies

Małgorzata Melchior’s book *Zagłada a Tożsamość. Polscy Żydzi ocaleni na “aryjskich papierach.” Analiza doświadczenia biograficznego* (The Holocaust and Identity: Polish Jews Saved by “Aryan Papers”: An Analysis of Biographical Experience, 2004) provoked one of the most interesting debates in recent years. From an anthropological perspective, Melchior thoroughly examined personal reports and documents of Polish Jews who had lived in hiding on the Aryan side of the ghetto walls. “To be someone else” at that time, she writes, meant above all “to not be a Jew,” but fabricated personal documents and altered personal details did not solve every problem. A deeper metamorphosis became necessary: new ways of behaving and speaking had to be learned, the social code – sometimes an anti-Semitic code – had to be mastered, according to which one had to know how to react appropriately.

Melchior collected a mass of self-assessments, which show that Jews in hiding were perfectly aware of how playacting had become a way of life, and of the dangers that could threaten them in an Aryan “audience.” They talk about “disguising themselves,” “impersonating someone else,” “roll playing,” “putting on masks,” a “comedy act,” a “tragicomedy,” and “pretending.” Eyes and ears were on a constant state of alert. Those “actors” who were not able to play the game had to pay with their lives. The stakes involved in playing one’s role successfully were high – indeed vital. It is no surprise that, because of this, many of those in hiding “on the Aryan side” expressed hatred for this tragic farce, and that it was difficult to hold out in someone else’s skin, when at any moment the mask could be pulled away, and one’s life threatened.

In *Czarne sezony* (Black Seasons), Michał Głowiński wrote about his mother, who survived that entire hellish occupation hiding behind “Aryan papers,” and he claimed that the “deepest psychological injury” she suffered was connected to the “*dom pod orłami*” (Home Under the Eagle) in Otwock. She worked there as a maid, and when nuns from the nearby orphanage brought children to visit this home, she could not reveal that she knew one of those “orphans,” who was in fact her son.¹⁵¹ One can presume that this particular injury was the deepest because this situation – which was highly dangerous – required the most all-embracing kind of lie.

151 Ibid., 83-90.

As Melchior has shown, these new identities could be viewed simply as a tool for survival, but they could also be viewed as the starting point for deeper changes. Nechama Tec confesses: “I became a double person, one private and one public. When I was away from my family I became so engrossed in my public self that I did not have to act the part; I actually felt like the person that I was supposed to be.” This internalized duality, the author-actor writes, “made life easier, and I felt less threatened when Jews were mentioned. I could listen to anti-Semitic stories indifferently, and even laugh heartily with everyone else about some Jewish misfortune. I knew that they were abusing my people, but part of me was like them.” Tec was not at all proud of these changes,¹⁵² but her personal story provides moving testimony to the concealment of one’s secret origins and feelings of parental betrayal.

Such a duality could make life easier, but what is most striking is the fact that some Holocaust survivors suffered from remorse, even guilt, for having pretended and lied. Rarely if ever were such feelings the result of accusations of fraud made by someone else; Melchior has presented startling evidence that shows that, most often, survivors cast such accusations on themselves.

She also cites possible moral justifications for this Aryan lie. Maria Ossowska suggests, for example, that “circumstances exist in which we are allowed to depart from telling the truth.” Anna Pawełczyńska writes that this can happen in extreme situations in which the individual is faced with an immediate threat to life, and with – on a broader scale – the extermination of one’s nation. And yet (Melchior mentions this as well) some of those who lied in order to survive would share the belief expressed by Leszek Kołakowski, namely that “lies are not morally right even when they are admissible and recommended in the name of the greater good.”¹⁵³

At the beginning of his study *O Kłamstwie* (On Lies), Kołakowski writes in fact about the complexity of human affairs, for which an absolute prohibition on lying in any circumstances is “not only hopeless, but (and this is worse) often runs counter to the imperative of kindness toward one’s neighbor or to well-reasoned social interests.” And significantly, by way of confirming this by no means imaginary scenario, he cites an example directly from Holocaust: “If there is a Jew in hiding someplace, and German military police come asking if any Jews are living there, who with an ounce of conscience could claim that, in the name of high principle, that person should be handed over to the executioner for certain death?” Clearly, the Holocaust marks out peculiar boundaries here, though Kołakowski’s statements are not altogether consistent; indeed, his final conclusions are a sign

152 Małgorzata Melchior, *Zagłada a tożsamość. Polscy Żydzi ocaleni „na aryjskich papierach.” Analiza doświadczenia biograficznego* (Warszawa, 2004), 279. For the specific quote, see Nechama Tec, *Dry Tears: The Story of a Lost Childhood* (Westport: Wildcat Publishing, 1982), 144-145.

153 See Melchior, *Zagłada a tożsamość*, 286-291.

that these borders have not been given thorough consideration, among which is the statement quoted above, namely that lies – even when they serve a greater good – are not morally right.¹⁵⁴

Kołodkowski's arguments, inserted into the discussion of how to evaluate Holocaust survivors, triggered a significant reaction. On the one hand, Joanna Tokarska-Bakir questioned both Kołodkowski's opinion and the fact that Melchior quoted him in the context of lies told by Jews in hiding, and she drew this conclusion: "I could agree with the philosopher [Kołodkowski] only if, right after acknowledging that such lies are morally wrong, he recognized that truth in such situations is also wrong."¹⁵⁵ In connection with Melchior's book, Bronisław Świdorski struck the greatest blow against lying during the Holocaust. In his opinion, it might well be that the price of survival was, for example, continued demoralization throughout the survivor's life. "Yes, they survived, but precisely because they crawled, pretended, lied." Those who survived inherited lies and continued to practice lies under communism ("we regarded state lies as something natural," etc.). All things considered, "Kołodkowski is probably more correct," the uncompromising Świdorski claims, who also praises Kołodkowski's "moral rigor."¹⁵⁶

From *Asystent śmierci* (Assistant of Death) it becomes clear that lies, in Świdorski's case, were entangled with his family's larger drama: His mother, having lost a sixty-person family in Treblinka, did not admit to being a Jew until her death in 1992, and his father was a hardcore communist. Indeed his mother in *Asystent śmierci* lies much like the Jewish woman who appears in Melchior's book. She was silent about her origins toward the Polish girlfriend who saved her, and who from the very start confessed that she was an anti-Semite. Environmental anti-Semitism requires lies, and that environment intensifies lies told by Jews in hiding (sometimes throughout a survivor's entire post-Holocaust life). Clearly, Świdorski understands these circumstances perfectly well.¹⁵⁷

154 Leszek Kołodkowski, *Mini-wykłady o maxi-sprawach* (Kraków, 1997), 32-34. The quoted statement about the complexity of human affairs and Jewish survival was probably influenced by experiences in his youth: an apartment in 1943 in Warsaw, a place which was a "true den of conspiracy, where Jews were hiding who had fled the ghetto" (see *Czas ciekawy, czas niespokojny*, part I. Zbigniew Mentzel talks with Kołodkowski [Kraków, 2007]).

155 Joanna Tokarska-Bakir, "Bez próby losowej," in supplement "Książki w Tygodniku" to *Tygodnik Powszechny* (24 October 2004).

156 Bronisław Świdorski, *Asystent śmierci. Powieść o karykaturach Mahometa, o miłości i niewiści w Europie* (Warszawa, 2007), 458-462.

157 Yet Świdorski writes: "The fact that, in order to survive, Polish Jews had to lie is a testament to the moral condition of Polish society. After arriving in Denmark in 1970 I was surprised to hear that Danish Jews, in order to survive, had to speak the truth. They were saved simply by admitting that they were Jews." *Ibid.*, 462.

The stories and accounts collected by Melchior suggest that what we are dealing with here are notions of “worthy” and “unworthy” lives, as well as a moral hierarchy of different types of death. Survival is not treated as a heroic or moral act in and of itself. Głowiński confronts the schema – so popular in Poland – by which the concepts of noble and heroic are understood. “Conspiracy is not limited to military and political action; it also involves helping to save the lives of those who managed to escape from behind those walls.”¹⁵⁸ The Holocaust brings a certain knowledge to bear on the canon of heroism that has not yet managed to spread.¹⁵⁹ Grynberg expressed the belief that, in this absolutely extreme situation, Jewish moral resistance was the greatest test. “Under conditions created by the Holocaust – in which fundamental moral norms had been broken – moral resistance was more difficult than armed resistance.”¹⁶⁰ An evaluation of the ethos of the ghetto and the ethos of the “Jewish war” for survival demands that antiquated stereotypes be abandoned.

Lies told by Jews in hiding do not succumb to patterns emanating from the humanistic glow of goodness, truth and beauty; they have no place in the canon that marks a “pure” and “noble” life off from “impure” and ignoble survival. The conventional borders of tragedy were crossed. Lies involving identity implied life, and in this case one cannot accept the assumption that values are more precious than life because, in the Holocaust, life was the highest value. Tokarska-Bakir quotes the words of Artur Nacht-Samborski that were used during wartime by “Żegota” activists: “Wanda, Poland will win without you; do not distribute those underground pamphlets ... save Jews. A single saved Jew means more than anything else.”¹⁶¹

One need not treat this as an expression of contempt for the underground independence movement, because what emerges here, paradoxically, is the importance of the life even of a single saved Jew. But in order to recognize this, one must abandon ethical arrogance.¹⁶²

158 Głowiński, *Czarne sezony*, 56.

159 Agnieszka Arnold talks about the second part of her film *Sąsiedzi*, in which the daughter of Antonina Wyrzykowska (who was rescuing Jews) says: “My mother is a greater hero than a partisan, because she did not have even a gun,” and Arnold comments: “That simple woman said something so obvious and yet so unsuited to the ethos of Polish heroism [...] Still, heroism can only be about partisans – and common human love of a neighbor is not heroism. But I would like equal recognition for both of those two heroisms” (“Nienazwane i nieusłyszane”).

160 Grynberg, *Monolog polsko-żydowski*, 177.

161 Tokarska-Bakir, “Bez próby losowej.”

162 This is Slavoj Žižek’s term, used in the context of his discussion of the moralistic evaluation of “Muselmänner,” the most humiliated prisoners in the Nazi concentration camps (*The Puppet and the Dwarf: The Perverse Core of Christianity* [Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003]).

II.
POLISH ANTISEMITISM
AND ITS FOUNDING MYTH

To Feliks Tych

Part One

The Enlightenment discourse tended to rationalize and utilize, and this discourse applied to Jews as well, to those foreign particles in societies that one found irritating, offensive. Until then it had been thought that Jews could not be integrated, trimmed to size, or evened out. Most often, Jews in Europe were viewed as distinct, in a negative sense, and special attention was given to the radical (often demonized) otherness of their religion, dress, language, behavior and customs. Christianity had long before worked out the concepts and norms by which “*communication and association* of Jews with Christian society were to be prevented” and the discriminatory “division between Christian society and the Jewish minority” was to be strengthened.¹⁶³

The Enlightenment – at the center of which was the battle against “superstition” – wanted to “civilize” the Jewish religion and thereby make Jews somehow useful. The belief that Jews do not work, and that they – though idle – are constantly attempting to enrich themselves, was common, and of course this belief was reinforced by the fact that many Jews – in part because of socioeconomic restrictions – were heavily involved in trade and money lending. The image of the Jew as parasite, cunning swindler, usurer, speculator and bloodsucker had deep roots in the European imagination. Precisely for this reason Jacques Attali wrote, at the start of his book *The Economic History of the Jewish People*, that he was “well aware of the subversive nature of this subject. It has unleashed so many controversies and brought about so many massacres as to have become a veritable taboo, a topic that must not be evoked under any circumstances for fear of provoking some age-old catastrophe.”¹⁶⁴

During the Enlightenment, the question of how to prevent this “Jewish parasitism” was widely debated, and much was written about how to “make use” of Jews, to turn them into honest, proper citizens who acted in accordance with virtuous social principles. In Poland we can point to two debates that focused on

163 A. Esposito, “Stereotyp mordu rytualnego w procesach trydenckich i w kulcie ‘błogosławionego’ Szymona” in Susanne Buttaroni, Stanisław Musiał, *Mord rytualny. Legenda w historii europejskiej* (Kraków-Nürnberg-Frankfurt am Main, 2003), 120-121. Author’s emphasis – M.J.

164 Jacques Attali, *The Economic History of the Jewish People*, foreword by Alan Dershowitz (Eska, 2010), 1.

these problems, one that took place during the Great Sejm¹⁶⁵, and another connected with the proceedings of the Congress Poland Sejm in 1818. Of course, such discussions also took place later, and they became increasingly significant in the Positivist era, but my interest here is limited to the first two decades of the nineteenth century. I would also like to draw attention to the vitality in the twentieth century of the myth of “Jewish uselessness,” and to the perfidious exploitation of this myth by the Nazis, who deceived Jews being sent to their immediate death with the argument that they were to finally become “useful,” that they were being sent to “work in the East.”¹⁶⁶

Writing today about “using” Jews raises difficulties; certain words conjure up heinous analogies. And genocidal practices have forced us to reflect on a question that emerged already in the nineteenth century: What is to be done with the Jews if it turns out that they cannot be made into useful citizens? Lubliner wrote: “To expel from the country [Poland] all the Jews – that great, two-million mass – is to commit an act of shame and ignominy, and to become a disgrace to all civilized nations.” Lubliner regarded that idea as a negative alternative to the “political, unconditional and direct incarnation of the mass of Jews into the mass that is the Polish nation,”¹⁶⁷ but the fact is that he was able to write of the expulsion of Jews from Poland because such an idea had appeared even before his *Obrona Żydów* (Defense of the Jews) in 1858. What was involved here was not answers to questions, but rather the horizon of the questions; the problem had become, quite clearly, the number of Jews, which makes us ask: was “eliminationist anti-Semitism” looming in the distance?¹⁶⁸

165 See the brochure by E. Deiches, “Sprawa żydowska w czasie Sejmu Wielkiego” (Lwów, 1891) and the thorough work included in the relevant chapters of Eisenbach, *Emancypacja Żydów na ziemiach polskich 1785-1870 na tle europejskim* (Warszawa, 1988). The author emphasized that “in publications and commentary from the time of the Great Sejm the view was promoted, among both the nobility and public administrators, that Jewish society was on a civilizational level lower than other groups in the country,” specifically Christians. Such a claim served as the basis for the conclusion that Jews needed to be “civilized.” The negative stereotype of the Jew mystified social relations (juxtaposing “dishonest” Jews with “honest” groups or social strata), functioned as an “ideological factor,” and favored the “reinforcement of government policies toward the Jewish community, whose aim was to preserve existing legislation toward them” (104-105).

166 See, among others, the chapter “Wielkie kłamstwo” in the excellent work by Michał Marandy, *Nazistowskie obozy zagłady. Opis i próba analizy zjawiska* (Warszawa, 2002).

167 Ludwik Ozjasz Lubliner, *Obrona Żydów zamieszkałych w krajach polskich od niesłusznych zarzutów i fałszywych oskarżeń* (Brussels, 1858), 21-22.

168 Read about this notion of “eliminationist anti-Semitism” in Daniel Jonah Goldhagen’s works: *Hitler’s Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and The Holocaust* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996) and *A Moral Reckoning: The Role of the Catholic Church in the Holocaust and Its Unfulfilled Duty of Repair* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002).

1. The Great Sanhedrin in Paris

Some of the debates carried out in Poland after the French Revolution took on a tone that was consistently under the influence of the French conservatives. Their texts were standard reading for Zygmunt Krasiński – who will be a subject of special interest for us later in this work – and they established the unmistakable repertoire of anti-Jewish accusations.

On 27 September 1791, the French National Constituent Assembly granted Jews their civil rights, the only condition being that they swear a civil oath, which the majority of Jews did. The removal of legal discrimination against Jews aroused a powerful reaction from Christian conservatives. In a lengthy article published in 1806 and entitled “Sur les Juifs” (On the Jews), the famous traditionalist Louis de Bonald warned of the terrible consequences of Jewish emancipation. After all, Bonald argued, they bear God’s curse for the great crime of deicide; they are faithless by their very nature; they hate Christians. There are those who “can let themselves be cheated by Jews, but they cannot allow themselves to be governed by Jews.” Emancipated Jews could become even worse than before; they are simply wild beasts – the freedom given to them will release innate “lower instincts.” Monika Senkowska-Gluck summarized the ultimate conclusion: “And if all of that turned out to be true, then it would be impossible, without great turbulence, to push them back into the condition of dependence from which they had been released, and one would perhaps need to resort to total extermination.” She added that “today’s readers, who are aware of how the implementation of that idea looks in practice, cannot read those reflections of the Christian philosopher without a shiver.”¹⁶⁹ The Parisian advocate, Pojoul, author of a tract also from the year 1806, believed – much like other French and Polish conservatives – that even a Jew who converted to Christianity remains a Jew; nothing can change his innate qualities.¹⁷⁰

One work that towers above all others, and had a decisive influence on conservative thought in the nineteenth century and its offshoots in the twentieth century, is Abbé Augustin de Barruel’s *Mémoires pour servir à l’histoire du jacobinisme* published in 1797-1798. This work was well-known in Poland from the summary put out by Father Karol Surowiecki under the title *Święte tajemnice massonii sprofanowane* (Sacred Mysteries of Profane Freemasonry, 1805), and his *Historia Jakobinizmu, wyjęta z dzieła księdza Barruela* (History of Jacobinism, selected

169 Monika Senkowska-Gluck, *Życie po rewolucji. Przemiany mentalności i obyczaju w napoleońskiej Francji* (Wrocław, 1994), 181.

170 Ibid., 183.

from the work of Father Barruel, 1812).¹⁷¹ Barruel's phantasmic creation was of such strength that his portrayal of the French Revolution as the effect of actions taken by secret societies became the model of all conspiracy theories of history.¹⁷² Barruel described a triad of culprits: The Illuminati – Freemasons – philosophers. Could it be that the Jews were passed over?

Absolutely not. In his *Histoire de l'antisémitisme*, Léon Poliakov shows that, until 1806, anti-revolutionary polemicists generally left the Jews in peace, though Barruel talked of an affiliation between masonry and Jews. But the idea that Jews represented a hostile force that desperately wanted to destroy Christianity was given new life in the wake of an assembly of Jewish notables, convened by Napoleon in Paris in July 1806 from all countries then under French control, and after the Grand Sanhedrin in February 1807. Napoleon (the Usurper, the expected Jewish Messiah,¹⁷³ the Anti-Christ) and the Jews: Now *that* was a myth-creating connection. Cardinal Joseph Fesch, Napoleon's uncle, "warned him that 'the end of the world will come when the Jews are brought together,'" but "Napoleon wrote to his Minister of Cults that 'never since the storming of Jerusalem by Titus could so many enlightened men belonging to the religion of Moses have assembled in the same place.'" ¹⁷⁴ Nonetheless, for many, the council of Jews was the realization of the phantasm that emanated such terror.

Abbé Barruel, who returned to Paris from exile and became canon at the Notre Dame Cathedral, sent out warnings to Church and police authorities. A secret informer had provided him details about the plans of world Jewry, which were confirmed by Pope Pius VII himself. Jews were intending "to become masters of the world, to overthrow all other religions in order to assure exclusive rule by their own sect, to transform churches into synagogues, and to lead what remained of Christians into a state of absolute slavery." All of the misfortune that plagued Christianity could now be explained. Jews were the inspiration for anti-Christian activities; posing as Catholics, they were working to destroy the Church from

171 Recently an exceptional work has been published on Barruel and Surowiecki: Michał Otorowski, *Konspiracjonizm polski. Zapomniana tradycja* (Warszawa, 2006).

172 Lech Zdybel has collected a range of opinions on Barruel's work as an exposition of the "most classic example of conspiracy theory in history." See Zdybel, *Idea spisku i teorie spiskowe w świetle analiz krytycznych i badań historycznych* (Lublin, 2002), 188-190.

173 As Szymon Askenazy wrote, Metternich reported to the Austrian government that Napoleon wanted to "present himself as the liberator of the Christian people of Poland and, at the same time, as some sort of Messiah for the large Jewish population there." But the Jews of the Duchy of Warsaw (especially the Hasidim) were said to have accepted him "not so much as a Messiah, but as Haman" – that is, as their brutal persecutor ("Z dziejów Żydów polskich w dobie Księstwa Warszawskiego," *Kwartalnik Poświęcony Badaniom Przeszłości Żydów w Polsce* (1912) zeszyt 1, 4, 7).

174 Both quotes from Attali, *The Economic History of the Jewish People*, 310.

within. Above all, Jews were portrayed as the leading force in a massive conspiracy. “Possibly here, we find ourselves at the source of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*,” Poliakov writes.¹⁷⁵

Barruel held back the publication of his text, “in fear of provoking an anti-Jewish massacre,” but others did not hesitate. Joseph de Maistre called the Jews an “accursed sect,” and he saw in them a destructive and subversive force whose aim was to undermine the Christian order and serve as an inspiration for all sorts of revolution. “Their money, their hatred and their talents are in the service of a great conspiracy.”¹⁷⁶ Isaiah Berlin highlighted de Maistre’s preoccupation with blood and death,¹⁷⁷ which is of great significance in terms of the influence it had on the imagination of Zygmunt Krasiński.

I emphasize the role of imagination in this regard because we will soon take a closer look at this poet – Zygmunt Krasiński – and his drama *Nie-Boska Komedja* (Un-Divine Comedy), which was published in 1835. But here we can speak of images that sparked the imagination not only of an era, but – even more – of a family. Krasiński’s father, Wincenty Krasiński (who was born in 1812, and was a count, a general in command of a division, and Marshall of the Sejm) published a brochure in 1818 under the title *Aperçu sur le Juifs de Pologne* (Overview of the Jews of Poland), to which I will return in a moment.

2. Early Warnings from Staszic

Stanisław Staszic’s opinions had a great influence on the views of conservative elites in Congress Poland. Staszic devoted a separate chapter to the Jewish issue in his *Przestrogi dla Polski* (Warnings for Poland, 1790), and a quarter-century later – at the beginning of Poland’s pared-down statehood – he developed his views in a work published in 1815 under the suggestive title *O przyczynach szkodliwości Żydów i środkach usposobienia ich, aby się społeczeństwu użytecznymi stali* (On the Reasons for the Harmfulness of Jews and the Means to Dispose Them to Become Useful to Society).¹⁷⁸ Aleksander Hertz treated the views of Staszic and

175 I discuss and cite from Léon Poliakov, *Histoire de l’antisémitisme*, vol. II (Paris, 1981), 144-149.

176 *Ibid.*, 149.

177 Berlin, “Joseph de Maistre and the Origins of Fascism” in *The Crooked Timber of Humanity*, 91-174.

178 I draw citations from these editions: Stanisław Staszic, *Przestrogi dla Polski* [abbreviated here as *PdP*], ed. S. Czarnowski (Kraków, 1926), BN, I, 98, and from *O przyczynach szkodliwości Żydów i środkach usposobienia ich, aby się społeczeństwu użytecznymi stali* [abbreviated here as *O szkodliwości*], *Dziela*, vol. IV (Warszawa, 1816).

Wincenty Krasiński together as “unfriendly” toward Jews, as a “deeply pessimistic assessment of the possibility of Polish-Jewish coexistence,” which “culminated in prewar racism.”¹⁷⁹ The kind of views put forward by Staszic, steeped in ethnic stereotypes, would harden over the course of the next two centuries.

Staszic saw in the Jews “the cause of all of the Polish nation’s misfortunes” (*O szkodliwości*, 217)¹⁸⁰. He alluded to the ordeals of the partitions and of war, and claimed that “even at times of such suffering, the evil handed to us by the Jews is our deepest affliction; it offends the Polish nation above all” (*O szkodliwości*, 219). Referring to devastating plagues on a biblical scale, he even called the Jews “summer and winter locusts” (*PdP*, 185). What had the Jews done to the Polish nation to rise to the level of the main threat? Above all, they had shown an absolute lack of gratitude. Poland had taken the Jews in at the very time that all other European states were expelling them. Instead of being grateful and stopping their irritating ways – that is, rather than coming to a complete standstill – the Jews demonstrated great liveliness and a will to survive, using – however – dishonorable methods. They devastated the peasantry, above all through drink, and they obstructed the growth of industry.¹⁸¹

Their “natural” tendency to do harm and their base character were to blame. They were the “greatest of all sluggards” (*PdP*, 184), always contriving ways to survive without working. Their religion contained an imperative to deceive, found of course in the Talmud (*PdP*, 188). Amazingly, Staszic defined the Jews as “people of no faith.” They were obstinate toward Christians (*PdP*, 188). Staszic called them a “plague, ever more spoiling our unfortunate nation” (*O szkodliwości*, 226),

179 Hertz, *The Jews in Polish Culture*, 17, 13.

180 It has become a widely accepted formula: “The Jews are Poland’s misfortune!” Compare the similar German slogan discussed in L. Heid, “Die Juden sind unser Unglück! Der moderne Antisemitismus in Kaiserreich und Weimer Republik” in Ch. Von Braun, L. Heid (eds.), *Der ewige Judenhass. Christlicher Antijudaismus, deutschnationale Judenfeindlichkeit, rassistischer Antisemitismus*, 2. verbesserte Auflage (Berlin/Wien, 2000). The author cites a statement by the Prussian historian Heinrich von Treitschke, who maintained that “today [1879], as if from a single mouth, we hear: The Jews are our misfortune! [...] and those words are heard even from those who reject with contempt any thought of national arrogance” (116).

181 Staszic and others did not take into account the propination laws. “Because of propination privileges, which gave landowners the exclusive right to produce liquor, and because of propination obligation, by which the peasants were forced to buy or consume a certain amount of alcohol, the nobility took huge profits (See J. Burszta, *Wies i karczma. Rola karczmy w życiu wsi pańszczyźnianej* [Warszawa, 1950] and Żyndul, “Karczma żydowska jako ‘locus delicti,’ czyli próba przestrzennego usytuowania zbrodni rytualnej,” *Teksty Drugie* 4 [2008], 208). So, who forced the peasants to drink? “The right to brew alcoholic beverages was much more the business of the gentry than of the Jews” (Hertz, *The Jews in Polish Culture*, 14).

“our people, the least tainted heretofore” (ibid., 231). “Plague” was an extremely powerful epithet, one with unforeseeable consequences.

Aleksander Hertz discerned here the stereotype of the Jew-merchant who lived according to “another morality. He was scheming and evasive. He thought only about his own profit and sought to cheat Christians. He had all the features that folklore everywhere in a pre-capitalist economy endowed upon every merchant.”¹⁸² This peasant’s view of Jews – supported and fueled by obsessive Church teachings – has survived in Poland until the present day and become a component of contemporary anti-Semitism. An image of Jews came into being that can be called “mythical,” since it involves generalizations having little to do with ordinary, everyday reality, and it attributed to Jews demonic authority and power. The Jew “is an antisocial and anti-Polish creature, an alien element in Poland [...] organically evil.”¹⁸³

Staszic is widely considered an “ideologue of the Polish bourgeoisie,”¹⁸⁴ and his aggression toward Jews can be explained as a defense of the interests of this weaker social stratum that was so close to his nationalist heart. For him, it was out of the question that Jews would be granted civil rights, except in the case of individuals who had fulfilled excessive conditions, about which Staszic wrote at the end of *O przyczynach szkodliwości Żydów...* Since the demonized Jews embody every evil and bring only destruction, it would be justified to use against them “violent means, to destroy the plague with a single blow” (*O szkodliwości*, 247). But such means could not be used. Therefore, Staszic proposed more “patient means.” Since Jews could not be moved out of the country – which Staszic thought was the best method¹⁸⁵ – one had to resort to other, time-tested means of force (for which the Jews, as usual, would be themselves to blame): namely, “to apportion, town by town, places in the country where they would live entirely by themselves, separate from the homes of the nation’s other residents” (*O szkodliwości*, 237-238) – that

182 Hertz, *The Jews in Polish Culture*, 68.

183 Ibid., 204.

184 Eisenbach, *Z dziejów ludności żydowskiej w Polsce w XVIII i XIX wieku* (Warszawa, 1983), 33, and K. Zienkowska, “Stereotyp Żyda w publicystyce polskiej w drugiej połowie XVIII wieku,” where the author wrote that the negative stereotype of the Jew began to grow in strength at the moment when the Christian bourgeoisie wanted to join the nation, which was no longer noble, but rather Polish, and the Jewish-Polish conflict began to clearly stand out (in Jerzy Michalski, ed., *Lud żydowski w narodzie polskim* [Warszawa, 1994], 96-97). See also Barbara Szacka, *Stanisław Staszic. Portret mieszczanina* (Warszawa, 1962).

185 In a note at the end of *O przyczynach szkodliwości...*, Staszic referred to the Tsar of Russia as the one who would liberate Europe from the Jews. What was to be done with them? “Mark out an area for them in Bessarabia and Crimea and resettle them there, in countries until now unpopulated and which are most suited to the attitudes and industriousness of the Jewish race” (248).

is, quite simply to close them into a ghetto. “Our earliest forefathers” acted in this way, and we have carelessly neglected this practice. Staszic vividly described how the Jews would be “under closer supervision” locked in the ghettos, which “will be accessible only through a gate.” The ghetto was to be “encircled by a perimeter that would not allow contact between [Jewish] living quarters and homes of national [Polish] residents” (*O szkodliwości*, 239). Through the pen of this “progressive” ideologue of the bourgeoisie, such suggestions gave new life to medieval methods of isolating Jews in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. And they have ominous tones, foreshadowing the practices of the later nationalists; indeed, in Poland, Staszic’s views are considered a precursor to “Endecja”¹⁸⁶ nationalism.

At this point, we must mention another factor. In his brilliant work *Jews in Poland-Lithuania in the Eighteenth Century*, Gershon David Hundert pointed to the fact that, already in the eighteenth century, “the distance between Jews and Christians [was widening, and] the actions of the Church [to show, from a theological point of view, its superiority over Judaism and Jews] complemented a deeper process that had already begun. Increasingly, Jewish and Christian Poles would be separated, ‘the Jew’ would be seen as the other, and a modern, *mono-ethnic* Polish national consciousness would develop. The effect of the Church’s onslaught against Jews was to exclude them from Polish national identity as it was crystallizing.”¹⁸⁷

For Staszic, one of the motives that justified such severe treatment of the Jews was his belief that they are a “secret corporation, a mysterious order.” Staszic mentioned other secret groups (e.g., the Illuminati and Freemasons), who – despite everything – “have their eyes, at least in part, set on the national cause.” But the Jews seek “in every way to damage a hospitable nation,” and out of all the known groups, the Jews are the most dangerous because they are the best organized. Their “secret and uninterrupted” contrivances work systematically toward the destruction of the national order and of the nation itself (*O szkodliwości*, 235-236). Jews locked in ghettos could continue to devise their plots, but Staszic predicted this and wanted – among other restrictions – a tight ban on “secret meetings, discussions and actions” (*O szkodliwości*, 241). The Jews as a dangerous internal enemy: Here, in Staszic, we find the modern version of that phantasm that would play such an important role in the history of the next two centuries. If one considers the notion of the Jew “as an enemy who should be hated and combated,” or as the enemy who is responsible “for our misfortunes and who should be destroyed” as an indicator of anti-Semitism, then Staszic deserves to be called an anti-Semite.¹⁸⁸

186 Translator’s note: The term “Endecja” is a reference to the pre-World War II right-wing National Democrats led by Roman Dmowski.

187 Hundert, *Jews in Poland-Lithuania in the Eighteenth Century*, 77. Author’s emphasis – M.J.

188 Hertz (*The Jews in Polish Culture*, 75) uses the terms quoted in the first half of this sentence only in relation to anti-Semitism in the second half of the nineteenth century and the

Staszic's views also had a practical dimension. Kajetan Koźmian, a member of Congress Poland's conservative elite, mentioned in his memoirs his participation in the debate on the "contrivances of the Jewish people," which the Council of State planned to consider at the beginning of 1817. "At the suggestion of Stanisław Staszic, Koźmian prepared a comprehensive 'political-historical' report, in which he refuted individual articles of the already submitted liberal project. The Council of State, accepting his point of view, rejected that project and asked Koźmian to draw up a Council report for [Tsar] Alexander I. 'So I composed a document', Koźmian wrote, 'the namiestnik recommended it to the Emperor, and the emancipation of the Jews was never discussed again'." Artur Eisenbach, from whose work I cited the above description of events, added this interesting point: The fact that Koźmian reminded readers years later (1854-1855) about his own opposition to Jewish emancipation "had a clear, didactic goal," namely to suggest to the landed gentry that such opposition needed to be maintained.¹⁸⁹

3. A Moral Conflict

Let us return to Wincenty Krasiński's abovementioned brochure. What image of the Jews emerges from the authoritative statement of a count, a general, and a Marshal of the Sejm? What is striking are feelings of ethnic disgust and deep estrangement, which are justified – much like with Staszic – on the basis of a moral conflict: On the one hand there are old-Polish virtues, and on the other hand, the "mentality of grubby profiteers [*geszefciarzy*]" who accumulate great wealth trading "without subtlety and with no sense of honor."¹⁹⁰ The Jews' ill-gotten gold,

twentieth century. The first edition of Hertz's book appeared in 1961. In his introduction to the new edition, Czesław Miłosz pointed out that Hertz wrote the book in America, "far from the place where the abyss opened, *abyssos*, and I think that had he been one of the few survivors there, in Poland, he would not so easily have written such a tranquil book" (Hertz, *Żydzi w kulturze polskiej* [Warszawa, 2003], 15). In contemporary usage of the notion of "anti-Semitism," it is difficult to separate oneself from the shadow that the Holocaust casts over the last century.

189 See Eisenbach, "Polemika wokół sprawy żydowskiej w prasie emigracyjnej w latach 1856-1860," *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego* 1 (1980) 26-27. Koźmian's political and social views are presented in the highly interesting work by Maciej Mycielski, "Miasto ma mieszkańców, wieś obywateli." *Kajetana Koźmiana koncepcje wspólnoty politycznej (do 1830 roku)* (Wrocław, 2004).

190 Wincenty Krasiński, *Aperçu sur les Juifs de Pologne par un officier general polonaise, nonce à la diète* (Warszawa, 1818), 13. In parentheses I provide the page numbers from this work. See also: "O Żydach w Polsce. Tłumaczenie nowo wydane w Warszawie w francuskim języku dziełka przez pewnego generała polskiego, posła na Sejm," *Rozmaitości* 8 (1818).

their coat-of-arms, becomes an object of contempt, but also of envy. A second feature of Jews – again, much like with Staszic – is the speed by which they reproduce. Taken together, all of this makes it possible for Jews to create “practically a state within a state” (23). General Krasieński maintained that the Jews had isolated themselves as a nation “inside a nation” by their own choice, “always oppressed, always sticking together, striving toward their own goals, waiting for the new Messiah, and not believing in that which we worship” (4). Thus, “they represent a difficulty that is almost insurmountable for any government” (4). They are “citizens of the entire world” who “possess huge wealth,” and who submit themselves “only superficially to the laws of the land in which they live” (3). In fact, they are dependent on “unknown leaders” (4), as subordinates of a “single Superior, who is dependent on a Superior general, who resides in Asia and has the title of Prince of slavery” (33). It was understood that Jews are being led by an invisible hand, and remain in contact through secret meetings. Organized in such a way, they “paralyze all government attempts to bring them into the national fold and confer on them the mark of being native” (5). Our country is particularly vulnerable to their insidious actions directed from afar. Krasieński clearly states the danger: “the reshaping of noble and virtuous Poland” into another Judea. The defense of Poland as a gallant and Catholic entity emerges here as a noble goal.¹⁹¹

The terrible specter of Jewish mastery over Poland – the creation by Jews of a Judeo-Poland in which Jews are not assimilated into Polish culture, but Poles are assimilated into Jewish culture – emanates from an anti-Semitic pamphlet from the year 1820 by Niemcewicz entitled *Rok 3333-ci, czyli Sen niesłychany* (The year 3333, or the incredible dream). In this gruesome dream, Warsaw is re-named Moszkopolis, and on the Polish throne sits a Jew, King Moszko XII.¹⁹² A novel by Julian Brinken (we will have more to say about this work in our discussion of

191 Significantly, in the year 1862, when the patriotic movement before the January Uprising was demanding equal rights for Jews, Archbishop Zygmunt Szczęśny Feliński wanted to maintain the discriminatory separation of Jews from Poles, and he justified this view in a speech to a patriotic delegation in the following way: “Jews have been sent by God to Poland in order to drain the gutters – in the age of exchanges, trade and swindles – of all the scum with which the clean, noble hands of Poles – meant for other purposes – should not defile themselves.” The archbishop also sent out a circular in which he prohibited giving absolution to workers of, and anyone else providing services to, Jewish entrepreneurs (see Eisenbach, *Emancypacja Żydów*, 494). The separation of Jews from Catholic Poles was to reach into every social stratum.

192 See Roman Brandstaetter, “Moszkopolis,” *Miesięcznik Żydowski* 7-8 (1932); Niemcewicz, “Rok 3333-ci, czyli Sen niesłychany,” *Przegląd Poznański* (1858), vol. XXVI; and Niemcewicz, *Rok 3333-ci, czyli Sen niesłychany*, with an introduction on the Jewish issue in Poland (without signature), Warszawa, 1913. On Niemcewicz’s vision, see the study “Staro-

Jews and Mickiewicz), who by no means sympathized with the Frankists, ends with a scene in which a foreigner in this future Warsaw, to his own amazement, meets more passersby who look Jewish than those who look Slavic. A fear of an apparent assimilation – which would never eliminate the racial traits of the Jews – is what dictated this hateful vision.

General Krasieński informed his readers about movements preoccupying Judaism in Poland, and painted a picture of new Jewish threats. He mentioned Sabbatai Zevi, discussed Hasidim, and devoted the most attention to Jakub Frank and the “political-mystical sect” he had established.¹⁹³ The Frankists, who received collective baptism in 1759-1760, those supposedly converted Jews, those sinister “neophytes” acting as false Christians, became a curse on the house of Krasieński. They had to be ruthlessly exposed as Jews in fact. In his brochure, the general cited something that he treated as one of Frank’s maxims, namely that “a Jew always remains a Jew” even if he “acts publicly in accordance with the religious customs dominant” in any given country. Everywhere and always, Jews are able to land on their feet. They always stick together and seek to control key positions. In every capital, the resident dean “chooses and defines the profession to which every child of a neophyte should devote himself: Administration, police, the army, trade” (29). Reformed Jews are not better Jews, since they enjoy privileges in our societies that are far too great.

So, what could be done about it? Having presented the great danger posed by the Jews, the general then showed a certain level of generosity, and in a sense, a crack appears. Wincenty Krasieński, at the end of his brochure, referred to several regulations designed for Jews, which were to be implemented without locking them into ghettos – as Staszic wanted – but which nonetheless included plans for total control of births, marriages, and deaths; education, jurisdictions, and changes in dress and language. Marcin Wodziński has argued that this program complied with the enlightened standards of the day, and was even acknowledged by representatives of the Jewish Enlightenment, the Haskalah.¹⁹⁴

But the brochure’s conclusion is at odds with its main contents, which justify treating *Aperçu sur le Juifs* on the same footing as Staszic’s work (which Aleksander Hertz does). What is important here are the ideas-images-matrices of fantasy, etched in memory, such as the broad Jewish conspiracy driven by its own objectives; the associated machinations of converts; the threat that Poland would

zakonni Polacy Niemcewicz” in my book *Do Europy tak, ale razem z naszymi umarłymi* (Warszawa, 2000).

193 Wodziński points out that Wincenty Krasieński, “in his ignorance,” tied the rise of the Frankists with the rise of the Hasidic sects. See Marcin Wodziński, *Oświecenie żydowskie w Królestwie Polskim wobec chasydyzmu. Dzieje pewnej idei* (Warszawa, 2003), 85.

194 *Ibid.*, 48.

be Judaized. All of these phantasms of danger and threat surface in the works of Wincenty's son, Zygmunt Krasiński, who would always emphasize the fundamental differences between the two moralities: "Jewish" and "Polish."

4. The Specter of Elimination?

The fact that the general's little work contained thoughts about the Jewish threat looming over Poland, and that that work could inspire more radical solutions, is indicated by a brochure written by one of his adherents, also published in 1818, under the title *Sposób na Żydów czyli Środki niezawodne zrobienia z nich Ludzi uczciwych i dobrych Obywateli* (An Approach to the Jews, or Dependable Means of Making of Them Honest and Good Citizens). Its author was probably Gerard M. Witowski.¹⁹⁵ The title itself suggests certain enlightened tendencies, but how perversely they were used!

From the beginning, the author writes in tones that – one could reasonably argue – invoke demonological associations.¹⁹⁶ Solutions suggested by the general – the author declares – were not adequate to push back the evil he unambiguously attributed to Jews. Above all, Jews make up their own "corporate interest," through which they justify every sort of mean behavior; by nature they are swindlers, whose activity is excused by the Talmud; they are characterized by an ever-present "indifference to any sense of morality."¹⁹⁷ In the author's opinion, the example provided by the Frankists showed that "more liberal education" can change nothing. Contempt and disgust once protected us against the Jews, but converts had forced their way into "the temple of citizen privileges" and were able to ruin the nation at will; over time, they could become "the country's leading figures" (23). They all manifested the same Jewish "nature." The Jew – "shaved or bearded" – is always the same. Nothing can change him; he simply cannot be reformed.

The not-so-distant example of the Frankists raised disgust and justified the search for definitive measures. General Krasiński, whom the author of *Sposób na Żydów* thought was richly endowed "with a love of humanity, the true qualities of a knight" (5), was not able – because of his great nobility – to prescribe the proper, radical medicine. But the author of this brochure did not hesitate in this regard, us-

195 Wodziński (ibid., 76) rejects the idea that Wincenty Krasiński authored this brochure and accepts the hypothesis that Gerard M. Witowski wrote it.

196 See Joshua Trachtenberg, *The Devil and the Jews: The Medieval Conception of the Jew and Its Relation to Modern Antisemitism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1943).

197 [Witowski], *Sposób na Żydów, czyli Środki niezawodne zrobienia z nich ludzi uczciwych i dobrych obywateli. Dziełko dedykowane posłom i deputowanym na Sejm 1818 r.* (Warszawa, 1818), 9. In parentheses I provide the page numbers from this work.

ing surgical metaphors: what was needed was amputation. Aleksandra Sekuła accurately described the comparison that immediately comes to mind: namely, that of Jews with gangrene.¹⁹⁸ Their forced seclusion became the only remedy, which raises memories of the great expulsions of Jews from Spain and the Russian guberniyas.

One problem involved finding a place where the Jews could be sent. Here, the author turned for help to “Our Benefactor,” “the greatest of all Monarchs ruling today” (13), Alexander I, known for his “boundless love for humanity.” That noble ruler could allow for a “new colony” to be established “on the borders of the Tartary or some other place in the southern parts of this extensive land” (13).¹⁹⁹ Jews would be alone with themselves, and would no longer be able to deceive even each other. Maybe then a “sense of honor and glory” – something so dear to the author – would develop among them, and they would be forced to become decent people (17). The only condition seems to be that that metamorphosis take place outside the domain of the virtuous Poles.

The author set out extensive plans for this forced exodus, which “of course would be paid for by the Israelites themselves.” After all, they possessed great wealth. “In order to not deprive us of capital, the Jews would need to hand over their rights to the government, which in return would feed the Jews during the march and equip them with their initial needs in the colony” (16). The need for expropriation did not worry the author. Indeed, plans were drawn up in the inter-war period for the forced resettlement of the Jews at their own cost, since – it was argued – the money did not belong to them; it had in fact been stolen “from us.” Near the end of the brochure, the author admitted that foreigners would be necessary for the development of the Kingdom’s economy, but they could not include Jews, with their “disgraceful morality.”

198 See Aleksandra Sekuła, “Fantazmat macierzyński.” This text was provided to me in manuscript form.

199 Józef Gołuchowski entertained similar notions, which Eisenbach called “the leading ideology of the conservative landowners” (*Emancypacja Żydów*, 427). Convinced of the moral and social fall of the Jews, that they “are the nation’s disaster,” and guided by a notion of what was good for them, Gołuchowski did not see how equal rights for Jews, assimilation, or even baptism could improve the situation. Jews always were, and always would be, a foreign body, a “nation within a nation.” The only solution was to get rid of them once and for all, and not just from Poland, but from all civilized countries of the world. Gołuchowski outlined a bold plan to resettle the Jews in a “separate province” to be created in Russia. In order to reach that goal, he would bootlick the Tsarist Empire. “The sewer of Jewish people in a separate province” would be known as a venerable monument to Russia in human history. “Russia would gain in moral authority, would win the sympathy and admiration of peoples, would glory in its own existence” (see J. Gołuchowski, [Klemens Przezor], *Kwestia reformy Żydów* [Leipzig, 1854], 66-67). Descriptions of this sublime project were dripping with hypocrisy, a fact which seems to have eluded the author.

In the feverish visions of the author of *Sposób na Żydów*, a mass of Jews would march divided into 300 columns with a thousand persons each, moving at the rate of two miles per day, etc. This radical's impatience was so intense that he foresaw this march taking place "in the spring of 1819, just after the Jewish Easter" (14). He explained his ruthlessness with the argument that the Jews needed to be "separated from us" – they needed to be "subtracted" from our numbers (the author repeats this expression many times) – as soon as possible, before they managed to completely corrupt the Poles. He argued that, in such operations, "there is no middle ground," mediation would do no good. The Polish nation, as the most virtuous, had to be separated from Jews, who were by nature immoral. Their tribe had to be ripped out by the roots and thoroughly eradicated, in a clear statement that the Jews, as evil incarnate, had no place on Polish soil. It is difficult not to categorize ideas put forward by General Krasieński's adherent as *eliminationist* (to use Daniel Goldhagen's terminology), the emotional and intellectual preparation for the final eradication of the Jews. And in this process, the identification of Jews with that which is diabolic – derived from Christian demonization – played a central role.

5. The Threat of Revolt

One of the most important items in the list of Jewish threats presented above is missing: namely, the Jews' inclination to engage in revolution. But that element emerges in a brochure by Ludwik Janowski entitled *O Żydach i judaizmie, czyli wykrycie zasad moralnych tudzież rozumowania Izraelitów* (About Jews and Judaism, or Detection of the Moral Principles and Reasoning of the Jews).²⁰⁰ Judaism's most important aspect, in Janowski's view, was this: "The principles of the Jewish religion and the Jews' political position always provide them a clear path to revolutionary thinking and to the collapse of all other nations, on the ruins of which a great and powerful Israeli Kingdom is to be built: One must thus always consider the Jews as nothing other than sworn enemies of the country" (7). In pursuit of this goal – that is, Jewish control over the world – the Talmud (which at the time was condemned within the Enlightenment community as an example of fanaticism, and within the Church as anti-Christian) allowed them to use any means necessary in the battle against their greatest enemy – Christianity.

Of course, Jewish conversion was a fraud. Neophytes accepted "the Christian faith only for show while they keep Jewish maxims and the Shabbat close to their

200 *O Żydach, czyli judaizmie* (Warszawa, 1819); updated in a somewhat expanded version: *O Żydach i judaizmie, czyli wykrycie zasad moralnych tudzież rozumowania Izraelitów przez J.* (Siedlce, 1820). In parentheses I provide the page numbers from the second work.

hearts” (21). Janowski openly attacked the Frankists for playing their duplicitous game. For them, Christianity was just a “mask for the dissemination of Judaism” (30). What we see here is some sort of Wallenrodism by converts, which might help explain why Krasiński once wrote: “Wallenrodism is Judaism.”²⁰¹

The fact that neophytes combine two strengths into one – Judaism and Christianity – struck terror in the hearts of men like Janowski; their Christian goals were just a pretense behind which they hid the fact that their Jewish goals remained the most important. This explains why converts “hold their meetings in the back street” (25) and have to hide and plot secret conspiracies. This is a “national infection” (26), and in order to kill off that infection, in order the gain control over this “nation within a nation,” appropriate discriminatory policies need to be implemented, for example a ban on marriage between two converts as far as the third generation, or a prohibition on Jews holding any national public office (29-30). What is the threat if we do not pull ourselves together and nip the possible Jewish revolt in the bud? With further questions, the author defines a vision that some scholars consider one of the possible inspirations for Krasiński’s *Nie-Boska Komedia*: “So I ask myself, if those couple million Jews, including the neophytes, upon the appearance of a Jew or convert of great genius, might start a revolution? Would it not frighten us deeply?” (27)

Mateusz Mieses downplayed these signs of fear with the words: “A phantom of fear without reason,” and he referred to the fact that, over the course of several generations, Frankist neophytes blended into the Polish nation, performing great services on her behalf.²⁰² But in Congress Poland, as the Jewish question was being debated so vigorously, visions of a connection between Jewish ingenuity and revolution could occupy men like Father Alojzy Ludwik Chiarini and Krasiński, who were hostile to alleged Talmudic artifice.

201 This is from a letter to August Cieszkowski in 1848; later in that letter, Krasiński maintains that Mickiewicz is an “excellent Jew” – a notion from which he derived his idea of Wallenrodism (this revolves around the behavior of a person who has devoted his entire life to the battle for the independence of his fatherland, and is forced to use methods that conflict with Christian teachings and chivalric ideals – deceit and betrayal – methods considered to be the only available “weapons of slaves.” The model for such behavior is the eponymous character of Mickiewicz’s poetic novel *Konrad Wallenrod*. What emerged from the reception of this work was a conflict – tearing at the Polish consciousness – between politics and morality, between the ethos of conspiracy and the ethos of chivalry. The ethical aspect of Wallenrodism returns again and again in debates and discussions, journalistic commentary and literature, throughout the nineteenth century). This entire question is discussed in detail in my book *Zycie pośmiertne Konrada Wallenoda* (Warszawa, 1990), 230-231.

202 See Mateusz Mieses, *Polacy – chrześcijanie pochodzenia żydowskiego*, vol I (Warszawa, 1938), XXX-XXXI.

Abraham G. Duker pointed out that the famous novel by Jan Czyński about the November Uprising contains certain Frankist concepts that exaggerate Jewish influence in the year 1830 and call attention to the vision of the glory of the false Messiah: “The treasures of the world are in our hands; we have the numbers, strength, intellect, and gold; God has given us our guide, and on the ruins of paganism, on the ruins of thrones, we will build altars to god and justice.”²⁰³ Such revolutionary rhetoric characterizes the opinions of one of the novel’s characters, Handelsman, who believed in the imminent arrival of the Messiah and the deliverance of Israel. Similarly, Mickiewicz once drew a connection between the Jews and ruthless European revolutionaries. In his *Księgi pielgrzymstwa polskiego* (*Books of the Pilgrims*, which is often counted among works from Mickiewicz’s “anti-Jewish period”) Mickiewicz writes of the merciless law of “Moses, and Joshua, and Robespierre, and Saint-Just” (XVIII, 1056-1057). Duker emphasized that this vision preceded the publication in 1835 of *Nie-Boska Komedia*, and that – perhaps – Mickiewicz discussed with Krasiński the brochure *O Żydach, czyli judaizmie*, which had appeared anonymously in Warsaw in 1819.²⁰⁴ Later, by the time he was leading his polemic against Krasiński’s drama, Mickiewicz had already changed his opinions regarding Frankism.

6. Christian Blood

Continuing this line of reasoning, I would like to draw attention to a footnote in the abovementioned brochure that refers to ritual murders carried out by Jews. Janowski claims bluntly that “secret murders of Christians take place here [...] since Jews require blood for certain holidays.” They are shrewd and it is difficult

203 Jan Czyński, *Cesarzewicz Konstanty i Joanna Grudzińska, czyli Jakubini polscy*, intro. K. Bartoszyński (Warszawa, 1956) 281. This novel was first published in 1833. Duker’s commentary is on p. 305 of his work “Polish Frankism’s Duration: From Cabbalistic Judaism to Roman Catholicism and from Jewishness to Polishness: A Preliminary Investigation,” in *Jewish Social Studies* 4 (1963).

204 See Duker, “Adam Mickiewicz’s Anti-Jewish Period: Studies in ‘The Books of the Polish Nation and of Polish Pilgrimage’” (Jerusalem, 1975). Reprinted from the *Salo Wittmayer Barron Jubilee Volume* (American Academy for Jewish Research), 318. The author of this brochure maintains that “the principles of the Jewish religion and the Jews’ political position always provide them a clear path to revolutionary thinking” (3). After citing Judaism’s central maxims, which widen hatred of Christians, the author draws attention to the neophytes (the converts), who accepted Christianity only superficially, “keeping in their heart their Jewish maxims and the Shabbath” (14). Such a deceitful nation “cannot be reformed,” he concludes, unless you destroy the Qahals, outlaw the Talmud and prohibit neophytes from marrying other neophytes “until the third generation” (15).

to prove their actions. “And yet we have convincing evidence” (16-17). On a certain phantasmal level, the lust for Christian blood among Jewish blood libelers is connected to their revolutionary endeavors.

A reply to the “absurdities” contained in this little work was authored by Samuel Baum and appeared in 1821 under the title *Odpowiedź autorowi bezimiennemu pisemka „Żydzi i judaizm” w Siedlach wydrukowanego* (Reply to the Author of the Anonymous Pamphlet *Żydzi i judaizm* Published in Siedlce). The main point behind Baum’s argument is “to clear the Jews of these most terrible and abominable aspersions,”²⁰⁵ that is, of the ritual murder of Christian children. He addresses the accusers of Jews as “My dear and respected Christians” and “Enlightened Men” to encourage them to acquaint themselves with the books from which they supposedly derived their wisdom, and to not make use of “various ephemeral writings” filled with ravings of doom brought on by Jews. He establishes that the Jewish Talmud is not guided by a spirit of hatred, and that Jews are created “from the same material as other humans” (35). Baum called for a stop to those writings, but soon thereafter Father Chiarini was claiming that in 1827 ritual murder was again being attempted in Warsaw, and that the Talmud exudes the poison of hatred toward Christians. Jewish defenders put forward arguments against Chiarini, regarding him as nothing more than a slanderer, but it was of little use, at least in the case of Zygmunt Krasiński.

Father Chiarini (1789-1832) was a professor at the University of Warsaw and a trusted friend of Wincenty Krasiński. After being pensioned off by the university, he moved into the Krasiński home and became Zygmunt’s teacher. He was regarded as an expert on the Talmud and Judaism in general and was known especially for his two-volume work *Théorie du judaïsme, appliquée à la réforme des Israélites de tous le pays de l’Europe, et servant en même temps d’ouvrage préparatoire à la version du Talmud de Babylone*, which was published in Paris in 1830.

The young Krasiński was very close to Chiarini. While living in Geneva he wrote letters to Chiarini, and in letters to his father he “bowed most sincerely” to his mentor and revealed his strongest affections. “I commend myself to Father Chiarini and remain his most loving pupil”; “Father Chiarini is one of those people whom I most respect and love.” He also reported that Chiarini’s *Théorie du judaïsme* was being sold in Parisian bookstores.²⁰⁶

205 Samuel Baum, *Odpowiedź autorowi bezimiennemu pisemka “Żydzi i judaizm” w Siedlacz wydrukowanego* (Kraków, 1821), 7. In parentheses I provide the page numbers from this edition.

206 Krasiński, *Listy do ojca*, ed. and intro. Stanisław Pigoń (Warszawa, 1963), 88, 267, 119 (letters from the years 1830-31).

Undoubtedly Krasieński was steeped in Father Chiarini's views, which were clearly enunciated in the extensive two-volume work mentioned above. As he revealed in a dedication letter to Tsar Nicholas I, Chiarini had been drawn to his study of the Jews by their vast numbers in Russia and Poland and by their dark fate. The question that most troubled Chiarini was bathed in the spirit of the Enlightenment: Can the Jews be made happier by making them more useful? Perhaps they could be, but only under certain conditions. First and foremost, they had to be weaned from the Talmud.

Among the world's holy books – in this context Chiarini mentioned the Hindu Vedas, the Scandinavian Edda, the Persian Zend-Avesta and the Koran – only the Talmud was “shapeless chaos, a cesspool of errors and superstition where all the mad delusions of fanaticism collect.” “The Talmud's yoke is an overwhelming burden for those who live according to its principles, as well as for those who live among its scattered followers.” In Chiarini's view, the Talmud represents “the most oppressive religious despotism, the most sophisticated fraud, the most shameless intolerance, whose sinister spirit, emerging from the impenetrable darkness that surrounds it, has threatened, and continues to threaten, the entire world.”²⁰⁷

Chiarini was simply an anti-Talmud visionary, and this certainly had a tremendous effect on the young Krasieński. The Talmud had to be exposed, unmasked – these were the goals of the author of *Théorie du judaïsme*, who did not hesitate to attribute to it orders for ritual murder. Dawid Kandel has described the pernicious effects of the appointment – made by the Committee working in Congress Poland on the “reform of the Jews” – of Chiarini as an expert on Jewish affairs. “The Committee's work on the moral reform of the Jews was difficult and sensitive, and it required great tact and prudence,” but under Chiarini's influence, it “concentrated its efforts, in a way which was both abrupt and ruthless, on the immediate, violent and radical detachment of the Jewish people from the Talmud.”²⁰⁸

Ignacy Schiper, presenting Chiarini as but a self-proclaimed expert on Jewish affairs, called him a “deceitful Italian,” a “fierce Jew hater,” and at the same time a “complete ignoramus” on questions related to the Talmud and Hebrew literature. Nonetheless, “under Chiarini's clear influence, the Committee [*Komitet Starozakonnych* on the Jewish issue] took the position that there needed above all to be a reform of the Jewish religion, which ‘deviates from the order of Moses’ and – being an ‘unformed collection of principles covered in thick darkness and infused with fanaticism and intolerance’ – has contributed to the fact that the Jews ‘have not changed over the course of centuries, have always avoided work,

207 Chiarini, *Théorie du judaïsme, appliquée à la réforme des Israélites de tous le pays de l'Europe*, vol. I (Paris, 1830), 6, 7, 11.

208 Kandel, “Komitet Starozakonnych” in *Kwartalnik Poświęcony Badaniu Przeszłości Żydów w Polsce* (Warszawa, 1912), zeszyt 2, 100.

been greedy and unwilling to integrate themselves into the larger population.’ Therefore,” the Committee concluded, “the Jews must be liberated from the ‘yoke of the Talmud’.”²⁰⁹ Chiarini’s anti-Talmudic crusade, carried out in the name of enlightened progress, brought deplorable results. Its “insinuations awakened a powerful anti-Semitic movement within certain national governing circles.”²¹⁰

Chiarini was a kind of personal liaison between ideas and debates about Jews in Congress Poland on the one hand, and Zygmunt Krasiński on the other. Bogdan Burdziej, in his profound work “Izrael i krzyż” (Israel and the Cross), argues that Krasiński could have drawn the “conclusion that Jews had hostile intentions toward those most close to him” from the polemics carried out in the press by Jewish authors against Chiarini.²¹¹ Is that the reason Jewish authors were confronting accusations of ritual murder thrown at Jews by Chiarini?

Let us go to the source, that is, to a book published in the middle of 1831 by a distinguished representative of enlightened Jewry, Jakub Tugendhold.²¹² It contains an extensive introduction by Tugendhold himself as well as a translation – with a preface by Moses Mendelssohn – of a treatise by Rabbi Menasseh Ben Israel, in which he rebuts accusations that Jews “need Christian blood.”²¹³

209 Schiper, *Przyczynki do dziejów chasydyzmu w Polsce*, with introduction, notes and print preparation by Zb. Targielski (Warszawa, 1992), 117-18.

210 Kandel, “Komitet Starozakonných,” 103.

211 Bogdan Burdziej, “Izrael i krzyż. U Podstaw ideowych ‘Nie-Boskiej komedii’ Zygmunta Krasińskiego” in eds. G. Halkiewicz-Sojak and Burdziej, *Zygmunt Krasiński – nowe spojrzenia* (Toruń, 2001), 230.

212 Jakub Tugendhold was a prominent representative of the Haskalah, that current of enlightened Jewish thinking. One can trace the intellectual peripeteia of the Haskalah in his example, and those set by his successors. In the work cited above, Marcin Wodziński describes, thoroughly and intelligently, Tugendhold’s attitude toward Hasidism, which he did not try (as others did) “to exclude from the womb of orthodox Judaism” as ignorant and fanatical (151). Rather, he treated Hasidism “as a noble and valuable religious movement, though not flawless, in the womb of Judaism” (149). However, as Wodziński presents it, the positivistic concepts of the Haskalah weakened considerably, along with the larger positivist movement, at the end of the nineteenth century. An interest in Jewish folklore, modern Yiddish literature, the philosophical aspects of Hasidism (thanks to the work of Martin Buber), a return to mysticism, along with modern anti-Semitism and socialism and Zionism, together led – as Jerzy Tomaszewski writes in his review of Wodziński’s book (*Midrasz*, June 2003) – to a “questioning of the Haskalah’s enlightened rationalism” and its “civilizing” and integrative program. The Haskalah – despite its clear merits in the struggle against anti-Jewish prejudices – became a thing of the past.

213 Tugendhold, *Obrona Izraelitów przez Rabbi Menasse ben Izrael czyli odpowiedź tegoż, dana uczonemu i dostojnemu Anglikowi na kilka jego zapytań względem niektórych zarzutów Izraelitom czynionych oraz rozprawa o czynionym ludowi starozakonnemu zarzucie*

Chiarini's work was not warmly received in academic and literary circles. Tugendhold cites reactions from French and German sources, but also a thorough and devastating Polish critique (by Abraham Stern), contained in a Polish-Hebrew lexicon, in which the work was described as a "despicable compilation" with over 900 errors and inaccuracies (cxviii-cxx). Tugendhold suspected that Chiarini embodied the conceit of an "Italian in a foreign country" who believes that his "shallow harvest, especially in a subject known to only a very few, will not be closely examined and could pass as a masterpiece" (cxxviii).

In *Théorie du judaïsme* there is mention of attempted ritual murders in Warsaw in 1827. Chiarini responded to claims that he was revitalizing accusations common in the Middle Ages by saying that, of course, the assertion that Jews were poisoning wells and rivers had to be rejected since it is "improbable according to the laws of physics." But "threatening lives" was quite another matter: "People who insist on maintaining the discarded religious and moral teachings contained in the Talmud and other tomes required by the synagogue are capable of such acts" (Tugendhold, cxxxvi). It must be emphasized here that Chiarini was a man who wanted to be regarded – and was regarded – as an expert on the Talmud! Tugendhold, barely able to contain his rage, argued that Chiarini had no evidence at all to support his absurd claims, and until he supplied such evidence (it was clear that he could not supply it) he would be proclaimed a "slanderer and a despicable liar." It is interesting that Tugendhold suggested that, had Chiarini been living in France, "his insolence would be called not before the court of public opinion, but before a correctional court" (cxxxvii). Thus, Tugendhold believed that this "false and malicious allegation" was being made "only by common people" (cl) and "only in Poland" (xvi).²¹⁴

Why had this "inhuman accusation" been formulated (Tugendhold wrote a multi-page polemic against the "sordid" work of Father Stefan Żuchowski, printed in 1713 and addressing Jewish crimes²¹⁵), and why was it again being raised?

potrzeby krwi chrześcijańskiej do jakiegoś obrządku religijnego czy też do innego jeszcze użytku (Warszawa, 1831). In parentheses I provide the page numbers from this edition.

214 A modern scholar of this issue writes: "In light of research conducted so far, there is no doubt that the majority of accusations and trials for ritual murder on the territory of the Republic took place in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, that is, at a time in Western Europe when we – practically speaking – no longer see them" (J. Wijaczka, "Oskarżenia i procesy o mordy rytualne w Rzeczypospolitej w XVI-XVIII wieku" in Buttaroni, Musiał, *Mord rytualny*, 206).

215 Hanna Węgrzynek („Czarna legenda” Żydów. Procesy o rzekome mordy rytualne w dawnej Polsce [Warszawa, 1995], 203) gives us the original title of this work, published in Sandomierz: *Proces Kryminalny o Niewinne Dziecię Jerzego Krasnowskiego. Już to trzecie Roku 1710 dnia 18 Sierpnia w Sandomierzu Okrutnie od Żydów zamordowane. Do odkrycia innych kryminalów Żydowskich, Dla przykładu sprawiedliwości potomnym wiekom.*

A lack of enlightened education has often been given as the main reason, but perhaps there were other reasons, about which we will speak in a moment.

Chiarini himself maintained that the motive behind his writing was “philanthropy, a desire to improve the fates of Jews,” but this was regarded as little more than hypocrisy; as Tugendhold claimed, “accusations, imputations and insults against the Jewish religion and its followers meander through this work without end” (cxxi). “The hatred that the author exudes toward Jews” (cxv) is surprising – despite everything – given that it is being expressed by a Catholic priest.

Tugendhold and other critics of *Théorie du judaïsme* demystified the purpose of Chiarini’s work by focusing above all on its charge that Jews practice ritual murder; the work’s goal was “to incite the minds of honest Poles and honorable Christians of other countries, and thus to revive the long vanished severe persecution of the beleaguered people of Israel” (cxxi). Tugendhold also made use of a letter published on 23 January 1830 in *Gazette des Cultes. Journal consacré aux matières religieuses*, whose author called *Théorie du judaïsme* an “incendiary piece of writing” and treated the section on ritual murder as proof of the “extent to which madness can move a mind full of superstition and blinded by passionate hatred” (cxxxiv). Ignorance gives rise to pernicious hatred – such is the sequence in the enlightened reasoning of Chiarini’s critics – but it can also serve as the impetus behind terrible deeds.

Critics were convinced that the author of *Théorie du judaïsme*, along with other advocates of the myth of ritual murder, were guided by “lingering fanaticism” (iii) and a “lust for persecuting Jews” (cxvi). Can one call that anti-Semitism? It appears that, on the basis of the monstrous and fabricated accusation that Jews need Christian blood, Tugendhold was able to define the phantasmal character of anti-Semitism. “Indeed, intolerance and fanaticism, those terrible monsters from hell, have their own creative force; without elements, without a core, they derive their creations from nothing, and while they are but empty apparitions, they have deceptive and virulent effects” (xxxv). Even those whom we would not suspect were vulnerable could succumb to their powers.

Earlier Tugendhold had written about the “painful bitterness” he felt – how he was filled with sadness – by a story he heard two years earlier from one of the “well-known Christian doctors here,” who claimed that he saw with his own eyes a child murdered by Jews using “the most perfect art for the extraction of all blood from the child’s body” (xxix). Tugendhold was stunned, and when he expressed his outrage, it was met by silence from those attending the Warsaw salon. Tugendhold would return many times in his writing to the silence that surrounded the base accusations directed against Jews. What could he do about it? We find

Father Musiał extracts some frightening quotes from this (*Czarne jest czarne* [Kraków, 2003], 30-38).

an answer, though oblique, in one of the footnotes: “Who in Poland, where such false and inhuman accusations are still heard, should blush with shame? The Jews or the Christians?” (clvii). Neither the teacher, Chiarini, nor the pupil, Krasieński, was the least bit ashamed.

7. Myth and the Face

Accounts of ritual murders allegedly carried out by Jews reveal the existence of a certain type of persecution narrative.²¹⁶ The staging of events usually has the same features as a literary plot. As conceived by common folk, this scenario can be summarized in a single sentence: Jews kidnap “for matzah” and – pressing out the blood – torment the Christian child. This story was carried through the centuries, in folk legends, church sermons, and hagiographic writings.²¹⁷ Joshua Trachtenberg described Jews appearing in these narratives as invented Jews, “theological Jews.” To the European peasant – a Church follower – that Jew bore little resemblance to the real Jew, “the neighbor whose friendship he enjoyed and with whom he worked and dealt.”²¹⁸ This disparity had to be overcome by instilling in the minds of parishioners the notion that Jews only appear to be no different than other

216 In recent years this narrative has been transferred to “Satanists” (who are not far from “Jews”). Catholic societies and the Catholic press have condemned the “promotion of Halloween” among Polish children. As Andrzej Oseka reports, *Nasz Dziennik* (30 October and 1 November 2004) printed an article by Father Aleksander Posacki SJ in which the author draws a connection between Halloween and the ritual murder of children, like what – in his opinion – Celtic druids did on that October night years ago, and Satanists do today (“Dyńia i opętanie,” *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 6-7 November 2004). We see here a mechanism at work similar to what Thomas Caliò describes: when a local Italian parish priest in 1970 felt the need to silence anti-Jewish statements, he thought to “direct accusations of ritual murder not toward Jews, but toward some undefined sect or a group of devil worshippers, or some other heretics of that time” (“Kult rzekomych ofiar mordu rytualnego w drugiej połowie XX wieku we Włoszech” in Buttaroni, Musiał, *Mord rytualny*, 233).

217 Rainer Erb also points to the significance of forced confessions under torture and of trial documents copied for use by various authorities. The story was “disseminated and explained not only through chronicles and literature, but also by trial protocols. Songs, games, paintings and sculptures in churches and private homes testified to ‘Jewish crimes’.” With the invention of print came new possibilities for propaganda and to extend its reach” (“Legenda o mordzie rytualnym od początku do XX wieku” in Buttaroni, Musiał, *Mord rytualny*, 15). See also the foundational work of Tokarska-Bakir, *Legendy o krwi. Antropologia przęsądu* (Warszawa, 2008).

218 Trachtenberg, *The Devil and the Jews*, 162. It is also worth noting the “exposure” of the Jew in Singer’s *The King of the Fields*. He is called a Jew only after a Bishop appears in the ancient community on a white horse and accuses him of deicide.

people; in fact, they are masters at pretending and cheating. The term “mythical Jew” – as opposed to the “real Jew” – appeared in the work of Jerzy Jedlicki, and it was the real Jew who fell victim to “insults, ridicule, pogroms, murder, and blackmail.” But always – we might add – the distinct features of the mythical Jew served – and continue to serve today – as a justification for violence. And it was precisely this mythical Jew who committed ritual murder, for which the real Jew paid the price. It is enough to remember that the pogrom in Kielce in 1946 started with the suspicion that a ritual murder had taken place. The strongest and most justified attempts to refute such accusations do not convince those who thought – and continue to think – that Jews commit fraud and crimes harming Christianity. It works like this because the mythical Jew, who “rules the world in secret,” is – as Jedlicki suggests – “in many Christian minds irreplaceable and cannot be killed, since he is immortal.”²¹⁹ This peculiar dehumanization of the Jew started with anti-Judaism.

Let us consider the categories used by Slavoj Žižek in this context of anti-Semitism. According to Žižek, one must postulate that the concept of the Jew in anti-Semitism has nothing to do with Jews. There is a discrepancy between the ideological figure of a Jew and everyday experience – that is, in dealing with a real Jew, who could easily be one’s good neighbor. But anti-Semitism as an ideology removes this contradiction with the argument that the Jew’s true nature is hidden behind the mask of everyday life. Thus, the ideological image of the Jew comes out victorious. “An ideology really succeeds when even the facts which at first sight contradict it start to function as arguments in its favor.” In this way, the coherency of ideology, and a coherent view of the world, are maintained.²²⁰

The figure of the Jew finds itself at the center of Chiarini’s activities. In my analysis of *Nie-Boska Komedia*, I will make use – because of the work’s literary instrumentarium – of concepts of myth, political myth, the “mythical Jew,” and the “mythological Jew.” Of course those two expressions – ideological and mythological – merge with one another.²²¹

It has often been argued that all Christian superstitions pertaining to the Jews come into focus with accusations of ritual murder. Ritual murder organizes Christian demonology, turns the Jew into a sorcerer, evil incarnate, an evil demon, or

219 Jerzy Jedlicki, “Wiedza jako źródło cierpień,” one voice in the discussion of the article by Jan Tomasz Gross “Niepamięć zbiorowa” in *Tygodnik Powszechny* 32 (22 August 2004).

220 Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, 2008), 50.

221 If one trusts Marie-France Rouart, the “good” Christian sacrifice of cleansing and its parody – the “bad” criminal sacrifice (such as ritual murder) – hide a common “archetypal reality,” which connects them and yet separates and opposes (“Pozory argumentacji, archetypiczna realność: Oskarżenie o zbrodnię rytualną na Zachodzie” in Buttaroni and Musiał, *Mord rytualny*, 33-36). I will return to this thought in my analysis of *Nie-Boska Komedia*.

the devil. Trachtenberg recognizes that, even though “the medieval conception of the Jew [...] is so foreign to our modern point of view, to many, no doubt, so incredible [...] it must still be reckoned with in our own time.”²²² In Poland as well. At the very center of the demonization of Jews – derived from the Middle Ages – is ritual murder. Actions taken by the Church and its followers are intertwined with stories of saintly children allegedly tortured to death by Jews. As Dawid Kertzer has shown, even in the times of the “enlightened” Popes of the twentieth century, there was no shortage of stories of ritual murder, recounted in religious periodicals controlled by the Vatican.²²³ For ages, paintings representing savage Jews torturing little Christian martyrs were hung in churches in, for example, Italy and Austria, and local cults for these supposed victims were maintained.²²⁴ When it comes to Poland, it is enough to remember the dramatic battle led by Father Stanisław Musiał not long ago to remove from a sacred space (the Church of St. Paul in Sandomierz) images portraying brutal scenes of ritual murders allegedly carried out by Jews.²²⁵ What is most essential to anti-Semitism comes together in such images, namely that Jews themselves must always be held responsible for the violence used against them. Sympathy for the victims of massacres is thus not necessary, an attitude which was reaffirmed during the Holocaust. We find an exception to this rule in the great empathy shown by Father Musiał, who wrote that “one must make an effort, in thought and imagination, to visualize those hundreds of faces during torture and the thousands, indeed hundreds of thousands of Jews

222 Trachtenberg, *The Devil and the Jews*, 7.

223 See David Kertzer, *The Popes Against the Jews: The Vatican's Role in the Rise of Modern Anti-Semitism* (Vintage, 2002). On the medieval Popes who tried to resist accusations of ritual murder made against Jews, see J. van Banning SJ, “Watykan i mord rytualny” in Buttaroni and Musiał, *Mord rytualny*, 61-73. That author points out, however, that the “orders of three Popes were not always effective on the local level, where they were opposed under pressure from the people” (74).

224 Church authorities have retreated from (and Vatican II has abolished) the cult of “martyrdom” that had been based on accusations against Jews of ritual murder. Georg R. Schroubek writes about resistance from the faithful against the Episcopal prohibition on the practice of these cults, though he thinks that those who worship the young martyrs allegedly killed by Jews are losing ground, and the “too long, depressing and shameful chapter in the history of piety” is coming to an end (“Zagadnienie historyczności postaci Andrzeja z Rinn” in Buttaroni, Musiał, *Mord rytualny*, 175). Perhaps this judgment is too optimistic. Thomas Caliò cites examples of Italian cults that have not been abandoned by the Church. The Hebrew journal *Shalom* expressed the opinion that it is not at all so easy to part with the cult of the child martyred by the Jews, since it is so “deeply rooted in the folk consciousness (or subconsciousness!).” See “Kult rzekomych ofiar,” in Buttaroni, Musiał, *Mord rytualny*, 233.

225 See “Żydzi żądni krwi” and “Droga krzyżowa Żydów sandomierskich” in *Czarne jest czarne*.

with fear written on their faces because – at any moment – a suspicion of ritual murder might fall on the Jews.²²⁶ For Father Musiał, the testimonies of Jewish faces – faces as understood in the spirit of Emmanuel Levinas – were decisive.

8. The Image of the Eternal Enemy

With the myth of alleged ritual murder and its real-life consequences in mind, we can trace how it was that anti-Judaism became anti-Semitism. We recall that many scholars shared Hannah Arendt's belief that anti-Semitism is a creation of the twentieth century, and with regard to earlier times, one must speak of patterns that preceded anti-Semitism. But even they tended to agree with Christhard Hoffmann, who – next to the primary political and social-historical (the industrial revolution) factors – also took into account long-term cultural-historical and attitudinal factors, and granted them significant meaning. In this light, “ideological transformation” falls between “Christian anti-Judaism” and “modern anti-Semitism,” and “the essential structure of anti-Jewish arguments remains the same.”²²⁷

226 Ibid., 45.

227 See J. van Banning, “Watykan i mord rytualny” in Buttaroni and Musiał, *Mord rytualny*, 74. The author refers to the work of Ch. Hoffmann from 1994: *Christlicher Antijudaismus und Moderner Antisemitismus*. Romuald J. Weksler-Waszkinel writes about anti-Judaism as a “religiously motivated anti-Semitism,” and believes that without the centuries of Christian hatred of Jews it would have been impossible to implement a plan of physical extermination “on such a massive scale – in the middle of Christian Europe” (*Zgłębiając tajemnicę Kościoła...* [Kraków 2003], 303). The author refers to, among others, Jules Isaac's book, *L'enseignement du mépris: les racines chrétiennes de l'antisémitisme*. Jerzy Jedlicki – in connection with the reissued work of Aleksander Hertz – wrote that the boundaries between the old church anti-Judaism and modern anti-Semitism “were clear neither in propaganda, nor in the practice of persecution.” Referring to the book by Alina Cała, *Wizerunek Żyda w polskiej kulturze ludowej* (Warszawa, 1992), he pointed to the placement of one upon the other and confusion in the human mind. “It was, after all, no different in Jedwabne or Kielce, where the justification for murder was political and religious transformation (“Cień kasty,” *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 30-31 August 2003). Recently, Anna Wolff-Powęska has thoughtfully presented church sources regarding anti-Jewish prejudices (*A bliźniego swego... Kościoły w Niemczech wobec „problemu żydowskiego”* [Poznań, 2003]), and Sławomir Buryła completed a brief review of opinions on this question (“Antyjudaizm czy antysemityzm? Kilka znaków zapytania,” *Studia Judaica* 1 [2004], 95-110). The author refers to Zygmunt Bauman, who emphasized throughout his *Modernity and the Holocaust* (1989) that modernity inherited the concept of the “Jew” detached from real Jewish men and women living in cities and villages. Precisely this was the legacy of “the mythical Jew.”

The figure of the “theological Jew” – laced with ethnic-religious stereotypes – is highly explosive under the influence of ideological phantasm, which in turn can advance forward into a vengeful act.

Poland at the beginning of the nineteenth century – as one can easily imagine based on even a cursory review of what I have presented here – became a breeding ground for anti-Semitic attitudes, which were occasionally eliminationist in nature. I accept the definitions Goldhagen offered in his two books; he emphasizes that the term “eliminationist” does not necessarily refer to killing, but rather to a desire to get rid of the Jews and their real or imagined influence, one way or another. And Catholicism is an essential backdrop to procedures directed toward the goal of removing Jews. “The antisemitism that the Church had spread implied or even openly asserted that Jews had to be eliminated from Christian society, such as by forced conversion or expulsion, *even though the Church and its bishops did not call for their mass murder, and even though they often made a point of enjoining their faithful against committing violence.*”²²⁸ As Trachtenberg, Goldhagen and other historians of Catholic anti-Semitism emphasize, the Church incited its followers with images of Jewish iniquities, while at the same time calling for mercy.²²⁹ The reception these works received was as ambivalent as the works themselves, and we must remember that G. Witkowski in 1818 and J. Gołuchowski in 1854 wanted to rid Poland of the Jews using rather brutal methods – in the name of love for the nation and humanity, indeed for the good of the Jews themselves.

Nie-Boska Komedia is in part an outgrowth of the mentality of Congress Poland’s conservative elite. It is here where the central ideas that shaped the image of the Jews in Krasiński’s drama were formed:

1. The Jewish drive to gain control over the world through conspiracy;
2. The Talmud teaches hatred for Christians;
3. The Jewish lust for Christian blood;
4. Converts – false Christians, plotting deceitful conspiracies;
5. Revolution as a tool in the hands of Jews.

One might ask: From where does Jewish subject matter – so conceived – derive its ideological significance? The Krasiński family’s patriotism had special nuances – feudal allegiances toward rulers in the case of General Krasiński, and in Zygmunt Krasiński’s case, his romantic conception of the nation. Stated briefly, a modern nationalism grew out of romantic soil. In 1932, Ludwik Oberlaender pointed out

228 Goldhagen, *A Moral Reckoning: The Role of the Catholic Church in the Holocaust and Its Unfulfilled Duty of Repair* (New York: Knopf, 2002), 25. Author’s emphasis – M.J.

229 Trachtenberg explains: “The writings and sermons of the militant leaders of the Church inevitably whipped up public opinion and led to wild attacks upon the Jews, which these same leaders often felt bound in all conscience to deprecate” (*The Devil and the Jews*, 163).

that “although the National Democrats, and particularly Roman Dmowski, opposed – unambiguously and in no uncertain terms – the use of Polish romantic slogans, the romantic element is, despite everything, so powerful and durable in Poland that a total liberation of Polish nationalism from the romantic influence is out of the question. That is why we have not seen in Polish nationalism so far a negation of Christianity. [...] We see, rather, a strong Catholic emphasis as a social pillar and a link with the Latin culture of the West.”²³⁰ The “Pole-Catholic” is the core of the Polish national idea.

The modern concept of nation moves the qualities of identity and cohesion to the forefront. In principle, those qualities are unattainable, given the fact that modern collectivity is always internally and immanently antagonized, which is why – as Žižek writes – “every process of identification conferring on us a fixed socio-symbolic identity is ultimately doomed to fail. The function of ideological fantasy is to mask this inconsistency [...] *fantasy is a means for an ideology to take its own failure into account in advance.*” It is best then to invoke the figure of the Jew: the external element, the foreign body that tears at the healthy fabric of society. The project of an entirely homogeneous, transparent collective existence puts up an obstacle, as it were, in the form of the “Jew,” who appears as “an intruder” and “introduces from outside disorder, decomposition and corruption of the social edifice [...], whose elimination would enable us to restore order, stability, and identity.”²³¹

Of course, history is more complicated than what Žižek presented in his brilliant – though, by necessity, schematic – work. However, this reasoning holds true on the basis of both the dominant landowning class and the burghers of Poland, who were coalescing around the idea of a closed nation (quite different than Kościuszko’s vision of a multi-national and multi-religious *Rzeczpospolita*), of a nation defending itself against “foreign influences” under pressures from the partitioning powers. National and Catholic tradition put forward a convenient image of the “enemy” – the Jew, who over time was viewed as a greater misfortune than each of the three partitioning powers, even the three taken together. These terms – “misfortune” and “national misfortune” – must now accompany us constantly. They are the key to understanding the kind of mentality that dreams of social and national unity and solidarity, and that generates the image of the Jewish threat.

230 Ludwik Oberlaender, “Współczesne ruchy nacjonalistyczne a antysemityzm,” *Miesięcznik Żydowski* 7-8 (1932), 7.

231 Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, 142-144.

Part Two

1. A Wound on the Body of Poland

When Krasieński was living in Geneva in 1830 he came across a freshly published book edited by Leonard Chodźko entitled *Tableau de la Pologne ancienne et moderne* (A Portrait of Old and Modern Poland). He found there a reprint of the brochure written by his father in 1818, *Aperçu sur le Juifs de Pologne*. Still in a state of great emotion, he confided the following in a letter: “You will not believe, Papa, what an impression it made on me to find my dear Papa’s name.” The reprint includes a list of all General Krasieński’s titles, which his son quotes.²³² We must place “My dear Papa’s name” as an inscription at the beginning of this discussion of *Nie-Boska Komedia*. The “Name of my Father.”

What was the young Krasieński – in view of his thoughts of, and about, his father – able to derive from this new edition of *Tableau de la Pologne*, which contained a variety of information (described in the work’s subtitle) along with reprints of tracts with publisher annotations and supplements?²³³ After some comments on the geographical location, climate and customs of Poland and the character of its inhabitants comes chapter five, “Żydzi w Polsce” (Jews in Poland). After that we find historical and geographical descriptions of the Polish regions and a “Krótki rys historii Polski” (A Brief Outline of Polish History). Jews were thus set apart as a group, belonging rather to ethnography than Polish history. Their placement outside the course of Polish history would seem to be significant; it was, so to speak, the removal of Jews from the “central narrative.” To be sure, Wincenty Krasieński informed his readers about the historical actions taken by Polish rulers toward Jews, but – because of the book’s structure – the general impression of seclusion, of remaining “outside the border” could not go unnoticed.

232 Krasieński, *Listy do ojca*, 158 (letter dated 12 July 1830).

233 See Leonard Chodźko, ed., *Tableau de la Pologne ancienne et moderne, sous les rapports géographiques, statistiques, géologiques, politiques, moraux, historiques, législatifs, scientifiques et littéraires, publié en un volume par Malte-Brun*. Nouvelle édition, entièrement refondue, augmentée et ornée de cartes par Leonard Chodźko (Bruxelles, 1830). In parentheses I provide the page numbers and columns from this edition. This was a revision of a rare, 1807 work by the famous geographer Conrad Malte-Brun that included numerous corrections and updates to the year 1829. After his arrival in Paris in 1826, Chodźko visited the famous scientist. Malte-Brun agreed to a reworking of the *Tableau*, but he died at the end of that year. In agreement with the heirs and the publisher, Chodźko undertook the new edition, which was fundamentally altered.

Chodźko printed an abbreviated version of *Aperçu sur le Juifs de Pologne* but he also included his own text (in two passages), which is in itself quite alarming, and which focuses on the notion that Jews reproduce at an intimidating pace,²³⁴ that they are dependent on nameless leaders, are guided by invisible hands, and treat the places where they were born as strange and foreign, etc. He also paraphrased statements made by Staszic and others who had participated in the Congress Poland debates about the Jews' immeasurable riches and – in the same breath – their idleness; about their cunning and fraudulent activities; and about the thievery that was especially widespread among Jews in Poland. Jews are always able to find for themselves one of the easier professions, because they dislike hard work. They have a tendency to be disloyal (evidence of this, for example, was the spying conducted for Russia in the Napoleonic years of 1806-1812; scheming Jews were supposed to have contributed significantly to the defeat of the French army), and they have a tendency to be cruel (in Wilno, they mistreated the remnants of the *Grande Armée* during its retreat from Warsaw in hopes of gaining recognition from Russia). Examples of Jewish depravity included selling their own wives and daughters into prostitution and setting up their own brothels. Chodźko used the word *abjection* to describe the feeling that the Jewish people cause.

Despite attempts at reform, “the Jews remain for Poland a wound that heals with great difficulty” (40b), one which will fester without end. But help is on the way! A second figure emerged, Zygmunt Krasiński's favorite after his father, namely Father Chiarini. He was called an “enlightened philanthropist” (both of these words are, to say the least, out of place; compare the critique of Chiarini by contemporaries in Part One of this section²³⁵), and in his two-volume work he posed an important question: Can the Jews be made happy and useful in the countries where they live? This wise and profound scholar – Chodźko gushed – carrying the torch of knowledge, descended into the abyss which divides us from the Jews, and he did so through a literal interpretation of the Talmud (which – we might add – was supposed to finally expose Jewish hatred of Christians). Chiarini could contribute radically to the disappearance of the most incurable, painful wound on the body of Poland. The comparison of Jews to “wounds” appears twice in this short text, and has great symbolic significance.

For solace, at the end Chodźko mentions Berek Joselewicz and his regiment as Jews who nobly fought for Polish independence in 1794 (he also discusses other stages of Joselewicz's biography up until his heroic death – as an officer in the army of the Duchy of Warsaw – in 1809), and the “literary and academic talents” of Salomon Maimonides, Załkind Hurwic and Abraham Stern. “Poland can

234 Chodźko reported that, in the year 1824, there were 20,720,000 people living on territory defined by the pre-1772 borders, and among them were 2,100,000 Jews (39a).

235 He was known as a “persecutor of Israelites.”

be proud that they have seen the light of day in our country” (42a). Quite clearly – Chodźko seems to be saying – there are exceptions whom Poland could accept into its history, but the rest – that is, the mass of Jews – have to be judged harshly though fairly, as a foreign and hostile object in the womb of noble Poland.

It seems that the *Tableau* tugged Zygmunt Krasiński’s imagination toward both a recognition of authorities back home and an affirmation of the education he had received there, even though he would soon fall into conflict with his father, in a series of letters, over the November Uprising.

2. Crusade

I have discussed *Nie-Boska Komedia* many times through the years, presenting it as a Christian tragedy of human rebellion and a romantic metaphysical drama set in the world of history; it had various sources of inspiration, derived particularly from French traditionalistic historiosophy. I have also addressed Krasiński’s catastrophism; in an article “Katastrofa i religia” (Catastrophe and Religion) I wrote that “apocalypse” and “salvation” are opposed to one another, and it is difficult to foresee the ultimate meaning of that opposition in *Nie-Boska Komedia*. Krasiński’s imagination stops at the precipice of discontinuity and draws images of reconciliation amidst the necessity of catastrophe. Ruthlessness – reducing everything to ashes of apocalypse – and the devastating, menacing beauty of death collide with religious faith in salvation through God’s love.²³⁶ I have also examined the genesis and role of the Converts in view of the revolution presented in Krasiński’s drama.

The abovementioned article by Bogdan Burdziej, “Izrael i krzyż,” published in 2001, drew my attention to the notion that I did not take into sufficient consideration – despite everything – the religious, crusade-like dimension of Krasiński’s drama. To Burdziej, what was involved here was a battle with the enemies of Christianity and the struggles of the followers of true Christianity.

Burdziej highlights the fact that Count Henryk reacted with the religious fervor of an inquisitor when, before talking with Pankracy, he referred to the great fathers: “Faith in Christ and his church, blind, inexorable, ebullient, the inspiration for our work on earth, the hope for eternal glory in heaven, let it descend upon me and I will murder and burn our enemies; I, the son of a hundred generations, the last heir to your ideas and valor, your virtues and errors” (102).²³⁷ Believing in

236 See Maria Janion, *Wobec zła* (Chotomów, 1989), 114.

237 In parentheses I provide the page numbers from this edition: Krasiński, *Nie-Boska Komedia*, 9th ed., intro. Maria Janion, text and notes by Maria Grabowska (Wrocław, 1966), BN I, 24.

the victory of his crusade, he promises to build on the necks of the rebels a “new church of Christ” (90).

In Burdziej’s opinion, Krasieński borrowed imagery from epochs in which battles against Christianity had already played themselves out: “Julian the Apostate, the Enlightenment critique of religion, libertinism, the practical atheism of the French Revolution, Freemasonry’s religious ideology, Saint-Simonism and other unorthodox movements, and the contemporary confrontation of Christianity with Judaism.”²³⁸ It was widely believed in Krasieński’s day that Jews were behind a majority of these ideas and activities, and in this light Burdziej argues consistently against Juliusz Kleiner, who believed that *Nie-Boska Komedia* painted a vision of the end of the world. “The battle against Christianity presented in Krasieński’s drama is not the final act of the total destruction of the Church (and all the churches on earth),” Burdziej writes, “but rather an episode analogous to the destruction of temples and the revival of old cults, or the establishing of new cults in the time of Julian the Apostate and during the French Revolution, an episode that is closed with Pankracy’s death.”²³⁹ And he further argues that, in Krasieński’s drama, the end of the true enemy of God – Satan – has not yet come. “After all, Krasieński presented an un-divine comedy of human history; what is involved here is by no means a Final Judgment, or even preparations for it.”²⁴⁰ The battle continues. Burdziej even suggests a hypothetical ending to a future *Boska Komedia* by Krasieński: “Converted Jews truly hand themselves over to their Lord and God, and Satan – in the form of a Leonard or his spiritual essence – is cast into the abyss.”²⁴¹ This crusade would end in victory over the Jew-Satan, the tools of Satan.

If one accepts the consequences of such an argument, then it is possible to demonstrate an important aspect of Krasieński’s thinking, one which – however – cannot embrace a drama that, in its entirety, is more complicated than such an interpretation would allow. In any case, Krasieński constructs Count Henryk as the protagonist of one side of the tragic conflict; Count Henryk does not represent the entire truth, but rather partial truth, and the work’s ending is by no means unambiguous, as Burdziej’s argument makes clear. One can read the “Jewish conspiracy” aspect of the drama separately as a series of ideological phantasms, and over the course of the entire drama they contend with the tragic nature of partial

238 Burdziej, “Izrael i krzyż,” 239. When he writes about the “contemporary confrontation of Christianity with Judaism,” does Burdziej also mean to include the thoughts of Chiarini and other critics of Judaism close to him?

239 Ibid., 242-43.

240 Ibid., 247.

241 Ibid., 248. Translator’s note: As most Polish readers (but fewer non-Polish readers) know, Leonard is a character in Krasieński’s *Nie-Boska Komedia*. Professor Janion has a great deal more to say about Leonard below.

truths.²⁴² In this light, what originated in various pronouncements made in Congress Poland, as well as in various other ideological commentaries at the time, sometimes had to be modified as a result of the artistic vision of the tragedy. Krasiński himself confided to Henry Reeve that he began writing his drama “about today’s issues in this world, about the principle of the aristocratic and the popular,”²⁴³ and that he did not derive any particular meaning from the scenes with the converts. Interestingly, a friend of Krasiński, Stanisław Egbert Koźmian, tried in vain to “dissuade” him from including these scenes, and Mickiewicz – who held the overall drama in great esteem – took issue with the image of the “representatives of Israel,” whom Krasiński had utter the most “hateful and cruel” words. But despite all that, Krasiński insisted on the credibility of his views regarding Jews.

Nie-Boska Komedia is a contaminated masterpiece. Here I will deal only with its contamination.

3. A Single Miracle

Krasiński belonged to that group of romantics who were particularly prone to fantasy. He himself produced fantasies, and he easily assumed those created by others. Perhaps this susceptibility is a key to understanding the abundance of his correspondence, which is used against him by historians of literature convinced that his mania for letter-writing exhausted the energy he should have spent creating literature, strictly defined. In fact, no other Polish romantic writer left such a great treasure of correspondence, and letters from no other such writer are filled with so many – often repeated – fantasies, premonitions, dreams, and imaginary travels and meetings.

The dreamer is where he is not, and he is not where he is²⁴⁴ – this principle is particularly relevant with regard to Krasiński’s correspondence. Especially his letters to Delfina Potocka overflowed with creations of the concentrated imagina-

242 See also my argument in the introduction to the above-cited edition of *Nie-Boska Komedia* about philosophical – especially the Hegelian theory of – tragedy (“a catastrophe, which ends in a tragic collision, a reaction of the whole, of the *universum* turning against the excessive claims of that which is partial,” p. LXXXIII).

243 Krasiński, *Listy do Henryka Reeve*, trans. from the French A. Olędzka-Frybesowa, edited by, and annals and notes provided by Hertz, vol. II (Warszawa, 1980), 127. In the original French: “du principe aristocratique et populaire” (122-123). Letter dated 19 December 1833.

244 See my work under precisely this title (“Marzący: jest tam, gdzie go nie ma, a nie ma go tu, gdzie jest”) in *Projekt krytyki fantazmatycznej* (Warszawa, 1991), subsection “Krasiński: Delfina i średniowiecze,” 38-43.

tion – in order to remove oneself from the “here and now” and to soar “up there,” to create a new reality in memory of an idealized past and with the goal of building a vision of the future. This is the structure of *Przedświt* (Daybreak); this is the “let me dream now, please let me” that Witold Gombrowicz ridiculed in *Ferdynandurke*. In Krasiński’s work, a constant habit of separating oneself from the din of the present – of living in the realm of dreams, in daydreams, in visions – is combined with the author’s view of himself as a clairvoyant, someone with the skills to predict the future, especially catastrophes. This is the basis on which *Nie-Boska Komedia* was built, which has often been attributed with great powers of prophecy, with an ability to penetrate the surface of events. Krasiński knew how to bend the future through predictions in the shape of phantasms – the literary staging of possible courses of events. He believed his ability to divine reality would never leave him. In 1849 – a year of catastrophic dreams and premonitions which, he thought, lent credibility to his *Nie-Boska Komedia* – he told August Cieszkowski: “Please write to me often and tell me about various details, I have a particularly good instinct for approaching catastrophe and acts of treason being developed underground! I also know how to penetrate a person’s interior simply from his face alone.” In this same letter he infiltrated Prussian intentions, namely to deprive the Duchy of Posen of its national identity by buying up land and giving it to peasants; they want to finish “us” off – the great landed property – “it can be cheaply divided into small parts and entrusted to drunkenness and decrepitude on the one hand and, on the other hand, to the Jews and the Germans.”²⁴⁵ But Krasiński, thinking so much like a prophet (in his view), did not foresee the character Ślimak from Bolesław Prus’s *Placówka* (The Outpost). He gave free rein to his ideological phantasms: threatening signs from the peasants, the Germans and, of course, the Jews. This is just one of many examples of this kind of revelatory statement.

The subject of the analysis below is the ideological phantasms in *Nie-Boska Komedia*. At their foundation lies the conviction – enunciated in the writings described above – that Jews are Poland’s misfortune (implicitly – the “world’s misfortune”). It is the Jews who are blocking the formation of utopian cohesion in Society and the Nation.

After the November Uprising, which revealed class conflicts inflamed by those who were greedy for money but had no idea about the Poland of “shoemakers, converts and tailors”²⁴⁶, Krasiński’s view of the foundation of a true nation crys-

245 Krasiński, *Listy do Augusta Cieszkowskiego, Edwarda Jaroszyńskiego, Bronisława Trentowskiego*, selected, ed. and intro. Zbigniew Sudolski, vol. I, (Warszawa 1988), 443-444. Letter dated 22-23 January 1849.

246 These terms come from the letter to Reeve dated 14 August 1832. *Listy do Henryka Reeve*, vol. II, 11. In the original French, to define the converts, Krasiński used the phrase “les juifs baptisés.”

tallized even further. In a letter to Konstanty Gaszyński in 1837 he condemned foreigners (Germans and Jews) who were morally oppressing Poland. “The greatest service we can do for the country is to not allow the converts and the industrialists to hold a monopoly over all of the wealth and moral authority of Poland, and such a battle is more difficult and longer than armed conflict.” Krasieński was prepared to place the eradication of foreign influences on a higher level of importance than the battle for independence. He wrote: “Above all today, the nobility’s role in saving Poland, having reconciled with the people in the countryside, is our only source of strength; the nobility’s leadership over the mob is the only wager worth making for a greater destiny.”²⁴⁷

In his works from the 1840s, Krasieński invoked even more emphatically the vision of a single nation whose aim was a Kingdom of God. In *Przedświt*, it was unity of generations of nobility:

*With one bond, in one spirit,
Like a link in a chain,
The Lord linked fathers and sons.
If this chain someday breaks;
For everyone, together, beautiful!*

*Jedną spójnią, w jednym duchu,
Jak ogniwa na łańcuchu,
Pan powiązał ojców z syny.
Ni ten lancuch kiedy pęknie;
Wszystkim razem dobrze, pięknie!*²⁴⁸

In *Psalmi przyszłości* (Psalms of the future), the idea of the “great Polish nation” was presented as a unity (“one will, one movement”) of the nobility and the people, in the famous words:

*Just one, a single miracle
With the Polish nobility – the Polish people* *Jeden tylko, jeden cud:
Z Szlachtą polską – polski Lud*²⁴⁹

This rhymed commentary glorified ever more distinctly the notion of national unity as led by noblemen, who knew no limits to their devotion to the fatherland. After all, “Neither merchants, nor Jews / Neither burghers, nor their sons”²⁵⁰ could give a moral example, or build a nation. Krasieński cared deeply for the “immaculate vestments” of Poland, which are “pure” in every respect. Thus, the Polish nation was supposed to be two-tiered but homogeneous, “one with itself,” free from both “gold and muck” (which, in Krasieński’s opinion, is where Jews wallow). The greatest threat to this conservative view of the nation was “foreigners” – among them, the Jews, and among the Jews, the converts.

247 Krasieński, *Listy do Konstantego Gaszyńskiego*, selected, ed. and intro. Zbigniew Sudolski (Warszawa, 1971), 167. Letter dated 6 July 1837.

248 Krasieński, *Dziela literackie*, with selection, notes and comments by P. Hertz, vol. I (Warszawa, 1973), 170.

249 *Ibid.*, 212.

250 *Ibid.*, 214.

4. Theological-Ideological Phantasms

In Krasieński's drama, the issue of Jewish converts is connected with other phantasms: the Talmud, blood, decide, and conspiracy.

Converts. Part Three of *Nie-Boska Komedia*, devoted to the revolutionary camp, begins with images of their conspiracy. Dangers posed by the Jews increase because they appear masked, as Christians. They are in fact Jews (because, after all, "a Jew is always a Jew"), and they act according to their own, Jewish interests. Jean Delumeau argued that, in Christian Europe in the fifteenth century, the belief in baptism – as a way to efface "the flaws of a decidual nation" – had retreated in the face of other views. It turned out that the "Jew maintains the legacy of the sins of Israel, even when he becomes a Christian. At this very moment, anti-Judaism became racial, while it remained theological." And this belief, juxtaposing radical anti-Semitism with the theology of baptism, became the reason behind the ban on neophytes holding public office, and this was the foundation of statutes in Spain referring to "blood purity."²⁵¹

In *Nie-Boska Komedia* the Chorus of Converts presents itself with operatic unanimity: "The cross, our holy mark – the water of baptism connected us with the people – the ones despising believed in those who were despised" (64). The naive faith of the "sons of Christians" is mocked in the following self-definition: They believed "the sons of Caiaphas," that is, they believed in the descendants, the heirs of the Jewish high priest who handed down the death sentence on Christ. Lies are the essence of Jewishness. Converts can call themselves "brothers" only out of meanness and hatred.

These self-definitions from the pen of Krasieński point to what he viewed as the inauthenticity of Jewish conversion. Jews cannot be sincere Christians, and false conversion is to be thoroughly exposed. For the author of *Nie-Boska Komedia*, Spanish Marranos and Polish Frankists were sinister examples of apparent Christianity. Hidden and corrosive hatred toward Christianity, a desire to damage Christianity – even totally destroy it – were supposed to be what guides both Jews and converts, always and everywhere. For him, the Frankists were an ominous, diabolical gang, which was plotting the ruin of Poland and its people, which was particularly dangerous when representing the interests of middle classes (into which the Frankists very often entered²⁵²), and which was trying – in Krasieński's opinion – to break the natural alliance of pure Polish powers: the nobility and the people.

251 Jean Delumeau, *Strach w kulturze Zachodu. XIV-XVIII w.*, trans. A. Szymanowski (Warszawa, 1986), 280-283.

252 "Żywoty pseudo-mesjaszów żydowskich, z niemieckiego dzieła dra Seppa o życiu Chrystusa Pana wyjęte i przełożone przez ks. Hieronima Kajsiewicza z dodatkami tłumacza," *Przegląd Poznański* (1852) półrocze drugie, zeszyt VII i VIII. In the *Dodatek tłumacza*

In the revolutionary year of the Springtime of the Peoples (1848), Krasieński reaffirmed the credibility of the image he painted in *Nie-Boska Komedia*. He wrote to Cieszkowski: “My scene with the converts is not altogether fabulous. There is a lot of truth in it. There is today something Jewish in the air, and therein a certain envy of one people towards the other. What sort of details are being discovered here coming from hell every day. Immeasurable betrayal, cruelty without limits.”²⁵³ Krasieński had gotten carried away by his own vision as a clairvoyant able to penetrate reality and reveal its hidden moral structure. This self-critique testifies to the notion that the author had “checked” the validity of his vision through events of the revolution.

One thing that stands out in the above profile of the Converts – beyond the concealment of their true faith – is the connection “with people” through baptism. It could be that this expression touches upon the old belief in Europe that Jews are not quite human in the way others are. Goldhagen writes about a terrifying superstition: “Europeans in the Middle Ages commonly believed that Jews were servants of the devil (Antichrists) and in the modern period that they were immensely powerful, genetically programmed subhumans bent upon destroying humanity (antihumans).”²⁵⁴ Trachtenberg, whose arguments I cited above, comes to the conclusion that the theological Jew – a construct created by the Church – “is not really a human being at all.”²⁵⁵ Joanna Tokarska-Bakir demonstrates that – particularly in folkloristic accounts – Jews are “anti-human” creators of an “anti-world.”²⁵⁶ All of this is the result of the Jews’ innate, demonic character.

It is worth shining light on a particular episode in *Nie-Boska Komedia*, in which Pankracy tells one of the Converts to go on a secret mission to Count Henryk with the message that he would like to meet the count. The command is preceded by the question: “Do you know Count Henryk?,” to which the Convert responds: “Great Citizen, I know him by sight rather than by conversation – only once I remember, while walking in the Corpus Christi procession, he screamed at me – ‘Step aside’ – and he looked down at me with the expression of a haughty nobleman – and for that, I promised in my soul he would hang by a noose” (67).

[translator’s additions], Kajsiewicz emphasizes that the Frankists – in the second generation – “abandoned trade, pushed their way into offices like air, and seized all branches of administration [...] They are working in law and doing quite well there” (324).

253 Krasieński, *Listy do Augusta Cieszkowskiego*, vol. I, 357. Letter dated 13-14 July 1848.

254 Goldhagen, *A Moral Reckoning*, 35.

255 Trachtenberg, *The Devil and the Jews*, 163.

256 See Tokarska-Bakir, “Żydzi u Kolberga,” *Res Publica Nowa* 7/8 (1999), and “Ganz Andere? Żyd jako czarownica, czarownica jako Żyd w polskich i obcych źródłach etnograficznych, czyli jak czytać protokoły przesłuchań,” *Res Publica Nowa* 8 (2001). The first work was reprinted as Tokarska-Bakir, *Rzeczy mgliste. Eseje i studia* (Sejny 2004).

This mention of Corpus Christi is not accidental. Burdziej has justifiably pointed out that the essence of this conflict “rests not just in the fact that they belong to two different estates: the aristocrat-lord and the Jew.” If Krasiński places the motif of Corpus Christi “into the mouth of his character, he does so because, through the holiday’s name, he wants to introduce another, more important layer of this conflict – namely its religious dimension” – along with this conflict’s possible meaning, namely the triumphant oppression of the Jews, who do not recognize the Christian dogma of God’s incarnation.²⁵⁷ Count Henryk viewed the Convert as a “perfidious Jew,” and it was on Corpus Christi where he wanted to put him in his place, where he showed his revulsion and contempt.

But we must also add the fact that, next to Easter, celebrations surrounding Corpus Christi were quite often the point in time where anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism culminated. Generally, Jews most feared pogroms just before Corpus Christi. Joanna Tokarska-Bakir cites the unusual fact that “the municipality of Poznań wanted to force a group of Jews to walk in the procession with drawn knives,”²⁵⁸ which was an allusion to the common accusation that Jews profaned the Blessed Sacrament (they were said to steal the Host from churches and puncture it with sharp instruments, the result being that blood would trickle out). By participating in Corpus Christi processions in this terrifying way, Jews would manifest the significant danger they posed to the Christian community united around the cult of the Eucharist. The “Bleeding Host” recalled Jewish horrors, which were always present in – and always threatening – the entire world.

The diabolical Converts, whose role in *Nie-Boska Komedia* is symbolic-synthetic, were coterminous with the real and concrete converts described in Krasiński’s letters. One could say that the menacing shadow of the converts never left him. In a letter to Adam Soltan written in 1836 from Prague, he complains about the ubiquity of rich and pretentious converted Jews from Warsaw in spa towns such as Karlsbad and Marienbad. Polish lords are moving in their entourage, treating such company as a fatal necessity. Jewish domination would lead to a decline in national dignity. Krasiński sees how “Germany and the Jews benefit from widespread misery and disgrace, how Jews settle on the rubble of our palaces, how Jews everywhere – and Jews only – have influence, importance, power, wealth.”²⁵⁹ Such thoughts obsessed Krasiński. A year later, in another spa town, Kissingen, he observed the unbearable global triumphs of converts. His travels abroad only strengthened him in his conviction that Jews in Poland were occupying the space of the French third estate, which filled him with terror, since

257 Burdziej, “Izrael i krzyż,” 235.

258 Tokarska-Bakir, “Żydzi u Kolberga” in *Rzeczy mgliste*, 56.

259 Krasiński, *Listy do Adama Soltana*, selected, ed. and intro. Zbigniew Sudolski (Warszawa, 1970), 98. Letter dated 1 August 1836.

it meant certain doom for Poland. He called the converts “a bunch of monkeys,” such was his estimate of their inauthenticity and imitative nature. They are both insolent and comical in their pomposity. But – even if they parade around with aristocratic emblems, riches and manners – a Jew always remains a Jew. Here Krasieński expressed his belief in the inherently abject nature of Jews: “Considering all that, the Jew is not able to hide his distinct accent, certain movements of the back, certain defects in his gait, by which a keen observer would be able to identify him as a cousin of Rothschild.” Krasieński was especially haunted by Aleksander Krysiński; their surnames were distinguished only by a single letter. “That Jew glitters with chains and rings,” Krasieński wrote bitterly. His carriages, gloves, “gold-trimmed walking sticks from London,” “trousers from London, glasses *ditto*” all drove Krasieński into a rage. To make matters worse, Krysiński had been secretary to General Chłopicki during the November Uprising.

Krasieński suspected that “every barber” would, in Krysiński’s presence, take him for a “footman,” when in fact it was he, Krasieński, who was the fine gentleman, whose every gesture reflected his immaculate and pure-bred nobility.²⁶⁰ In Krasieński’s thinking, in light of his “convert complex,” there was something of a hostile projection. He would like to have everything that his “monkey” has, perhaps even the right to say he participated in the uprising of 1830-1831.²⁶¹ Nonetheless, though he did not possess the gold of the converts, he could plunge into narcissistic pleasures and swim in feelings of moral superiority over the “monkey.”²⁶²

One problem that emerges here should be considered separately: namely, the aesthetic distance at which the wider society held Jews, particularly converted Jews. As part of emancipation, they were trying to make their way into the upper

260 Krasieński, *Listy do Gaszyńskiego*, 166-167. Letter dated 6 July 1837. On the issue of the strange “Krysiński-Krasieński” connection, see the work of Magdalena Lipiec, “Krysiński-Krasieński,” in manuscript form. Stanisław Egbert Koźmian even believed that Krasieński’s aversion to Krysiński influenced the portrayal of the Converts in *Nie-Boska Komedia*. “I could never persuade him that it would be better to not include the Chorus of Converts in *Nie-Boska*. At the time, Krysiński was getting on his nerves, and this may have contributed to the converts being anathema to him” (Krasieński, *Listy do Koźmianów*, ed. and intro. Zbigniew Sudolski [Warszawa, 1977], 283. This contains Koźmian’s commentary on a letter from “May – beginning of October 1849”).

261 Krasieński often repeated that the November Uprising was conducted by converts (in fact, many of them did take part). This was, to some extent, an argument against the uprising, but also a kind of jealousy.

262 Marek Bieńczyk explains Krasieński’s anti-Semitism as a “tendency to internalize that which he hated, that which he feared; to perversely identify with that which caused him disgust; the melancholic unraveling of his identity is undoubtedly the existential, neurotic source of his anti-Semitism” (*Oczy Dürera. O melancholii romantycznej* [Warszawa, 2002], 209).

classes and, more generally, into “good society” in order, above all, to secure a certain financial position for themselves, but also to achieve a certain “resemblance.” The accounts collected by Gregor von Ressori in his book *Pamiętki antysemity* (Memoirs of an Anti-Semite, 1979) are poignant, and depict the precise mental mechanisms that underpinned the conviction that impassable barriers existed between “us” and “them”; these mechanisms were set up in the Habsburg monarchy and remained at work over the course of a long period of time. Of course, racial arguments had to be used: “Aryanism” against “Semitism.” But what the narrator makes most clear in *Pamiętki antysemity* is the aesthetic conflict. We even read of “class aesthetics, whose influence is all too often overlooked.”²⁶³ In the clash of “class ethics,” the Jews – the argument goes – were bastardizing pure European tastes with their “orientalism.” As it turned out, this was precisely the problem Krasiński had with, among others, Krysiński, and it shows up in analysis of a prominent character in *Nie-Boska Komedia*, namely Leonard.

The Talmud is the Holy Book of the Converts (an indication of their orthodox Judaism), and from the very beginning of Part Three of the drama they leave no doubt about the object of this cult. Krasiński has the Converts chant these words: “My despicable brothers, my vindictive brothers, beloved brethren, let us suck on the pages of the Talmud as on a mother’s breast, the breast of life, from which flows strength and honey for us, but bitterness and poison for them” (63). It is clear what those in Zygmunt Krasiński’s close circle thought about the Talmud and the anti-Christian hatred allegedly contained therein. Here, it is worth recalling the views of Chiarini, who – as I wrote in Part One – wanted to expose the Talmud through a literal interpretation of its texts. “Its maleficent spirit, amidst the thick darkness that surrounds it, inflicts terrible and unseen blows on mankind. [...] Its poison circulates, even without our interpretation, and it circulates all the more awfully because it is invisible.”²⁶⁴ This invisible poison had to be made visible, and this is precisely what both Chiarini and Krasiński (in *Nie-Boska Komedia*) were doing.

In his brochure discussed above, General Wincenty Krasiński – much like Tadeusz Czacki – argued that the example for the Jews should be the Crimean Karaites because they venerate the “Holy Scriptures, and reject the Talmud.” The general, like many people of the Enlightenment, viewed the Talmud as book full of superstitions. Of course, they did not use the original Hebrew version, but rather an appropriately prepared extract, published in Amsterdam in 1789 under the title *Rabinismus oder Talmudische Torheiten* (Rabbinic Judaism or Talmudic Follies), and it was on this basis that Niemcewicz regarded the Talmud as a collec-

263 Gregor von Ressori, *Pamiętki antysemity*, trans. Krzysztof Jachimczak (Sejny, 2006), 141.

264 Quoted from Burdziej, “Izrael i krzyż,” 223. Burdziej quotes from Chiarini’s texts printed in 1829 in *Dziennik Warszawski*.

tion of “inhuman” and “noxious Jewish superstitions,” “ridiculous superstitions” used by rabbis to derange their unfortunate people. A thorough education would thus be useful, to bring the Jews to their senses.²⁶⁵ Similarly, according to Staszic, “the Talmud was the source of Jewish separatism, anti-Christian bias and double morality. [...] The present religion of the Jews needs to be cleansed of the Talmud, which would essentially mean the repudiation of the entire Jewish tradition.”²⁶⁶

One of the most appalling consequences of accusations against the Talmud, one that was widespread throughout Germany and Poland, involved the notion that it contained “secret guidelines that could push people to terrible deeds” – that is, to commit acts of ritual murder to fulfill religious requirements. Maria Cieśla and Jolanta Żyndul, authors of a fine examination of the original sources, have written: “The tradition of presenting the Talmud as the source of all evil – greed, fraud, hatred of Christians, etc. – reaches back to the Middle Ages, when the Talmud was burned in piles.” They add: “But subsequent ‘discoveries’ of further passages, whether from the Talmud or from other Jewish religious writings, were invalidated. In the end, in 1892, Father August Rohling [author of *Der Talmudjude*, which appeared over the course of 1870 and 1871, and which enjoyed great success] put forward the thesis that the Talmud had been ‘emasculated’, cleansed of uncomfortable fragments,”²⁶⁷ which of course did nothing to prevent others from arguing that the Talmud incited the greatest crimes and guided their concealment. Jews were supposed to have remained faithful to the most bloodthirsty vision of the Talmud.²⁶⁸

265 Niemcewicz, *Lejbe i Siora, czyli Listy dwóch kochanków. Romans żydowski*, vol. I (Warszawa, 1821), VI-X. It is characteristic that Walerian Łukasiński, in his polemic against the position taken by General Krasiński, thought that the “scorn we show the Jews is one of the main barriers to the improvement of this people” (*Uwagi pewnego oficera nad uznanaą potrzebą urzędzenia Żydów w naszym kraju i nad niektórymi pisemkami w tym przedmiocie teraz z druku wyszlemi* [Warszawa, 1917], 14. This is a reprint of the entire brochure from 1818).

266 See Wodziński, “‘Cywilni chrześcijanie’: Spory o reformę Żydów w Polsce 1789-1830” in eds. G. Borkowska and M. Rudkowska, *Kwestia żydowska w XIX wieku. Spory o tożsamość Polaków* (Warszawa, 2004), 18.

267 See Maria Cieśla, Jolanta Żyndul, “Sprawa Ritterów. Aktualizacja legendy mordu rytualnego w Galicji końca XIX wieku” in *Kwestia żydowska w XIX wieku*, 451.

268 In the interwar period, the nationalist critic Zygmunt Wasilewski denounced Polish poets of Jewish origin (Julian Tuwim, Hanna Mortkowicz-Olczakowa, Mieczysław Braun, Leopold Lewin and others) for the bloodthirsty nature of their Semitic imaginations. As an example, Wasilewski’s definition of Tuwim’s relations to the poetic word is significant: “He punctures the word, in order to satiate his hunger with the vision of blood: ‘smoke rises from a puddle of blood’. His poetic gift is the dagger, the kind used in the Kabbalah to pierce the Host in a satanic ritual” (“Wampiryzm poezji semickiej,” *Mysł Narodowa* 6

Surprisingly, as late as 2005, Professor Bogdan Michalski, who initiated yet another Polish edition of Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, encouraged this book to be read as a "part of diseased human creativity" which, much like the Talmud, cannot be blotted out of history. The Talmud has something in common with the work by the leader of the Third Reich, Professor Michalski claims, namely that it "does not treat nations well other than the Jewish nation. It contains a great deal of propaganda promoting inequality among nations." An outraged Michael Schudrich, Chief Rabbi in Poland, replied: "Those are lies, and it is absurd" to make such a claim. "In contrast to *Mein Kampf*, the Talmud does not propagate the idea of inequality among nations, and it does not encourage anyone to kill."²⁶⁹ It is difficult not to see in statements made by Professor Michalski the old miasma of racial hatred attributed to the Talmud, essentially the angry projection of age-old superstitions.

Hostile judgments about the Talmud and lessons provided in Krasiński's drama bore fruit in the twentieth century. To take just one example, let me refer to a book written by a once famous expert on Judaism, Father Józef Kruszyński. In his anthology of opinions about the Jews, drawn from "the finest people in the world," he did not miss the chance to reference *Nie-Boska Komedia*. If disaster falls upon the Jews (for example, a pogrom), one has to understand that they have brought it upon themselves – "by applying the *Talmud's principles* in real life – that is, by continuing work designed to destroy Christianity."²⁷⁰ The word "work" was used here to mean what it meant in the context of the Converts in *Nie-Boska Komedia* – a conspiracy.

Deicide and blood. "Ages ago our fathers martyred the enemy – today, we will martyr him again, and he will rise no more" (64) – the Converts proclaim. This is an allusion to the crucifixion of Christ by the Jews, to murders carried out by revolutions, to so-called ritual murders – as a repetition of the original crime. Father Chiarini explained the nature of this "blood-thirsty superstition": it involved "snaring Christian children to use them for sacrifice during Easter holidays, either to refresh the memory of the act of deicide committed by their ancestors, or to make some use of the blood, or – and this is most probably the case – for both of these reasons."²⁷¹ We might ask: Did Krasiński perhaps pass through

[1934]). In light of what I have argued so far, the symbolic warp of such statements leaves little doubt as to their meaning.

269 "Po co się wydaje 'Mein Kampf'," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 15 February 2005.

270 Father Józef Kruszyński, *Rola światowa żydostwa* (Włocławek, 1923), 74. Author's emphasis – M.J.

271 Quote from Tugendhold, *Rozprawa o czynionym ludowi starozakonnemu zarzucie...*, CXXXV.

childhood and his early school years in fear of innocent blood being spilled and of Jewish snares?

Throughout the centuries across Europe, it became quite common to describe alleged ritual murder as the “martyring of the second Christ.”²⁷² Delumeau cites one of the model descriptions of exceptional horror: Jews and Jewish converts in Toledo in 1490 were said to have crucified a Christian child and torn its body apart “in the same way, with the same hatred and the same brutality, as their ancestors did with Our Savior Jesus Christ,” and then they mixed its heart into the consecrated host. From this mixture – Delumeau added – the conspirators expected to destroy the Christian religion.²⁷³ Even more terrifying details of “Jewish crimes” were invented. The masochistic, mournful examination of Christ’s wounds converged with the sadistic and vengeful delight in oppressing – in one’s imagination, but also in practice – the Jews-murderers.

Tokarska-Bakir presents all of the criminal consequences of tales of kidnapping children “for matzah,” of bleeding hosts punctured by Jews – the torture, burning and killing of Jews. From this she draws the conclusion that old-time, folk anti-Semitism – defined as being merely a “reluctant posture toward that which is different” – was in fact not at all as innocent as scholars have often thought. The ethnographic material²⁷⁴ that Tokarska-Bakir has examined dictates that a different judgment be made, “especially if events are to be viewed from the perspective of the Jews themselves.” She concludes that “pre-modern anti-Semitism – religious, ethnic and social – marked out, in the symbolic narrative, a ‘dangerous place’ for Jews,” who could disappear from the face of the earth in an instant (often in the course of a pogrom).²⁷⁵

The Church played a shameful role in these practices; as Hundert has written, “the Church did not shy away from extreme actions such as trials, accompanied by torture, of Jews accused of the ritual murder of Christians, or of using Christian blood in their ceremonies, or of desecrating the Host.” In the eighteenth century the Church was the initiator and organizer of trials and judicial murder significantly more often than in previous centuries.²⁷⁶

“Ritual murder is a religious commandment for the Jews,” proclaimed the famous nineteenth-century Jew-hater mentioned above, Father August Rohling. The Zohar supposedly contained detailed instructions on how to murder Christian vir-

272 See the works included in Buttaroni, Musiał, *Mord Rytualny*.

273 Delumeau, *Strach w kulturze Zachodu*, 273.

274 See also the pioneering work of Alina Cała, *Wizerunek Żyda w polskiej kulturze ludowej*.

275 Tokarska-Bakir, *Rzeczy mgliste*, 66. The notion of viewing events “from the perspective of Jews themselves” reminds one of the approach taken by Father Musiał, about whom I wrote in Part One: the appeal that we look into Jewish faces.

276 Hundert, *Jews in Poland-Lithuania in the Eighteenth Century*, 72.

gins. Maria Cieśla and Jolanta Żyndul cite such claims, and emphasize that there are many more to be found in nineteenth-century works presenting “ritual murder as an integral part of Jewish rites.”²⁷⁷ Having analyzed the dreadful Kishinev pogrom in 1903, Hanna Węgrzynek states: “Despite the fact that economic issues were the most important cause of the growing conflict, the immediate cause of the pogrom’s outbreak was the continuing influence in society of the medieval myth of ritual murder.”²⁷⁸ Such was the case at least through the Kielce pogrom of 1946.

A close structural congruence between two narratives is discernible: Christ’s suffering and the profanation of the Host, and the tormenting of Christian children. The second is the “inverse” of the first – which was supposed to be a manifestation of the Jewish “anti-world.”²⁷⁹ We might also discern here what could be called “mocking of ritual,” the ridiculing of things sacred, the magical parody of the sacrifice,²⁸⁰ and we have thus perhaps touched upon one of Krasiński’s obsessions: the rituals of the “new faith” as carried out by Leonard in *Nie-Boska Komedia* are a caricature and mockery of Christian rituals. Irritability of a specific kind emerges within a wider concern for Krasiński’s own faith, exposed to ridicule – Christ’s sacrifice is questioned by Jews as a result of its “similarity” to so-called ritual murder.

Blood is at the center of the story of the profane Jewish sacrifice. Trachtenberg devotes a special chapter in his book *The Devil and the Jews* to calumny involving blood. The Jews who killed Christ and took his blood onto themselves suffer, for this reason, from various ailments and sicknesses: for example, Jewish men menstruate and Jews are plagued by all sorts of hemorrhages and hemorrhoids. These ailments can be treated only with Christian blood. Because of this, Jews are caught for all time in a vicious circle, or – as it is stated in *Nie-Boska Komedia* – in “endless carnage.” Trachtenberg cites numerous accounts of abstruse criminal actions by Jews, in which “the ultimate combination [of] murder, blood, magic, poison [joined] in a grand alliance aimed at the destruction of Christendom.”²⁸¹ Revolution – a bloodthirsty act of Jews – was also a sort of ritual sacrifice of blood. Pierre-André Taguieff argues that *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, with their description of the murder of the Tsar and his family in 1918, introduced a “new

277 Cieśla, Żyndul, “Sprawa Ritterów,” 448. See also the work of Christina von Braun, “Und der Feind ist Fleisch geworden. Der rassistische Anti-semitismus” in von Braun, L. Heid, *Der ewige Jüdenhass*. Von Braun’s study includes a chapter “Die Wiederbelebung der Ritualmordbeschuldigungen im 19. Jahrhundert.”

278 Hanna Węgrzynek, “Pogrom w Kiszyniowie (1903) – reakcja na ziemiach polskich i wpływ na postawy Polaków” in *Kwestia żydowska w XIX wieku*, 454

279 See Tokarska-Bakir, *Legends o krwi. Antropologia przesądu*.

280 See Rouart, “Pozory argumentacji” in Buttaroni and Musiał, *Mord rytualny*, 32-36.

281 Trachtenberg, *The Devil and the Jews*, 144.

symbolic dimension”: Bolshevism is shown to be the effect of a global Jewish conspiracy. “Thus, two dominant stereotypes in modern anti-Semitism merged: conspiracy and the Jews’ blood-thirsty nature.”²⁸² These elements of this frightful imaginarium are also found in *Nie-Boska Komedia*.

Conspiracy. “The cross, our enemy, cut off at the base, rotted, stands today in a pool of blood, and once it falls, it will not rise again.” Because now “the work of ages is being completed, our gloomy, painful, persistent work.” It turns out that the Jews had long been plotting the destruction of the cross – assisted by “liberty without order,” “slaughter without end,” and “wrangling and animosity.” Hatred, conflict, moral and social disorder – all of that serves the interests of the Jews. This is an ideological phantasm of the eternal obstacle in the path of those building order.

“The might of Israel,” the Converts believe, will settle upon the ruins of Christianity, which is now being protected only by the “lords.” But after the fall of the “lords,” the Jews will turn against murderers-revolutionaries: “They will kill the lords in the meadows – and hang them in the gardens and forests – then we will kill them and hang them” (66). Out of fear, and in search of money, but also because of a deeply secret hatred for revolution, a Convert furtively guides Count Henryk through the revolutionary camp. For their own cause, the Jews commit every crime and betrayal, because they want to reign supreme over the world. Juliusz Kleiner believed that the Chorus of Converts introduced a “distinct element into the powerful contrast of two competing parties, an element which, despite earlier signs, in no ways affects the plot and its resolution; it disappoints original expectations, and therefore spoils the poem’s uniformity.” Burdziej’s argument against Kleiner is solid. The author of “Izrael i Krzyż” pointed out that the structure of the conflict in *Nie-Boska Komedia* is three-sided, not two-sided.²⁸³

Presumably for this reason, Kleiner minimized the importance of the Chorus of Converts as an organic part of *Nie-Boska Komedia*. Essentially denying the phantasm of the eternal and global Jewish conspiracy, he wanted to avoid expansive discussion of the drama’s anti-Semitism. If his argument were taken to its logical conclusion, one could have simply deleted the initial scene with the Converts, or put it in an appendix. Probably Kleiner’s understanding of the work’s “uniformity” was influenced by traditional literary views, and having granted certain privileges to the main narrative, he defined the conflict as being between two competing forces. Kleiner essentially pushed the Jews to one side of the main nar-

282 Quote from M. de Pracontal, “Cette obsession qui a taché le siècle,” *Le Nouvel Observateur* 1432 (du 16 au 25 Avril 1992).

283 Burdziej cites, and argues against, Kleiner’s opinion (“Izrael i krzyż,” 222); on the three-sided conflict, see p. 245.

rative; they could not be integrated into the patriotic canon of public knowledge,²⁸⁴ unless of course they managed to make their way into “patriotic history” – as had the creator of the Jewish regiment during the Kościuszko Uprising in 1794, Berek Joselewicz. While the independence conspiracy could be at the center, the Jewish conspiracy could only serve to undermine that main event.

Throughout his entire life Krasieński adhered to various conspiracy theories, and his belief in the existence of a conspiracy grew stronger during the Revolution of 1848. To denote various kinds of conspirators, he made use of Hoene-Wroński’s expression *bande infernale* – an infernal gang. The author of *Métapolitique messianique* (1840) described secret societies in this way: “This invisible gang is mysterious and hidden even today; it is a devilish gang, which in all circumstances, even in the most contradictory circumstances, endeavors to sow confusion everywhere, to obstruct the progress of reason and thus bring about the new fall and destruction of mankind.”²⁸⁵ At that time, Krasieński saw this “infernal gang” in Mickiewicz and the followers of Andrzej Towiański, whom he accused of subversive-revolutionary activities and, thus, of attempting to return to the world “of barbarism, to the state of original sin.” In this context, he also made use of a character that long troubled him: namely, the mysterious “Old Man of the Mountain,” leader of a dangerous sect of Islamic assassins.²⁸⁶

The model of conspiracy against the “natural” order was the ubiquitous Jewish conspiracy. Judaism itself was supposed to be a “conspiratorial organization [*une organisation conspiratrice*] in the service of evil, which strives to thwart God’s plan, constantly plotting to destroy the human race.”²⁸⁷ A similar vision

284 A discussion initiated by a highly significant article by Gross, “Niepamięć zbiorowa” (*Tygodnik Powszechny* 32 [2004]), re-opened the debate about Jedwabne, and addressed among other things the relationship between private knowledge and public knowledge, along with the issue of who writes the history of the national drama in the main “myth-creating/patriotic stream.” Jews were not a part of this history; see especially the above-cited article by Jerzy Jedlicki, who wrote, among other things, that “no one among the thousands who knew wanted to see his private knowledge [about events at Jedwabne] enter the canon of public knowledge.”

285 See Krasieński, *Listy do Augusta Cieszkowskiego*, vol. I, 342. This is a note by Zbigniew Sudolski to a letter dated 16 April 1848; trans. Józef Jankowski.

286 *Ibid.*, 340-341. “There is nothing that resembles Towianism more than *Vieux de la montagne* from Arab history.” On the subject of the secret sect of the Muslim Ismailists, active especially during the Crusades, see W. B. Bartlett, *Assassins: The Story of Medieval Islam’s Secret Sect* (The History Press, 2001).

287 Lech Zdybel cites the work of Corinne Touati-Pavaux, *La séduction de la conspiration*, published in a two-volume work devoted to *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (1992). Zdybel also writes that, according to Walter Laqueur, the “real fusion of anti-Semitic beliefs with conspiracy theories took place only in the nineteenth century.” He adds that “for every serious researcher, the relationship between anti-Semitism and conspiracy theories

of Judaism emerges in much of the commentary published in Congress Poland. In his drama, Krasieński – reflecting Church teachings – clearly lent it a demonological element,²⁸⁸ and this attitude has a name, “demonological anti-Semitism.” Throughout his work *The Devil and the Jews*, Trachtenberg shows conclusively that the sinister strangeness of Jews, when combined with magic practices (the “Jew-sorcerer,” the Jew who is “full of magic spells”), was transformed into a demonic conspiracy.

In light of its similar imagery and locution, *Nie-Boska Komedia* has often been described as a precursor to the famous anti-Semitic falsification-pamphlet, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.²⁸⁹ Making use of the existing stock of images and stereotypes, Krasieński formed a modern anti-Semitic narrative. It seems that a skillful blend of theological and ideological factors is what determined the nature of this political myth. Cesare G. de Michelis argues that “extensive commentary revolving around *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, as well as focusing on the text itself, are larded with pseudotheologemes – that is, ideas and concepts drawn from traditional Judeo-Christian culture – but also with a lack of authentic theological intentions. In a word, what is involved here is the ‘secularized’ use of theological categories.” But one cannot ignore the fact that the alleged “religious” overtones of *The Protocols* were used to bolster its credibility. For de Michelis, *The Protocols* are a link between the “religious” nineteenth century and the “pagan” anti-Jewishness of the present day. By way of conclusion he claims, however, that “the dominant anti-Semitism of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* is neither precisely ‘pagan’ (biological) nor strictly ‘religious’ (the deicidal nation); it is thoroughly ideological, ‘conspiratorial.’”²⁹⁰

about Jews is an obvious fact. What is more, this theory is the culmination of typical and extreme notions and stereotypes about Jews” (*Idea spisku*, 115, 119).

288 In his work *Czy ojcem Żydów jest diabeł? J 8, 44 w kontekście czwartej ewangelii* (this is a reference to the Gospel of John and his statement: “Ye are of your father the devil”), Father Michał Czajkowski asks whether one can speak here of the fatherhood of Christian anti-Semitism, and he responds, “On the level of the inspired author’s intentions, the meaning of the text – certainly not. But on the level of age-old explanation and actions based on the text (*Wirkungsgeschichte*) – to a large extent, yes” (in *Rozdział wspólnej historii. Studia z dziejów Żydów w Polsce ofiarowane profesorowi Jerzemu Tomaszewskiemu w siedemdziesiątą rocznicę urodzin* [Warszawa 2001], 83).

289 Janusz Tazbir quotes G.K. Chesterton’s opinion from 1923, who was amazed that, in *Nie-Boska Komedia*, “the Jews are planning the destruction of our community in almost precisely the same words later attributed to the Elders of Zion” (*Protokoły mędrców Syjonu. Autentyk czy fałszyfikat* [Warszawa, 1992], 23).

290 C.G. de Michelis, “Przyczynek do teologicznego odczytania ‘Protokołów mędrców Zyjonu’” in *Kultura staropolska – kultura europejska. Prace ofiarowane Januszowi Tazbirowi w siedemdziesiątą rocznicę urodzin* (Warszawa, 1997), 41, 50.

In *Nie-Boska Komedia*, the theological explanation of evil and the ideological phantasm of conspiracy are of equal importance. Together, these two visions – these two ideas – had a great chance at popularity in Poland, particularly in the Catholic-nationalist milieu. In a wonderful article on this topic, Paul Zawadzki demonstrated how and why *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* – repeatedly updated, shamelessly discussed and distributed by the Church – enjoyed such great success throughout the twentieth century. Zawadzki accepts the perspective put forward by Pierre-André Taguieff and presents *The Protocols* as “one of the most extreme examples of self-victimization, based on a two-tiered scheme of ‘Jews’ and their ‘victims.’” It is the Jews who are guilty; the victims are legitimately defending themselves against Jewish machinations. Referring to the “logic of self-defense,” Zawadzki speaks of “reverse causality.” In Poland, *The Protocols* strengthened age-old religious Judeophobia. “The fear of Jewish rule over the world merges with themes from traditional anti-Judaism, which concentrate on deicide and on Jewish attempts to revenge the cross.”²⁹¹

One can read Krasiński’s drama as an argument for the “logic of self-defense,” because he described Jewish conspiratorial intentions, aimed at the Polish-Christian foundation, and he justified the fear of the converted Jew, the disguised Jew, the Jew-subversive. “The absolutized image of the Jew as an invariably perverse personality”²⁹² arose from the Judeophobic teachings of the Church, *Nie-Boska Komedia*,²⁹³ and *The Protocols*. In this ideological arrangement, each of them could prop up the others. And they did.

One case in recent years involves Father Henryk Jankowski, provost at St. Bridget’s church in Gdańsk and legendary chaplain of the Solidarity movement, who was long known for his various anti-Semitic statements. He especially enjoyed reminding people that “Jews killed our Lord Jesus.” In August 2004 – in

291 Paul Zawadzki, “‘Protokoły mędrców Syjonu’ w polskiej myśli antysemitycznej,” *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego w Polsce* 3/4 (1993), 65, 68. On the “subject of traditional Judaism” and anti-Semitism, see Tokarska-Bakir, *Rzecz mgliste*.

292 Zawadzki, “‘Protokoły mędrców Syjonu’,” 68.

293 Adolf Nowaczyński published a large part of Part Three of the drama (the profile of Leonard; the Chorus of Converts) in his prestigious anthology *Mocarstwo anonimowe (Ankieta w sprawie żydowskiej)* (Warszawa 1921), 222-225. Relevant quotes from *Nie-Boska Komedia* served anti-Semitic propaganda well in the interwar period. A detailed review of some of the anti-Semitic journalism from that period is presented in Małgorzata Domagańska, *Antysemityzm dla inteligencji? Kwestia żydowska w publicystyce Adolfa Nowaczyńskiego na łamach ‘Myśli Narodowej’ (1921-1934) i ‘Prosto z mostu’ (1935-1939) na tle porównawczym* (Warszawa, 2004). In 1938, Nowaczyński called on the clergy to distribute an extremely anti-Semitic publication, *Żydzi w karykaturze*: “No diocese in all Poland should do without this view of collective anti-Christianism, pushing humanity of all races and descriptions toward terrible war” (177).

connection with accusations regarding his behavior – he talked during one Sunday mass of the “perfidious, satanic *Judeokomuna*²⁹⁴ directed against the Church” and appealed for the nation to be led out of the “swamp of Jews and Judeokomuna.” Father Jankowski’s followers marched under patriotic and Solidarity banners that resembled the “newspeak” propaganda of the Polish People’s Republic (PRL). One of them read: “Father Jankowski is a symbol of the Polish nation’s best traditions!”²⁹⁵

We might ask, very briefly: how is the passage from the idea of “Solidarity” to anti-Semitism possible? It must be remembered that anti-Semitism was part of the multi-faceted Solidarity movement from the very beginning, though Father Jankowski was an exceptionally consistent example of someone proclaiming the “truth about Jews.” That truth contained – for the priest and for his followers – a simple answer to the question of why the utopia of social unity that Solidarity had promised was not being realized. In 1981, he borrowed words from Krasieński’s work to describe players in current events: Solidarity was that “single miracle,” the intelligentsia was the “nobility,” and the workers were the “people.” Why did their unity collapse? Of course, because it had been blocked by the Jews. Using Žižek’s words, the “Jew” serves to mask a lack of cohesion – the impossibility of cohesion – in the project of national identity. It is a need so strong that one can refuse to accept the teachings of Vatican II and even the Polish pope, John Paul II, who withdrew accusations hurled at Jews for centuries by the Church. One could also “forget” about the Holocaust, arrive at an agenda about the entire extermination of the Polish Jews, and follow a line of thought that can be disturbed by nothing.

This image of the Jew serving this purpose connects theology with ideology. *Nie-Boska Komedia* contains within itself a story of the satanic Jewish conspiracy whose goal is the destruction of Christianity. I have attempted to describe particular elements of this narrative that helped create the myth of the Jews. Ernst Cassirer made use of the notion of “political myth” in his classic work *The Myth of the State*.²⁹⁶ Ivan Čolović wrote about “characters in a mythical-political discourse on the national community and its limits,” and about the “political mythologies of nations.”²⁹⁷ But here, the understanding of political myth formulated by Georges

294 Translator’s note: “Judeokomuna” and “Żydokomuna” are particularly poisonous anti-Semitic terms in the Polish language. They came into use in the early twentieth century, and identify communism with a broader, Jewish world conspiracy to seize power.

295 See *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 9 August 2004.

296 Ernst Cassirer, *The Myth of the State* (Yale University Press, 1961).

297 See Ivan Čolović, *Polityka symboli. Eseje o antropologii politycznej*, trans. M. Petryńska (Kraków, 2001).

Sorel – and recently revived by Vladimir Tismaneanu²⁹⁸ – is most useful. Sorel emphasizes the emotional and irrational character of the mythical story, which not only inspires certain ways of understanding cause and effect relationships and explains the world, but also stimulates action. Having examined the post-communist political psychology, Tismaneanu has pointed to the significant role played in various post-communist countries by fantasies of redemption, which are being obstructed by the “Jew.”²⁹⁹ Salvation is defined as the achievement of a utopian, “closed, homogeneous totality.”³⁰⁰ Such “unity” in temporal social life is simply impossible, and this impossibility is best embodied by the “Jew” – the insidious enemy of God’s Order.

5. Mickiewicz against Krasiński

Krasiński’s view of the Jews was not shared by all of his contemporaries; indeed, he had powerful antagonists. In 1843, Mickiewicz devoted as many as five lectures to an analysis of *Nie-Boska Komedia*. He lavished praise on parts of the work, calling it the “groan of despair from an ingenious man,” but he had to deal separately with the “issue of the Polish Jews so wrongly presented by the author.”³⁰¹ Krasiński “introduced the Jewish people in his drama,” but he portrayed them falsely. “One could say that, in defaming the character of the Jews, he perpetrated a crime against a people [in the French, a *crime anti-national*]; he presents the Jewish people as lying in wait for the right moment to annihilate the nobility and the peasantry, to destroy Christianity. He put the most hateful and cruel words into the mouths of the representatives of Israel.” Mickiewicz was convinced of the special religious role played by the Jew, exiled by God, in Polish history. He continued: “One should not be so reckless in explaining the verdicts of Providence, because it is providential – not without reason – that the Jews have lived among Poles for so many centuries, and that their fate is so closely tied to that of the Polish nation.”³⁰² At another time Mickiewicz stated that “destiny has tied our two nations together, so foreign to one another only on the surface,” and that “our country is the main settlement for the oldest and most mysterious of all nations, the nation of Israel.”³⁰³ For Mickiewicz, the mysterious nature of the

298 Vladimir Tismaneanu, *Fantasies of Salvation: Democracy, Nationalism, and Myth in Post-Communist Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 31.

299 *Ibid.*, 88-110.

300 This is Žižek’s term. See Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, 142.

301 Mickiewicz, *Dziela*. Wydanie Jubileuszowe, vol. XI, *Literatura słowiańska*, 103.

302 *Ibid.*, 109-110.

303 *Ibid.*, 458.

Jews was connected to the mystery of revelation, which he understood much as the Archbishop of Paris Jean-Marie Lustiger³⁰⁴ later would, and as Romuald Jakub Weksler-Waszkinel does, who calls himself a “Jew for Jesus.”³⁰⁵

Lustiger proclaimed: “God allowed the Jews to exist for the salvation of all humanity, for the coming of the Kingdom, and – according to the promise – it was precisely in Israel where the suffering Messiah appeared. [...] The Jewish people were, and continue to be, the heir and witness to the promises of God and the faith of Abraham. Those promises are irreversible.”³⁰⁶ Lustiger repeatedly emphasized the irreversibility of God’s calling of the Jewish people. He understood – as Dawid Warszawski (Konstanty Gebert) accurately defined it³⁰⁷ – that “it is an irrevocable fact that the Jewish people were chosen,” and he tied this notion closely to the thinking of John Paul II. In *The Promise*, he proclaimed: “The Pope asks Christians to discover the Jewish people by looking at them, not just in the Bible, but also in the history of the last two millennia [... This reflection] invites us to understand the meaning, for all people, of the Election of the Jewish people. Misunderstanding or renouncing this Election would deprive history of salvation that founds the Christian faith – and perhaps all human history as well – of all its meaning.”³⁰⁸ For Lustiger, this is a fundamental explanation for Christian and Jewish history, and it sheds light also on the religious thinking of Mickiewicz. But for Krasiński, it was something completely foreign.

Krasiński also was not able – and did not want – to reconcile himself with Mickiewicz’s estimation of his drama. The conflict between the two writers came to a head during the Springtime of the Peoples, when Krasiński regarded Mickiewicz as a spokesman for the “red republics” and as a representative of the Asi-

304 Cardinal Lustiger requested that a plaque be placed in his Paris cathedral with the inscription: “I was born a Jew, and was given the name Aron after my grandfather. When, through faith and baptism, I became a Christian, I remained a Jew like the Apostles remained Jews. My holy patrons are Aaron the Priest, Saint John the Apostle, and Mary full of grace. Named by His Holiness John Paul II the 139th Bishop of Paris, I took the office of bishop on 27 February 1981, and here I fulfilled my ministry. All those who come, pray for me. Aron Jean-Marie Lustiger, Archbishop of Paris” (J. Pietrzak-Théobault, “Pogrzeb kard. Arona Jean-Marie Lustigera. ‘U Boga nie ma nic niemożliwego,’” *Tygodnik Powszechny* 33, 19 August 2007).

305 See Weksler-Waszkinel, *Błogosławiony Bóg Izraela* (Lublin, 2000).

306 Lustiger, *Wybór Boga*. Jean Louis Missika and Dominique Wolton talk with the cardinal. Trans. Anna Turowiczowa (Kraków, 1992), 70, 78.

307 See Dawid Warszawski, “Żydowskie chrześcijaństwo,” *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 6-7 November 2004.

308 Lustiger, *The Promise*, trans. Rebecca Howell Balinski, Msgr. Richard Malone, and Jean Duchesne (Cambridge U.K.: William B. Eerdmans, 2007), 141.

atic, Jewish spirit, which had been drawn into his veins through his wife.³⁰⁹ At that time Krasiński also confessed: “More than ever I am keeping my eye on the Converts and Jews. The day will come when it is clear that the scene with them in *Nie-Boska Komedia* was neither an empty dream nor a *crime anti-national*, as Mickiewicz called it in an indexed work!”³¹⁰ As these and other statements show, Krasiński believed that what he had written was true and real. He would believe in his myths about Jews until the very end.³¹¹

This dispute between Mickiewicz and Krasiński is by no means limited to the Romantic era; it runs throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and continues today. Indeed, it is difficult to consider the Polish cultural paradigm without being aware of the character and scope of this dispute. In his lectures on *Nie-Boska Komedia*, Mickiewicz pointed to the founding myth of Polish anti-Semitism.

309 Krasiński, *Listy do Koźmianów*, 283 (letter dated “May – beginning of October” 1849). Mickiewicz’s wife, Celina (née Szymanowska), came from a Frankist family. The letter ends with a statement about Mickiewicz: “Now that is a great spirit!” This is perhaps a somewhat ironic repetition of an expression that Mickiewicz himself liked to bestow on various “wild dispositions” (see *ibid.*, 241).

310 Krasiński, *Listy do Koźmianów*, 225. Letter dated 30 July 1848. Here Krasiński was referring to the entry of two volumes of Mickiewicz’s lectures into the index of books prohibited by the Church (see also the publisher’s explanation, 231). Also in this letter Krasiński expresses his contempt for the convert Aleksander Krysiński (see footnote 246 above). Krasiński in 1848-1849 regarded *La Tribune des Peuples*, edited by Mickiewicz, as “mud thirsty for blood.”

311 In a letter to Cieszkowski, he asked: “Do you not know that the Jewish spirit is the eternal instinct to overthrow the Christian world? [...] Everywhere today Jews are doing that very thing” (*Listy do A. Cieszkowskiego*, vol. I, 502-503. Letter dated 19 June 1849). In Koźmian’s comments, quoted above, on Krasiński’s letter from 1849, we read: “Z. could not stand Jews. Their only motive was revenge, to destroy the world, to avenge the insult and humiliation they have suffered. He also did not like converts, considering them to be a hidden and even more dangerous lackey of Jewry” (*Listy do Koźmianów*, 283). I analyze the Semitic character of Leonard in the next section.

III.
LEONARD'S EASTERN EYES

To Michał Głowiński

1. Portraits

In the epic-lyrical introduction to Part Three of *Nie-Boska Komedia*, which opens our view onto the camp of “new people,” Krasieński – making use of several characteristic traits – paints a vivid portrait of Leonard. He is the second protagonist of the revolution, after Pankracy, but he is far more radical and ruthless than Pankracy; he is not burdened by ideological doubt, and he advocates murder with neither fear nor remorse. Touching a sword to their shoulders, he offers his men criminal blessings and leads orgiastic “rituals of the new faith.” But how does he appear at first glance? “Eastern eyes, black and shaded by long eyelashes, drooping shoulders, buckling legs, an awkward body bent to one side – on his lips something lascivious, something malignant, and on his fingers golden rings – and he calls out with a husky voice – ‘Long live Pankracy!’” (61-62).³¹² The context in which Leonard appears highlights his distinctive nature and, above all, his repulsive strangeness.

As George L. Mosse pointed out, the ideal man has a will to rule, honor, and courage; this definition permeates all of modern western culture. The role of *visibility*, the exceptional importance granted to that which is visible, had revealed itself by the early nineteenth century not only in, for example, the prevalence of various national emblems, but also in certain sciences, such as physiognomy and anthropology. Of particular importance was a book entitled *Physiognomik* (1781) by Johann Kaspar Lavater, whose arguments were based on the notion that one can recognize a person’s hidden character through his external appearance; such a technique often served as an incentive to move from external analysis to moral judgment. From the second half of the eighteenth century – Mosse’s argument goes – the modern ideal of a man, of masculinity and masculine beauty began to take shape, and one individual who played an enormous role in formulating and disseminating this ideal was an admirer of ancient Greece, Johann Joachim Winckelmann. Interestingly, Mosse points out that “women [...] were excluded from the principles of beauty [...] and therefore from what beauty symbolized for society’s self-image. Supreme beauty for Winckelmann was male rather than female. Examples of supreme beauty such as the Apollo of Belvedere, Antonius, or Laocoön are never androgynous but are ‘real men’ because female influences are excluded.” Except as symbolic national figures, women as individuals had no place in public life, which was a decisive point in the construction of modern masculinity. The use of the term “effeminate” began to expand in the eighteenth century, and it represented something undesirable, though – in Mosse’s view – women were not actual “pariahs” – that is, one of those who played the role of

312 Krasieński, *Nie-Boska Komedia*, 24.

counter-type. The status of true counter-type was reserved for the traditional “pariahs” – such as Jews and Gypsies (there were very few black Africans in Europe at that time). Especially Jews were supposed to be marked by ugliness as a sign of disorder and disorganization, by nervousness, by a nature devoid of nobility; and they were said to be subject to an unbridled sex drive.³¹³

Krasiński's imagination was subject to all of these gender and racial stereotypes; indeed, in *Nie-Boska Komedia*, he built an image of the character *Mąż* (Husband, Man)³¹⁴ that was opposed to all things “un-manly.” He liked to make use of romantic physiognomy. With the help of Lavater's ideas and Franz Joseph Gall's phrenology, and then transforming them for his own use, Krasiński created – in personal correspondence as well – a network of symbolic relationships between body appearance and the condition of the soul. He also discerned features which he regarded as racial, both class-based and ethnic (for example, the Polish nobleman or the Jew-convert).

Leonard appears against the backdrop of the revolutionary mob, which is obnoxious, but in a different way than the “citizen-convert [*obywatel-przechrzta*].”³¹⁵ Men in the revolutionary camp are proletarians: “All of them wretched, with toil on their foreheads, with disheveled hair, dressed in rags, with dried up faces, and hands shriveled by manual labor” (59). Armed with the tools of their trades, which become tools of murder, they are vitalized by the desire for revenge and alcohol. Their women are as “hungry and poor as they are, prematurely aged, with no trace of beauty – dust of the beaten track in their hair – tattered clothes around their bodies, and in their eyes something dying away, grim, as if mimicking a vision” (60). They are revitalized by alcohol. All signs of femininity (hair, eyes, and bosom) have been degraded. Men abandoned work, and women lost all the beauty to which they were entitled. Individual features, denoted by the character's particular charms or type of work, long ago began to blur as the result of drudgery and have now died out amidst the ragged, drunken mob.

The leader of the haggard, revolutionized riff-raff, Pankracy, deserves a separate portrait. He is supposed to be Count Henryk's worthy adversary, and he is set apart from the mob by his distinct appearance. In describing Pankracy, Krasiński

313 George L. Mosse, *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 17-76. Quote appears on p. 35.

314 Translator's note: The Polish word “Mąż” has at least two meanings in English: “Husband” and “Man.” Because both are relevant in Professor Janion's discussion of *Nie-Boska Komedia*, I simply keep the term “Mąż” in its original Polish.

315 I assume that Leonard is “citizen-convert.” Burdziej convincingly argues that, although his name is not spoken in the introduction to Part Three – and the title “technically” could refer to the Convert who appears in the next scene – one must nonetheless recognize the “citizen convert” as, in fact, Leonard (“Izrael i krzyż,” 212-213).

expands on the symbol of the skull – where revolution's reason dwells – giving Pankracy a long forehead. Pankracy has lost the hair on his head through thinking, “skin parched to his skull, to his cheeks, something yellowish marked between the bones and the muscles – and from his temples, a black beard wraps his face like a wreath” (60). His face is pale, it never takes on color; his eyes “unmoved, fixed on his listeners” – how different from the blind eye of the proletariat. Apparently he magnetizes the mobs with his gaze, they adore him and yield to him on everything. This is the people's tribune: A decisive man, able to captivate and prevail over his listeners, distinguished by his intellectual, austere appearance.

One can speak of a characterological contrast of two figures – Pankracy and his admirer Leonard – but also of the differences between Leonard and the mob. What is involved here is some sort of racial marking of the revolutionary leader's “friend, companion, or servant” (61). The character of Leonard immediately brings to mind a cultural code that marks that character with a particular quality of being somehow “worse.” How does Krasieński achieve this grotesque effect? I will now turn our attention to Leonard's prominent features.³¹⁶

2. A Body Oriental and Jewish

His “eastern eyes, black...” direct our attention to the Orient, which – as Edward W. Said has argued – is one of the most powerful and deeply embedded images of the Other in European culture. Islam is characterized by sensuality, laziness, fatalism, brutality, decay, and splendor. For Krasieński in *Brydion*, the Orient was a symbol of decadence, chaos, of imminent collapse, and Said – in the extended concluding section of his exhaustive analysis – adds that the Orient has long been marked by the impure stigma of being different and alien to the West.³¹⁷ Impurity is a meaningful specification here, because the term *alien* signifies something visibly “worse.” From the beginning, Krasieński presents Leonard's oriental physique as negative, and at the heart of this set of images is a scale of values based on the racial principle of “superiority” and “inferiority.” In *Nie-Boska Komedia*, Krasieński abandons his romantic orientalism – the literary fascination with wild exotica found in his novel *Agaj-Han* – and moves toward an aggression tinged

316 Burdziej discusses precisely the character of Leonard, as drawn by Krasieński (“Izrael i krzyż,” in *Zygmunt Krasieński – nowe spojrzenia*, 212-216), though he does not use the word “grotesque.”

317 Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1979), 1-28, 226-238.

with anti-Semitism. One could say – freely applying a term used by Shulamit Volkov – that anti-Semitism here is a hidden, but legible, “cultural code.”³¹⁸

Nie-Boska Komedia was originally supposed to appear under the title *Mąż*. Anton Sergl believes that “this is not just the main character of the drama, but also its main theme. *Mąż* embodies masculinity allegorically, becoming a man, being a man, proving yourself as a man.” Here, Krasieński is battling for a “manly discourse,” a “discourse regarding the true, just and real man.”³¹⁹

In light of the above description, Leonard clearly lacks masculine bravery and the physical readiness to fight and engage in military conflict (the vile, revolutionary murder of “aristocrats” is something else altogether). He is characterized by repulsive sluggishness, even a certain deformity. The physical defects accumulate: “drooping shoulders, buckling legs, an awkward body bent to one side.” Leonard’s amorphous eastern-ness is identified with semitic-ness, and semitic-ness is a sign of physical and spiritual inferiority. Krasieński’s view, full of anger and contempt, brought “true” Jewish features to light. No matter how much he might disguise himself, a Jew always remains a Jew. “Considering all that, the Jew is not able to hide his distinct accent, certain movements of the back, certain defects in his gait, by which a keen observer would be able to identify him as a cousin of Rothchild.”³²⁰ In literature, anecdote and custom, the idea that Jews would serve in the military – the place where noble virtues of chivalry and masculinity were put to the test – was simply amusing.

Krasieński vented his disdain toward Jews without hesitation. As Aleksander Wat has written: Polish anti-Semitism, which is tame and rather bloodless com-

318 Ewa-Maria Ziege cites Shulamit Volkov, maintaining that by the end of the nineteenth century anti-Semitism had advanced to the level of “cultural code”; it had become “a sign of cultural identity, of belonging to a particular cultural camp” (“Antisemitische Frauen und misogyne Bilder vom jüdischen ‘Anderen’,” *Metis* 2 [1993], 66-67). Translator’s note: This is my translation from the original German. See also Volkov, *Antisemitismus als kultureller Code* (München: Beck, 2000), which is an updated version of her 1990 work *Jüdisches Leben und Antisemitismus im 19. Und 20. Jahrhundert* (München: Beck, 1990). Volkov’s *Das jüdische Projekt der Moderne* (München: Beck, 2001) serves as a sort of second volume to the above-mentioned work, and contains certain revisions regarding the concept that is of particular interest to us, namely the “cultural code.”

319 Anton Sergl, “Mąż. Koncepcja płci w ‘Nie-Boskiej Komедii’ Zygmunta Krasieńskiego” in *Ciało. Literatūra. Praca ofiarowane Professorowi Germanowi Ritzowi w pięćdziesiątą rocznicę urodzin* (Warszawa, 2001), 72, 76.

320 Krasieński, *Listy do Gaszyńskiego*, selected and with an introduction by Zbigniew Sudolski (Warszawa, 1971), 166-167. Letter dated 6 July 1837. In this letter Krasieński vents his rage on the convert, Aleksander Krasieński, who – in Koźmian’s opinion – “may have contributed to the converts [in *Nie-Boska Komedia*] being anathema to him [Krasieński]” (Z. Krasieński, *Listy do Koźmianów*, 283).

pared to other varieties, nonetheless bears the hideous stigma of racial contempt and loathing.³²¹ The romantic poet was disgusted by Jewish “*chalaciarze*,”³²² but perhaps he was even more disgusted by assimilated Jews, who were hiding their Jewishness. He was somehow always able to detect them; for him, they were the cause of unrestrained revulsion.

Said – while showing how antipathy and even hostility toward Jews have their roots in orientalism – discusses, among other things, the views of Friedrich Schlegel in 1808, who considered Semites as “alien, inferior, and backward.” Said concludes that “much of the racism in Schlegel’s strictures upon the Semites and other ‘low’ Orientals was widely diffused in European culture.”³²³ It became almost reflexive.

Descriptions of the body of a Jewish man (who was something quite apart from the “beautiful Jewess”) were guided by “emotional prejudices” – the ridiculous, comical, and grotesque. Joshua Trachtenberg points to a long tradition in European culture of portraying the Jew with contempt and abuse. “Where another note was permitted to intrude, it was only extremely rarely one of kindness and commiseration; more usually it was one of scorn and derision – the Jew was a comic as well as a vile creature,”³²⁴ with a hooked nose, covered with scabs, stinking of garlic, etc. In Niemcewicz’s “Jewish romance” *Lejbe i Siora*, a novel which appeared in 1821 and which initiated “the history of the Jewish theme in Polish high literature,” the Hasidic character Jankiel appeared as a pretender to the hand of the eponymous Siora. She views him this way: “A creature on long, thin little legs, with a pointy head set between two large humps, one in the front and one in the back.”³²⁵ That is, of course, the view of a young, enlightened Jewess toward a religious fanatic, but throughout the entire novel, Jews (non-progressive) remain the dwelling place for filth and ugliness. Their physicality is a reflection of souls stained by dark prejudices toward Jews; their caricature was supposed to be an expression of a racial condition – lower, alien, amusing. Konstanty Jeleński sum-

321 Aleksander Wat, *Świat na haku i pod kluczem* (Warszawa, 1991).

322 Translator’s note: “*Chalaciarze*” is a term for Jews wearing the traditional black coat, called in Polish a “*chałat*.”

323 Said, *Orientalism*, 99. Among other things, the author accurately describes the great academic authority of the nineteenth-century philologist Ernest Renan, who exhibited “notorious race prejudice against the very Oriental Semites whose study had made his professional name” (133). For Renan and many other nineteenth-century orientalists, “Semitic is a phenomenon of arrested development in comparison with the mature languages and cultures of the Indo-European group, and even with other Semitic Oriental languages (145).

324 Trachtenberg, *The Devil and the Jew*, 13.

325 I present an analysis of Niemcewicz’s novel in *Do Europy tak, ale razem z naszymi umarłymi*, 101-125. The sentence about the initiation of the Jewish theme is from W. Panas.

marized a view that is common in Poland, namely that Jews are “scrawny and sickly, congenital weaklings and victims.”³²⁶

3. Femininity

Leonard's “eastern eyes, black” are “shaded by long eyelashes.” Behind this description is an allusion to the feminine character of the “citizen-convert.” Sergl describes Leonard as a “character with the effeminate features of an oriental potentate.”³²⁷ In the European vision of the Orient, emphasis was often placed on the entirely passive and feminine character of the Eastern peoples; their colonization by the West was often justified by the necessity of conquest by masculine victors.

At the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries – Shulamit Volkov writes – “women and Jews were regarded as inferior and dangerous, as enemies of human culture, as a threat to the existing order. ‘Woman and Judaism,’ one could read in the *Politisch-Antropologische Monatsschrift*, have an ‘instinctive will to achieve power, which is, however, morally harmful, because its goals are selfish’: For Jews, it involves ‘freedom to make money’, and for women ‘sexual freedom.’”³²⁸

And that is not all. Beyond the similarities these two enemies of social order share, how is the “feminization” of the Jewish body achieved? Christina von Braun has shown how, for Aryans, the “Jew” not only embodies “wrong” faith, but similarly, how his body is considered somehow “wrong.” Pointing to images of femininity serves to reinforce racist theories about the “different” shape of the Jewish body. In the work of Otto Weininger at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the Jew became a figure of flesh and blood, which finds its definition in a fictional “race,” and which provides one of the keys to answering the question of why sexual imagery plays such a large role in racial anti-Semitism; when feminine qualities are ascribed to a Jew, that which distinguishes him from a Christian – from the Aryan, from the biological Christian – becomes physiological, which means it becomes a visible difference. And this is not only

326 Konstanty Jeleński, “‘Hańba’ czy wstyd?,” *Kultura* (Paris) 5 (1968). Quote from *Wizja Polski na łamach „Kultury” 1947-1976*, prepared for print, introduction, notes and index by G. Pomian, vol. II (Lublin, 1999), 138. Quoted here is the first part of a sentence describing the contradictory feelings Poles have for Jews. In the second part, Jeleński says that we do not like Jews for a completely different reason, namely “because they are athletic and have their battle units and ‘chutzpa.’”

327 Sergl, “Maż. Koncepcja płci,” 73.

328 Volkov, *Das jüdische Projekt der Moderne*, 76. Translator's note: This is my translation from the original German.

because within Christianity (as in Aristotelian antiquity) the “body” incarnates “matter,” which contrasts with masculine ideality, spirituality. Having been assigned feminine attributes, the “Jew” becomes a figure of flesh and blood. From this “spiritual” contrast, the “Jew” is thus transformed into the flesh of another, since he was assigned femininity – that is, feminine “corporeality” and the biological “otherness” of a woman.³²⁹

In this way of European thinking, femininity means weakness and inferiority. In his 1903 work *Geschlecht und Charakter*, Otto Weininger took things to their logical conclusion by claiming that the Jew is imbued with femininity, which is nothing other than the negation of all male qualities. Ewa-Maria Ziege points out that Weininger's views were by no means original, although he expressed them more dramatically than others had. A dichotomy that is central to anti-Semitism is often highlighted in research being conducted in cultural identity and gender – “feminine/Jewish” versus “masculine/Aryan” – though the parties to the contract are extremely uneven; the contrast's asymmetry is striking. A hierarchical dependence is dominant here: the feminine/Jewish is subordinated in the social, cultural and symbolic spheres to the masculine/Aryan.³³⁰

Weininger's example gives us a glimpse into what was occupying the European consciousness in the nineteenth century. Weininger – as Christina von Braun has shown – set the goal for a man to take control of that which is feminine and Jewish inside of him, to recover from that which is unmanly. “For Weininger, the woman and the Jew were models for self-definition, the ‘not I’ by which one measures the ‘I.’”³³¹ Here, deep spheres of the cultural self are revealed, and at the same time, the “not I,” delimiting the “I,” yields the essential affirmation.³³²

In Krasieński, especially in his correspondence, one can trace the process by which the masculine ideal contended with all kinds of adversity, including feminine and Jewish weakness. Marek Bieńczyk explains Krasieński's anti-Semitism as the “melancholic swaying of his identity.”³³³ Once, it even inspired delight – and under what circumstances! He confesses: “I was a Jew for 24 hours.” This happened during a reading from the *Historia panowania rzymskiego w Judei i*

329 See Christina von Braun, “Antisemitische Stereotype und Sexualphantasien,” in *Die Macht der Bilder Antisemitische Vorurteile und Mythen* (Wien, 1995), 181-184. See also the chapter “‘Żyd’ i ‘kobieta’ – zakres wspólnoty konstruktów” in Bożena Umińska, *Postać z cieniem. Portrety Żydów w polskiej literaturze od końca XIX wieku do 1939 roku* (Warszawa, 2001).

330 See Ziege, “Antisemitische Frauen,” 66-67.

331 Christina Von Braun, “‘Le Juif’ et ‘la femme’: deux stéréotypes de l’‘autre’ dans l’antisemitisme allemand du xixe siècle” in *Revue germanique internationale* 5 (1996); *Germanité, judaïté, altérité*, 123.

332 Ibid., 137-138.

333 Bieńczyk, *Oczy Dürera*, 209.

zburzenia Jerozolimy – when he identified with the military heroism of the Jews battling the Roman legions.³³⁴ Of course, military prowess is beyond Leonard's reach; he can only lead sexual orgies.

4. Something Lascivious

“On his lips something lascivious...” Certain qualities were attributed to people of the East, especially Jews: sensuality, promiscuity, a tendency toward debauchery. Researchers of European stereotypes of the Orient emphasize that the association of the Orient with sex has enjoyed particular longevity. In fact, the Orient was an insult to sexual decency; its excessive “freedom of licentious sex” was offensive.³³⁵ The man of the East was often depicted as irrational, ruined, fallen, and irresponsible. The European – as rational, honest, and mature.³³⁶ Sensuality was feminine and oriental, and among men it was proof of “inferiority” compared to the control and intellectual discipline of the European man.

Nationalist critic Zygmunt Wasilewski maintained that sensuality was a racial trait of, among others, Jewish poets of the interwar era. “I would say, sensual: a salacious attitude to matter in general leads to the highest tension in sexual relations,” presented in various forms in such poetry. In contrast to Aryan civilization, which was moving upward in the Promethean sense, the rays of the Semitic soul run downward, toward inferno.³³⁷ The satanical and dissolute “Black Mass” was what marked the path of the Semitic imagination.

This sexual image of the Jew is prominent in nineteenth-century anti-Semitism. The congenital immorality of the Jew was said to manifest itself – as always – in notorious scams, but a new factor came into play: unrestrained sexuality. Christina von Braun draws a connection between the sexualization of the Jew with the secularization of mythology in all European countries. “The secularized ideal lifts blood purity to the highest level of importance and transposes it into the field of sexual relations.” Succumbing to secularization, the Christian demand for purity becomes a requirement in sexual relations with representatives of one's own blood. The community of believers is reshaped into a community of heritage or race,³³⁸ but it is disturbed by the Jewish assailant's penetration from without. As

334 See Krasinski, *Listy do Augusta Cieszkowskiego, Edwarda Jaroszyńskiego, Bronisława Trentowskiego*, vol. II, ed. and intro. Zbigniew Sudolski, vol. II (Warszawa, 1988), 85-87. Letter to Trentowski dated 29 January 1847.

335 See Said, *Orientalism*, 190.

336 *Ibid.*, 40.

337 Zygmunt Wasilewski, *Wampiryzm w poezji semickiej*, *Myśl Narodowa* 6 (1934).

338 Christina Von Braun, “‘Le Juif’ et ‘la femme,’” 133-135.

Christina von Braun writes, the figure of the woman-savior appears in nineteenth-century culture, who dies by sacrificing herself for a loved one or for humanity. There is no salvation in the Aryan religion without sacrificial death. She points to the fact that, at the end of the nineteenth century, the “victims” of Jewish ritual murders were increasingly women (medieval legend talked only of boys).

In anti-Semitic mythology, the “death” of a woman was explained by the Jew’s “guilt.” The secularization and feminization of Christian sacrificial death takes place by singling out the Jew, who rapes Christian – read: “Aryan” – women and is engaged in human trafficking. The Jew – as in the story of the Passion of Christ – is assigned the role of defiling the victim (*Rassenschande*) as he “crucified” her. Under a particular anti-Semitic illustration one reads this inscription: “Otto Mayer, the Nuremberg Jew, prepared his victim for crucifixion. He bound the naked [blond] woman to a specially prepared wooden cross, and raped her as soon as the blood began to flow from her wounds.” Von Braun states that this imagery – dictated by sadistic fantasies – represents a mixture of two accusations raised against Jews, namely that they have committed “*Rassenschande*” and that they “killed God.”³³⁹

5. Jewish Girls

Krasifski had a sense for the dangers that threatened pure blood – that is, Polish, noble blood; he had been fed such phantasms since childhood. As we mentioned above, his private teacher, Father Chiarini, published a work in French in 1830 under the title *Theorie Du Judaïsme*, which he had been working on for years. Many of his contemporaries viewed the book more as a pamphlet on Jews than an academic work, and it did not live up to its title. In any case, among the notions that shaped *Theorie Du Judaïsme* was the basest aspect of blood libel: namely, the accusation that Jews committed so-called ritual murder, which was indignantly refuted by Jews, who regarded it as nothing more than a method to incite hatred against them. And for good reason, since pogroms often began as rumors of “ritual murder.”

Chiarini put up barriers between Jews and the rest of the population, and in doing so he did not neglect to warn virtuous youngsters about beautiful Jewish women. “The truth is that Jewish girls, left to their own natural development, frequently have a more favorable appearance than Christian girls, but they resemble wild fruit in that their deceptive skin contains sour juices and a thoroughly unpleasant taste.” Jakub Tugendhold, from whose work I have cited this fragment,

339 Christina Von Braun, *Antisemitische Stereotype*, 182-185.

regarded such statements – and there were many of them – as expressions of the “hatred that the author exudes toward Jews. [...] It is] so strange, that it is difficult to believe that it flowed from the pen of a Catholic priest.” Shortly thereafter, Tugendhold praised the daughters of Zion – a “swarm of innocent beauty.”³⁴⁰

Father Chiarini warned against “Israeli girls” as dangerous seductresses, whose external, superficial beauty – viewed from the instructional-Catholic moral ideal – could be none other than specious. Left under the care of no one, without proper upbringing, and originating from a foreign strain, Jewish girls were “wild fruit” which cannot taste good to the person eating it, which brings with it the threat of contamination. “Sour juice” should not circulate through the veins of the nation. One can easily imagine that Chiarini did not spare the young Krasieński such warnings – about the alien race, which was alluring but which concealed a danger both to the individual and society.

But this is not the end. Jewish immorality (by which – according to the expanding stereotype – anything could be bought and sold) was seizing more and more territory. In Geneva in 1830, Krasieński read the freshly published work mentioned above, *Tableau de la Pologne ancienne et moderne*, edited by Leonard Chodźko, which contained a chapter devoted to Jews in Poland. Chodźko complemented the published materials with various footnotes and additions, in which he characterized Jews darkly; they are inclined to treason, brutality, and thievery. They know how to profit from everything in order to make money without actually working. As an example, Chodźko added that Jews “have found a disgraceful source of riches even in the charms of their wives and daughters” by procuring them for foreigners passing through Poland. But these were opportunities that passed quickly and were volatile, which is why “some streets of Warsaw, Wilno, Minsk and other significant cities have their own regular houses of prostitution, which are not yet visible.”³⁴¹

Such claims were not very precise, but that was not Chodźko's goal; rather, he wanted to show generally how Jews and foreigners were demoralizing Poland. Prostitution could not be excluded from the list of factors stimulating *abjection* – aversion to that which is odious – a term Chodźko used to denote feelings that are inseparable from the sight of a Jew. We find ourselves at the beginning of a vision in which Jews prostitute not only their own wives and daughters, but women in general – particularly Polish women. According to the anti-Semitic press, the Jew

340 Tugendhold, *Obrona Izraelitów przez Rabbi Menasse ben Izrael czyli odpowiedź tegoż, dana uczonemu i dostojnemu Anglikowi na kilka jego zapytań względem niektórych zarzutów Izraelitom czynionych oraz rozprawa o czynionym ludowi starozakonnemu zarzucie potrzeby krwi chrzeoecijańskiej do jakiegoś obrządku religijnego czy też do innego jeszcze użytku* (Warszawa, 1831), CXXXVIII-CXXXIX.

341 Chodźko, ed., *Tableau de la Pologne*, 40a.

traded in “living commodities” as a profession out of a need to find quick money and to prey on feminine naiveté, but also because of his generally lascivious nature and “uncontrolled” sexuality. By warning innocent Aryan and Christian girls about the criminal greed of Jewish rapists, one could defend them against the defilement of both blood and race.

6. The Sexual Orgy

Leonard's lascivious nature – presented as one of his main attributes – is firmly embedded in *Nie-Boska Komedia*, and Leonard – as the high priest of the revolutionary “new faith” – is the leader of sexual orgies. A woman described as “independent, liberated, stripped of delusions and superstition [...] is chosen from among the daughters of Liberty” (88) to be his bride. Images of liberated women culminate in debauchery and madness. The orgy – oriental in nature, an orgy of the senses and agony³⁴² – is the manifestation of excessive “licentious sex,” linked to the infliction of death. What emerges here is something characteristic of modern culture: namely, a fear of “sexual anarchy” fomented by revolution and associated – by conservative social critics – with the emancipation of women. During the nightly orgy in Krasieński's drama, women squirm around the fireside, faint with desire, and tremble in a divine frenzy. *Mqż*-Count Henryk watches as one of them, “with wild hair and panting breast, throws herself into the rubble with abandon” (88). Later – also from the eyes of *Mqż* – we see a “pale, deranged” woman “in convulsions” (93) pressing herself against Leonard. The orgiastic masses, and especially the dissolute women demanding their prize (for murdering an aristocrat), frolic on the ruins of the fallen temple.

The appearance and behavior of these women indicate that they are, for *Mqż*, hysterical followers of the new religion and the revolution. The women's spectacular convulsions belong to the permanent repertoire of the physical demonstration of religious ecstasy. Beginning in 1872, the famous Jean-Martin Charcot elaborated on the example of the eighteenth-century *convulsionnaires* in the cemetery of Saint-Médard, calling it a classic example of hysteria.³⁴³ Theater during the

342 See Eugène Delacroix's “Death of Sardanapalus.” For more on this painting, see Mario Praz, *Zmysły, śmierć i diabeł w literaturze romantycznej*, trans. K. Żaboklicki (Warszawa, 1974), 140-144. R. Przybylski, in *Sardanapal. Opowieść o tyranii* (Warszawa, 2001), discusses “stories of unbridled hedonism” in romantic works, including in Delacroix. He also cites Krasieński's statements about “Sardanapalusian nuptials” (52-53).

343 See Catherine-Laurence Maire, *Les Convulsionnaires de Saint-Médard Miracles, convulsions et prophéties à Paris au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris, 1985), 242-246.

French Revolution often contained an element of the hysterical, in which women played a central role.³⁴⁴

Emphasis in *Nie-Boska Komedia* was placed on women dancing in front of Leonard; throngs of women tug at him, falling into his arms with delight. The sex act with Leonard takes on perverse, sacral power. Licentious sex is sanctified. When a Convert explains to *Maż* that Leonard's brides are "countesses and princesses who, having left their former husbands, moved to our faith," he reacts – it would come as no surprise – with horror: "Once they were my angels" (92). These were the very women who greatly changed under Leonard's influence and thus became demonic fornicators.

Krasiński's view of women in this period was unambiguous. He did not see in them any creative element. In a letter to an English friend, Henry Reeve, he wrote that "women can become angels in an instant," although they are, in fact, "entirely earthly" creatures. But in the introduction to Part One of *Nie-Boska Komedia* he equated the fake poet with woman. "Who gave you a despicable life, so misleading that you can pretend to be an angel for a moment before you get bogged down in the mud, before you, like a reptile, creep around and suffocate yourself in the sludge? – You and woman have the same beginning" (4). The angelic nature of woman is in fact an illusion, and woman – through her inferiority – is not capable of playing any sort of role in world history; indeed, Krasiński compared her to what is considered a lower existence (a reptile bogged down in the mud). Later, during his affair with Delfina Potocka, he would alter his views in this regard.

The Jew's lascivious nature unleashed in women their latent sexuality, which would otherwise not have gained such prominence in European culture (according to its conventions, women are "angels"). The blasphemous Leonard calls the New God of the people the "Lord of freedom and joy" (89). Liberated women become his followers, and *Maż* sees a great danger in their awakened desire. Sergl, referring to Krasiński's phantasm of the dead woman and fear of her return, writes that *Maż*, during his trip through the revolutionary camp, is appalled by a woman he met "who [had] freed herself from her spouse in order not to die for him or through him. To *Maż*, the personification of the liberated woman seems to be a fury from a nightmare."³⁴⁵ In fact, as is the case in certain modern interpretations,

344 See, among others, Elisabeth Roudinesco, *Théroigne de Méricourt. Une femme mélancolique sous la Révolution* (Paris, 1989). The author writes about the legendary blood-thirsty women of the French Revolution. One could argue that – if common women in Year II appeared to be more bloody in their fascination for the guillotine than their male counterparts – it was not because of a more perverse 'instinct,' but rather because their condition as half-citizens, indeed 'half-animals,' led them to demonstrate their convictions in ways that were more extreme: fanaticism, vituperation, mystical adoration, etc" (158).

345 Sergl, "Maż. Koncepcja płci," 89-90.

the “liberation of women” means giving vent to their sexuality. In *Nie-Boska Komedia*, Jewish and feminine elements (by which, as we mentioned above, Leonard is feminized) join forces in an attempt to entirely destroy the system's pillars: family and religion.

7. Gold

“On his fingers golden rings...” Gold was popularly considered a symbol of Jewish wealth. Krasiński senior, in his work on the Jews, emphasized that, by wearing golden rings, Jews wanted to express their familial ambition. He wrote: “Polish noblemen were the protectors of a custom that descended from the ancient Roman knights: namely, the wearing of golden rings on which were engraved mottoes and emblems; Jews also wanted to enjoy this privilege, but the law expressly forbade them from doing so; they were allowed only to engrave on rings trademarks, the name of Jerusalem or the river Sambation.”³⁴⁶ Thus, the Jews were shown their place, told to curb their mistaken ambition to rise to the level of the nobility, a status determined by blood, not money.

Even so, wealthy Jews treated gold as their own kind of heraldic emblem. Real (though less wealthy) aristocrats felt inferior, and it was with this sense of inferiority that Krasiński junior wrote the above-cited letter to Gaszyński in 1837. The ostentatious wealth of Aleksander Krysiński irritated him. That convert, whom Krasiński met in foreign spa towns, stamped his emblem (“Leliwa”) wherever he could, on his bathrobes and teacups; it all literally shone of gold. “That Jew glitters with chains and rings,” a virulent Krasiński reported to a friend. Krysiński's carriages and gloves drove Krasiński insane, “gold-trimmed walking sticks from London.” Alongside Krysiński, he suspected, “every barber” would take him, a true nobleman, for a footman. “With no dignity in his bearing, he talks constantly of money and pours hundreds in ducats, not from a bag, but from his big mouth. This strange mixture of gold outside and muck inside is what rules in Warsaw.”³⁴⁷ Not only the spa towns, but also the Polish capital, were under the control of mean and wealthy Jews. One can presume that the “golden” Krysiński left his stamp on the figure of Leonard, though with his conspicuous, tacky wealth, he differs greatly not only from the mob of proletarians, but also from Pankracy.

346 Wincenty Krasiński, *Aperçu sur les Juifs de Pologne*, 20-21. This includes a note explaining that the River Sambation is the “river of Israel.”

347 Krasiński, *Listy do Konstantego Gaszyńskiego*, 166-167.

8. Satan

We must finally examine the satanic aspect of the character of Leonard as described in “Leonard – wielki mistrz sabatów rewolucji” (Leonard – The Grand Master of the Revolutionary Covens) by Waław Kubacki, who regarded the orgasmic scene – the revolutionary “coven” – as crucial in defining the play’s significance. He rejected the theory put forward by earlier scholars that the ideas of Saint-Simon and his “new religion” were the determining influence in that scene; they cannot explain the “revolutionary bacchanalia in the third part of *Nie-Boska Komedia*,” and they cannot clarify the various allusions to events of the French Revolution. The main frame of reference for this central scene, Kubacki argued, is the devilish coven. Krasieński’s stylizations and travestiation have far-reaching consequences and allow us to solve the mystery of Leonard. Here is Kubacki’s final interpretation: “In the scene with Leonard we find a hidden parallel: revolution – coven; a social movement – the inspiration for hell; the people’s tribune, Leonard – the Satan of medieval legend, the great master of all debauchery and licentiousness.” Kubacki shows no signs of hesitation: Leonard “is undoubtedly Satan, though even more detached from reality than Masinissa.”³⁴⁸ The problem is that Kubacki does not explain on what basis Leonard is stripped of real features, and it seems that what in fact makes Leonard real are his Semitic features.

Bodgan Burdziej, in his 2001 study, adopts Kubacki’s position on the issue of Leonard and discusses the implications of the character’s Jewishness. The hero’s demonic features, “along with his masked Jewish identity, create a stereotype – known since the Middle Ages – of the Jew as ‘Satan’s agent.’”³⁴⁹ In his conclusion, Burdziej states that, in the drama’s final scene, Leonard, “helpless like Pankracy against the revealed power of God, is stylized as Satan. Christ destroys only Pankracy, a tool of the evil spirit, one of the many [...] used by Satan over the course of history.” When Pankracy dies – having fallen into Leonard’s arms and taken his last breath – “the tool returns to the master, property to its owner,” that is, to the Devil, who this time is vanquished.³⁵⁰

This unequivocal and somewhat preachy interpretation not only deprives the image of revolution (which is supposed to be exclusively a satanic intrigue) of all features of immanency, it also passes over the insoluble nature of the drama, which is open to tragic antinomies. But *Nie-Boska Komedia* is not *Nie-Boska komedia czescia pierwsza*, written in 1840-1848, which Kubacki accurately interprets as

348 Waław Kubacki, “Leonard – wielki mistrz sabatów rewolucji,” *Ruch Literacki* (1960), z. 3, 176, 184.

349 Burdziej “Izrael i Krzyż,” 216. The author refers here to a chapter in J. Delumeau, *Strach w kulturze Zachodu XIV-XVIII w.*, trans. A. Szymanowski (Warszawa, 1986), 257-286.

350 *Ibid.*, 247.

an allegory depicting a “chain of heresies and rebellions against the Church and the Lord’s anointed.” For Kubacki, *Nie-Boska Komedia* is also supposed to have been a simple illustration of Church demonology – in agreement with the notion that Krasiński’s philosophy of history was, at its foundation, ecclesiastical, in line with Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet. “Along with all the inspiration Krasiński took from the likes of Hegel, Pierre Simon Ballanche and August Cieszkowski, it fits perfectly into the Church’s teachings on Providence.”³⁵¹ Nonetheless, it seems that these inspirations allowed the poet in *Nie-Boska Komedia* to overstep the horizon of church satanology and introduce a tragic aspect of conflict. The non-Bossuetean providentialism of Ballanche (called “Vico enlightened by the French Revolution”), the modern historicism of the precursors of Romanticism (like Herder), and the idea of the tragic in Hegel, all constituted the intellectual capital of Krasiński as the creator of *Nie-Boska Komedia*.³⁵² It is not worth trying to cram his youthful drama into schemas which he was breaking through, and to which – it is agreed – he later returned.³⁵³

9. *Das Unheimliche* and Magic

The character of Leonard is more complicated both in relation to the Converts who appear in the drama, and to the historical-literary interpretations cited above. The extended background of meaning that accompanies Leonard allows us to nudge our understanding of that character toward the hidden motives of fear, loathing, and disgust. They consist of the alien nature – the strangeness – of the Jew. For her understanding of this issue, Maria Bonaparte introduces the Freudian category of *das Unheimliche*. She writes of the *étrangement inquiétant* (*unheimlich*) character of the Jew: “He remains an alien among us, an enemy in our midst, and even today that image, though anachronistic, is attached to the Jew, even to the Jew who is most

351 Kubacki, “Leonard,” 181-184.

352 See my Introduction (*Wstęp*) to *Nie-Boska Komedia*, XLV-LV.

353 The work of Krzysztof Biliński offers little that is new. He writes about the “atheistic ideas” of the French Revolution as being the explanation of Leonard’s behavior. He also discusses “libertine demonism” along the lines of Mirabeau’s *Ma conversion, ou, Le libertain de qualité*. He compares descriptions of rituals of the new faith in *Nie-Boska Komedia* with relevant passages from the *Historia powszechna kościoła katolickiego* from 1903 and *Encyklopedia Kościelna* from 1899 (see “Leonard i nowa religia rewolucji” in *Zygmunt Krasiński – nowe spojrzenia*, 251-258). Since the author accepts the ecclesiastical character of Krasiński’s historiosophy, a similar interpretation serves the explanation “of the same through the same.” There are much newer works on this subject, which return to the original sources, including Michel Vovelle, *La Révolution contre L’Église. De la Raison à l’Être Suprême* (Éditions Complexe, 1988).

assimilated in European society.”³⁵⁴ Jean Delumeau characterizes in much the same way the Jew's situation in earlier times, which survived into the following centuries: “Recognizable on the street and in iconography from his skullcap, subject to disgraceful taxes, as if he has forever had to buy the right to life, swearing oaths only from humiliating positions, hanged by the legs when sentenced to death – a Jew is increasingly viewed in the eyes of a decayed medieval society as a bizarre *foreigner* not willing to assimilate himself. To be sure, he has his own customs, his way of living, his religion. But the Church has increasingly isolated him, and has encouraged the state to do the same, all of which has helped intensify the Jew's distinct nature and exaggerate his unsettling character.”³⁵⁵ The forms of his stigmatization have changed, but the stigma has remained. The body betrayed the Jew's strangeness, sometimes grotesque strangeness, which are images we find in Krasieński's works.

This vision of the alien nature of Jews – and, for that matter, many “others” defined by their appearance – was associated with a fear of the magic they were supposed to have practiced throughout the centuries. Through his painstaking research, Joshua Trachtenberg has shown that, since the Middle Ages, the “Jew-sorcerer” grew to become one of the most widespread anti-Semitic stereotypes. The popular belief was that Jews were proficient in all sorts of magic. Medieval chronicles are full of descriptions of the magical powers of Jews, inspired by the devil. It was often said that they used such powers to mock and ultimately destroy Christianity through, for example, the desecration, mutilation and tormenting of the Host, which thus dripped with blood and was then used by Jews to “cure the secret ailments from which they supposedly suffered.” We can also cite from Trachtenberg's work the phantasm of a magical conspiracy of the impure: A Hebrew letter found in 1321 and “translated” by a converted Jew “was said to reveal a huge plot of Jews, the lepers, and the Saracens of Spain to destroy the whole Christian population of Europe by poisoning the wells.”³⁵⁶ This menacing phantasmagoria is directed by a fear of the alien, the strange, the excluded, and by the project to destroy “them” before they manage to destroy “us.”

This fear of the alien's magic moved Marian Pankowski to create the term “magical” anti-Semitism to denote the reflexes of those Poles who wanted to exclude all that was “impure” and “besmirched” in Polish society.³⁵⁷ At the root of

354 Maria Bonaparte, “Le mythe du Juif-Satan” in *Mythes de guerre* (Paris, 1950), 145. Here the author discusses the position taken by Otto Fenichel.

355 Delumeau, *Strach w kulturze Zachodu*, 276. Author's emphasis – M.J.

356 Trachtenberg, *The Devil and the Jews*, 57-123. The passages quoted above can be found on pp. 116 and 101 respectively.

357 Marian Pankowski, “Odpowiedź na ankietę ‘Kultury’,” in *Wizje Polski*, 122. The author views “magical” anti-Semitism as a “form one hundred times more threatening and widespread than ideological anti-Semitism (Rosenberg, ONR).”

this “magical” anti-Semitism were feelings of disgust and revulsion, and it was not by chance that one spoke colloquially of misbehavior by Jews and the devil as being “impure.” Aleksander Hertz wrote: “Magical factors play no less a role today in the thoughts and actions of man than they did in the lives of our remote ancestors.” The only difference is in the “forms they take, the external expression, the stereotyped rationalizations” of purity and impurity.³⁵⁸ The anti-Semitism of the common people, as well as that of the Church and Krasiński, all had a common source. Trachtenberg ends his book with an important section entitled “The Jew as Sorcerer,” in which he writes that “the old notion of the Jew retained its ancient lustiness into the new times. [...] Protestant reform made no difference so far as the Jew was concerned; [...] attitudes] toward him remained fixed in medieval tradition. The era of rationalism and liberalism made no difference – it passed the masses by unnoticed. [...] The magic of words has transmuted a pernicious medieval superstition into an even more debasing and corrosive modern superstition.”³⁵⁹

10. The Fist or Money, or Violence

While looking into the sources of the name “Leonard,” Kubacki discovered useful entries in the *Dictionnaire infernal* by Collin de Plancy, a work that was well-known in the Romantic era. Under the category “Infernal court” appears one of the leaders in hell, “Leonard – a grand master of covens,” and under the entry “Leonard” one can read his exact profile, including for example that he is the “general inspector of witchcraft, black magic and sorcerers. He is often called the Great Negro.”³⁶⁰ Beyond all the other meanings referring to darkness, black magic and the arts of a wizard, this is a metaphor for the alien nature of Satan.

358 See Hertz, *The Jews in Polish Culture*, 34.

359 Trachtenberg, *The Devil and the Jews*, 219. Here the author means “scientific” anti-Semitism.

360 Jacques Collin de Plancy, *Słownik wiedzy tajemnej*, selected and translated by M. Karpowicz (Warszawa-Kraków, 1993), 58, 108-109. The original title is *Dictionnaire infernal* (see the integral edition, Nervièrs 1973). See Kubacki, “Leonard...,” 173-174. Burdziej explains Leonard’s name from other perspectives (“Izrael i krzyż,” 215-216). In various writings the term “Negro” played a demonic role. He had sinister sexual and seductive powers; he was the personification of evil. The devil liked to take on this character. The following is a popular motif: “The devil in the form of an Ethiopian distracted the monk from prayer.” See J. Wolny, “Exempla z kazań niedzielnych Peregryna z Opola (z XIII wieku)” in *Kultura elitarna a kultura masowa w Polsce późnego średniowiecza*, ed. B. Geremek (Wrocław, 1978), 270.

But it is also a metaphor for his dark sexual powers. As the high priest of the new faith, Leonard is one of those rulers endowed with magical charisma, with supernatural, unearthly qualities.³⁶¹ The magical, erotic strengths of the “Lord of freedom and joy” arouse mad passion among women. Of course, women are able to respond to Leonard’s call with license – and that is revolting. But Krasiński is, at the same time, fascinated by sexual energy and the seduction/possession of women, proof of which he revealed in letters to male correspondents. Tadeusz Boy-Żeleński extracted from Teofil Lenartowicz’s correspondence an amusing passage on our great bards’ sexual excitabilities: “Kornel Ujejski, revered and adored in all writings, has one fault for which he is persecuted, as I suspect: Lustful harpies tear at him [...] On the ruins of Rome, in the groves of Parthenope, in the romantic hills of Florence, the Jeremiah of Poland [Ujejski was the author of *Skargi Jeremiego*] howled, burned with satanic fires, and ran after any woman. [...] Our Polish prophets generally are more similar to David [known for his amorous passions] than to Jeremiah or Isaiah. They are very fond of the feminine tribe, from which come the plague and other ailments. Zygmunt (Krasiński), ugly as a dog, cross-eyed, with legs like a Dachshund, he philandered, my dear sir, throughout the whole world, would be carried away into seventh heaven, sometimes under the grace of prophecy (along the lines of Schelling’s examples). Adam (Mick.) was also up to his ears in iniquity with some Jewesses (Dajbel).”³⁶²

Krasiński’s youthful eastern novel *Agaj-Han* (published in 1833), extolling impassioned love-crime,³⁶³ contains extremely bold erotic scenes full of corpses, blood and brutality culminating in a severed head. Here, blood develops a special semantic marking – the awe of complete fascination.

Letters to Jerzy Lubomierski contain advice on how to treat a venereal disease contracted by a friend from an Italian courtesan and – right after describing ways to get rid of dangerous venom in the organism – Krasiński puts forward an angelic vision of woman as the earthly incarnation of God’s idea of beauty³⁶⁴. How can these conflicting images be reconciled?

Krasiński calls Adelaida Fabbi, who had affairs with both Sołtan and Lubomierski, a “scamp” and the “worst little beast.” He even compared her to a “spirit of a shrew sent to the poet through hell, pretending to be the comely virgin, the ideal of

361 Compare Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, eds. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (New York: Bedminster Press, 1968), 241-245.

362 Tadeusz Boy-Żeleński, “Plotki starego lirnika” in *Pisma*, ed. H. Markiewicz, seria I, vol. VI, *Szkice literackie* (Warszawa, 1956), 100-110.

363 On the issue of love-crime, see Praz, *Zmysły, śmierć i diabeł w literaturze romantycznej*.

364 See Krasiński, *Listy do Jerzego Lubomierskiego*, selected and introduction by Zbigniew Sudolski (Warszawa, 1965), 35-36. Letter dated 21 September 1839.

his dreams” from *Nie-Boska Komedia*.³⁶⁵ He then advances to the claim that “that Italian woman is always an animal, in fact not a woman” – thus, any means can be used against her, “the fist or money, or violence.”³⁶⁶ Krasieński’s reply to Adelaida’s attempt to blackmail Sołtan was to threaten to visit the parish priest, tell him about all her lovers, and demand that she be locked up in a penitential convent.³⁶⁷ We learn from further letters that Adelaida was in fact put into such a convent by her family, and that Krasieński once saw her in Rome in a “long row of black Magdalenas strolling on a festival day. [...] She does not look bad, but she looks defiant. [...] When she saw me, she turned her eyes away in anger, and in that moment it turned bitter.”³⁶⁸ This is not at all surprising, since Krasieński was one of those who had contributed to the punishment she received for having consorted with Polish aristocrats. At the end of his life, he remembered the wonderful Roman carnival in 1835 as “Adelaida-esque”³⁶⁹ – though Adelaida remained a symbol of the passions that were, for Krasieński, ambiguous, both intoxicating and rejected.

11. The Thirst for Blood, Gold, Luxury and Debauchery

In his introduction to Part One of *Nie-Boska Komedia*, Krasieński – as we mentioned above – describes woman as casting a deceptive shadow, in which she can pretend to be an angel in one moment before she mires, before she crawls like a reptile and suffocates, in the mud.³⁷⁰ Woman, no matter how alluring she might be, has a “difficult nature, always in decline, [she] can never rise to the same heights as the [male] soul.”³⁷¹ This is a pre-Weiningerian characterization of the pov-

365 Ibid., 36.

366 Krasieński, *Listy do Adama Sołtana*, selected and introduction by Zbigniew Sudolski (Warszawa, 1970), 339. Letter dated 4 April 1840.

367 Ibid., 342. Letter dated 22 April 1840.

368 Ibid., 387. Letter dated 31 March 1841.

369 “Do you remember when the world Adelaida-ed both of us, as did the earth and sea, every flower, everything?!” (ibid., 581. Letter dated 6 February 1852).

370 Maria Grabowska, in her comments included in the edition of *Nie-Boska Komedia* cited here (4), points out how these words converge with an opinion offered in a letter to Reeve dated 5 February 1833: “I thought further about women, and I stated that they are entirely earthly beings, who are able to transform themselves into angels in difficult moments; the illusion lasts briefly, the angel flies from earth.” See Krasieński, *Listy do Henryka Reeve*, trans. Al. Ołędzka-Frybesowa, edited and with an introduction and notes by P. Hertz (Warszawa, 1980), vol. II, 84.

371 Krasieński, *Listy do Adama Sołtana*, 301. Letter dated 29 September 1839.

erty of a woman's soul, a separation of the masculine "I" from the "not-I" (later, Krasieński would try to alter this attitude to bring it into line with his feelings for Delfina Potocka). *Mąż* in *Nie-Boska Komedia* does not submit to women going wild under Leonard's influence. But, as I have already pointed out, it was those very women who had once been his "angels." Now they had crossed over to the devilish, Jewish passions. He who had led them there was repulsive, even though he represented a hidden part of human sexuality that Krasieński knew well, and understood.

Maria Bonaparte, referring to Otto Fenichel's arrival in Prague in 1937, highlighted the specific function played in anti-Semitism by projection. "More or less consciously, anti-Semites project onto the Jew all of their own evil instincts: Their thirst for blood, gold, luxury and debauchery. Having liberated themselves from all that, they become clean in their own eyes and appear to be shining examples of purity. Thus, the Jew is best suited to be the projection of the Devil. Aggression can fixate on this new incarnation of Evil."³⁷² The Alien is assigned a particular ethnic type (Jewish, Gypsy, Black), which must assume the burden of aggression.

This fixation on aggression makes the Jew into something disgusting and hideous. Let us recall the portrait of Leonard: Eastern eyes, long lashes, Jewish body, something lascivious on his lips, a husky voice ...

372 Bonaparte, *Mythes de guerre*, 145.

**IV.
THREE VARIATIONS
ON THE JEWISH THEME
IN MICKIEWICZ**

1. Wail in the Synagogue

The poignant cry of Jews praying in the synagogues, pleading and lamenting. This was one of the impressions that remained with Mickiewicz his entire life. He took it with him from childhood, from his youth, which is indicated by various statements he made, above all from the period when he was particularly concerned with the mystery of the common Polish and Jewish destiny. In a lecture given at the Collège de France on 26 December 1843, he praised those “parts of truth” gained from the “soul’s toil.” They are the possession of the Jewish people. “In lands inhabited by our tribe [...] live millions who belong to a well-known people, the oldest in Europe, the oldest of all civilized peoples, who from the depths of their synagogues have, for centuries, not ceased to draw from themselves the plea with which nothing else in the world can be compared, the kind of plea that human memory has lost” (WJ, XI, 343).³⁷³

It is clear how highly Mickiewicz valued this exceptional, often non-verbal mode of expression, which could stir everyone emotionally but could not be placed into any sort of logical-rational category.

Juliusz Kleiner – writing about the extraordinary character Judyta, a young Jewish woman in Słowacki’s dramatic poem *Ksiądz Marek* (Father Marek) – draws our attention to the dominant tone of mystical exaltation highlighted by both Towiański and Mickiewicz. As evidence, he quotes a statement by Towiański: “The highest non-Christian spiritual liberation ever achieved comes through the prayer of Israel, which frees the spirit in prayer through pure exaltation, by taking flight, and on this non-Christian path, and with the might of Israel, it reaches the throne of God.”³⁷⁴

The impassioned exaltation of prayer becomes a way to release enormous spiritual power. For Mickiewicz, emotional internalization was always a condition for communication with himself and with others. In his farewell speech before leaving Paris for the East (on 11 September 1855) to create a Jewish Legion, he expressed himself as he had in the Great Improvisation of *Dziady*: “I feel in my chest the voice of all captive Poland” (WS, XI, 524).

On 5 March 1847, in a speech given at the *Koło Sprawy Bożej* (the Circle of God’s Cause, hereafter called simply the *Koło*, or God’s Cause), Mickiewicz drew a connection between the wail of praying Jews with the indomitable spirit of their faith, which is something the official Church had lost entirely. That is why the priest smothers any movement of spirit, he can excite no one’s heart, and he thus cannot convert a Jew. “In the last 1800 years only the Jews have maintained

373 See a List of Bibliographic Abbreviations on p. 176.

374 See Juliusz Kleiner, *Juliusz Słowacki. Dzieje twórczości*, vol. IV: *Poeta mistyk*, part I (Warszawa-Kraków-Lublin-Łódź, 1927), 134.

among themselves a true feeling for God. When the rabbi in his temple wails from the depths of his soul, his spirit is more purely shaken, and he gains a strength that he communicates to others; how is a priest of weak faith supposed to convert him?" (WS, XI, 436)

The wail is a path of direct communication with God and the dispensation of spiritual energy. The wordless grief of the Jews reveals the "true sense of God" to an incomparably greater extent than tens and hundreds of preachers with their eloquent words. Only a deep "sense of God" can unite Poland and Israel, the spiritual character of which, for Mickiewicz, manifested itself when Towiański, "after fifteen minutes of conversation," converted one of the Jews in the *Kolo*: "The Master spoke to him with his famous voice, which shook him to his core" (WS, XI, 436).

The wail heard in the synagogue is the opposite of not just silence, but also the articulated word. In accordance with romantic anthropology, Mickiewicz placed it alongside a sudden, emotional act: "If something exists that could bring the truth from the heavens down to earth, is it not then perhaps this wailing, in which the individual focuses on, and immerses himself in, as it were, his entire life? Would not these unfortunate ones, who have called and cried for centuries, be more certain to achieve truth than the quiet scholar, or the man who draws his knowledge from the daily newspaper?" (WJ, XI, 343)

For Mickiewicz, the losing of oneself in the cry, the loud display of hope and despair, was more effective on the path toward truth, in reaching God, than practicing science or philosophy or reading the daily papers. In the same passage from the 1843 lecture mentioned above, he spoke ironically about the person who, in the search for truth and with proud conceit, "opens a book with a disdainful smile, and draws from it that which forces him into no action and to no sacrifice" (WJ, XI, 343). Mickiewicz decidedly condemned this easy path. The search for truth is painful and laborious, and requires self-denial and mystical concentration. He rejected the simplified civilization of the West, demanding from each person the highest measure of spiritual effort. However, this was a peculiar kind of effort.

Mickiewicz criticized the French, who wanted new ideas, "but that is not really relevant; ideas are no longer of any help to anyone"; they are without value. What counts are feelings, pain, suffering. The French must "wail over Poland, ache and quaver, until they cannot stand it any longer" (WJ, X, 335). Only then will they wake up to the new, spiritual life, as the Jews-Israel already have. In accordance with these beliefs, he argued – as Johann Arndt had – in a lecture from 31 May 1842 that "books have only a secondary significance in Christianity; its essence is life and deeds" (WJ, X, 335).

A sense of the highest value of the existential dimension of faith, affirmed by one's own life and experience, was fixed in Mickiewicz's mind as early as the

writing of *Zdania i uwagi* (Opinions and comments): a sense of faith, and not of religion, which supposes the possibility of knowledge of God through reason. From that point he developed, sometimes to an extreme, his belief in the primacy of the relentless fervor of faith and prayer above all else, which became one of the reasons behind his far-reaching apologia for the greatness of Israel. In his famous letter dated 8 February 1842, he warned Aleksander Chodźko: “Remember that the Jews who doubted, they died, and they did not enter the Promised Land” (WJ, XV, 460). The glorification of pure faith was also at the foundation of his bold confession, noted by Józef Bohdan Zaleski and defined by him as Adam’s fallacy: “The genuine acceptance of Islam is even progress for the nobleman because he will at least believe in God” (WS, XVI, 345).

The emotional tone of Israel was, for Mickiewicz, a constant value. Zaleski recorded the course of a conversation on 31 July 1851: “I moved over to Adam. We talked about the German Protestants, about soulless philosophical theories compared to the faith of the Jews and the emotions of the Slavs” (WS, XVI, 344). Earlier, in a letter dated 24 November 1847, Mickiewicz advised the national elites and those working for Poland’s salvation, the noble class, to draw their strength from appropriate sources. “The faith of Israel, the simplicity of the peasant, the great deeds of ancestors, these are our guides” (WJ, XVI, 169).

One can presume that Mickiewicz – having placed Israel’s faith in such a prominent position, a faith that had survived despite the Diaspora and persecution – intended it to be a signpost for Poles as well; that is, the Jews’ exceptional ability to survive as a community could be found in their religious anthropology. This is how François Furet describes Gershom Scholem’s views in this regard. For Scholem, as it was in the end for Mickiewicz, the Jewish people were “more the history of faith than the development of society,”³⁷⁵ evidence for which is, in Mickiewicz’s thinking, a salient episode in Jewish history. On 11 August 1845, which was – according to the Jewish calendar – the anniversary of the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem by the Romans, Mickiewicz called for a service of the *Kolo* to be held in a Paris synagogue. “Be in prayer in this spirit: We join with the grief of Israel, wherever on earth there are those who today grieve the destruction of Jerusalem” (WS, XI, 391). Such were brother Adam’s instructions. The Polish-Jewish connection had particular significance. “We Poles should arouse in us similar feelings, in memory of the slaughter at Praga and the capture of Warsaw” (WS, XI, 391).

Seweryn Goszczyński also examined the convergence of Polish and Jewish fortunes: he mentioned “our bond with the Jews in their anguish as we remember

375 See François Furet, “Gershom Scholem et l’histoire juive” in *L’atelier de l’histoire* (Paris, 1982), 293, 295.

the slaughter of Praga and the fall of Warsaw.”³⁷⁶ Mickiewicz recommended: “Let us be humble in the face of the spirit of Israel, which for 1800 years has known how to keep sorrow alive, as if its misfortune happened just yesterday” (WS, XI, 391). Historical time had to give way to emotional time, to faith. The non-verbal connection in “feeling,” in “anguish,” would not dissuade brother Adam from believing that – were he to feel the need – he could intone a psalm (*God is our refuge*) in the synagogue.

In a letter to Towiański dated 16 August 1845, Mickiewicz submitted a report on the service he had led in the Paris synagogue. He believed he had cleared the road for his French brothers; he felt that “Waterloo was for the French” what the destruction of the temple was for the Jews, and the slaughter at Praga for the Poles. This overtly political observance of bereavement in the temple apparently troubled the rabbi of the synagogue at rue Neuve-Saint-Laurent 14. Mickiewicz described it this way: “The rabbi was outraged by the fact that I was talking about the bereavement of Israel to him. Because here they only want to use; what is most difficult for them is to ache.” Somewhat earlier he told Towiański: “The Jews here are the lowest” (WJ, XVI, 51-52), by which he meant the least spiritual. He treated their hedonism and materialism with disgust. The reason why the rabbi in Paris did not want to hear “about the bereavement of Israel” is best explained by his having been confronted with the opposition of spiritual “grief” and mundane “usage,” of the pure expression of pain and the “enlightened” practice of ritual.

Mickiewicz draws a clear distinction between the “Jew” and “Israel.” When Lenartowicz accosted him about the famous German poet, Heinrich Heine, Mickiewicz grimaced: “He is not Israel, because that is a great thing – he is a Jew” (WS, XVI, 364). What was that supposed to mean? Armand Lévy recorded the following remark by Mickiewicz about Israel: “The Jew is Israel returned to earth, who takes abilities acquired in order to understand and perform higher concerns and applies them to concerns that are heavy and material. He has succeeded in this, but it has reduced him.” And this was followed by some thoughts on a legendary rich man and Jewish banker: “What would Rothschild not be able to achieve if he took the energy used to pursue matters of a lower level and used it instead for higher works” (WS, XVI, 418). It was typical for Mickiewicz to use such terms as “lower” and “higher” applications of energy and to draw distinctions between “spiritual” and “material” actions and goals. Spirituality is Israel’s greatest feature.

Mickiewicz’s speech at the *Koło* on 19 March 1845 contained a passage about the oldest spiritual family, which calls itself Israel. “These are the spirits of Israel, in whatever bodies they happen to find themselves.” Stanisław Pigoń notes that, at

376 Seweryn Goszczyński, *Dziennik Sprawy Bożej*, ed. and intro. Zbigniew Sudolski, in cooperation with W. Kordaczuk and M.M. Matusiak, vol. I (Warszawa, 1984), 257.

this point in Goszczyński's hand-written manuscript, there is further clarification: "The name Israel is a spiritual name." Later we find a reference to a statement made by Towiański, a declaration of his pan-Israelism: "The cause is for Israel, and in Israel, and through Israel." Mickiewicz commented: "For unfathomable reasons, God has carried those spirits for centuries through three generations; He leaves them with the Israel-Jew and embodies them in the Israel-Frenchman and the Israel-Slav. Nonetheless, let us feel that this is one family." The community of Israel that is the Jews, the French and the Slavs marches toward ideals (WS, XI, 365). The precedence of Israel is the precedence of the spirit to which God first revealed that the Jews were Chosen.

Czesław Miłosz, writing of Mickiewicz's fatherland, made use of journals written by a certain Robert Johnston describing his travels to Russia and Poland in 1813. Alongside Johnston's descriptions of the most unusual, animal-like, and even barbaric residents of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, Miłosz also found a panorama of Nowogródek and its residents. "The people," Johnston wrote, "are simpletons, poor and filthy, and are made up mostly of Jews." Indeed, most of the towns on the eastern border regions of the Republic looked like that; we know this from many other travelers, above all from Józef Ignacy Kraszewski, who many times portrayed the eastern Jewish population of that day. Miłosz suggests that "the fifteen-year-old Adam Mickiewicz could have been among the locals watching those foreigners."³⁷⁷ From our point of view, the contrast between the Englishman's naturalistic descriptions filled with disgust for Nowogródek and Mickiewicz's nostalgic vision of his home region is of little significance. What is important is the fact that Mickiewicz knew these people from experience. In time, they would be called the "Jews of Eastern Europe," and often contrasted with the well-mannered, assimilated, or enlightened Jews of the West.

In Mickiewicz's view, the spontaneous, impassioned folk religiosity of the Jews of Eastern Europe (in his understanding, the powerful spirits of Israel) was particularly valuable. For Abraham J. Heschel, author of the 1950 work *The Earth Is the Lord's: The Inner World of the Jew in Eastern Europe*, it was on Polish soil in the modern era where the Jewish people reached their highest level of spirituality. The idea of "Israel," as Mickiewicz and Towiański proclaimed, was closely tied to the spirituality of Eastern European Jews. Daniel Grinberg, who shares Heschel's views on the Ashkenazi culture of Jews living in small Eastern European towns, pointed out their open double identity – Jewish and Polish.³⁷⁸ Mickiewicz was well aware of this, as evidenced by his character Jankiel in *Pan Tadeusz*.

377 See Miłosz, *Szukanie ojczyzny* (Kraków, 1992), 75-79.

378 See Daniel Grinberg, "Żydowskie kłopoty z tożsamością narodową w ujęciu Isaiaha Berliana a doświadczenia Żydów polskich ostatnich stuleci" in *Kultura i Społeczeństwo* 2 (1994). On the issue of eastern Jews as seen from the point of view of German Jews, see the *Nowy*

Let us return to the abovementioned scene in the Paris synagogue. We can assume that Mickiewicz knew about the customs started by the Kabbalist mystic Izaak Luria, founder of heterodox, messianic Judaism. “He introduced a whole range of practices into religious ritual, for example midnight services (Chatzot), during which texts are recited while weeping, which rises to a level of paroxysm, lamenting the destruction of Jerusalem and the dispersion of Israel...”³⁷⁹ Such spasms of mourning must have been strange to “civilized” Parisian Jews. During Mickiewicz’s time at the Paris synagogue, there was a collision of two great forces, which Gershom Scholem identified this way: The grand messianic perspective of moral and national rebirth, and the limited horizon of the nineteenth century Jewish bourgeoisie.³⁸⁰ “The rabbi interrupted me several times and ran out [Mickiewicz reported], but I restrained him; my last words [...] captured some of the Jews present.”

And what were those words Mickiewicz spoke in the synagogue? He himself cites them in French: “*Je parle au nom des synagogues de notre pays dont nous avons entendu les cris déchirants, je parle au nom des synagogues de l’Orient et de l’univers entier*” [I speak in the name of synagogues in our country where we heard the mournful cries, I speak in the name of the synagogues of the East and of the entire world]” (WJ, XVI, 52).

We recall that Mickiewicz talked earlier of “millions of people” belonging to the Jewish nation and living in Slavic lands. He resorted to his personal experience, listening closely to those expressions of grief. But the question arises: who gave him the right to speak “in the name of” those grieving millions?

2. The Matrix of Frankism

In various phases of his life Mickiewicz explored the mysteries of Polish history, and there came a moment, just after *Księgi narodu polskiego i pielgrzymstwa polskiego* (The Books of the Polish Nation and Polish Pilgrimage, 1832), when he began to identify it with the messianic mystery of Israel. Such thinking gained particular clarity in the lectures he delivered at the Collège de France. On 23 April

leksykon judaistyczny under the entry “Ostjuden,” along with L. Heid’s essay “Wizerunek Żydów z Europy Wschodniej [Ostjuden] w Niemczech.”

379 Bałaban, “Mistyka i ruchy mesjańskie wśród Żydów w dawnej Rzeczypospolitej,” in *Żydz i Polsce Odrodzonej*, vol. I (Warszawa, 1932), 258.

380 See Gershom Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism and Other Essays on Jewish Spirituality* (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), 78-141, chapter entitled “Redemption through Sin.” Here Scholem writes about, among other things, the psychology of the followers of Sabbateanism and Frankism.

1844, he declared: “Our country is the main residence of the oldest and most mysterious of all nations, the nation of Israel.” And this was the source of the special mark left by the charismatic lecturer: “As a Pole and a countryman of my brothers the Jews, I, speaking to you, have been naturally called upon to talk to you about messianism, since fate has tied two nations closely together that are foreign to one another only by appearances” (WJ, XI, 458).

That relationship, ordained by Providence – as Mickiewicz lectured a month later (21 May 1844) – has a dimension that is both historical and mystical. Poland experienced its political fall much like Israel once had, and – much like Israel – Poland had to focus itself internally, to “turn in upon itself,” in order to achieve full concentration; there was no other such example in the world. Poland plumbed the depths of the Jewish spirit; one secret led to another: “In this way Poland came to know the mysteries surrounding the history of Israel; Poland became its representative and accepted common responsibility for it” (WJ, XI, 490).

The mystical union that recognized the common messianic mystery of spirits turned Poland into a representative of Israel. Martin Buber, in an address delivered on the hundred-fiftieth anniversary of Mickiewicz’s birth at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, highlighted the significance of Mickiewicz’s thinking on the mysterious ties that bind the Polish and Jewish nations. The suffering of both nations has messianic meaning, and Buber called it a “miraculous coincidence of thought” that, at the moment when Mickiewicz was beginning his lectures at the Collège de France, Nachman Krochmal – “the thinker who formulated the theory of the spiritual-national destiny of peoples, one which was highly original and very Jewish, and which was also very close to Mickiewicz’s wider conception” – died in a small Polish-Jewish town.³⁸¹

Mickiewicz believed that Poland’s right to represent and lead the “millions” about which he spoke in the Paris synagogue was based on the notion that God had ordained the presence of Jews in Poland. But perhaps, as Duker suggests in a brilliant article, there is here a certain hidden allusion to the Frankist tradition.³⁸² After all, Frank – during his stay in Smyrna – heard voices several times telling him to go to Poland and to encourage people there to take up the Christian faith,

381 See Samuel Scheps, *Adam Mickiewicz. Les affinités juives*. Préface de J. Fabre (Paris, 1964), *Annexe*, 93. This is a reprint of excerpts from a collection of texts by Buber, published in Hebrew. On Krochmal’s thinking, see the study by J. Taubes, “Nachman Krochmal und der moderne Historismus” under “Gesetz, Geschichte, Messianismus” in his book *Vom Kult zur Kultur Bausteine zu einer Kritik der historischen Vernunft*. Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religions- und Geistesgeschichte herausgegeben von A. und J. Assmann (München, 1996).

382 See Duker, “The Mystery of the Jews in Mickiewicz’s Towianist Lectures on Slav Literature,” *The Polish Review* 3 (1962), 54.

and his constant companions – Mardocheusz and Nachman – began trying to convince him to move his activities to Poland, where he could not only find more followers, but could also even play the role of the new pseudo-Sabbatai.³⁸³

The special significance of Poland in Frank's message has been widely discussed.³⁸⁴ "All of the good of the entire world is hidden in Poland," the prophet claimed.³⁸⁵ In a novel about Frank, the first chapters of which were printed in *Biblioteka Warszawska* in 1845, Poland was presented as the chosen home of the Jewish people: at a gathering at the home of an orthodox rabbi during a Jewish holiday (4 June 1759) in the small town of Stanisławów near Warsaw, one of the guests says that "in the end our dear Poland appears to me to be a second promised land, flowing with milk and honey, toward which God pointed Abraham as the chosen home of his chosen people, so they could at least taste the sweetness of peace and freedom." Another guest adds: "Our great messiah will be born in Poland."³⁸⁶ The Frankist myth about Poland as the Promised Land contained within itself, as an essential ingredient, a rejection of the idea of returning to Palestine.³⁸⁷

Gershom Scholem disputed the claim that a fruitful exchange existed between Jewish culture and German culture. The assimilated Jewish bourgeoisie since the

383 Aleksander Kraushar, *Frank i frankiści polscy. 1726-1816*, vol. I (Kraków, 1895), 62.

384 See especially the valuable work by Duker, "Polish Frankism's Duration", 306-307. The author points out how some of Frank's prophecies were put to anti-Semitic use. I will return to this issue in later sections of this book. Recently, Jan Doktor has addressed the problem of Poland and the Frankists in "Miejsce schronienia czy miejsce zbawienia. Polska w oczach frankistowskich neofitów," made available to me in digital format.

385 See Kraushar, *Frank i frankiści polscy*, vol. II, 365.

386 *Józef Frank. Powieść historyczna z drugiej połowy XVIII-go wieku przetłumaczona z niewydanego rękopisu przez Aleksandra Bronikowskiego*, published in *Biblioteka Warszawska*, vol. III, July 1845, 102-103. In 1980, Scholem devoted an important study to this novel ("Julian von Brinken et son récit romancé sur les frankistes," in a collection of his works, *De la création du monde jusqu'à Varsovie* [Paris, 1990], 199-221). As Scholem points out, it was widely known that around the year 1820 the Frankists in Warsaw (as in Prague) formed a well-organized group. The printing of the book by *Biblioteka Warszawska* was interrupted after intervention by important Frankist families, who were financially supporting the periodical. Their names appeared in the work. The novel in its entirety is known through its Russian translation. Its author was Baron Julian Brinken, who started work on the novel in 1825, which was interrupted by Maria Szymanowska – who came from a famous Frankist family – and he returned to it after the "talented pianist's" death in 1832.

387 See *Rozmaite adnotacje, przypadki, czynności i anegdoty pańskie*, selected, prepared for print, and introduction by J. Doktor (Warszawa, 1996). The introduction is entitled "Saloniki – Częstochowa – Offenbach. Stacje mesjańskie drogi Jakuba Franka," 21. Doktor supposes that – perhaps – all of the Sabbateans under the influence of Baruchja Russo's doctrine "gave up the idea of a return to Palestine with the messiah" (36).

nineteenth century was struggling with its identity within German culture, but on the German side there was no movement toward Jewish tradition. A Jewish-German dialogue, in Scholem's opinion, never really existed. Nazi genocide did not interrupt that exchange; it was just the crowning achievement of violence against spirits through the destruction of bodies.³⁸⁸ Mickiewicz's position is the result of an entirely different point of view: in granting them "precedence," which was recognition of greatness, the poet laid the foundation for true Polish-Jewish spiritual dialogue. That having been said, one must also remember that a dramatic split never developed in Poland as it had in Germany precisely because of the Frankists, among other reasons. "Judaizing Catholics"³⁸⁹ appeared on the scene, whose contribution to culture was enormous, although they contributed indirectly through their opponents to the sinister phantasm of "Judeo-Polonia."

It was not without good reason that Frank was told he could play the role of a new Sabbatai in Poland. Sabbateanism – a mystical movement in the second half of the seventeenth century – enjoyed powerful and long-lasting support, as Scholem writes, in Lithuania and above all in eastern Małopolska (Lesser Poland) and Podolia.³⁹⁰ A hundred years later, Jakub Józef Frank – inspired by Sabbatai – would find great success in south-eastern Poland.

Majer Bałaban, writing about mysticism and the messianic movements among Jews in the old *Rzeczpospolita*, argued that the Counter-Reformation played a highly significant role in their rise and expansion. The attacks, the tumult, the bloody pogroms, and the increasing persecution of Jews (many of whom were tried for committing ritual murder) all "created a terrible atmosphere within Jewish communities." And it was against this backdrop that Bałaban outlines the character of Sabbatai Zevi, with whom so many tied their hopes for the arrival of the Messiah.³⁹¹ Jan Doktor reminds us that scholars in the Scholem school of thought explain the success of Sabbatai Zevi in a distinct way, emphasizing the "messianic expectations raised by the expulsion of the Jews from the Iberian Peninsula."³⁹²

388 See Scholem's studies: "Juifs et Allemands; Contre le mythe du dialogue judéo-allemand" and "Encore un mot sur le dialogue judéo-allemand" included in *Fidélité et utopie. Essais sur le judaïsme contemporain* (Paris, 1978); see also Furet, "Gershom Scholem," 293-294, and A. Lipszyc, "Wiek Scholema," *Znak*, 1997, no. 8. Lipszyc accurately writes that representatives of Scholem's post-assimilation generation detected "false assimilation" and found themselves in a dramatic situation: "On the one hand, they could not become Germans, and on the other hand, the horrible choice to close themselves off in the ghetto of orthodox Judaism was, for them, impossible" (42).

389 This expression is from Isaak Markus Jost's *Allgemeine Geschichte des israelitischen Volkes* (1828) and is cited by Duker in his article "Polish Frankism's Duration," 291.

390 See Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1946), 303.

391 See Bałaban, "Mistyka i ruchy mesjańskie," 262.

392 Doktor, *Rozmaite adnotacje*, studium wstępne, 11.

In any case, messianic rapture in the middle of the seventeenth century also took hold among the mass of Jews in Poland, who abandoned their work and “sat for days on end in their temples, singing songs to the savior. [...] Jews in the eastern and south-eastern borderlands of the *Rzeczpospolita* were enthralled more than Jews in Wielkopolska (Greater Poland) and Małopolska.”³⁹³

It was in fact a wildfire. Scholem uses such expressions as “tide of emotion,” a “tremendous religious mass movement,” an explosion of “boundless rejoicing and enthusiasm.”³⁹⁴ Furet also points to the exceptional level of exultation: “The entire Jewish world, from Yemen to Morocco, from Poland to Holland, was in a blaze about the pseudo-Messiah Sabbatai Zevi, who ended his life infamously as a convert to Islam.”³⁹⁵

Scholem believes that the existential foundation of this great explosion of messianism was the unbearable tension between “exile” and “redemption”: “A people which had suffered from all the tribulations which exile and persecution could bring, and which at the same time had developed an extremely sensitive consciousness of life actually lived between the poles of exile and redemption, needed little to take the final step to Messianism.”³⁹⁶

After the expulsion of the Jews from Spain, the limits of endurance were reached. The teachings of Sabbatai Zevi and his prophet, Nathan of Gaza, and Sabbateanism as mystical heresy based on Kabbalistic sources, together fueled the messianic idea, promising not just redemption in a historical dimension, but also a “significant transformation at the very heart of all creation.”³⁹⁷ Rabbinical Judaism was undermined from within by heterodox messianic Judaism.³⁹⁸ Even if hope in the fulfillment of messianic promises eventually weakened in the external sphere, “what had taken place in the brief but thorough experience of Messianic uprising could not be taken away again.”³⁹⁹

That existential and, above all, emotional experience with Kabbalistic mysticism, expressed through heterodox messianic Judaism, caused a breach in Jewish thought and feeling, through which Jakub Frank – as a derivative of Sabbatean-

393 Bałaban, “Mistyka i ruchy mesjańskie,” 262.

394 Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 288.

395 Furet, “Gershom Scholem,” 294.

396 Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 287-288.

397 Ibid., 372. See also the excellent study by Jan Doktor, “Zbawienie doczesne czy duchowe,” *Midrasz* (July-August 1997), in which the author, among other things, discusses the messianic movement of Sabbatai Zevi and explains the numerous difficulties involved in finding reliable source material on Sabbateanism.

398 See the work of Michał Galas, “Heterodoksyjny mesjanizm w mistyce żydowskiej. Sabatjanizm i frankizm,” *Znak* (1991), nr. 5; the author described precisely how Scholem framed the central problem.

399 Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 306.

ism – could emerge in Poland. Of course, one cannot overlook what Jan Doktor writes in his book on Frank's teachings, namely that the burdensome wars that the *Rzeczpospolita* was engaged in, starting in the middle of the seventeenth century, led to the financial collapse of local governing institutions within Jewish communities. Their weakness raised the "ambitions of the Church hierarchy, which precisely at this time was organizing missionary activities among the Jews."⁴⁰⁰ At the same time, the number of accusations of alleged ritual murder increased. Doktor cites Simon Dubnov, who wrote that between 1730 and 1750 in Poland "not a single Passover went by without a ritual murder trial or an attempt to create such a trial."⁴⁰¹

The weakening of "local governing and religious institutions" contributed to a crisis in Judaic tradition, as defined up to that time. Jan Doktor treats Frankism as a "response to that crisis in tradition," which had already been undermined by the Sabbatean movement.

Polish priests who – for their own purposes – wrote about Frankist teachings, did so by placing a tendentious emphasis on the conflict between the Talmud and Kabbalah, which in fact had a long history. "There were always quarrels between the Talmudists and the anti-Talmudists, or the Kabbalists (also called Sabbateans)" – Father Gaudenty Pikulksi wrote.⁴⁰² The Zohar, that "bible of the kabbalists," became the foundation for the messiahs of Podolia. Majer Bałaban vividly described the disputes organized by Catholic clergymen between the Talmudists and the Sabbateans, also known as "anti-Talmudists." Bishop Mikołaj Dembowski taught his protégés using such words: "They are close to Christianity, they believe in the Trinity, they do not recognize the Talmud, naturally, and they are convinced of its harmfulness, which is why they suffer persecution at the hands of the Jews-Talmudists."⁴⁰³

400 Doktor, *Jakub Frank i jego nauka na tle kryzysu religijnej tradycji osiemnastowiecznego żydostwa polskiego* (Warszawa, 1991), 29.

401 Simon Dubnov, *History of the Jews from Cromwell's Commonwealth to the Napoleonic Era*, trans. Moshe Spiegel, vol. IV (London: Bames, 1971), 124; quoted in Doktor, *Jakub Frank*, footnote on p. 30.

402 Quote from Doktor, *Jakub Frank*, 34.

403 Quote from Bałaban, "Mistyka i ruchy mesjańskie," 271. Another subject of debate was the question of whether "the Talmud teaches the use of Christian blood" (*ibid.*, 276). Frankists recoiled from such an accusation, but in the end they figured it out. The most dangerous anti-Semitic phantasm was confirmed. This was echoed even in *Pan Tadeusz* when Zosia cries out: "As a child, pierced with needles by Jews" (VIII, 670), which Stanisław Pigoń explains with the following words: "The comparison was based on the old and widespread folk belief regarding so-called ritual murder committed by Jews on Christian children for blood used in matzah for Passover festivities" (Adam Mickiewicz, *Pan Tadeusz*, ed. Pigoń [Kraków, 1929], s. 359, BN I, 83). Mickiewicz thus was making a reference to a folk preju-

Rabbinical Judaism was in trouble, but not for long, because suddenly the bishop-protector of the Frankists died. And apparently Orthodox Jews wanted the Frankists to be christened, in order to be rid of them.

The conversion took place in a spectacular setting, namely the Lwów Cathedral in 1759. Aleksander Kraushar wrote that the number of converts who, over the course of two years (1759-1760), publicly became Catholics totaled 514 people. He pointed out that that number is “certainly far from the broad number of a thousand given in reports by Fathers Awedyk and Pikulski, but he added that never before in any country had so many Jews as a group abandoned the faith of their ancestors at the same time; one must view it as somehow symptomatic.”⁴⁰⁴

Before we attempt to define the specific character of the Frankists’ conversion, we must first consider the apostasy of the Messiahs-dissidents – from Sabbatai Zevi to Jakub Frank – in some kind of typological terms. Scholem establishes the premises for this in his foundational work *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*. For him, the key to apostasy is the conflict between the external and internal aspects of life and experience. New theories had to make life bearable within this tension, which gave birth to the psychology of the Marranos, who – after terrible persecution in Spain – were forced to convert to Catholicism.⁴⁰⁵ They were “compelled to lead, as it were, a double life. The religion they professed was not the one in which they believed.”⁴⁰⁶

The fate of the Marranos involved an understanding of the fact that “the heart and tongue do not always have to agree with one another,” which illustrates the sabbateanistic doctrine of the “sacred deception” and the “burden of silence”⁴⁰⁷ to which Frank so often referred. The monstrous (in Scholem’s view) figure of the Messiah-apostate represents a dramatic parallel to the experience handed out

dice. Recently, Andrzej Fabianowski discussed anti-Semitic motifs in Mickiewicz’s works, including the “elements of anti-Semitic discourse” in *Księgi pielgrzymstwa polskiego*. See “Żyd realny, Żyd mityczny” in eds. A. Fabianowski and E. Hoffmann-Piotrowska, *Mickiewicz mistyczny* (Warszawa, 2005), 402-413.

404 Kraushar, *Frank i frankiści polscy*, vol. I, 208-209. Doktor (*Rozmaite adnotacje*, 26) accepts that “in 1759 alone one thousand people took baptism,” though declared supporters of Frank were in the minority. The conversions gained international attention. “Documents involving disputes among rabbis and the baptism of the Frankists were very quickly translated into, among other languages, Latin, German, French and Spanish, and were published in many countries in Europe, even in Mexico” (ibid., 39).

405 See Heinrich Graetz, *Historia Żydów*, trans. St. Szenhak (Warszawa, 1929), vol. VI: *Od okresu Majmuniego do przymusowego nawracania Żydów w Hiszpanii*; vol. VII: *Od przymusowego nawracania Żydów w Hiszpanii do marranów i papieży*.

406 Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 309.

407 See ibid., 389, 490. See also Doktor, “Maskowanie doktryny” in “Zbawienie doczesne czy duchowe,” 50-51.

to the Marranos. The tragic paradox of the Redeemer-dissenter results in further paradoxes, including “sacred sin” and other such antinomic notions.⁴⁰⁸ Jan Doktor explains that, defending themselves against the temptations of institutional religions (especially Catholicism), the faithful fought the “powers opposed to salvation,” and their main weapons were antinomic ceremonies that demonstrated and perpetuated freedom from “laws.”⁴⁰⁹

Faith in the messianic mission of Sabbatai Zevi manifested itself in a dialectical paradox that was deeply shocking to traditional Jewish views: “violation of the Torah could become its true fulfillment.” Such thinking gave expression to the complexity of the Sabbatean psychology and raised the possibility of the obstruction of the most holy of books and its mission, precisely in order to fulfill it.⁴¹⁰ “The apostasy of the Messiah is the fulfillment of the most difficult part of his mission.”⁴¹¹

From this psychological foundation emerged the archetype of the traitor-savior (which brings to mind the figure of Konrad Wallenrod). As Scholem emphasized, the apostasy of the Messiah was a mystery of greatest significance, located within the history of renewal and salvation. The Messiah was a national hero, called on to achieve victory in the highest of cosmic dramas; his apostasy was not a transgression, but the fulfillment of God’s command.⁴¹²

Just as Scholem has words of recognition for Sabbatai Zevi, he directs his most damning accusations at Jakub Frank, presenting him as the “the most hideous and uncanny figure in the whole history of Jewish Messianism.”⁴¹³ These accusations also include negative judgments of Frank’s religious “nihilism,” which bordered on anarchy and libertinism,⁴¹⁴ and of his overall character – “a Messiah with a thirst for power; indeed his greedy lust for power dominated him to the

408 See Scholem, “Redemption through Sin” in *The Messianic Idea in Judaism*, and the chapter “Antynomijny sens apostazji” in Doktor, *Jakub Frank*, 105-108.

409 Doktor, *Rozmaite adnotacje*, 27.

410 Scholem, “Redemption through Sin” in *The Messianic Idea in Judaism*, 84.

411 Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 311.

412 Scholem, “Redemption through Sin” in *The Messianic Idea in Judaism*, 86-108. Scholem emphasizes the fact that the Sabbateans were representatives of a “new emotion, which was not restricted to the traditional expectation of a political deliverance of Israel alone. [...] The redemptive process was now no longer conceived of as simply a working-out of Israel’s temporal emancipation from the yoke of the Gentiles, but rather as a fundamental transformation of the entire Creation, affecting material and spiritual worlds alike” (86-87).

413 Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 308.

414 See Scholem, “Le nihilisme, phénomène religieux” in *De la création du monde*, 87-98. In Scholem’s opinion, Frank was the first to clothe various Sabbatean notions in “a mythical structure of religious nihilism” (88).

exclusion of every other motive. It is this which makes his personage at once so fascinating and so ignoble."⁴¹⁵

Arguably, contained in such statements is a certain hidden analogy to the behavior of Towiański and his sect, and in this regard it is significant that Johann Nepomuk Sepp placed Towiański right behind Frank on his list of Jewish pseudo-Messiahs, an argument that met the high approval of Hieronim Kajsiwicz. Towiański emerged on the scene just before 1840, as many Jews were expecting the arrival of their messiah. "Reading of the wonders and prophecies of these false messiahs, it spontaneously comes to mind," Kajsiwicz writes, "that we heard similar claims from the mouths of the Towianists in their first moments of fervor and sincerity. Briefly put, Towianism reeked of the Jew from the beginning." But Kajsiwicz did not want, and was not able, to answer the question: did "Towiański himself come from the anabaptists or Frankists?"⁴¹⁶ It seems that the anti-institutionalism of this separate and clearly defined sect, based on the absolute authority of a leader, was most often identified as "Frankist." But in this regard, the doctrinal influences of Sabbateanism cannot be ignored.

One issue related to apostasy raised in Scholem's work seems to be of particular importance to us: namely, that a significant majority of the radicals, even of the Sabbatean-Islamists, remained in the womb of Judaism, much like how the Frankist-Catholics remained members of the Jewish community. "Here the external world [...] was that of rabbinical Jewry, for which the Messianic Judaism of Antinomianism [...] became the secret substitute." The concept of externality could extend much further – into Islam and Catholicism.⁴¹⁷ Doktor emphasizes that Frank "did not want to, and could not, return to rabbinical Judaism. [...] He often called Catholicism the outer shell, inside of which was trapped the core. It was not the goal, but only a step on the path to salvation that one must go down and then leave behind, just like previous religions: Rabbinic Judaism and Islam."⁴¹⁸

Duker uses the term "double Marranoism" to denote the location of Frankists among Jews and Catholics.⁴¹⁹ In view of this psychological gesture, as one might call such behavior, the core of internality was heterodox messianic Judaism, which endured unchanged. For Mickiewicz, this was the essence of Frankism, and the vicissitudes of his relations with Jews can only be understood with this notion in mind. For decades, Kraushar's *Frank i frankiści polscy* (Frank and the Polish Frankists), published in 1895, was the only serious source of information about,

415 Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 336.

416 "Żywoty pseudo-mesjaszów żydowskich," 326. Sepp's work – with a preface by J. Görres – came out in seven volumes in the years 1843-1846.

417 Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 319.

418 Doktor, *Rozmaite adnotacje*, 23, 27.

419 See Duker, "Polish Frankism's Duration," 301.

and interpretation of, this topic. Almost a hundred years later, walking in the footsteps of Scholem and Duker, Jan Doktor legitimized Frankism's distinctive nature as a serious religious phenomenon, by no means some charlatan's hoax. He also questioned Kraushar's foundational thesis, which remained predominant for years, that the Frankist rebellion was aimed at emancipation, a way out of the Jewish ghetto, assimilation. Doktor writes: "Assimilation, which was embraced by some of the Frankists who took baptism with Frank (to be more precise, some of their descendants) was not the motive behind their messianic outburst. [...] The Frankists did not intend to leave Judaism, not even the Jewish ghetto [...] they did not intend to give up their Jewish identity."⁴²⁰

Kajsiewicz calls Frank the "founder of a Christian-Jewish sect."⁴²¹ After a conversation with Duker, Jan Lechoń – feverish with hypotheses about Mickiewicz – made this note in his diary dated 4 June 1952. "Because as I have learned, the Frankists were by no means converts to Catholicism, it was a sect close to both religions, holding on to the Kabbalist Torah."⁴²²

One must add here that – as the biographies of many descendants of the original Frankists show – Frankists continued to feel connected to Judaism, even if they were assimilated. "Even after taking baptism, feelings among them of belonging to the Jewish community remained powerful."⁴²³ Scholem emphasized that the Sabbatean movement "must be regarded not only as a single continuous development which retained its identity in the eyes of its adherents regardless of whether they themselves remained Jews or not, but also, paradoxically though it may seem, as a specifically *Jewish* phenomenon to the end."⁴²⁴

Various factors contributed to the fact the Frankists in Poland were a coherent group that survived – contrary to Kraushar's claim – many decades after Frank's death. Duker called Frankism largely a family religion that "has continually been strengthened by marriage and by economic ties through concentration in certain occupations."⁴²⁵ Of particular significance was a certain custom that was looked down upon in some Christian circles: namely, the fact that a prohibition on mixed marriages was to protect true believers from melting into other peoples; and to protect against the adoption of other religions, there were antinomic teachings and ceremonies.⁴²⁶

420 Doktor, *Jakub Frank*, 111.

421 "Żywoty pseudo-mesjaszów żydowskich," 321.

422 Jan Lechoń, *Dziennik*, vol. II (Warszawa, 1993), 456.

423 Doktor, *Jakub Frank*, 111.

424 Scholem, "Redemption through Sin" in *The Messianic Idea in Judaism*, 84.

425 Duker, "Polish Frankism's Duration," 301.

426 Doktor, *Jakub Frank*, 112.

As mentioned above, both Sabbatean-converts to Islam and Frankist-Catholics (who regarded apostasy as “something external”) maintained ties among themselves, sometimes over a long period of time, while remaining members of the Jewish community. In light of this, the opinions that Jan Doktór expressed in his preface to Jakub Frank’s esoteric lectures collected under the title *Księga Słów Pańskich* (Book of the Words of the Lord) become more accessible: while the conversion of the Frankists “was not obviously tantamount to full acceptance of Catholic teachings on faith, it was also neither a common fraud nor an apparent conversion carried out for commercial gain, as observers and historians have often claimed.”⁴²⁷ Duker sums up the duality of their condition in comments reflecting the ambiguity of their status: “The baptized Frankists were not true Catholics nor were the non-baptized ones true Orthodox Jews.”⁴²⁸ One need not read anything demonic or scheming into this set of circumstances, but the fact is that it did lend a beginning to the ominous legend that is Polish anti-Semitism.⁴²⁹

Mickiewicz knew a great deal about this Judeo-Christian duality. In a lecture delivered on 14 June 1842 on Józef Maria Hoene-Wroński’s relations with Napoleon, he said: “Let me mention that there existed at that time a large Jewish sect, half-Jewish and half-Christian, whose members were also waiting for the Messiah and viewed Napoleon as that Messiah, or at least as his agent” (WJ, X, 369). Duker accurately reads this as an allusion to the Frankists, in whom Mickiewicz was keenly interested.⁴³⁰ A reference he made to the “secret teachings of Israel” (WS, XVI, 419) in a discussion with Armand Lévy is probably a reference to the Zohar. Zaleski noted that in 1851, during a dinner, Mickiewicz led “an interesting discussion on the Frankists, with whom he had an opportunity to become acquainted through his wife” (WS, XVI, 345).

Just through his wife? Some believe that it was also through his mother. Indeed, on 26 July 1838, the *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums* wrote: “But even

427 Jan Doktór, ed., *Księga słów Pańskich. Ezoteryczne wykłady Jakuba Franka*, commentary by Doktór, vol. I (Warszawa, 1997), 15.

428 Duker, “The Mystery of the Jews,” 61.

429 For example, Stanisław Didier devoted more than half of his book (*Rola neofitów w dziejach Polski* [Warszawa, 1935], published under *Mysł Narodowa*) to Frank and Frankist activists inspired by “world Jewry” to destroy Poland. He was guided by “one goal, which is the most objective presentation of historical truth,” and as a methodological guide for his research into the “Pan-Judaic program,” he took one of the most famous and criminal works of political provocation, namely *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.

430 See Duker, “The Mystery of the Jews,” 57. In Duker’s “Polish Frankism’s Duration” there is a separate chapter entitled “The French Revolution and Napoleon” dealing with, among other things, younger Polish Frankists who believed in Napoleon and his messianic message; for them, Napoleon “presented a connecting link between Cabbalism and Polonism” (309).

the greatest poet Poland has ever given us, perhaps the greatest poet of our times, Mickiewicz, who has long lived in Paris, belongs to our nation as a Frankist.⁴³¹

Recognizing the obviously insurmountable obstacles that stand in the way of solving the problem of Mickiewicz's origins,⁴³² let us now focus our attention

431 According to Duker, Jakub Szacki (Szacki) was the first to draw attention to this article from the *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums* included in a work written in Hebrew and published in 1923 and again in 1947 ("Polish Frankism's Duration," 292). In a study published in the 1950s, Scholem emphasized: "It seems that no one has not paid attention to this important document during the debate over the last 20 years about Mickiewicz's Jewish roots" ("Le mouvement sabbataïste en Pologne," *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions*, vol. CXLIV [1953], 76). More recently, Krzysztof Rutkowski returned to this issue, referring to a mimeographed pamphlet written by Ignacy Henner ("Kilka Uwag z powodu 'Kilku szczegółów'," *Twórczość* 1 [1995]), and there appeared in no. 9 of that publication M. Demałowicz's challenge, "Nad 'Kilkoma uwagami' z powodu 'Kilku szczegółów'" and Rutkowski's answer, "Odpowiedź"). Krzysztof K. Makowski reports, like Szacki, that the piece from the *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums* was reprinted in the weekly *Archives Israélites*, apparently by Armand Lévy. Szacki also maintained that "several years later the chief rabbi of Belgium and eminent scholar Eli Carmoly, writing about famous Polish Jews, listed Mickiewicz as being among them based on information he had received from Joachim Lelewel. That would be important, since Lelewel was in a position to know something about the poet's genealogy. But the author did not provide any footnotes in his work, so we unfortunately do not know what publication is involved here ("Wątek żydowski w badaniach nad Mickiewiczem" in eds. Z. Trojanowiczowa and Zb. Przychodniak, *Księga Mickiewiczowska. Patronowi Uczelni w dwusetną rocznicę urodzin 1798-1998* [Poznań, 1998], 434-435).

432 In his work "Polish Frankism's Duration" (footnote on p. 291), Duker states that another of his works, "The Mystery of the Jews in Mickiewicz's Towianist Lectures on Slav Literature," which was printed in 1962, was mostly written in 1946. It presents the elements of Frankism contained in Mickiewicz's lectures on Slavic literature. Duker confesses: "... I arrived at the suspicion of Frankist influences on Mickiewicz much earlier [than 1946], in consequence of my researches, rather than under the influences of the debate about his descent, which I had disregarded before 1936 as a question of no consequence." In his article "Adam Mickiewicz's Anti-Jewish Period," Duker wrote: "The dispute about Mickiewicz's alleged Jewish origin and contacts with Frankists in his childhood and youth may never be settled because of the destruction of sources and the reluctance on the part of his contemporaries and, later, of Mickiewicz scholars to face these problems openly" (341). Somewhat earlier he reproached Kleiner for not indicating, in his monograph on Mickiewicz, the motivation behind the poet's attack on two radicals, Czyński and Krępowiecki, who had Jewish origins, and "this is unfortunate because he could have based it on sources which may no longer be available or on oral tradition that Mickiewicz's worshippers have been seeking to destroy" (339). A particularly distinct position is taken on speculation about this issue by Jadwiga Maurer, *'Szkie o powiązaniach Mickiewicza ze światem Żydów* (London, 1990), who argued that theories about Mickiewicz's Jewish heritage are probably true.

on two figures to whom Stanisław Morawski devoted individual chapters in his memoirs from Saint Petersburg from the years 1827-1838. Both of them played large roles in Mickiewicz's life in ways that are of particular interest to us, and their names are Józef Oleszkiewicz and Maria Szymanowska.

In his *Dziady Część III Ustęp*, Mickiewicz devoted a poem to Oleszkiewicz, who was then a painter living in the Russian capital, and put his name in the title. The question of "who is this man" is answered here:

<p><i>He is a Pole, a painter, More properly called a shaman, For he long ago set aside paint and brush, He only studies the Bible and the Kabbalah, They even say he talks to the spirits.</i></p>	<p><i>Polak, jest malarzem, Lecz go właściwiej nazywać guślarzem, Bo dawno od farb i pędzla odwyknął, Bibliją tylko I kabalę bada, I mówią nawet, że z duchami gada.</i></p> <p>[58-62]</p>
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This "shaman" in Mickiewicz's work predicts the 1824 flood of St Petersburg. Morawski writes about him simply that "he was a prophet." He called him an "Eleusinian high priest" and presented him as an admirer of Emanuel Swedenborg and ... cats, who in the end were also creatures to be treated as "mystical." He was one of the finest researchers of the Kabbalah in Russia at that time, and Morawski connected him with various more or less secret associations: "The highest degree in Freemasonry, the Rose-Croix, the Illuminati, Martinists, Michelists, Mesmerists [...] all of these had a powerful influence on his thinking, which was inclined by nature toward the mystical."⁴³³

There has been a great deal written about the influence of Oleszkiewicz – the mystic and Kabbalist – on Mickiewicz. Wiktor Weintraub affirmed Pigoń's belief that only two people had a decisive influence on Mickiewicz, Oleszkiewicz and Towiański, "and the first one to a greater degree than the second." The "master initiator," who introduced the poet to the world of kabbalistic mysticism, was "to some extent the godfather of Mickiewicz's national messianism," and it was he who "made the poet aware of his prophetic calling" in the spirit of Saint-Martin.⁴³⁴ Duker discussed the Frankist predictions – tied to Oleszkiewicz – of the end of the world.⁴³⁵ This was the first line of influence, which we might call "kabbalistic." The second line is the personally Frankist.

433 Stanisław Morawski, *W Peterburku 1827-1838: Wspomnienia pustelnika i koszałki kobiałki* (A. Czartkowski and H. Mościcki, Poznań, 1928), 121, 122, 125.

434 Wiktor Weintraub, *Poeta i prorok. Rzecz o profetyzmie Mickiewicza* (Warszawa, 1982), 79, 80, 132. See especially the chapter "Rosyjski martyzm i Oleszkiewicz."

435 See Duker, "Some Cabbalistic and Frankist Elements in Adam Mickiewicz's 'Dziady'" in *Studies in Polish Civilization*. Selected papers presented at the First Congress of the Polish Institute of Arts and Sciences in America, November 25, 26, 27, 1966 in New York. Ed.

Maria Szymanowska (née Wołowska), who was one of Mickiewicz's close acquaintances during his time in Russia and was the mother of Mickiewicz's wife, came from a notable Frankist family.⁴³⁶ She was great-granddaughter of Eliza Szor from Rohatyn and granddaughter of Salomon ben Elias, called Szloma of Rohatyn; her husband and Celina's father, Józef Szymanowski, also came from a Frankist family.⁴³⁷ Mateusz Mieses defines Celina's full sister, Helena Malewska, as a "one hundred percent Jewish woman on both her paternal and maternal sides."⁴³⁸ Eliza Szor was one of the most famous Sabbateans in the eastern territories of the *Rzeczpospolita* and an "apostle" of Frank.⁴³⁹ Szloma of Rohatyn, along with his four sons (including Franciszek, Celina's grandfather), was baptized in the Lwów cathedral and took the name Wołowski.

More than once it has been pointed out that the Wołowski clan included some people who were wealthy and gifted, talented and able to quickly advance in Polish society, detached from any orthodoxy, including Frankist orthodoxy. Duker writes: "Certainly, the Wołowskis were among the educated elite and not of the ignorant masses. It may be assumed that those of the family who broke away from 'Orthodox' Frankism and no longer could believe in Frank's supernaturalism or even earthly Messianism or in his daughter Ewa, continued to believe in some 'unitarian' God, but not through the Catholic mysteries. Possibly, they either had been searching for a more enlightened version of mysticism or had adopted a deistic concept of God. Such changes in faith must have involved problems of adjustment not only to the Catholic milieu, but also to the older Frankist generations."⁴⁴⁰ In any case, they felt well positioned in their environment and internally well-connected.

Maria Szymanowska was an outstanding pianist, who attained a certain level of fame in Europe. This "pure blooded Frankist" (words used by Mieses⁴⁴¹) led salons in Saint Petersburg that "looked exactly like salons given by modern Jewesses or neophytes in Berlin and Vienna," the author of *Polacy – chrześcijanie pochodzenia żydowskiego* (Poles – Christians with Jewish Origins) argued, as had Heinrich

Damian S. Wandycz (Institute on East Central Europe of Columbia University and The Polish Institute of Arts & Sciences in America), 220-221.

436 Her exact genealogy is given in Syga and Szenic, *Maria Szymanowska i jej czasy* (Warszawa, 1960), 452-459. The "Tablica genealogiczna Wołowskich" (the genealogical table of the Wołowski's) can be found on p. 493.

437 Syga and Szenic gathered information on him (ibid., 459).

438 Mieses, *Polacy – chrześcijanie pochodzenia żydowskiego*, vol. II (Warszawa, 1938), 113.

439 Compare information about him from Bałaban, "Mistyka i ruchy mesjańskie" (267-268), and Duker in "Polish Frankism's Duration" (317), who emphasizes that Szor enjoyed a reputation as a learned Kabbalist and Talmudist.

440 Duker, "Polish Frankism's Duration," 317.

441 Her mother's maiden name was also Wołowska (Syga and Szenic, *Maria Szymanowska*, 459).

Graetz.⁴⁴² Her social grace, beauty and masterful piano playing attracted the entire Petersburg elite to her salon. But reports submitted by the spy Henryk Mackrott provide a bit of news about Maria Szymanowska's social and artistic conquests during her stays in Warsaw. Her successes caused "great pleasure among the christened Jews of Warsaw."⁴⁴³ Working as an agent of Grand Duke Constantine Pavlovich's secret police, Mackrott kept Warsaw Frankists under surveillance, calling them "baptized Jews," and among them, the Wołowskis and "Mrs. Szymanowska" – who were particularly adored in their "own" milieu – held an exceptional position.

But as Scholem's research shows, Szymanowska had an interest in neutralizing the effects of her origins.⁴⁴⁴ Did she always succeed? Stanisław Morawski provides some interesting evidence illustrating how his own opinion was clearly split in this regard. In his memoirs from Saint Petersburg, he paints a thoroughly adoring portrait of a lady full of virtue and talent, who "wore all of Europe on her sleeve"; she enjoyed great fame, deservedly so, and was "highly civilized and enlightened," etc. But in the appendices to his memoirs, entitled *Glupie i blażeńskie notatki, pisane w Petersburgu w 1830* (Silly and Stupid Notes, Written in Saint Petersburg in 1830), we find several unflattering comments about Maria Szymanowska, her sister and her daughters: "*Elles judaissent*. The blood of Palestine always rises in these people." Further on, he writes about attempts to match him with Maria's sister, Kazimiera, an idea "which I never wanted to entertain, because I did not want to humiliate the matchmakers, with whom I never wanted to be related, unless Rothschild, having purchased the Holy Land, would summon them to Jerusalem as ministers."⁴⁴⁵

The Jewishness of the Szymanowskis was thus something disturbing for Morawski. When he said that Maria Szymanowska – based on her hearing, sight, and the presence of mind – could be a "minister of police," he might also have had in mind the investigative talents she employed to cut short speculation on her genealogy. After all, Frankists routinely hid their ancestry from Polish society. Duker quoted Kraszewski's opinion that, after the first partition of Poland (1772), there was greater fear of the so-called newly converted Frankists than of Jews.⁴⁴⁶ I will return to this issue a bit later.

442 Mieses, *Polacy*, vol. II, 212. Duker offers a similar characterization in "Maria's Musical Career" in "Polish Frankism's Duration," 319-320.

443 Quote from Syga and Szenic, *Maria Szymanowska*, 464.

444 In footnote 386 above, see a description of her intervention in the question of Brinken's novel about Frank and the Frankists.

445 Morawski, *W Peterburku*, 330-331. This is a malignant allusion to rumors about the establishment of a Jewish state by Rothschild – the prince of Jerusalem, which is what he was supposed to name himself after he purchased suitable territory in Palestine from the Turks.

446 See Duker, "Polish Frankism's Duration," 313.

Celina Mickiewicz's Jewish background was the target of many sarcastic comments in the Polish émigré community. Krasiński referred to her as a "Talmudic Jewess," as a "little devil, convert and madwoman." There was "something dark and evil about her, something material and eastern which is forever tempting, and which battles the Western genius in Mickiewicz."⁴⁴⁷

In a letter dated 19 February 1847, he warned Delfina to avoid Celina, putting these words in Celina's mouth: "As a convert I never believed in Christ, because converts do not believe in anything."⁴⁴⁸ For Krasiński this was not about the Frankists' disbelief in Christ,⁴⁴⁹ but rather about total nihilism. In a similar spirit, Krasiński wrote that "our converts, the Frankists, are a separate tribe of people, the most strangely superstitious, but in the end without any faith at all."⁴⁵⁰

But this supposed eastern, Jewish materialism did not at all disturb the bright spirit of Mickiewicz. On the contrary, he treated Celina's background as a sign of the precedence of Israel. "In Celina's relations with Towiański," Jadwiga Maurer accurately points out, "the Jewish-Frankist factor plays an enormous role."⁴⁵¹ Placing a great spiritual task before her, and calling her before "the terrible judgment of God," the "terrible judgment of Christ," Towiański explained Celina Mickiewicz's calling in this way: "You, sister Celina! Carrying the great and ancient spirit, belonging – because of the age of your spirit – to the ancient children of God [...]"⁴⁵² Mickiewicz interpreted the fact that Towiański had "returned Celina to health" as her having felt Jehovah ("You will not move a Jew in any other way, unless you let him feel Jehovah"): "When the Master [Towiański] removed Celina's insanity with only a few words, uttered in a powerful voice, she said, coming to herself: 'Moses went up to the mountain and spoke.' Her Israelite spirit had been touched with the strength and voice of Mosaic might" (WS, XI, 321-322).⁴⁵³

447 Krasiński, *Listy do Delfiny Potockiej*, ed. and intro. Zbigniew Sudolski, vol III (Warszawa, 1975), 281. Letter dated 19 February 1847.

448 Ibid.

449 On the lack of "Christological terminology" in the correspondence of the Wołowskis and Szymanowskis, see Maurer, 'Z matki obcej...', 84.

450 Krasiński, *Listy do Delfiny Potockiej*, vol. III, 281.

451 Maurer, 'Z matki obcej...', 78.

452 *Współdział Adama Mickiewicza w Sprawie Andrzeja Towiańskiego. Listy i przemówienia*, vol. II (Paris, 1877), 50.

453 Father Kajsiewicz treated Celina's invocation of Moses as proof of the Jewish obsessions of both Andrzej Towiański and the Mickiewiczzes: "It is strange that Adam's late wife, in a state of morbid exaltation, announced 'the master' as Moses arriving to save the Polish nation [...] And in turn, Towiański glorified the spirits of Israel as the highest; for him the suffering of dispersed Judah was a great service: And Adam – for many reasons which do not need to be listed here – showed an inclination toward Jews." See "Pamiętnik o po-

As Duker accurately points out, here Mickiewicz was referring directly to her Jewish origins, and not a “Slav Moses.”⁴⁵⁴

Eustachy Januszkiewicz characterized the obsessions involved in Celina’s madness in November 1838 with the following words: “She was dominated by two ideas, first that she has been called upon to resurrect Poland, and second, to redeem the Jews [...] There were moments of high inspiration, in which she spoke of religion, of a person’s relationship with God, of our duties, firm in her language, full of embellishment, almost biblical.”⁴⁵⁵

One can already discern the outlines of the Polish-Jewish messianism that would later occupy both Celina and Adam Mickiewicz, and it should come as no surprise that ten years later, in a letter to Adam written in Paris on 13 April 1848, Celina praised *Skład zasad, czyli Symbol polityczny Polski* (A Collection of Principles, the Political Symbol of Poland) with warm words: “In Rome you brought attention to the Cause of the reborn, new Poland. Israel and woman are finally given their due respect. I could feel Your hard work, both in spirit and physically. From 25 March to 6 April I suffered with you, I was constantly afraid for you and so physically weak that I could hardly walk. [...] In the last few days I have calmed down completely and returned to my old state of peace.”⁴⁵⁶ It is difficult to resist the thought that Celina Mickiewicz consciously identified herself in spirit and body with the two Great Excluded Ones – Israel and woman – and that she raised herself from decline when she lifted their cause.

Adam Mickiewicz saw in Celina a Frankist, which means a Jewish-Christian woman.

For him the most meaningful act of self-definition was monotheistic faith. In this context I want to mention once again that Mickiewicz was prepared to accept a nobleman who, in sincere faith, converted to Islam (WS, XVI, 345; see also XI, 524 ff). In his Paris farewell speech before his departure to the East he did not condemn such converts to Islam as Józef Bem and Michał Czajkowski, who were helping Poland in its liberation, fulfilling in this way “God’s will and law, when one cannot but do it, when there are no other means to achieve it.” In any case, as Mickiewicz emphasized, Sadyk Pasha [Czajkowski] was not concerned with gold, because if he wanted it, both Russia and Austria would gladly give it to him,

czątkach Zgromadzenia Zmartwychwstania Pańskiego,” in H. Kajsiewicz, *Pisma*, vol. III, *Rozprawy, Listy z podróży, Pamiętnik o Zgromadzeniu* (Berlin-Kraków, 1872), 428-429.

454 Duker, “The Mystery of the Jews,” 42. See also the section entitled “Celina’s Illness and Cure” in Duker’s “Polish Frankism’s Duration,” 323-327.

455 Quote from Maria Dernałowicz, *Kronika życia i twórczości Mickiewicza. Czerwiec 1834 – październik 1840* (Warszawa, 1996), 393.

456 *Mickiewicziana w zbiorach Tomasza Niewodniczańskiego w Bitburgu* (Warszawa, 1989), 233. *Listy Celiny [Mickiewiczowej] z roku 1848*.

and with this gold he could “generously pay for solemn masses, and every priest would perform them and thank him for the gold” (WS, XI, 525). The issue rather was faith in a single God and in Poland. Władisław Mickiewicz remembered: “My father once told me in response to comments made against the Jews: ‘Every Jew believes in God and in the fatherland.’ Can one say that about any other people?”⁴⁵⁷

Religious faith was most important; Mickiewicz treated religious confession, in the end, as “something external,” which is a notion that has a great deal in common with the thinking behind heterodox messianic Judaism. Mickiewicz placed the two chosen nations – Israel and Poland – on an equal plain, as he did their deliverance from oppression. Jan Doktor draws attention to the significant internal similarities shared by various examples of messianism: “The two greatest messianic movements in the history of Judaism, and the only ones which survived the death of their founders – namely Sabbateanism and Christianity – appealed to the idea of spiritual salvation. [...] Messianic movements based on the biblical tradition were divided not so much by the religion in which they developed, but rather by their vision of salvation. Both in Judaism and Christianity there appear both ways of understanding the Messianic idea, which Scholem considers to be specifically Christian and specifically Jewish [...] In the Bible two notions of salvation coexisted: Political and social utopia and spiritual transformation.”⁴⁵⁸ Mickiewicz inherited both of them, merging inspiration from both Christianity and Judaism to form his own, messianic syncretism.

In a certain sense, though in a more universalistic way, a similar position was taken up in our times by the Archbishop of Paris, Jean-Marie Lustiger, who emphasized above all God’s choice visible in the special recognition of Israel. God allowed Israel “to exist for the salvation of all mankind, for the Kingdom of God and, according to the promise, it was in Israel where the suffering Messiah appeared. Until the coming of the Messiah in glory, *the Jew endures, and he remains a Jew, whether he is a Christian or not.*”⁴⁵⁹

So, the Christian is a Jew. “The Jewish people were and continue to be heirs and witnesses to God’s promises and the faith of Abraham. These promises are irreversible, and when one believes them, then one is engaged in the work of Salvation.”⁴⁶⁰

457 This is from a letter written by Władisław Mickiewicz dated 4 April 1924 and published by its addressee, Marek Rappaport from Lwów, in *Wiadomości Literackie*, 6 (1930), 6 (in the section “Korespondencja”).

458 Doktor, “Zbawienie doczesne czy duchowe,” 53.

459 Lustiger, *Wybór Boga*, 70. Author’s emphasis – M.J.

460 *Ibid.*, 78.

Banal statements about how Christianity cannot be detached from Judaism take on deeper significance here, and the figure of a Jew-Christian allows one to become acquainted with faith in how the absolute is rooted in the Jewish people, and therefore with faith in the “precedence of Israel.” This figure – in Mickiewicz’s thinking – was a derivative of the matrix of Frankism.

3. Moses, Christ, and Towiański

The conversion and baptism of Gerszon Ram, a young Jew from Wilno, is a thoroughly puzzling issue of particular interest to us here. Several scholars of Towianism have taken note of Ram, and Stanisław Pigoń saw in him a “highly uncommon phenomenon.”⁴⁶¹ Gerszon Ram was born in 1812. He came from the Rams of Wilno – that “new Jerusalem,” which is what Jews called the city because of its flourishing religious and cultural activity – where they made a living as printers and publishers of works in Hebrew. Karol Dresdner (a Polish-Jewish poet and historian of literature who was murdered by the Nazis in 1943) emphasized that the “dry study” of the Talmud and rabbinical works, which were published so widely in Wilno, was perhaps not enough for Gerszon, so he reached for the Kabbalah and came in contact with Hasidism. Dresdner suspects that it is possible that, through the Kabbalah, Gerszon Ram met Andrzej Towiański as early as his time in Lithuania.⁴⁶² In any case, both of them eventually left Lithuania for Paris. Ram arrived in the middle of 1842, joined the *Koło Sprawy Bożej*, and recognized Towiański as the “Gate of salvation for Israel.”⁴⁶³

In *Kilka aktów i dokumentów odnoszących się do działalności Andrzeja Towiańskiego* (A Few Acts and Documents Related to the Activities of Andrzej Towiański), we find a precise description of a “miraculous” event; the history of Towianism is filled with such events, in which Towianists act “in a state of inspiration,” and the example of interest to us here involves Mickiewicz’s story about Gerszon’s first baptism. A few months after being accepted into the *Koło*, Gerszon – still unchristened – “suddenly turned deathly ill and felt the urgent need for holy baptism.” At this very moment, Romuald Januszkiewicz (chosen by Mickiewicz as the “priest among us”), “who knew nothing about the matter at all, having gone to Notre-Dame-des-Victoires, was praying at the image of the miraculous Mother Mary when he was suddenly struck by the feeling (which, in such stories, is al-

461 Stanisław Pigoń, “Z późniejszych lat J.A. Rama,” *Pamiętnik Literacki* (1928), z. 2, 286.

462 Karol Dresdner, “Brat Gerszon (Jan Andrzej Ram),” *Pamiętnik Literacki* (1928), z. 2, 281.

463 “Gerszon, a po chrzcie świętym Jan Andrzej Ram. (Notatka spisana z opowiadania Rama i Romualda Januszkiewicza),” in *Kilka aktów i dokumentów odnoszących się do działalności Andrzeja Towiańskiego*, Part I (Rome, 1898), 29.

ways identified with a clear order from the Blessed Virgin Mary) to go as quickly as possible to Ram and to administer him holy baptism.” In this revelation he was told to buy a cross from the woman in the vestibule of that church, and that – on his way to Ram – he would meet the godmother. Somehow, at Place des Victoires, he came upon Ksawera Deybel who, having yielded to a strong inner calling, had come there not knowing why. [...] The fires of faith and deep reverence” propelled them both to Ram, whom they found in dramatic circumstances, “already almost dying, but with a burning desire to receive baptism.” They administered it to him, upon which Ram had a vision of a procession of saints led by Saint Kazimierz (one of the patrons of Wilno). This procession took him in and led him to the Church of Christ in Heaven.⁴⁶⁴ Of course, Ram soon returned to good health. Dresdner concluded this description of events – which sounds like an excerpt from some church book for common folk – with the comment that Januszkiewicz and Deybel were “pressing the cross into Ram’s hands.”⁴⁶⁵

But this is not the end of the story of Ram’s baptism. At that time, Towiański was not in Paris. In a letter to the Master dated 3 November 1842, Mickiewicz regarded baptism as having been performed, but wondered nonetheless if the issue could be considered settled, or if they needed to also visit the priests – to take care of final formalities. “Polish clergymen – I doubt they will handle things smoothly, because they are biased. Should we go to the French? I do not know how to solve this problem” (WJ, XV, 521). Towiański wanted to give Ram’s baptism the cover of full formality, in order to show the world the greatness and effectiveness of the *Kolo*, in the spirit of Christ, which is why he responded to Mickiewicz, in a letter from Brussels dated 27 November 1842, by writing that “the baptism of brother G. is of great importance – it is the will of the Lord. The world is watching us and passing judgment – great care is required in this regard – you may go to the French priests, declaring that in our brotherly Circle one is disposed to accepting the light of Christ – in any case, full compliance in satisfying forms – without revealing particulars – let G. go forward in this spirit.”⁴⁶⁶ In that moment for Towiański, it was most important to emphasize the role of the *Kolo Sprawy Bożej* in the expansion of Christianity among Jews.

Everything had to have symbolic significance. On 29 November 1842, on the anniversary of the November Uprising, which was always solemnly celebrated among the émigrés, Gerszon was baptized by Father Kajsiewicz in the Towianists’ favorite Church of Saint-Séverin, and he was given the name Jan Andrzej. The church rendered “his demeanor and a loud cry” spectacularly, which “reverber-

464 Ibid., 29-30.

465 Dresdner, “Brat Gerszon,” 282.

466 *Współdział Adama Mickiewicza w sprawie Andrzeja Towiańskiego. Listy i przemówienia*, vol. I (Paris, 1877), 55-56.

ated throughout the entire church, in which humility, repentance and fire respond to the call of our Lord Jesus, setting Israel, after centuries of resistance, on his path."⁴⁶⁷ In the person of Ram, all of Israel was converting to the correct path of salvation.

Of course the *Kolo* participated in this sublime event, but "even priests skeptical toward the Cause were moved, feeling the clear presence of God's grace."⁴⁶⁸ Perhaps it was similar several years later (8 September 1845) in the case of Jakub Aronowicz, also a Jew from Lithuania, who was first baptized in the *Kolo*, and then again – under the advice of Towiański – in the Church. Writing in a mocking tone, Zaleski described that ceremony as a "parade of Towianists. Our priests were baptizing a Jew, so they were all there."⁴⁶⁹ Zaleski's letter reveals not only his doubts about Towianism (into which he did not allow himself to be drawn), but also how he held fascination with the conversion of Jews to Christianity at arm's length.

Now, Jan Andrzej Ram felt like an apostle of the Towianist idea, and in this role he enjoyed the special care and attention of Mickiewicz. In surviving speeches delivered before the *Kolo*, the poet informed his listeners about Ram's activities among "Jewish brothers"; he wrote instructions for him (warning against "those giving false revelations" – spiritists and magnetized women whom Ram was supposed to reach in his Towianist mission); he evaluated the success of Ram's mission; and he anticipated, for example, "the service of the entire *Kolo* in connecting with, and helping in spirit, our brother Ram, who is now carrying out important duties with the Israelites in England, which is the result of their understanding with the Israelites of Holland" (speech to the brothers, 1 August 1845, WS, XI, 388-389).

In 1843, Ram undertook an important mission, which was again surrounded by legend. At first he did not know where to start, so he waited for intervention by a supernatural power: "He was pushed to Rome by a clear command received from above." Bathing in the sea at Marseille, he heard a voice clearly calling out "Ram! Ram, to Rome..." He set off immediately on his assigned journey.⁴⁷⁰ By strange coincidence he met Towiański at the gates of Rome, who – having faced the hostile activities of Resurrectionist priests – was just leaving Vatican City after failing to arrange an audience with the Pope.⁴⁷¹ This meeting is supposed to have

467 "Gerszon, a po chrzcie świętym Jan Andrzej Ram," 30.

468 Ibid.

469 Quote from Zofia Makowiecka, *Brat Adam, Maj 1844-grudzień 1847. Kronika życia i twórczości Mickiewicza*, ed. Pięgoń (Warszawa, 1975), 203.

470 "Gerszon, a po chrzcie świętym Jan Andrzej Ram," 30.

471 See Rawita-Gawroński, *Andrzej Towiański i Jan Andrzej Ram. Kartka z historii mistycyzmu religijnego w Polsce, w pierwszej połowie XIX wieku* (Lwów, 1911), 8. The author

once again been so oracular that Towiański entrusted Ram with an undelivered memorial to the Pope with the request that Ram hand it to the Holy Father himself. Ram considered this a “command from God.”⁴⁷² He went on a nine-day spiritual retreat, gained the trust of his confessor, and was received by Gregory XVI on 4 November 1843. He spoke to the Holy Father as a convert and Servant of God’s Cause to the Highest Office of God.⁴⁷³ Franciszek Rawita-Gawroński – characteristically – highlighted the fact that, “as a neophyte, Ram had greater access and indulgence.”⁴⁷⁴ In any case, Towiański’s message to the Pope, dated 25 October 1843, contained a significant passage: “I place my request at the feet of Your Holiness through one of the Israelites given to me in the fulfillment of my mission for Israel, to show their errors.”⁴⁷⁵ Later, Towiański asked that the Pope bless Ram’s work converting his brothers, work which he was said to have taken up in order to fulfill what his inner voice was insisting.⁴⁷⁶ Interestingly, Towiański’s activities nicely converged with the practices of the Popes at that time, including Gregory XVI, who was carrying out a highly restrictive set of policies toward Jews. “Each conversion of a Jew [even forced] ... reflected the glory and the divinely ordained supremacy of the Roman Catholic Church. The conversion of the Jews was, indeed, one of the centerpieces of the Church’s millenarian vision, for according to Christian belief, at the end of time, with the Second Coming, the Jews would be converted.”⁴⁷⁷

After his hearing with the Pope in that year of 1843, as well as throughout the next year, Ram made his way to Frankfurt, to Rothschild, again with a message from Towiański. It is highly significant that Towiański chose to target these powerful people – powerful in both spirit and finance (after all, the Rothschilds more than once provided loans to the Papacy in return for promises of relief for Jews in Vatican City, promises which were not kept) – and that he chose Ram as his messenger, whom Towiański described as a “brother from Israel called by God into His Service.” Rawita-Gawroński published the documents, written in German, that Towiański directed toward Rothschild. Consistent with Towiański’s general teachings on Israel, these documents are filled with vague platitudes about the mission of Israel, its mission as the chosen tribe, pronouncements about the

believes that Towiański was in Rome to respond directly to the Pope regarding accusations that he had been disloyal to the Catholic faith.

472 “Gerszon, a po chrzcie świętym Jan Andrzej Ram,” 30.

473 *Ibid.*, 31.

474 Rawita-Gawroński, *Andrzej Towiański*, 8.

475 Towiański, *Wybór pism*, vol. II, 6.

476 *Współudział Adama Mickiewicza w sprawie Andrzeja Towiańskiego*, vol. II, 201.

477 David I. Kertzer, *The Popes Against the Jews: The Vatican’s Role in the Rise of Modern Anti-Semitism* (New York: Knopf, 2001), 41.

approach of Israel's greatest days, throwing off the yoke, deliverance from misery and humiliation. Israel, Towiański wrote, should be as great on earth as it is before God. Both Rothschild and Ram were supposed to serve God united in the spirit of Israel.⁴⁷⁸ In these documents we read nothing directly about conversion.

Ram also set off on a journey to various parts of France preaching the message of God's Cause, which was treated by authorities at the time as sectarianism, and which – in terms of its propaganda – was closely connected to the cult of Napoleon; both were equally looked down upon in government circles. In part for this reason, but above all because of the “spread of the Cause within the military,” Ram and Januszkiewicz were ordered to leave France,⁴⁷⁹ which did not worry Mickiewicz at all. In a speech to his brothers delivered on 15 November 1844, he declared that “one must view this incident as a great blessing for the brothers. [...] This trip is a sign of God's blessing. He has determined they should serve elsewhere. For brother Ram especially this is a Polish baptism, it connects him with the émigrés and with Polish persecution” (WR, XVIII, 181). This is how Mickiewicz understood the dignity of the émigré and the Pole. By 18 September 1844 the two brothers had left for Switzerland.

Mickiewicz treated missions assigned to members of the *Kolo Sprawy Bożej* as eminently responsible tasks. In a statement addressed to Seweryn Goszczyński on 19 December 1843 he announced, with threatening words: “Your calling is great, and the responsibility for not fulfilling this calling is terrible. You represent the Circle of Cossack Ruthenia [Goszczyński was from the Ukraine]. Your calling is mainly to connect the Cossack Cause with Poland, as Gerszon (Ram) is doing among the Israelites. You will not carry this out other than with a Kossack tone.” Later, Mickiewicz accused Goszczyński of turning his back on the tone of the Cossack for the “tone of the salon” (WS, XI, 229-230).

He eventually threw similar accusations at Ram, who was, of course, supposed to have abandoned his Israelite tone. “Ram has not lived up to his ministry; had he done so, he could have struck like lightning” (12 July 1844, WS, XI, 306). Probably this comment was a reference to the time Ram spent with the spiritists, mentioned above. In any case, a true Israelite tone was “thunderous,” like the voice of *Judyta*, the character brilliantly drawn by Słowacki in *Ksiądz Marek*.⁴⁸⁰ It was typical for Mickiewicz to brutally denounce all shortcomings in spirit, but in

478 See Rawita-Gawroński, *Andrzej Towiański...*, “A. Towiański do Rotszylda, 15 sierpnia 1843 r. z Frankfurtu nad Menem” and “A. Towiański do Rotszylda z Solury, d. 1 października 1844 (przesłany przez J. A. Rama),” 32-35.

479 Quote from Makowiecka, *Brat Adam*, 63.

480 Dresdner supports the thesis formulated by Juliusz Kleiner in his monograph on Słowacki, according to which *Judyta* – the female hero in Słowacki's mystical drama – was based on the figure of brother Ram. Słowacki “endowed [*Judyta*] with all Jewish features in ac-

the context of Ram, something special appeared: an aversion to both enlightened Judaism and “salon” Judaism, by which he meant the manners of those Jews striving for assimilation. So Mickiewicz wrote to Towiański about the bad impression Ram had made in Switzerland: “They saw in him the behavior of a young Jewish master, a certain gentleness” (1 July 1845, WJ, XVI, 27). He also informed Towiański: “I wrote sternly to brother [Ram], telling him not to yield in London to the tone of a banker and a civilized Jew. I implored him to remain aware of this temptation” (2 August 1845, WJ, XVI, 49). With virulent words written to Anna Gutt, Mickiewicz succumbed to anti-Semitic prejudice: “It is odd how easily our Ram collapses into fear and truly Jewish trembling” (6 October 1845, WJ, XVI, 65). Mickiewicz thus recognized how Ram was manifesting features of a “Jew,” as opposed to the features of the “Israelite” he wanted.

But this does not mean that Mickiewicz did not appreciate the role “Ram’s service” had played in reawakening the spirit of Israel. The poet’s bonding with brother Israel in the Paris synagogue on the anniversary of the destruction of Jerusalem (about which I wrote above) was a direct result of the fiery inspiration of brother Gerszon – that is, Jan Andrzej. Towiański responded to Mickiewicz with words expressing his deep appreciation for the “mobilization of Israel caused by God through Ram” and about the “fraternal association with Israel.”⁴⁸¹ In a return letter to his “dear brother Adam” (from Frankfurt, 28 July 1845), Ram reported on his activities among local Jews and on his visit with rabbis at the French embassy. It is significant that, after Ram stated that “Israel itself is searching for what it has to do, and the Man of God [Towiański] has a Divine order for three nations (Poland, France, and Israel),” the rabbis responded legalistically: “We come here with our brother Ram, [knowing] *that he did not come calling for some revolutionary treason*, no gentlemen, he brought us words of Comfort, for which we have been waiting for a long time, and without which we cannot manage.”⁴⁸² It is thus apparent that, in his Towianist propaganda, Ram emphasized the greatness of Israel and its future – the same kind of vague statements offered on the mission to Rothschild mentioned above.

The phase in Ram’s life mission that was most important to the Towianists was arriving. At the end of April 1845 Towiański solemnly declared to Ram: “You are

cordance with Towiański’s doctrine,” and Father Marek’s relationship to her “resembles Towiański’s relationship to Ram” (“Brat Gerszon,” 284).

481 *Współdział Adama Mickiewicza w sprawie Andrzeja Towiańskiego*, 277. Towiański’s letter, written from Basel to Mickiewicz, dated 5 August 1845. Later, Towiański defined Ram’s mission in this way: “Offering congratulations, that God has had mercy on Israel – that he has assigned to Israel a man-brother, who is to show if God has released Israel from its guilt, and designed it a happier future for the ages.”

482 Rawita-Gawroński, *Andrzej Towiański*, 41. Author’s emphasis – M.J.

a tool in the acceptance of the Word of God by Israel – the Revelation to Israel of Divine Thought through Moses [...] offered through the Word of God. You are an apostle of Christianity to Israel.”⁴⁸³ Mickiewicz, in an address to the guardians of the groups of seven in the *Kolo* on 16 March 1845, charted the course to the summit: “We remember that we must simply take the straight path, the path on which each soul crawls to the Lord, on which Moses, Christ, and our lord [Towiański] lead. The Judaic and Catholic orders have led us down no other path. He who has not followed an old order in full compliance finds it difficult and dangerous to leap into the new one” (WS, XVI, 369-370). Mickiewicz regarded the patronage of Moses, Christ and Towiański, the old and new orders, as harmonious, though it required great spiritual exertion.

The apostle of Judea set off on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem in November 1844, and by the middle of January 1845 he was in the Holy City. He described his mission as “carrying the challenge to the brothers of Israel in Jerusalem” and “communicating to them the good news.” On 29 January 1845, he managed to speak to sixty Jews in a synagogue, and in his speech he again highlighted, as he himself confesses, “the greatness of the Israeli people and Its high calling in the holy cause.” He also referred to Towiański – a Man of God, who wants “to deliver Israel, to have it recognized on earth as the first brother, to gather us all under a single, Most Holy Banner.” He did not speak of conversion. In his report to the *Kolo* he himself emphasized that, in Jerusalem, he had avoided “mentioning the sort of details which the spirit of Israel tends to grasp, and for which it would immediately start to search for appropriate explanations.” For Ram, it was above all about awakening the spirit of Israel without going into “details,” and according to him, his message was received by the Jews with a “spirit that was stirred and moved.”⁴⁸⁴

So it is clear that Ram was silent about the need for Jews to convert to Christianity. Dresdner summarized his mission bluntly: “He simply concealed his own baptism, and wanting to win over his former fellow Jews, he mentioned nothing to them about the cross.”⁴⁸⁵ Did he act in this way for tactical reasons alone, or for more general, substantive reasons?

Here we arrive at one of the many mysterious issues that characterize Towianism, both in terms of the discretion with which Towianists often treated their own actions, and in terms of the silence, bias, concealment, or error committed by scholars of Towianism. Rawita-Gawroński published a document with the title *Idea Pana przez brata Rama podana Kolu* (Idea of the Lord Delivered by Brother Ram to the *Kolo*), under the date 17 May 1845, which included the following,

483 Ibid., 36. Towiański: “Do. br. Jana Andrzeja Rama,” 25 April 1945, Richterswil.

484 Ibid., 37-39. “Pismo br. Andrzeja Rama. Sprawozdanie z jego podróży do Jeruzalem.”

485 Dresdner, “Brat Gerszon,” 285.

significant statement: “Israel will not need the form of baptism in a church, it will Christianize itself through the acceptance of the new spirit.”⁴⁸⁶ Somewhat later, a dispute was sparked by the question of who came up with this key sentence: Ram, Towiański, or Mickiewicz? Attilio Begey argued in his day that the text quoted by Rawita-Gawroński included a mistake, and that – as in *Współdział Adama Mickiewicza w Sprawie Andrzeja Towiańskiego* (Mickiewicz’s Participation in the Cause of Andrzej Towiański) – the title should contain the phrase “delivered by brother Adam to the *Kolo*” (and not “by brother Ram”).⁴⁸⁷ In Begey’s view, these words are Mickiewicz’s since they are consistent with his enthusiasm – expressed earlier in this same address – for Ram’s baptism (this is how Begey interprets Mickiewicz’s feelings toward the conversion – after fifteen minutes of conversation – of a Jew by the Master). As evidence he cites Mickiewicz’s statement: “A few days ago a renowned Frenchman visited me who exhibited in every way emptiness and a lack of life, and he told me: We see that you are the *Jews of the new order*, it is time now, we are prepared, give us a new life!” It has been said that this Frenchman was the illustrious historian Jules Michelet.⁴⁸⁸ The phrase “Jews of the new order” is worth remembering.

Leon Płoszewski also tried to unravel the mystery of who authored these words. He argued that – before his pilgrimage to Jerusalem – Jan Andrzej Ram brought Towiański’s “idea” to Paris and communicated it to the guardians of the groups of seven within the *Kolo* on 17 May 1845. Thus it was a mistake in *Współdział Adama Mickiewicza* when Władysław Mickiewicz attributed authorship to his father, giving the “ideas” this title: *Słowa brata Adama na zgromadzeniu stróżów, o południu, w niedzielę 15 Maja 1845* (Words of Brother Adam at the Meeting of the Guardians, at Noon on Sunday, 15 May 1845).⁴⁸⁹

486 Rawita-Gawroński, *Andrzej Towiański*, 40.

487 Attilio Begey, *Andrzej Towiański et Israël. Actes et documents (1842-1864)* (Rome, 1912), 66 (In *Współdział Adama Mickiewicza* the sentences reads: “Israel will not need the *complement* of baptism in a church,” p. 230).

488 *Ibid.*, 67. In *Współdział Adama Mickiewicza*, Mickiewicz’s address is dated in the following manner: “(B.d. 1842?).” The Sejm edition (Wydanie Sejmowe) sets the date as 5 March 1847. The cited fragment: XI, 439 (author’s emphasis – M. J.). Regarding the statement about the converted Jew, Pigoń comments: “It is difficult to say whom is being discussed: Ram, Aronowicz, or someone else” (436).

489 See Leon Płoszewski “Przyczynek do dziejów Mickiewicza. Część druga. III. Poprawki do chronologii listów i przemówień Mickiewicza. Część druga,” *Pamiętnik Literacki* (1924/1925), 305. I quote Płoszewski’s entire argumentation: “More careful analysis of the title published by Rawita-Gawroński dictates that we assign authorship to someone else: ‘to the Lord’ i.e. to Towiański. Ram was only the carrier of this particular ‘idea,’” which is even more clearly indicated in the title given to this document in Aleksander Chodźko’s notes (hand-written manuscript in the Mickiewicz Museum): *Idee Pana przesłane Kolu przez*

But the issue requires more consideration. What caused such confusion among researchers over authorship of that key sentence? It probably revolves around the fact that ideas about Christian-Judaic union circulated widely among the brothers (especially Towiański, Ram, and Mickiewicz), and that these ideas were in the very air that Towianism breathed, which is clear from statements made by both its supporters and opponents (see the section “The Matrix of Frankism” above). Ram, with his behavior in Jerusalem as described in the cited documents, by no means betrayed the Towianistic idea.

One expert on issues related to Judaism and Towianism, Abraham Duker, treated the much maligned “idea” from 17 May 1845 as a declaration of a “new policy” toward the question of the conversion of Jews to Christianity. As Duker emphasized, Mickiewicz – around the time of his Paris lectures – was thinking about the kind of conversion that would not represent religious apostasy from Judaism. Frankism, with its faith in the true, Higher Torah, fits into this formula. “As long as Jews remained in the Jewish fold, there was hope for their conversion to Frankism and Towianism. The rationalist and materialist Jewish converts to Christianity, including former Frankists, were very poor candidates for conversion to Towianism.”⁴⁹⁰ What was necessary for Mickiewicz was the religious fervor of Israel. Thus, Marek Bieńczyk is correct when he discerns in Mickiewicz’s “Israel” the “purest Judaic form,” the one which maintained its complete spirituality, and which was predestined to do work that is exclusively heavenly.” It is Israel’s fate to carry out a mystical mission from which it cannot escape. “Referring to the Frankist example, Mickiewicz allowed for the kind of conversion that would not simultaneously cause a renunciation of the spiritual elements of Judaism, always allowing space for Israel. Conversion [...] would be the acquisition of spirit, and thus just as much an opening to the new faith as it is a recovery of the old faith.”⁴⁹¹

In such circumstances the dogmatic borders between Judaism and Christianity became blurred. One might talk of *a certain kind of syncretism*, which is something Jan Doktór emphasizes in his book on Frank. In one of the Frankist documents he cites, “the phrase ‘purely Christian religion,’ used interchangeably with

brata Rama – 17 Maja. So this item must be disconnected from Mickiewicz’s address. If, in the notes used by the publisher of *Współdział Adama Mickiewicza*, there was one item under the title *Słowa brata Adama ... 15 Maja*, that means that Mickiewicz delivered it at a ‘meeting of the guardians’ on 15 May, and Ram to the full *Kolo* on 17 May. Such a two-step process was practiced. Rawita-Gawroński noticed ‘all features of the polemics within the Kolo’ in a writing, which turns out to be a writing of [...] Towiański.”

490 Duker, “The Mystery of the Jews,” 62. Duker maintained that there is sufficient evidence to believe that – in the reasoning that went into the Jewish question – Mickiewicz was rather Towiański’s mentor, and not his disciple (ibid., 61).

491 Bieńczyk, “Wileński debiut Juliana Klaczki” in *Oczy Dłżera*, 211-212.

‘spiritual Christianity,’” is conspicuous. It is supposed to highlight the notion that this religion is cleansed of the institutional distortions of Catholicism. This is the message of Jesus that Baruchja Ruso recommended be coupled with the mystical traditions of Judaism and Islam to form a ‘new religion of the end’. [...] Spiritual Christianity is simply a new name for the Frankist concept of the ‘sacred wisdom of Edom’ – of the redemptive truth of a Catholicism, which could be gained without changing one’s publicly confessed religion.”⁴⁹² The currents of Frankism certainly permeated Towianism. As Marta Piwińska accurately writes in connection with the character Judyta in *Książę Marek*: “Undoubtedly *transfiguration, and not assimilation*, should be the path of both nations.”⁴⁹³

In light of such notions, less significance should be attributed to reports that, in time, Ram converted back to Judaism, something which greatly concerned Towiański.⁴⁹⁴ Pigoń supposed something different: “There is a lack of evidence to suggest – and it seems unlikely – that he would abandon Christianity and return to the religion of Moses. But it is certain that he decidedly left the Master once and for all.”⁴⁹⁵ It is much more meaningful to say – using Towianist terms – that “Israel” had again become a “Jew.” Testimony to this would be the chronicle of Ram’s financial successes, as assembled by Pigoń.

Even earlier (as I wrote above) Mickiewicz perceived in Ram certain features of “a banker and a civilized Jew.” In the 1850s, it was characteristic of the Towianists to speak of Ram in such terms, namely that he “preferred Mammon over something higher, he buried himself in death, he lost the movement of his spirit, the only treasure of a true Christian, a true Jew, and he degraded his great spirit to such an extent that something lower thoroughly overpowered him, and he succumbed to its rule.”⁴⁹⁶ Stagnation in spirit and neglect of its upward “movement” were supposed to be Ram’s greatest offenses; in his attempt to make as much money as possible, he had traded his “heavenly” treasure for a worldly one. “He

492 Doktor, *Śladami Mesjasza-Apostaty. Żydowskie ruchy mesjańskie w XVII i XVIII wieku a problem konwersji* (Wrocław, 1998), 231-232.

493 Marta Piwińska in the introduction to Słowacki, *Książę Marek*. 3rd ed., amended, ed. Marta Piwińska (Wrocław, 1991), LXXIX (author’s emphasis – M.J.; BN, I, 29).

494 See Dresdner, “Brat Gerszon,” 286. Rawita-Gawroński defined these circumstances according to stereotypical notions of Jewish character: “Ram, in all probability, reverted back to the old path, *as many Israelites customarily do*” (*Andrzej Towiański*, 18; author’s emphasis, M.J.).

495 Pigoń, “Z późniejszych lat,” 290.

496 Romuald Januskiewicz’s opinion is quoted in Pigoń, “Z późniejszych lat,” 288. This true Towianist, who served as Ram’s godfather, was so worried about changes he saw in Ram that “he even went in prayer to Kościuszko’s grave searching for advice and assistance.”

is flattered by the fact that the English take him for a great man, and happy that he now has 400 pounds sterling a year, and he could have a thousand."⁴⁹⁷

Pigoń's summary of the events and issues involved here did not diverge very far from the above Towianist views. In the introduction to his monumental edition of Mickiewicz's *Przemówienia* [addresses] at the *Kolo Sprawy Bożej*, he wrote that the results of the *Kolo's* work involving Jews were "most dismal," and that a negative example of that work had been Ram himself. "His zealotry, his impressive momentum, the distinct grace of God that accompanied him, all of that somehow left him for considerations very mundane" (WS, XI, 39-40).

Signs of Ram's changes greatly upset the Towianists. Goszczyński added his comments to concerns expressed by brother Januszkiewicz; they reveal how the "Jew" and "Jewishness" were understood within the *Kolo Sprawy Bożej*. Goszczyński wanted his words to "awaken this brother [Ram] and remind him that he is above all a servant of God's Cause, and that – having become a Christian – he had stopped being a Jew. He should concern himself more with his higher, eternal happiness than with the good of his material existence. All of this is particularly necessary for him because he has apparently cooled down, lost that feeling we so admired in him in the first years of God's Cause; apparently he has descended into Jewish life, returned to the captivity of the Jewish spirit." But Ram did not give in to these objections and accusations; indeed he bravely resisted them. "In this spirit we talked with him yesterday," Goszczyński goes on to report, "but he stubbornly defends his current circumstances, and sees in them the proper actions of a servant of God; he views it as progress that he has come to a stop and fallen. It seems to him that everything he does is done under the inspiration of a higher grace, that he is carrying out the will of God. On this point he is immovable."⁴⁹⁸ Clearly, Ram felt no sense of betrayal at all, and believed that favorable financial circumstances by no means represented a lack of fidelity to God's mission.

As Pigoń reports, the last news we have about Ram comes from October 1861. Goszczyński, in a journal entry describing the patriotic demonstrations then taking place in Warsaw, mentioned this: "Jan Ram, once our brother, is in Paris. He has met with Ludwik Nabelak regarding some earthly interest. From a pauper several years ago he is now a rich man with millions." So, had God perhaps been looking down kindly on his material well-being? A positive answer to that question, of course, could not possibly fit with Towianist reasoning. Nabelak began to admonish Ram (despite the fact that Ram had proposed that he join him in a business deal, which Nabelak did not reject): "Above all he talked to Ram as if to a servant of God's Cause, which is today emerging so wonderfully in Poland. Ram's first reaction was of indignation toward this manner of speaking, but the

497 Ibid., 289 (this was Januszkiewicz's view).

498 Goszczyński, *Dziennik Sprawy Bożej*, vol. I., 502-503. Notes from 18 August 1854.

issue is in a state of suspension, and Nabelak has decided not to stop at this beginning. Januszkiewicz Eustachy, who was present at the conversation, supported Nabelak.⁴⁹⁹ But they got nowhere with Ram, who remained “immovable,” as they themselves noticed; he was outraged by their accusations and absolutely certain that he was in the right. Financial success – in Ram’s opinion – could not have been a sign that God had turned away from someone endowed with earthly grace. This conflict between Ram and the Towianists points to the deep differences that existed in their attitudes toward money. Słowacki (in his mystical period), in order to regard finance as good, had to give money a certain, mystical flair, but the Towianists were not able to take this step for many reasons, including perhaps because the stereotype of Jewish greed and corporeality – revealed in the accumulation of wealth – weighed heavily on their minds. They did not appreciate the skills required to turn over money, because for them money was “dead” and “cold.” This was a difference in mentality. “From that point in time,” Pigoń writes, “we lose sight of that man ‘called upon as an apostle of Israel.’”⁵⁰⁰

In the eyes of the Towianists, Ram showed evidence that he had abandoned the spiritual path. But is it not possible that – having left the mystical episode behind him – he (like many Frankists) by no means stopped being a religious Jew who combined Judaism with Christianity?

* * *

Except for a few minor additions, the first two parts of the above study (“Wail in the Synagogue” and “The Matrix of Frankism”) were published in Warsaw in 1998 in the collection *Tajemnice Mickiewicza* (Mysteries of Mickiewicz), edited by Marta Zielińska. In a thorough study by historian Krzysztof A. Makowski, “Wątek żydowski w badaniach nad Mickiewiczem,” dealing with, as the title suggests, “Jewish motifs in studies on Mickiewicz” through the year 1998, the author argues that “a large part of the books, articles, and other items collected by him on Jewish motifs in Mickiewicz’s life and work are not known to many authors or are not utilized by them” (418). Specifically, this involves the tremendous work of Abraham Duker (1907-1987). And I have to admit that, over the course of my work on this subject, I have always been amazed that Duker’s works have not been translated into Polish, and by how seldom they are referenced.

499 Ibid., vol. II, 116.

500 Pigoń, “Z późniejszych lat,” 290.

List of Bibliographic Abbreviations

Mickiewicz, *Dziela* (Warszawa, 1955), Wydanie Jubileuszowe = WJ. In parenthesis are volume and page numbers.

Mickiewicz, *Dziela wszystkie* (Warszawa, 1933), Wydanie Sejmowe, vol. XI, *Przemówienia*, edited by Stanisław Pigoń = WS, XI.

Mickiewicz, *Dziela wszystkie* (Warszawa, 1933), Wydanie Sejmowe, vol. XVI, *Rozmowy z Adamem Mickiewiczem*, collected and edited by Stanisław Pigoń = WS, XVI.

Mickiewicz, *Dziela* (Warszawa, 2001), Wydanie Rocznicowe, vol. XIII, *Pismatowianistyczne, Przemówienia, Szkice filozoficzne* = WR, XIII.

V.
MICKIEWICZ'S JEWISH LEGION

1. Life is Somewhere Else

During the Crimean War, in the autumn of 1855, Mickiewicz left Paris for the East to assist in the creation a Polish military formation to fight on the side of Turkey, France and England against Russia – not “hired mercenaries, but rather allied Polish Battalions.”⁵⁰¹ He was accompanied by his secretary, Armand Lévy, an “Israelite devoted body and soul to Mickiewicz.”⁵⁰² It was a common belief among our émigrés at that time that “Poland’s fate hung in the balance in the Bosphorus” (*Żywot*, IV, 402)⁵⁰³. After the Springtime of the Peoples (1848-1849) and the Hungarian Revolution, which was suppressed by Russian military intervention under the orders of the “*gendarme* of Europe,” Tsar Nicholas I, hope remained that military conflict would break out between Russia and the western states along with Turkey. This conflict was supposed to weaken Russia. Complicated diplomatic intrigues, a network of blackmail schemes carried out among the partitioning powers, and activities of various kinds on the part of European émigrés, were all aimed at the exploitation of Turkey, which played a key role at that time in the dreams and ambitions of those wanting to create an anti-Russian coalition. The detailed turns taken in the project to “create, in support of Turkey, a common front of peoples, battling against Austria and Russia” – the oppressors of those peoples struggling for independence – were complicated, but the idea remained the same. Émigrés repeatedly argued that it was not necessary to incite an uprising in Poland; rather, what was required was a Polish legion in Turkey battling alongside the armies opposed to Russia in the East.⁵⁰⁴

Particularly after his wife died, Mickiewicz often emphasized in conversations that his “role [is] in the East” (*Żywot*, IV, 401). He had already traveled the long road of repudiating both poetry as the art of beautiful but empty words, and diplomacy as the art of pretense and subterfuge. Alternatively, since his authority was always that of a bard, he could express the opinion that the time had come for poets to start building through action what they had “so far sung in inspiration.”⁵⁰⁵ What interested him, especially after 1848, was only action; the oppressive, passive atmosphere of Paris disturbed him. Janusz Ruszkowski, author of a book on

501 [Michał Czajkowski], *Kozaczyzna w Turcji. Dzieło w trzech częściach przez X.K.O.* (Paris, 1857), 242. Part II: *A. Mickiewicz o legionach z Kozaczyzną i listy o formacjach polskich*. The quote comes from Mickiewicz’s *Noty o Zastępach Polskich* (translated from the French). This document – printed in a work by Płoszewski as *Odpowiedź na zastrzeżenia w liście lorda Harrowby* dated 13 June 1855 – does not contain the quoted formulation (see WJ, XIII, 137).

502 Rawita-Gawroński, *Adam Mickiewicz na Wschodzie (1855)* (Lwów, 1899), 11.

503 See a List of Bibliographic Abbreviations on p. 204.

504 Adam Lewak, *Dzieje emigracji polskiej w Turcji (1831-1878)* (Warszawa, 1935), 92, 99.

505 [Czajkowski], *Kozaczyzna w Turcji*, 246.

Mickiewicz's millenarianistic utopianism, highlights the fact that the poet went to Rome in 1848 to create a Polish legion to fight for Polish independence; he had already distanced himself from Towiański's philosophy of passivity. As evidence, Ruszkowski cites, among other things, the words of Juliusz Falkowski, who described Mickiewicz's departure for Rome in this way: "Mickiewicz wanted to act like the knights of the old orders and not sit idly by, as Towiański recommended; he had repeatedly stood up to him [Towiański], but then – feeling repentant – apologized; in the end, when war broke out in Italy, he went there to create a Polish phalanx and, having fallen out again with Towiański on the issue, he stopped yielding to him."⁵⁰⁶ This was only a personal conflict; Mickiewicz never stopped professing Towianism as his mystical doctrine.

Despite the defeat of the Springtime of the Peoples, Mickiewicz did not abandon thoughts of Polish liberation. Now, in contrast to the stagnation of Paris, life was somewhere else – in the East. Many romantics dreamed of the Orient, but our poet did so in a particular way.

After 1848, he was again dreaming about the East, now above all as a field of action. Zaleski made a note in his diary, dated 2 August 1851, about a conversation he had with Adam on the issue of the possibility of a liberated Poland – "with the exuberance of the peasants being incited to slaughter, and the callousness of the magnates and nobility, etc." Given this internal state of the country, only one solution remained – rescue from the outside. "We must create a [military] force somewhere in the West or in the East. Bem in Hungary presented the ideal path for the salvation of Poland" (*Żywot*, IV, Aneks, XXXVI).

Bem's biography has symbolic power. General Józef Bem was one of the most famous leaders of the Hungarian Revolution of 1848-1849. When it collapsed under the blows of Russian military intervention, he was interned in Turkey. Viewing Turkey as the only power capable of opposing – and even defeating – Russia, General Bem converted to Islam in 1849, along with dozens of other Polish officers, and joined the Turkish armed forces. This change in faith, which was necessary in order to serve in the Turkish military, raised concerns among Polish émigrés and soldiers, who were deeply split between their traditional Catholicism and their overwhelming desire to fight for Polish independence. But General Bem explained what he had done with words to which Mickiewicz could not object: "It was not out of ambition that I decided to deviate from the religion of my forefathers, but because – as I see it – it is the last path to achieving independence for the two oppressed nations; in sacrificing the form, I did not change my heart, in which faith in Him remains."⁵⁰⁷ Bem believed that it would come to

506 Jansusz Ruszkowski, *Adam Mickiewicz i ostatnia krucjata. Studium romantycznego milenarizmu* (Wrocław, 1996), 193.

507 Quote from Lewak, *Dzieje emigracji*, 88.

“war between Turkey and Russia, from which a restored Poland would have to emerge. Turkish forces are sufficient to crush Russian power.”⁵⁰⁸ Unfortunately, Bem died at the end of 1850. Rumors circulated that he had been poisoned by an Austrian agent. He was placed in his grave with his head facing Mecca, but also with a bag of soil brought from Poland.⁵⁰⁹

Military action in the East was one of the main topics of thought and discussion for Mickiewicz. He confided to Ludwik Zwierkowski: “I have long thought about how to support the endeavors of those clamoring for action, since Sadyk and Zamoyski and Wysocki want to do something, they are of greater value than all of the encyclopedists in bathrobes” (*Żywot*, IV, 401). The Sadyk mentioned by Mickiewicz was General Michał Czajkowski, who after he converted to Islam in 1850 became a Turkish military commander and creator of a regiment of Ottoman Cossacks; General Władisław Zamoyski was at that time acting in Turkey on behalf of the informal Polish “Minister of Foreign Affairs” in exile, Prince Czartoryski, and was attempting to create a second Cossack regiment; General Józef Wysocki had been commander of the Polish legion in Hungary in 1848 and was tipped to become leader of a Polish army in Turkey. They were working for the future defeat of Russia through armed action (for Mickiewicz this was most essential), though they represented various and often conflicting political views. Jadwiga Maurer accurately analyzed the reasons why Prince Czartoryski was counting on the “turned-Turk,” Sadyk Pasha: Czajkowski was the “only Pole in the entire world who had armed soldiers.”⁵¹⁰ Armand Lévy wished (for himself and for everyone present) for the day to come “when, changing the refrain in *Jeszcze Polska* ... everyone would be able to sing: March, march Sadyk, from Turkish land to Poland” (*Żywot*, IV, LXXXVI). This was a significant rewording of the line (in what is now the Polish national anthem) referring to Dąbrowski's Legions in Italy.

Mickiewicz's statements during his stay at the military camp with Czajkowski at Burgas were filled with admiration for the soldiers' military heroism. Dobrosława Świerczyńska pulled one of them from oblivion: “Glory to you! Glory to you, officers of the first regiment. It is a real Pole, a true son of Poland, who carries a weapon at his side, who can endure and suffer like you. Long live! Long live such sons, long live the Mother of such sons!”⁵¹¹

508 Ibid.

509 Ibid., 91. See also Jadwiga Chudzikowska, *General Bem* (Warszawa, 1990).

510 Maurer, “‘Jak mnie nie stanie, nikt tego nie zrozumie’. O legionie żydowskim Adama Mickiewicza,” in eds. H. Filipowicz, A Karcza, and T. Trojanowska, *Polonistyka po amerykańsku. Badania nad literaturą polską w Ameryce Północnej (1990-2005)* (Warszawa, 2005), 115.

511 Dobrosława Świerczyńska, “Zapomniane relacje o pobycie Mickiewicza w Burgas,” *Pamiętnik Literacki* (1990), z. 4, 221.

This is repetition of the classic stereotype of the homo-social, male community, whose unambiguous cohesion and morality is guaranteed by one, dignified mother.⁵¹² Praise for an armed, vibrant, and uniformed military collective must be juxtaposed to contempt for “encyclopedists in bathrobes.”

Mickiewicz's way of assessing such issues should come as no surprise. He often expressed scorn for those who write and study, and contempt for triflers carousing through salons and beyond; at other times, he heaped excessive praise on those who would “leap into action,” understood as military action directed against Russian barbarism. Russia's military failures in the Crimean War, Władisław Mickiewicz once wrote, “seemed to herald a long series of defeats. There was talk within the exile community of crushing Moscow and wiping it from the map of Europe.” But in his biography of his father, he added that “feelings of pagan revenge were foreign to him [Adam]; he wanted Poland's liberation to also lift her enemy” (*Żywot*, IV, 409).

Mickiewicz could not avoid being faced with unpleasant circumstances in the East. He went there at the request of Prince Czartoryski as a mediator in the growing tension between Zamoyski and Czajkowski, whose world views (monarchic-Catholic *versus* democratic-“turned-Turk”) and military interests (the creation by Zamoyski of a second regiment under his command paid for by the English) were coming into increased conflict. The historian and author of a monograph on Armand Lévy, Jerzy W. Borejsza, wrote quite simply: “It pained Mickiewicz to see that the creation of the Polish legions had just been set in motion, and they were already being broken up. What is more, he understood in Burgas that Hotel Lambert [i.e. Czartoryski] had sent him there to cover up Zamoyski's political maneuverings.”⁵¹³ Given Mickiewicz's ethical foundation, according to which the Polish cause was something sacred, this was a dreadful experience. Some people have argued that it drove him to an early grave.

The patriotic moral imperative governed Mickiewicz in everything, and his decision to go East was supposed to set the strength of a moral example. Let young people see that “I, with gray hair, am going where my heart and understanding lead me. [...] I, the father of six orphans” (*Żywot*, IV, 401). Mickiewicz was not exaggerating when he spoke of gray hair and about his concern for six orphaned children. He was in fact broken and destroyed; to many who saw him at work as an archivist at the Arsenal Library, he seemed prematurely aged and embittered.

512 The mentality and ideological character of the atmosphere in Burgas is analyzed by Kazimiera Szczuka in her work “Matki, płaczki, wdowy. Żałoba po Mickiewiczu” in eds. K. Czeczot and Marta Zielińska, *Śmierć Mickiewicza. Teksty i rozmowy w Roku Mickiewiczowskim 2005* (Warszawa, 2008).

513 Jerzy W. Borejsza, *Sekretarz Adama Mickiewicza. Armand Lévy i jego czasy, 1827-1891*. 3rd ed., updated (Gdańsk, 2005), 129.

But on the ship to Constantinople Mickiewicz felt refreshed and healthy. As if training himself for life in the camp he had been dreaming about, he slept on deck wrapped in his overcoat. Armand Lévy noted in his diary: "One of the passengers, a member of the English parliament, Sir Seymour, said to me: 'What on earth is such an old man [at that time Mickiewicz was almost 57 years old] doing traveling to the East?' This question shocked me. But Adam is doing perfectly well, seems rather rejuvenated" (*Żywoł*, IV, 426). As we know, this episode of a second youth was very brief. Without a doubt, the hardships and shortages of camp life – at least that which resembled camp or nomadic life – contributed to Mickiewicz's impending death.

The poet did not live to see the defeat of his great hope, for which his enthusiasm – it must be said – was no longer as strong as it had been in 1848. He died on 26 November 1855 in Constantinople. Not just his life, but also his death had been somewhere else. Not in Poland, and not in France. In the East, Polish dreams and intentions were crushed. Mickiewicz had tied a powerful set of messianistic convictions with Napoleon I and his later incarnation, Napoleon III, who – during the Crimean War – achieved little for the so-called Polish cause. The Allies achieved their goal (they defeated Russia), but this had no meaning for Poland. The issue of Poland was not raised at the Paris peace conference in 1856; Russia succeeded in making sure it was omitted from the agenda.

2. The Precedence of Israel

Mickiewicz had long been interested in the creation of Polish armed legions. In the previously cited note dated 17 June 1855, he mentioned the "famous Polish Legions under Generals Dąbrowski and Kniaziewicz" and all the "units and regiments which, at various times, have taken up arms under the Polish banner, as for example in 1833 in Germany, in 1834 in Piedmont, and in 1848 in Piedmont, in Hungary, in the Grand Duchy of Posen, in Sicily, in the Grand Duchy of Baden; and all of them under their own Polish generals."⁵¹⁴ The words "legion" and "legions" in Polish tradition were – and continue to be – surrounded by a particular aura.⁵¹⁵ Of course, Mickiewicz was perfectly aware of this and consciously appealed to expressions which have significance in Polish speech that borders on the cultic. He himself had heroically created a Polish legion in Italy in 1848. He

514 [Czajkowski], *Kozaczyzna w Turcji*, 241-242.

515 The various dimensions of Polish reverence for, but also aversion to, the word "legions" are presented by Krzysztof Stępnik in a book devoted to a comprehensive portrayal of the reaction to Piłsudski's Legions, *Legenda Legionów* (Lublin, 1995).

reminded Michał Czajkowski, in the East in 1855: "I rather walked than rode to Italy because then, as now, I felt that Poland could be won, and even if I were to die somewhere, good people would save my little orphans if they could, knowing that it happened for Poland, for its rescue, its reawakening."⁵¹⁶ This resuscitation, awakening, and attainment of Poland was an important element of Mickiewicz's mission, as it was for many of our great romantics. Mickiewicz shaped the Italian legion like "the *Kolo*, on the basis of the Master's [Towiański's] principles," created as the "nucleus of a regiment" (WJ, XVI, 186).

The mystical character that Mickiewicz lent to the legion in Italy implied that the poet was preparing his "crusaders" for the specific mission of the spiritual rebirth of Poland. In his *Memorandum for Napoleon III*, probably written between December 1852 and the year 1855, Mickiewicz argued, as Ruszkowski has emphasized, that the "goal of a future war in the nineteenth century – using the analogy of the retaking of Jerusalem – should be the retaking of Poland from the hands of the 'unfaithful.'" Participation in the liberation movement of 1848 was also based on such assumptions. "Mickiewicz's intentions were for the legionnaires to become the future elite of a new Poland, and the legion elite was supposed to be composed of the Parisian 'crusaders,' that is the Towianists from his Circle," a unit that would maintain its internal cohesion and "military-monastic character."⁵¹⁷ This was the essence of Mickiewicz's concept of the legions. His "crusaders" were heading to a new Promised Land, the New Jerusalem – that is, to Poland, Ruszkowski writes, who goes on to cite English scholar Monica M. Gardner, who argued that Mickiewicz "viewed himself as a pilgrim, as a member of the chosen people – of the new Israel on its journey to the promised land."⁵¹⁸

On 2 April 1848, Mickiewicz penned a letter from Rome to brother-Towianist Juliusz Łącki describing their "mystical-moral-military mission," and declaring that "I intend to go to Florence, Milan, the Czech territories, and to Kraków" (WJ, XVI, 186). The poet wrote this letter on the back of a copy of his *Skład zasad* (29 March 1848), also known as the "Mickiewicz Constitution." Here, alongside the guarantee of civil liberties of all kinds, is a separate point, the tenth, which reads: "To Israel, our older brother, respect, fraternity, and assistance on the path to his eternal and temporal welfare. Equal in all rights" (WJ, XII, 7). In the Italian version of *Skład zasad*, the concept of equal rights for Jews was defined with these words: "full equality in political-civil rights" (compare WJ, XII, 331).

To many it was shocking that Mickiewicz called the Jew "our older brother." In a letter to Zaleski, Cyprian Norwid put forward a fundamental critique of the unorthodox "nonsense" contained in Mickiewicz's *Skład zasad*: "On issues re-

516 [Czajkowski], *Kozaczyzna w Turcji*, 255.

517 Ruszkowski, *Adam Mickiewicz i ostatnia krucjata*, 241, 230.

518 *Ibid.*, 233.

lated to the Church, this manifesto is aimed at the most precise devastation of dogma [...] in that the older brother Israel is supposed to assume a prominent place. [...] this way effectively leads (briefly put) to the Synagogue. Recognition of the precedence of Israel is the logical outcome – because while Christ conquers time, the precedence of Israel comes from chronology, is of time and of blood, etc. [...] a turn to the Old Testament.”⁵¹⁹ Władysław Mickiewicz elegantly avoided the difficult problem raised by his father's Israel heresy by altering – in his *Legion Mickiewicza. Rok 1848* – this drastic expression so as to less upset the reader: “To Israel, our brother...” This subtle change was pointed out by, among others, that inquisitive and erudite expert on Mickiewicz and Jewish issues, Abraham Duker.⁵²⁰

In order to understand this “older brother,” one must reach back to the Towianist, messianistic antecedent. “The oldest family of souls is called Israel” (WS, XI, 365), Mickiewicz explained in one of his addresses to the *Kolo* in 1845. “The mission of Hebrew spiritual leaders was to lift not a single caste, but an entire people to recognition of the unity and universality of God” (WJ, XI, 264), which is how he explained the superiority of the “spirit of Hebraic revelation.” This, along with the fact that the people of Israel never doubted Providence, formed the basis for his notion of the precedence of Israel. The souls of Israel, as the oldest souls, can find themselves in various “bodies.” Along these lines, Mickiewicz maintained in 1847 that “there are among us in Poland great and powerful souls, both among the Jews and among our people, the peasants: – Israels” (WS, XI, 438).

This claim of Israel's primacy was naturally difficult for the émigrés to digest. Zaleski wrote to Goszczyński on 15 July 1842: “Mickiewicz's messianism is something else. It is simply the apotheosis of Judaism, a highly difficult lesson, namely for the Slavs, such heart-felt Christians [...]. Poles – and in general all Slavs – are not quick to recognize the spiritual superiority of Jews over them.” “Tribal repulsion is not easily eradicated after so many centuries.” Like Norwid, Zaleski recoiled from the notion of a total return, as he judged it, to the Old Testament; he believed that such a reversal was a blow to his Christianity, but also to his national affiliation, which is why he wrote of the difficulties involved in the “renunciation of the personal and national.”⁵²¹

519 Letter to Zaleski dated 24 April 1848 in Cyprian Norwid, *Pisma wszystkie*, collected, and with an introduction and commentary, by J.W. Gomułicki, vol. 8, *Listy 1839-1861* (Warszawa, 1971), 62.

520 See Duker, “Mickiewicz and the Jewish Problem” in *Adam Mickiewicz: Poet of Poland A Symposium*, ed. M. Kridl (New York, 1951), 117. In this regard, Stefan Kieniewicz writes of a “very peculiar printing error in the Polish edition of Wł. Mickiewicz's *Legion*.” See Kieniewicz, *Legion Mickiewicza, 1848-1849* (Warszawa, 1957), 54.

521 Zaleski, *Korespondencja*, vol. I (Lwów, 1900), 245.

Such reservations could also take on the character of national prejudice: just before the Second World War, a periodical representing purely Polish nationalists accused Mickiewicz of not only biological, but also spiritual Semitism, asserting: "Surely no one would attempt to prove that that messianism [mesjanizm] – or rather, Mickiewicz's *mesjonizm* – is a world view that is not Jewish." The work of a "mesjonista" could inspire Jews, but Poles recoil "from everything that smells of the spirit of the Habakkuks, Jeremiahs, Ezekiels, and other inspired Judeans."⁵²²

Mickiewicz's thinking on the spiritual superiority of Israel had no place for such national loathing. What interested him were unwavering faith in a single God and the path of religious and moral perfection in the spirit of Christ, and it was from this point of view that he approached the "errors of Israel." The "Israelites rejected the grace that Christ offered, they wanted – in spite of Him – to take another path to perfection, and they walked into a circle of centuries of suffering" (WS, XI, 270). Earlier, on 3 May 1843, during a session of the Literary Society, he said: "Jews were not reborn, because they wanted to improve the old Church, and Christ came not to repair the old, but to build something new" (WS, XI, 499). In his critique he did not appeal to stereotypes and common prejudices about the "punishment" that befell the Jews for the crucifixion of Christ. In 1851, Zaleski noted a conversation he had with Mickiewicz "about Palestine and about the Jews. With curiosity he inquired about the details of my travels to the Holy Land. We talked about the character of the Jewish people, and about its sublime spiritual mission, which it dropped" (*Żywot*, IV, *Aneks*, XXXV). But that is Zaleski's commentary. Mickiewicz proceeded along the lines of Towiański's idea who, in the poet's view, "does not dissolve the old order, but rather wants to complete it; he raises a third floor of the church, without destroying the lower floors, consolidating them naturally" (WJ, XV, 520). The "third floor of the Church" is built on the Old and New Orders, a new epoch in Christianity, in which all of the causes for the collapse of Poland are destroyed, "which means the *merger and brotherhood of all of the various races and religions*."⁵²³ After the Slavic-Polish legion in Rome in 1848, there came the time for a Slavic-Jewish legion in 1855, which was supposed to journey to Poland on a "millenaristic crusade," an "eschatological expedition toward a different and better world."⁵²⁴

522 See Gniewomir, "Mesjonista Adam Mickiewicz," *Zadruga*, no. 4-5 (18-19), April-May 1939, 16-17. Author's emphasis – M.J. Translator's note: What is apparently involved here is something of a play on words. The Polish word for messianism is "mesjanizm," and "mesjonizm" (and "mesjonista", or messianist) would seem to be a combination of "mesjanizm" and the Polish word for Zionism, "Syjonizm."

523 *Adama Mickiewicza wspomnienia i myśli*. Conversations and speeches selected and edited by Piękoń (Warszawa, 1958), 263. Author's emphasis – M. J.

524 See Ruszkowski, *Adam Mickiewicz*, 246-248.

3. “Fate Has Tied Two Foreign Nations Closely Together”

In Mickiewicz's understanding, Poland constituted an exceptional, mystical foundation for the Jews. He shared this view with Andrzej Towiański. The author of *Biesiada* (Towiański) believed that Israel in Poland is “more truly Israel than in other countries.” “It is easy to sense,” Towiański explained, “how it is of great importance for Poland, in its future, that these two parts of Poland are united in the idea of God, parts which are so close to each other by origins, going from there in like spirit – which reveals itself particularly in the Polish people – despite the different roads taken and circumstances on earth [...] So let our love for our brothers, who were once our guests but are now our countrymen – marked, in common spirit and calling, to become a homogeneous part of Poland – let our love manifest itself with great desire and sacrifice, and with this let us pay our debt to the love of God and to the love of those close to us, a debt which we assumed in the past as Christians, and as the hosts of those, our guests, whom God – designating our land as their home – has entrusted with our love and care.”⁵²⁵ To be sure, Towiański had not forgotten the errors and sins of Israel, but for Mickiewicz, especially in the period when he was creating the Jewish legion, what was most important was his thinking on the deep spiritual affinity both nations have toward one another. We recall that, in a lecture at the Collège de France in 1843, Mickiewicz talked of the “millions of people” belonging to the nation of Israel and living in Slavic lands (WJ, XI, 343), and of the fact that he wanted to speak on their behalf.

The Jews of Eastern Europe would not allow themselves to be assimilated; they had no thirst for assimilation at all. They largely opposed Enlightenment currents leading to the universal concept of mankind and remained steadfast in their faith. Gershom Scholem argued that, within the psychology of the Sabbateans and Frankists (predominantly recruited from the Jews of Eastern Europe) there lay a deeply hidden aspiration for moral and national renewal that was developing beyond the ideals of the nineteenth-century Jewish bourgeoisie,⁵²⁶ whose horizon was too narrow – indeed foreign and hostile – for Mickiewicz. What particularly attracted Mickiewicz was the huge reserve of religious energy so apparent among these eastern Jews, which was in fact becoming more pronounced in part as a result of the democratization of Talmudic instruction. With this process of democratization came the “intellectual emancipation to the people” and the joy of “studying revered books.” Abraham Heschel, from whose work I draw these

525 Towiański, *Pisma wybrane*, vol. II, *Kościół Chrystusowy, Izrael, Sztuki piękne. Listy, Urywki*, selected, with layout and notes, by A. Boleski (Kraków, 1920), 99, 103

526 See Scholem, “Redemption through Sin” in *The Messianic Idea in Judaism*, 84.

quotes, mentioned that one of the many books saved from the Holocaust, and preserved in New York, bears the stamp: "The Society of Wood-Choppers for the Study of Mishnah in Berditshev."⁵²⁷ Heschel (author of *The Earth Is the Lord's: The Inner World of the Jew in Eastern Europe*) was correct when he wrote that these Jews – despite appalling material poverty – felt they were kings of spirit, which is something that Polish romantics knew perfectly well, romantics such as Mickiewicz and Słowacki, who – in *Ksiądz Marek* – created the extraordinary character of the inspired Judyta, a great spirit of Israel. As defined by Heschel, the Eastern European epoch in Jewish history was the golden age of the history of the Jewish soul.

Mickiewicz recognized that, on Polish lands, "fate has tied two nations closely together that are foreign to one another only by appearances." In one of his Paris lectures he said: "Our country is the main residence of the oldest and most mysterious of all nations, the nation of Israel" (WJ, XI, 458). Duker believed that Mickiewicz's lectures on Slav literature produced a "new theosophic synthesis," and its foundation in the question of the future status of Israel in Poland (as in the *Sklad zasady*) was a combination of Towianist and Frankist concepts. One of these concepts was the belief that the concentration of Jews in Poland had been ordained by Providence for some mysterious, messianistic purpose, a view that was inspired by Frankism.⁵²⁸ Let us remember that, when Mickiewicz set off for the East, he was still convinced of the mystical union recognizing the shared, messianic mystery of spirits; this union made Poland into a representative of Israel. Lévy emphasized: "It needs to be known that Adam Mickiewicz died holding true to the ideas for which he lived. He died having revoked nothing, though some would like to contend that he did. His last conversations were the same as in earlier years. *What he said at the Collège de France is what he believed to the very end*" (WS, XVI, 431, author's emphasis – M.J.).

And he was able to translate that faith into very practical language. When he learned that Michał Czajkowski was treating the "matter of the Israelites" – that is, the planned Jewish regiment – with a nobleman's course humor, he told him in a letter written a couple weeks before his death that he could not condone the ridicule of serious issues, since "our enemies are not joking." And he explained concretely: "In recent years the issue of the Israelites has occupied many minds. In our country they are in active support of our nationality. Should this unit [the Jewish fighting force] become active, you would have the support of the French government" (WJ, XVI, 634).

527 Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Earth Is the Lord's: The Inner World of the Jew in Eastern Europe and The Sabbath* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 40-47.

528 See Duker, "Jewish Volunteers in the Ottoman-Polish Cossack Units during the Crimean War," *Jewish Social Studies* (1954), vol. XVI, 352, 354.

4. Politics and Mystical Illumination

Czajkowski – Sadyk Pasha – was the leader in the Turkish army of the first regiment of Ottoman Cossacks. In the military camp where he was residing, at Burgas, there were supposed to be around 200 Jews, mostly former prisoners of war. In the pages of *Mysł Narodowa*, Pigoń – who believed that Roman Brandstaetter's "brochure" *Legion żydowski Adama Mickiewicza* (Adam Mickiewicz's Jewish legion) contained exaggerations and was outright misleading – cast doubt on that estimate. "Even though he [Brandstaetter] managed to put together not quite 60 names according to the registers, he somehow works them out – like Lévy – to being 200." Pigoń mentions that Henryk Służalski – a Sarmata accompanying Mickiewicz in Burgas – found barely "a few Jews" in the regiment.⁵²⁹ But Duker's research, published in 1951 and 1954, confirms Lévy's calculations, based on lists of names contained in separate annexes indicating the diverse geographical origins of the Jewish volunteers.⁵³⁰

In any case, in view of the number of Jewish prisoners and deserters from the Russian army during the Crimean War and other possibilities for recruiting Jews, who were quite willing to fight against Russia, it is known that attempts to make military use of Jews, especially by those within Prince Czartoryski's political circle, date back to 1854. Duker pointed out that *L'Univers israélite* reported in March 1854 that an Istanbul rabbi had "formed a legion of Israelites which he presented at the disposition of the Sultan," and that "Israelite notables of most cities are furnishing the necessary funds." And Duker adds this commentary, which contradicts interpretations put forward by Władysław Mickiewicz and Stanisław Pigoń: "It is inconceivable that Lévy was not acquainted with these rumors or that he did not discuss them with the poet. Moreover, it is most unlikely that Mickiewicz was not told, in connection with his mission, about the significant successes achieved by Poles in recruiting Jewish volunteers in England, France, North Africa, and among the Russian war prisoners..."⁵³¹

529 See Pigoń, "Z ostatnich chwil A. Mickiewicza," *Mysł Narodowa* 45 (1932), 659.

530 See Duker's "Mickiewicz and the Jewish Problem" and "Jewish Volunteers." In the section from "Jewish Volunteers" entitled "Recruiting of Jewish Volunteers," Duker analyzed in detail lists of names of those registered in Czajkowski's first Ottoman regiment. "That these people, who volunteered to serve in Zamoyski's unit ended up in the rival outfit may be due to the possibility that the General did not want Jews in his Regiment in the earliest stage of its organization ..." (214-215). The section "Polish Attitudes Toward the Jewish Volunteers" begins with the claim that "some Poles resented the presence of so many Jews in the First Brigade" (217). Duker also stated: "It is very unlikely that Adam Mickiewicz, who had been interested in the course of the recruiting campaign for the Polish army, had not been aware of the relatively large number of Jewish volunteers" (352).

531 Duker, "Mickiewicz and the Jewish Problem," 110-111.

All the same, there was certainly no shortage of something in the nature of mystical illumination when the idea to form a Jewish legion first occurred to the enthusiastic Mickiewicz and Lévy. Armand Lévy described that fateful moment in a letter to Emilian Bednarczyk, quoted by Brandstaetter: "The issue began in a pure and selfless form, beyond mere human calculation. There can be no question about that. The project was born in the tents at the camp at Burgas. The sight of Jewish soldiers serving under the banner of the Ottoman Cossacks inspired him [that is, Mickiewicz – as indicated by a note in Brandstaetter's work, which Pigoń questioned]. With the first words I spoke, we all recognized – Mickiewicz, Sadyk and I – that we had arrived at the same thought simultaneously, and as each of us spoke, we said what the other one wanted. In this way great things happen. And that was it. We became convinced that there was, in this work, something of Providence. We were instruments being prepared beforehand for this work. Mickiewicz always repeated: believe, this cause is Providential – all the irrational circumstances that meet and merge, moving toward the same goal, beyond all intellectual speculation, are proof of that."⁵³²

It is difficult to question the authenticity of Mickiewicz's statements as recorded by Lévy, and we must mention that Pigoń recognized other notes made by Lévy as being entirely credible. In any case, what is striking about Mickiewicz's statements are notions already well-known from his Paris lectures: The connection between the Jewish and Polish causes (which is "beyond mere human calculation"); the guidance of Providence; the intuitive interpretation of history, including the smaller events contained therein; the importance of *médiumnité* as a factor in collective inspiration, which is in turn obedient to divine judgment. In this context, the idea emerges again that the concentration of two nations in one place could not have been accomplished without the higher intention of Providence, which at the same time worked to unite the simultaneous thinking (regarding the creation of a Jewish legion) of Mickiewicz, Lévy, and Czajkowski. In light of all this, one must recognize that the charge made by Pigoń (and Stanisław Piasecki) – namely that the idea of a Jewish legion was not authored by "A. Mickiewicz" but rather was the original inspiration of Armand Lévy – is misguided.⁵³³ Nonetheless, such was Pigoń's argument. At the same time, Piasecki argued, based on his reading of Brandstaetter's "little book," that Lévy, with Jewish cunning, decided right then to "become a Jew" and was the "main organizer of the Jewish legion."⁵³⁴ Unfortunately, much of this reminds us of the vile anti-Semitic tone of articles like one that appeared in the pages of the Kraków periodical *Czas* in

532 Brandstaetter, *Legion żydowski Adama Mickiewicza. (Dzieje i dokumenty)*, Warszawa, 1932, (print from *Miesięcznik Żydowski*), 4.

533 See Pigoń, "Z ostatnich chwil A. Mickiewicza," *Mysł Narodowa* 44 (1932), 641.

534 Stanisław Piasecki, "Ochotnik Lévy," in *Prosto z mostu* (Warszawa, 1934), 208.

1876, which questioned the fact (which is, in truth, indisputable) that Lévy was “Mickiewicz’s friend” and the “caretaker of his children.” The article also discussed how Lévy, with suspicious enthusiasm, “threw himself into the formation of a Jewish legion” because he sensed there might be financial gain in it for him.⁵³⁵ For the sake of justice, we must mention that Władisław Mickiewicz disputed this libel found in the pages of *Czas*.⁵³⁶

5. The Banner of the Maccabees

There remains the issue of the name “Jewish legion.” We must point out that even the *Czas* article mentioned the “formation of a Jewish legion” with no reservations regarding its use of terms. However, in *Mysł Narodowa*, Pigoń unleashed a series of accusations regarding the title of Roman Brandstaetter’s “brochure” and its lack of objectivity and irresponsible interpretation. The alleged legion – Pigoń writes – “was supposed to be one small component of Sadyk Pasha’s larger Ottoman Cossack corps. Had the idea gone into effect, the result in the best case scenario would have been a Jewish regiment under a Polish colonel, under the command of Czajkowski. That was it, nothing more.”⁵³⁷ Over and over again, Pigoń repeats “that was it, nothing more” in a desire to restrain the exaggerated ambition of the “Jewish historian,” as he calls Brandstaetter.⁵³⁸ Lévy himself emphasized that it was supposed to be a “third regiment, made up of Israelites. It was not about creating a separate organization [regarding the “separate organization,” Ksenia Kostenicz adds some clarification: “Later, there were negotiations in Constantinople *about a separate legion*”⁵³⁹], but rather about creating space for the Israelites in an existing Polish organization which guaranteed them the maintenance of their rituals to the extent that military requirements allow” (WS, XVI,

535 “Przyjaciół Mickiewicza. Opiekun jego dziećci,” *Czas* (krakowski), no. 220, 27 September 1876.

536 For more on this subject, see Borejsza, *Sekretarz Adama Mickiewicza*. “This man, who gave away his fortune to Mickiewicz’s children and was buried in a common grave for the poor, is the man whom *Czas* accused of ‘Jewish skullduggery,’ cunning, and greed” (11). In *Sekretarz Adama Mickiewicza*, see also p. 171-173.

537 Pigoń, “Z ostatnich chwil A. Mickiewicza,” 641.

538 As Maurer rightly points out, some historians were guided by the fear of staining the sacred word “legion.” The emotional value connected in Poland with “legion” did not allow it to be connected with something “Jewish.” This is one of the reasons why the Jewish legion was “quickly removed from the Mickiewicz canon” (see “‘Jak mnie nie stanie, nikt tego nie zrozumie,’” 115-117).

539 See Ksenia Kostenicz, *Ostatnie lata Mickiewicza. Styczeń 1850 – 26 listopada 1855, Kronika życia i twórczości Mickiewicza* (Warszawa, 1978), 479. Author’s emphasis – M.J.

417). I want to draw special attention to this last statement. Later on, Lévy spoke of a unit of Jewish volunteers as part of a "Polish legion." In a letter dated 30 January 1856, Ludwika Śniadecka strongly emphasized: "Mickiewicz's last idea was the formation of *Jewish regiments* under Sadyk's command, as a new force for Turkey, and a great one for Poland."⁵⁴⁰

Is such a strict observance of nomenclature justified to make certain the term "regiment" is employed, and not "legion"? Mickiewicz freely used several words to describe Polish military units, such as *zastępy* (regiment, battalion), *legia* (legion), *legion* (legion), and *legiony* (legions). Czajkowski talked of a military "Polish-Jewish *korporacja*." In his valuable monograph published in 1922, Stanisław Szpotański wrote about a "Jewish legion" and about the fact that its organization was Mickiewicz's "most important project" during his stay in Turkey.⁵⁴¹

In any case, as we remember, Ksenia Kostenicz – a seasoned expert on the epoch in which Mickiewicz lived – also used the term "separate legion." And one must remember that Mickiewicz was supposed to have been surprised by the number of Jewish volunteers, and that he wanted to find an organization commensurate with their desire to fight.

In light of the expressed desire to maintain religious rituals and customs in the regiment or legion, one can without doubt use the terms "Jewish" and "Israeli," although we should ask if Pigoń was right to state that, back in 1855, "no one – in Mickiewicz's milieu – ever dreamed of using a distinct language, let alone a Jewish national banner."⁵⁴² But who knows? To be sure, supporters of Mickiewicz's idea talked about the "banner of the Maccabees," and Czajkowski reported that, upon seeing officer Moszek Horenstein and a comrade dressed in the "uniform of the Hussars of Israel" (designed by the regiment commander), Mickiewicz joked: "Goliaths, Samsons, Holoferneses, just watch out, so that some Judith or Delilah does not get in the way, because it will spoil all plans, and those Hussars of Israel will return again to being factors in business."⁵⁴³ Apparently, Mickiewicz did not know how (and maybe he did not want) to refrain from occasionally making jokes quite common in Polish culture on Jewish themes – in this case on the comical contrast between brave soldiers and timid civilians.⁵⁴⁴ Or perhaps the instance

540 See Rawita-Gawroński, "Sadyk Pasza i Adam Mickiewicz. (Wiązanka wspomnień i listów odnoszących się do Adama Mickiewicza)," *Przewodnik Naukowy i Literacki* (1898), z. IX, 946. Author's emphasis – M.J.

541 Stanisław Szpotański, *Adam Mickiewicz i jego epoka*, vol. III, *Działalność polityczna Mickiewicza* (Warszawa-Kraków, 1922), 107.

542 Pigoń, "Z ostatnich chwil A. Mickiewicza," 641.

543 Quote from Brandstaetter, *Legion żydowski*, 35-36.

544 Such humor was popular also in the camp at Burgas. Teodor Tomasz Jeż recalled that one of the officers around Czajkowski spoke of a humorous set of rules for his Jewish

quoted above stems from the fact that he was surrounded by examples of military heroism, and thus felt it important to refrain from expressing his true opinions about Jews. In any case, it is significant that Czajkowski once stated that one of the more capable Jewish soldiers – Mahmud Freund, who had converted to Islam – reminded him of Berek Joselewicz, and that he wanted him to be commander of an entire future Jewish legion, whose numbers would be around a thousand.⁵⁴⁵

Brandstaetter emphasized that both Mickiewicz and Lévy gave the Jewish military formation a distinctly national character. In a letter to Baron Alphonse Rothschild, Lévy clearly expressed his desire for support for the “idea of a Jewish legion in the old, nationalist Jewish tradition.” Like Mickiewicz, he feared that assimilation would, in the end, lead “to the complete destruction of the Jewish character.” Military action could rehabilitate Jews as soldiers. After Mickiewicz’s death, Czajkowski regarded the poet’s work to create a Jewish legion as “great,” since it was supposed to represent “the military revival of a great nation – it has suffered so much under the sword, it will thus have to regain its former success by the sword.”⁵⁴⁶ The idea of rehabilitating the race through military courage and through use of the sword was considered one of the main goals behind the idea of a legion. Participation in battle was treated as an instrument of Jewish emancipation; bravery, military prowess, and courage – these were the values that Jews needed to restore in order to regain their dignity and significance. Jews themselves harbored such convictions. For example, as Duker wrote, there was a “growing belief among Jews in the Balkan area that Jewish emancipation could be won only by the sword.”⁵⁴⁷ Ludwika Śniadecka reported in a letter cited earlier: “A young Frenchman from the Jews came with Mickiewicz, Mr. Armand Lévy, who is committed to this project with all his heart, wanting to raise that abject nationality and return to it the kind of military glory that would lift it so high.”⁵⁴⁸ Beyond that, there were also motivations derived from more recent history. In a letter to

subordinates, substituting certain military commands accordingly: instead of “do prawego równaj” (line up, face right) it was “do prawego fastryguj się” (the Polish verb “fastrygować” refers to a sewing procedure), and instead of “do ataku broń” (fix bayonet, prepare firearm for attack) it was “pikes na gwałt” (prepare pikes for attack), etc. See Świerczyńska, “Zapomniane relacje,” 219-220.

545 Duker, “Jewish Volunteers,” 358.

546 Brandstaetter, *Legion żydowski*, 25, 15, 38.

547 See Duker, “Jewish Volunteers,” 216.

548 Rawita-Gawroński, “Sadyk Pasza i Adam Mickiewicz,” 946. Relying on the results of research carried out by M. Bossak, published in Hebrew, S. Sheps (*Adam Mickiewicz. Ses affintés juives*, 88-89) emphasizes the Frankist genesis of the Jewish legion: Frank often talked about bringing together the Jews from the Diaspora and the liberation of Palestine. He dreamed of heroic wars, and one of the reasons for conversion to Christianity was even supposed to be a desire to learn the art of war and the creation of a military legion. Though

Władysław Mickiewicz, Lévy wrote that he had joined the Cossacks under Sadyk Pasha right after his arrival, having been pushed by the “spirit of those great, fallen soldiers from your legions and our grand army (i.e. Napoleon’s army).”⁵⁴⁹ But what was most often given as a reason to join the legion was a desire for a return to Israel’s past military glory.

Lévy carved out his view of action, and especially its highest form – Polish action – under the clear influence of Mickiewicz. In a letter to Władysław Mickiewicz dated 27 September 1855, he marveled at Iskender Pasha (Antoni Iliński),⁵⁵⁰ whom he had met on the trip east. “[Jan Chryzostom] Pasek would still recognize Poles today. If many flaws have survived the centuries, the highest virtue has remained: relentless bravery.” Lévy believed that, after coming into contact with such people, “one understands the mystery of how true and great action lights a fire inside, how it cleanses and causes light to spring from all one’s pores, like a halo around a head” (*Żywot*, IV, Aneks, LXXIV). This was precisely the sanctification of heroes, this “religion of action,” that was said to make up Mickiewicz’s “core” (WS, XVI, 431). It became Lévy’s core as well.

Mickiewicz – who did not want assimilation, who no longer thought about conversion to Christianity, and who placed his trust in a “supra-religious saving truth that preserves all religions that recognize the authority of the Bible”⁵⁵¹ – simultaneously cared deeply for a distinct Jewish religious identity. Czajkowski wrote: “and there was, in the Cossack camp, a synagogue – under the protection

he put an end to various Jewish customs, he maintained the holiday of Hanukkah in honor of national military victory.

549 Quote from Borejsza, *Sekretarz Adama Mickiewicza*, 130.

550 Adam Lewak calls him the “most interesting and exuberant kind of Pole in the Sultan’s military service (*Dzieje emigracji*, 87).

551 Jan Doktor characterizes the teachings of Sabbatai Zevi and the views of the Sabbateans, the precursors to the Frankists, in this way: “Conversion to Islam was for him [Sabbatai Zevi] neither a fall nor suffering [...], but rather a positive act, charting the path to salvation down which the faithful were to go, not just Jews. Sabbatai Zevi ordered his followers to reject the institutions of all particular religions and search for redemptive truth which stands above religion, and which all religions recognizing the authority of the Bible preserve. These are neither the efforts of a missionary, nor is it the theological convergence of messianic doctrine with Islam and Christianity, though its antinomic-syncretic character and the idea of imitating the messiah induced thousands of Sabbateans to change religion, often several times” (*Śladami mesjasza-Apostaty. Żydowskie ruchy mesjańskie w XVII i XVIII wieku a problem konwersji* [Wrocław, 1998], 245). Mickiewicz – I mention again – responded succinctly to accusations made against Jews: “‘Every Jew believes in God and in the fatherland’. Can one say that about any other people?” (from a letter by Władysław Mickiewicz published in *Wiadomości Literackie* in 1930). This was his most important criterion for judgment. He foresaw the day “when Christians and Jews will rise together to a higher religious plane” (*Żywot*, IV, 433).

of Adam Mickiewicz.⁵⁵² And one must remember that Jews, from the year 1835, had to serve as recruits in the Russian army, in which they could not practice their religion, which in turn caused, among other things, desertions from the military. Among the Polish units, they got a chance to maintain their distinct identity.

In the camp at Burgas, Sadyk Pasha issued an order that “services be conducted according to their own customs by Muslims on Fridays, by Jews on Saturdays, and by Christians from the eastern and western churches on Sundays.” This same order mentioned that the harshest penalties would be imposed on “anyone who, through violence or terror, tries to convert someone to another faith, or ridicules them because of that faith.”⁵⁵³ Both Mickiewicz and Lévy were immensely pleased by the fact that holy Sabbath had been introduced for Jews in an Ottoman regiment. Lévy reported to Czajkowski: “This kind of occurrence – Adam told me – is the first of its kind since the Jews were exiled, and one can attach to it great significance.”⁵⁵⁴ It was a sign of the dawn of a new era.

6. Will the Jews leave Poland?

A Jewish legion was to take part in the battle for Polish liberty. Lévy wrote notes filled with delight about the idea of the liberation of peoples, and presented a vision of the joyous events playing themselves out on Polish soil under the slogan “For your freedom and ours”: “We have already seen the day coming when the banner of the Maccabees will be raised, and when the Israelite, fighting for Poland, will take the great leap forward he has been called upon to take, without which his misery will have no end, and where – opening his heart to the misery of others – he will thus deserve, in turn, to be treated as a brother” (WS, XVI, 417-418). Reflected in this vision are the notions of fraternity from the Springtime of the Peoples which, though they were defeated in 1848, never stopped being important to the kind of “revolutionary republican romantic” that Lévy remained throughout his entire life.⁵⁵⁵ Mickiewicz responded to Lévy’s prophecy with these words: “If, standing on Polish soil, that regiment attracts Jews from one synagogue, then other synagogues will follow, and Jews – showing proof of their bravery and devotion to Poland – will lift their race in their own eyes and in the eyes of Poles” (WS, XVI, 418).

552 Quote from Brandstaetter, *Legion żydowski*, 11.

553 *Ibid.*, 11-12.

554 *Ibid.*, 12.

555 Regarding this issue, see the work cited above by Borejsza on “Mickiewicz’s secretary.”

Such convictions do not differ greatly from ideas typically espoused by romantics in general, who called for a common battle for oppressed peoples, and who made the equally romantic argument that only heroism on the battlefield constitutes national greatness. But Mickiewicz added yet another aspect, one connected to his mystical concept of the particularly spiritual community of Poland and Israel. In a letter from Lévy to Bednarczyk, we learn that Mickiewicz emphasized that “without the liberation of the Jews and the development of their spirit, Poland cannot rise. And if it were to rise without the liberation of the Jews – which I do not believe – it would certainly not be able to last long.”⁵⁵⁶ Clearly, what Mickiewicz had in mind was the contents of the tenth point in his *Skład zasad* from 1848: Civil equality, or as he put it in 1855: “the merger and brotherhood of all of the various races and religions” in the fatherland. The “development of their spirit” was equally necessary for Poland.

At the same time, he was upset by the thought that the liberated Jews – who were for him an essential part of the Polish spirit – might want to return to Palestine. During his stay in the synagogue at Smyrna Mickiewicz came to the conclusion that a “people who prays with such unshaken faith will someday propitiate God” (*Żywot*, IV, 426), and his wish was this: “I would not want the Israelites to leave Poland because – just as the union of Lithuania and Poland (despite differences in race and religion) gave political and military greatness to our *Rzeczpospolita* – the union of Poland and Israel will, I believe, increase our spiritual and material strength” (WS, XVI, 428).⁵⁵⁷ With each step, what is striking is the fact that Mickiewicz's thinking about Jews was so thoroughly contrary to the “eliminationist” notions discussed above in my study devoted to Zygmunt Krasiński's anti-Semitism.

It was after a discussion Lévy had with a rabbi in the Smyrna synagogue that Mickiewicz began to express fears that the Jews might leave Poland. “It happened,” Lévy noted, “that I told one of the rabbis: It would appear to me that the time for the return to Jerusalem is near. And he asked me: ‘What are the signs?’ There are three, I responded: The approaching fall of temporal papal authority, Turkey's current agony and the destruction of Russia” (WS, XVI, 428). Before I take this matter further, it is worth drawing a certain comparison. Moses Hess (that “declared Zionist *avant la lettre*,” as Isaiah Berlin called him⁵⁵⁸) – in his book

556 Quote from Brandstaetter, *Legion żydowski*, 5.

557 Jadwiga Maurer argues that “faith in Poland as the Promised Land for Jews originates in the prophecies of Frank. Mickiewicz, to the end of his life, maintained faith in Providence, which concentrated the Jews in Poland. In accordance with Frank's teachings on Jews and Poland, he would later tell Lévy that he did not want the Jews to leave Poland.” See Maurer, *Z matki obcej...*, 135.

558 Berlin, “Moise Hess, sionist et communiste” in *Trois essais sur la condition juive* (Paris, 1973), 139.

Rom und Jerusalem, die letzte Nationalitätsfrage (Rome and Jerusalem: The Last National Question, 1862), which is often considered a pre-Zionist project to create a Jewish state in Palestine – spoke of Armand Lévy as a friend heralding the end of the Jewish exile. As quoted by Hess, Lévy told him (while traveling through the Danubian Principalities just after Mickiewicz's death) that “Jews here are brought to tears when they hear words proclaiming an end to their suffering: *Le temps du retour approche*. Our *Kulturjuden*, with their sumptuous lives, do not know with what longing the great mass of Jews in the East dreams of a final liberation from the two thousand year exile. [...] They asked me” Lévy continued, “what sign will tell us that the end of our exile is near? To which I responded, when Turkish and Papal rule is broken.”⁵⁵⁹

In his discussion with Hess, Lévy mentioned two of the three signs he had indicated in Smyrna. In the *Myśl Narodowa* article cited several times above, Pigoń claimed that it would be risky to name Mickiewicz as the inspiration behind such ideas.⁵⁶⁰ Of course, Pigoń's main concern involved Lévy's prediction that Papal authority on earth was about to collapse, but it is as if Pigoń – in making his claim – forgot how much energy Mickiewicz had invested in his criticism of the “official Church” and in building a “spiritual Church.” For example, at the *Kolo* on 5 March 1847, Mickiewicz said: “Today's Church has preserved only its forms; it has lost the soul, the life of Christ. The Pope has become an excellent landlord, lawyer, even diplomat” (WS, XI, 436). Mickiewicz often repeated the accusation that the “official Church,” with the Pope at its head, had lost its soul. Lévy, in a letter to Władysław Mickiewicz on 29 September 1855, repelled – entirely in the

559 Moses Hess, *Rom und Jerusalem, die letzte Nationalitätsfrage, Briefe und Noten* (Leipzig, 1862), 104. In 1845, Hess published a scathing, sarcastic article about the “little flock surrounding the Polish Messiah, Towiański,” later called a hypnotist. This group of “silly priests in uniform” and “soldiers in cassocks” – as one of Hess's friends called them – was at that time descending on Switzerland. Mickiewicz is also mentioned here, who “formerly lectured at the Collège de France, and not long ago published in France the wildest nonsense” (no doubt Hess was referring here to courses III and IV – published in 1845 – of the lectures on Slavic literature: *Eglise officielle et le Messianisme* and *Eglise officielle et le Messie*). The kind of accusations put forth by Hess – Towiański is suspected of being a Russian agent, and Mickiewicz of being mad – points to a source of information within the Polish democratic circle in Paris. In any case, Hess simply refers to a “certain Pole” (see Hess, *Pisma filozoficzne 1841-1850*. Selection, introduction and notes by A. Cornu and W. Monke [Warszawa, 1963], 455-457). One must remember that – as Berlin said – Hess was disturbed by Polish Catholicism and nationalism and the poisonous anti-Semitism flowing from them. The model of national liberation for him was the secular and humanist rebirth of Italy (*Trois essais sur la condition juive*, 123). None of this precludes recognition for Lévy's activities in the 1850s.

560 See Pigoń, “Z ostatnich chwil A. Mickiewicza,” 660.

spirit of Mickiewicz – accusations made against Sadyk Pasha after his conversion to Islam: “Others accused him of changing faith. In fact, it was not they who left the Church, but the Church which pushed them away, along with their fatherland. And in truth, the hero and martyr Bem is closer to God than those who accuse him and his brothers-in-arms. If the Church wants them to return, then let it again take up the rights of nations. Let its breath give life to nations, above all to a nation both faithful and martyred” (*Żywot*, IV, Aneks, LXXIX). This was a bitter lesson, one that stemmed from the Church's behavior during the Springtime of the Peoples when, as Mickiewicz wrote, Pius IX turned out to be “determined to devote everything in the effort to maintain all that which is called the Church in its old form, meaning its personnel, property and clerical privileges” (WJ, XII, 260). Both Mickiewicz and Lévy integrated this lesson into their thinking. In their opinion, the “official Church” could not foster the idea of national independence; quite the opposite, it could only block it.

7. The Legend of a Modern-day Moses

Thus, I do not hesitate to adopt Brandstaetter's argument that it was “under the influence of Mickiewicz's ideology” that Lévy began to dream of the resurrection of a free Jewish state in Palestine.⁵⁶¹ Duker believes that Lévy was an early Zionist, though to say the same about Mickiewicz would be conjecture.⁵⁶²

It was not without inspiration from Mickiewicz that Lévy negotiated with the Rothschilds for financial assistance. Czajkowski took note of certain rumors that were circulating: “Zwierkowski wrote to me that he learned for certain that the Rothschilds wanted to enter into financial relations with the Turkish government in order to get the rights to Jerusalem and become a tributary of the sultans.”⁵⁶³ Such power – the money of the Rothschilds and the “great Jewish mass in the East” – terrified both Turkey and the western Catholic states, who feared that, over time, the Jews would try to break Palestine away from Turkey and create an independent Jewish state.

The idea of a Jewish legion ended with Mickiewicz's death and the end of the Crimean War. Duker writes that “reticence over mentioning Mickiewicz's last major interest, so symptomatic of the Polish historians, seems to have been the general rule among his contemporaries. It is impossible not to go beyond the verdict of historians like Marcei Handelsman, who opined that the Legion scheme

561 See Brandstaetter, *Legion żydowski*, 7.

562 See Duker, “Mickiewicz and the Jewish Problem,” 113.

563 Quote from Brandstaetter, *Legion żydowski*, 25.

was not the focal point of Mickiewicz's political activities in the East."⁵⁶⁴ Maurer joined the broad controversy over Handelsman's judgment, writing that "the Jewish legion has often been an embarrassing mission for mainstream scholarship and wisdom regarding Mickiewicz, the Bard and national poet, and in this national context, from the very beginning, attempts were made to eradicate it. But it was, in fact, a mission of great significance in the poet's spiritual life. We do not need to engage in some theoretical investigation of the importance of the legion for Mickiewicz, because witnesses do not agree at all with Handelsman's opinion. Contemporaries all recognized," Maurer concludes, "that Mickiewicz was practically obsessed with the idea of a Jewish legion."⁵⁶⁵ And she presents powerful evidence to prove it.

"Adam's son," Władysław Mickiewicz, played no small role in "stylizing" (as Brandstaetter called it) his father's story, though perhaps also in "deleting" certain parts.

In 1881, Michał Czajkowski wrote a short work in which "Mickiewicz and Rothschild join the ranks of the Cossacks" – as Władysław Mickiewicz satirically put it – and which treated events "more as an object of fiction than of history" (*Żywot*, IV, 434). This work was a handwritten manuscript entitled "Adam Mickiewicz w obozie kozackim" (in the Cossack camp) or "w obozie w Burgas" (in the camp at Burgas), which Brandstaetter treated as a serious, source-based "thesis."

In this context, one cannot overlook a controversy that broke out in the pages of the monthly *Przewodnik Naukowy i Literacki* in 1898. In the wake of Rawita-Gawroński's published excerpts of Sadyk Pasha's writings, Władysław Mickiewicz wrote a letter in which he argued forcefully that Czajkowski had deviated from the truth, that he was too eager to let go of the reins of fantasy, and that the Rothschilds had never had anything to do with the Jewish unit. Rawita-Gawroński responded by writing that he considered concerns raised by Władysław Mickiewicz as his "personal views," unsupported by evidence, at which point he himself then referred to "letters and memoirs of contemporaries, about whose authenticity there is no doubt."⁵⁶⁶ Undoubtedly, the most disagreeable characters in this story were, for Władysław Mickiewicz, the Rothschilds, but the fact is that negotiations were carried out with their representatives, and in those negotiations an important role was played by the argument that Jews ought to participate in armed conflict as an instrument leading to emancipation.⁵⁶⁷ Władysław Mickiewicz maintained

564 Duker, "Jewish Volunteers," 368. In his meticulous study, Duker found only one article in the contemporary émigré press touching on the issue of Mickiewicz's Jewish legion.

565 Maurer, "Jak mnie nie stanie, nikt tego nie zrozumie," 120-121.

566 See *Polemika: Władysław Mickiewicz's letter and Rawita-Gawroński's response*, *Przewodnik Naukowy i Literacki* (1898), z. X, 1116-1118.

567 See Duker, "Jewish Volunteers," 354, 358.

until the end of his long life that there had never been talk in his father's circle of an independent Jewish legion (or legions). It is difficult to resist the argument that Władysław, as Maurer put it, simply "decided to lie about the legion" because – taking into consideration, of course, such things as, for example, a satisfactory response from within Galician clerical-aristocratic circles⁵⁶⁸ – he wanted to raise Adam, among the people and the nation, to the level of the "Pole-Catholic" ideal, where he was full of evangelical sensitivity toward Jews, but in reality had nothing in common with them.⁵⁶⁹

Despite all that, the legend of the Jewish legion showed signs of life here and there, a fact which we can address with an interesting piece of evidence. In Leo Belmont's popular "novel-study" about Teodor Herzl entitled *Mojżesz współczesny* (Modern-day Moses, 1931), there is a chapter called "Zwiędła róża z Konstantynopola" (The Withered Rose of Constantinople). It revolves in part around the mystery of Teodor's father, Jakub, as revealed during a fateful discussion in the year 1895. Plagued by the anti-Semitic harassment and insults he had endured in Germany, Jakub made plans to travel to the river Jordan, but in the end he gave them up, having remained captive to the comforts of bourgeois life. All that remained of that dreamlike episode were mementos, among which was a letter from Armand Lévy from forty years earlier and a withered blossom, a "Constantinople rose from a wreath supposedly placed by Armand Lévy on the coffin of the greatest of all Slavic bards as it was being sent on the ship back to Paris." That "Polish bard, pushed onto the path of mystical premonitions by the grief of a patriot," perceived the similarities between the fates of the Poles and Jews, "based on sympathy that perhaps came" – as Lévy wrote in the fictional letter – "not just from the inspirations of a great spirit, but also in part from the dictates of blood," since he came from Frankists on his mother's side. Jakub Herzl reads to his son the tenth point of the *Skład zasad* (translating literally from the Hebrew), describes Mickiewicz's visit to the Paris synagogue, quoting from his speech to the rabbi "in the name of the synagogues," and tells of the poet's idea to organize in Turkey

568 Maurer, "‘Jak mnie nie stanie, nikt tego nie zrozumie’," 119.

569 Władysław Mickiewicz's letter to Begey, dated 4 March 1912 may provide direct evidence of this; it was printed as a preface to Begey's book *André Towiański et Israël. Actes et documents* (1842-1864) (Rome, 1912). Here, Władysław condemns contemporary anti-Semitism, which was widespread, but at the same time he condemns the sins of the Jew who does not want to convert to Christianity and accept Christ. He also violently attacks Zionists, who would want to return to Palestine without understanding why Providence had exiled them. In a letter to the readership of *Wiadomości Literackie* dated 4 April 1924, he omits the entire "mystical" side of Mickiewicz's venture, and pointedly emphasizes that "in Istanbul, it was not about the creation of a Jewish legion, but rather an army comprised of all the Sultan's non-Muslim subjects" (*Wiadomości Literackie* 6 [1930], nr. 6, section "Korespondencja").

“the legion [...] of Jews helping Poland.” Mickiewicz died of cholera having not achieved his goals. Armand was “the only witness at the moment of his death: a tender Jewish hand closed his eyes.”⁵⁷⁰ The Lévy letter in Belmont’s novel contained the message of Mickiewicz’s words and actions, passed on by father to son, Teodor Herzl, the founder of Zionism. Before publication of *Der Judenstaat* (The Jewish State), the “modern-day Moses,” in Belmont’s novel, received a legacy from Mickiewicz. Father and son part with the following words – “In a year, in Jerusalem” – which, in this context, take on an entirely unconventional character.

8. A Precursor and an Heir

Brandstaetter was right to maintain that Władysław Mickiewicz imposed on readers the interpretation that the Jewish legion was a work of “philanthropic Philo-Semitism” alone, “seeking to inculcate in Jews the Christian concept, beginning with its practice, which is the spilling of blood for another.”⁵⁷¹ Rafał Błüth argued in turn that the Jewish legion realized the “strange (in its mystical paradox) and alogical notion of Christian Zionism,” which was supposedly a “natural stage in the first and tragic process of Christianizing Judaism,” the “bringing of Jews into brotherhood with bloody sacrifice, with the idea of self-abnegation in the search for their own freedom through the battle for the freedom of another, identical nation.” Mickiewicz was supposed to have cast into the world this idea of sacrificing oneself for others, including in protest against assimilated, Europeanized Jews.⁵⁷² Both Wiktor Weintraub⁵⁷³ and Jadwiga Maurer⁵⁷⁴ maintain that there is no evidence to support Błüth’s thesis; indeed, on the contrary, this thesis is at odds with what Lévy wrote about guarantees that Jewish religious rituals could be maintained in the legion.

Władysław Mickiewicz – the son of a poet with a foreign mother, as Mateusz Mieses described him – battled anti-Semitism, which was growing stronger in Europe generally, and in Poland specifically, at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries. But he did so in a particular way: “For its justification, anti-Semitism invokes the ancient sins of Israel, regardless of the

570 L. Belmont, *Mojżesz współczesny, Powieść-studium* (Warszawa, 1931), 100-104.

571 See Brandstaetter, *Legion żydowski*, 69.

572 See Rafał Błüth, “Konstantynopolitańska katastrofa” (1932) in Błüth: *Pisma literackie*, ed. P. Nowaczyński (Kraków, 1987), 101-103.

573 See Wiktor Weintraub, “Studia literackie Rafała Marcelego Błütha,” in Weintraub, *O współczesnych i o sobie. Wspomnienia, sylwetki, szkice literackie*, ed. and intro. S. Barańczak (Kraków, 1994), 310.

574 Maurer, ‘*Z matki obcej...*’, 95.

Jews who have, more or less, yielded to the creeping influence of Christianity.”⁵⁷⁵ Clearly Władysław Mickiewicz had given into the stereotypes of Christian anti-Semitism, by which Jews are talked into believing they are egoistic and unable to sacrifice for others. In his eyes, in the year 1912, Zionism had no chance of succeeding. Only those Jews who consent to Christianity can escape oppression unscathed; this, in the end, was the message of “Adam’s son.”

It is difficult to agree with the argument that such statements represent a continuation of the poet’s thinking, though the issue remains open.

At the beginning of 1939, the famous writer Mieczysław Braun printed an article in *Nasz Przegląd* entitled “Syjonizm Adama Mickiewicza” (Adam Mickiewicz’s Zionism), in which he boldly claimed: “It will present no paradox if I say that the genius of the Polish nation, Adam Mickiewicz, was a Zionist.” This poet, who worked at the level of the Hebrew prophets, was the man who initiated the Jewish legion, which – in battling Russia – was supposed not only to hasten the restoration of Polish independence, but also to bring with it an “attempt to solve the problem of the Diaspora,” as Braun put it. The creation of Jewish armed forces was the poet’s great idea, not just a romantic pipe dream. “An idea stripped of its romanticism would be just a business interest, and no one knows better than we Jews how quickly interests come to an end, and how long ideas last.”⁵⁷⁶ So it was that Mickiewicz devoted the twilight of his life to an idea of great duration.

Let us recall: feeling responsible for the spiritual connection with the “millions” of Jews in Eastern Europe, Mickiewicz no longer wanted conversion to Christianity; he rejected assimilation, regarding it as a path to apparent emancipation that produced indifference toward religion and traditional customs; he recognized the irreducibility and distinct nature of Jewish religious and national identity; and he wanted to create, for its expression, a military force. The statement made during the revolutionary National Assembly in 1789 would be entirely foreign to Mickiewicz: “The Jew as an individual among individuals – yes! The Jews as some sort of community – no!”⁵⁷⁷

Various components of Mickiewicz’s thinking mentioned above form the possible premises for “pre-Zionism.” Brandstaetter, in a debate with Boy-Żeleński carried out in *Nowy Dziennik*, emphasized that the “idea of the national rebirth of the Jews in Mickiewicz’s time was not able to attract the wider mass of Jews; it could count on only a handful of supporters.” The Jewish legion collapsed not

575 Quote from Mieses, *Polacy*, vol. II, 136. These are fragments from a letter to Begey, which Mieses provides in his own translation, a letter which is interesting and significant because “it contains occasional neophyte Christian tones.” See footnote 569 above.

576 Mieczysław Braun, “Syjonizm Adama Mickiewicza,” *Nasz Przegląd* (Warszawa), 14 January 1939.

577 Quote from Ewa Bieńkowska, “Wybór i tożsamość,” *Aneks* (1988), nr 51 / 52, 125.

only for technical reasons, but also – as meticulously described in Brandstaetter's work – “because of a lack of understanding of the national idea within the Jewish community on the Balkan Peninsula.” This final Mickiewiczian idea did not crystallize into its ultimate form; it was as vague as the “first signs emerging at that time of the national renaissance of Judaism represented, for instance, by Moses Hess (Armand Lévy's friend), one of the precursors of the Zionist thinking of Teodor Herzl.” This idea – Brandstaetter wrote – “faced resistance from the forces of assimilation, with Jewish indifference, and with reluctance on the part of certain factions within the Christian world, until it finally became concrete at the historic Basel Congress.”⁵⁷⁸

The Mickiewiczian idea was like a flash – it shined and then disappeared (though only apparently) into oblivion.

Gershom Scholem (the parallels between him and Mickiewicz, by the way, remain one of the fascinating comparisons yet to be made) showed in a 1953 study on the Sabbateans that the Frankist movement in Poland was a continuation and logical conclusion of Polish Sabbateanism. Referring to the famous but mysterious article from the *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums* from the year 1838 that talked about Mickiewicz's affiliation as a Frankist with the Jewish nation, Scholem conceded that the greatest Polish poet and champion of Polish messianism was, from his mother's side, a descendent of Frankists, and he ended his study with this point: arguably, Mickiewicz preserved both a part of the Sabbatean movement's heritage and its unfulfilled dream of the liberation of Israel and other nations.⁵⁷⁹ Would that not mean – in light of what Scholem argued – that the Mickiewiczian idea was not just a precursor, but also an heir?

In any case, one issue (which is internally inconsistent) remains a problem, indeed a mystery: how were the Jews supposed to regain Jerusalem and, at the same time, not leave Poland?

* * *

Thus ends the romantic epopee of Polish Jews, for which two names, symbolizing conflicting views, serve as a beacon: Krasiński and Mickiewicz. In contemporary Poland, the Catholic-nationalist tracts represented by Krasiński have had greater staying power than views presented by Mickiewicz. The total extermination of the

578 Brandstaetter, “Cholera, trucizna – i Legion żydowski Mickiewicza,” *Nowy Dziennik*, 25 August 1932.

579 Scholem, “Le mouvement sabbataïste en Pologne,” *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions*, vol. CXLIII (1953), 77.

Polish Jews destroyed the dreams and aspirations of millions of Jews in Poland and physically liquidated their protagonists.

But strangely, this did not extinguish the myth of the Jewish conspiracy, despite the fact that the alleged conspirators were gone. Indeed, this myth became one of the ideological levers of the Holocaust. The goal of the next two sections is to present the character and dimensions of Jewish death in the Holocaust.

List of Bibliographic Abbreviations

Mickiewicz, *Dziela* (Warszawa, 1955), Wydanie Jubileuszowe = WJ (in parenthesis are volume and page number).

Mickiewicz, *Dziela wszystkie* (Warszawa, 1933), Wydanie Sejmowe, vol. XI, *Przemówienia*, edited by Stanisław Pigoń = WS, XI.

Mickiewicz, *Dziela wszystkie* (Warszawa, 1933), Wydanie Sejmowe, vol. XVI, *Rozmowy z Adamem Mickiewiczem*, collected and edited by Stanisław Pigoń = WS, XVI.

Mickiewicz, *Dziela* (Warszawa, 2001), Wydanie Rocznicowe, vol. XIII, *Pisma towianistyczne, Przemówienia, Szkice filozoficzne* = WR, XIII.

Władysław Mickiewicz, *Żywot Adama Mickiewicza podług zebranych przez siebie materiałów oraz z własnych wspomnień*, vol. IV (Poznań, 1895) = *Żywot*, IV.

**VI.
THE IRONY
OF CALEK PERECHODNIK**

The work to be discussed here, which is full of curses and vituperation, became itself a kind of “cursed work.”

Calek Perechodnik’s memoir, which appeared under the shocking title *Czy ja jestem mordercą?* (Am I a Murderer?), was first published in 1993 and came out in a second edition in 1995. At the time, Paweł Szapiro, the work’s editor, argued that it was one of the few memoirs of a policeman (in the Otwock ghetto) published in its entirety, and the only one that was subject to so little self-censorship. The KARTA Center issued a publisher’s series under the title “Żydzi polscy” (Polish Jews), in which Perechodnik’s memoir was printed; editors regarded this testimony as a “masterpiece of documentary literature [*literatura faktu*]” and as “one of the most important documents of the twentieth century.” “Reaction to the finished book,” Zbigniew Gluza, the head of KARTA, wrote, “confirmed first impressions. Translations in English, German, French and Italian quickly appeared.” Agnieszka Holland, who has read hundreds of documents, stories, novels, and memoirs on the Holocaust and related issues, characterized Perechodnik as “the author of what is perhaps the most horrifying description of the Holocaust experience.” The book became part of the historical “canon, cited in all of the most serious studies on the subject of the Holocaust.”

Meanwhile, in 1999, Professor David Engel’s review of the work appeared in issue number 12 of *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, in which he argued that KARTA’s publication was counterfeit. It turned out that that edition was based on a censored, typewritten manuscript found in the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw which had been subject to additional edits that softened some of the text’s “anti-Polish” assertions. Given the new circumstances, the KARTA Center decided to correct the mistake by entrusting the work to Professor Engel, who agreed to prepare a version for print based on the author’s handwritten manuscript preserved in the Yad Vashem collections in Israel. One must also mention here that the Jewish Historical Institute is in possession of a typewritten manuscript produced by Calek’s brother, Pejsach, which is based on the handwritten manuscript and is very close to that original. It is not known precisely why the editor of *Czy ja jestem mordercą?* used the abbreviated, altered, and ultimately deformed typewritten version.

In 2004, a new “first edition” of Calek Perechodnik’s work appeared at KARTA in Warsaw that was true to the original (with the author’s first name revised) and entitled *Spowiedź. Dzieje rodziny żydowskiej podczas okupacji hitlerowskiej w Polsce* (Confession: A History of a Jewish Family during the Nazi Occupation of Poland), edited by, and with an afterword and notes by, David Engel. It is based on the handwritten manuscript.⁵⁸⁰ The two previous editions were recognized as

580 I will refer to this edition in the pages that follow. Page numbers will appear in parentheses.

Fragments cited so far come from pages 5-6.

mistakes, and efforts were made to remove them from circulation: whoever owned one of the two previous editions could exchange it free of charge for a corrected edition through the end of 2004.

But, to my own knowledge, many copies of the original edition remain in readers' hands. Typically it is difficult to correct an editor's error after the previous edition gained some fame and was widely distributed and read. Not every reader wants to track the differences in various editions of a book. Everyone who opens a copy of the corrected edition, however, will notice the dedication that was not there before. It reads like this:

S.N.

P.P.

T.Ż.

To them I dedicate my memoir.

The brother, Pejsach Perechodnik, deciphered these initials in the following way: S.N. as "*sadyzmowi niemieckiemu*" (to German sadism); P.P. as "*polskiej podłości*" (to Polish mean-spiritedness); and T.Ż. as "*tchórzostwu żydowskiemu*" (to Jewish cowardice).

Thus, at the work's very beginning, Calek Perechodnik defined the three main players in the Jewish tragedy – the Germans, the Poles, and the Jews – and assigned them what, in his opinion, were their predominant features. The entire force of the author's furious irony is directed squarely at these three perpetrators of murder, for which he finds no justification:

- At the sadism unleashed by the Germans who murdered Jews under all circumstances, encouraged by total impunity; Perechodnik's memoir is filled with terrible scenes of brutal murder; "it is difficult to list all the sadistic skills of the Germans, but one can certainly depend on them" (131);
- At Polish participation in the Holocaust, manifested in the unbridled plunder of Jewish property, in criminal *szmalcownictwo*,⁵⁸¹ and in a complete lack of scruples in taking advantage of German authorization to commit racial persecution; Perechodnik draws attention to a widely known fact: the Germans were not able to recognize a Jew as well as Poles were; "there is no escape for any Jew because we are surrounded by unknown enemies, each one of which is lurking, lying in wait for our lives. It means nothing that a Jew is in a position to deceive the gendarme with his appearance, or with his papers, when he does not know how to protect himself against the millions of his fellow citizens' eyes, the majority of which are just waiting for the chance to hand

581 Translator's note: The Polish term "szmalcownictwo" refers to actions taken by a "szmalcownik," a Pole who blackmailed Jews in hiding out of their property and assets. "Szmalcownicy" also blackmailed Poles hiding Jews.

him over to the Germans [...] Human mean-spiritedness and time are working tirelessly for the Germans; they give them the best guarantee that no Jew in the territory of all Poland will survive the war” (271-272); Perechodnik’s requests of the Polish community are by no means unreasonable: “I am not at all so blind as to think that it was the duty of every Pole to risk his own life and hide a Jew in his flat, but I do think that it was the duty of Polish society to allow Jews to move freely in Polish neighborhoods. Polish society should have strongly condemned all those who hunted Jews. It is true that Poles helped me, my father, and my mother, and they helped thousands of other Jews, who are still alive today. I do not want to appear to be ungrateful to them, and that is why I am changing my attitude, I will say no more about the Poles and their attitudes toward Jews, though I will write about Messrs. X, Y, Z, etc.” (129-130). There are many such individuals in Perechodnik’s work, but against this backdrop, there rises the figure of the ideal Pole (there was such a Pole!) by the name of Magister;

- Finally, at the lack of resistance by Jews, who did not put up an active self-defense, who did not consider escaping or an honorable death: “O great God, there are a hundred of us blokes, standing side by side, and in front of us are a dozen or so gendarmes with rifles; boys, let’s jump them, and then we all die” (56); “The idea of arming oneself at all costs and selling one’s life – and the lives of one’s relatives – at a high price, no one has put much thought into that” (39) – he is speaking here about Otwock; “You think about everything, just not about the fact that you are the descendants of Judas Maccabeus” (61) – this is a final call, to death, but death also for the enemy; take revenge and die, like Samson, and like Konrad Wallenrod, who was patterned on Samson, and about whom Perechodnik – citing Mickiewicz – knew full well; “I proposed to my friends that they [...] buy a couple hand-grenades at any price, a couple revolvers, which would allow us, once the camp is being liquidated, to escape into the wider world. I explained to them that a single grenade thrown into a group of unsuspecting gendarmes would be enough for the majority of us to escape. My words did no good, no one wanted to hear or talk about it” (155). Each person preferred to delude himself into thinking that he would be the one to survive, that by having a certificate showing he had worked, he would avoid death – “which is why every person, *affectionately* holding his certificate signed by an SS dignitary, tried to find work” (130, author’s emphasis – M.J.).

The foundation of Perechodnik’s ironic style consists of his determination to expose reality, a determination he expresses in the dedication and maintains throughout the memoir. And he does not spare himself from criticism, blaming himself ceaselessly for having not protected his wife and child from being sent

to Treblinka. The second part of the dedication in his book raised the question of whether or not his wife, child, and the three million people burned in Treblinka⁵⁸² would ever be avenged. He himself mentioned several times that, after the war, he would like to become an executioner, more precisely the executioner of German children, which reminds us of a verse by Tadeusz Borowski.⁵⁸³ He is advancing toward the last resort, though one need not equate – as some reviewers have done – his determination for revenge and his blistering irony with nihilism.

Perechodnik's work in its deformed version was published rather late, in 1993, a fact which, for some, might seem astonishing. However, astonishment decreases as one becomes familiar with the reviews and opinions offered up shortly after that first edition appeared. In *Znak*, Izabella Sariusz-Skapska supported the opinion that Perechodnik's memoir could have easily remained a mere hand-written manuscript, "since neither Poles nor Jews dare to publish memoirs that are so imbued with hatred for their nations." According to Sariusz-Skapska, Perechodnik's anti-Semitism is not an easy issue to handle; during the liquidation of the Otwock ghetto, he "became morbidly anti-Semitic," not to mention pathologically anti-Polish. He is said to have fallen into complete nihilism as a result of his own participation in the crimes. The book's title is treated as an unambiguous admission of guilt: Yes, I am a murderer, because as a Jewish policeman I sent my own wife and daughter to their deaths (actually, if we read Perechodnik's work more carefully, the title's meaning becomes somewhat less clear and simple, especially given the fact that it was provided by the publisher based on a fragment of a sentence in the memoir). Perechodnik, in Sariusz-Skapska's opinion, found himself in the realm of complete nothingness, where there is no God, there is no good and evil, and – as the executioner of his own family – he

582 In fact, between 750 and 870 thousand Jews perished in Treblinka (see p. 295 of Engel's notes).

583 See "Spacer po Monachium" (A walk around Munich) in Tadeusz Borowski, *Utwory wybrane*, ed. A. Werner (Wrocław, 1991), s. 50, BN I, 276 – which was written after the author had been liberated from the camps and was filled with wild fantasies of revenge, a "young and ridiculous poet/liberated, extracted from the agony of the concentration camps" walks around the city and – after recalling the children strangled, gassed and burned in Auschwitz – dreams:

*I take a walk around the city
And I look at the children,
The pink-skinned little babies,
As if to pull them out of their strollers
And twist their little legs;
And to pound them on the sidewalk,
Would they burst, or not burst?*

*Chodzę sobie po mieście
I przyglądam się dzieciom,
Różowiutkim bobaskom,
Jakby wyjąc tak z wózka
I zakrećić za nóżkę;
I o chodnik haratnąć,
Trzasłoby czy nie trzasło?*

fell into a state of complete moral destruction, not only of himself, but also of the entire world.⁵⁸⁴

Gustaw Herling-Grudziński arrived at a similar verdict. He posits that there is something worse than death – that is, something that touches the absolute bottom of the remnants of humanity – and he thus treats Perechodnik in the end not as a murderer, but as an eager assistant to murder. “Had he understood that there is something even worse than death, he would have gone to Treblinka with his wife and daughter. He chose for himself a small, abject scrap of life (he could not count on a larger one). It is better to be silent about the remainder of his life lived as a mere remnant of humanity. For mercy’s sake.” This absolute moralist chokes with contempt and does not feel enough concern to quietly read the memoir to the end (even though it is precisely there where we find the solution to the riddle of this strange work). Herling-Grudziński – without a shadow of compassion, but with a large dose of condemnation – confesses: “One needs to do violence to oneself to make it to the last page of this memoir of ‘penance,’ which is simultaneously genuine and deceitful.” Perechodnik and those people around him were all the same: “Callous, cruel and hollow.”⁵⁸⁵ The deceit is apparently based on the fact that, unable to see the depths to which they had fallen, they did not realize who they had become. But the question arises: would such a “hollow” person be able to muster the kind of comprehensive irony that Perechodnik did?

It seems that such negative judgments of the work stem from, among other things, its reading as merely some sort of protocol. Such reviewers do not delve into Perechodnik’s style, which plays such a decisive role in determining the character of the work he left behind. Perechodnik himself was in fact not certain about what kind of work he was writing; he used such terms as account, memoir, “memoir of a Jew and his Jewish family,” “confession of my life,” and finally a “confession before death” (the work was produced with the author’s own death in sight) in which he would share “the fate of all Jews from all of Poland” (8). It is clear from this work’s very first passages that Perechodnik has an excellent command of the Polish language, and we sense, on many pages, the spirit of Polish romantic poetry. Perechodnik himself, at the beginning of a brief autobiographical sketch, considers it appropriate to confess: “I adore Polish poetry, from the period of lost independence, especially Mickiewicz.”⁵⁸⁶ It speaks to my heart, because I associate it with the history of the Jews” (10).

Born in 1916, Perechodnik belonged to that generation of Poles raised in an interwar school system that imbued pupils with the cult of romantic litera-

584 Izabella Sariusz-Skapska, “Wybrani, naznaczeni, przekleci...,” *Znak* 6 (1994), 76-85.

585 Gustaw Herling-Grudziński, “Z ‘Dziennika pisanego nocą’,” *Tygodnik Powszechny*, no. 4, 22 January 1995.

586 He goes so far as to even attribute a piece by Adam Asnyk to Mickiewicz (see p. 199).

ture. Some of his contemporaries were authors of autobiographies submitted to a competition sponsored by the Żydowski Instytut Naukowy (YIVO) in Wilno in 1932, 1934, and 1939,⁵⁸⁷ and from their works one can see how very attached those authors were to Poland, and at the same time how Poland made their life difficult, how it tormented them. Aleksander Hertz recalled his time working in Jewish gymnasia in the interwar period: “I saw how, in Polish conditions, these young people have to contend tragically with the hopelessness of life, how they are caused to limp, how they are wasting their best strengths under conditions that make it impossible to achieve a full life.”⁵⁸⁸ Professor Hertz regarded the ethnic politics practiced by the Polish right under the leadership of Roman Dmowski as demonic idiocy. The right’s motto of “Poland for Poles” sounded meaningless in a country in which one-third of citizens were non-Polish. “Unfortunately, like no one else, [Dmowski] was able to read the mood of the historically immature mass of Poles, he knew how to play on their fears, he was able to strike at that which was most primitive in Poland,”⁵⁸⁹ all of which took a terrible toll on attitudes toward Jews in Poland occupied by the Nazis (who managed to kill off 90% of the prewar population of Jews living in Poland; in no other country was that percentage so large⁵⁹⁰).

The fact that he was being excluded from Polish society, that those whom he had considered his fellow countrymen were abandoning him, was a terrible blow for Perechodnik, especially during the war and occupation. He recalled the disgrace of the second half of the 1930s – the intensifying anti-Semitism and fascist tendencies in Polish public life (because of the *numerus clausus*, he was not allowed to study at the University of Warsaw, and he was not able to become an officer in the Polish army) – and he emphasized the fact that he had been sincerely and unselfishly attached to Poland, that he understood and liked Polish poetry more than most educated Poles, and that the Polish language was his “mother tongue” (12).

He felt more like a Pole than most Poles, precisely in light of his foundation in romantic poetry, and the romantic paradigm is a constant presence in Perechodnik’s work – much as it is in memoirs by other people with similar schooling and from the same intellectual milieu. But it is a kind of romanticism applied to a certain set of conditions, which is what gives the work its distinct tone (romanticism treated as the most appropriate expression of the gravity of last actions taken

587 See *Ostatnie pokolenie. Autobiografie polskiej młodzieży żydowskiej okresu międzywojennego ze zbiorów YIVO Institute for Jewish Research w Nowym Yorku*, ed. and intro. Alina Cała (Warszawa, 2003).

588 Quote from Cała’s “Przedmowa” (Foreword), 15.

589 *Ibid.*, 14-15.

590 *Ibid.*, 15.

in the face of death), and which explains why, at the grave of Adam Czerniaków (who, as leader of the *Judenrat* in the Warsaw ghetto, committed suicide under circumstances in which he had to make a dramatic choice), the legendary doctor Janusz Korczak said: “God entrusted you with the dignity of your nation, and you are passing that dignity back to God.”⁵⁹¹ This statement is a paraphrase of the romantic words, famous in the Polish patriotic tradition, that Prince Józef Poniatowski is said to have spoken before his death (some suspect it was suicide) in the currents of the White Elster River at the Battle of Leipzig in 1813: “God entrusted me with the honor of the Polish people, and I shall simply return it to him.”⁵⁹²

Perechodnik, in his hiding place in Warsaw, made the decision to begin writing his history on 7 May 1943. He repeats this date several times, because it was precisely then that he first fully understood his position – as one of the few Jews who remained alive and who, at the same time, was sentenced to imminent death. Thus, he describes his social and existential situation as “final.” He feels like a gladiator being led to his death (he described Polish bureaucrats inquiring into the course of the “action” in the Otwock ghetto as having the attitude of Nero at a Roman circus, and he attributes to himself these words: *morituri te salutant*, 119), and he calls himself the “last Mohican,” as does another memoirist in hiding as he watches the crime of extermination being committed, namely Baruch Milch.⁵⁹³ Romanticism has a special affinity for the kind of situation faced by the “final man standing” – as a perspective on life that assures a privileged position: a vision of the whole in some sort of prophetic rapture just before disaster. One of Perechodnik’s favorite works was Słowacki’s *Lilla Weneda*, which describes the tragedy of the vanishing Vistula Veneti people, over which hung the ironic fate of extermination. The aura of this ironic-tragic drama matches Perechodnik’s state of mind as he watches his people being destroyed.

In the last part of the memoir another one of the writer’s impulses becomes more prominent, until it becomes, in the end, the guiding impulse: “It occurred to me that there would be no one left to mourn the death of, and honor the memory of, my wife” (203). His memoir would take care of that – a tomb for the dead

591 *Adama Czerniakowa dziennik getta warszawskiego 6 IX 1939-23 VII 1942*, edited and with notes by M. Fuks (Warszawa, 1983), 364. This is a quote from a letter by Czerniaków’s widow.

592 See Maria Janion and Maria Żmigrodzka, *Romantyzm i historia* (Warszawa, 1978), 290. In this context, it is worth pointing out that, in his diary (*Pamiętnik*) written in the Warsaw ghetto, Janusz Korczak mentions that his patrons were Polish heroes, the heroes of the romantic myth of the individual: Piłsudski, Norwid, Mickiewicz, Kościuszko and “who knows, maybe even [Walerian] Łukasieński.” See Janusz Korczak, *Pisma Wybrane*, vol. IV (Warszawa, 1978), 306.

593 See Baruch Milch, *Testament* (Warszawa, 2001).

woman who has no grave. On 18 August 1943, Perechodnik decides to stop writing his memoir. Significantly, he wants to read it to his dead wife, and then – after handing it over (as if it were a priceless deposit) to a trusted Pole for safekeeping – to never return to it again. From this point on, he treats his memoir in a new way, namely as a “report submitted to You on the anniversary of Your death” (257), as a document representing the months-long work of mourning, carried out with feelings of guilt over the fact that he was still alive, and with rage at having allowed himself to be deceived, as – after all – the majority of Jews had been. He establishes a specific bond between himself and his dead wife, or rather her immortal soul, in which he believes.

The work fluctuates between being a “monument” and an “embryo.” Once, he speaks about the fact that he was writing his memoir “in Your honor, to Your immortality [...] I erected for you an eternal monument. Now that our common embryo is alive, it must be nurtured and protected, until it matures and turns into a living word that no power can kill” (258). Here we see a romantic faith in the notion that words are immortal. A bit before that, he wrote that “now, when I am completely alone, bereaved and unable to conceive my own live creature, I had to conceive a dead embryo into which I breathed life” (258). He also called his memoir “our second embryo” (258). He begins to define it as “our second child,” which will take revenge for all the misdeeds and injustices committed against the Jews. “Your second child, born in the pain of death, will avenge you” (258). Tangled in metaphors and instantiations, and carried away by aspirations to commune physically with the dead woman and to conceive with her a “second child,” Perechodnik behaves like Creator in Mickiewicz’s Great Improvisation from Part III of *Dziady*:

*I feel the entire suffering of the nation
Like a mother feels in her womb the pain of her fetus.*

*Czuję całego cierpienia narodu
Jak matka czuje w łonie bole swego płodu.*

Finally, at the conclusion of his argument on the processes of creation, Perechodnik includes a sentence that is absolutely modeled on the Great Improvisation: “I now feel within me immortality, because I created an immortal work, I immortalized You, for the ages” (259). Here is the declaration, full of excessive pride, from the Great Improvisation:

*Such a song is immortality!
I feel immortality, immortality I create,
What greater thing could you do, God?*

*Taka pieśń jest nieśmiertelność!
Ja czuję nieśmiertelność, nieśmiertelność tworzę,
Cóż ty większego mogłeś zrobić – Boże?*

Konrad, as the poet in *Dziady*, feels equal to God, and Perechodnik imitates this romantic poet, though the immortality of his work rescues for the ages not him, but his deceased wife, elevating her to the heights of divinity. He juxtaposes his deceased wife's divinity with the self-deification of the Germans, who consciously style themselves as gods mythically towering above the miserable crowd of Jews: "Corpses of familiar people under foot, officers in helmets and – with silver shields on their chests – they look like demigods, compared to that meek and miserable crowd, carrying luggage on their backs, with small children in their arms, and terrible fear in their hearts" (52). A German, the commander of the gendarme in the district of Warsaw, "accentuates each word slowly, firmly and emphatically. Is he a man or a God? No one pays these matters any attention" (55).

With the help of romantic topoi, Perechodnik performed his own kind of therapy, the funeral ritual that was lacking in reality. He wrote a dirge after his father's death, a "fearless fighter" in the battle for survival (269); he invented his own funeral rites; he carried out his own *Dziady*.⁵⁹⁴ Over the course of Perechodnik's work, its meaning emerges with full strength: It is a crypt where he preserved his dead. And it is only with these intentions in mind – intentions which the author fully grasped precisely during the writing process in which they were realized – that one can weigh the meaning of the question "Am I a murderer?"

Significantly, that question – and the way Perechodnik answered it – also have their origins in romanticism, though one from a different current – that is, from irony, more specifically the kind of tragic irony that permeates the pages of *Lilla Weneda*. Using such language, Perechodnik was able to describe what he had experienced and what had victimized him, but also what had turned him into an accomplice. Unknowingly, he accepted the task that Primo Levi would later set for himself in his last book (*The Drowned and the Saved*), namely to (among other things) address issues regarded as taboo, and to oppose a certain "rhetorical and hagiographical styling."⁵⁹⁵ As Perechodnik himself indicates at the beginning of his work, he had no literary ambitions, though that claim is not entirely true in light of his memoir's ending; rather, he set for himself, above all, a cognitive goal. Jarosław Ławski points out how well organized Perechodnik's text is, whose narrative is an "expression of an extraordinary control over the chaos of memory, over the expressive impulse and element of emotion" (this contrasts sharply with Milch's *Testament*, whose descriptions of German brutality turn into "hysterical trembling," into an "ever greater tangle," into a "torrent of images," indeed into a kind of logorrhea). Perechodnik makes use of a heritage rich in literary culture, of a well-internalized "memory of narrative patterns," of erudition gained in school,

594 Translator's note: The term *Dziady* refers to an ancient Slavic feast to commemorate the dead. Literally, it means "Grandfathers."

595 Daniela Amsellem, *Primo Levi* (Paris, 2000), 37.

and of his own “incredible powers of persuasion.” None of which, however, prevents him from explosions of “unprecedented fury.”⁵⁹⁶

One could say that the cognitive goal set by the author of *Spowiedź* intruded upon the particular literary organization of the text, since Perechodnik decided to portray precisely the satanic logic of the German conduct against the Jews. As he emphasized: now, it was clear to him what the Germans were doing, “but back then, way back then – few people understood, few people realized that an irrevocable verdict had fallen on everyone” (86). After a year filled with horrible experiences, Perechodnik managed to decipher the German plan. Using ironic illusion as his basic means of persuasion, he describes the premises behind this terrible, satanic *theatrum*: “July 1942. What are the Germans doing?” They were facing a problem, a macabre problem of how to murder all the Jews in the entire *Generalgouvernement* without exception, and in doing so, certain conditions had to be fulfilled, namely “that:

- a. the Jews do not figure out that they have been issued a death sentence;
- b. the Jews do not defend themselves;
- c. as few Germans as possible be mobilized to achieve this goal;
- d. the Jews themselves help the Germans carry out their dirty work;
- e. other Jews clean up the ghetto after the mass of Jews has left;
- f. Jews bury the Jewish corpses;
- g. all chattel, including gold, dollars and jewelry, fall into the hands of the Germans⁵⁹⁷;
- h. every Jewish town feel certain that it *kommt nicht in Betracht* [is not being considered];
- i. every influential or wealthy Jew be convinced that the Germans are not considering him, that he not flee, but rather simply waits until his turn comes;
- j. the abovementioned Jews do not figure out that they are being led to their deaths;
- k. the Jews not fall into a panic at the moment before death, that they remain unaware to the very last moment;

596 Jarosław Ławski, “Narracja i wyniszczenie. O ‘Spowiedzi’ Calka Perechodnika,” *Teksty Drugie* 4 (2005), 178-182.

597 Primo Levi writes in this regard about the “hypocritical advice” given by SS men to Jews being deported from Italy to Auschwitz: “Bring along gold and jewels, and above all woolen clothing and furs, because you’re going to work in a cold country.” Such “ironic advice” was constant. “In fact, this was self-plunder ... and sure enough, upon arrival, everything was seized.” See Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, trans. Raymond Rosenthal (New York: Summit Books, 1986), 109-110.

- l. the bodies of three million people be used as a valuable raw material, for example as natural fertilizer, that body fat be extracted for chemical processes, which at the same time helps assure that no traces will be left behind in the form of cemeteries;
- m. [and that] Jews cannot be rescued in Polish neighborhoods” (31-32).

Perechodnik’s entire story revolves around this plan so deciphered,⁵⁹⁸ and the foundation of Perechodnik’s irony consists of rage, anguish, despair, impotence, powerlessness in the face of cruel violence. He responds to the Germans’ hypocritical irony with his own irony, designed to expose the truth, and the effect is different than in Milch’s *Testament*, which is striking in its excess of everything, including brutal characterizations, invective, and ideas for the sophisticated torture that awaits the Germans after they lose the war, and so on, and so forth. The difference between the two works lies in the fact that such feelings, in Perechodnik, are accompanied by a great recognition of Fate, of his own inexorable and imminent end, indeed an entire people’s. This is his narrative’s beacon, much as it sometimes was in Greek tragedy, and one can talk about the author’s recognition of Fate only by virtue of an ironic consciousness that reveals the hidden, and often perverse, meaning of events.

Perechodnik emphasizes above all the incongruity between the naïve attitude of certain “lucky” Jews and the deceitful criminality of the Germans. For example, some Jews arranged for themselves special passes, which were supposed to protect them from being transported. “The Germans also honored them; they did not take those *lucky* Jews holding such passes to the train cars, rather – they shot them on the spot” (85, author’s emphasis – M.J.). A particular, ironic understanding of the word “lucky” appears frequently in the memoir, especially when a Jew, instead of suffering for a long time, gets an immediate bullet to the head. Or when: “Fortunately, pits did not have to be dug. The Jews prepared them for themselves in advance” (72).

598 Paweł Szapiro writes about this fact: Perechodnik “deciphers the Germans’ goals and their methods of extermination *accurately*, though a bit late (in any case, it could not have been earlier). His awareness of the Holocaust transforms itself into absolute certainty practically in front of the reader’s eyes – and *this is something thoroughly unique in the literature*. We see how, from a certain moment, Perechodnik perfectly perceives and understands the means of psychological manipulation, the role of false rumors, promises, and assurances. He is aware – *as few other Jews at the time were* – of the fact that, without all of these manipulative measures, it would have been impossible to herd millions of humans into train cars and transport them to extermination centers.” See Szapiro’s “Afterword” in Perechodnik, *Czy ja jestem modercą?*, edited and with an afterword and notes by Paweł Szapiro (Warszawa, 1993), 244. Author’s emphases – M.J.

Sometimes the author laughed bitterly at the “holy naiveté” of the Jews, as – for example – when they packed their most cherished possessions properly so that they would, in the end, arrive in one piece at Treblinka, “where the Germans [...] would] not have any sorting to do, because all those things were good.” (46). Or, in *Otwock*: “Jews prepare with their own hands the square next to the railway tracks, they cut down the trees, they fence it in with barbed wire so that the lumber there will not be stolen, they all work enthusiastically and with great hope for the future. The square is ready, though with one small difference. The Jews expect that the square has been prepared in order to unload more lumber from the train cars. But the Germans certainly know that it has been prepared to collect all the Jews there and then load them into the cars” (37). The author also liked to cry out: “Oh, ironic fate!”, for example, when a Jew hid 500-zloty Polish banknotes believing firmly that they would retain their full value: “I do not know, but I doubt that 10 percent of Poles would do that. What irony of fate! Jews believed more in Poland, in [Władysław] Sikorski, than did native Poles” (21).

Leon Najber astutely captured such a state of consciousness, emphasizing that we “perhaps need to preserve this part of the tragedy, to describe the nightmarish delusions, to depict the torture of the unfortunate ones and our false hopes, which were sustained and fueled by diabolic German deceit.”⁵⁹⁹ All of the concepts that make up the fabric of Perechodnik’s work – delusion, false hope, the demonic deceit of the Germans – appear in Najber’s work, but for Perechodnik they are not just historical-journalistic characterizations equipped (of course) with the force of truth, but also elements of an artistic construction drawn from an excellent knowledge of the literary works the author studied in school. They mark out the ironic fields of German and Jewish action. The stakes are deadly, and an essential role in these games is played by Evil, embodied by Satan himself.

“Everyone lived and moved about as if in a ghastly dream (130)” – this is how Perechodnik characterized the sense of existence for Jews in the ghetto. Other memoirists have used similar words. Everyone has been sentenced. To the extent they are able, Jews are deferring the final sentence (the exact nature of which they do not know), but the Germans are unrivaled. “In this war, there has never been a Jew who could deceive a German; quite the opposite – every Jew, even the smartest Jew, was deceived by the Germans” (235). This is also one aspect of the Germans’ demonic actions: the omnipotence of superhuman deception.

One the one hand: “the rules by which selections take place, only the German Satan knows. Sometimes the first rows remain behind, and those in the back move into the train cars; sometimes one would hear the order to ‘about face,’ in which case the back remained behind and the first rows move into the train cars; some-

599 Leon Najber, *Ostatni powstancy getta* (Warszawa, 1993), 5.

times, mothers are released but the abandoned children – little children – move into the train cars; sometimes, the children themselves are saved, but the parents move into the train cars” (133). Nothing is predictable; Perechodnik describes dozens of such situations.

On the other hand: there was widespread self-deception among the Jews. “Each individual Jew was overcome by psychosis: I am someone special, they will not transport me” (133). The head of the *Judenrat* spoke in October 1942, “at a time when almost all the ghettos on Polish soil had already been liquidated, and their residents had already been burned in Treblinka.” But the Jewish workers listened to him trustfully, they preferred to foolishly deceive themselves (140). Perechodnik writes ironically about “rational” explanations for how the death sentence could be commuted: “The tailors got it in their heads that they had not yet finished sewing the uniforms for the gendarmes, and the carpenters, they had not yet cut the pieces for the furniture, so how could the Germans now kill them? Who would finish the work?” (154)

In Claude Lanzmann’s film *Shoah*, Auschwitz survivor Rudolf Vrba explained that the Germans occasionally liked to joke agreeably when new trains loaded with people arrived at the camp, of which 90 percent were sent to the gas chambers within two hours: “Sometimes,” Vrba reported, “if it was good weather, the SS used to deal with it differently. I mean I was not surprised if they were in a different mood and exhibited a lot of humor, like saying ‘Good morning, Madame’ and ‘Will you walk out, please.’ Oh yes, oh yes. And ‘How nice that you arrived. We are so sorry that it wasn’t too convenient, but now things will become different.’”⁶⁰⁰

It is not surprising that Perechodnik pays ironic homage to the demonic German genius, which was able to distract people and push them into a state of “collective bewilderment [...] They did not even hide, on the contrary – they herded themselves so that the executioners did not have to work to take them away” (45).

The explanation Perechodnik finds for the Jews’ slow reaction to the Germans’ total deceit appeals to an expressionistic vision of the world – a theater of marionettes whose strings are pulled by Satan – a vision from a sinister burlesque. On an issue discussed above – Jews packing their rucksacks “for Treblinka” – Perechodnik wrote: “It is truly a marionette theater, but what a tragic one it is! Look how all the Jews without exception construed these German intentions, and carried them out, in the certainty that they were doing so for themselves, for their own good, for the security of their material future; how the Germans suggested this to the Jews, this will remain forever one of Satan’s mysteries” (46). A bit later he asks: “What is this: Tragedy? Comedy? Or perhaps simply a marionette

600 Claude Lanzmann, *Shoah: An Oral History of the Holocaust* (New York: Pantheon, 1985), 42-43.

theater” (59). “People are changing into automata, foolish puppets which are not even alive, because one after the other they are being killed” (52). The consistent use of such images leads us to suppose that Perechodnik was able to explain mass murder only by reducing people to the status of a puppet, by depriving them of their own will and thought, by subordinating their goals, by depriving them of a sense of their own interest and replacing it with the interest of the executioner, persecutor, and murderer. “Oh cursed Germans! How wise you are, how quickly we became obedient puppets in your hands. We work briskly; neither does the demon of rebellion control us, nor do feelings of mercy toward the remaining Jews” (62). The mechanism of the German plan is working dependably. A certain paralysis has overwhelmed the Jews, or they are behaving “like tools,” like “passive machines” (96). These reified objects, these passive objects, shatter in the rhythm of death.

Perechodnik himself falls victim to stupefied bewilderment and puppet-like automatism. He tells his wife to report to the square, because there she will be released. This is what Kronenberg had promised. “Is this my voice? Am I an executioner, a murderer of my own wife? And Kronenberg, too? Maybe we both are just puppets of destiny, of Israel’s misfortune” (71). Puppets are entitled to inertia, they have no voice. Perechodnik, living in a state of frightening hallucination, does not even know if he was the one who spoke the words that became a death sentence for his wife.

In Lanzmann’s *Shoah*, there is an extraordinary discussion between Motke Zaidl and Itzhak Dugin, who worked in the area around Wilno at the beginning of 1944 digging out bodies of dead Jews and burning the retrieved corpses. During their work, they recognized members of their own families. The butchers, in obliterating the signs of their own crimes, introduced a harsh linguistic regime, and they punished those who failed to follow it.

The Germans even forbade us to use the words “corpse” or “victim.” The dead were blocks of wood, shit, with absolutely no importance. Anyone who said “corpse” or “victim” was beaten. The Germans made us refer to the bodies as *Figuren*, that is, as puppets, as dolls, or as “Schmattes,” which means “rags.”⁶⁰¹

Again we arrive at the heart of the German plan. In an excellent study of Lanzmann’s film, Shoshana Felman writes: “The essence of the Nazi plan is to make its very existence (and thus the Jews as well) completely invisible. It involves making Jews invisible not only by killing them and putting them in ‘camouflaged,’ invisible death camps, but also by reducing their corpses to ashes, by radically re-

601 Ibid., 13. Leon Weliczker, who was also forced into doing similar work in and around Lwów, wrote: “Corpses are called ‘figures.’” See *Brygada śmierci. (Sonderkommando 1005). Pamiętnik* (Łódź, 1946), 42.

ducing the visibility of corpses, and by reducing the referential and literal strength of the word ‘corpse’ to the transparency of pure form, to a metaphor of a purely rhetorical and ordinary figure; that is, to a disembodied verbal substitute, which introduces an abstract and linguistic entitlement to the possibility of replacement and unending substitution. Corpses – treated in Nazi jargon as *Figuren* – become linguistically invisible, and at the same time bereft of substance and specificity.”⁶⁰²

Perechodnik’s work is a dual accomplishment. First, the author revealed the German plan – for him it was not invisible, though he knew that it was becoming invisible. Second, in writing about how that plan was being carried out, and in making his wife’s grave visible through his memoir, he subverted the invisibility, the transparency, and the insubstantiality of the *Figuren*. He retrieved their names; he understood it through immortality; it was no longer just “that.” And in the end, what enhances the visibility of this exceptional text is, above all, its multi-faceted irony.

602 Shoshana Felman, “A l’âge du témoignage: ‘Shoah’ de Claude Lanzmann,” in *Au sujet de Shoah. Le film de Claude Lanzmann* (Paris, 1990), 61.

VII.
**KERTÉSZ: “EVEN IF I MAY SEEM
TO BE TALKING ABOUT SOMETHING
QUITE DIFFERENT, I AM STILL
TALKING ABOUT AUSCHWITZ”**

To Stefan Amsterdamski

1. Collisions

Postwar art – broadly defined – remains in the dark shadow of the Holocaust; it is testimony to the struggle between speaking and silence, between an excess of language and its radical reduction. Historical facts collide with fiction, ethics with aesthetics, the expressible with the inexpressible.⁶⁰³ Dramatic conflicts over the meaning of history and the significance of humanistic values have emerged in post-Enlightenment modernity, and in this context one cannot help but mention the works of Lawrence L. Langer, who – having thoroughly analyzed the wide range of texts – argues that “the Holocaust experience challenged the redemptive value of all moral, community, and religious systems of belief.” Langer’s notion of “preempting the Holocaust” is a reference to efforts to inscribe the Holocaust with universalizing systems, which are used in turn to make sense of the crimes that were committed and to connect the Holocaust with some sort of portrait of the world in which moral virtue, the human community, and mercy come out – in the end – victorious. But the fact is, as Langer concludes, that the Holocaust is a “phenomenon alien to our usual patterns of speech or belief,”⁶⁰⁴ and it is in this sense that the Holocaust must be viewed as something exceptional.

In light of all the rigmarole of universalistic moralizing, a brief examination of the so-called redemptive narrative is called for.⁶⁰⁵ Henryk Grynberg, acting as a spokesman for the local – but also spiritual – Jewish community, states: “We, the Jews of Dobre, do not like the majority of books written about us, especially in America. The idyll – the catastrophe – the battle with death – victory over evil – the happy ending. We know that there was no idyll or victory, no happy ending, not even catharsis. And we know that therein lies the novelty.”⁶⁰⁶ Here Grynberg is referring succinctly to the motifs by which the “majority of books” deviate from the real Holocaust experience, from its non-cathartic tragedy. A redemptive narrative tries to render events of the Holocaust coherent, to place them in some sort of sequence, in order to formulate conclusions that rescue the meaning of history and universal morality. Langer offers some excellent analysis of a significant example, namely Elie Wiesel’s book *Night*, which was published with an introduction by François Mauriac that allowed two narratives to be confused. In his introduc-

603 An excellent, comprehensive review of Holocaust literature – the first such work in Poland – is presented in Aleksandra Ubertowska, *Świadectwo – trauma – glos: Literackie reprezentacje Holokaustu* (Kraków, 2007).

604 Lawrence L. Langer, *Preempting the Holocaust* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 3-4.

605 See Tokarska-Bakir, “Topos ruin. Zbawcze narracje w najnowszej historii Niemców, Żydów i Polakom” in *Rzeczy mgliste*.

606 Grynberg, *Monolog polsko-żydowski*, 98.

tion, Mauriac alludes to Lazarus raised from the dead, and in so doing imposes a consolatory myth on the story by "grafting the language of redemption onto the experience of mass crime and transforming it into nothing more than the universal mystery of human suffering." The alleged reconciliation of the two narratives is supposed to reveal the deeper meaning radiating through events. But the problem is that there is, in fact, no such meaning in *Night*, and Mauriac's peculiar "anti-text" fences itself off from Wiesel's story; his words "retreat from the dark intent of Wiesel's narrative," which in fact lacks a sense of rebirth and is filled with relentless incongruity, crushing doubt, and insurmountable tragic dilemma.⁶⁰⁷

This redemptive method of writing has been questioned in a variety of works, from autobiographical accounts by "living corpses" who survived only because "their lives had become meaningless" (and not because they wanted to become witnesses),⁶⁰⁸ to attempts to undermine the prevailing narrative by "playing" the Holocaust.⁶⁰⁹ Lawrence Rees, author of a recent monograph on the death camp at Auschwitz, which is based on accounts by unpunished perpetrators and victims who survived by chance, summarizes his work in the following way: "There is a deep human need to feel that life offers an element of justice – the sense that the innocent eventually receive recompense and the guilty are brought down. This history, however, offers little of that comfort, for the most searing example of lack of redemption rests in the soil of Birkenau, the earth worked over for valuables by locals after the war, in the largest graveyard in the history of the world. This, together with the nearby Vistula River where many ashes were dumped, is the final resting place of more than a million people whose testimony we cannot listen to."⁶¹⁰

Theodor Adorno predicted that – in an era in which the culture industry is king – culture would be suffocated by the ubiquitous cult of kitsch. Here, kitsch means the unwarranted pursuit of harmony, cheap apologies for "simple" moral values, the suppression of tragedy and incongruity, attaching a happy ending to everything possible. Imre Kertész regarded *Schindler's List*, the famous film by Steven Spielberg from which millions of people learned about the Holocaust, as kitsch. Why? What was his main criterion? Kertész provided a clear answer to these questions: "I consider the most important message of Spielberg's black-and-

607 Langer, "The Stage of Memory: Parents and Children in Holocaust Texts and Testimonies" in *Preempting the Holocaust*, 142.

608 See Lawrence Douglas, "Didactic Legality and Heroic Memory" in *The Memory of Judgment: Making Law and History in the Trials of the Holocausts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 150-182.

609 Ernst van Alphen, "Playing the Holocaust" in *Mirroring Evil: Nazi Imagery/Recent Art*, ed. Norman L. Kleeblatt (New York: The Jewish Museum, 2001), 65-83.

610 Lawrence Rees, *Auschwitz: A New History* (New York: Public Affairs, 2005), 297-298.

white film to be the final scene in color, showing the victorious crowd; because it seems to me that every work deserves to be called kitsch which *implicite* does not talk about the long-term ethical consequences of Auschwitz, every work which posits that the Human Being (written with capital letters), and along with him the entire idea of humanity, came out of Auschwitz unscathed" (*Jnw*, 125).⁶¹¹ Kertész has criticized the humanist kitsch that is so widespread, especially in mass culture, and he explained that the deepest message of his work is to confront this kitsch. He manages this confrontation in an elaborate way that is highly complicated and sometimes both contrary and outrageous.

The narrator and protagonist of Kertész's *Sorstalanság* (published in English as *Fatelessness*, 2004), just after his return to Budapest from the camp at Buchenwald, meets a journalist who tries to convince him to describe his recent experiences for a newspaper, and who justifies his plan with platitudes about "the 'healing of still-bleeding wounds and punishment of the guilty,'" about the need to reveal the "horrors," and about how "'public opinion has to be mobilized,'" that the truth has to be exposed, regardless of how "'painful the ordeal' of facing up to it" might be (*FA*, 247, 251). The narrator – one of Kertész's great and innovative literary creations – regards the journalist as a likable and friendly man, but right after the intruder leaves, he throws away the piece of paper that was pressed into his hand with the name and address of the newspaper. This is a symbolic gesture rejecting widely-accepted, kitschy, humanistic platitudes.

The rejection of such platitudes shows up again in an even more powerful framework. As *Fatelessness* comes to an end, the narrator draws a provocative contrast between – on the one hand – stories of "the hardships and the 'atrocities,'" about which the journalist and others have inquired, and – on the other hand – that "something that resembled happiness" in the camps ("next to the chimneys, in the intervals between the torments"). In the work's final sentences, the narrator says that he will talk about this happiness: "If indeed I am asked. And provided I myself don't forget" (*FA*, 262). He thus doubts the accepted conventions by which the Holocaust has been trivialized, and he declares that this new story, this perverse catharsis, might never be told if questions are not asked that go beyond the established horizon of expectations, if events are forgotten by the very ones who experienced them.

611 At the end of this section, I provide an explanation of the abbreviations, and a list of published works by Imre Kertész cited here.

2. Celan or Dante

Adorno's famous statement that "there can be no poetry after Auschwitz" has been interpreted in a hundred ways, often mistakenly and without considering the full context. He completed this thought while writing about Arnold Schoenberg's composition *A Survivor from Warsaw*, and argued that there is "something embarrassing" (*etwas peinliches*) about Schoenberg's piece. Why? "Creating an image of the crime, even if the most harsh and uncompromising, the artist does harm to our sense of shame to the victims. Indeed, it is from their suffering that one concocts this kind of work and throws it at the mercy of the world that killed them. Potential aesthetic pleasure is bound – so what, if not directly – with the so-called 'artistic expression' of the naked, bodily pain that people felt who were massacred with rifle butts. [...] The style of the composition, and especially the solemn prayer of the chorus, creates the impression that this unimaginable fate did not lack a certain meaning; radiant with heavenly light, that fate does not seem so terrifying."⁶¹² In Adorno's opinion, art by necessity aestheticizes, and this "aestheticization" gives the Holocaust meaning. It creates a certain artistic salvation, and art becomes – as Adorno so brutally put it, alluding to the use of music by the hangmen in the concentration camps – an "accompaniment which the SS commonly used to drown out the screams of its victims." Felman accurately interprets Adorno's postulate as a demand for "art to *de-aestheticize* itself and to justify henceforth its own existence."⁶¹³

It is widely recognized that the poetic path of Paul Celan had an influence on Adorno's views. One of the greatest poets of the twentieth century, Celan searched for a language that suited the tragedy of the Holocaust and finally – before committing suicide – he stood on the border between quiescence and silence. His oft-analyzed *Todesfuge* (Death Fugue) – written at the end of 1944 – has inspired many interpretative disputes. Did the author estheticize the Holocaust in this poem? Some scholars have thought that, in Celan's virtuosic work, "metaphors still screen the infernal cynicism of what really took place," encouraging the treatment of the Holocaust "as a legend, as an incredible apocalyptic fable."⁶¹⁴ From

612 Adorno, *Noten zur Literatur* (Frankfurt a/M, 1965), vol. 3, 126-127. Quote from Karol Sauerland, *Od Dilltheya do Adorna. Studia z estetyki niemieckiej* (Warszawa, 1986), 212-213.

613 Felman, "Education and Crisis, or the Vicissitudes of Teaching" in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, ed. and intro. Cathy Caruth (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 39.

614 This is the opinion of Rolf Hochhuth from 1963 as quoted in Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi, "The Holocaust and the Shifting Boundaries of Art and History" in *History and Memory*, vol. 1, no. 2, Fall/Winter, 1989, 89.

this standpoint, the sophisticated polyphonic melody of *Todesfuge* led to aesthetic intoxication through "nice sounds."

Fearing such a perception, Celan drew his own conclusions: "Celan himself, in later years, thus turned against his early poem, refused to allow its reprinting in further anthologies, and changed his writing style into a less explicit, less melodious, more disrupted and disruptively elliptical verse."⁶¹⁵ The ash and night of *Todesfuge* were "stripped of cadence and metaphor,"⁶¹⁶ and in this way they were "de-aestheticized," though their particular poetic melodies remained:

<i>Ash,</i>	<i>Asche.</i>
<i>Ash, ash.</i>	<i>Asche, Asche.</i>
<i>Night.</i>	<i>Nacht.</i>
<i>Night-and-night. – Go</i>	<i>Nacht – und – Nacht. – Zum</i>
<i>To the eye, the moist one.</i> ⁶¹⁷	<i>Aug geh, zum feuchten.</i>

Todesfuge is often regarded as "a basic text in contemporary German culture,"⁶¹⁸ and one can rightly add that it has also entered the European canon. In this and other pieces, Celan made use of ellipses and reductions – poetic means which, in Celan's work, are signs of broken continuity and cohesion. *Todesfuge* is a tragic poem, sophisticated in its variations and contrasts, "dark," and full of "ecstatic melancholy."⁶¹⁹

It is significant that Primo Levi, the author of one of the most famous books on the Holocaust, *Survival in Auschwitz* (original Italian: *Se questo è un uomo*, 1947), did not like Celan's writing style. In an article on "obscure writing," he condemned Celan's works as incomprehensible and uncommunicative. "He who does not know how to communicate, or communicates badly, in a code that belongs only to him or a few others, is unhappy, and spreads unhappiness around him." Naturally – Levi admits – each of us harbors within us a certain "source of unknowability and irrationality," which must be accepted; indeed it must be "even authorized to express itself in its (necessarily obscure) language." However, it "should not be considered the best or only source of expression." It is the author's fault – Levi argues – if the reader, full of good will, cannot understand

615 Felman, "Education and Crisis," 40.

616 This is the opinion of John Felstiner as quoted in Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi, "The Holocaust and the Shifting Boundaries of Art and History," 90.

617 This is a fragment from Celan's poem "Engführung" (The Straitening) found in *Poems of Paul Celan*, trans., intro. and preface Michael Hamburger (New York: Persea Books, 2002), 114-127. This fragment can be found on pp. 118-119.

618 See Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi, "The Holocaust and the Shifting Boundaries of Art and History," 90.

619 The author of this last expression is Horst Bienek. See Feliks Przybylak, *Paul Celan. Metody i problemy "liryki esencji"* (Wrocław, 1993), 155.

him. Maybe this is an idealized version of the reader, Levi admits, but it is he who establishes the most important criteria. "I write for *him*," Levi declares, "and not for the critics, nor for the powerful of the earth, nor for myself." From this point of view, Celan practiced a kind of tragic, noble poetry, "a reflection of the obscurity of his fate and his generation," but these darknesses become too confined – from the brutal shrewdness of *Todesfuge* to the obsessive chaos of his last poems. Levi feeds the conviction that what is unstated will remain unstated forever, and that nothing can fill that empty space. He does not want to step close to the limits of the inexpressible; he finds "semantic refusals" offensive.⁶²⁰ He distances himself from the "stale innovations" of the dark poets' works and their metaphorical language, and even from the "toxicity" of these writers, who would later commit suicide (Celan and Georg Trakl).⁶²¹

One can divine the reasons behind Levi's opposition to Celan's work in his preface to *Survival in Auschwitz*, a book that was supposed to "furnish documentation for a quiet study of certain aspects of the human mind."⁶²² Levi was a chemist by training and vocation, and as such he wanted to apply scientific procedures to his "research" of human behavior in the concentration camp. The style to be used had to be the one he learned in the chemistry laboratories – positivist and exact. His literary model is not Petrarch or Goethe, but rather the kind of weekly report published for use in a factory or laboratory. Giorgio Manganelli called Levi's case "triumphant rationalism," and as evidence he cited statements made by the chemist-writer-naturalist: He recognized as valuable only those texts which – as generally understood – cannot be subject to ambiguous interpretation.⁶²³

However, as Hayden White has argued, even Levi in his crowning achievement could not help but appeal to a literary and mythical model, and that model was Dante's *Divine Comedy*. "No doubt Levi draws upon Dante's epic as a model for his plot." Although "none of the facts has been invented," his work's meaning "resides in large measure in the extent to which it copies the plot-structure of poetic fiction." Part of the "figural realism" in Levi's work is Dantean allegory.

620 Primo Levi, *Other People's Trades*, trans. Raymond Rosenthal (New York: Summit, 1989), 169-175.

621 One of Levi's admirers, Giorgio Agamben, who based practically his entire famous book on these testimonies and opinions, admits that the author of *Survival in Auschwitz* was never able to fully grasp Celan's poetry, though he was fascinated by it (see Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen [New York: Zone Books, 1999], 36). Nonetheless, this deep "incomprehension" of the gloomy poets is meaningful and affects all of Levi's type of humanism.

622 Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz: The Nazi Assault on Humanity*, trans. Stuart Woolf (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1958), 9.

623 See Myriam Anissimov, "Primo Levi," *Le Magazine 10/18* (2002), nr. 1 (Anissimov is the author of a book under the significant title *Primo Levi ou la tragédie d'un optimiste*).

The function of *Inferno* manifests itself on a number of levels – from quotations to “Dantean scenes” and entire poetic figures. The chapter “The Canto of Ulysses” is an attempt to transfer the Dantean category of the *Inferno* to the reality of the concentration camp. White (despite Levi’s “chemical” worldview) regards the literary structures of *Survival in Auschwitz* as evidence that “one cannot do justice to the Holocaust without recourse to myth, poetry, and ‘literary’ writing.”⁶²⁴

But what interests us here is less the application of the Dantean model than the question of why Dante’s *Inferno* occurred to Levi at all. Setting aside the fact that *Inferno* is part of the traditional school curriculum, it is worth considering the traditionalism of “darkness” and “light” in literature and the anthropology of the writer. In “The Canto of Ulysses” Levi attempts to explore the camp’s abyss with the help of a description, taken from *Inferno*, of the immense sea that must be crossed on the daring journey. This existential endeavor is accompanied by an indication from Dante involving “all those who suffer, and in particular all of us [prisoners]”:

*Think of your breed; for brutish ignorance
Your mettle was not made; you were made men,
To follow after knowledge and excellence.*⁶²⁵

This is a highly important motif in Levi – the moral separation of man from animal. Alex the Kapo turns out to be a “violent and unreliable rogue” – like the other “nonvirtuous” ones. Levi’s final reflections in *Survival in Auschwitz* include the claim that, in Auschwitz, the Germans worked on the “bestial degradation” of prisoners.⁶²⁶ Similarly, in *The Drowned and the Saved*, Levi emphasizes that, in Auschwitz, “the transformation from human beings into animals was well on its way.” This notion is repeated many times.⁶²⁷

In the key final discussion with the journalist in *Fatelessness*, the former prisoner, having returned from the camp, was told he simply had to tell “the whole world,” but about what? About “‘the hell of the camps’ – he [the journalist] replied, to which I remarked that I had nothing at all to say about that as I was not acquainted with hell and couldn’t even imagine what that was like. He assured

624 See Hayden White “Figural Realism in Witness Literature”, *Parallax*, January-March 2004 (“Witnessing Theory”), 113-124. The fragments cited above can be found on pp. 117-118.

625 Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz*, 113.

626 *Ibid.*, 110, 171.

627 Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, 112; One could translate the original title (*I sommersi e i salvati*, 1986) in the spirit of Dante as “The Condemned and the Saved.” Elsewhere, Levi states that forced nudity in the concentration camp was also a product of efforts to bestialize prisoners: “Anyone who does not have them [clothes] no longer perceives himself as a human being but rather as a worm: naked, slow, ignoble, prone on the ground. He knows that he can be crushed at any moment” (p. 113-114).

me, however, that it was just a manner of speaking: 'Can we imagine a concentration camp as anything but a hell?' he asked, and I replied, as I scratched a few circles with my heel in the dust under my feet, that everyone could think what they liked about it, but as far as I was concerned I could only imagine a concentration camp, since I was somewhat acquainted with what that was, but not hell" (*FA*, 248-249). Facing a reality that is – in an existential sense – hardly palpable, the narrator resists the use of colloquial terms, but also – consistent with Kertész's intentions – literary and humanistic banalization.

Kertész's novels and essays constitute a groundbreaking proposition in European literature. As a writer, Kertész appeared relatively late on the literary horizon (*Sorstalanság* was published in 1975), but through his personal experience with the Holocaust, he has been able to reflect on what led "to the alienation of concepts related to it" (*Jnw*, 123), and to put forward a body of work that demonstrates a distinctive methodology in writing about the Holocaust.

Kertész's literary frame of reference is also distinct; it constantly touches upon what is unstated and unstateable, on what is existentially dark and ambiguous, on the scandal of innocence being put through an incomprehensible trial, which ends with a death sentence for the victim. His patrons are Celan and Kafka.

3. Black Sun

The motifs in Celan's *Todesfuge* became the theme of Kertész's *Kaddis a meg nem született gyermekért* (published in English as *Kaddish for an Unborn Child*, 1990), which can be summed up in the following words:

*... he shouts stroke darker the strings and as smoke you shall climb to the sky
then you'll have a grave in the clouds it is ample to lie there*

*... er ruft streicht dunkler die Geigen dann steigt ihr als Rauch in die Luft
dann habt ihr ein Grab in den Wolken da liegt man nicht eng*⁶²⁸

- and for his novel (and in various circumstances and situations therein) Kertész borrows countless images from this famous poem. The elements of air and fire, understood as the elements of death, cover the entire work; the mysterious rhythm of song-death brings to mind Celan's poem; and the oxymoronic "black milk" of *Todesfuge* is spilt onto almost every page of *Kaddish*.

For the protagonist of *Kaddish*, life after Auschwitz was like digging a grave in the air, "in the clouds, the wind, the nothingness" (*K*, 85). But he was not the one who started this work, which is in fact only the "continued digging of the

628 *Paul Celan: Selected Poems*, trans. Michael Hamburger and Christopher Middleton, intro. Michael Hamburger (Penguin, 1972), 34.

grave that others had begun to dig for me in the air and then, simply because they did not have time to finish, hastily [...] they thrust the tool in my hand and left me standing there to finish, as best I could, the work that they had begun" (K, 30). Everything he does now refers back to that; it is sequel.

Nonetheless, it turns out that his work digging in the air has its material dimension. His shovel is the fountain pen, and it is with this pen that he digs his own grave, "diligently, like a forced laborer who is whistled up every day to drive the spade deeper, to play death on the violin with a darker, sweeter tone" (K, 34-35). Such terms are repeated practically word for word when he thinks about things he cannot explain to his wife – "I write only because I have to write, and I have to write because I am whistled up every day to drive the spade deeper" (K, 84). The true nature of the protagonist's work becomes clear: it is (as he often repeats) the digging of his own grave – both under the coercion of the master from Germany in Celan's verse ("eyes that are blue/with a bullet of lead he will hit in the mark he will hit you"), and under the pressure of those who were no longer able to dig.

"Writing as *literature*" does not interest him at all (though it seems that, at a certain point, it does interest the writer's wife). His writing has a peculiar character. It is a tool of life, in the sense that "one's sole means is, at one and the same time, one's sole possession; one's life" (L, 120). And the goal of that life is "conscious self-liquidation" (K, 51). *Liquidation* tells the story of writer B. and his three-act comedy (which remains on paper alone and is entitled "Liquidation"), of his self-liquidation, radical self-annihilation, suicide, and the destruction of his last novel, for which the book's narrator-presenter searches for a publisher, in vain. In a letter to his wife, writer B. asks her to throw the manuscript into the fire "so it burns, because via the flames it will reach where it has to reach" (L, 120). In this way, writer B.'s phantasmal body – his manuscript – will find its way into the air, and it is there where it finds its natural grave.

Kertész's writing is characterized by numerous internal references. By appealing to his own works in a variety of ways, the author creates a network of connected themes, or rather one main theme, namely Auschwitz, according to his own declaration: "Whatever I think about, I always think about Auschwitz. Even if I may seem to be talking about something quite different, I am still talking about Auschwitz. I am a medium for the spirit of Auschwitz; Auschwitz speaks through me."⁶²⁹

Writer B.'s last novel is – as one might guess – *Kaddish for an Unborn Child*. Kertész did not send it into the air, since he wanted paradoxically to articulate self-annihilation, which was Celan's intention as well. Thus, a work reached our

629 "Galley Boat-Log (*Gályanapló*): Excerpts," trans. from the Hungarian Tim Wilkinson, in *Imre Kertész and Holocaust literature*, eds. Louise O. Vasvári and Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek (Purdue University, 2005), 103.

hands which we might call a Kaddish for those who were killed by life in/after Auschwitz.⁶³⁰ Kertész's superb novels yield an extremely important hypothesis regarding the suicides of Tadeusz Borowski, Celan, Levi and above all Jean Améry, whom Kertész revered. In a sense, the paths of so many dissertations, articles and books have, in unprecedented ways, been illuminated by Kertész's tetralogy; the internal "black sun" casts a shadow on landscapes we did not know before.

4. Jew

"Man's greatest crime is to have been born" is the famous statement from Calderón's *Life is a Dream*, which is repeated in Kertész's *Kaddish* (*K*, 93) and *Liquidation* (*L*, 79). Writer B. took delight in that statement; indeed his editor asks rhetorically how many times he heard B. repeat that statement, first made well before Schopenhauer. A Beckett-like understanding of the "guilt of being born" and a Kafkaesque "shame of life" (*L*, 107) lend a special aura to the shape of existence given in Kertész's novels.

But there remains a certain "mysterious shame" (*K*, 72) stretching out behind the Jew. Kertész's novels explore what one might call the Jew's "ultimate identity." A childhood experience – in which he identifies himself with an accidental glimpse of his aunt – is marked with a premonition of the disgusting, abject nature of Auschwitz: "A bald-headed woman in a red negligee" (bald because, as a religious Jewish woman, she shaved her head and wore a wig). "I lived in a dark, heavy atmosphere of repulsion and secrets," the narrator confesses. "The aunt stripped bare, with her shiny pate like that of a mannequin in a window display, summoned up in me an image now of a corpse, now of a great harlot into whom she transformed herself for the night in the bedroom" (*K*, 21). "The unclean horror of the facts" dictated that the writer understand who he is: It was that bald woman, in a red negligee, who made "the incomprehensible and peculiar fact" specifically clear, "namely that I was Jewish," which meant a death sentence (*K*, 22). The Jew as something "obscene," something strange and grotesque can, at any moment, reveal itself in the determinative view of another as "a bald-headed woman in a red negligee."

But that perspective was subject to change. In the final, dramatic discussion with his wife, the narrator declares that "*from this unique perspective alone* am I willing to be Jewish [...] to have had the opportunity of being in Auschwitz as a branded Jew and yet, through my Jewishness, to have lived through something

630 Elie Wiesel, after Primo Levi's death (as the result of an accident or suicide), said: "Primo Levi died 40 years earlier in Auschwitz."

and confronted something; and I know, once and for all, and I know irrevocably something that I will not relinquish, will never relinquish" (*K*, 118-119). In *Gályanapló* (Galley Boat-Log) he repeats more blatantly: "Because of my Jewishness, I experienced something, and that is the universal experience of the fate of man at the mercy of totalitarianism. So since I am a Jew, I declare that I am negation, the negation of all human pride, the negation of security, of quiet nights, of a nicely organized emotional life, of conformism, of free choice, of national glory – I am the black page in the book of triumphs, on which the writing is invisible, I am negation, not Jewish negation, but universal human negation, I am the Mene-Tekel-u-Pharsin in the world of total oppression" (*Dg*, 44-45). Hence Kertész's concept of fatelessness, which remains in close association with an understanding of tragedy. "The protagonist of a tragedy is the man who creates himself and brings himself to his own fall. But today, a man is able only to conform" (*Dg*, 9). And it is within this context in Kertész's work that the concept of fatelessness emerges. "What do I call fate? Certainly the possibility of tragedy. The external determinacy, the stigma which constrains our life into a situation, an absurdity, in the given totalitarianism, thwarts this; thus, when we live out the determinacy that is doled out to us as a reality, instead of the necessity that stems from our own (relative) freedom – that is what I would call fatelessness."⁶³¹ This is precisely the lesson learned from Auschwitz.

In a polemic furor, the narrator of *Kaddish* says that he regards his Jewishness as a blessing, even as a sign of grace. Earlier he showed that Judaism – as an experience – is for him a "cerebral form of existence" (*K*, 88). Kertész also refers to this formulation in one of his essays ("Long Dark Shadow"). "To be a Jew today is, in my opinion, an ethical exercise" (*Jnw*, 44). In lectures delivered in 1990-1992, Kertész presented his view of the Annihilation of the Jews as part of the European ethical culture. Taking up a problem posed by Adorno – namely the dissonance between the ethical and the aesthetic in the artistic record of the Holocaust – Kertész emphasized the notion that "we can generate" an image of the Holocaust "only through the aesthetic strength of imagination. More precisely, our image is not just of the Holocaust, but its ethical repercussions appearing in our imagination" (*Jnw*, 40). In this sense, Kertész calls the Holocaust a phenomenon that produces its own culture, an "acid test of existential and moral confrontation" with the Holocaust (*Jnw*, 45), which is a necessary component of European consciousness and affiliation.

"The spirit of the story" (Thomas Mann) and "spirit of myth" (Carl Jung) emerge, and it is this spirit of myth – recalling the words inscribed on the tablets received by Moses on Mount Sinai – that chose Auschwitz as the symbol of all

631 "Galley Boat-Log (*Gályanapló*): Excerpts," 98.

camp. Describing the creation of *Fatelessness*, Kertész points out: "The obligatory elements of this material are not only not to be avoided, but must be adhered to very strictly: The loading up of the railway wagons, the journey, the arrival at Auschwitz, the selection, the bath, the issuing of clothes – everything as an obligatory succession of moments, exactly like the Stations of the Cross in a medieval passion play."⁶³² On the main stage of the Holocaust "the age-old story of torment and human suffering was revived" (*Jnw*, 37, repeated on 44). In these key words, Kertész located his knowledge of the ethical content of the Holocaust as "Europe's greatest trauma since the Cross" (*Jnw*, 49), its "greatest event" (*Jnw*, 65). "Decades, perhaps even centuries [will be] required to understand it" (*Jnw*, 49). Kertész's work paves the way to such an understanding. But what is this understanding?

5. Muselmann

Primo Levi calls the muselmänner the "backbone of the camp." These condemned ones find themselves in the depths of the Dantean inferno. After arriving at the camp, Levi and the others were greeted by a procession of grotesque characters, "strange individuals" who "walked [...] with an odd, embarrassed step, head dangling in front, arms rigid," like marionettes. They were living ghosts. "We looked at each other without a word. It was all incomprehensible and mad." Such images lead the reader into an atmosphere that is both Dantean and romantic. After the next camp scenes, Levi writes: "We seem to be watching some mad play, one of those plays in which the witches, the Holy Spirit and the devil appear."⁶³³ Then, in a matter of a single moment, the fantastic, unreal, sinister drama transforms itself – in Levi's work – into a detailed report on the circumstances and character of the camp. Such an abrupt change in content actually occurs only once, and it is worth noting that the only instances in which Levi's text touches so powerfully on the (always close to death) "incredible" – as in Freud's *das Unheimliche* – are associated with camp's emblematic character: the muselmann.

In the glossary *Określenia oświęcimskie* (Auschwitz Terms), Borowski discusses three aspects of the muselmann figure, which was so called – perhaps – from the monotonous nodding of the head, like a Muslim in prayer:⁶³⁴

632 Ibid., 102.

633 Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz*, 90, 20, 25.

634 Jorge Semprun states that, at first, he used terms drawn from earlier, pre-camp life – "bums" or "tramps" – to describe the muselmänner, but such terms did not suit this phenomenon. See Semprun, *Odpowiedni trup*, trans. M. Ochab (Warszawa, 2002), 27. Regarding the origins of the term "muselmann," Primo Levi explains: "Two explanations for it have been advanced, neither very convincing: fatalism; and the head bandages that could resemble a

First, the muselmann was a person completely broken physically and spiritually, thoroughly "ripe for the chimney";

second, no description can reflect the contempt with which other prisoners treated the muselmann;

and third, no one wants to admit that he was ever a muselmann, even in camp autobiographies.⁶³⁵

Contempt for the muselmann, fear of him, and fear of falling into his condition, all expose emotions that are clearly discernible in Borowski's work, as they are in many other historical and literary accounts.

Magdalena Swat-Pawlicka rightly draws attention to the fact that "the view of the muselmann is almost always a *view from the outside*, through which their classification is carried out, their objectification by the system and in the system – both by the Germans and by other prisoners."⁶³⁶ The prisoners feared the muselmänner as if they were "carriers of pestilence" (*Fa*, 173), one could be infected by them and their hopelessness. They tried to separate themselves from the muselmänner, and they themselves decided who was excluded from, and included in, that cursed group.

Levi's attitude toward the muselmann was inconsistent. On the one hand, he regarded him as the most credible witness to what was going on in the camp, though that witness was silent. On the other hand, he emphasized the inner emptiness of the muselmann, who had lost all dignity and sense of reason, had forsaken his own self, had allowed himself to be deprived of humanity. Let me quote from what Levi wrote about the character Null Achtzehn (Zero Eighteen), who was defined by the last three digits of his camp number because he had forgotten his own name: "When he speaks, when he looks around, he gives the impression of being empty inside, nothing more than an involucre, like the slough of certain insects which one finds on the banks of swamps, held by a thread to the stones and shaken by the wind." Null Achtzehn "is no longer a man."⁶³⁷ Significantly, his new name begins with "Null."

The comparison of the muselmann to an insect's shell is meaningful. In a conversation with Philip Roth, Levi himself said that, in Auschwitz, he was "con-

turban" (*The Drowned and the Saved*, 98). Giorgio Agamben mentions yet another etymology: "There is also the rather improbable interpretation of *Muselmann* as *Muschelmann*, 'shell-man,' a man folded and closed upon himself (Levi seems to allude to this interpretation when he writes of 'husk-men')." Translator's note: in German, one word for "shell" is *Muschel*, in Polish *muszla*. See Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz*, 45.

635 Borowski, *Utwory wybrane*, s. 78, BN I, 276.

636 Magdalena Swat-Pawlicka, "Z inkubatora systemu. Casus muzułmana w systemie koncentracyjnym," *Teksty Drugie* 5 (2004), 71 (author's emphasis, M.J.).

637 Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz*, 42.

stantly pervaded by a curiosity that someone afterward did, in fact, deem nothing less than cynical; the curiosity of a naturalist who finds himself transplanted into an environment that is monstrous but new, monstrously new."⁶³⁸ The ironic use of the word "saved" (from the title of Levi's last book) – devoid of any theological connotation – referred (as the author himself made quite clear) to those who were "capable" of survival, in the Darwinian sense of the word.⁶³⁹

At the same time, in *Survival in Auschwitz*, in the context of the camp community, Levi points to the fact that "we have learnt that our personality is fragile, that it is much more in danger than our life." For this reason, Levi reproached the ancient sages: "Instead of warning us 'remember that you must die,' [they] would have done much better to remind us of this great danger that threatens us."⁶⁴⁰ The humanism of the ancient wise men was, in Levi's opinion, limited; they were not speaking of individual personality, though we might add that they were not able to talk about it in the way Levi does when he raises his cultural construct of the human-individual.

At the end of his life, the author of *Survival in Auschwitz* went through a crisis as a witness. Alvin H. Rosenfeld, who has written an important study of Holocaust literature, describes this crisis on the basis of correspondence with Levi: "On both a moral level, and a literary level, the author of *The Drowned and the Saved* began to cast doubt on the value of his own testimony. Survivors are not the true witnesses, Levi acknowledged, though they speak 'instead of them, as a replacement' [...]. Those who touched bottom stayed there; they said nothing and nobody heard them."⁶⁴¹ It was not just mistrust toward survivors' testimonies and toward their memories – including his own – that played a decisive role here. It also seems that Levi felt pangs of conscience for the muselmann, and for how he had presented him in *Survival in Auschwitz*.

The figure of the muselmann has moved to the center of discourse about the concentration camp. In his famous book *Remnants of Auschwitz*, Giorgio Agamben turned the muselmann into an essential criterion for his reflections on the human condition. Agamben, a great admirer of Levi, has adopted many of Levi's essential concepts, and accepts the consequences of such thinking. Quite clearly – against the backdrop of discussions about Levi's attitude toward muselmänner

638 Ibid., 180 (in "A Conversation with Primo Levi by Philip Roth").

639 Ibid., 18. Alvin H. Rosenfeld paraphrases a confession contained in *The Drowned and the Saved* that is self-accusatory in tone: "The worst survived, the selfish, brutal, insensate, collaborators from the 'gray zone,' informers. The worst survived – those most adapted to survive – all of the best people died." See Rosenfeld, *Podwójna śmierć. Rozważania o literaturze Holokaustu*, przełożyła B. Krawcewicz (Warszawa, 2003), 97.

640 Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz*, 55.

641 Rosenfeld, *Podwójna śmierć*, 97.

– what dominates the muselmann's nature, according to Agamben, is his non-humanity, his non-human nature. Agamben writes: "The *Muselmann* is not only or not so much a limit between life and death; rather, he marks the threshold between the human and inhuman" (*Remnants of Auschwitz*, 55). In light of other testimonies, including those on which Agamben and others rely (for example Hermann Langbein's *People in Auschwitz*), such a contention is at least controversial.

Let us examine a work that is considered a classic, namely Jorge Semprún's 2001 autobiographical novel *Le mort qu'il faut* (published in Polish in 2001 as *Odpowiedni Trup*, or Suitable Corpse), which is set in the concentration camp at Buchenwald. The "suitable corpse" is the corpse of a muselmann, whose place – when he eventually dies – the narrator will take because his own life is threatened. "Briefly put, he will give me his death, so that I will be able to live. We will exchange names, which is no small matter. Under my name he will go up in smoke, and under his name I will survive" (*Odpowiedni*, 110). The plan to substitute a corpse with a live person is never implemented, but the entire story revolves around the intention to carry out this macabre substitution. The "cursed muselmänner" – the description of their monstrosity and the loathing felt toward them by other prisoners (and the contempt of the SS men) emerge at the very beginning of *Le mort qu'il faut*, because these shapeless piles of hideous rags are visible upon arrival at the camp.

But unlike Agamben, Semprún never makes use of the human/non-human distinction. On the contrary – his narrator once managed to actually talk with the muselmann chosen for death and substitution. When he could not remember how one of Rimbaud's verses continued, the "suitable corpse" finished it for him. "Discussion was possible" (*Odpowiedni*, 36) – but only in a horrible and cursed place, namely in the common latrine, amidst the stench and sounds of people urinating and defecating.

In *The Drowned and the Saved*, Levi treats collective urination and defecation – along with hunger and cold – as the greatest torment that camp prisoners had to endure. But in Semprún's work, the common latrine "became a place of asylum and freedom" (*Odpowiedni*, 48), against the will of the SS men. For Levi, public defecation is a drastic, intolerable violation of one of the European cultural taboos – an "assault on humanity" that transforms the human being into an animal (*The Drowned and the Saved*, 112). In Semprún's work, there is no such talk, because he does not draw a distinction between man and animal based on (among other things) how they relieve themselves. It is similar with Marian Pankowski in his work *Z Auschwicu do Belsen* (From Auschwitz to Belsen). "Above all else, the muselmann is someone who takes a leak."⁶⁴² Defecation is an indica-

642 Marian Pankowski, *Z Auschwicu do Belsen. Przygody* (Warszawa, 2000), 21.

tion of humanity, as it is in both the work of Pankowski generally, and of – to take another example – Miron Białoszewski⁶⁴³.

Semprún's description of a night spent in a single bunk bed with the muselmann, along with his description of his death, ends with the muselmann quoting – at first indistinctly – one of Seneca's maxims (the "suitable corpse" was a "Latinist" by profession). At first, the narrator is not certain about what he heard, but years later, preparing an adaptation of Seneca's *Troades*, he recreated the final words as those being most certainly the words spoken by the dying muselmann: *Post mortem nihil est ipsaque mors nihil ...* – "There is nothing after death, and death itself is nothing" (*Odpowiedni*, 130). The dying stoic uttered the word *nihil* two times. The narrator ends: "Around me there were only corpses. Meat for the crematoria" (*Odpowiedni*, 129).

Despite all that, the narrator of Semprún's work does not distance himself from the muselmann's humanity, though his is a specific kind of humanity. Because muselmänner "had no place in the Manichean logic of resistance, of the battle for survival, for life" – they "are somewhere else," "beyond life, beyond survival," "submerged in a kind of nirvana" (*Odpowiedni*, 27). Like some sort of Buddhists. The narrator even highlights the fact that, having looked into the eyes of his "suitable corpse," he realized that he had "never before felt such a powerful closeness to another person" (*Odpowiedni*, 27). Looming death caused "these mortal remains to be brothers to me. It was we who were dying in this stench, and it was here where one could experience somebody else's death on one's own skin: Being-together-till-death, *Mitsein zum Tode*" (*Odpowiedni*, 27). Here, the Heideggerean vocabulary is interpreted entirely differently than in the work of Agamben – precisely with regard to the human community, which is understood not in the spirit of traditional humanism, but in terms of a distinctive "muselmann-centered" watershed in culture.

Referring to Agamben, Slavoj Žižek writes: "One cannot simply ignore the Muslim [muselmann]: any ethical stance that does not confront the horrifying paradox of the Muslim is by definition unethical, an obscene travesty of ethics – and once we actually confront the Muslim, notions like 'dignity' are somehow deprived of their substance. In other words, 'Muslim' is not simply the 'lowest' in the hierarchy of ethical types ('they not only have no dignity, they have even lost their animal vitality and egotism'), but the zero-level that renders the whole hierarchy meaningless. Not to take this paradox into account is to participate in the same cynicism that the Nazis themselves practiced when they first brutally reduced the Jews to the subhuman level, and then presented this image as proof of their subhumanity – they extrapolated to the extreme the standard procedure

643 See Miron Białoszewski, *Pamiętnik z powstania warszawskiego* (Warszawa: PIW, 1970).

of humiliation, in which I, say, take the belt off the trousers of a dignified person, thus forcing him to hold his trousers up with his hands, and then mock him for being undignified. In this precise sense, our moral dignity is ultimately always a fake: it depends on our being lucky enough to avoid the fate of the Muslim. This fact, perhaps, also accounts for the 'irrational' feeling of guilt that haunted the survivors of the Nazi camps: what the survivors were compelled to confront at its purest was not the utter contingency of survival, but, more radically, *the utter contingency of our retaining our moral dignity*, the most precious kernel of our personality, according to Kant." Perhaps this is – as Žižek maintains – the most important ethical lesson of the twentieth century: "we should abandon all ethical arrogance, and humbly acknowledge how lucky we are to be able to act ethically."⁶⁴⁴ In light of such arguments made by Žižek, it does not seem to me (as it does to Agamben) that Levi's statements about the muselmann's dignity and lack of dignity were ironic in character (*Remnants of Auschwitz*, 47).⁶⁴⁵

Another disturbing ethical question from Levi's *The Drowned and the Saved* is the emergence of the "gray zone" in the concentration camps⁶⁴⁶ – on which Agamben placed such great importance – and the members of the Sonderkommando that were part of that "gray zone." Sonderkommandos were special units, created by the SS and made up of Jews, that were designated to receive those being transported to their deaths, to lead them to the gas chambers, to extract the bodies, to segregate the remains, to carry the bodies to the crematorium, to supervise the furnaces, and then to extract and dispose of the ashes. Successive Sonderkommandos were ruthlessly liquidated; it was a rule the SS men were obligated to follow. A few of their members survived – "thanks to some astonishing twist of fate." Levi counts the Sonderkommandos in Auschwitz and other extermination camps as examples of the most "extreme cases of collaboration," which suggests the kind of rigorous ethics that led Hannah Arendt to include in the circle of collaborators members of the Jewish police and the Warsaw *Judenrat*. But the value of classifying occupants of the "gray zone" in such a way is doubtful; neither Leon Weliczker's story nor the "testimonies of the Jewish Sonderkommando from Auschwitz" – published under the emphatic title *We Wept without Tears* – allow for a hasty judgment. The author of this work, Gideon Greif, acknowledges that use of the word "collaboration" –

644 Žižek, *The Puppet and the Dwarf: The Perverse Core of Christianity* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003), 158-159. Author's emphasis – M.J.

645 Similarly, I do not see the rhetorical irony in the title of book, translated directly from the Italian (*Se questo è un uomo*) as "If This Is a Man."

646 Agamben writes of the "unprecedented discovery made by Levi at Auschwitz" – the discovery of the gray zone, in which "the 'long chain of conjunction between victim and executioner' comes loose"; in which the persecuted become the persecutors, and the torturer becomes, in turn, the victim (*Remnants of Auschwitz*, 21).

after considering all circumstances and accounts – “leaves a bitter aftertaste.”⁶⁴⁷ “Any moral deed,” Walter Sofsky argues, “is impossible where absolute evil has become an institution.”⁶⁴⁸ Greif calls for “a basically *empathetic* stance,”⁶⁴⁹ and thus opens the door to the abandonment of ethical arrogance.

Kertész takes a different position than Levi. In *Kaddish* the narrator hears a “sour tone, not just within me but also around me” (*K*, 10), and he rejects the classic message “to be a creator, to produce and create”; when he and his interlocutors “blow sour notes” it is disgusting, as is the “moralizing paranoia [...] of criminal proceedings against others” (*K*, 16). One can regard the first novel in the cycle we are discussing here, namely *Fatelessness*, as a questioning of the humanistic view of man and the human project. In *A kudarc* (published in English in 2011 as *Fiasco*), Kertész describes the vicissitudes of the publishing of *Fatelessness*. In a conversation with the neurotic man from the publishing house, it becomes clear that if the novel seemed bitter to him, it would not gain his approval. “Only then,” the narrator admits, “did I see that I was sitting opposite a professional humanist, and professional humanists would like to believe that Auschwitz had happened only to those to whom it had happened to happen at that time and place; that nothing had happened to the majority, to mankind – Mankind! – in general” (*FO*, 37). But if that was so, then one would neither have to show bitterness because of accidents of fate, nor demand a revision of the history of mankind. The latter would be the worst.

The narrator of *Fatelessness* is a child, a credulous fifteen-year-old in a concentration camp. At first he is fooled – as were many adults – by the big lie told by the torturers in charge of the camp, who staged the area of extermination as a “cozy, spotlessly clean bathing house in the middle of a green forest.”⁶⁵⁰ Rudolf Reder, an escapee from the Belzec camp, has written that “lies told to the Jews continued right up to the front of the gas chamber, because even in the courtyard of death, those crowds of naked condemned people were being deceived. This was the purpose of the signs indicating ‘showers’ at the entrances to the gas chambers, along with – as if to mock the victims even further – a large vase of colorful flowers.”⁶⁵¹ Borowski recalls: “- - - someone named our camp: *Betrugslager*, camp of lies. A sparse hedge in front of a little white house, a yard like one sees in the countryside, signs with the inscription ‘bath,’ were all enough to bewilder millions of people, to deceive them until death.”⁶⁵² In *Fiasco*, we learn that the

647 Gideon Greif, *We Wept Without Tears: Testimonies of the Jewish Sonderkommando from Auschwitz* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 70.

648 *Ibid.*, 67.

649 *Ibid.*, 71. Author’s emphasis – M.J.

650 Maranda, *Nazistowskie obozy zagłady*, 75.

651 Rudolf Reder, *Belzec* (Kraków, 1999), 2nd ed., 19-20.

652 Borowski, *Utwory wybrane*, 93 (“U nas, w Auschwitzu...”)

publisher reprimanded the author for treating his hero's reactions ironically – they appear “odd,” “incredible,” “in bad taste” and “offensive” (*FO*, 56-57). But how else could one express the dual irony – the cynical irony of the executioners and the tragic irony of the victims, or rather of their situation?

But the greatest offence to the editor's good taste had to be the fact that Köves became a muselmann.⁶⁵³ It is one of the most powerfully written parts of *Fatelessness*. Chapter 6 ends with the protagonist heaving bags of cement until, “by the end of the day, I felt that something within me had broken down irreparably” (*FO*, 170). And Chapter 7 begins with the protagonist stating that he had found “peace, tranquility, and relief. [...] Thus, if I grew tired while standing at *Appell*, for example, without so much as a look at whether it was muddy or there was a puddle, I would simply take a seat, plop down, and stay down, until my neighbors forcibly pulled me up. Cold, damp, wind, or rain were no longer able to bother me; they did not get through to me, I did not even sense them. [...] As for work, I no longer even strove to give the appearance of it. If people did not like that, at most they would beat me, and even then they could not truly do much harm, since for me it just won some time: at the first blow I would promptly stretch out on the ground and would feel nothing after that, since I would meanwhile drop off to sleep” (*FO*, 171-172).

The muselmann's condition is defined in Kertész's works by two basic features:

First, he is excluded from the system of forced labor that dominates the camp; Semprún regarded this exclusion as the start of the “process of muselmannization”; the muselmann is marked by “unproductive marginality” (*Odpowiedni*, 27);

And second, he regains his own death: “it is precisely in the name of death that we can defy collectivity, just as we defy ourselves, we can thus – in those rare moments which are close to death but full of life – be real individuals: Then, no one else lives in our stead, and no one else dies in our stead” (*Dg*, 155).

Unlike other writers, Kertész attempts to describe the muselmann's *internal experience*. He does not condemn the muselmann, and he throws no accusations in his face. He shows the path to the other side, where an altered state of consciousness is achieved, marked by lightness, peace, and contentment. The narrator confesses that “my body was here, I had precise cognizance of everything about it, it was just that I myself somehow no longer inhabited it” (*FA*, 184); emancipation from the body is the muselmann's great fortune. In the hospital where he was miraculously placed, the narrator keeps a corpse with him in bed so he can eat the rations that continue to be brought for that corpse. This is his “suitable corpse,”

653 In *Dziennik galernika*, Kertész writes about the “condition of the muselmann in Auschwitz (which I survived).” And he adds: “But still, in that vegetative state, from time to time, the soul and the light of an ethical world shines through” (219-220).

through whom he is indirectly nourished, "until one day he began to go really strange" (*FA*, 182) and the narrator started to fear that they were going to notice his delay in turning over the corpse, and he would face trouble. Levi had a different attitude toward this set of circumstances. "It is no longer a man," he states uncompromisingly, "who, having lost all restraint, shares his bed with a corpse."⁶⁵⁴ But is it not a bit offensive to read about someone granting or denying humanity? We understand, of course, that what we are talking about here is a relationship with a corpse, but Levi demands something that is not realistic, namely that the muselmann abide by cultural rules that are no longer important for someone who has lost a strong sense of the border between the living and the dead.

Levi declared that "it is man who kills, man who creates and suffers injustice," but a man who has lost all internal restraints, he is not a man; Europe's cultural norms and its anthropological vision – Levi believes – decide what is, and what is not, human. Kertész does not share this view. He agrees with Améry, who – when writing about the concentration camps – "rejected the embodiment of spirit and culture that had previously been the 'intellectual' and the 'man of culture.'" Culture can help neither to relieve suffering, nor to resist, since – as Améry writes – "intellectual and aesthetic goods become the enemy's property" (*Jnw*, 60), which can in turn be used to prop up its reasoning – that is, its rule. This was, by the way, an obsession for Tadeusz Borowski, and it was precisely for this reason that, in Kertész's view, the muselmann must stand apart from culture and civilization, which after all was what created the concentration camp in the first place. The muselmann does not acclimate himself – as in Darwin – to conditions in the camp, but rather abandons his culturally-defined personality.

Kertész agreed with Adorno, who feared that so-called activist literature could, "with a clear conscience, continue to amuse itself in the very culture which gave birth to the crime." Such literature is generally marked by the distinct fact that it leads one to believe – deliberately or not – that humanity flourishes even in so-called extreme situations, indeed especially in such situations. Sometimes this line of reasoning turns into murky metaphysics, which is prepared to affirm a horror tailored-made for the extreme situation, as long as it reveals the "true" essence of man.⁶⁵⁵

At this point it must be clearly stated that Kertész – through his analysis of the muselmann experience – invalidated such an understanding of culture and humanity. And for this reason he had a right to formulate a different notion of culture, cleansed of hypocrisy and falsehoods spoken on behalf of Man, and to propose the notion of "the Holocaust as culture," a tragic culture, free of humanistic kitsch.

654 Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz*, 171.

655 Quote from Sauerland, *Od Diltheya*, 213.

The difficulties surrounding the publication of *Fatelessness* as described by Kertész in *Fiasco* illustrate the level on which this extraordinary work was received, a work which exceeded the accepted methods of writing about the concentration camps. The subject itself, the editorial augurs claimed, is great and terrifying, but "your way of giving expression to the material of your experiences" does not work (*FO*, 73). The overall style is disturbing, as is the fact that, in the end, the protagonist – who himself is so morally suspicious – dares to pass judgment on moral matters. In the end, it turns out that "the publishing man wanted to read into my novel that notwithstanding – indeed, *precisely* notwithstanding – everything that had happened to happen to me too at that time and place, Auschwitz had still not sullied me. Yet it had sullied me. I was sullied in other ways than were those who had transported me there, it's true, but I had been sullied none the less; and in my view this is a basic issue" (*FO*, 37).

This *being sullied* truly is a basic issue. The protagonist is certainly an accomplice in the transgression that was the very fact of survival, and that survival was thanks to his having been an abject muselmann. He does not hide this fact at all. Such an approach stands in stark contrast to testimonies left behind by Levi and others.

6. Wife

We must devote special attention to Wife, since she plays a decisive role in at least two parts of Kertész's tetralogy, *Kaddish* and *Liquidation*. Actually, with reference to the wife, one could isolate the two works into a kind of diptych. *Kaddish* portrays Wife from the point of view of Husband, and *Liquidation* considers the position of Wife and presents Husband as viewed by Wife. The figure of Wife is so generalized that one could characterize her attitude – not even using her name – as something like what one would see in a morality play.

An important theme in *Kaddish* revolves around conversations between Husband-writer and Wife – "a pretty Jewish girl" who fell in love with him after a powerful speech he gave on Auschwitz. The "wife (to-be and ex-)" maintains that he must be – according to the narrator these are her exact words – "very lonely and sad" (*K*, 47) and he must be very inexperienced, despite his many experiences, since he so lacks faith in people and must force the creation of strange theories to explain "a natural (yes, that's what she said: natural), a *natural* and decent human gesture" (*K*, 47). She falls in love with him in a way that befits a woman who wants – of course, along the lines of the age-old myth – to save the man, though it is difficult not to notice that this is a pointless task, because behind her attitude lies something that Kertész characterized as the behavior of a "professional human-

ist" – of the publisher, the editor, and maybe even Levi. "I recollect," the narrator says with tender irony, "how much these words upset me, a remark that was so utterly amateurish and so beguiling in its very untenability" (*K*, 47). She also tells him that, having read a story he wrote about a Jew, she is now able to "*hold her head high*," that it "*taught her how to live*," etc. (*K*, 76). He lets his wife in on his plans as a writer, which is an obvious mistake, because there is no way she could completely understand him; indeed he does not even want her to understand him.

Wife, in the version presented in *Kaddish*, gets married in order to save a poor man who had been severely beaten morally in Auschwitz. Amazed, he presents her plans to save him parodically: She wants to "guide me to her, to her love, so that *together* we might extricate ourselves from the swamp and leave it behind forever, like the bad memory of an illness" (*K*, 116). Wife's mistake stemmed from the fact that she believed (and this is why she adored him) that he had not given in to destruction in Auschwitz. But she was terribly wrong (*K*, 115). In the end, Wife wanted a child as culmination, to which Husband responded with a dreadful and categorical *No!* This *No* is the starting point for *Kaddish for an Unborn Child*, and it is a constant presence throughout the novel.

The conflict between Wife and Husband is the foundation for a clearly outlined drama, not only revolving around the family, but also encompassing society. Husband directly admits "that when I contracted my marriage [it was ...] undoubtedly out of motives and for the aim of self-liquidation," though at the beginning he did think about future "happiness" (*K*, 70). His marriage creates a paradox regarding the unborn child, which is repeated several times in *Kaddish*: "your non-existence viewed as the necessary and radical liquidation of my own existence" (*K*, 70).

Liquidation reveals, through the wife's confession, her position in this marriage. She understands the dangerous argument of her husband, who has injected himself and her with the concentration camp's poison, and in the end he turns her into ... a muselmann. "One day," she says, "I realized that I was satisfied. I was startled, because there were no grounds for being satisfied. [...] I had no desire, no goal, I didn't wish to die but I didn't care to live either. It was a peculiar condition but, in its singular way, not unpleasant" (*L*, 111). Eventually, however, she decides to break out of this condition and leave – to a place "in which it is possible to live" (*L*, 117) and, in the end, to a new husband and two children with him.

In *Kaddish* we clearly see what Husband is afraid of: namely, what a woman is able to do in this culture – to tame. And the objects of his love are like Celan's: "For a ballpoint pen is my spade, the sepulchre of your ashen hair, Shulamith" (*K*, 73). Marriage is of use to him only to the extent that he learns that he is "unable to live in a married state" (*K*, 70). He brought it to a point where Wife becomes foreign to him once and for all (*K*, 112-113).

A necessary condition for Husband's life-writing is that he has nothing of his own, that he always remains an exile, a "resident of camps and subtenancies" (K, 61), foreign. But he goes further: in *Fiasco*, writing is presented as dispossessing oneself, surrendering oneself to the paper. The writing of a book (*Fatelessness*) becomes separation, alienation. The product of writing is betrayal. A particularly sharp contrast is drawn between the "novel" and "I" – with Auschwitz as the backdrop: "I was taken to Auschwitz not by the train in the novel but by a real one" (*FO*, 83).

7. Mourning

Like many others, Kertész indicates that what was most poignant in the concentration camp was a terrible fear of oblivion, made possible through culture used as a tool of those in power. He invokes Tadeusz Borowski, who expressed concern that such a culture would eliminate knowledge of the Holocaust and Auschwitz, that the victory of the murders would efface the memory of the victims' suffering. "We will be shouted down by our poets, attorneys, philosophers and priests. They will create beauty, goodness and truth. They will create a religion."⁶⁵⁶ Kertész reminds us that this is what Jean Améry wrote about as well, twenty years after Borowski (*Jnw*, 61).

In postwar, Sovietized (as Kertész consistently defines it) Eastern Europe, another method of Auschwitz suppression has been dominant: feigned memory, ritualized memory limited to various banal words and gestures. This has had especially profound repercussions in Poland. In Auschwitz alone around a million Jews were put to death, a fact which imposes a particular responsibility on us Poles. In 1957 Maria Czapska wrote: "The most terrible genocide in human history, the massacre of several million Jews in Poland, which was chosen by Hitler as his execution square, together with the blood and ashes of those victims who vanished into the soil of Poland, constitute a fundamental tie that binds Poland with the Jewish nation; it is not within our power to break this bond. Poland is burdened, if not by responsibility for the crimes, then by a responsibility to redress those crimes."⁶⁵⁷

Fifteen years ago Kertész emphasized: "I repeat that the Holocaust is a universal experience, and through the Holocaust, Judaism is today a renewedly universal experience." He has continued to use an expression that is key to his thinking – "Judaism as universal experience"⁶⁵⁸ – an expression that has an ethical character

656 This is a quote from Borowski's story "U nas, w Auschwitzu" in *Utwory wybrane*, 111.

657 Maria Czapska, in response to the editor, Turowicz, *Kultura* (Paris), 1957, no. 6, 53.

658 Kertész, *Die exilierte Sprache. Essays und Reden* (Frankfurt a/M., 2003), 59. In the Polish translation, the expression "universal experience" does not appear.

and forms the foundation of the notion of "the Holocaust as culture." This is the title of a lecture delivered by Kertész at the University of Vienna in 1992. At that time he declared that a heavy, black Holocaust mourning should become an integral part of social self-awareness, and that the determination to establish such a mourning will mean a "vibrant value system" (*Jnw*, 68). "The Holocaust is a value, because at the price of immeasurable suffering it has led to immeasurable knowledge, and as a result it contains within itself immeasurable moral resources."⁶⁵⁹ The ethical implications of the Holocaust are a "gloomy mourning holiday, whose dark glare will not disappear – probably never will – from the world to which we belong" (*Jnw*, 40).

We are forced to live in an excess of pain, with a sense of irrevocable loss. We are not talking here about a traditional period of mourning that lasts no longer than a year or two. This mourning can never end. As an ethical attitude, it defines a universal European consciousness. And Poland, which Hitler marked out as a field of genocide, cannot avoid this mourning.

I cite the following works by Imre Kertész. In parentheses I provide the abbreviations used in the above section of my book. If the work has been translated into English, I include the original title and original date of publication, followed by the English-language publication information. If the work has not been translated into English, I provide the Polish title and, in parentheses, the original title, a rough English translation of the title, and the original publication date.

Fatelessness (*FA*, *Sorstalanság*, 1975), translated by Tim Wilkinson (New York: Vintage, 2004);

Fiasco (*FO*, *A kudarc*, 1988), translated by Tim Wilkinson (Brooklyn: Melville House, 2011);

Kaddish for an Unborn Child (*K*, *Kaddis a meg nem született gyermekért*, 1990), translated from the Hungarian by Tim Wilkinson (New York: Random House/Vintage International, 2004);

Liquidation (*L*, *Felszámolás*, 2003), translated from the original Hungarian by Tim Wilkinson (New York: Knopf, 2004).

Dziennik galernika (*Dg*, *Gályanapló*, "Galley Boat-Log," 1992), Warszawa: W.A.B., 2006;

Język na wygananiu (*Jnw*, *A száműzött nyelv*, "The Language of Exile," 1998), Warszawa: W.A.B., 2004.

659 *Ibid.*, 88.