

Alina Molisak

# Jewish Warsaw – Jewish Berlin

Literary Portrayal of the City in the First Half  
of the 20th Century



Studies in Jewish History  
and Memory



PETER LANG

This book is a reflection on the Jewish presence in two European capitals, Warsaw and Berlin, in the first half of the 20th century. It was inspired by the works of Polish-Jewish, Yiddish and German-Jewish authors, as well as by the connections between urban spaces and the formation of different varieties of modern Jewish identity. The spotlight is cast on images preserved in literary works, namely those concerning separate Jewish neighborhoods and the sphere of cultural interethnic contacts. By attempting to restore the presence of Jewish inhabitants of both cities, destroyed by the Holocaust, it may become possible to see how the imagined communities of the time were created and preserved in the texts, even if, in reality, the metropolises were transformed into necropolises.

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## Jewish Warsaw – Jewish Berlin

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*For Leon*





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# Foreword

I have long been interested in the subject matter of the functioning of urban spaces, particularly those of Warsaw and Berlin, which, as it seems, have a lot in common. When I look at various versions of these two cities' literary record, I notice how clearly they are bound by their peculiar existence, which spans between worldliness and provincialism. When studying these urban spaces' history, one discovers their shared peripheriness, the experience of war destruction (during the Second World War), and the efforts to rebuild the urban structure, the effect of which, in the case of both capital cities, was sometimes something like a 'staging' of the city that sought new versions of its identity. Both Berlin and Warsaw were often seen as cities placed between the East and the West.<sup>1</sup> Particularly interesting was not only the history of these two metropolises and their political history but also their urban development and cultural and ethnic diversity. First and foremost, the presence of their Jewish inhabitants was highly visible in the first half of the twentieth century, with their social stratification, internal diversification, and transformations connected with the development of modern Jewish identity remaining a vital part of the European heritage and also a fascinating research topic for me.

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1 I wrote about this for the first time in my article devoted to Berlin, see "Miejska przestrzeń literatury dwudziestowiecznej – Berlin, Berlin," in *Dwudziestowieczność*, ed. M. Dąbrowski and T. Wójcik (Warsaw, 2004); in this book I make use of my other publications on the subject matter of Jews: "Żydowska Warszawa – żydowski Berlin w pierwszej połowie XX wieku. Różne wersje religijności," in [www.plit-aip.com/plit/2015/08](http://www.plit-aip.com/plit/2015/08); "Spisek wam wszystko wyjaśni. . .," in *(Nie)przezroczyść normalności w literaturze polskiej XX i XXI wieku*, ed. H. Gosk and B. Karwowska (Warsaw, 2014); "Jüdische Identität in der ersten Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts," in *Osteuropäisch-jüdische Literaturen im 20. und 21. Jahrhundert: Identität und Poetik*, ed. K. Smola (Munich–Berlin, 2013); "Przestępczość wielkowiejska – prostytutka. Portret literacki Ostjuden: Warszawa i Berlin," in *Literatura popularna XX wieku – przeglądy – analizy – interpretacje*, ed. E. Bartos and M. Tomczok (Katowice, 2013); "Literackie ślady żydowskich migracji pierwszej połowy XX wieku," in *Narracje migracyjne w literaturze polskiej XX i XXI wieku*, ed. H. Gosk (Cracow, 2012); "Zionism in Polish, or a Few of Jakub Appenzlak's Texts," in *Polish and Hebrew Literature and National Identity*, ed. A. Molisak, S. Ronen (Warsaw, 2010); "Literacki obraz miasta – żydowski Berlin, żydowska Warszawa," *Anthropos* 6-7 (2006).

Treated symbolically, Warsaw and Berlin can be said to represent two Jewish communities which lived in different conditions and had a lot in common but also differed in many respects. Literary records concerning these two metropolises produced in the first half of the twentieth century constitute an enormous fond difficult to present within the framework of one publication. Hence, the texts analyzed in this book are only a sample, a small collection of various prose works, which facilitates seeing various representations of these two places, the literary topographies connected with Warsaw's and Berlin's Jewish spaces.

We have to do here with a curious way of perceiving space. On the one hand, the authors use various clichés and stereotypes, often to exoticize the East. On the other hand, in these texts we often encounter an outlook on the different versions of the identity of the West-European diaspora as seen with the eyes of newcomers from the East, who sometimes adopted the categories which described their distinctness and defined their own identity.<sup>2</sup> More complex proved the situation where the immigrants from the East-European diaspora came into contact with the phenomenon of the interest taken in, for instance, Hasidic spirituality, which certain German Jews regarded as an opportunity for returning to the roots. Those who looked at the East-European Judaism like at a chance for revival were far from treating the East in categories of cultural subordination and barbarism, while in the case of the religious sphere many were also fascinated by the East European Judaism (more about this topic in the chapter "City and Religion").

Aside the sphere of the sacred another important dimension of the functioning of the urban space is the sphere of power, which is why the realm of political activity constitutes a vital aspect of the literary records. The presence of Jewish milieus in this domain is represented by both realist narrations and political fiction novels (chapter "City and Politics").

Cities are also areas conducive to the activity of people from the social margin. Urban centers are spaces where organized crime develops. These phenomena, which were also present in the Jewish circles in both capitals, deserve attention as well, particularly that research (Ułaszyn's, Brzezina's, and Krynicka's) has indicated the existence of a curious kind of language connected with this sphere of the Jewish and non-Jewish community's activity.

The phenomenon of migration of inhabitants was evident in both Warsaw and Berlin. What I have in mind here is both the movement of the population within

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2 This has been discussed by James Carrier. See J. G. Carrier, *Occidentalism. Images of the West* (New York, 1995).

the borders of the urban center and the escape from the *shtetl* to the metropolis, connected predominantly with the modernization processes and various forms of anti-Semitic violence. Descriptions of migration motivated by various considerations, which, particularly in the case of the German capital, contributed to the emergence of the *Ostjuden*'s separate microworld, are supplemented with images of the course of the metropolization of Jews in the European diaspora. I analyze these in the chapter "City and Emigration."<sup>3</sup>

The perception and valorization of space is accompanied with the functioning of common places, that is contact zones (Pratt) where multi-ethnic communities present in the tissue of the metropolis co-exist.<sup>4</sup> One should inquire not only about the common areas, but also about divisions in the urban space and the existence of invisible walls between the communities inhabiting both capitals. To this I devote the chapter "City Divided and Contact Zones."

I direct the question about the course of the 'city's narrative' and how the aforementioned various phenomena exist in narrations about the urban space at a small number of selected Polish, German, and Yiddish prose texts, which fact I explicitly emphasize in the text. The context in which I read them is the modernization processes and the transformations of the Jewish identity and the development of its modern versions.

A separate topic is the transformation processes in both European and Jewish literature, with the latter produced in various languages and in contact with the Other. But this would constitute an entirely separate research area.<sup>5</sup> An important phenomena which one should bear in mind when looking at the metropolitan spaces, is the kind of dislocation with which we have to do in various narrations concerning the East European diaspora since the second half of the nineteenth century and increasingly evidently in the early twentieth century. One can clearly see the slow departure from the dominance of the sphere of the *shtetl*/small town – a place so characteristic of Central and Eastern Europe – and

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- 3 See T. Brinkman, "Ort des Übergangs – Berlin als Schnittstelle der jüdischen Migration aus Osteuropa nach 1918," in *Transit und Transformation. Osteuropäisch-jüdische Migranten in Berlin 1918-1939*, ed. V Dohrn and G. Pickhan (Gottingen, 2010), pp. 25-44.
  - 4 M. L. Pratt, "Art of the Contact Zone," *Profession* 91 (1991): 33-40; her, *Imperial Eyes: Travel, Writing and Transculturation* (London, 1992), p. 2. See also E. Prokop-Janiec, "Kategoria pogranicza we współczesnych studiach żydowskich," in her, *Pogranicza polsko-żydowskie: Topografie i teksty* (Cracow, 2013), pp. 134-146.
  - 5 One example of reflection on this subject matter is Krutikov's work. See M. Krutikov, *Yiddish Fiction and the Crisis of Modernity 1905-1914* (Stanford, 2001).

its replacement with the city. The presence of urban spaces is connected with both migrations of the Jewish population and changes in the characters' identity in response to the challenges of modernity, new social trends and movements, which changed the Jewish community to a considerable degree and made it possible to establish new orders, reevaluate traditions, confront the non-Jewish world, and, last but not least, facilitated the enormous multi-lingual growth of the Jewish culture during the pre-Holocaust period.

\* \* \*

This book I have written is deeply indebted to others – I would like to express special gratitude to several people. I am thankful to Magdalena Marszałek, Gertrud Pickhan, Wojtek and Magda Klemm, Jola Żyndul, Maria Antosik-Piela, and Anja Tippner for the many meetings and highly inspiring discussions concerning both urban spaces and the types of Jewish identity. I am grateful to Szymon Rudnicki for his precious remarks and orienting me in the subject matter of Jewish political parties. Bella Szwarzman-Czarnota was highly supportive and taught me about the phenomena important to the religious dimension of Judaism present in the literary records. I would also like to thank Andrzej Zieniewicz for his critical remarks concerning the conception of the whole. Thus, I am solely responsible for any omissions, mistakes, and blunders.

I owe separate thanks to Shoshana Ronen and also Staszek Obirek for their attention, concern, and hours of conversations. I would like to thank all residents of our 'Mokotów kibbutz' and my true friends for the years of support. Last but not least, I am grateful to my family, particularly Leon Rozenbaum, for patience, kindness, and understanding.

## Two Cities – Two Quarters

*Getting to know cities involves deciphering their depictions, narrated just like that, as if in a dream.*

S. Kracauer<sup>6</sup>

Since the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries urban space has been a particularly important place and an object of literary narrations. A constant element of representations of this space is, on the one hand, fascination with the city, and, on the other hand, the fears, concerns, and terror caused by this deformation of the existing world. Although for many twentieth-century literary characters the city is the most natural environment, a phantasmic place attractive through both its diversity and universality, its evaluations are often ambivalent. With the appropriation of the urban space by literary texts come attempts at its metaphorization; visions of fascination with the urban space begin to coincide with its apocalyptic record.

In reference to the conception of the city as cultural space formulated by Aleksander Wallis, Ewa Rewers notices two possible perspectives of reading this research proposal:<sup>7</sup>

Wallis' approach can be called culturalist, which puts him alongside Georg Simmel, Max Weber, Siegfried Kracauer, Lewis Mumford, Richard Sennett, Peter Hall, Edward Soja, and Michael Deer, to list just a few scholars important for research on the twentieth-century city. But one can also say that it is connected with cultural studies as defined by the British and Americans.<sup>8</sup>

According to Wallis, particularly vital areas are generated in places where the cultural practices of the urban community are centered, including the spaces which he considers the most vital, such as, the city center, the home, and the *temple*. But the scholar points out that nowadays areas situated outside culture (markets, railway stations, airports, and hotels)<sup>9</sup> play a tremendous role and strive

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6 S. Kracauer, "Ulice," trans. by K. Wierzbicka, in *Literatura na Świecie* 8-9 (2001): 325.

7 E. Rewers, "Miasto jako przestrzeń kulturowa," in *Przemiany miasta. Wokół socjologii Aleksandra Wallisa*, ed. B. Jałowiecki, A. Majer, and M. S. Szczepański (Warsaw, 2005).

8 *Ibid.*, p. 86. If not indicated otherwise, all English translations by A. B.

9 These spaces have become an object of a separate contemporary conceptualization in the form of the proposition made by Marc Augé, who saw them as one of many

for recognition as cultural areas. Thus, the modern city should be seen more like a work of art (Hans Jonas' conception) than through the prism of division into various areas saturated with symbolic values to a varied degree (Wallis).<sup>10</sup>

It seems, however, that in reference to literary texts produced in the first half of the twentieth century Wallis' conceptions provide more appropriate analytic tools. One has to bear in mind that in his definition of the city Wallis used the classification of space defined according to criteria such as function/purpose, ownership, shape, characteristic features, etc.<sup>11</sup> For the notion of the cultural area defined by Wallis can regard not only the city center or the temple/sacred realm, but also parts of the city such as quarters.<sup>12</sup> Describing the space of a quarter would inherently involve not only noticing its information layers (origin history, architecture, ownership relations, urban planning structure), but also formulation of a repertoire of cultural roles played by such a clearly marked place. In a metropolitan system a quarter is seen as a "mainstay of hominess."<sup>13</sup> The space delineated by the street network remains under the rule of the community, at least on the symbolic level (even if not legally). Sometimes – and this is the case with the Jewish quarters in Warsaw and Berlin in the early twentieth century – the symbolic sphere too has an ambiguous status. Take, for instance, the bi- and sometimes tri-lingual (in Warsaw under the Russian partition) street signs, shop signs, and advertising slogans.

Transformations of perception of the urban space are nothing new. The city is sometimes seen as an awe- or repulsion-inspiring area of ambivalence, with its diversity based on opposites and contrasts (Max Weber). At other times it is viewed critically as a sphere subordinate to commercial values, an area dominated by the pursuit of financial gain and the universal experience of alienation (Georg Simmel).<sup>14</sup> Emphasizing the durability of Weber's conception, Dobiesław Jędrzejczyk points out that it supplements the gravity of the issue of

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non-places (*non-lieux*), emphasizing their role in the present phase of contemporariness. See M. Augé, *Non-Places: An Introduction to Anthropology of Supermodernity* (Le Seuil: Verso, 1992).

10 Ibid., p. 90.

11 A. Wallis, "Definicja miasta. Symbole," in *Socjologia miasta*, text selection and editing M. Malikowski and S. Solecki (Rzeszów, 2001), pp. 67-83.

12 A. Wallis, "Pojęcie obszaru kulturowego. Pojęcie centrum. Krajobraz i szata informacyjna," in *Socjologia miasta*, pp. 83-100.

13 K. Pawłowska, *Idea swojskości w urbanistyce i architekturze miejskiej* (Cracow, 1996).

14 See *Przemiany miasta*; A. Majer, "Świadomość miasta – miasto w świadomości," in *Przemiany miasta*; D. Jędrzejczyk, *Geografia humanistyczna miasta* (Warsaw, 2004).



community, of the bond tying the entire city.<sup>15</sup> In the individual urban centers, this community's awareness is conditioned by, for instance, their size and cultural type.<sup>16</sup> The precursor of such an outlook on the urban space was Florian Znaniecki, who believed that "urban dwellers are not only bodies, but also active experiencing 'subjects', in which character they are not in the city but the city is in the sphere of their shared experience and actions; they create it as a most complex social structure. This experience is precisely 'experiencing space' [...]."<sup>17</sup> It is noteworthy that this 'experiencing of space' accompanies not only those who remain in the sphere of its immediate influence, but it also often becomes a constructed experience, attributed to the existence of subjects present in art (literature).

Znaniecki also stressed that "no man can individually stay anywhere permanently or temporarily without entering the range of the spatial values of some system simply by means of his very presence. [...] Presence [...] within the scope of the given system's spatial value is experienced socially as a kind of participation in this property."<sup>18</sup> As a result of thus perceived mutuality of relations – of the interrelations between the subject and space – even in the case of the object's constructed or reported experiences (literary fiction and reportage respectively) it is possible to say that the space acquires a somewhat special status, it is co-shaped by various actors. Putting predominantly specific inhabitants, subjects of urban life, at the center of attention makes their relations closely connected with the given area become instruments of identification and isolation.

In sociology the city is defined as a social place where strangers meet. It is not so much a meeting place as more like a very important sphere of moving between what is familiar to what is not, between the known and the unknown, between what is one's own and what is alien. This synthesis of many reflections

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15 It is noteworthy that differentiating between various types of cities (consumer, producer, mercantile, and agricultural, that is ones created in connection to agriculture), Max Weber emphasized the close ties between the economy and politics and the consequent regulations, important for the organization of structures of inhabitants. See M. Weber, "Pojęcie miasta i kategorie miast," in his, *Racjonalność, władza, odczarowanie*, selection, introduction and translation by M. Holona (Poznań, 2004), pp. 243–266.

16 D. Jędrzejczyk, *Geografia humanistyczna miasta*, p. 25.

17 F. Znaniecki, *Miasto w świadomości jego obywateli. Z badań Polskiego Instytutu Socjologicznego nad miastem Poznaniem* (Poznań, 1931), p. 5, <http://www.wbc.poznan.pl/dlibra/aresults?action=SearchAction&QI=5A08CEFD29E-057EF27E734AD00965141-17>.

18 Qtd. after: A. Majer, "Świadomość miasta – miasto w świadomości," p. 64.

on the urban space (formulated by scholars as different as Max Weber, Georg Simmel, Richard Sennett, and others) was proposed by Markus Schroer.<sup>19</sup>

Elżbieta Rybicka very shrewdly remarks that “the city is not only a cultural space in the strictest meaning of this term, that is, an object of research and reflection of cultural studies (as well as many other disciplines: history of art and architecture, sociology, and philosophy of culture), but also a laboratory of transformations in culture.”<sup>20</sup> Due to such an interdisciplinary approach to geopoetics we obtain a lot of analytic tools in the areas with which deal scholars who are advocates of the ‘spatial turn’ in literary studies, particularly history of literature. Owing to the approach proposed, in the case of urban spaces we also gain a broader understanding of the city. Thus, “both the object of research (the place experienced by man, the cultural landscape) and the new hermeneutic methods (emphasis laid on comprehension as opposed to explanation) have brought humanistic geography closer to literary studies.”<sup>21</sup> The scholar presents the ways of approaching the category of space after the cultural turn – the attention is focused predominantly on relations between space and language, and culture and literature. Scholars are increasingly often interested in space understood in a transitive, dynamic way. The object of relations is hybrid areas, heterotopies. Yet again there returns the category of place, but this time in the perspective of reflections on ethnicity, class divisions, gender, and, last but not least, in the context of the pragmatism of authority over space, along with sometimes highly peculiar ways of its ideologization, which occasionally assumes the form of symbolic violence. These reflections are accompanied with the “conviction that literature performatively establishes, creates, and gives meanings to space.”<sup>22</sup>

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19 M. Schroer, *Räume, Orte, Grenzen. Auf dem Weg zu einer Soziologie des Raums* (Frankfurt am Main, 2006), p. 244.

20 E. Rybicka, “Geopoetyka (o mieście, przestrzeni i miejscu we współczesnych teoriach i praktykach kulturowych),” in *Kulturowa teoria literatury. Główne pojęcia i problemy*, ed. M. P. Markowski and R. Nycz (Cracow, 2006), pp. 471–488.

21 E. Rybicka, “Od poetyki przestrzeni do polityki miejsca. Zwrot topograficzny w badaniach literackich,” *Teksty Drugie* 4 (2008): 29.

22 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 33. In his study into the subject matter of space, Bachórz pointed out a long time ago that the subject matter of the spatial turn had been present in our times “at least for the second time [. . .], while earlier it had been essential in the works of M. Bakhtin, H. Meyer, D. S. Likhachov, J. Lotman, G. Genett, and G. Bachelard.” See J. Bachórz, “Dom i reszta świata (z zagadnień przestrzeni),” in his, *Realizm bez “chmurnej jazdy”*. *Studia o powieściach Józefa Korzeniowskiego* (Warsaw, 1979), pp. 213 ff. Writing about what connects different literary forms where the urban space plays an important role, Bachórz emphasizes, for instance, their shared elements, that is, migration (sometimes

Relating how the understanding of the category of ethnicity has changed in contemporary research, Eugenia Prokop-Janiec emphasizes the polemic character of present-day diagnoses. Scholars such as Appadurai or Modood associate ethnic identity not so much with origin or socialization and internalization of specific cultural practices, as they consider this category (in its traditional definition) as historic, stating that nowadays “ethnic identity proves to be [...] increasingly weakly connected with participation in specific cultural practices such as language, religion, or attire [...]”<sup>23</sup> Evoking Fredrik Barth’s and Stuart Hall’s conception, the scholar discusses the chronologically variable and the diversely conditioned way of the functioning of the subject, which undergoes processes of (self-)attachment and exclusion and which in a multicultural society chooses to belong to a culturally diverse group. One can wonder to what degree Jews living in the European diaspora – whose identity since the nineteenth century had undergone various modifications as a result of their community’s acculturation, assimilation, and modernization – are a model example of these two processes. Curiously enough, ethnic threads appearing in contemporary conceptions of culture, both those concerning deterritorialization of culture (Gupta, Ferguson, and Appadurai) and those which describe processes of hybridity (Welsch, Hannerz), can be used with regard to the cultural functioning of the Jewish diaspora before the twenty-first century, now when the realization that ethnic and national groups function as constructs, as imagined communities (Anderson) seems to be increasingly common.

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an escape) to a big city, which in most cases is like crossing a border (according to the nineteenth-century model, where it is usually associated with the anti-urban sentiment – from Dostoyevsky, through Kraszewski and Reymont, to Balzac and Dickens). According to Bachórz, the Polish modification of the image of the big city consists in “emphasizing its characteristics of the salon and the tavern.” The scholar observes: “This vision of Warsaw as a combination of the salon and the tavern could be noticed in the xenophobic action romances produced at the turn of the ‘30s and ‘40s” (ibid., p. 240). A special role is played by the ‘tavern’ located in the outskirts, at the crossroads (understood also symbolically as moral crossroads), seen as a ‘pernicious’ place, as ‘tentacles,’ as an urban outpost luring one towards the evil of the world. Magdalena Opalski wrote interestingly about the creation of the specific place connected with the stereotypization and perpetuation of cliché perceptions of Jews. See M. Opalski, *The Jewish Tavern-Keeper and his Tavern in Nineteenth-Century Polish Literature* (Jerusalem, 1986). Seweryna Wysłouch also wrote about the trans-disciplinarily understood space. See S. Wysłouch, “Przestrzeń jako kategoria transdyscyplinarna,” *Estetyka i Krytyka*, vol. 17/18 (2/2009-1/2010): 47-60.

23 E. Prokop-Janiec, “Etniczność,” in *Kulturowa teoria literatury*, pp. 409-432.

Assuming that the ethnic problem with respect to literature can be treated as a “cultural issue, with literature deemed one of the practices which constitute the cultural field,” we can try to read texts in such a way so as to bring out not only the meaning-generating practices (Culler),<sup>24</sup> but also to facilitate a comparison between experiences of various ethnic groups recorded in various forms (in the form of fiction or otherwise). In consequence, reading literary texts produced in the first half of the twentieth century, for this is what I want to devote my attention to, is going to facilitate, to some degree, a portrayal of the cultural identity of the specific group.

Jewish studies have a long-established tradition in many countries around the globe. The review of their paradigm postulated by Sander Gilman has been discussed by Eugenia Prokop-Janiec, who proposes to introduce the category of *pogranicze* (borderland) into the Polish discourse.<sup>25</sup> The Polish scholar justifies this translation of the term ‘frontier’ by remarking that “it is evolving in the English language into two different spatial figures – the demarcation line and the adjacent area.”<sup>26</sup> The frontier is an area where the processes shaping a kind of “fluid culture in between” take place, repealing the division into the center and the periphery.<sup>27</sup> Another important voice brought up by the scholar is the perspective of research on contemporary Jewish culture proposed by Benjamin Harshav, where this culture is treated as “a point where various civilizational traditions intersect, meet, and also overlap; [a place] which emerges as a result of conflicts, influences, and migrations of models.”<sup>28</sup> Pointing at the linguistic poly-dialog as the Jewish diaspora’s natural habitat, Harshav emphasizes, on the one hand, the internal multilingualism connected with religious education and the socialization system, and, on the other hand, the external multilingualism connected with the different places of residence in the European diaspora (particularly in Central-Eastern Europe).<sup>29</sup> In as much as the phenomenon of linguistic polysystems is more widespread than in the European countries in the nineteenth century and in the early twentieth century, one must bear in mind that the milieu of the Jewish diaspora was characterized by at least bilingualism and usually even trilingualism, which was the reason for both the polyphony

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24 See *ibid.*, p. 418.

25 See E. Prokop-Janiec, “Kategoria pogranicza we współczesnych studiach żydowskich,” in her, *Pogranicze polsko-żydowskie. Topografie i teksty* (Cracow, 2013), pp. 134-146.

26 *Ibid.*, p. 134.

27 *Ibid.*, p. 135.

28 *Ibid.*, p. 137.

29 See B. Harshav, *The Meaning of Yiddish* (Oxford, 1990).

of the Jewish literature produced in the diaspora, and the phenomenon of dialogicality that accompanied it (speaking different languages meant that one had access to different cultural resources).

Bearing in mind the model of interpretation already incorporated into Polish scholarly reflection, that is, the conception of the polysystem of trilingual Jewish culture that emerged on Polish territory, which was proposed by Chone Shmeruk, Prokop-Janiec adds to Gilman's frontier the instrumentarium present in newest research – “Homie Bhabha's third space theory taken from post-colonial criticism, Mary Louise Pratt's contact zone, and the model of Jewish contemporary subcultures emerging as a result of acculturation processes.”<sup>30</sup>

Elżbieta Rybicka's and Eugenia Prokop-Janiec's works to which I refer above make it possible to plan such a reading of literary texts where, on the one hand, the urban space plays the key role, and, on the other hand, selected texts regard modern Jewish culture defined (after Harshav) as “an open, diverse area made up of various local variants emerging as a result of relations with non-Jewish cultures.”<sup>31</sup>

When selecting the texts to be the basic material of my analyses, I turned to literature produced in Polish, German, and Yiddish in the first half of the twentieth century. Of course, I could have also included works written in Hebrew, but that would have broadened the scope of my research to excess. Moreover, I would have been forced to work mostly on translations (chiefly into English or German for few texts have been translated into Polish).<sup>32</sup> Naturally, dealing with prose produced in Polish, I also included on my reading list the works which belong to the legacy of the Polish-Jewish literature. Limiting the chronological framework of the texts' production to the first half of the twentieth century, and actually almost exclusively to the pre-Holocaust period (except for Israel Joshua Singer's 1943 novel *The Family Carnovsky* and Alter Kacyzne's *Shtarke und shvakhe*, which was published posthumously as Kacyzne died in 1941; 1954<sup>33</sup>

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30 E. Prokop-Janiec, “Kategoria pogranicza we współczesnych studiach żydowskich,” in her, *Pogranicza polsko-żydowskie*, p. 138.

31 *Ibid.*, p. 136.

32 I exclude Hebrew literature altogether (a comprehensive discussion of this topic is a material for a separate study). Great Hebrew writers, such as J. S. Agnon or Lea Goldberg, were connected with the East-European diaspora by means of the place where they were born or where they came from. As they spent some time living in Berlin, the German language and culture became one of their many points of reference. Nevertheless, they wrote in Hebrew and, first and foremost, they penned their most important works after leaving Europe, after the inter-war period.

33 [http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/kacyzne\\_alter-sholem](http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/kacyzne_alter-sholem).

saw a publication of its excerpt entitled “Stare Miasto” [Old Town]<sup>34</sup> results not only from the limited volume of my work. I opted for this chronological framework predominantly because a large number of texts, especially those regarding Jewish Warsaw, were penned after the Holocaust, which to some extent must have altered the outlook taken by the authors of both memoirs and *belles lettres* (this is why I do not analyze, for instance, Bernard Singer’s memoir *Moje Nalewki* [My Nalewki (Street)], Zusman Segalowicz’s *Tłomackie 13* [Tłomackie Street 13], or Isaac Bashevis Singer’s prose familiar to the Polish reader, for instance, *The Family Moskat*).<sup>35</sup>

Same as in European literatures, beginning with the late nineteenth century urban space also starts to play an increasingly important role in Jewish culture. Although the most well-known and well-established topos is the *shtetl* (a small Jewish town, which is the area definitely the most substantially co-shaped by Jewish inhabitants and particularly vital in the East-European diaspora), the urban space is also gaining importance. This phenomenon of growing significance can be seen from at least two angles. On the one hand, writers increasingly often set their texts in cities. On the other hand, urban spaces are conducive to development of cultural life and a natural habitat for modernization (to which since the early twentieth century contributed the robust growth of the press, the operation of various cultural-literary institutions, the opportunity for debates and direct meetings between various milieus, and, last but not least, the impact of higher education institutions and centers associating the emerging political movements).

Jewish literature (understood as modern lay literature) had been developing rapidly on Polish lands since the mid-nineteenth century, at first chiefly under the influence of the literature of the West European *Haskalah* (here I must list Joseph Perl,<sup>36</sup> Nachman Krochmal,<sup>37</sup> and Yehoshua Schorr).<sup>38</sup> Eminent late nineteenth-century writers and thinkers were, for instance, Nahum Sokolow<sup>39</sup>

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34 <https://wolnelektury.pl/katalog/lektura/kaczne-stare-miasto>.

35 A separate set of reflections on Warsaw alone could be based on, for instance, the anthology *Dos amolike Yidyshe Varshe*, published in 1966 in Montreal by Farband Varshever Yidn in Montreal – the Union of Warsaw Jews in Montreal. Lots of memoirs regarding Jewish Warsaw and Jewish Berlin, novels, and essays were also published after the war.

36 [http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/perl\\_yosef](http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/perl_yosef).

37 [http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Krochmal\\_Nahman](http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Krochmal_Nahman).

38 <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/13306-schorr-joshua-heschel>.

39 Ela Bauer wrote about him in her book *Between Poles and Jews: The Development of Nahum Sokolow’s Political Thought* (Jerusalem, 2005).

or David Frishman<sup>40</sup> At the end of the century, Yiddish literature was becoming increasingly important (some Hebrew writers, for instance Perl or Frishman, occasionally switched to Yiddish), with Mendele Moykher-Sforim, Sholem Aleichem, Yitskhok (Isaac) Leybush Peretz, and Sholem Asch nowadays counted among its founding fathers. The first half of the twentieth century was a period of tremendous growth in Jewish literature produced in Poland, including the flourishing of Polish-Jewish literature. While in the nineteenth century literary contacts were somewhat hampered by the language barrier, it is noteworthy that first translations appeared in the 1880s. However, one must bear in mind that even during the interwar period there was a clear asymmetry: the Jewish readers' interest in Polish literature was much more pronounced than *vice versa* (to which testifies, for instance, the number of translations). The variants of modern Jewish identity changed fundamentally as a result of, on the one hand, the process of assimilation and acculturation which the Jewish community was undergoing, and, on the other hand, the increased awareness of cultural autonomy (particularly the importance of Yiddish and Hebrew literature and later of Polish-Jewish literature).<sup>41</sup>

Similarly to Warsaw, Germany, and predominantly Berlin, were an important place of the shaping of modern Jewish culture, including that generated in Hebrew, German, and Yiddish.<sup>42</sup> Michael Brenner emphasizes here the

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40 [http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Frishman\\_David](http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Frishman_David).

41 In this book I do not go into the details of the emergence and development of Hebrew, Yiddish, or Polish-Jewish literature in the first half of the twentieth century or the social processes which accompanied the modernization of the East European Jewish diaspora. For this subject matter goes far beyond the scope of my reflections. See, for instance, Ch. Shmeruk, "Hebrew – Yiddish – Polish: A Trilingual Jewish Culture," in *The Jews of Poland between Two World Wars*, ed. Y. Gutman, E. Mendelsohn, and J. Reinharz (Hanover-London, 1989), pp. 285–311; H. Hever, *Producing the Modern Hebrew Canon. Nation Building and Minority Discourse* (New York, 2001); *Culture Front. Representing Jews in Eastern Europe*, ed. B. Natans and G. Safran (Philadelphia, 2008); D. Miron, *From Continuity to Contiguity. Toward a New Jewish Literary Thinking* (Stanford, 2010); S. Pinsker, "Warsaw in Hebrew Literature 1880–1920: New Perspectives," *Studia Judaica* vol. 18, no. 1 (35) (2015): 105–137.

42 See M. Brenner, *The Renaissance of Jewish Culture in Weimar Germany* (Yale, 1996); *Jüdische Geschichte in Berlin. Bilder und Dokumente*, ed. R. Rürup (Berlin, 1995); M. Krutikov, *Yiddish Fiction and the Crisis of Modernity 1905–1914* (Stanford, 2001); M. Neiss, *Press in Transit* (Berlin, 2002); H. Helas, *Die Grenadierstrasse in Berliner Scheunenviertel. Ein Ghetto mit offenen Toren* (Berlin, 2010); V Dohrn and G. Pickhan, *Transit und Transformation. Osteuropäisch-jüdische Migranten in Berlin 1918–1939* (Göttingen, 2010); A.-Ch. Saßi, *Berliner Luftmenschen* (Göttingen, 2012); N. A. Block,



strong Hebrew tradition, which dated back to Mendelssohn's era. He reminds us about the Hebrew Language and Culture Conference organized in Berlin in 1909 and about the celebration in honor of Hayim Nahman Bialik held at the Berlin Philharmonic in January 1925, about which wrote even German, non-Jewish newspapers, which treated Bialik as a great "national writer." According to Brenner, the German capital was a meeting place between the Jewish West and East – the writer emphasized here not only the issue of periodicals and the operation of publishing houses, but also the years of the fruitful production of artists such as Uri Tsevi Grinberg, Sha'ul Tchernichowsky or Shemu'el Yosef Agnon.

The transformations of the Jewish community living in the East-European diaspora were connected not only with processes of general modernization and the intensified development of lay culture, but also, as I have mentioned when discussing the phenomenon of dislocation, the change of place due to both emigration from Europe and internal migrations to large urban centers. I believe that two European cities, or actually two Jewish spaces in these cities, that is Warsaw and Berlin, deserve more attention. I do not intend to reflect on the historical description of the creation of those quarters (a classic sociological work in this respect is Louis Wirth's work *The Ghetto*, discussed by Hannerz)<sup>43</sup> but rather on various literary records made in the first half of the twentieth century, that is, the Jewish quarters' literary topography.<sup>44</sup>

At the center of these reflections are literary portrayals which in the readers' imagination construct the urban space of both these capitals. It seems that one should pay attention to the kind of dialectic of such perception of space, where we have to do with the process of its exoticization – depending on the spectator's perspective, this process assumes the form of orientalizing or occidentalizing.

*In the Eyes of Others: The Dialectic of German-Jewish and Yiddish Modernism*, 2013, [http://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/bitstream/2027.42/100095/1/nblock\\_1.pdf](http://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/bitstream/2027.42/100095/1/nblock_1.pdf).

- 43 See U. Hannerz, "Dzielnica żydowska w Europie i Ameryce," in *ibid.*, *Odkrywanie miasta. Antropologia obszarów miejskich*, trans. E. Klekot (Cracow, 2006), pp. 53 ff [English edition: *Exploring the City. Inquiries Towards an Urban Anthropology* (Columbia University Press, 1983)].
- 44 I wrote about that in A. Molisak, "Literacki obraz miasta – żydowski Berlin, żydowska Warszawa," *Anthropos* 6-7 (2006); A. Molisak, "Jüdische Identität in der ersten Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts," in *Osteuropäisch-jüdische Literaturen im 20. und 21. Jahrhundert: Identität und Poetik*, ed. K. Smola (Munich-Berlin, 2013); A. Molisak, "Przestępczość wielkomiejska – prostytutka. Portret literacki Ostjuden: Warszawa i Berlin," in *Literatura popularna XX wieku – przeglądy – analizy – interpretacje*, ed. E. Bartos, M. Tomczok (Katowice, 2013).



Describing the Other or self-identification are done by both Jews living in the West and by members of the East European diaspora, and with the use of similar categories.<sup>45</sup> As a result of such thinking emerged oppositions which were to facilitate comprehension of differences (progress – stagnation, modernity – backwardness, rationality – irrationality, etc.). They solidified as stereotypes that had functioned almost until the present day.<sup>46</sup> That comfort of description was at times greatly disrupted. For instance, in the first half of the twentieth century, in order to overcome alienation many German Jews turned to the spirituality of the East European diaspora, which they regarded as a chance for a return to the roots. Although the perception of the differences between the East and the West usually matched the diagnoses proposed by Said, that is, the attribution of cultural inferiority or barbarity,<sup>47</sup> in the case of the religious sphere many Berlin Jews were fascinated by East European Judaism (I write more about this topic in the chapter entitled “City and Religion”).

The choice of these two urban areas (although one could think of many such comparative perspectives, particularly when it comes to the transformations of contemporary Jewish identity, where Odessa, Kiev, Vilnius, Lviv, New York, or Tel Aviv also played a vital role) is dictated by the various analogous aspects of these two capitals' space. So what are the similarities between the 20<sup>th</sup>-century Berlin and Warsaw? I believe that these two cities have a lot in common, predominantly the kind of shaky, irresolute identity stretching between worldliness and provinciality. Looking at the history of the urban spaces, one can notice a lack of historical continuity in these two cities. Described in literary texts, their positioning between peripheriness and having the status of cultural centers and the consequent experience of ambivalence is something that the two capitals had in common. Both Berlin and Warsaw were often described as cities playing a

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45 James Carrier wrote about that. See J. G. Carrier, *Occidentalism. Images of the West* (New York, 1995).

46 Larry Wolff emphasized that that symbolic division of space into the West and East took place relatively late, stressing that that reorientation was connected with ideas of eighteenth-century philosophy. That change acquired new overtones in the subsequent centuries. This issue was discussed by, for instance, Maria Todorova in her book *Balkany wyobrażone*, trans M. Budzińska, J. Dzierżkowski, and P. Szymor (Wołowiec, 2014), pp. 27-41 [English edition: *Imagining the Balkans* (Oxford University Press, 2009)].

47 See E. W. Said, *Orientalism* (Vintage, 1979).

double role, as being suspended between the East and West. Such a unique location was connected with opportunities and also extraordinary risk.<sup>48</sup>

For the diaspora milieus Warsaw and Berlin were vital points on the map of modern Jewish culture. Berlin held a special place as the closest neighboring center and a place of confrontation and meeting, where to the fore came both Jewish milieus rooted in the German version of the *Haskalah* and Jews who came from the East. One should bear in mind that Warsaw did not constitute a homogenous milieu either as in it functioned highly diverse trends in Jewish identity: from assimilation through acculturation to Orthodox/Hasidic groups.

There were lots of differences between these two cities as far as the Jewish presence in the earlier periods is concerned, but the most pronounced differences could be seen in the nineteenth century. In its second half, when Warsaw was within the Russian partition, the Jewish presence in the public space was very pronounced: “Warsaw Jews took part in the patriotic demonstrations (1861) and uprisings (1830, 1863). After the pogroms in southern Russia (1881) Warsaw became one of the most popular immigration destinations.”<sup>49</sup> The establishment

48 It is perhaps safe to venture a thesis that the difference in the presence of these two cities becomes accentuated during the postwar period. While Warsaw is present in the literature produced in the first and second half of the twentieth century, Berlin, so pronounced before the Second World War, almost disappeared from German literature in its divided form and returned as an important space only after the fall of the Berlin Wall. I discuss this in my text published in 2004. See A. Molisak, “Miejska przestrzeń literatury dwudziestowiecznej – Berlin, Berlin,” in *Dwudziestowieczność*.

49 See “Warszawa,” in *Nowy Leksykon Judaistyczny*, ed. J. H. Schoeps, trans. S. Lisiecka, Z. Rybicka, E. Ptaszyńska-Sadowska (Warsaw, 2007), pp. 870 ff [original edition: *Neues Lexikon des Judentums* (Bertelsmann Lexikon Verlag, 1992)]; the presence of Jews in Warsaw was discussed in, for instance, A. Eisenbach, *Ludność żydowska Królestwa a powstanie listopadowe* (Warsaw, 1976) and *Z dziejów ludności żydowskiej w Polsce w XVIII i XIX w.* (Warsaw, 1983); A. Cała, *Asymilacja Żydów w Królestwie Polskim (1864–1897): postawy, konflikty, stereotypy* (Warsaw, 1989); *The Jews of Poland between Two World Wars*, ed. Yisrael Gutman, Ezra Mendelsohn, Jehuda Reinharz, and Chone Shmeruka (Brandeis University Press, 1989); M. Fuks, *Żydzi w Warszawie. Życie codzienne. Wydarzenia. Ludzie* (Poznań, 1992); E. Mendelsohn, *Żydzi Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej w okresie międzywojennym* (Warsaw, 1992); Z. Borzymińska, *Studia z dziejów Żydów w Polsce* (Warsaw, 1995); G. Zalewska, *Ludność żydowska w okresie międzywojennym* (Warsaw, 1996); *Żydzi Warszawy. Materiały z konferencji w 100. rocznicę urodzin Emanuela Ringelbluma (21 listopada 1900–7 marca 1944)* (Warsaw, 2000); *Żydzi w Polsce. Leksykon*, ed. J. Tomaszewski and A. Żbikowski (Warsaw, 2001); *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*, ed. G. D. Hundert, vol. 1–2 (New Haven, 2008).

of the Polish state also facilitated the Jewish milieus' participation in social life. The capital became a center for Jewish organizations and political parties. It also had various Jewish schools, with both Hebrew and Yiddish instruction, as well as charitable, cultural, and religious institutions (synagogues).

The shaping of Jewish life in the German capital took a different course. In the early nineteenth century municipal regulations gave Jews citizenship (1808) and “prospects of municipal honorary positions. Salomon Veit and D. Friedlander were the first Jews in the Berlin municipal council and the first councilmen.”<sup>50</sup> The universal acceptance of the *Haskalah* ideas as well as, for instance, the 1812 emancipation edict, which introduced equal civil rights, were the reasons why in the milieu of Berlin Jews dominated attitudes of active engagement in the public life and German culture. During the 19<sup>th</sup>-century transformations and the establishment of new institutions (the Society for Jewish Culture and Science, the Cooperative for Judaism Reform, the Higher Institute for Jewish Studies, etc.) there emerged and solidified the Reform Judaism current (although there was also the Orthodox milieu).<sup>51</sup> By the late nineteenth century “Berlin had already become the main center of the Jewish community (in 1871 in the city and its outskirts lived 36,326 Jews, while in 1910 and 1925 their number increased to 142,289 and approx. 173,000 respectively).”<sup>52</sup> To the marked increase in the number of Jewish inhabitants of Berlin substantially contributed immigration from the East European diaspora (more about this in the chapter on immigration).<sup>53</sup> In the early twentieth century Berlin, same as Warsaw, was a seat of

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50 See “Berlin,” in *Nowy Leksykon Judaistyczny*, p. 110; more about the history of Jewish Berlin see, for instance, *Jüdische Geschichte in Berlin* (Hentrich, 1996); M. Brenner, *The Renaissance of Jewish Culture in Weimar Germany; German-Jewish History in Modern Times*, vol. 3, *Integration in Dispute, 1871–1918*, vol. 4, *Renewal and Destruction, 1918–1945*, ed. M. A. Meyer (New York, 1996–1998); *Berlin Metropolis: Jews and the New Culture, 1890–1918*, ed. E. D. Bilski (Berkeley, 1999); A. Elon, *The Pity of It All: A History of Jews in Germany, 1743–1933* (New York, 2002).

51 See “Berlin,” in *Nowy Leksykon Judaistyczny*, p. 110.

52 Ibid.

53 To the immigration contributed not only the economic situation, but also the anti-Jewish violence in the East. Let me present just one quotation: “The pogroms trigger an enormous wave of refugees, also from the terrains where the hatred has not yet manifested itself. The Jews are selling their houses and land for next to nothing, they are closing down their stores and workshops – all that to go as far from tsarist Russia as possible. Their life in Russia has been one sheer vale of tears and misery, one constant distress caused by the bureaucratic persecution and discriminatory laws. The pogroms are the drop that tips the cup of bitterness.” Qtd. after: M. Pollack, *Cesarz Ameryki*.

political parties as well as central religious, economic, and social organizations of German Jews. The takeover of power by the Nazis marked the beginning of the disemancipation of the Jews, their exclusion from the general public, the persecutions, bans, and robbing, and liquidation of Jewish institutions. A prologue to the Holocaust was the *Kristallnacht*, the Night of Broken Glass, when not only synagogues were set ablaze, but also 12,000 Jews were deported to the concentration camp in Sachsenhausen.<sup>54</sup>

But signals of the failure of the German assimilation project began to appear as early as at the turn of the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. Michael Brenner writes about this, pointing to, for instance, the literary voice of Georg Hermann,<sup>55</sup> a very popular novelist at that time, who wrote the following in 1919 in reference to the questioning of the rights of Jewish citizens:

No matter if we want it or not, we must remember about our affiliation with Judaism because every year the war [WWI – A. M.] and [. . .] the sentiments/behaviors which accompanied it showed us the increasingly forceful elements of strangeness separating us from others. We have been experiencing a great disappointment with Germany and we experience it constantly, at every hour.<sup>56</sup>

In both Warsaw and Berlin Jews constituted an integral part of the urban communities. But the formulas of that integrality differed. There was the integral part which was less visible (less distinct) as it was undergoing the processes of assimilation and acculturation. But there was also the other integral part of the urban community: the more ‘visible’, separate Jews who stood out, for instance, by signaling their own traditional identity through special attire, which was the main distinct feature of *Ostjuden* in the German capital.<sup>57</sup> Steven Aschheim stresses that since the Enlightenment the image of Jews from the East had been

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*Wielka ucieczka z Galicji*, trans. K. Niedenthal (Wołowiec, 2011), p. 72 [original edition: *Kaiser von Amerika: Die grosse Flucht aus Galizien* (Zsolnay-Verlag, 2013).

54 See “Berlin,” in *Nowy Leksykon Judaistyczny*, p. 111.

55 A reference to the highly popular novel entitled *Jettchen Geberts Geschichte*, published during 1906–1909 and adapted for the screen in 1926.

56 Qtd. after: M. Brenner, “Zwischen Ost und West: Berlin als Zentrum jüdischer Kultur in der Weimarer Republik,” in *Jüdische Geschichte in Berlin*, p. 198.

57 In the East European diaspora, for instance, in Galicia, individuals who cut their sidelocks, shaved their beard off or cut it short, or dressed fashionably were sometimes said to ‘have become German’, which was sometimes meant as an insult.

an important point of reference in the construction of the identity of German Jews.<sup>58</sup>

One should bear in mind here that the term *Ostjuden* was a conception constructed from the German perspective. It was coined by Natan Birnbaum,<sup>59</sup> who in 1902 published an article entitled “Was sind die Ostjuden? Zur erster Information”<sup>60</sup> [Who are *Ostjuden*? Initial information]. At first relatively neutral, that is denoting Jews from the East, the term then began to be used in an emotionally charged and evaluative way. It seems that after subtracting this negative layer, one can use the term *Ostjuden* interchangeably with the category of East European Jews, but one must bear in mind that from the Polish perspective Jews coming from the East to, say, Warsaw could not be included in this group.<sup>61</sup>

Writing about the figure of *Ostjuden*, Aschheim emphasizes its two variants functioning in the German discourse. On the one hand, *Ostjuden* were perceived as a threat to the integration of the German Jews, who wanted to be part of the modern society (the ‘less visible’ integral part). On the other hand, since the

58 See S. E. Aschheim, “Spiegelbild, Projektion, Zerrbild. ‘Ostjuden’ in der jüdischen Kultur in Deutschland,” *Osteuropa*, vol. 58, no. 8–10 (2008): 67–81.

59 [http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Birnbaum\\_Nathan](http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Birnbaum_Nathan); see also I. Olszewska, “Was sind die Ostjuden? Zu einigen Proben des Stereotypenwandels von osteuropäischen Judentum anhand der Publizistik von Nathan Birnbaum (1864–1937),” *Zeitschrift des Verbandes Polnischer Germanisten* 4 (2013): 305–317.

60 In 1916 the text was published in the form of an information brochure – N. Birnbaum, *Was sind Ostjuden? Zur ersten Information*, series *Flugschriften zur Aufklärung über ostjüdische Frage* (Vienna, 1916), <http://sammlungen.ub.uni-frankfurt.de/freimann/content/titleinfo/720324>.

61 In the nineteenth century, the situation of Jews differed depending on the partition. While in Galicia the Jewish population became subject to compulsory education and in 1848 received equal rights, in the Prussian partition Jews usually had to undergo quick and often forced assimilation. The strictest regulations were in Russia, which was where a vast majority of Polish members of Judaism lived. Settlement restrictions were introduced during the reign of Catherine II. Later, the authorities usually tightened the bans concerning the Jewish population. Beginning with the reign of Alexander III, the Jews were practically forbidden to hold higher positions in the administration or the military. They could not buy land and had impeded access to lay education, and there were also restrictions on their working in certain occupations. In the nineteenth century, on Polish lands, there lived four-fifth of all Jews in the world. The process of immigration to Western Europe, Palestine, and the USA was gradually gaining momentum. There are no exact data on the number of Jews who immigrated, but certainly more left the Polish lands than remained on them. See N. Davies, *God’s Playground* (Columbia University Press, 1981), pp. 244 ff.

early twentieth century more and more attention had been given to the positive image connected not with the stereotypical perception of *Ostjuden* as poor and powerless, but with noticing viable sources of spirituality in the East European version of Judaism.<sup>62</sup> In line with the negative schematic ways of representing the East in general (which had been a broader phenomenon in Western Europe for centuries), Jews from the East were described as “immoral creatures from a hideous, anachronic ghetto.”<sup>63</sup> That stereotype was why newcomers from the East European diaspora were seen as the Other, as differing from the German Jews and deserving of rejection on account of their mentality and external appearance. The opposite pole was the ‘Romantic’ image of *Ostjuden*, seen as exotic and at the same time as fellow Jews – fascinating carriers of the idea of Hasidism and Eastern folklore. From this perspective the image of *Ostjuden* was sometimes reduced to only one aspect.

The First World War had a significant influence on the change of the attitude towards *Ostjuden*. The earlier ‘Romantic’ figure was confronted with the German soldiers’ experience of direct contact in the Eastern front line (in Warsaw and elsewhere) with the East European Jews’ actual economic situation and social status. The influx of *Ostjuden* to Berlin began in 1880. The next two great immigration waves took place during the First World War and after 1918.<sup>64</sup>

When referring to the model of Jewish culture in the first half of the twentieth century, one should bear in mind the aforementioned term used by Harshav, who emphasized multilingualism and the very high level of internal diversification of the models of that culture which functioned at that time. The Jewish communities in Warsaw and Berlin were heterogenous groups, which also generated many different self-portraits, present not only in the political-social discourse, but also in literary narrations.

To the limited integration of the Jewish population in both capitals testifies, for instance, its functioning in the social space. Non-Jews met with the Jewish inhabitants in the sphere of public affairs, for professional reasons, and in the

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62 S. E. Aschheim, *Spiegelbild, Projektion, Zerrbild*, pp. 67–81.

63 *Ibid.*, p. 67.

64 Although *Ostjuden* were not a homogenous group, in 1919 they established the Union of East Jews in Germany (*Verband der Ostjuden in Deutschland*) to unite and bring together the newcomers, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, to defend themselves from increasingly frequent accusations (voiced not only by German politicians) that they posed a ‘threat’. Anne-Christin Saß writes about this and other Jewish organizations co-created by immigrants from the East European diaspora. See A.-Ch. Saß, *Berliner Luftmenschen*.

course of everyday life with regard to specific practical considerations. However, mutual private contacts were a rare exception. Personal relations were facilitated by assimilation or acculturation, but that did not entirely eliminate certain limitations and distance. Participation in public life was often also connected with a 'difference', for instance, in schools (separate religious instruction lessons and the discrimination in higher education institutions in the 1930s) or in the military (rabbis aside priests). A separate issue is the participation in the life of political parties – that process took a different course in both countries, that is, reborn Poland and post-war Germany (I write more about this in the chapter "City and Politics.")

Analyzing the processes of the social functioning of the Jewish milieu during the interwar period, Anna Landau-Czajka emphasizes that despite assimilation and acculturation there was an aversion to mixed relationships (marriages). In the Polish-Jewish press they were often presented in a very negative way. The scholar discusses, for instance, an article in *Nasz Przegląd* (4 June 1935) entitled "Tragiczna miłość chrześcijanki i Żyda" [Tragic Love Between a Christian Woman and a Jewish Man] and a cycle of letters on this topic sent to the editorial staff which was published in the periodical *5-ta rano*. In each of these texts "the unfortunate person in love with somebody of a different nationality told their story. The advice they got was always the same: 'fall in love with someone else.'"<sup>65</sup> The assimilated families and those undergoing acculturation stood out with their curious social status: "They not only abandoned the traditional model of the family, but also – at least those assimilated in the first generation – usually changed their language, and sometimes religion too. That resulted not only in isolation from the Jewish milieu, partially voluntary, as that was the price for entering the Polish community, but also from one's more distant family."<sup>66</sup> Another obstacle in contacts with the Jewish milieu was distancing oneself from possible anti-Semitic sentiments among Poles, while in the case of, for instance, paying someone a visit at home – the issue of kosher rules. The position and the role of women was special – they were thought to be diverting from the ideas of the traditional home and assuming entirely different roles (that reservation concerned, for instance, women's professional activity, particularly in the case

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65 See A. Landau-Czajka, "(Z)asymilowane rodziny żydowskie w II Rzeczypospolitej: zarys problematyki," *Przegląd Historyczny*, vol. CIII, notebook 4 (2012): 830; her, *Syn będzie Lech... Asymilacja Żydów w Polsce międzywojennej* (Warsaw, 2006); her, *Polska to nie oni. Polska i Polacy w polskojęzycznej prasie żydowskiej II Rzeczypospolitej* (Warsaw, 2015).

66 A. Landau-Czajka, "(Z)asymilowane rodziny żydowskie w II Rzeczypospolitej: zarys problematyki," p. 832.

of married women), and, last but not least, their acting as ‘ambassadors of culture,’ particularly Polish culture, which, as Landau-Czajka emphasizes, was not accepted by Jewish journalists.<sup>67</sup>

But the German version of assimilation did not guarantee full participation in public life either. That issue was discussed by, for instance, Wolfgang Benz, who claimed that, somewhat as substitute, the Jews found consolation in developing their cultural life, pursuing education, and promoting art. Benz’s vital remark pertains to yet another social sphere – according to the scholar, the fact that approx. 100,000 Jews fought in the German army during the First World War – which, considering the percentage of Jews in the German population, was a significant overrepresentation – proves that the Jews sought confirmation of their German-Jewish identity in its most patriotic version.<sup>68</sup>

But the exceptionality of the first half of the twentieth century was evident in the case of both capitals. What I mean here is the activity of very different Jewish milieus, which created various versions or models of heterogenic identity, generating a diverse and multilingual cultural heritage. Writing about the Berlin center, Brenner emphasized that the Jews living in the German capital not only co-shaped the atmosphere of the “golden years of the Weimar Republic,” generated the “Berlin-Jewish-Spirit” (Peter Gay’s term), co-created the German culture and constituted its integral part, but also were pioneers of the modernization of Judaism (defined as a cultural circle), both in the case of co-creating religious trends and political movements and of laying foundations for lay Jewish culture.<sup>69</sup> A similar diagnose can be made when analyzing the activity of Jewish milieus and their participation in the creation of Polish and Polish-Jewish culture in the space of the Polish capital. Longer than Berlin, for practically until the beginning of the Second World War (despite the increase in anti-Semitic

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67 Landau-Czajka discusses a very harsh text by M. Broderson, “Kobieta żydowska i społeczeństwo,” *Nasz Przegląd* 92, 2 April 1925.

68 W. Benz, “Die jüdische Erfahrung. Die Legende vom der deutsch-jüdischen Symbiose vor 1933,” in his, *Bilder von Juden. Studien zur alltäglichen Antisemitismus* (Munich, 2001), pp. 44-56.

69 M. Brenner, *Zwischen Ost und West: Berlin als Zentrum jüdischer Kultur in der Weimarer Republik*, p. 197; a good example of comparisons of activity in the realm of culture can be the works on multilingual Jewish press published in Warsaw and Berlin; see, for instance, M. Neiss, *Presse in Transit. Jiddische Zeitungen und Zeitschriften in Berlin von 1919 bis 1925* (Berlin, 2002); *Studia z dziejów trójjęzycznej prasy żydowskiej na ziemiach polskich (XIX-XX w.)*, ed. J. Nalewajko-Kulikow, in cooperation with G. P. Bąbiak and A. J. Cieślukowa (Warsaw, 2012).



stances), Warsaw remained a center of multilingual Jewish literature, a rapidly developing sphere of art, and the place of the operation of numerous Jewish artists co-shaping the diversity of modern Jewish culture.<sup>70</sup>

Even though the intensification of the anti-Semitic violence in the 1930s differed between the two cities, the following remark made by Inka Bertz is applicable to both urban spaces:

Reflecting on the Weimar Republic period, one gets an ambivalent impression. On the one hand, at that time Berlin practically became the center of Jewish culture (not only of German Jews). On the other hand, the increased integration and respect for Jews as individuals and for Judaism as a religious community was accompanied by aggressive antisemitism, which the state could not or did not want to oppose, not even when the Nazi takeover of power was still in distant future.<sup>71</sup>

In the first half of the twentieth century, both cities had separate quarters referred to as Jewish. Writing about the Warsaw Jews' presence and economic activity at the very end of the nineteenth century, Jakob Szacki formulated a geographic record of that part of the city: "Particularly renowned were the Warsaw streets around Żelaznej Bramy Square: Wałowa – 'Wołówka', near the Citadel, and the Muranowski Square. Those squares were centers of the dynamic Jewish lumpenproletariat economy; they were not only described in Polish and Jewish reportages, but also became an integral setting of many novels and short stories."<sup>72</sup>

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70 See Ch. Shmeruk, "Aspects of the History of Warsaw as a Yiddish Literary Centre," *Polin* 3 (1988): 142 ff; E. Prokop-Janiec, *Międzywojenna literatura polsko-żydowska jako zjawisko kulturowe i artystyczne* (Cracow, 1992), her, "In Search of Cultural Identity. Polish-Jewish Literature of Interwar Period," *The Polish Review* 4 (1987); her, "Twórcy żydowscy w literaturze polskiej," *Kultura i Społeczeństwo* 1/1999; Ch. Shmeruk, *Hebrew – Yiddish – Polish: A Trilingual Jewish Culture*; Sh. Różański, "Rola Warszawy w literaturze żydowskiej," in: *Varshe in der yidisher literatur* (Buenos Aires, 1979); *Żydowski Polak, polski Żyd. Problem tożsamości w literaturze polsko-żydowskiej*, ed. A. Molisak and Z. Kołodziejska (Warsaw, 2011); E. Prokop-Janiec, *Pogranicze polsko-żydowskie; Polskie tematy i konteksty literatury żydowskiej*, ed. E. Prokop-Janiec and M. Tuszewicki (Cracow, 2014); *Twarzą ku nocy. Twórczość literacka Maurycyego Szymła*, ed. M. Antosik-Piela and E. Prokop-Janiec, Yiddishist cooperation K. Szymaniak (Cracow, 2015).

71 I. Bertz, "Juden in Berlin," in *Jüdisches Städtebild Berlin*, ed. G. Mattenklott (Frankfurt am Main 1997), p. 27.

72 J. Shatzky (Szacki), *Geshichte fun Yidn in Varshe*, vol. 1-3 (New York: YIVO, 1947-1953). This quotation comes from a short fragment of this three-volume work; qtd. after: J. Szacki, "Żydzi w życiu ekonomicznym Warszawy," *Biuletyn ŻIH* 30 (1959). This fragment concerns Warsaw Jews and their role in economic life after the fall of the 1863 uprising. The translated chapter concerned Jewish positivists and their views articulated

Gabriela Zalewska<sup>73</sup> emphasizes that the areas where the Jewish population of Warsaw settled were described and analyzed by various scholars, mostly historians, for instance, Raphael Mahler, Hilary Nussbaum, and Artur Eisenbach. The Jewish population settling in Warsaw in the nineteenth century and at the beginning of the twentieth century, during the period when there were no restrictions, usually chose the quarters already inhabited by Jews. They were motivated by various considerations, for instance, closeness of schools, prayer houses, or synagogues.<sup>74</sup> Generally speaking, the objective was to be surrounded by ‘one’s folk’, to live in a familiar space which was easier to function in. As a result of those processes, which took place in many agglomerations, emerged something like a ‘city within a city’, which was characteristic of urban spaces inhabited by ethnic/cultural minorities. The Jewish quarter in Warsaw was not uniform: “There were divisions both in terms of the inhabitants’ wealth and occupational structure. [...] The wealthier streets [. . .] were: Nalewki, Nowolipie, and Mirów. Grzybowski Square area was inhabited by the less affluent.”<sup>75</sup> According to statistical analyses, the percentage of Jews among Warsaw inhabitants was decreasing (42.2 percent in 1918 and 29.1 in 1938).<sup>76</sup> The migration was fostered by various factors, on the one hand the Depression, and, on the other hand, the development of the Zionist movement or (particularly in the 1930s) the exclusion of the Jewish population and making its social functioning difficult. Thus, the reasons for the concentration of the Jewish population in the Northern Quarter (a colloquial, not an administrative name) can be seen both in the transformation of the city center into a commercial and administrative center and in the anti-Semitism, which had been intensifying since the 1930s.<sup>77</sup> The high population density contributed to the disastrous housing situation. Despite voices of the Jewish population, the city authorities (and also its Polish inhabitants),

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in the periodicals *Izraelita* and *Varshoyer Tsaytung*. The economy, that ‘growing into’ the economy, was perceived as a factor of assimilation and acculturation (“Nabożny Związek Subiektów Handlowych staje się twierdzą pozytywizmu i kulturalnej asymilacji”, *ibid*, p. 19).

73 See G. Zalewska, *Ludność żydowska w Warszawie w okresie międzywojennym* (Warsaw, 1996).

74 See *ibid*, pp. 43 ff.

75 *Ibid.*, p. 44.

76 The data come from G. Zalewska, *Ludność żydowska w Warszawie w okresie międzywojennym*, pp. 49-53.

77 Zalewska writes: “There were also instances, particularly often in the late 1930s, that people who had once left the Jewish quarter, returned to it.” *Ibid.*, p. 65.

“in whose hands lay the betterment of the housing situation of the poorest population, did nothing throughout the inter-war period to alter the-then state of affairs.”<sup>78</sup>

The Jewish quarter in Berlin also developed gradually and relatively dynamically – the areas chosen by Jewish settlers changed over time. The most renowned place in that respect became the quarter called Scheunenviertel, where, by Frederick William’s 1737 order, settled all Berlin Jews who were not house owners, that is, those in the direst financial situation. That event, paired with the fact that the Jews were still allowed to enter the city only through its northern gates, led to a substantial concentration of the Jewish population. New cemeteries were set up nearby, for instance on the Schönhauser Allee. Newcomers from the East-European diaspora had also been settling in that part of the city since the mid-nineteenth century, motivated – similarly as in Warsaw – by the closeness of synagogues, religious schools, prayer houses, and, which was often the case, by the economic situation. Another important factor was certainly the existence of charitable organizations and also, to some degree, the sense of certain ‘familiarity,’ where neither Orthodox attire nor Yiddish as first language caused astonishment or surprise. The dominance of inhabitants originating from the East-European diaspora was the reason why Grenadierstrasse, a local street, became a symbolic figure as it was called “a ghetto with open gates.”<sup>79</sup>

In the literary records one comes across topographies of both quarters seen from very different perspectives. The first one is the internal one, which was the case with Appenzlak, who represented Polish-Jewish literature; Sholem Asch, Fishl Shneurson<sup>80</sup>, Oyzer Varshavski, Dovid Bergelson, Israel Joshua Singer, who wrote in Yiddish; and also Sammy Gronemann, Adolf Sommerfeld, and Artur Landsberger, who wrote in German. The other perspective was the external one. To this category I include texts by Alfred Döblin, who came from an assimilated Jewish family and confronted his perception of Jewishness in his reportages from Warsaw or on trips to the Scheunenviertel in Berlin, and also writers such as Antoni Sobański, Wanda Melcer, Stefan Żeromski, Stefan Wiechecki (Wiech), Pola Gojawiczyńska, Maria Kuncewiczowa, and Zbigniew Uniłowski, who wrote in Polish and belong to Polish literature.

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78 Ibid., p. 67.

79 See H. Helas, *Die Grenadierstrasse im Berliner Scheunenviertel*; A.-Ch. Saß, “Scheunenviertel,” in *Enzyklopädie jüdischer Geschichte und Kultur* (EJGK), ed. D. Diner, vol. 5 (Stuttgart-Weimar, 2014), pp. 352-358.

80 Fishl Shneurson or *Fischl Schneersohn* – the German record of the author’s name is used by me in my later analysis of the text as I use the German edition of the novel.

In the texts penned by the authors listed above the two quarters are areas dominated by the Jewish inhabitants of the two cities. A frequent device utilized in representations of those areas was emphasizing the urban phenomenon of contrast, juxtaposing images of poverty and wealth, and setting the plot in the immediate neighborhood of wealthier homes or apartments at the frontside of tenements as well as in the shabbiest rooms, basements, and overcrowded annexes. In the said literary topographies one should notice the phenomena characteristic, on the one hand, of the specificity of the Jewish quarters, the confrontations between the two worlds – the city and that separate and sometimes radically different space, predominantly on account of its inhabitants. On the other hand, noteworthy are the phenomena which owing to specific textual records (literary fiction or reportage) facilitate noticing various variants of the shaping of the modern Jewish identity and the cultural convergence mentioned by Harshav, whom I have quoted above.

Using various categories – utilizing instruments of the cultural theory of literature and geopoetics – should facilitate obtainment of a fuller picture of both quarters located in these two different European cities, an image reconstructed from the position of a historian of literature.

I propose focusing on a few selected aspects characteristic of thinking/writing about the city which I consider the most vital. This space – the metropolis and the specific quarter associated with a particular ethnic minority – has always been a sphere of two phenomena fundamental for the community's functioning and organization: politics and religion. I devote the first two chapters to precisely these two issues. In both cases I sketch the historical background, which is vital for comprehension and interpretation of texts produced in the first half of the twentieth century. This applies to not only realist novels and reportages, but also political fiction. The two cities constituted – when we analyze the shaping of modern Jewishness – political centers and also played the role of centers of emancipation and assimilation. Those two centers – to a different degree and in different ways – were also immigration destinations for those fleeing anti-Jewish violence and pogroms, and also those who decided to emigrate due to their economic status and aspired to better their lot. Warsaw and Berlin were also chosen by those who dreamed of becoming actively engaged in Jewish culture and co-shaping it. Similarly to other large urban centers, the dregs of society did play a certain role. I devote a separate chapter to this phenomenon, which was present in the literary constructions portraying the two capitals. Reflections perhaps most connected with the functioning of the Jewish ethnic minority in the two capitals regard the 'shared places', which I have already signaled above. Put forward by Pratt, the category of the contact zone helps us see clearly both the separateness

of the Jewish life despite the Jews' residing close to non-Jews and also the areas which – and I stress that I shall discuss only the chosen ones – facilitate contacts and confrontations. Inquiring about the actors of the social generation of space, it seems worthwhile to take a look at the type of the inhabitants, their diversity, and their 'visibility' signaled and noticed by others. One should also inquire about the valorization of space, the separateness of the Jewish quarters, which were indeed significant places, and their lasting integrality and connection with both cities.<sup>81</sup> Last but not least, one should also take a look at how the 'story of the city' unravels from the perspective of the three literatures.

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81 A totally separate comparative study can be written about the present functioning of the two Jewish quarters, for there are very different city memory formulas in both Berlin and Warsaw.



## City and Politics

Watching the process of transformations of the Jewish identity which had begun in Eastern Europe in the mid-nineteenth century and intensified in the first half of the twentieth century, aside the said cultural autonomy, scholars have described phenomena such as the birth and development of the Zionist ideas and the transformations in the assimilating and acculturating milieus, as well as, particularly in the first half of the twentieth century, the birth and development of various political organizations in which engaged became Jews from the East European diaspora.

A new phenomenon in Europe resulting from the social modernization processes was the Jewish milieus' establishment of political parties, which were gaining importance in the East-European diaspora and in Poland particularly in the early twentieth century.<sup>82</sup> I focus only on the most vital ones. Aside various forms of the socialist movement (such as the Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania or the Polish Socialist Party, which were attractive to assimilated Jews because of, for instance, their promotion of equal rights), one of the most prominent parties was the Bund, established in 1897, which fought for bettering the situation of Jewish laborers and petty craftsmen.<sup>83</sup> Among the Bund's essential postulates was national-cultural autonomy. Being the Polish Socialist Party's Jewish counterpart, the Bund and its cognate organizations, for instance, the youth organization *Tsukunft*, operated on a large scale in interwar Poland. One should bear in mind that Bund members were not only anti-Zionists, but also anti-communists (although I should mention the existence of the Kombund, which in the 1920s joined the Communist Party of Poland).<sup>84</sup> The Bund was also an anti-religious party. Unlike Orthodox organizations, chiefly *Agudat Yisrael*, which treated Jews as a religious and not a national community,

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82 Sz. Rudnicki, *Żydzi w parlamencie II Rzeczypospolitej* (Warsaw, 2015), pp. 11-20; *Polski słownik judaistyczny. Dzieje, kultura, religia, ludzie*, ed. Z. Borzymińska and R. Żebrowski, vol. 1 (Warsaw, 2003).

83 The full name of the party, which existed from 1897 to 1948, was *Allgemeyner Yidisher Arbeiterbund in Lite, Poilen un Rusland* (The General Union of Jewish Workers in Lithuania, Poland, and Russia).

84 In 1915, the Bund split into two independent parties: the Russian and the Polish one. Same as other Socialist parties in Russia, the Russian Bund endorsed the 1917 February Revolution. It did not support the October Revolution. In Soviet Russia many Bund members became victims of the 1930s purges.

the Bund regarded Jews as a separate nation with its own culture associated with Yiddish.

[According to its ideological resolution, t]he Bund considered itself [...] a socialist party of the Jewish working class and an organic part of the socialist movement in Poland and around the globe. It criticized the Soviet Union and the communist policy [...]. Zionism was considered a utopia, while the Orthodox milieus were considered an obstacle to progress. The Bund demanded removal of all restrictions imposed on the Jewish population, equal rights, and also unrestrained development of lay Jewish culture.<sup>85</sup>

A separate movement extremely vital for the transformations of the Jewish community was Zionism, which also originated in the nineteenth century, gradually solidifying in the entire European diaspora and internationally. Aside from promotion of the Zionist project of establishing the Jewish state, other vital elements of its platform were cultural and national autonomy and preference for the Hebrew language (in teaching and cultural life) as the language of future Israel. Nevertheless, it did not neglect reflection on the functioning of Jews in the diaspora. Szymon Rudnicki wrote:

Zionists played the main role in political life [...] until the mid-1930s. Without giving up the pursuit of the Jewish state [...] in December 1906 they adopted a platform 'for now'. According to it, the goal of the Jews living in the diaspora was recognition of Jewish nationality as one organism with prerogatives of national autonomy in all manifestations of national existence; the right to use the Jewish language in schools, courts, and in public life; and the right to have Saturdays off [...]. The path to that was to be the democratization of the political system of the state on principles of consistent parliamentarism, complete political freedom, national autonomy, and guarantee of the rights of minorities [...].<sup>86</sup>

Zionists wanted for the powers taking part in the peace conference after the First World War to deem vital a guarantee of equal rights to national minorities in the infant states. They agreed with the Bund that the Jewish communities (units within the framework of the autonomy) should represent the Jewish community before the state and that "the autonomy should include matters of religion, culture, upbringing, school system, education, welfare, and organization of economic activity."<sup>87</sup> Initially on Polish lands there were four Zionist federations – in Vilnius, Warsaw, Cracow, and Lviv (the Vilnius one subordinated to Warsaw in

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<sup>85</sup> *Polski słownik judaistyczny*, vol. 1, p. 243

<sup>86</sup> Sz. Rudnicki, *Żydzi w parlamencie II Rzeczypospolitej*, p. 12.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.



the early 1920s). Despite the attempts to unite the movement made at the 1925 congress, the tendencies aiming at division soon prevailed. Thus, there were the Poale Zion Left and Poale Zion Right. There was also the radical wing, the 'revisionists' centered on Żabotyński, who gained importance in the 1930s by promoting emigration and armed combat for the Jewish state. A separate faction of the Zionist movement were representatives of the religious organization *Mizrachi*, established in 1902, which deemed religion the foundation of Jewish life.<sup>88</sup>

Folkists that is, the *Folkspartei* (Folksparty – Jewish People's Party)<sup>89</sup> established in 1917, were less influential than Zionist parties. *Folkspartei* activists postulated national and cultural autonomy, while the Polish branch of the party emphasized the importance of Yiddish and recognition of the diaspora country as homeland.

The third and largest political force that represented the Jewish diaspora was *Aguda*, established in 1916.<sup>90</sup> It associated predominantly Orthodox Jews, who believed Jewish identity to be founded on religion as opposed to language or lay culture. *Aguda* supporters opposed assimilation, fiercely criticizing both Zionists and left-wing parties (although not all of them were against the establishment of the Jewish state). From the perspective discussed here, interesting seems the fact of close relations between the early forms of the religious-political organizations which were established in Warsaw during the First World War and which were influenced by German Orthodox Jews (Emanuel Carlebach and Pinchas Kohn). After 1918 *Agudat Yisrael* was a strong party associating religious Jews who not only tried to maintain the community founded on religion (zaddiks from Góra Kalwaria had the most influence in the organization), but also defended civil rights of minorities in new Poland. Rudnicki writes: "The rabbis were protecting the values which had helped Jews survive over the centuries. But contrary to their intentions, they did contribute to their modernization [...] by basing on the most

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88 See *ibid*, pp. 11–20.

89 "The party first emerged under the name Folks-Komitet (People's Committee) during elections in June 1916 to the Warsaw City Council, a council widely seen as the embryonic parliament of a future independent Poland." See: <https://yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Folkists>.

90 Established in 1912 in Katowice, *Agudat Yisrael* (Hebrew for Union of Israel), *Agudas Yisroel* in Yiddish, or *Aguda* was an international political organization of ultra-Orthodox Jews. *Aguda* operated as a political party, for instance in Poland, until 1939.

traditional factions of the Jewish community, involving them in politics, participating in elections, and publishing their own periodicals.<sup>91</sup>

One should bear in mind that all of the political parties had their youth organizations, supported schools (which differed in, for instance, the language of instruction), and tried to shape the next generations in the spirit of their own political conceptions (*Tarbut*, the Central Jewish School Organization, Shul- und Kultur Farband, and Tachkemoni).

Although assimilated Polish Jews did form their own organization – the Union of Polish Members of Judaism (1919) – they were not particularly influential.

Their number was small. Originating from the educated spheres, they had no influence on the Jewish masses. They opposed all national parties, recognized themselves as Poles, and demanded equal rights for Poles and Jews. They were opposed by both Jewish parties and Polish nationalists. For most Jews they were those who put themselves outside the framework of Jewish life, while for Polish nationalists they were still Jews.<sup>92</sup>

The advancement of assimilation and acculturation in the milieu of German Jews was connected with the granting of political rights, while the heyday and influence of the *Haskalah* ideas contributed to the fact that they had a fundamentally

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91 Sz. Rudnicki, *Żydzi w parlamencie II Rzeczypospolitej*, p. 18. *Agudat* did not bring together all supporters of tradition – it failed to win favor with certain Hasidic groups and some of the Misnagdim in the Eastern Borderlands of Poland.

92 See *ibid.*, p. 18. In Warsaw the dynamic of the transformations can be retraced with the use of the example of elections to the Jewish Community. In 1923 Sebastian Bregman was elected chairman of the board of the Warsaw Jewish Community. In 1926 *Aguda* won the elections to the Community. *Aguda* member Elias Kirszenbaum was elected its deputy chairman, while *Mizrachi* representative Jozua Farbstein became its chairman. In 1929 the Bund withdrew from activity in the Commune as it believed that the Community ignored the needs of atheists (the CISZO, that is, the Central Jewish School Organization, did not receive a subsidy). During the period when the Community was governed by *Aguda* advocates, it subsidized almost exclusively religious organizations. Yet another reason for criticism, that time on the part of the Folkists, was the high remuneration of rabbis. In 1931 Orthodox organizations won the elections again, while the Bund did not run in them. Jakub Trokenheim and Elias Mazur were elected the deputy chairman and the chairman of the board respectively. All Community departments were headed by Orthodox Jews. During its term there were fierce conflicts between the organizations making up the Community. In the years preceding the war the elections were held in September 1936 and they were won by the Bund by a small margin. Due to conflicts and arguments an intervention of the municipal authorities became necessary. The intervention in 1937 established in appointed administration, called the Provisional Board. Maurycy Mayzel was appointed the chairman.

different social position than in Eastern Europe. Analyzing the years which Simon Dubnow,<sup>93</sup> one of the most eminent Jewish historians, spent in Berlin and his works and notes dating to that period, Karl Schlögel stressed that for the scholar Berlin was a city where

Mendelssohn and Lessing, ‘the spiritual leaders’, had acted for equal rights, [...] where the Jewish life had become a lasting element of usual everydayness. Dubnow was in favor of neither assimilation nor establishment of the Jewish state as projects of the existence and functioning of the Jewish society. He was a proponent of Jewish cultural autonomy.<sup>94</sup>

Even though in the late nineteenth century there was an increase in the anti-Semitic sentiments in united Germany, fueled by the large number of newcomers from the East who were fleeing pogroms, those who demanded restrictions of civil rights of Jews failed to win support for their ideas (parties with Folkist sympathies suffered a defeat in the 1912 elections). During the First World War, German Jews fought on many front lines, which was later strongly emphasized.<sup>95</sup> In the Weimar Republic era many German Jews were involved in politics, becoming engaged in the activity of democratic parties (Walter Rathenau, assassinated in 1922, was a co-founder and member of the German Democratic Party [DDP], while Hugo Preuss authored the Weimar Constitution) and left-wing ones. But German Jews did not form separate political parties. That resulted not only from the level of their assimilation with the German community, but also from the small percentage of Jews living in Germany at that time.

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93 Simon Dubnow was born near Mohylev, now in Belarus. In 1917, he became a lecturer at the St. Petersburg Institute of Jewish Studies. In 1922 emigrated to Kaunas. According to Schlögel, Dubnow was forced to take that step not only by hunger, poverty, and the civil war, but also by the Red Terror. In Kaunas he hoped to find a job at a university, but he was not hired due to anti-Semitic protests. He then went to Berlin. Dubnow's major work penned during that period is his ten-volume history of the Jewish people. In 1933 he fled from Berlin to Riga and then died murdered in the local ghetto.

94 K. Schlögel, *Das russische Berlin. Ostbahnhof Europas* (Berlin, 2007), pp. 287-306.

95 Established in 1919, the Reich Federation of Jewish Front-Line Soldiers (*Reichsbund jüdischer Frontsoldaten*) sought to disseminate knowledge on the Jewish soldiers' patriotism which they had proved by fighting on the front line. The organization also counteracted manifestations of anti-Semitism. Most members of the Union advocated assimilation, although after the NSDAP's takeover of power they agreed that Zionist activists were right to promote agricultural and artisan education which was to facilitate the beginning of new life after emigration from Germany. In 1936 the organization was made illegal and two years later it was dissolved.

The largest organization representing German Jews (aside many other, smaller associations) was the Central Association of German Citizens of Jewish Faith, established in 1893, later renamed the Central Union of Jews in Germany (1935) and then the Central Union of Jews (1936). It focused predominantly on social-cultural and educational work, protected civil rights, counteracted manifestations of anti-Semitism, and, beginning with 1933, provided legal advice.<sup>96</sup> Also noteworthy is the Zionist *Jüdische Volkspartei* (established in 1919),<sup>97</sup> which ran in elections to Jewish Communities, not only because it opposed the liberal version of Judaism (that current was dominant in the aforementioned Central Union) and regarded Jews as a national minority, but also because it won numerous supporters among *Ostjuden* by fighting for equal rights for migrants from the East-European diaspora.

For Jews the years of the Weimar Republic, which was a relatively fragile democracy, proved a period when they did enjoy equal rights. As I have mentioned, they held important positions in the public sphere, worked in higher education institutions, and were active and present in culture. Historian Fritz Stern believed that since the end of the nineteenth century in the community of German Jews there had been a Jewish-German symbiosis, with elements of both cultures merging into a unique new value.<sup>98</sup> Hence, it can be said that in the 1920s that value flourished, both in the sphere of science and art.

Of course, since Walter Rathenau's assassination there had been a widespread fear of the danger posed by nationalist forces. The Central Union supported democratic organizations and parties which could foster stabilization of the state during the Depression. The number of Jews living in Germany in the years preceding the Nazi takeover of power is estimated at approx. 500,000, which amounts to 0.8 percent of the total population of the country. Despite various difficulties and perceptible anti-Semitism, vast majority of German Jews considered themselves loyal patriots tied with the German state and its culture. In their circles many believed that the administration of national socialists would leave

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96 *Nowy Leksykon Judaistyczny*, ed. J. H. Schoeps, trans. S. Lisiecka, Z. Rybicka, and E. Ptaszyńska-Sadowska (Warsaw, 2007), p. 155 [original edition: *Neues Lexikon des Judentums* (Bertelsmann Lexikon Verlag, 1992)].

97 See M. Zimmerman, *Die deutschen Juden 1914-1945 (Enzyklopädie deutscher Geschichte, vol. 43)* (Oldenburg, 1997), p. 30.

98 See T. Rink, *Doppelte Loyalität: Fritz Rathenau als deutscher Beamter und Jude* (Hildesheim, 2002), p. 48.

the Jews alone in recognition of their role in commerce and science as well as their contribution to the German economic development.<sup>99</sup>

In the urban space the presence of political forces has always played a major role. Cities have always been seats of the authorities, administrative centers, areas of propaganda struggles, and also sites of various demonstrations. The presence of politics in the urban space seems a somewhat natural phenomenon, with which one should associate also the appropriation of public space either in a symbolic form, for instance, by using various formulas of political propaganda, or in a direct form, when specific communities appropriate it through demonstrations, pickets, or party rallies.

The presence of politics in both capitals' urban space can be seen in two ways. On the one hand, one can focus on the phenomena in political life which shape the fate and identity of the individual heroes. On the other hand, one can look at narrations presenting the above-mentioned urban forms of the presence of politics.

In Sholem Asch's trilogy *Three Cities*,<sup>100</sup> in the volume devoted to Warsaw, the author adopts a political perspective on the milieu's internal diversification in such a way so as to show to the reader the multitude of the variants of the urban-Jewish identity. The reader follows the discussions and debates frequently held both in private (Hurwicz's apartment) and in public, that is, during political meetings. One of the fundamental planes of the disputes are the heated arguments between Zionism-smitten Mirkin and Weinberg-Żychliner, also known as 'the baptized', who is a proponent of lay education and assimilation. A different position in these disputes is held by Hurwicz senior, who appreciates the power of Polish culture but also maintains his Jewish identity of a *Haskalah* advocate. Other secondary characters in Asch's narration are other

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99 Yad Vashem, [http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/de/holocaust/about/pre/weimar\\_republic.asp](http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/de/holocaust/about/pre/weimar_republic.asp), accessed 17 March 2016.

100 See Sh. Asch, *Przed potopem: Petersburg, Warszawa, Moskwa (1929-1931)* [English edition: *Three Cities* (Carol and Graf Pub, 1983)]. The trilogy tells the story of several characters who span the individual volumes. The second volume is set entirely in Warsaw. I used the 1931 edition (translation by Waclaw Rogowicz). In her work entitled *Literatura jako medium pamieci*, Magdalena Sitarz wrote about Asch's narrations from yet another perspective. Using the category of figures of memory and treating the literary text as a historical source, the scholar analyzed Sholem Asch's literary output and discussed his novels, in which she noticed various formulas which shaped the image of the Jewish lot conveyed in the texts. See M. Sitarz, *Literatura jako medium pamieci. Świat powieści Szolema Asza* (Cracow, 2010).

politically-engaged residents of the tenement, for instance, carpenter Henoch and purse-maker Mordche, called ‘the hunchback,’ who belonged to an “underground political organization,” bravely stored “revolutionary proclamations,” and also sheltered party members pursued by the police.<sup>101</sup>

Engagement in the public sphere could regard political affairs understood in many different ways. Let us take Mrs. Hurwicz’s activity outside the home – she organized a soup kitchen for the poor and participated in a demonstration together with representatives of the young generation. It is noteworthy that the manifestations of upholding tradition – Shabbat observance at the Hurwicz’s and discussions about politics or the history of the diaspora – are accompanied by signals of acculturation, such as reading aloud of Mickiewicz’s poetry (but also Bialik’s), which was forbidden in the Russian partition, or singing songs together, both those originating from Jewish folklore and those purportedly revolutionary.<sup>102</sup>

Weinberg-Żychliner, who had lived in Warsaw for quite some time and was engaged in political activity, became, at least for some time, Mirkin’s guide. “From time to time Żychliner would take him places in the evening. Every time it was a different corner in the poorest quarter of the city [. . .].”<sup>103</sup> The educated newcomer from Petersburg was cast a role of a social educator. He sometimes acted as teacher to all those who wanted to learn, while his “lectures were usually held in workshops, mostly carpenter workshops or at handbag factories, so in case of a police raid those gathered could stand by the machines and tables to dispel any suspicions.”<sup>104</sup> Such meetings, possible precisely in urban spaces, were sometimes a painful confrontation. During one of his lectures held in a basement locale the speaker heard voices of the rebellious unemployed people who mocked his decent clothes and commented on his social status. As he and Żychliner are walking back home “along snow-covered streets in the red-yellow light of the shop lamps,” the activist explains to Mirkin the source of the proletarians’ mistrust; he makes him realize the basic difference between his own experiences and the experience of the hungry and unemployed people who were listening to the lecture on economy.

Politics shows its cruel face in the urban space in yet another way – the times of the economic downturn and poverty “filled the city with the unemployed,

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101 *Ibid.*, p. 42.

102 *Ibid.*, p. 111.

103 *Ibid.*, p. 124.

104 *Ibid.*

hungry, and cold people who ran across streets as if they were sick, like lunatics [. . .].”<sup>105</sup> In place of ethnic diversity in this epoch appears a completely different social stratification: the division into the rich and poor, which redefines the existing diversity. “Wandering about without a plan, the people pressed their noses onto frozen windows of grocery stores and stared with longing and dry tongue at the sausages, herrings, and other delicacies that Warsaw liked so much.”<sup>106</sup> The times of the economic crisis are also conducive to activation of political movements. In the months when “the frost was still bearable unmarried laborers assembled at the ‘market’ – the job center, where, passing them by, agitators and political leaders fed them various slogans of war and strike in line with their party’s platform.”<sup>107</sup>

During a debate at the Hurwiczs, one of the sons speaks impulsively, which provokes the mother to a radical step. The criticism voiced by the young man concerns not only the immediate surroundings, but is aimed at those for whom the sphere of politics is more like a sphere of debate than revolution. Young Hurwicz explains to those gathered that the proclamations he spreads are “a call [. . .] to action and not only to a shouting match, which is what your Jewish parties do.”<sup>108</sup> As I have mentioned, the result of the family disputes is the mother’s heroic gesture – she joins a group making demands of the Jewish Community. The narrator emphasizes the overall atmosphere of protest. Although it could not “be established who spread the news in the cold proletariat homes that some people were going to the Community to demand coal,” when Mrs. Hurwicz and her neighbors approached the building on Grzybowska Street, which was the seat of the Community, “she saw there a large groups of unemployed laborers and artisans from across the city.”<sup>109</sup> The crowd which entered the main hall agreed to be represented by an elected group, one of the main members of which was Mrs. Hurwicz, who was regarded as a person known and respected in the Jewish quarter. Rachel Lea accepted the role of the chief negotiator, representing the remaining people gathered before the Community Elder. She spoke with him but to no avail. A while later she learns the hard way what the skill of political manipulation is – at first those gathered want to use force to claim the aid they are entitled to, but when the elder promises to issue coal and food coupons,

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105 *Ibid.*, pp. 194-195.

106 *Ibid.*, p. 195.

107 *Ibid.*

108 *Ibid.*, p. 202.

109 *Ibid.*, p. 204.

when the prospect of changing their lot emerges, the protesters abandon Mrs. Hurwicz. “The crowd which just a moment ago was ready to tear the Elder into pieces at a single sign from Rachel Lea, now, after the hope-inspiring words [. . .], has abandoned its delegate and gone to the Community cashier.”<sup>110</sup> An additional, extremely sad impression is left by the words addressed to those gathered, which pertained to the heroine and the few neighbors who accompanied her. The skillful rhetoric of manipulation was applied in the Elder’s utterance: ““You think that they’ll give you something?” [. . .] emboldened, he pointed at Rachel Lea, who was withdrawing into a corner. ‘You think that they care about the coal for you? Why, they have something completely different on their mind, ha, ha, ha.’”<sup>111</sup> That painful experience did not make Mrs. Hurwicz give up her social activity altogether, but she reduced it to the local dimension as she and a group of her neighbors from the tenement opened a soup kitchen.

Penned in the early 1930s, Appenzlak’s novel *Piętra. Dom na Bielańskiej* [Floors. Tenement on Bielańska Street] was envisioned as a narrative about choosing Zionism. That was to be achieved by depicting the main character’s transformation. From this perspective Warsaw appears predominantly as a space of formation of variants of modern Jewish identity, as a place of the operation of various organizations and parties, and, last but not least, a place of agitation where in the public sphere we face the election-related propaganda.

One of the main secondary characters is MP Landesmann,<sup>112</sup> who during an election rally addresses the youth coming from various quarters of the capital city. He makes a harsh diagnosis of the Jewish population’s situation, clearly advocating national separateness: “We are trapped – [. . .] the anti-Semitic system to one side; to another the Orthodox, the assimilated Jews, and the satiated and content portion of the society, and the merchants who fear repressions; and behind us – socialists! And in the middle – we, alone! [. . .]”<sup>113</sup> The presence of the Zionist ideas in the political discourse during that period had strengthened the growing anti-Semitism since the late 1920s. The temperature of political disputes was risen particularly by the time of the parliamentary elections, which also affected the shape of the public space in the city. Propaganda and the use of

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110 Ibid., p. 213.

111 Ibid.

112 Maria Antosik-Piela pointed out to me that Landesmann might have been modelled on Zionist activist Izaak Grünbaum, who was an MP for many years in the Second Republic of Poland. It would be interesting to take a look at other characters and, perhaps, find their prototypes too.

113 J. Appenzlak, *Piętra. Dom na Bielańskiej* (Warsaw, 1933), p. 142.



various forms of agitation significantly altered Warsaw's appearance: "The streets were shivering in the pre-election fever. Driving a car, MP Landesmann saw with a sense of pleasant self-satisfaction a banner being hanged across the street over the roadway saying: 'Jews! The time of our liberation has come! Vote for the national ballot!'"<sup>114</sup> Of course, there were also unpleasant incidents. The political struggle sometimes assumed brutal forms, even if only symbolic. For instance, Bund members posted on walls gigantic posters with a caricature of Zionists triumphantly entering Jewish Warsaw:

In the Jewish quarter the crowd was seething like boiling water. Small groups of listeners surrounded agitators on the corners, outside stores. White leaflets flew in the air, lightly falling onto the sidewalk and the roadway. The pedestrians' feet, the horses' hooves, and the car wheels pressed into the mud those pieces of paper printed over with promises, election slogans, surnames, and numbers [...].<sup>115</sup>

The internal diversity of political views in the Jewish diaspora captured the attention of inhabitants of the Northern Quarter to such an extent that the propaganda addressed to the general public was almost entirely absent from that area. That made the internal conflicts connected with politics all the more visible. We learn about yet another confrontation between the world of politics and the world of religion from Döblin's account of his visit to Warsaw in the 1920s. The author writes about the conflicts triggered by the communists who "outside the prayer rooms, Jewish Communists hawk gazettes with caricatures attacking 'clericalism'. The news vendors are driven away; they yell: 'Religion is the opium of the people,' fistfights break out."<sup>116</sup> The author also takes note of the Orthodox Jews' aggression towards those who, for instance, do not observe the fast connected with Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, the holiest day in the Jewish year<sup>117</sup> – "Jews emerging from pastry shops were harassed by pious Jews."<sup>118</sup> The confrontational character of conflicts in the Jewish community was connected with both spheres of public life in the capital – the sphere of politics and the sphere of religion – but in those cases it was sometimes a kind of an internal dispute.

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114 Ibid., p. 269.

115 Ibid., pp. 259–260.

116 A. Döblin, *Journey to Poland*, trans. Joachim Neugroschel, ed. Heinz Graber (New York: Paragon House Publishers, 1991), p. 70.

117 A. Unterman, *Encyklopedia tradycji i legend żydowskich*, trans. O. Zienkiewicz. Warsaw, 1998, p. 131 [Original title: *Jews, Their Religious Beliefs and Practices* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985)].

118 A. Döblin, *Journey to Poland*, p. 70.

The spatial division was not the only reason why the majority social-political discourse, including engagement in various Polish organizations and parties, was almost absent from Jewish Warsaw. In Appenzlak's novel discussed above we see that in the sphere of politics the two worlds had (in that version almost grotesque) contact with each other only during the pre-election period:

Agitation sometimes stormed into this neighborhood from Polish parts of Warsaw. A propaganda car drove down Nalewki Street, a stentorian voice booming from the megaphone hidden in the jalopy. The car was delivering an election speech to the Nalewki people, calling for defending the faith and race against the influx of the Jewry. Bolder pedestrians cried out: "Go away!" Hasidim sought shelter in gates. The voice from the car was booming over tram bells and the bustle of the street. On the corner of Franciszkańska Street the car suddenly turned back, fell silent, and rushed back as if having taken a fright or become embarrassed.<sup>119</sup>

The peculiar recipient, that is, 'the Nalewki people', on the one hand reacted by rejecting the nationalist anti-Semitic slogans, and, on the other hand, experienced symbolic violence. The fear of proponents of such views was conducive to the experience of radical exclusion from the general public, from the community which was to be founded on "faith and race." A different reaction to the Polish propaganda can be found in Döblin's reportage, which includes an ironic remark which points to ignoring the cultural distinctness of Jewish Varsovians. "On this eve of the Day of Atonement, the Polish air force scheduled a recruitment concert at the Philharmonic. I'm told that only eleven people showed up; this is told not without pleasure."<sup>120</sup> Noteworthy here are at least two issues – attachment to tradition (the said Day of Atonement is indeed a special time in Judaism) and the presence (in this particular instance – absence) of the Jewish audience, seen as an important recipient of culture.

In Appenzlak's aforementioned narration the urban space presented in the novel is not only a place of election campaigning, but also a sphere of the existence of various political movements – a form of social activity important to many Jewish citizens. The upcoming parliamentary elections trigger all the livelier discussions about the place and role which various representatives of Jewish milieus intend to play. The city became a space where various versions of the propaganda resounded, a place where "posters and banners called, persuaded, and pleaded."<sup>121</sup> The author even ventures a relatively ironic description of a

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119 J. Appenzlak, *Piętra. Dom na Bielańskiej*, pp. 260–261.

120 A. Döblin, *Journey to Poland*, p. 70.

121 J. Appenzlak, *Piętra. Dom na Bielańskiej*, p. 279.

spotlight which at night projected the word 'vote' and the ballot number onto the sky in red letters (but it is difficult to say how realistic this description is). That modern form of propaganda is something extraordinary. It causes astonishment and agitation among pedestrians who take that for a miracle, a revelation from the heavens. Teeming with life, filled with "enormous department stores," which sport their "facades with numerous store signs,"<sup>122</sup> the city is also a space permeated with political propaganda.

Becoming engaged in debates about the social-political currents such as Zionism or the anti-assimilation postulates of cultural autonomy, the main hero of Appenzlak's novel, Henryk, discovers for himself and others a path of co-creating a Jewish community according to new rules: "the national movement was initiated to crush the walls of the ghetto," declares Henryk in his spontaneously delivered speech. The transformation of his views is paired with his return to his old lover, Zionist Helena. The finale of that 'Zionist love affair' is the couple's immigration to Palestine.

The stance of another Zionist who embodied that current of the political life present in the urban space of Warsaw is portrayed in the second volume of Sholem Asch's trilogy. Hurwicz's friend, a poor Hebrew teacher by the surname of Königstein, is a Zionist and a dreamer: "He had no money for the journey and he did not know what would happen to his wife and children which he would have left. Nevertheless, he thought about nothing else but the journey. He neglected his lessons [. . .]."<sup>123</sup> Trying to help his friend out, Hurwicz decided to sell his book collection by taking it to "Izrael Aronson's modern bookstore on Twarda Street, where proponents of 'education' assembled every Friday evening to smoke cigarettes and discuss new Hebrew literature."<sup>124</sup>

Although Hurwicz did hold the idea of homeland in high esteem, he did not decide to leave Warsaw. His attachment to the city and Polish culture to some degree resembled the bond with Polishness felt by aforementioned hero of Appenzlak's novel. In the novel *Piętra. Dom na Bielańskiej* both the narrator and the protagonist on several occasions emphasize their ties with the Polish capital. The thread of being rooted in the city becomes an important subject of reflection. There recurs the thought that "nothing can weed out Warsaw from one's soul"<sup>125</sup> and that even those who opt for emigration do not seek the causes

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122 Ibid, p. 22.

123 Sh. Asch, *Warszawa*, trans. W. Rogowicz (Warsaw, 1931), p. 321.

124 Ibid., pp. 328-329.

125 J. Appenzlak, *Piętra. Dom na Bielańskiej*, p. 183.

for their decision in their not being at home. As a matter of fact, the exact opposite is emphasized – the fact of being connected “until the end of time” with the specific urban space, with the city one knows well. Everyday toil is more bearable owing to the existence of some spiritual refuge, a “spiritual reservation,” as one of the heroes calls it. For many of the characters that ‘reservation’ is Polish culture, its lively existence and co-creation, the space of Warsaw cafés, and walks along Aleje Ujazdowskie Street. Thus, the capital city is a special place, a place to which one who leaves it shall compare all other places (in the final scene Henryk and Hela sit on a bench on Rothschild Avenue, looking at “the multi-colored crowd, different from that on Nalewki Street,” listening to “the heartbeat of Tel-Aviv,” which “thudded regularly”).<sup>126</sup>

Appenzlak’s novel is undoubtedly an agitation popular novel. Interestingly enough, it was written in Polish.<sup>127</sup> Thus, its target reader must have been the Jewish reader of books from the sphere of literature which we refer to as Polish-Jewish.<sup>128</sup>

Sammy Gronemann’s narration, which similarly to Appenzlak’s novel has a form of a “Zionist novel” (Joachim Schlör’s expression),<sup>129</sup> also presents a spectrum of various political views in Jewish milieus in Berlin. When one of the characters visits the quarter inhabited mostly by Jews from the East he comes across Zionist agitators. Demanding a small annual donation, the young people tell the owner of a local café that today is Shekel Day and inform him: “The Zionist platform consists in building a safe and law-abiding homeland for the Jewish people in Palestine.”<sup>130</sup> The two young people collecting the money clearly stand out with their attire from the other inhabitants of the quarter. Noticing that, the café owner addresses them in an ironic tone: “What kind of beggary is this?! Now even sophisticated ladies and gentlemen from Tiergarten come to extort money from Russian Jews! The world’s gone mad!”<sup>131</sup> It is noteworthy that Tiergarten was a quarter inhabited by better-to-do Berliners. Undeterred by those remarks, the woman explained to the owner with great zeal: “We are

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126 Ibid., pp. 349–350.

127 Penned in 1929, published in Warsaw in 1933.

128 This is how Eugenia Prokop-Janiec defines this phenomenon. Of course, for Appenzlak, who was an editor of a Jewish newspaper published in Polish (*Nasz Przegląd*), the target reader of his novel was the same.

129 S. Gronemann, *Tohuwabohu* (Berlin, 2000), afterword by J. Schlör, who called the novel “Zionist.”

130 Ibid., p. 215.

131 Ibid.

not begging [. . .]. We go to all Jews – German or Polish, it is all the same to us as long as they are Jews. Today is Shekel Day, so we are collecting money. There should be no more beggary and only work for everybody.”<sup>132</sup> The two young people enter into a heated discussion not only with the owner, but also with the customers present. They leave a handful of agitation leaflets. As the owner stresses in his conversation with Heinz, the couple was not the only Zionists who were collecting money from the general public on that day.

In both Appenzlak’s and Asch’s narration, Warsaw was also a sphere of diverse forms of political engagement. A separate place of political meetings were various premises where assembled underground activists and individuals engaged in various forms of party activity who were in favor of changing the-then order. In Sholem Asch’s novel, one of such places was the café on Dzika Street run by Szlomo, nicknamed ‘Bachelor’: “Szlomo’s café was frequented by party big fish, members of the ‘Central Council’, known to only a small number of party members. [. . .] Party councils were held in its kitchen in the surroundings of steaming pots with boiling water and coffee pots, decisions to go on strike were made, and important orders were given to the labor exchange. [. . .] Police raids were frequent as they kept a close eye on the café.”<sup>133</sup>

On momentous occasions the city transformed into a space of mass revolt. In her novel *Dziewczęta z Nowolipek* [Girls from Nowolipki Street], Pola Gojawiczyńska discusses workers’ strikes, organization of mutual aid, and, last but not least, patriotic-religious demonstrations in the church on Leszno Street, where those gathered sing “With the Smoke of Fires.”<sup>134</sup> The narrative about the life of women from Nowolipki Street mentions street marches organized by the Warsaw inhabitants. Their participants are described in the following generalizing manner – “the people were walking in the middle of the street singing; they did not disperse at the sight of mounted Cossacks.”<sup>135</sup> Gojawiczyńska signals

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132 Ibid, pp. 215–216. We also have to do here with a reference to Zionist symbolism. Published in 1920, the novel is set in the-then Berlin, when the shekel was not the currency used in Palestine. For Zionists, however, the shekel originating from the Bible, where it was a weight unit, alluded to the Jewish presence in Palestine. Zionists’ membership fees were also paid in shekels (that became customary as early as during the First Zionist Congress in Basil in 1897).

133 Sh. Asch, *Warszawa*, p. 238.

134 Nineteenth-century Polish patriotic song written by Kornel Ujejski in 1846. The song, which refers to the massacres in Galicia, became popular during the Spring of Nations. P. Gojawiczyńska, *Dziewczęta z Nowolipek* (Warsaw, 1973), p. 29.

135 Ibid., p. 30.

political sentiments when mentioning the “red turmoil”<sup>136</sup> or the participation of Mietek’s son, still a school student, in a strike and demonstration. In this novel there is also – though treated marginally – the space for political experiences such as the death of an agent provocateur on Nowolipki Street, the story of the Citadel and the prison on Dzika Street, and, last but not least, the father’s participation in “certain meetings”, that is, meetings of socialists.

It seems symptomatic that the sphere of politics encompasses two different spaces. When politics appears in the urban space during, for instance, various parties’ campaigning, the ethnic division of Warsaw inhabitants is maintained, at least in most instances. But in the case of street demonstrations this division becomes substituted with a different kind of distinction, one associated with belonging to a specific social class.<sup>137</sup>

In the second volume of Asch’s trilogy Warsaw is depicted chiefly as a very poor city, a city whose inhabitants suffer destitution and hunger, a city where a spark would be enough to start a revolt similar to the Polish Revolution of 1905. A highly characteristic element of recording the specificity of the urban space is the scene of an illegal May Day demonstration dispersed by the tsarist police. Its participants include not only politically engaged participants of party debates, but also Hurwicz’s wife and both daughters. This description of the May Day demonstration covers practically the entire day. Asch clearly shows the division between, on the one hand the demonstrators, who first assembled into groups, and on the other hand, the police and the army:

The streets looked festive. There were no hackney carriages or trams as if they had intentionally given up space for the fight which was about to ensue. Stores on the main streets were closed. [...] sidewalks on Marszałkowska Street were filled with a darkly-clad and stern-looking crowd of laborers, from among whom sometimes surfaced animated faces of salesclerks and sales employees. The scene was livened up by large groups of pale-faced, white-clad girls with red ribbon badges and small groups of smartly-dressed ladies.<sup>138</sup>

The Saxon Garden area, Królewska Street, and the streets adjacent to Marszałkowska Street are blocked by the police and Cossacks. Initially peaceful though filled with tension, that distribution of forces becomes more dynamic

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136 Ibid.

137 Nevertheless, there were also voices calling the 1905 demonstrations in Warsaw a “Jewish parade.” See M. Sokolnicki, *Czternaście lat* (Warsaw, 1936), pp. 198-199. Sokolnicki was a diplomat and Piłsudski’s co-worker.

138 Sh. Asch, *Warszawa*, pp. 331-332.

when the first red banner is hoisted above the crowd. Later, as the repeated attempts to stage the demonstration are suppressed, not giving in to the police forces even once, “the thick crowd is taking up more street space. [. . .] Numerous red banners with various inscriptions fly in the wind. Songs resound in various languages, becoming one loud cry [. . .]: ‘And its color is red / From the workers’ blood.’”<sup>139</sup> The demonstration is dispersed by the army, shots are fired, and there are casualties. The demonstrators suddenly flee in chaos, treated brutally and ruthlessly by the forces embodying the authorities.

A completely different record of May Day demonstrations is featured in Bernard Singer’s reportage.<sup>140</sup> This parliamentary correspondent famous in the interwar period described the conspicuous manipulation of May Day which he witnessed in Berlin in 1933. “The opponent’s holiday, which has gotten in the German proletariat’s blood, has been repainted in the national socialist colors.”<sup>141</sup> The insightful observer took note of the multitude of propaganda measures taken – houses decorated with flags with the swastika, Hitler’s portraits in windows, and the organization of marches by various formations with loud army music as background. The city itself was to become a space of a total symbolic victory of the new political forces: “First and foremost, the goal was to take Berlin. To show that that fortress of socialism and Marxism had forever come into the hands of the new regime.”<sup>142</sup> The skillful organization and management of the masses arriving for the central celebrations, both men and women, captured the reporter’s attention. He concluded: “[at] some point the streets of Berlin became crowded with brown shirts and detachments marching in the direction of the airfield.”<sup>143</sup> Planned, organized, and celebrating as if by order, the capital city seems to show that the new rulers of Germany have managed to not only conduct mass parades, but also command joy “kept in check by discipline.” The author of the reportage also describes the carefully orchestrated spectacle which took place on the apron, where the demonstrators assembled. The only quarters which stood out were the traditionally working-class Wedding and Neukölln, where the

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139 Ibid., p. 335. The song – original French (“Le drapeau Rouge”, written by Paul Brousse) – known also as “The Standard of Revolt;” Polish version by Bolesław Czerwiński, titled “Czerwony sztandar” (1882), which became the anthem of the Polish Socialist Party. Czerwiński’s lyrics were also the basis for Czech, German, Hungarian, Latvian, Romanian, Russian, Ukrainian and Yiddish translations.

140 B. Singer, *W krajach Hitlera i Stalina. Reportaże* (Warsaw, 2007).

141 Ibid., p. 29.

142 Ibid., p. 30.

143 Ibid., p. 31.

number of officially hoisted flags was smaller. It also occurred that “not a single [...] red banner had been put up in Berlin’s working-class quarter.”<sup>144</sup> Aware of what has happened to those who opposed the new regime, the author not only emphasizes the silence “at the former communist stronghold on Kösliner Strasse,” but also the fact of universal suspicion: “Every murmur, every tiniest grimace becomes an object of volunteer informers’ scrutiny.”<sup>145</sup>

The contrast between the first two May Day parades strongly highlights the totally different space of the demonstrations – in the first case the rebellious Warsaw inhabitants engaged in the working-class movement in the early twentieth century, and in the other the crowds manifesting the new regime’s dominance over the Berlin of the 1930s. Of course, a totally separate thread here is an outlook on the ideological motivations of those who decided to participate in the two events.

Antoni Sobański mentions two other formulas of the functioning of politics in public urban space. Watching things happening in Berlin at the beginning of the Nazi regime, he notices the last visible signs of opposition:

Only the communists are active. They demonstrate true heroism. [...] The state security has recently been somewhat dismayed by a graffiti painted early in the morning across several main arteries. It read, in red letters: ‘*Kommunismus lebt noch!*’ [Communism lives on! – A. M.] The roadways were then scrubbed clean with great fervor.<sup>146</sup>

The Polish observer, however, regards the German communist party’s activity as a strong reaction to national socialism. He believes that it would not have acquired such significance if liberal forces “more Weimar in spirit”<sup>147</sup> had risen to power. Dominant in the urban space, the second phenomenon was described in much more detail by the Berlin-visiting author – it was organization of great rallies to manifest party support for Hitler’s regime. Sobański perceives the formulas of the organization of political gatherings not only as a smoothly operating propaganda machine. He records the following observations: “Outside the building I am living in, stands a group of approx. 150 people with a banner informing that they represent a certain company. They wait in the middle of the roadway until the secretly operating and tremendously effective organization orders them to move on.”<sup>148</sup> The author deems characteristic of the German community not only

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144 Ibid.

145 Ibid, pp. 31-32.

146 A. Sobański, *Cywil w Berlinie* (Warsaw, 2006), p. 166.

147 Ibid.

148 Ibid., p. 175.



the organizational skills, but also the coordination of political actions. Watching both the inhabitants arriving in large groups and the law enforcement services, the police, and the uniformed party functionaries, he notices the importance of public gatherings aimed at strengthening people's convictions and showing the strength of the regime. Heading for the spot from which he intends to watch the rally, he walks between two rows of "tall SS-men dressed in black," who stand out with their radical Otherness. He does so as a "lone and embarrassed one-hundred-percent civilian, almost a Jew, dressed in a summer outfit."<sup>149</sup> Sobański devotes a lot of attention to those gathered, mostly young people, the propaganda symbols (flags, banners, the enormous *Maibaum* [Maypole] decorated with swastikas),<sup>150</sup> and the special place of honor allocated to the authorities: "They have erected bleachers 20 times larger and more extravagant than the Warsaw May Day ones on Marshal Piłsudski Square [. . .]."<sup>151</sup> The first stage of the May Day celebrated in the totalitarian state was not only enthusiastically applauded party speeches, but also a kind of a parade which the observer associated with "Carnival parades in Nice:" "Picturesque groups of boys from all parts of the Reich march or drive by dressed in colorful traditional outfits. They are followed by allegorical groups and vehicles, often sugary and sometimes clearly smelling of the Soviet climate."<sup>152</sup> The accounts that follow regard the march of the crowds heading for another gathering. They were dominant in the streets of the German capital, in the space where there was no place for participants differing from the fascism-supporting crowd.

I shall compare and contrast three books representing different genres which paint perhaps the most interesting portraits of both capitals during the interwar period. Each publication is a collection of reportages. The first two describe the Berlin of the 1930s (Singer, Sobański) and the third one Jewish Warsaw seen with the eyes of writer and journalist Alfred Döblin.

Not only Bernard Singer wrote about the transformation which Berlin underwent in the 1930s. Such reportages were also penned by aforementioned Antoni Sobański, a correspondent of the periodical *Wiadomości Literackie*. Well oriented in the political transformations in Germany during that period, the two authors were watching the public urban space from slightly different perspectives.

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149 Ibid., p. 176.

150 One should bear in mind that May Day was still celebrated in Nazi Germany for propaganda reasons.

151 Ibid., p. 177.

152 Ibid., p. 178.

In his text entitled “Zdobycie ulicy” [Capture of the Street], Singer emphasizes the universal character of the changes and the mass-scale production of various propaganda elements, which highlight the absolute power and the takeover of every, also urban, space. That propaganda industry was undoubtedly a very modern (by the-then standards) form of mass persuasion, for not only banners or emblems were manufactured, but also portraits of the leaders, agitation texts and special outfits: “Whenever you look, you can immediately see some evidence of the regime’s existence and reign.”<sup>153</sup> Because of language’s performative character, changing names in the public space also became vital for the organization of the new, different world: “Street renaming has been going on in Germany for several weeks. The well-established names are disappearing. Of course, the names introduced in 1918 and 1919 are all being removed.”<sup>154</sup> In Berlin the author notices the eradication of ‘the bygone’ in the name of the symbolic reign of ‘the new’:

The enormous Liebknecht House, where *Rote Fahne* was located [German for ‘red banner’, a KPD organ, the Spartacus League’s periodical published since the 1918 – A. M.] on Bülow Platz, where large flags of the communist party used to hang, has been renamed the Horst Wessel Haus. There are banners with the swastika flying wherever you look.<sup>155</sup>

Antoni Sobański mentioned similar changes in the urban space, taking note of the universal substitution of the Latin script with the gothic type:

Signs with names of subway stations, same as street signs, are being quickly replaced because they are written in the Latin script. It goes without saying that that began with Adolf-Hitler-Platz. On 5 March Reichskanzlerplatz was renamed in honor of the leader, but the letters were still in Latin script. I saw myself how that faux pas being ashamedly corrected.<sup>156</sup>

Staying in Berlin twice, in 1933 and in the late fall of 1936, Antoni Sobański published a description of Berlin at the beginning of the Nazi rule, first in *Wiadomości Literackie*, and later, in 1934, in book form.<sup>157</sup> Sobański emphasizes

153 B. Singer, *W krajach Hitlera i Stalina*, p. 53.

154 *Ibid.*, p. 53.

155 *Ibid.* The change in the building’s name is also symbolic. Celebrated by the Nazi authorities, Horst Wessel was a ‘martyr’ figure used in the Nazi propaganda.

156 A. Sobański, *Cywil w Berlinie*, pp. 107–108.

157 I use Tomasz Szarota’s enlarged edition – to the 1934 edition of *Cywil w Berlinie*, later texts published in 1934 and 1936 in *Wiadomości Literackie* were also added (even though the 1936 reportages concern Sobański’s visit to Nuremberg and not Berlin).

yet a different phenomenon: “Today I can see how different the street looks now. This is less visible in the western quarter. But here, where I am living, in the center [...] I can see two main changes: the sea of uniforms and the absence of foreigners.”<sup>158</sup> The Polish observer made a somewhat ironic comment on the multitude of different uniforms – which was indeed an important element of the appearance of the urban space: “There is no end to the different types of uniforms. They actually call for a comprehensive publication consisting of several volumes featuring a few dozen charts. Such a publication would be expensive, and rather dull too.”<sup>159</sup>

The author takes note of the almost complete absence of tourists, in both travel agencies and luxurious hotels. The conversations of pedestrians he hears also direct his attention to this fact. But the German capital has not become completely deserted. Sobański emphasizes: “the German likes to travel in his homeland. Besides, the Nazi revolution has resulted in such a multitude of conventions, celebrations, demonstrations, etc., the center of which is Berlin, that hotels, mostly the less expensive ones, and the street do not seem deserted.”<sup>160</sup> However, Italians and Chinese students are practically the only tourists. A separate group is made up by foreign correspondents and diplomats assembling at the Adlon Hotel or at the Italian restaurant called Die Taverne, where the author of the reportage, as he himself admits, has learned “a lot of interesting information, partly while talking with people and partly by using the reliable though tiring method of eavesdropping.”<sup>161</sup>

Although he points out that he cannot pinpoint or analyze all elements of the-then reality, he does notice an important aspect of that period – the atmosphere of “the revolution taking place in Germany,” a kind of “turmoil in a hurry” accompanying the “thrilling event of the national socialist takeover of power.”<sup>162</sup> Thus, the urban space of Berlin visited by the *Wiadomości Literackie* correspondent is characterized not only by the absence of foreign tourists or the multitude of uniforms: “There is anxiety in the air and one cannot forget about it even for a moment. There is also the ever-present talk of sabotage and counterrevolution.”<sup>163</sup> Looking out a café window, Sobański watches several trucks drive by,

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158 A. Sobański, *Cywil w Berlinie*, p. 39.

159 *Ibid.*, p. 41.

160 *Ibid.*, p. 40.

161 *Ibid.*, p. 41.

162 *Ibid.*, p. 78

163 *Ibid.*

which enables him to describe one of the characteristic actions undertaken in Berlin during that period.

[In the trucks] sit policemen and auxiliary police functionaries, holding their rifles between their knees. What this means is obvious: *Razzia* [literally a raid, a sudden police action – A. M.]. They are going to surround an entire cluster of residential buildings or even an entire block or park and they are going to check everybody's ID and frisk them. The suspected individuals are going to be apprehended. Such roundups sometimes last a whole day. [. . .] Who is hunted like that? Why, there is no shortage of enemies and suspected individuals: right-wing, left-wing, centrist, and, generally speaking, non-Nazis.<sup>164</sup>

From this perspective the city looks as if it were governed by some extraordinary regulations. The revolutionary, radical actions not only fill the space of Berlin – this 'revolution', which has so radically changed the appearance of the city in the observer's eye, is also accompanied by press reports on a wave of suicides.

Sobański also deals with the anti-Semitic propaganda (he visits, for instance, the editorial office of *Der Angriff*, the SA organ), although in 1933 he still notices the presence of Jewish inhabitants of Berlin, chiefly *Ostjuden*: "In the miniature Berlin ghetto [a reference to the quarter inhabited by East-European Jews – A. M.] – which consists of just a few streets but boasts kapotes<sup>165</sup> and yarmulkes, beards and sideburns – the traffic and appearance of the street are almost [my emphasis – A. M.] normal, only that many stalls are closed. Their owners are either in prison or in Poland."<sup>166</sup>

The author attributes this relative normalcy to the fact that "[t]he anti-Semitism has not seeped into the masses. But the [anti-Semitic] factors are lobbying the authorities as much as they can. They will resort to any lie or slander."<sup>167</sup> The traveler from Poland refers not only to the presence of East-European Jews in the German capital – he is aware of how different they are, how they differ in their attire and appearance from German Jews. Sobański sees the latter in cafés and on downtown streets, but he is convinced about their exceptional loyalty to the German state. Unable to predict the most dramatic events and the nearing Holocaust, he remarks that the persecution "will last about two years," but will result, on the one hand, in an outflow of Jewish investors' capital

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164 *Ibid.*, p. 79.

165 According to Merriam-Webster, I use the word 'capote' for traditional long dark coat, which is dressed by Orthodox Jews and Hasidim. See: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/kapote>.

166 *Ibid.*, p. 94.

167 *Ibid.*

from Germany and pauperization of the Jews who will remain, and, on the other hand, in the creation of a peculiar “new form of a cultural ghetto” due to the ongoing “cleansing’ of art, literature, and intellectual life.”<sup>168</sup>

During his second visit to Berlin Sobański reflects on certain similarities between the local political discourse and that present in Poland in the 1930s, pointing at the pro-government as well as the National Democratic press. The comparison between the-then Germany and Poland leads to clear conclusions: “A shared feature is the ruthlessness and the tolerance for brutality, and the elements which complete this picture [. . .] are demagoguery and anti-Semitism [. . .].”<sup>169</sup>

A separate phenomenon is the functioning of the anti-Jewish attitude of a character of Alfred Döblin’s novel *Berlin Alexanderplatz*. Franz Biberkopf is aware of the power of the word, which he emphasizes in his dialog with Gottlieb: “But you know, them Jews did give me a lift. I went from one courtyard to another singing the Watch on the Rhine, that’s how dizzy I was in my head. Then the two Jews fished me out and told me stories. Words are a good thing too, Gottlieb, and what a man says.”<sup>170</sup> But this does not stop the main character from using anti-Semitic clichés when he comments on an advertisement of tie-holders on Rosenthalerplatz outside the Fabich & Co. men’s clothes store: “Go buy yourself a tie like this at Tietz’s or Wertheim’s or, if you don’t want to buy it from Jews, get it somewhere else. I’m a Nordic, I am. [. . .] Big department stores don’t have to get me to advertise them, they can exist without me.”<sup>171</sup> A seller of ‘national newspapers’, he joins this part of the society which does not see anti-Semitism as a form of discrimination: “He is not against the Jews, but he is for law and order. For law and order must reign in Paradise; which everyone should recognize. And the Steel Helmet, he’s seen those boys, and their leaders, too, that’s a

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168 Ibid., p. 97.

169 Ibid., p. 143.

170 A. Döblin, *Berlin Alexanderplatz: the Story of Franz Biberkopf*, trans. Eugene Jolas (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing, 1983), p. 66. “Wacht am Rhein” is a German Nineteenth-century patriotic song that became highly popular during the First World War.

171 Ibid., p. 77. Wertheim and Tietz were two big (Jewish) commercial enterprises which ran modern department stores since the beginning of the century in, for instance, Berlin. More about their origin and operation until their takeover as a result of the ‘Aryanization’ of companies see: E. Fischer, S. Ladwig-Winters, *Die Wertheims. Geschichte einer Familie* (Berlin, 2008); S. Ladwig-Winters, *Wertheim. Ein Warenhausunternehmen und seine Eigentümer. Beispiel der Entwicklung der Berliner Warenhäuser bis zur “Arisierung”* (Münster, 1997).

great thing.”<sup>172</sup> When Biberkopf pays another visit to his Jewish friends (“Franz Blows a Farewell March to the Jews” is the title of the subchapter),<sup>173</sup> his internal observations regard mutual strangeness: “[. . .] while he looked into their faces, smiled, questioned, answered: Franz Bieberkopf, they may say what they please, they’ve got the preacher’s outfit, but they’re not preachers, it’s a caftan; they’re from Galicia, near Lemberg, they’re clever, but they can’t tell me anything.”<sup>174</sup> But one has to bear in mind that the main character of the novel does not become a proponent of the national ideology, to which testifies, for instance, the following ironic scene. While selling ‘national newspapers’ Franz looked from Alexanderplatz “down Münzstrasse [. . .] and thinks to himself: Wonder how far it is to the two Jews [. . .] maybe I’ll call on them one of these days, they might buy a copy of the *Völkischer Beobachter* from me. Why not, if they want it, I don’t care, as long as they buy it.”<sup>175</sup> The alienation and psychological confusion which Biberkopf experiences have sources other than politics.

A reportage to a certain degree analogous, similar to Sobański’s book is Alfred Döblin’s earlier *Journey to Poland* (1925). The German author recounts the history of the Polish struggle for independence, the ideological diversity and the ideological currents which shape the political reality (Dmowski, Piłsudski), and the internal conflicts and political disputes in the Jewish communities in Polish cities, including Warsaw. A reader can notice that Döblin’s knowledge of the Polish-Jewish relations is not always accurate. The following quotation can serve as an example: “Jews and Poles were on excellent terms until 1903. Then the Jewish Russians showed up, energetic, sly, the hated Litvaks; they aroused the opposition of the Poles and the local Jews.”<sup>176</sup> Despite being relatively well-oriented in Polish history, the author is somewhat naive to use the expression “excellent terms” in reference to the Polish-Jewish relations. For he forgets about the major wave of anti-Semitism which emerged in the late nineteenth century, the 1881 pogrom in Warsaw, and the increase in anti-Jewish sentiments

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172 A. Döblin, *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, p. 97.

173 *Ibid.*, p. 164.

174 *Ibid.*, p. 168.

175 *Ibid.*, p. 223. Since 1920 the biweekly had been associated with the national socialist movement. Being the NSDAP organ, its subtitle was *Kampforgan der nationalsozialistischen Bewegung Großdeutschlands* [combat organ of the national socialist Greater Germany Movement].

176 A. Döblin, *Journey to Poland*, trans. Joachim Neugroschel; ed. Heinz Graber (London&New York: I. B. Tauris & Co Ltd., 1991), p. 37. This thesis could be illustrated with Artur Gruszecki’s novel *Litwackie mrowie* [The Litvak Swarm].

beginning with the early twentieth century. However, he does mention changes in the city's appearance connected with historical events, for instance, the removal of the statue of Count Ivan Paskevich or the demolition of the Russian Orthodox church on Saxon Square, which he witnesses.<sup>177</sup> Even though he initially regards the demolition of the church as a "killing" of the building, he immediately notices its symbolic dimension, its being a manifestation of foreign authority – "It was supposed to be a fist, an iron fist [. . .]."<sup>178</sup> Another vital change connected with politics which he notices in the urban space is the process of changing street names: "Lots of streets and squares have been renamed to obliterate the memories of old misfortunes and humiliations."<sup>179</sup>

Portraying the capital, Döblin points, on the one hand, to the presence of uniformed military men ("The Poles haven't had a military for long, they relish it."),<sup>180</sup> students, and smartly-dressed ladies, and, on the other hand, to posh representative streets (Krakowskie Przedmieście and Marszałkowska). He writes about not only the Warsaw trams' appearance and the symbols used (the city's emblem), but also the passengers' curious behavior: "In a manner unfamiliar in any German city, the people chase after the trolley, frantically jumping in and out."<sup>181</sup>

The German visitor first encounters Jewish inhabitants of Warsaw at a tram stop, which can also be regarded as a special place of contact between almost all people moving in the space of the capital. Even though Döblin does not come to Warsaw unprepared, as he knows *Ostjuden* living in a Berlin quarter, he expresses his surprise caused by that first encounter:

All at once, a lone man with a bearded face comes toward me through the crowd: he wears a black, ragged gabardine [. . .]. And right behind him, talking loudly, in words that I recognize as German [most probably Yiddish – A. M.], another one, likewise in a black gabardine, a big man, with a broad red face, red fuzz on his cheeks, over his lips. He talks intensely to a small, poorly dressed girl, his daughter no doubt [. . .]. I feel a jolt in my heart. They vanish in the throng. People pay them no heed. They are Jews. I am stunned, no, frightened.<sup>182</sup>

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177 The cathedral was demolished in the 1920s. See G. Michalak, "Sobór św. Aleksandra Newskiego na Placu Saskim w świetle międzywojennej prasy," *Saeculum Christianum* 1 (2010): 84.

178 A. Döblin, *Journey to Poland*, p. 6.

179 Ibid.

180 Ibid., p. 4.

181 Ibid., p. 5.

182 Ibid., p. 7.

It seems that the author not only looks at the Jews like at figures of exotic Otherness, different and distinguished by their peculiar attire (Döblin returns several times to both this topic and descriptions of typical Jewish inhabitants), but he also points to two important aspects of Jewish presence – apparent poverty and the other inhabitants' indifference. The author, who did not know many *Ostjuden* at that time, was shocked predominantly by their radically different appearance and striking destitution.

Reading Döblin's story about Warsaw the reader gets, on the one hand, his overview of the history of the Polish community, and, on the other hand, a portrayal of the political relations: the active parties and the subject matter of rights of ethnic minorities (an occasion for discussing this is Döblin's meetings with individuals engaged in political life: a journalist of a left-wing newspaper, a municipal politician, and a "very down-to-earth [. . .] National Polish politician"). Döblin also mentions the circumstances of the murder of President Narutowicz. He makes a laconic comment: "While viewing the paintings at the museum, he got the bullet in his back. It was an answer to the question of who should rule Poland, a state nation or a consortium of nations. The shot opted for the state nation."<sup>183</sup> The writer also meets with representatives of Jewish milieus. The situation of the Jewish population in reborn Poland is presented to him by, for instance, a "young Jewish politician," who points to discriminatory practices ("Anyone who registers as a Jewish national cannot advance in the polish army.")<sup>184</sup> and difficulties encountered on the modernizing labor market. Other actors on the political scene are representatives of the Bund and a leader of the Zionists. Described as "lively, bearded, thoroughly energetic,"<sup>185</sup> the latter is most probably Izaak Grünbaum. The author quotes the politician's diagnosis: "The Polish people mock and scorn the Jews; they also fear them a bit."<sup>186</sup> The leader of the Zionists also presents the efforts made by minority politicians

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183 Ibid., p. 37–38. It is noteworthy that this is a portrait of the Polish capital of 1924. This is how years later the author remembered the reasons for his travel to Poland in his autobiographic text entitled *Schicksalsreise*: under the influence of anti-Jewish riots in Scheunenviertel [a Berlin quarter inhabited mostly by *Ostjuden* – A.M.] in the early 1920s he wished to take a fresh look at the subject matter of the functioning of Jews in the diaspora: "I asked myself and others where Jews lived. I was told that in Poland. So I went to Poland then. . ." Qtd. after: [http://www.literatur-kritik.de/public/rezension.php?rez\\_id=3325](http://www.literatur-kritik.de/public/rezension.php?rez_id=3325).

184 Ibid., p. 57.

185 Ibid., p. 58.

186 Ibid.



with regard to equal rights (access to higher education, school subsidies, and promotion opportunities in state administration). Visiting one of the schools whose construction was initiated by Bundists (the writer calls it a “lay Jewish school”), Döblin emphasizes the activeness and autonomy of the emancipation of the “working masses of the Jewish people.”<sup>187</sup>

Presenting to the German reader the functioning of the Polish political scene in the infant state, the author points to the parties represented in the Polish Parliament associated with interests of various social circles – the landowners and conservatives, the petite bourgeois, the peasants – and the presence of the representation of ethnic minorities. As he himself admits, he obtained his knowledge chiefly by talking with representatives of various orientations connected with the diverse – also politically – Jewish milieu. But he did also speak with a “National Polish politician.”<sup>188</sup>

Though varying in genre (novels, reportages), the above narrations regarding the presence of political phenomena in the urban space make up a kind of a realist portrait. In the first half of the twentieth century (and also earlier, about which wrote Małgorzata Domagalska)<sup>189</sup> produced were also works which can be categorized as political fiction.<sup>190</sup> I would like to remark on three of them.

## Supplement: City and Politics, That Is, Literary Political Fiction<sup>191</sup>

A certain phenomenon has been present in various cultures for centuries. What I am referring to is the explanation of events with various conspiracy theories of history. Conspiracy theories – which we encounter also today – have often

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187 Ibid., p. 59.

188 Ibid., pp. 36–38.

189 See M. Domagalska, *Zatrute ziarno. Proza antysemitka na łamach “Roli” (1883–1912)* (Warsaw, 2015).

190 Paweł Dunin-Wąsowicz wrote about various fantastic narrations about Warsaw. Wąsowicz begins his reflection with Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz’s prose, that is, *Moszkopolis 3333*, and goes on to meticulously list a lot of works where one can often find motifs of Polish-Jewish relations, which stereotype Jews (for instance, the political visions of Antoni Skrzynecki. *Warszawa w 2000 roku* [Warsaw in the Year 2000], and Adolf Nowaczyński, *System dr Caro* [Dr. Caro’s System], published in 1927). See P. Dunin-Wąsowicz, *Warszawa fantastyczna* (Warsaw, 2010), pp. 24–29.

191 Some of these reflections were published under the title “Spisek wam wszystko wyjaśni. . .” in the collective work entitled *(Nie)przezroczystość normalności w literaturze polskiej XIX i XX wieku*, ed. H. Gosk and B. Karwowska (Warsaw, 2014).

served the purpose of creating a kind of (ab)normalcy. Explanations of how the world works made with the use of diverse conspiracy theories cannot be logically disputed – their total coherence guarantees their recipients an answer to every question and an explanation of every contradiction: imaginary conspiracies have a tendency for greater logical rigor and they contain fewer unexplained details than the actual course of events.<sup>192</sup> Kołakowski wrote: “for many people irrationality of history is unbearable as it makes them feel that their life makes no sense.”<sup>193</sup>

On the one hand, the conviction that social mechanisms or extraordinary phenomena are caused by some mysterious forces brings a sense of complete and deep understanding of history and contemporary events. On the other hand, it gives the convinced individuals emotional satisfaction which results from being in the know and which also makes one feel better. The persistence of faith in conspiracy theories of history, the assumption that there operate some secret, demonic organizations facilitates a quick and very easy explanation of the world. Immaterial become historians’ findings and reliable research. Conspiracy theorists feel off the hook as far as rational thinking is concerned. “The ‘conspiracy syndrome’ is an attribute of the human mind, a ‘degenerated form of normal mentality which seeks only the right sense and does not multiply variants of sense unnecessarily.”<sup>194</sup>

The building blocks of conspiracy theories are schematic concepts and stereotypes, that is very stable elements of collective imagination. As Janusz Tazbir has remarked, in the catalogue of figures which populate the Polish past (and present) the figures of the heretic, the Jew, or other representatives of a minority “fit the figure of the Other perfectly.”<sup>195</sup> Reflections on heroes of many centuries lead to a conclusion that the Other was seen as the main threat to the interests

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192 D. Pipes, *Potęga spisku. Wpływ paranoicznego myślenia na dzieje ludzkości*, trans. S. Kędziński (Warsaw, 1998), p. 50 [Original title: *Conspiracy: How the Paranoid Style Flourishes and Where It Comes From* (Touchstone, 1997)] Pipes compares conspirationism, that is conspiracy theories, to astrology and alchemy – they collect facts from various fields, finding incidental connections where in fact there are none (p. 50).

193 Qtd. after: J. Tazbir, *Protokoły mędrców Syjonu. Autentyk czy falsyfikat* (Warsaw, 2003) (reprinted in 2012), p. 11 [All translations from Polish by A. B]; L. Kołakowski, *Światopogląd i życie codzienne* (Warsaw, 1957), p. 193.

194 J. Tazbir, *Protokoły mędrców Syjonu*. p. 11.

195 J. Tazbir, “Stereotypów żywot twardy,” in *Mity i stereotypy w dziejach Polski*, ed. J. Tazbir (Warsaw, 1991), p. 11.

of both the state and the Church. The Other stood out by his behavior, faith, and language, and often also attire or appearance. All that made up the image of the enemy.<sup>196</sup>

Myths and stereotypical beliefs helpful in creating reality in literary texts, particularly in popular literature, were frequently used predominantly at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, when, according to historians, they were often employed to explain the fiasco of Polish uprisings. Stereotypes and myths – chiefly those which originated in the nineteenth century, when “the nation was torn between megalomania and gloom-mongering, to which it found a remedy in many irrational illusions”<sup>197</sup> – were strongly reinforced, on the one hand, by the popularity of the historical novel (Sienkiewicz, Kraszewski, and others), and, on the other hand, by means of the secondary, post-1945 reception of those works as books on obligatory school reading lists or highly popular film adaptations. A separate literary current is works which promised a universal explanation of all events on earth and in the heaven. They are penned by very different authors who have proposed to their readers – since the nineteenth century (and earlier too, of course) – a certain special perspective, a kind of ‘normalcy’ *a rebours*.

Tazbir writes: “Painting the modern image of the enemy requires [...] accepting a conspiracy theory of history, that is, a belief in the centrally-steered operation of Masonic lodges or in the Conspiracy of the Elders of Zion which threatens the world. It [the theory – A. M.] found its enthusiasts among far-right journalists active in reborn Poland.”<sup>198</sup> One should bear in mind that the said model was followed by not only journalists sympathizing with the National Democracy and other variants of the right wing thought.

We know that international conspiracy theories usually contain three basic elements. First of all, there is a powerful, secret, sinister organization striving at hegemony. Second, there are executives and agents who serve it, intentionally or unaware Third, there is a small group of trapped noble individuals who urgently need help to prevent the catastrophe.<sup>199</sup> Anti-Semitism fits this model well, while in its contemporary version it transforms into a peculiar, alternative way of looking at the world, in short, it becomes a philosophy of (ab)normalcy which answers all questions and gives recipes for salvation.<sup>200</sup> Thus, conspiracy theories

196 See *ibid.*

197 *Ibid.*, p. 22.

198 *Ibid.*, p. 12.

199 See D. Pipes, *Potęga spisku*, p. 41.

200 R. S. Levy, *Antisemitism in the Modern World: An Anthology of Texts* (Lexington, Mass., 1991), pp. 4, 122; qtd. after: D. Pipes, *Potęga spisku*, p. 41.

can and – as we know only too well – do become such ways of seeing reality which alter our thinking and govern our perception with precision, shaping a kind of (ab)normalcy or normalcy of the parallel world, with entire social groups functioning within its framework.

The history of secret associations or conspiracies is an object of research conducted by historians or scholars of social phenomena, who try to analyze and interpret the available documents and known facts in a reliable way. Conspiracy theories, which base not on facts but only ways of perception, are often used to construct literary plots. Classic works of this type are Eugène Sue's novel *The Wandering Jew* (where the figure of evil is ignoble Jesuits), which has recently been republished also in Poland, and Dumas' novels devoted to the Freemasonry.

Those who invent conspiracy theories share with their enthusiasts the deep conviction that “we have always fallen victim to some conspiracies organized by those who are against us, by the powers acting in secret; [this conviction – A.M.] has always had a comforting meaning. For to restore the old good fortune [. . .] it is enough to destroy these dangerous powerful entities.”<sup>201</sup>

An example – one of the most common – of a conspiracy theory of history is the anti-Semitic model of explaining events in the categories of a ‘Jewish conspiracy’.

In European history, this model appeared for the first time during 1347-1350 with regard to the plague, when “Jews were accused of poisoning well and spreading the epidemic.” In Polish narrations, the statement that “Jews are Poland's misfortune and nemesis” became the “basis for the anti-Semitic founding myth.” According to Maria Janion, this discourse of exclusion had a negative influence on the way in which we construct narratives about our past (or present):

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 consistently repeats itself – [. . .] The ‘Jewish conspiracy’ is supposed to be measured against Polish History (in capitals), Polish society, and the heroic history of the Polish people.<sup>202</sup>

The two books which I wish to discuss in this context are literary texts published in Poland during the interwar period. They construct a kind of variant of the normative model of the functioning of the world. They were

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201 J. Tazbir, *Protokoły mędrców Syjonu*, p. 127.

202 M. Janion, *Hero, conspiracy, and death: the Jewish lectures*, trans. Alex Shannon (Frankfurt am Main: PL Academic Research – Peter Lang, 2014), p. 52.

both written and published under pseudonyms, with their authors being key National Democratic activists – Roman Dmowski and Jędrzej Giertych. In his private correspondence, Dmowski confessed to having authored *Dziedzictwo* [Heritage]. One should take note of the publication dates of this work penned by the National Democracy leader – it went out in 1931, then in 1935, 1938, 1942 during the war (in London), and 1944 during the occupation (in Cracow! published by the Prom publishing house).<sup>203</sup> By contrast, the authorship of Jędrzej Giertych's novel *Zamach* [Assassination Attempt] published in 1938 was uncertain for some time.<sup>204</sup>

The tradition of conspiracy theories about Jewish plans to transform Poland into their own state dates back to Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz's peculiar work *Moszkopolis 3333*, which has been republished a number of times, or Staszic's stereotypical views that Jews were “the cause for all of the Polish nation's misfortunes.”<sup>205</sup> Niemcewicz's work can be treated as a kind of fantasy or a harsh pamphlet. But it seems that the moment of the publication of this prose began the career in Polish literature of political fiction based on conspiracy theories of history.<sup>206</sup> In the second half of the nineteenth century and in the first half of the twentieth century such plot constructions were popular in Polish literature – it is enough to mention authors such as Antoni Skrzynecki, Andrzej Niemojewski, or Artur Gruszecki. By the way, Dmowski and Giertych might have treated as prototype the literary achievements of Stanisław Piasecki (1900–1941, associated with *ABC* and *Wieczór Warszawski*, a co-founder, together with Wojciech Wasiutyński, of the periodical *Prosto z mostu*) – the two-volume thriller entitled *Związek Białej Tarczy* [White Shield Union], as it was published in 1929.

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203 J. Tazbir, *Protokoły mędrców Syjonu*, p. 129.

204 Although this is how the pseudonym J. Mariański was interpreted in the National Library catalogue, according to Janusz Tazbir, Jędrzej Giertych never confessed to the authorship. Thus, it was thought that the book might have been written by National Democratic journalist Jerzy Mariański. Cf. J. Tazbir, *Protokoły mędrców Syjonu*, p. 132. However, we now know that the author was indeed Giertych, as he confessed to the authorship in his book *Curriculum vitae*. See J. Giertych, *Curriculum Vitae Jędrzeja Giertycha* (Krzeszowice, 2011), p. 90.

205 Maria Janion discusses the birth of the founding myth of Polish anti-Semitism in more detail. Cf. M. Janion, *Hero, conspiracy, and death*, pp. 63–73.

206 *Moszkopolis 3333 czyli sen niesłuchany* (penned in 1817, first edition – *Przegląd Poznański* 26 [1858]) is a kind of a fictional history of the future, professing the dominance of the Jewish race in Poland and Europe.

Even the Holocaust did not put an end to that way of thinking. Tazbir points to Jan Dobraczyński's<sup>207</sup> novel *Dzieci Anny* [Anna's Children] (published in 1983!), where Jews are exclusively negative characters and the reader is to become convinced that "the world is manipulated and ruled by specific groups of people (for instance, Masons, Jews, certain agents, etc.)."<sup>208</sup> I have also written about similar ways of shaping the world depicted in the novels by Dobrowolski or Bratny, or in Machejek's prose as a kind of continuation of the March 1968 narrations.<sup>209</sup> Now I wish to point to the tradition of such novels written during the interwar period.

The narrative models in *Dziedzictwo* and *Zamach* involve a series of stereotypes from the classic repertoire of the anti-Semitic heritage. The first myth used is the motif of 'Jewish wealth'. To be sure, it is always wealth obtained through fraud, illegally, or by means of ingenious theft. Having come from Paris to Warsaw, Dmowski's main character immediately notices the difference between the capital of France and the 'Paris of the North': "he used that occasion to take a closer look at Warsaw, which he did not know. It made a sad impression on him: too much poverty, too much noise and dirt, and an inharmonic mixture of the East and West."<sup>210</sup> This lack of esthetic harmony results from the bad taste of Jewish inhabitants of Warsaw, their peculiar disposition and their complete strangeness in the esthetic space of the Polish capital. The milieu of Warsaw Jews is portrayed as a group of rich men and schemers. Tarkowski's uncle bequeathed to him not only his property, but also a 'secret'. For it occurs that the dead relative had temporarily belonged to a secret organization – the Union of Accommodating Gravediggers, but he left it when he learned that it was a Judeo-Masonic organization which intended to cause harm to Poland. However, he did learn many 'secrets', perhaps too many to remain alive. The main hero – superbly educated, because in Paris he had learned Hebrew and the Jewish occult and culture – initially maintains contacts with this circle of his uncle's Warsaw friends. Hence, he learns, for instance, about very complicated, unclear, and fraudulent international business conducted by Jews in Africa. Those Jews take advantage of the Polish nobility's lack of education, gullibility, and kind-hearted honesty. Treating young Tarkowski as an 'insider,' a man engaged in those actions

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207 As early as in the interwar period Dobraczyński was able to spot analogies between the Talmud and *Mein Kampf* (!!!). See J. Dobraczyński, "Niepokojące analogie," *Kultura*, 14 May 1939, p. 1.

208 J. Tazbir, *Protokoły mędrców Syjonu*, p. 141.

209 Cf. A. Molisak, "Kilka uwag o różnych odmianach 'marcowych' narracji," in (*Nieciekawa epoka? Literatura PRL*, ed. H. Gosk (Warsaw, 2008), pp. 282 ff.

210 K. Wybranowski (R. Dmowski), *Dziedzictwo* (Poznań, 1931), p. 45.

encourages him to stay in Warsaw and take active part in the life of the country because they “shall make Europe here, in Poland.”<sup>211</sup> Patriotic and Catholic political commentators had a clear opinion on the modernization of the world and the shaping of capitalism: “In its present form capitalism is a product of a gradual transformation of the Aryan economic system under the influence of Jewish principles and customs.”<sup>212</sup> A different member of the group portrayed in the novel inherited a large fortune from his father, Józef Culmer. We find out about how his ancestor came about all that money from the following highly suggestive, ironic narration:

He was said to have participated in the ‘63 uprising. But he did not go with a shotgun into a forest. He distinguished himself in Warsaw, in various councils and civic committees. People whispered about his relations with the National Government and those more in the know knew that he had put himself in great danger by taking upon himself the purchase of a substantial transport of weapons from England. Only that due to some unfortunate coincidence that weaponry never reached the country. But he got lucky because the Muscovites never discovered his active participation in the uprising. Thus, he avoided exile and hard labor, and perhaps even the gallows. After the uprising he remained in Warsaw, where during that difficult time he was one of the most fervent patriots forced to exercise extreme caution. Thus, his surname was spoken with great reverence. Some bowed their head when they said it.<sup>213</sup>

Thus, accusing his father of embezzling money allocated to a noble cause, Dmowski at the same time points to the source of the son’s fortune.

Another popular stereotype in literature is the myth of the beautiful Jewish woman. This phenomenon present in Polish culture has been aptly and thoroughly analyzed by Bożena Umińska in her book *Postać z cieniem* [Character with a Shadow].<sup>214</sup> This cliché frequently encountered in the Polish literary tradition can also be found in the two novels I am discussing. When a Jewish woman appears in *Dziedzictwo*, she obviously looks exotic and is an exceptional sexual object; her “eastern sensuality” is emphasized (p. 128, 137, 282, and 284). The same can be observed in *Zamach* [Assassination Attempt]<sup>215</sup> when the patriotic Captain meets an attractive young lady by a stall selling second-hand books. This is how the moment when he learns that she is Jewish is described:

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211 Ibid., p. 80.

212 The periodical *Ruch Katolicki*, 1938; qtd. after: J. Tomaszewski, “Stereotyp mniejszości narodowych w II Rzeczypospolitej,” in *Mity i stereotypy w dziejach Polski*, p. 279.

213 K. Wybranowski (Roman Dmowski), *Dziedzictwo*, p. 140.

214 See B. Umińska, *Postać z cieniem. Portrety Żydówek w polskiej literaturze* (Warsaw, 2001).

215 J. Giertych (J. Mariański), *Zamach* (Pelplin, 1938), published by the author.

He did not say a word. It was not a pleasant surprise. He was not by any means an anti-Semite. He was as far from anti-Semitism as one can be. But he inadvertently felt somewhat disappointed when he discovered an ordinary Jewish in the person who turned his head and whom he regarded as a quintessence of Paris. But after all, she was an Alsatian Jewess. A representative of a race which has been close to the European West for centuries. And there was nothing Jewish about her. That is, there was nothing in her from what we, who know Eastern Jews, tend to regard as inherently Jewish.<sup>216</sup>

The hero is somewhat distressed and disappointed, but the most characteristic aspect of the stereotype of the beautiful Jewish woman – her exceptional erotic appeal – is immediately emphasized: “but she was luring him in with all the potency of her sensuality and she was doing that deliberately. It was simply the Jewish woman in her manifesting herself.”<sup>217</sup>

Another enduring myth is the anti-Semitic conviction about the existence of a Jewish conspiracy. The author of *Dziedzictwo* lays out the motivations of the Jewish characters:

This land must be ours. Our wise men have been saying this for a long time. And the Germans, the Muscovites, and the Poles are helping us achieve this goal. And we need to push them to help us even more. You must take over this work from me. And to perform it you need a lot of thought, vigilance, and constant bearing of the cause in mind. [...] The cause has priority.<sup>218</sup>

Thus, on the one hand Jewish inhabitants of Warsaw are a part of an all-encompassing conspiracy and they act to dominate the whole world, and on the other hand, their main local objective is to take control over Polish lands. A similar conspiracy model functions in *Zamach*. This political fiction novel describes the establishment of a great conspiracy against Poland, in which participate an Italian fascist (of Jewish origin), a French banker (a Jew), a Polish representative with the League of Nations (a Jew), and a Polish diplomat (a follower of Jacob Fran, eminent Masons from Sweden, and even an employee of the Polish Ministry of Internal Affairs in Warsaw – a careerist of lowly origins who regards the planned upturn as a career opportunity. The heroic Captain who tries to counteract this conspiracy comes to a conclusion that not only Jews are to be treated with a great deal of caution: “He has avoided Jews and people connected by marriage with them – but it occurs that one must avoid pure-blood Poles too.”<sup>219</sup> Such an outlook is close to the reasoning of one of the most anti-Semitic representatives of

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216 Ibid., p. 8.

217 Ibid., p. 12.

218 K. Wybranowski (R. Dmowski), *Dziedzictwo*, p. 141.

219 J. Giertych (J. Mariański), *Zamach*, p. 105.



the Catholic Church in Poland in the interwar period, Father Stanisław Trzeciak, who carefully distinguished a peculiar category of ‘white Jews’:

Jews and white Jews [that is Poles who have a ‘Jewish mentality’ – A. M.] are flooding the Polish society with filth and are spewing the venom of hatred, discord, and partisanship. They are throwing mud at anything patriotic and Catholic. They are dragging the Poles who consciously come to their nation’s defense through mud and mire. [. . .] They intend to push the Christian society into the depths of corruption and debauchery so as to have an easier time weakening and devouring it there.<sup>220</sup>

Triggering unrest and revolution proves a method of realizing the secret objectives of the Jewish conspiracy. In *Dziedzictwo*, a member of the Union of Accommodating Gravediggers, a Jew who poses as a Pole of English origin, clearly alludes to this idea, stating that Poles must be manipulated in such a way so as to lead to “brutal demonstrations, to their letting others slaughter them and to their slaughtering of Poland. This is what we did in ’63. And in that year alone we achieved more than over the 30 years preceding it.”<sup>221</sup> Such an evaluation of the 1863 January Uprising is indeed rare in Polish literature.

Pointing to a reverse of the myth of Jewish wealth – to the stereotype of the Jewish revolutionary and the activity of the Judeo-Communism, Jan Tomaszewski emphasized its doubly-anti-Semitic tenor. This is what he wrote about the Jewish participation in the international conspiracy against Poland:

On the one hand it was said (also in *Rycerz Niepokalanej*) that Jews belonged to the world international of capitalists who aimed at making money and ruling the world. On the other hand, Jews were said to manage the international communist conspiracy. Political scribblers sought any international connections of Jewish organizations to prove the existence of that conspiracy, sometimes associated with a Masonic conspiracy analogous in its content. [. . .] the prevalence [of such views] in certain milieus in the Polish society caused the legend to spread, proving it surprisingly durable.<sup>222</sup>

The latter anti-Semitic stereotype is used in the novel *Zamach*. Although since the times of Zygmunt Krasiński the Polish reader might have been convinced that most pro-revolution advocates were Jewish converts, in Giertych’s novel the unrest is inspired by Polish Jews who aim not only at causing turmoil and a civil war and staging a coup d’état, but also at transforming Poland into the

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220 Qtd. after: M. Śliwa, *Swoi czy obcy. Z dziejów poglądów na kwestię żydowską w Polsce w XIX i XX wieku* (Cracow, 1997), p. 131.

221 K. Wybranowski (Roman Dmowski), *Dziedzictwo*, p. 128.

222 J. Tomaszewski, *Stereotyp mniejszości narodowych w II Rzeczypospolitej*, p. 285.

Judeo-Poland of their dreams and entering into a union with the Soviet Union. Let us read a description of the effects of the demonic conspirers' actions:

Buses and trams in Warsaw have stopped running. Phones have gone silent. There is no electricity. There is no water or gas in pipes. Even laborers who do not belong to socialist unions have stopped working under the terror of the socialist paramilitary groups. Giving in to the psychosis which has been spread by the cheap press edited by Jews, many of them are joining the socialist camp.<sup>223</sup>

The author does not need any distinctions or nuance or differentiation between socialist ideas and the communist project. Everything can be explained with a Jewish conspiracy.

Out of the blue, auxiliary forces appear in the Polish capital. As the conspiracy is known to be international, a landing party in Gdynia dropped by Jews reaches Warsaw. The Captain and other patriots, who are somewhat natural anti-Semites, are trying to counteract the nearing catastrophe. Truly horrified, they watch the invasion:

When he stepped out onto Marszałkowska Street, he stopped dead. A trail of a few hundred trucks transporting armed units and men in uniforms was speeding down the street. Over the truck heading the column flowed a standard – the white-and-blue standard of Zion.<sup>224</sup>

In this narrative appears the myth of the Jews' exceptionally perfidious 'poisoning' of the non-Jewish community, which has reappeared since the Middle Ages – in *Zamach* poisoned becomes bread in Warsaw bakeries. The subsequent actions of the Jewish conspirers are – at least to a certain degree – a mirror image of the activity of pogromers, who conducted a number of pogroms in Eastern Europe at the turn of the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, particularly in the course of the two waves during 1918-1920 and later, in the 1930s. For in the narrative about the Jewish coup d'état we read about a slaughter of Polish Christians: "Instigated by people sent from Nalewki Street, gangs armed with whatever was at hand must have walked from house to house, murdering the helpless and frantic Poles who had been spared death by poison."<sup>225</sup> The regular Jewish fighters in uniforms are Trumpeldor's supporters and communist paramilitary groups which cooperate with them, which are "placed in attics of the tenements on Królewska Street,"<sup>226</sup> as well as "the ordinary Jewish black

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223 J. Giertych (J. Mariański), *Zamach*, p. 191.

224 *Ibid.*, p. 217.

225 *Ibid.*, p. 220.

226 *Ibid.*, pp. 225-226.

masses.”<sup>227</sup> From this perspective the Jewish diaspora in Poland since the nineteenth century is uniform; the old principle of anti-Semitism that “every enemy is a Jew” becomes timely again.

The author also emphasizes the ‘true’ patriots’ union with the Church, which was often highlighted in anti-Semitic political commentaries: “The largest Polish mainstay was the All Saints Church on Grzybowski Square.”<sup>228</sup> It is only owing to the bravery of the uhlans and Polish patriots, who are somewhat naturally anti-Semitic, that at the end of the text one can see a flicker of hope for victory. Unfortunately, the capital city becomes destroyed: “Warsaw was simply in a horrible condition. [...] Despite the total ruin and chaos [...] it was certain that the number of corpses lying in the streets – victims of poison and slaughter – was at least a few hundred thousand.”<sup>229</sup>

Other anti-Semitic stereotypes present in both novels are those of the Jewish milieus’ ‘secret knowledge’ and the great manipulation by means of, for instance, distorting Polish history. ‘Patriotic’ milieus, that is those aware that Jews are to blame for all evil, are scarce but they believe that the Reformation was inspired by Jews for the purpose of weaken the Catholic Church, they know that Jews brought the misfortune of the Deluge onto Poland, that the Jews (together with Masons) are conquering Poland economically, and that the Jews were partly to blame for the partitions and peasant revolts. However, few people can learn about those facts for in their ‘Jewish perfidy’ the Jews living in Poland are also active in Polish higher education institutions. Thus, the Faculty of History is a place where history becomes distorted: “They keep our supporters away. At our university most lecturers of Polish and general history are Jewish.”<sup>230</sup>

Tazbir emphasizes the enormous scope of the revolution depicted in the novel:

the conspirers [...] provoke workers’ strikes and brutal riots in Łódź and then peasant revolts in Lesser Poland. In Volhynia and then in other regions inhabited by the Ruthenians, there begins an uprising led by the Workers and Peasants’ party of Western Ukraine.<sup>231</sup> The Jewish government surrenders the Poznań region and Pomerania to Hitler. But as the patriots had been able to see through that mean plan of the Elders of Zion STILL BEFORE THE UPRISING began, they offered resistance and now the Polish Army is routing out both the Red Army and the Jews. Once free of them, Poland becomes a truly independent, healthy Western Catholic country.<sup>232</sup>

227 Ibid., p. 226.

228 Ibid., p. 225.

229 Ibid., p. 232.

230 Ibid., p. 127.

231 J. Tazbir, *Protokoły mędrców Syjonu*, pp. 130–131.

232 Ibid., p. 131. The capitalization as in the original.

Many writers and journalists active during that period shared such views.<sup>233</sup> For them the Jew was a figure of evil, an enemy more dangerous to ethnically-defined Polishness than the German or the Russian. People coming to Warsaw from Western Europe noticed not only the Jewish quarter's size and appearance, but also the universal anti-Semitism. "The Jew is a Polish obsession. Everybody thinks about him, everybody talks about him."<sup>234</sup>

A totally different political fiction narrative is a novel entitled *Berlin ohne Juden* (Berlin without Jews), originally published in 1925. It constitutes a kind of a satirical vision condemning the Nazis' anti-Semitic activity. Its author, Artur Landsberger,<sup>235</sup> modelled his work on Hugo Bettauer's 1922 novel *Die Stadt ohne Juden: Ein Roman von übermorgen* [Berlin without Jews. A novel from the day after tomorrow], whose first Polish edition went out in 1924.<sup>236</sup> Conceived as a kind of a satire mocking the anti-Semitic propaganda, Landsberger's novel is a dystopian vision which nowadays can be seen as more than a caricatural narration.<sup>237</sup>

In the introduction, entitled "Pro domo," the author emphasizes how inspiring Bettauer's book has been to him even though the authors never met. Inquiring whether it would be possible to get rid of German Jews and how Germany would look without them, he polemicizes with critics and the assimilated Jewish milieu's reception of his earlier novels (written at the beginning of the century, up to 1910). Landsberger's words ending the introduction are highly interesting:

After all [...] I am a German who has been made not only a pauper by the tragic fate of his homeland, but also a lonely and miserable man (I do not care about the former in the slightest though). But enduring this pain seems a measure of patriotism of a more responsible man, more so than wearing swastikas and singing patriotic songs.<sup>238</sup>

In the novel the author employs not only the language of satire and grotesque, but also aptly portrays the mechanism of the operation of the political propaganda and manipulation, giving the reader a caricature of the-then media (including the periodical *Der Völkische Beobachter*, which he mentions by title).

233 Małgorzata Domagalska wrote more about this phenomenon: see M. Domagalska, *Antysemityzm dla inteligencji?* (Warsaw, 2004).

234 Qtd. after: B. Brzostek, *Paryże innej Europy* (Warsaw, 2015), p. 204.

235 Artur Hermann Landsberger (1876–1933) was a popular writer and film critic.

236 Bettauer's book was adapted for the screen in 1924, directed by Hans Karl Breslauer. The author of the novel died in 1925, shot by Nazi Otton Rohstock.

237 I use a contemporary edition. A. Landsberger, *Berlin ohne Juden*, afterword and published by W. Fuld (Bonn, 1998).

238 *Ibid.*, p. 7.

The main characters in Landsberger's narration are German nationalists as well as assimilated Jews and their German-Jewish families. We also learn more about a mysterious newcomer from the East, Russian Boris Pinski (a Doctor of Philosophy in economy and a secret agent), and the family of Oppenheim, the head of which is Benno Oppenheim, a commercial counselor. Pinski, the *spiritus movens* of the political transformations in the German capital, "[w]as a Slavic type, [...] and only his short-sidedness, highlighted by his horn-rimmed glasses, made him resemble the Jewish types from the East, hundreds of whom could be seen after the war [WWI – A. M.] on the streets of east Berlin."<sup>239</sup> In line with the principles of classic conspiracy theories of history the main objective of the character who comes to Berlin from Russia is promotion of Bolshevik ideology. To finance the planned actions, he comes up with a bold idea to turn to Jewish organizations (German and American) which want to help Jews living in the new country, that is, the Soviet Union. To lend credence to this version of his mission he introduces himself in certain milieus as a Russian Jew and a member of a help committee even though he was a professional propagandist from a Greek Catholic family. This lie opens to him "the door to [the homes of] most Berlin philanthropists of Jewish faith."<sup>240</sup>

The author uses a number of stereotypical beliefs about Jews, creating a character who cynically plays out selected roles to cover up his real intentions. In the milieu of the wealthy Oppenheims, whom he exploits financially, Pinski appears as a devoted man sympathizing with the difficult lot of the Russian Jews, particularly those from religious milieus. A double agent, he has a foot in both camps – he befriends many Nazis whom he teaches propaganda methods which identify Jews, on the one hand, with large capital, and, on the other hand, as the stereotypical Jewish communist. On a number of occasions these two clichés prove an all too effective means of mobilizing mass imagination.<sup>241</sup>

In line with the stereotype linking the financial world with Jews, Pinski befriends wealthy assimilated milieus (the Oppenheims), but when he establishes contact with a group of nationalists he immediately starts pretending to depreciate Jews, in doing which he again makes references to anti-Semitic clichés: "whenever I hear the word 'intellectual' I immediately suspect something Jewish!"<sup>242</sup>

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239 Ibid. p. 10.

240 Ibid., p. 10.

241 Stereotypes of Jews in literature have been discussed by, for instance, B. Umińska, *Postać z cieniem*, and S. L. Gilman, *Difference and Pathology. Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race, and Madness* (Ithaca, 1985) (introduction entitled *What Are Stereotypes and Why Use Texts*).

242 A. Landsberger, *Berlin ohne Juden*, p. 18.

The level of wealth and assimilation with the German society is showed indirectly, through a description of the Oppenheims' home:

[...] on the left side of Kaiserallee there is a house which resembles a palace. It is situated in a park [...]. It has only three floors, but there are as many as ten windows up front. In the back – wide, windowed verandas reach the branches of the tall lindens. From the outside one can see a fountain in the lawn, with the statue of Neptune in the middle, surrounded by nymphs holding tall jugs from which water is merrily dripping onto Neptune's broad back.<sup>243</sup>

The description of the interior is kept in a similar vein. There is, for instance, an enormous library and the walls are decorated with portraits of the ancestors.

The author gives a grotesque description of the nationalist milieu. During a meeting with Pinski it appeared that the nationalists also want to learn something from the Jews, namely how to influence other people's psyche and spirituality. But no German Jew even baptized, is willing to help them, particularly that the nationalists wish to get to know the vulnerable sides of the Jewish community. Again, there is the stereotypical belief that Jews can influence others. An ironic remark is interjected as a comment proving that the author of the novel is well aware of the social processes and the various ways of defining group identity:

[...] a majority always needs a minority to which it can from time to time attribute its own weaknesses and failures. If Jews do immigrate and settle in Palestine, the other nations, when they find themselves in trouble, will miss them and cry with remorse: "oh God, if only we still had our Jews, we would be able to say that they are once again to blame for everything."<sup>244</sup>

The manipulations to which Pinski encourages the nationalists, with whom he collaborates as a secret propaganda advisor, are to consist of promising the destitute masses that wealthy Jews will share their wealth with the general public. And once the Jewish Community rejects these postulates, it will be easy to cause general outrage and effectively lead to a widespread acceptance of anti-Semitism.

Pinski's projects and suggestions for nationalists resemble advice from professionals active in the sphere of propaganda and exerting influence on the masses. This regards also the presence of political agitation in the urban space:

First of all, make sure that there is music. Men waving flags must march down the streets of Berlin day and night to the tune of loud music. Something like this is always attractive. And they should be followed by a group of good-looking women who shall cry at

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243 Ibid., p. 8.

244 Ibid., p. 50.

the top of their voice the slogan “Germania libera” painted on banners. Of course, the guys must wear uniforms.<sup>245</sup>

In this vision the marching men in uniforms are associated with acceptance of military elements, which are indispensable to totalitarian regimes. Other factors of influence directed at those in the public sphere are the city’s appearance (all buildings were to be decorated with appropriate flags) as well as the use of modern technology for promotion of political slogans – aircraft were to drop leaflets over the German side with the words “Germania libera,” because, as Pinski emphasizes: “That was simply a catchword, and catchwords play a fundamental role in politics.”<sup>246</sup>

All guidelines provided by the ‘propagandist’ from Soviet Russia become implemented – the urban space transforms into a strongly politically-marked space, dominated by the totalitarian party’s propaganda message. One can observe only the relatively caricaturally portrayed triumph and ecstasy of the crowds of followers of one ideology:

In the evening, according to the plan, a commotion started in Berlin. Berlin was in a state of bewilderment. Parades with music and banners. Predominantly the academic youth, who want to mark their presence and distinguish themselves. Endless parades. Torches. Singing women. Shouts “*Heil!*” Speeches about Germany free of Jews. A festive and joyful atmosphere in theaters, cinemas, and restaurants. Hand shaking. Sacred spells. Beer. Hugging with emotion. Vodka. Oaths. Brotherhood. Tears. Fanfares. Champagne. [...] Singing: “The freedom I’m thinking about” – “*Erlösung!*” – Flag waving. – “At last!” – “One can breathe again!” – Enormous balloons with swastikas. – “Clean air!” – “If only they were already out of the country.” – Paper streamers. – “They shall call the French for help!” – “And that’s even better!” “*Heil!*” – Fire brigade. [...] “*Heil! Heil! War!*” – Attack on a joint. – One can hear loud cries: “We’ll win and conquer France!” – The tinkle of [broken?] glass. – Blood. – “War! Victory! Revenge!” [...] – Military music. – Klieg lights. – Ecstasy.<sup>247</sup>

Painting this portrait of the city, the author uses a very characteristic rhythmic organization of the text to further reinforce the image of the world of German inhabitants of Berlin who strive for war and are excited by the mass spectacle and drunk with propaganda.<sup>248</sup>

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245 Ibid., p. 107.

246 Ibid.

247 Ibid., p. 119.

248 Landsberger might to some extent be referring to, on the one hand, the legacy of German anti-Semitism dating back all the way to the nineteenth century – in the 1890s some German parliamentarians demanded introduction of anti-Jewish laws, while the newborn Folkist movement promoted racist slogans about the Jews’ inability

Unlike the 1920s readers of this political fiction, the contemporary reader connotes the practices which become widespread after the nationalists' victory, such as, the dispossession of Jews and their social exclusion, aggression, stigmatization (Jewish men had to wear red badges and women blue ribbons pinned onto their headwear),<sup>249</sup> banning from certain occupations and professions, expulsion from the country, etc.

As a result of these radical changes most Jewish inhabitants of Berlin decide to leave the country. At first, the capital city becomes something like a large marketplace as the émigrés-to-be are selling out all their movables. But the objects bought half price (also by German friends and neighbors!) later prove troublesome to the buyers. Once the Jews are gone, their property becomes an inconvenience. As the narrator ironically stresses, the Germans lack money for the upkeep of suburban villas or expensive apartments in the city center, not to mention, for instance, luxurious cars. “[W]hat could one do with enormous Persian rugs or custom-made 24 net curtains when you had only 5 windows? One was *nebblich*. Oh, how badly Jewish words were needed now!”<sup>250</sup>

In the second part of the novel we read about a two friends' visit to Berlin, which Jews have already abandoned. The two characters, who have emigrated to France, are comparing the two cities:

“Berlin is dead,” said Walke.

“Or you're old,” Kleber argued with him. “All the charm of Berlin consisted in its being the most hard-working and at the same time the least reliable city in the world. I like this mix. In Paris you *either* work *or* you enjoy yourself. One excludes the other. But Berlin?! What can the absence of a handful of loud Jews change? Not even you! You are blasé! Nothing excites you anymore.

“So let's make a bet,” replied Welke, “that you won't make it in Berlin for eight days without becoming bored to death.”<sup>251</sup>

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to assimilate. On the other hand, people still remembered the ordinance passed during the First World War regarding listing of Jews in the German army. The register was not published because it failed to confirm the thesis about the Jews' lack of patriotism, but it was used to build a myth known as a ‘legend about the stab in the back’ – a conspiracy theory regarding the lost war and the significant increase in anti-Semitic attitudes. See, for instance, R. Overy, *Trzecia Rzesza. Historia imperium*, trans. M. Antosiewicz and H. Turczyn-Zalewska (Warsaw, 2012), pp. 12ff [English edition: *Third Reich: A Chronicle* (Quercus, 2011)].

249 See A. Landsberger, *Berlin ohne Juden*, p. 71.

250 *Ibid.*, p. 144. The word *nebblich* comes from Yiddish and it denotes somebody who we sympathize with or pity.

251 *Ibid.*, p. 149.



The description of Berlin without any Jewish inhabitants resembles a portrait of a fallen city, almost entirely deserted, where scant, badly-dressed inhabitants are moping about the empty streets looking for food. The German capital seems a peculiar space where “[a]fter seven o’clock in the evening everything is deserted and dead.”<sup>252</sup> The only activity which the newcomers see is a public gathering:

On the corner of Kirchstrasse, which is in a new section of the city, the car had to pull up. A demonstration of a few hundred people was walking by. [. . .] ravenous-looking men, women, and children. Three blood-red flags gave away their political orientation. The demonstrators were crying interchangeably: “Away with reaction! Bread! Hunger! Bread!”<sup>253</sup>

It occurs that the Jewish inhabitants’ emigration from the German capital results in not only disastrous food provision, but also deep social frustration: “They were driving along Friedrichstrasse to the Hotel Esplanade. Even though it was high noon, Kleber noticed quite many drunken men in the street. ‘They are drinking away their couple of cents. This is the wisest thing one can do [. . .].’”<sup>254</sup> The last sentence is a comment made by a taxi driver. When the visitors from Paris want to rent a room in the once luxurious Hotel Adlon, it occurs that they should have brought bed linen and towels, because textile manufacturing has come to a complete halt [!]. The reader learns from the two men’s conversation with the hotel personnel that in the German capital foreign visitors are a rarity or even an outright sensation. Asked by the émigrés when this dystopian state of affairs in Berlin might change, the head waiter at Adlon gives a straight-forward answer: “Never! As long as we have no Jews, things will stay the way they are. The manager added: ‘Or it might get even worse.’”<sup>255</sup>

Not only the material sphere has been greatly depleted. There is almost no cultural life in Berlin either. New books are not being published, the press is limited to government communiques, and there is no entertainment, cabaret, operetta, or theater. The sphere of culture is limited to primitive offers of female escorts, while aside Hitler’s speeches, political propaganda, and brass band performances, the radio broadcasts, for instance, Professor Ad. Bartels’ lecture entitled “Literature – a Jewish invention” (Professor Bartels uses the figure of Alfred Kerr to prove that Jews had reinvented literature to kill the German spirit).<sup>256</sup>

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252 Ibid., p. 159.

253 Ibid., p. 160.

254 Ibid., p. 159.

255 Ibid., p. 163.

256 Ibid., p. 190.

In this conspiracy version of history the Soviet/Russian manipulation results in the victory of nationalists/Nazis, who intend to soon hand Germany on to Bolshevism. Soviet Russia is the only country which maintains relations with Nazi Germany, while other countries boycott it. But the author of this political fiction novel gives hope to the-then reader, for the book ends with a victory over Nazis and communists: “‘Away with the flags!’ – once again that became obvious in Berlin. But that time it was not a poison-induced delirium. [...] That time sobriety prevailed in the city, and even the returning Jews, upon their own request, were not given an official welcome.”<sup>257</sup>

One should bear in mind that Landsberger, the author of *Berlin ohne Juden*, committed suicide in 1933.

It seems noteworthy in Sobański’s unfictionalized reportage penned in the early 1930s includes the following passus regarding the cultural life of Berlin:

Let me return to the Jews. I am like a National Democrat. I cannot take my eyes off them. But I was in a theater and I saw the utter devastation which anti-Semitism had wrought there. [...] Over twenty theaters have stopped performing. In other ones, where I dropped by for a few minutes, [...] I saw horrible trash. Over the course of several months the theaters had reached a low provincial level. [...] The situation in the movies is no better.<sup>258</sup>

The novel about a Judeo-Masonic conspiracy has become such a popular genre that it has become an object of pastiches and parodies. Janusz Tazbir pointed to this phenomenon by emphasizing pastiche elements present in Umberto Eco’s *Foucault’s Pendulum*.<sup>259</sup> Another Eco’s novel which very skillfully deconstructs the idea of a Jewish conspiracy is his *The Prague Cemetery*.<sup>260</sup> These two novels – which could be called ironic, intertextual, and utilizing queer theory tricks – show the essence of the power of manipulation and how to skillfully (also with the use of literary texts) steer people’s opinions and make very different groups and milieus see the world in the desired way. Although the author focuses chiefly on showing the mechanisms of creating conspiracy theories and the functioning of the anti-Semitic phantasms, one should see in these two works also an indication of a certain universal way of enforcing certain attitudes or (pseudo) ideologies.

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257 Ibid., p. 207.

258 A. Sobański, *Cywil w Berlinie*, pp. 99-102.

259 See J. Tazbir, *Protokoły mędrców Syjonu*, p. 9.

260 U. Eco, *The Prague Cemetery* (Mariner Books, 2012).

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Seen as a space of various events and social processes connected with politics, the city has been portrayed in multiple ways, on the one hand, in realist pre-Holocaust novels, and, on the other hand, in popular constructions categorized as political fiction. Although the texts I have discussed do not exhaust the subject matter, they facilitate seeing the situation of Jewish milieus in Warsaw and Berlin in the first half of the twentieth century from various perspectives, noticing their internal diversification and the transformations which the diaspora milieu underwent in both European capitals.



## City and Religion

An important element of the shaping of urban spaces is the presence of temples, cemeteries, and other places connected with the realm of the sacred. Cities have almost always played the role of seats of lay authorities and they have also been important religious centers. Analyzing selected texts produced in the first half of the twentieth century, I wish to emphasize how differently the versions of Jewish religiosity were portrayed in literature.<sup>261</sup>

Looking at the religious sphere, the two basic discrepancies between Warsaw and Berlin in the first half of the twentieth century seem to be the denominational diversity and the clear difference between the versions of Judaism dominant in these two cities. In both urban spaces functioned heterogeneous milieus and various variants of Judaism – from Orthodox Judaism through Conservative Judaism, Reform Judaism (also called Progressive Judaism), Hasidism, groups of *Haskalah* advocates (maskils), the Musar (Morality) movement (more strongly connected with tradition) to the current of religious Zionism. But important here is which kind of Judaism prevailed. German Jews, who had been under the influence of the *Haskalah* since the end of the eighteenth and accepted the ideas of Moses Mendelssohn and his successors, understood their religious identity differently than Jews living in the East-European diaspora, where Orthodox Judaism and Hasidism were dominant.

A significant percentage of members of Judaism in Germany accepted Reform Judaism, which included also a change in liturgy (introduced by Israel Jacobson in 1810 and involving, for instance, substitution of the traditional *siddur*, a prayer book, with its abridged version printed in German). As early as in 1778, David Friedländer established the Jüdische Freischule Berlin, with German as the language of instruction. The initial conception of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* was initiated in the early nineteenth century by Eduard Gans, who belonged to the group of activists associated in the Society of Jewish Culture and Science.<sup>262</sup> Co-creators of this idea wanted to “find new ways which were to help Jews

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261 A part of the text was published in [http://www.plit-aip.com/plit/2015/08\\_molisak.pdf](http://www.plit-aip.com/plit/2015/08_molisak.pdf).

262 See J. Carlebach, “Wissenschaft des Judentums. Esej,” in *Nowy Leksykon Judaistyczny*, ed. J. H. Schoeps, trans. S. Lisiecka, Z. Rybicka, and E. Ptaszyńska-Sadowska (Warsaw, 2007), pp. 890–893 [original edition: *Neues Lexikon des Judentums* (Bertelsmann Lexikon Verlag, 1992)].

integrate with the German society.”<sup>263</sup> That integration did not mean giving up their separate identity, including the religious one, although pro-Jewish studied activists understood Judaism more broadly, more like a cultural circle than only a denomination.

This emerging intellectual movement connected people like Leopold Zunz, Ludwig Philippson, Solomon Hirschheimer, Heinrich Grätz, and other scholars and activists who aimed at transforming Jewish self-awareness and also conducted in-depth research. The first Jewish-German translation of the Bible was done under Zunz and his co-workers’ guidance.

The emergence of religious schools was a result of the need to add religious content to the lay education of Jewish children advocated by the state. The purpose was to prevent secularization or complete assimilation of Jewish milieus (though advocates of national conceptions who wished to preserve Jews’ separateness voiced accusations of assimilation). Rabbinic schools were set up. For instance, the first modern rabbinical seminary was opened in Breslau/Wrocław in 1854. Religion textbooks and those connected with biblical and Jewish history as well as prayer books were edited in line with modern pedagogical requirements. Within the framework of Reform Judaism there was also a flowering of speeches (sermons) in synagogues and instrumental religious music. One of its eminent composers and precursors was Louis Lewandowski (a cantor in a Berlin synagogue since 1840).

But one has to bear in mind the internal division of Reform Judaism in Germany – supporters of Zacharias Frankel (the founder of the Breslau/Wrocław seminary) believed that despite its historical evolution Judaism had “the unalterable core of a revealed religion, which must be preserved outside any historical critique.”<sup>264</sup> There was also the progressive current, which was accepted by most German Jews. With this milieu connected was the abovementioned idea of *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, whose supporters included Zunz, Geiger, and Philippson. Moreover, an important institution was established – the Higher School of Jewish Studies. Within this ‘progressive wing’ there was also the independent Berlin Reform Community.<sup>265</sup> Opened in 1866, the second Berlin synagogue (on Oranienburgerstrasse) introduced prayers in German, organ music, and choir singing. Since the beginning of the nineteenth century (owing to administrative changes such as the 1808 granting of citizenship or the 1812

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263 Ibid., p. 890.

264 See M. A. Meyer, “Judaizm reformowany. Esej,” in *Nowy Leksykon Judaistyczny*, p. 411.

265 See *ibid.* A separate issue is the development of Reform Judaism in other European countries (France, England) or in the United States.

emancipation edict) Jews were trying to join the currents of German culture, while in the first half of the twentieth century Berlin became the main center of the Jewish community in Germany.<sup>266</sup>

The influence of the *Haskalah* in the East-European diaspora was less pronounced and it differed depending on the milieu – the situation in Galicia or Vilnius differed from that in Congress Poland. Marcin Wodziński's excellent analysis of stances and reactions of supporters of the Jewish enlightenment to Hasidism clearly shows various factors which shaped the presence of the *Haskalah* on Polish lands.<sup>267</sup> Wodziński, who dealt with transformations of *Haskalah* supporters' relations to Hasidism and those transformations' dynamic throughout the nineteenth century, stressed the decrease in the importance of inter-religious conflicts visible at the turn of the centuries: "At the turn of the [18]70s and [18]80s the basic lines of division no longer ran between advocates of enlightenment and backwardness, that is factions inside the Jewish world, but between the Jewish community and anti-Semites."<sup>268</sup> Not only the emergence of modern anti-Semitism (a factor external to the Jewish community) was significant. Internal changes played a major role too: "The death of three leaders of the 'progressive' camp was symbolic: Chairman of the Jewish Community in Warsaw Henryk Natanson (1820-1896), journalist and social activist Hilary Nussbaum, and *Izraelita's* editor-in-chief Samuel H. Peltyn [. . .]."<sup>269</sup> The worldview crisis was also connected with birth of new ideas, for instance, various kinds of Zionism, and defining the modern identity of the Jewish nation. The scholar emphasizes two issues important for these reflections. The first one is abandonment of positivist ideas:

The foundation of the *Haskalah* ideology and its later heirs was the conviction about the objective, 'scientific' value of progress in knowledge, technology, and civilizational growth, which had to lead to overall progress of mankind in all spheres, including spiritual ones. [. . .] In the Kingdom of Poland the universal value of progress and the sensibleness of the positivist thought was put into question particularly by the emergence of 'progressive anti-Semitism' and the anti-Jewish turn made by old eminent Positivist ideologists (chiefly Świętochowski).<sup>270</sup>

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266 See *Jüdische Geschichte in Berlin. Essays und Studien/Bilder und Dokumente*, ed. R. Rürup (Berlin, 1995).

267 See M. Wodziński, *Oświecenie żydowskie w Królestwie Polskim wobec chasydyzmu. Dzieje pewnej idei* (Warsaw, 2003).

268 *Ibid.*, p. 264.

269 *Ibid.*, p. 235.

270 *Ibid.*, pp. 236-237.

That phenomenon was accompanied with the questioning of the Enlightenment heritage and interest in irrational currents, which were becoming increasingly widespread in Europe. The second important factor which contributed to the emergence in literary narrations of issues connected with Jewish religiosity different from *Haskalah* ideas was the interest taken in mystic currents and the previously questioned Hasidism: “In the late 1890s, sentimental stances which idealized Hasidim and Hasidic masters began to take the upper hand among opinions about it [Hasidism – A. M.]. There was also an increase in the interest taken in that movement as a depository of folk traditions [. . .].”<sup>271</sup>

But one should bear in mind that, in the East-European diaspora, Hasidim did not constitute the dominant current among members of Judaism. The most widespread there was the Orthodox version of Judaism, while supporters of Reform Judaism, Conservative Judaism, or the *Haskalah* constituted smaller groups.

The fundamentally difference in the perception of Hasidism in Warsaw and Berlin in the first half of the twentieth century resulted, for instance, from a dissimilar evaluation of this movement. While some German Jews regarded the Hasidic current as a source of Judaism’s vitality, beginning with the early twentieth century, certain Polish Jews (earlier in Galicia and then also in Warsaw) began to be increasingly convinced about Hasidism’s not exclusively religious, but also political character:

*Izraelita* could not repeat after Yiddish *Der Fraynd* that Hasidism was by no means a sweet little angel from Isaac Leib Peretz’s nostalgic stories, but a dangerous demon of the Jewish political life. With the 1912 establishment of Agudas Isroel, the political representation of the Orthodox Jews, such convictions became widespread.<sup>272</sup>

In Germany, the initially critical evaluation of the Hasidic movement (by, for instance, Grätz) later gave way to fascination, an example of which was the popularity of Martin Buber’s debut – an adaptation of a story by Nachman of Breslov. Published as adaptations, the history of Nachman of Breslov (*Die Geschichten des Rabbi Nachman*, 1906) and stories about Baal Shem Tov, one of the fathers of Hasidism (*Die Legende des Baalschem*, 1908) met with some readers’ radical criticism.

By commencing a philosophical reinterpretation of the Hasidic doctrine, in the eyes of many Buber became the person who saw in the East-European Jewish

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271 Ibid., p. 238. One should bear in mind that the interest in Hasidism was also connected with development of research on folklore, which was gaining importance in both Eastern and Western Europe.

272 Ibid., p. 243. A separate issue is whether Peretz’s works can be called ‘nostalgic stories’.



religiosity its greatest value, that is, the quintessence of spirituality.<sup>273</sup> Hasidism was also perceived in a similar way in the East-European diaspora (Dubnow, Peretz, Berdyczewski). One should bear in mind that what people sought in that current was “a repository of folk wisdom and untainted Jewish folklore, folk mysticism, [. . .] and a fascinating literary topic,” while the political activity of Hasidim was harshly criticized.<sup>274</sup> An excellent example of a literary narration concerning this phenomenon, that is the interest taken in Hasidic currents alive in the East-European diaspora, is Schneersohn’s novel, which I shall discuss.<sup>275</sup>

The Jewish community was inhomogeneous in both Warsaw and Berlin. Orthodox and Reform groups lived side by side. In the public sphere there were assimilators, integrationists, and Hasidim. It is very important to remark on what differentiated those two cities – not only the ratio of the Jewish inhabitants to the non-Jewish ones, but also (particularly when we focus on the sphere of religion) the ratio of different currents inside Judaism. The Jewish community’s religious heterogeneity is a characteristic feature shared by Warsaw and Berlin, but the clear predominance of Jews associated with Reform Judaism in the German capital was what essentially distinguished it from the Jewish community in the Polish capital, which, by contrast, was dominated by Orthodox Jews.

In Warsaw there were of course various Jewish milieus. Since the early nineteenth century there were the maskils, Hasidim, their opponents, that is, the Misnagdim, and, last but not least, the Jews who were “attached to tradition and the religious law” but did not sympathize with either Hasidim or the Misnagdim.<sup>276</sup> However, one must bear in mind that since the late nineteenth century and chiefly since the early twentieth century the milieu of the Jewish diaspora had been undergoing transformations under the influence of modernization and new ideological currents, mostly Zionism, the national movement, and various other political currents.

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273 Buber’s publications were also appreciated by Polish scholars of Hasidic heritage. See *ibid.*, p. 248.

274 See *ibid.*, pp. 264–265.

275 Fishl Shneurson or Fischl Schneersohn (1887–1958) – author of numerous scholarly publications, stories, and novels. His opus magnum is *Der Weg zum Menschen*. Published in 1927, it was a polemic with Freud’s psychoanalysis. He lived in Berlin, New York, Warsaw, and Tel Aviv.

276 Agnieszka Jagodzińska discusses the change in the relations between the progressive and traditional milieu in more detail. See A. Jagodzińska, “‘Mój brat, człowiek kosmaty, a ja człowiekiem gładkim’ – o ewolucji stosunku Żydów postępowych do tradycyjnych,” in *Izaak Cytkow. Życie i dzieło*, ed. M. Galas (Cracow, 2010), pp. 11–37.

Pointing to the results of the activity of the Reform milieu in Warsaw, the various actions undertaken back in the nineteenth century, and discussing early twentieth-century religious issues, Agnieszka Jagodzińska emphasizes both the construction of the Great Synagogue on Tłomackie Street (opened back in 1878, it became a clear symbol of Reform Judaism in the urban space) and the vital linguistic aspect.<sup>277</sup> Although sermons in Polish were given as early as in the nineteenth century by Izaak Kramsztyk and Markus Jastrow, a continuator of their activity, Izaak Cylkow, the first rabbi of the Great Synagogue in Tłomackie Street, believed that “[a]ttachment to the old social position’ did not let the masses find their way out of the situation which Progressive Jews regarded as ‘new Egyptian captivity.’”<sup>278</sup>

A phenomenon vital for the perception of the gravity and functioning of religion in Jewish life was the process of modernization and liberalization which generated certain distance to the centuries-old foundation of the diaspora’s identity, namely Judaism understood as religion. Jagodzińska points this out in her discussion of the views held by Cylkow, who despite making appeals for unity, was aware of the deep divides between Jews – “he was also aware of the irreversibility of that growing divide between various Jewish milieus.”<sup>279</sup>

A good example of the conflicts regarding the religious sphere is the history of the appointment of eminent scholar Samuel Poznański to the position of the Rabbi of Warsaw. Poznański had been a rabbi in the Great Synagogue on Tłomackie Street since 1908. In 1921, supporters of Reform Judaism suggested his appointment as the Rabbi of Warsaw. And even though the document regarding his nomination mentions that it was the position of the Warsaw Rabbi of the *Reform* milieu, the Hasidim’s protests were so violent that they led to clashes outside the building of the Warsaw Jewish Community. The distance between the two milieus or even their mutual strangeness was diagnosed by above-mentioned Izaak Cylkow, who emphasized the distinctness of the Orthodox followers, who

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277 Agnieszka Jagodzińska lists many initiatives undertaken by the Progressive circles other than giving sermons in Polish. “Jakub Elzenberg penned a number of catechisms and prayer books for Polish men and women of Jewish faith, while Rozalia Saulsonowa née Feliks became the first woman to write prayers in Polish for Jewish women from Progressive circles. *Izraelita* popularized the integrationists’ views and ideology for a few dozen years [. . .] Neufeld’s translation activity also found several imitators [. . .]. One of his major initiatives was Cylkow’s translations.” Qtd. after: A. Jagodzińska, “Mój brat, człowiek kosmaty, a ja człowiekiem gładkim,” p. 28.

278 *Ibid.*, p. 29.

279 *Ibid.*, p. 31.

differed in “customs, upbringing, language, and overall lifestyle and behavior.”<sup>280</sup> They were regarded as “nests of reaction, sowing murderous seeds of fanaticism” which were “increasingly boldly coming to public view and organizing themselves into associations” which were to “return our entire society to the old religious captivity and the old Jewish quarter.”<sup>281</sup>

Thus, one must bear in mind that the internal diversity in the Jewish community of Warsaw in the early twentieth century was connected with both political divisions and religious diversity. As I have mentioned, the ratio in the two capitals was different. The reform-seeking Jewish milieu in Warsaw regarded as Progressive constituted a minority in the large community. In Berlin Orthodox followers were predominantly Jews from the East European diaspora, although some of them proved attracted to the German version of Reform Judaism.

Many literary records feature interesting narrations regarding religion's presence in the urban space. Both capital cities – Warsaw and Berlin – were important centers for the Jewish milieu but they were associated with quite differently developing Judaism. Dominant in Warsaw, Orthodox Judaism was unlike the *Haskalah* or the German version of Reform Judaism. Of course, there were also Reform synagogues in Warsaw, the first of which was established as early as in 1802,<sup>282</sup> but they were not as popular as in Berlin. Orthodox synagogues in the German capital were located mostly in the quarter with the largest percentage of East European Jews, but the most influential ones and best known to the members of Judaism were the Reform ones.

Owing to the large number of literary narrations one can acquaint oneself with the various ways of describing these objects, which were so important for the geopoetics of the two cities and were places of not only prayer, but also meetings which fostered relations inside the community.

The axis of the construction of the plot of Fischl Schneersohn's novel entitled *Grenadierstrasse. Fun Yidishn lebn in Daychland* [Grenadierstrasse. Of Jewish life in Germany] is a meeting between two versions of Judaism which took shape in the European diaspora. Berlin, where the entire plot is set, is a special place in this regard. In the first half of the twentieth century it was a space where

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280 Qtd. after: *ibid.*, p. 33.

281 Qtd. after: *ibid.*

282 Michał Galas writes that it was a 'German' synagogue. Galas explains that a 'Progressive synagogue' in Poland was equivalent to a Reform or Liberal synagogue in Germany. He bases this statement on Michael A. Meyer and his text in *The YIVO Encyclopedia Jews in Eastern Europe*. See M. Galas, *Rabin Markus Jastrow i jego wizja reformy judaizmu. Studium z dziejów judaizmu w XIX wieku* (Cracow, 2007), pp. 28 ff.

German Jews, most of who, as I have said, were supporters of the *Haskalah*, met with *Ostjuden* who arrived in Berlin since the early nineteenth century to the 1930s. As we know, for the newcomers from the East European diaspora the German city was often only a stopover on their way to the country where they intended to settle. Nevertheless, many stayed in Berlin for longer. One could point to three primary reasons for choosing that city. First, it offered a chance of escaping the persecutions and pogroms in Eastern Europe. Second, it also gave hope of improving one's financial situation. Last but not least, it was also attractive as a center of the Jewish enlightenment, which facilitated pursuit of education in that current of Judaism. Of course, there were also other reasons why Jews stayed in Berlin temporarily – from doing business through visiting one's family or studying to engagement in criminal activity.

In Schneersohn's novel Berlin becomes a space where German Jews can come into contact with the East European ones. At that time, in the early twentieth century, the Grenadierstrasse from the title was a symbolic place that marked out a separate space – the quarter inhabited by newcomers from the East. The author does not limit himself to describing the differences between the two versions of the Jewish religious identity – the Liberal and Orthodox one. He also presents other milieus: socialists, right-wing Zionists, students who came from the East, German Zionists, nationalist student associations, and Hasidic centers. His novel can be treated as a multiple portrayal, a presentation of various versions of modern Jewish identity, but here we are interested predominantly in the religious aspect.

Depicting the atmosphere at the railway station – a symbol of modernity in the early twentieth century – which was a characteristic element of urban spaces, the author introduces into this area characters which stand out from other inhabitants or the newcomers – the *Ostjuden*:

As always [at the Alexanderplatz railway station – A. M.] hotel agents, porters, relatives and friends were waiting for the train bringing in the extraordinary passengers from Eastern Europe. Today there was also a large group waiting – over a hundred *mizrekh-yidn*, bearded, with sideburns, most of them dressed in long *kapote's*. Among them were elderly men with white beards and a few rabbis who in line with tradition were wearing silk *kapote's* and the traditional Polish hats. They were the *mizrekh-yidn*, mostly from Poland and Galicia, who had been settling in Berlin for years in the famous southern neighborhood centered on Grenadierstrasse. The newcomers were mostly good merchants, craftsmen, street vendors, rag collectors, and beggars. However, some of them were solid traders, men of success.<sup>283</sup>

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283 F. Schneersohn, *Grenadirshtrase. Fun yidishn lebn in Daychland* (Warsaw, 1935), p. 9. The German translation (*Grenadierstrasse*) was published in Göttingen in 2012 with

It immediately becomes clear that Jews from the East stand out from other people at the railway station, predominantly with their traditional beards, sideburns, and attire characteristic of East European Jews. The silk *kapote's* or, to quote Schneersohn, the "Polish hats" signal their affiliation with the Orthodox tradition. These items of clothing are treated as external signs of the *Ostjuden's* identity, which differed from the German one. Nevertheless, the Jews are also under the influence of their Berlin surroundings – instead of the traditional *hitlekh* (hats) some of them wear fashionable hats, put on shirts and jackets which "look like cut-off *kapote's*" and some hide their sideburns behind their ears.<sup>284</sup> Importantly, they behave like this in the public space almost exclusively outside their place of residence, while in the quarter inhabited predominantly by Orthodox Jews they return to the traditional appearance to some extent.

An important historical phenomenon which contributed to the influx of *Ostjuden* to Berlin was the First World War. Not only the military operations, but also the wave of pogroms, particularly in Galicia,<sup>285</sup> were conducive to decisions to flee or emigrate. Schneersohn remarks: "During the war a number of rich Hasidic families came to Berlin from Poland and Galicia."<sup>286</sup> Also vital was the way in which the newcomers were perceived. Regardless of their financial status, in the eyes of Berliners, and also among the general public, *Ostjuden* were exceptionally exotic figures.

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Michail Krutikov's afterword. Unless specified otherwise, the English translations of fragments of Schneersohn's book are based on Molisak's Polish translation. Molisak uses two versions, the Yiddish and the German one. The page numbers provided come from the German version which is available to more readers. Schneersohn's book has been discussed, by, for instance, Gertrud Pickhan, who deals with the subject matter of the transformations of the identity of German Jews connected with the rediscovery of the Jewish spirituality in the East European diaspora. See G. Pickhan, "Die Grenadierstrasse. Transnationale Brechungen des Judischen," in *Lesestunde / Lekcja czytania*, German texts edited by R. Leiserovitz and S. Lehnstaedt, Polish texts edited by J. Nalewajko-Kulikow and G. Krzywiec (Warsaw, 2013).

284 *Ibid.*, p. 20.

285 See S. Ansky, *Tragedia Żydów Galicyjskich w czasie I wojny światowej. Wrażenia i refleksje z podróży po kraju*, translated from Hebrew by K. D. Majus, introduction, footnotes, and editing by K. D. Majus and S. Stępień (Przemysł, 2010). The text was originally written in Yiddish *Der yidish hurbn fun Poylen, Galitsye un Bukovine. Fun tog-bukh 1814-1918*; the Hebrew translation by Samuel Lejb Citron was published in 1929 in Berlin and in 1936 in Tel-Aviv.

286 F. Schneersohn, *Grenadierstrasse*, p. 20.

“Most Jews, particularly those who only pass through the capital and do not live in Berlin, know little about such Jews, who [. . .] live on the margin.”<sup>287</sup> In fact, “life on the margin” meant functioning on the margin of the entire German society. Wishing to maintain their religiosity and separate identity, the immigrants concentrated in practically one Berlin quarter – Scheunenviertel. Even those who could afford to live in more posh neighborhoods often chose living among ‘their own.’

In Schneersohn’s novel the arrival in Berlin of a group of Hasidim and their wise man is described as a spectacle interesting to all travelers. The two main characters watch with interest the peculiar scenes taking place at the railway station: “For a moment that ‘procession’ inspired interest and surprise at something extraordinary and impressive, and such a reaction is rarely manifested by inhabitants of large cities. It must be added that that interest was intensified by the fascination with everything Oriental. For the Orient enticed Europeans in museums and encouraged them to travel to those exotic places.”<sup>288</sup>

In a different context, but deserving of a mention here, Maria Todorova diagnoses the creation of the images of what is referred to as the East (more particularly, the East European Jewish diaspora). Todorova claims that the East was created to meet the needs of the West as a fairy-tale, exotic land abundant in legends and miracles. It embodied the longing and facilitated choosing something different than the prosaic and down-to-earth world of the West.<sup>289</sup> This ‘Romanticized’ vision of East European Judaism can be encountered in several crucial literary texts.

From Schneersohn’s narration we learn that the arrival of the rabbi not only inspired interest on the part of random observers, but was also such an important event for the community (and exotic one too, as I have mentioned) that the local press reported on it. The next morning, under the title “Mysterious Vehicle,’ the newspapers printed a picture of hundreds of delighted, odd-looking *Ostjuden* walking in the procession, guarding the “mysterious vehicle” with their umbrellas so as to protect their ‘*wunder-rabbi*.’<sup>290</sup>

Two characters – educated German Jews – who watch the whole event conclude that even though they have traveled a lot and have seen China and Siberia,

287 *Ibid.*, p. 21.

288 *Ibid.*, p. 24.

289 M. Todorova, *Balkany wyobrazone*, trans. M. Budzińska, J. Dzierzgowski, and P. Szymor (Wołowiec, 2014), p. 40 [English edition: *Imagining the Balkans* (Oxford University Press, 2009)].

290 F. Schneersohn, *Grenadierstrasse*, p. 25.

they did not know that apparitions as exotic as the Jewish migrants from the East were an element of their city. The Jewish quarter in Berlin is a world in itself, separate and mysterious. Johann Ketner, the protagonist of *Grenadierstrasse*, tells his wife that he has heard about such quarters in other large cities to which the poor from the East European diaspora immigrated. Motivated by curiosity, the couple watches the rabbi drive by. They quickly notice the Otherness and realize that they have entered an alien space – this happens when they see the first shop signs in Yiddish, which in a way mark the border of the quarter inhabited by *Ostjuden*. For the two characters that indicated the boundary of the different space – marked by inscriptions on buildings which caught their eye because they were written in a strange alphabet or by the street babble of voices in a language which did resemble German to some extent but was nonetheless different.

Schneersohn's novel is a record of the experience of German Jews who come into contact with the East European variant of Judaism. For the former the interwar period was also, and one should bear this in mind, a time of interest taken in Hasidism, not so much on account of the exoticism as the beliefs held by personas as eminent as thinkers Martin Buber or Gershom Scholem who, as I have mentioned, saw in Orthodox Judaism and Hasidism a chance for a cultural revival of Judaism. The interest taken in Eastern currents of Judaism was an element of the Jewish life in pre-war Germany, though not a very widespread one. Schneersohn emphasizes the existence of milieus of disappointed German intellectuals who discussed the 'twilight of Western culture', treating various variants of the Eastern spiritual currents as chances for a return to the sources of Jewish spirituality.<sup>291</sup> The Jews also studied Indian or Chinese mysticism. Certain circles of German Jews pointed to the legacy of Judaism connected with cabbala or to Hasidic teaching, with the latter being present right by their side: "In the homes of many Jewish families, which have been assimilated for several generations, the young read with great admiration the disseminated translations of Hasidic tales recorded by Baal Shem and his students."<sup>292</sup> Reporting on the manifestations of the interest taken in East European Judaism, the narrator also stresses the "Romantic longing" of the young which was conducive to reading those works and also the pursuit of cultural revival in which engaged were intellectuals who studied the German translations (done by, for instance, Buber) of works on Hasidism or cabbala.

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291 See *ibid.*, pp. 28 ff.

292 *Ibid.*, p. 29.

A shrewd reporter, Bernard Singer comments more bluntly on the wave of the fascination with the Eastern variety of Judaism, criticizing the behavior of the young: “The young escape from the homes of the Jewish bourgeois in Germany. [...] The religious mysticism takes hold of the ranks. In Jewish synagogues there is an increasing number of people praying and moaning while saying the words of prayer. Zionism and religion have won the Jewish street over during the reaction period [this is how Singer refers to the 1930s – A. M.] in Germany.”<sup>293</sup>

This kind of revolt of the young observed by Singer was aptly depicted by Gershom Scholem in his autobiography, where he stressed his opposition to his grandparents’ and parents’ assimilation and his opting for mystical currents of Judaism.<sup>294</sup>

Setting his novel in the milieu of Berlin Jews, Schneersohn shows also its internal diversification. Aforementioned Johann Ketner is a son of a well-known banker from an assimilated liberal milieu. He manifested his connection with Judaism only by visiting the synagogue on major holidays (Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur) and contributing financially to the Jewish Community. But in the same family there are also Conservative Jews (nowadays Conservative Judaism is the current of Judaism more liberal than Orthodox Judaism but less liberal than Reform Judaism). Adolf’s brother-in-law, Ketner, who was a University professor, “goes to a synagogue without organs (of course that without organs!) at almost every Shabbat and cultivates tradition at home, predominantly kosher meals.”<sup>295</sup> The two men avoided closer mutual contacts: “Liberal Ketner called his Conservative brother-in-law a ‘fanatic’ and jibed at him on account of the latter’s ‘kitchen Judaism.’ The latter mockingly called the former a ‘three-day Jew’, that is one who limits his faith to two days of Rosh Hashanah and one day of Yom Kippur.”<sup>296</sup> It was the first time that Johann saw Jews who looked different and behaved differently during prayer. After seeing them at the *tempel* (which was how Reform/Progressive Jews called the synagogue) he learned from his father that they were either newcomers staying temporarily in Berlin or curious *Ostjuden* from Grenadierstrasse.<sup>297</sup> Young Ketner becomes interested in currents of Judaism other than the Liberal one, which leads to disputes and conflicts. His

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293 B. Singer, *W krajach Hitlera i Stalina. Reportaże* (Warsaw, 2007), p. 99.

294 I do not discuss Scholem’s autobiography in more detail as it was penned many years later. In it one can find a very interesting portrait of the milieu of German Jews in Berlin.

295 F. Schneersohn, *Grenadierstrasse*, p. 31.

296 *Ibid.*, pp. 31-32.

297 See *ibid.*, p. 40.



father's friends, strong opponents to Orthodox Judaism, are trying to convince him as to the openness of the Liberal circles, with one of the arguments being the fact that the Jewish children's hospital founded by the Community admits all suffering Jews:

Polish, Galician, and other *mizrekh-yidn* [Jews from the East – A. M.], in *shtraymlekh* [fur hats worn by the Hasidim – A. M.] with long beards, those who probably regard us as morally corrupt *meshumadim* [Jews who abandoned Judaism, apostates – A. M.] all use our hospital, sometimes undergoing treatment for weeks. We neither ask them about their beliefs nor require any thanks. So is this brotherly, unprejudiced help coming straight from the heart not indicative of the true Jewish religion? It is Liberal Jews who have proved that accepting freedom of the spirit, as true German citizens they remain faithful to Judaism, the Jewish religion which protects us from. . .<sup>298</sup>

The speaker does not finish the sentence because young Ketner smashes the tableware in a gesture of protest. After Ketner junior has left the living room, one of the friends of the family, attorney-at-law Semmering tries to justify this act of rebellion as a manifestation of a broader phenomenon characteristic of those times:

This is no miracle – today the air is poisoned with the fanatic spirit of Grenadierstrasse. [...] In some impeccably educated liberal families the young are fascinated with bizarre legends of fanatic Hasidim, whose bearded specimen can be encountered on Grenadierstrasse. [...] they all turn Judaism into something hysterical.<sup>299</sup>

The description of the members of both Orthodox and Conservative Judaism, whose religiosity the protagonist perceives as more intensive, encompasses not only appearance (predominantly the traditional attire), but also behavior in a temple. The author also writes about the places of prayer. Although Johann Ketner first becomes acquainted with the form of service in a Conservative synagogue, which also differs from that in a Liberal *tempel* which he is familiar with, he later watches a service in an [Orthodox] synagogue, that is a place where there is no organ music but only a choir of praying voices and the "hazzan does wear the Orthodox attire, a broad prayer shawl, but has a fashionable and modern hairstyle."<sup>300</sup> The narrator not only often explains to the readers the basic distinctness of the East European religiosity, so different from the liberal version dominant in Western Europe, but also emphasizes that even the circle of German Orthodox Jews had mixed feelings about the religious *mizrekh-yidn*. On the one

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298 Ibid., pp. 46-47.

299 Ibid., p. 47.

300 Ibid., p. 175. A *hazzan* or cantor is a prayer leader.

hand, they distanced themselves from them, and, on the other hand, the learned Litvak Misnagdim were treated with deference and there was admiration for Hasidim' vigorous and emotional religiosity.<sup>301</sup>

Schneersohn's novel does not have to be read as a realistic portrayal of the life of East European Jews in the German capital. One can see in this narration a record of the interest taken in *Ostjuden's* religiosity and of a certain model of the religious transformations which occurred in the milieu of assimilated Jews connected with Reform Judaism. The protagonist is deeply affected by his encounter with the East European version of this religion. He experiences a frequently highlighted sense of lack, as if he had been deprived of a vital part of the spiritual heritage. In such an outlook on the German version of Reform Judaism one can see both its critique and an accusation against *Haskalah* advocates or assimilators: this is about loss of a vital, authentic element of Jewish identity. From yet another perspective – bearing in mind that the novel was written in Yiddish – one can see in Schneersohn's narration a “literary response to the kind of trend developing in German culture which had been introduced into it by, for instance, Martin Buber's Hasidic stories and which was becoming increasingly popular in the German Jewish milieus, particularly after World War I.”<sup>302</sup>

In a chapter, which is a kind of the novel's summary, Schneersohn brings up in an almost journalistic style the intensification, after the German defeat in the First World War, of the sense of disappointment with and letdown by various conceptions of modernity. That disappointment did not bypass the intelligentsia, contributing to the rapid growth, particularly in the milieu of Jewish intellectuals, of interest taken in the currents of Jewish mysticism, kabbala, and types of Hasidism: “The excellent German translations of folk and Hasidic tales

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301 The expression *mizrekh-yidn* pertained to newcomers from the East. The aforementioned Misnagdim and Hasidim were radically different religious groups, which lived predominantly in the East European diaspora and were in conflict with each other; Jews who were followers of the traditional rabbinic Judaism had opposed Hasidism from the start. The Misnagdim criticized Hasidim by, for instance, accusing them of neglecting the study of the Torah and the Talmud, and predominantly of treating zaddicks as middlemen between God and man. In Lithuania, where the spiritual leader of the Misnagdim was Eliyahu ben Shlomo Zalman, known as the Vilna Gaon, the development of Hasidism was hampered due to his authority (and curse putting). See <http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/misnagdim>, access 11 July 2016.

302 M. Krutikov, Afterword, in F. Schneersohn, *Grenadierstrasse*, trans. A. Bothe, ed. A.-Ch. Saß (Göttingen, 2012), p. 248.

caught the attention of the young and inspired great interest in East European Jews.<sup>303</sup>

A female character of Sammy Gronemann's 1920 novel *Tohuwabohu*<sup>304</sup> seems surprised by such great interest taken in spirituality and conversations about religiosity, which was regarded as the foundation of individual and group identity. Having arrived in Berlin to study, she soon states with astonishment: "It's strange to think what opinions one can come across among German Jews!" said Chane. "During these couple of days I have been in Germany I have heard more conversations about religion and Judaism than in my entire life. I am curious whether non-Jews also start talking about their own Christianity and their Germanness right away."<sup>305</sup>

The issue of religion often recurs in discussions held in the milieus described in Gronemann's 'Zionist novel'.<sup>306</sup> Some of the characters who came from the East European diaspora, for instance, Wolf Klatzke, have already managed to construct their new urban identity, while others, who have only just arrived, like Chane or Jossel Schenker, at first see distinct features and differences in Berlin inhabitants' definition or redefinition of their Jewish identity. Klatzke loudly points during these debates to the completely false ideas to which succumbed the German Jews who were willing to listen to their rabbis' sermons: "Why, it's simply the German rabbis' invention that Judaism is a religion like Christianity."<sup>307</sup> In the course of the debates, it occurs that to German members of Judaism being a Jew means a specific denomination, while for immigrants from the East, particularly those who had recently arrived in Berlin, like Chane, Jewishness is not marked out exclusively by religion. From this perspective Jewish identity acquires a broader, cultural meaning. It is more like a way of life than only a relation to a specific version of Judaism, be it the Orthodox or the Reform one. For them tradition constitutes an obvious, integral part of existence. The plot of this narrative about a meeting between East European and Berlin Jews is clearly connected with

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303 Ibid., p. 245.

304 Tohu wa-bohu is a Biblical Hebrew phrase found in the Genesis creation narrative (Genesis 1:2) that describes the condition of the earth immediately before the creation of light in Genesis 1:3.

305 S. Gronemann, *Tohuwabohu* (Leipzig, 2000), p. 229.

306 The plot of *Tohuwabohu* was described in this way by the author of the afterword to the newest edition of this novel, Joachim Schlör, who quotes Hanni Mittelman. See J. Schlör, "Tohuwabohu. Einige Klärungen und viel mehr Fragen," Afterword in S. Gronemann, *Tohuwabohu* (Leipzig, 2000), pp. 357-374.

307 Ibid., p. 229-230.

the diagnoses made by the author himself, who was convinced that in the West European diaspora there were attempts to “lock both God and Judaism away in synagogues,” while for East European Jews Judaism understood as a way of life encompassed existence in its totality.<sup>308</sup>

In his short story entitled “Der verirrte Kosak” [A Lost Cossack], Fischl Schneersohn confronts a Hasid from a Volhynian *shtetl* with Berlin, a city which initially seems to Awermele a wonderful and extraordinary place.<sup>309</sup> The man admires the grand, large buildings, wide streets, people, automobiles, and streetcars. The unsuspecting protagonist, dressed in his best clothes, visits a synagogue, where an astonishing scene takes place. He looks with wonder at the grand stone building topped with a golden dome, which looks totally unlike the wooden Volhynian synagogues he knows. Although he does not have an entry card he is let in. But when he begins to pray in the way which seems the most appropriate to him, that is by singing, he proves to be an unwelcome visitor, a stranger oblivious to the rules of conduct in the synagogue which proves different not only in architectural terms.

A different experience of alienation experienced by a religious newcomer from the East can be found in Dovid Bergelson’s short story, which gives a different perspective on the clash between the different worlds. Bergelson emphasizes *Ostjuden’s* special sense of strangeness in his short story “Alte Geschichten” [old tales], where the religious elderly protagonist, who was brought to Berlin by his children who had already taken root in their new life, compares the city to biblical Nineveh.<sup>310</sup> During a sleepless night Mojsche Grejwis realizes that this “big but also sinful city, wicked and blaspheming against God resembles Nineveh, which during prophet Jonas’ times inspired God’s anger and which the Almighty wished to destroy just like he did Sodom.”<sup>311</sup> Meditating, the protagonist begins to analyze his own past. At dawn he listens in to the characteristic sounds of the city – streetcar bells, heavy footsteps of the swelling tide of pedestrians, the racket of trains, and the long factory whistles which remind about the workers’ toil. All this hustle and bustle is full of verve or even almost “youthful zeal,” and is aimed at shedding the laziness of the night. Straining his ears to hear the signals

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308 Qtd. after: J. Schlör, *Tohuwabohu. Einige Klärungen und viel mehr Fragen*, p. 371.

309 F. Schneersohn, “Der verirrte Kosak,” in *Unter Emigranten. Jüdische Dichtung und Prosa aus Berlin*, ed. A. Jendrusch (Berlin, 2003), pp. 33–36.

310 See D. Bergelson, “Alte Geschichten,” in *Unter Emigranten*, pp. 77–86.

311 *Ibid.*, p. 77.

of the urban everyday life, the protagonist remembers that it was in Nineveh that there was nobody willing to do penance.

A character from Sammy Gronemann's aforementioned novel has similar experiences coming to Berlin from an East European *shtetl*, though depicted in a rather comical way.<sup>312</sup> The author describes a meeting between Jacob Kaiser and Jossel with a great deal of humor. Standing close to a synagogue on Oranienburgerstrasse, Jossel was looking with curiosity and admiration at the very sophisticated individuals entering the building. Jossel asks a newly met student who these people are. The man invites him inside the synagogue, where a comedy of errors ensues. A wedding ceremony is taking place in the beautiful interior and loud organ music is playing. At first Jossel asks his companion whether he should take his headgear off. Later, when he realizes that the man conducting the prayer is speaking Hebrew, he hastily grabs Jacob's arm:

"Didn't he say something in Hebrew?"

"Why, of course, he said the wedding vow!"

"In Hebrew?"

"How else?"

"And where did the Orthodox priest learn Hebrew?"

"Priest? What priest?"

"Why, there's only one here. Is Hebrew spoken in Berlin churches too?"

"What churches? Where do you think you are?"

"Why, in church of course! It's my first time. We don't normally go there. This is quite interesting to me."<sup>313</sup>

The radical difference in the rituals, the synagogue's interior design, and the rabbi's appearance – all this takes the young follower of East European Judaism aback. He even suspects this to be a prank, for he regards such stark differences as positively unthinkable. The clothes are different, there is music, and those gathered listen to a sermon instead of just reading the Torah – the man is shocked. Seeking emancipation in Berlin, Chana makes a similar diagnosis of this distinctness: "These are two different worlds that have little to do with each other."<sup>314</sup> The functioning of those two parallel worlds was further highlighted by the territorial separation in the urban space of the quarter inhabited chiefly by Eastern Jews.

Exoticization seems a mutual phenomenon occurring during meetings between religious Berlin Jews and the East European ones. The mutual

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312 S. Gronemann, *Tohuwabohu*, pp. 97 ff.

313 *Ibid.*, p. 99.

314 *Ibid.*, p. 228.

observation usually causes surprise and wonder, and sometimes only interest in the radically different version of Judaism. The figure of the mythical *Ostjuden*, connected with not only a description of the presence and distinctness of the Jews who came from Poland or Galicia, but also their exceptional religiosity, was sometimes ambivalently evaluated in various literary records (for instance, in Schneersohn or Döblin's works). Krutikov remarks that East European Jews were aware of that phenomenon and had a relatively ironic attitude to it. The scholar quotes, for instance, Hersh Dovid Nomberg's text penned in Berlin after the First World War:

German Jews yearn for Jewishness. At the same time it is interesting that the more assimilated and more distant from Judaism the German Jew becomes [. . .], the stronger his desire for Jewishness. Needless to say, we, *Ostjuden*, are expected to quench this thirst. Anybody who arrives from the other side of the [Eastern – A. M.] border and wishes to be seen or heard has to be, first and foremost, incredibly and truly Jewish, appraised on the scale of Jewishness as 18-carat gold. A painter is expected to paint in the 'Jewish' manner, that is, beards and sidelocks, faces contorted with suffering, and eyes terrified after a pogrom. The basic requirement is [elements such as – A. M.] a menorah, a synagogue, a *shul*, and tombstones. The only thing expected from literature is deep mysticism, sad eyes, God, angels, rabbis, and Hasidim.<sup>315</sup>

In Schneersohn's novel the reader also finds an evaluative summing up of the German Progressive Judaism seen by a newcomer from the East, a Hasid, who in line with tradition refers to a story of a rabbi:

People say that when an old rabbi from Graniev [*Graniever Rebbe* – A. M.], blessed by his memory, was in Berlin he dressed like a German and went to your synagogue to pray. He said later that that synagogue was a realistic photograph of Judaism [. . .]. Like in a photograph, everything that looked like in a synagogue, all details were in place, but, unfortunately, it was dead.<sup>316</sup>

Krutikov writes that Schneersohn's novel brings a much more detailed portrait of the milieu of German Jews than its depiction as mythical *Ostjuden*. This aspect was discussed by the text's reviewers.<sup>317</sup> The narrator assumes an almost ethnographic perspective on the transformations in the milieu of Berlin followers of Progressive Judaism, including the detection of the religious distinctness of representatives of the East European diaspora.

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315 Qtd. after: M. Krutikov, Afterword, in F. Schneersohn, *Grenadierstrasse*, p. 249.

316 *Ibid.*, p. 187.

317 Krutikov refers to, for instance, Nachman Meisel's review. See M. Krutikov, Afterword, p. 252.

Commenting on the political transformations in Germany in the early 1930s, Antoni Sobański points to, for instance, the place of religion in the emerging political system and emphasizes that religion was a competition to the total state: "Religion is a rival. Nationalists are the most radical monotheists. There is one idol – the state. The rest is opium of the masses."<sup>318</sup> The observer from Poland notices various manipulations concerning the two main denominations, that is Protestantism and Catholicism, and also brings up the protest against admission of Jews to Protestant communities. Sobański points to the Protestant and Catholic division in Germany. Reminding that German Catholics "have always been held up as a model to all Catholics who confused matters of faith with chauvinism,"<sup>319</sup> Sobański points to their passivity and connects it with more or less concealed anti-Semitism. Although the author of the reportage does mention scarce protests regarding freedom of speech or the authorities' brutality staged by representatives of the Catholic circles, he also points to the fact that this "anti-Jewish uproar is the most advanced in Rhineland, which is a Catholic land."<sup>320</sup> He also mentions that when he drew the attention of a Catholic activist to that movement's "highly un-Christian" character, he heard an evasive answer "that Jews in Mexico did not protect the persecuted Catholics."<sup>321</sup> Sobański is disappointed by the position of the German Catholic circles in Germany not because they do not protect Jews from persecution, but because they fail to notice the fundamental contradiction between the national revolution and Christianity: "There is nothing more un-Christian or even un-pagan than the current German coup. Nationalism is a lowland cult. It does not develop in the shadow of either the Mount of Olives or even the Olympus."<sup>322</sup> Summing up his stay in the German capital, he adds: "I saw, and this is perhaps essential, a country ruled by the primitive instinct of the tribe and its distinctness. Not even for a moment during my stay in Berlin was I able to forget about such revival of primitivism."<sup>323</sup> Although the religious life of Warsaw Jews remained heterogenous, it was dominated by the Orthodox version of Judaism. Portrayals of various types of this religiosity (and also of the functioning of the Reform community) can be found in many narratives. One can also come across portrayals of the version of Judaism identified with tradition. A record of modern Jewish identity which was undergoing

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318 A. Sobański, *Cywil w Berlinie* (Warsaw, 2006), p 132.

319 *Ibid.*, p. 133.

320 *Ibid.*

321 *Ibid.*

322 *Ibid.*, p. 134.

323 *Ibid.*, p. 141.

changes and was connected with Judaism understood as a vital cultural element can be found (in the unorthodox version) in, for instance, Sholem Asch's narrative. The Sabbath at the Hurwiczs is not so much a religious celebration as a kind of a traditional ritual, where as part of the family feast, aside discussions about Zionism or the role of religion, appear elements of Polish and Jewish culture, such as reading Bialik's and Mickiewicz's poetry out loud or singing a revolutionary songs. All this did not exclude the presence of a religious element.<sup>324</sup> One can clearly see here a certain model of a synthesis of identity, which contemporary scholars, for instance, Prokop-Janiec or Steffen call Jewish Polishness. A crucial character is Hurwicz senior, who believes in the *Haskalah* ideas and is engaged in teaching patriotism to the young in line with the Polish Romantic models but has not abandoned Judaism. A reader of the plot constructed by one of the most eminent Yiddish writers learns about this and other versions of the Jewish identity while reading descriptions of the characters. Mirkin, who arrives in Warsaw from Petersburg via Vilnius, is initially very impressed by the strong presence of religion in the everyday life of the Jews living in the diaspora because he comes from an assimilated family. But his subsequent experiences make him interested in other formulas of constructing Jewish identity, ones connected with its modern versions, that is, Zionism and other political movements.

Two interesting outlooks on the role and significance of religion in the life of Warsaw Jews can be found in reportages which, as I believe, should be compared. The very title of a collection of reportages by Wanda Melcer, a Polish author associated with the weekly *Wiadomości Literackie's*. *Czarny ląd* [Dark Continent], emphasizes the separation and radical distinctness of Warsaw's Jewish society. Despite the Jewish community's spatial, territorial closeness, the author highlights what I call cultural distance of the thus singled out group of Varsovians. The author divides Jewish citizens of interwar Poland into three groups. The largest one is made up of various factions of religious followers of Judaism, which she describes very unambiguously as "the dark mass of Orthodox Jews, [. . .] where ignorance, hypocrisy, and reactionism fight for dominance."<sup>325</sup> Melcer devotes several sentences to the second (in her opinion smallest) group – the assimilated "Jews who consider themselves Polish and try to reconcile the often contradictory views in the spirit of national cooperation."<sup>326</sup> She also notices those "who have fully and consciously detached themselves from any denominational

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324 See Sh. Asch, *Warszawa*, trans W. Rogowicz (Warsaw, 1931), p. 111.

325 W. Melcer, *Czarny ląd* (Warsaw, 1936), p. 24.

326 Ibid.



or national core and are navigating the wide waters of internationalism.<sup>327</sup> Thus singled out, the last, third group encompasses followers of communism on the one hand, and the big business and international finance on the other hand. And this actually merely proves the schematic and stereotypical perception of not only the Jewish population of Warsaw, but also Jews in general.<sup>328</sup> Melcer's reportage cycle was meant to familiarize the Polish reader not so much with the entire internally diverse Jewish community, as to present one of the groups: the group of diaspora Jews who were the most devoted to cultivation of tradition and customs. The author takes a critical stance on the phenomena she is describing. She harshly criticizes Jewish religious schools, carefully examines the status of women in the community of religious Jews, and also notices problems connected with the functioning of rabbinic courts and consequences of exclusion from the community. In an attempt to make the reader familiar with Jewish inhabitants of Warsaw, Melcer lists the institutions which facilitate the community's existence – schools, hospitals, and courses for teachers. She reports on both the activity of the community and *chevra kadisha*, which dealt with funerals. Although her publication was to explain the Jewish distinctness and familiarize the reader with the society of his neighbors, the author sometimes passes rather bizarre judgments on cultural phenomena connected with the Judaic community. She calls Talmud “a mystifying work,” whose reader encounters a bizarre layout. Examining one of its volumes presented to her by a teacher, Melcer deems Talmud a curiosity: “Capital and lowercase letters, all kinds of print, text forming a checker pattern, text across, rectangular and square text – all that seemed more like surrealist poems than a nation's traditional book.”<sup>329</sup> Intended by the author as a kind of a praise, her statement concerning the Jewish community's attitude to the phenomena of modernity sounds almost racist. Melcer writes about the Jewish “love for modernity [. . .] the ability to absorb and disseminate it, [which is] typical practically exclusively of the Semitic race” and which constitutes “one

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327 Ibid.

328 A very critical and ironic review of Melcer's book was printed in the July 1936 issue of *Oko w oko*. In his long article entitled *Podróż babci dookoła stołu* [Grandma's Voyage Around the Table] Samuel Jakub Imber not only criticizes Melcer for her inept depiction of the Jewish world of Warsaw and her complete ignorance about the culture of Judaism, but also accuses her of stereotypical perception, schematism, lack of reflection, and repeating anti-Semitic claims (about the consequences of circumcision and the issue of ritual slaughter). See S. J. Imber, “Podróż babci dookoła stołu,” *Oko w oko* 1 (1936): 4–12.

329 W. Melcer, *Czarny ład*, pp. 38–41.

of its most precious assets.”<sup>330</sup> Focused on describing traditions and religious customs, the author fails to notice both the Jewish lay identity, which in the 1930s already had a relatively strong position and the functioning of Reform groups in the urban space. Although she lists institutions such as Tarbut schools or those associated with CISZO, where Yiddish was the language of instruction,<sup>331</sup> she does not connect them with the operation of diverse larger organizations, social currents or with the divisions inside the Jewish population. She fails to notice Zionism, where the birth of the new Jewish national community was the most strongly emphasized. Hence, it is clear that, importantly, the structure of *Czarny ład* revolves exclusively around models of religious and moral organization of Jewish life – from birth (a description of *brith milach*, that is, circumcision, which the author regards as a terrifying and exceptionally brutal procedure), through upbringing and traditional education (the *heder* as the main source of knowledge), celebration of holidays (although Melcer briefly explains their character she devotes much more attention to the subject matter of kosher slaughter, possibly due to the heated debates going on at that time and efforts to delegatize the *shehitah*), through the wedding ceremony and marriage (Melcer points to the discriminatory status of the *agunot*),<sup>332</sup> and all the way to disease, death, and funeral. Hence, the Polish author’s book proves a publication focused entirely on one version of Jewish social identity – the community of Orthodox Jews, which Melcer got to know only superficially. Although she admits to being aware of the internal diversity amongst Polish Jews, she devotes almost no attention to currents other than the Orthodox one.

Alfred Döblin is more thorough when it comes to portraying the sphere of Jewish Warsaw’s religiosity. For he not only reports on the diversification of political views in that milieu, but also notices two versions of religiosity: the one

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330 Ibid., p. 45.

331 CISZO, that is, the Central Jewish School Organization (*Tsentrale Yidische Shul Organizatsye*) – a lay international Jewish organization associated with the Bund and the Folkiste movement. It laid particular emphasis on teaching Yiddish, which was the language of instruction there.

332 An *agunah* is a married woman whose husband disappeared without a trace and whose death remains uncertain or a woman abandoned by her husband who refused to divorce her, thus making it impossible for her to remarry. See A. Unterman, *Encyklopedia tradycji i legend żydowskich*, trans. O. Zienkiewicz (Warsaw, 1998), p. 16 [English edition: *Jews, Their Religious Beliefs and Practices* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985)]; most such abandoned women placed at the very bottom of the social hierarchy although helping them was considered *mitzvah*.

connected with Orthodoxy and dominant in the Jewish quarter of Nalewki as well as the more progressive one which he encountered when visiting the Great Synagogue on Tłomackie Street. In his *Journey to Poland*, Döblin first visits the capital, reports on the changes (the demolition of the Orthodox Cathedral on Saxon Square, and new, non-Russian street names), describes the city's architectural layout, notices a large number of churches, gives the reader an overview of Polish history until the reinstatement of independence, and discusses the political and cultural life at that time. A separate part of his reportage is entitled "The Jewish District of Warsaw," which not only proves the author's interest in the Jewish life in Polish cities, but to some extent attests to the separateness and isolation of the capital's Jewish inhabitants from the non-Jewish ones. Looking at Nalewki inhabitants, Döblin not only emphasizes in his reportage that the Jews dress differently, but also points to the elements of clothing closely connected with religion: "A gust of wind blows frequently; then their long black coats fly open, exposing their white ritual fringes."<sup>333</sup>

Döblin devotes a lot of attention to the synagogue on Tłomackie Street, immediately noticing the distinctiveness of the people who go there to pray: "Few of them wear caftans and skullcaps, this is the synagogue of the middle class, also the enlightened, the emancipated, and the assimilated."<sup>334</sup> But this does not stop him from inserting an ironic general comment on those present in the synagogue: "On the whole, these are not elegant people, they unabashedly pick their noses while talking."<sup>335</sup> The author describes the building's form, emphasizing its classicistic style and notices something striking to him: "And oddly: basins of dripping water to the right and left of the entrance; the vestige of a ritual ablution, and also how close to the Catholic stoup."<sup>336</sup> It is noteworthy that the author who arrived from Berlin strongly associates the version of Reform Judaism he encountered in Warsaw with Catholicism. Granted, when he describes the course of the prayers, he emphasizes the separation of women in the so-called *babiniac* (a Polish colloquial term for 'women's section') and the fact that there are "[n]ot nearly as many women as in Christian churches," but he starts reporting on the prayers with the following sentence: "The liturgy resembles the Catholic one. And it is amazingly similar to the Catholic one when the priest

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333 A. Döblin, *Journey to Poland*, trans. Joachim Neugroschel, ed. Heinz Graber (New York: Paragon House Publishers, 1991), p. 52.

334 *Ibid.*, p. 54-55.

335 *Ibid.*, p. 55.

336 *Ibid.*

pulls up the curtain, produces a chinking clinking silver implement and holds it in his arm like an ostensory.”<sup>337</sup> Döblin also writes “the altar” instead of *bimah* and he apparently is unaware that the Torah is decorated with a crown, usually made of silver.

There is one more noteworthy aspect of the version of religiosity observed by the newcomer from Berlin. Döblin notices not only various ways of wearing the *tallith* – “Some wear them like scarves, some wrap them around their arms, tightening them”<sup>338</sup> – or forms of prayer different from those he is familiar with – “A man in front of me prays very loudly, his upper body swaying, a man in a hat.”<sup>339</sup> Describing the character of the prayers, Döblin emphasizes their communal nature: “Here, there is a close rapport between parish and priest. They read aloud, and every so often, the crowd and the choir break in tumultuously.”<sup>340</sup> Of course, that was not so much ‘breaking in’ as joining the group prayer. It seems that that aspect also set the East European Judaism apart, even in its Reform formula, although there is always a division into what the prayer leader says/reads out loud and what the followers repeat or add.

The meticulous author also reports on his conversations with various Jewish leaders or political activists encountered in Warsaw. Quoting one of the Zionists, Döblin repeats his words on the-then secularization of Jewish life: “Judaism no longer has a living religious and spiritual life, a religious and spiritual movement as in the days when Hasidism was growing.”<sup>341</sup> He points to the increasingly popular shaping of Jewish lay identity in its various variants: “The *Sabbath* is rigorously observed only in Jewish neighborhoods. The caftan and the capote don’t tell you much. There are Communists who wear capotes.”<sup>342</sup> Thus, getting to know Polish Jews, the author (and the reader too) was able to realize the great internal diversity in the Jewish community inhabiting Warsaw. Another proof for the changing mentality is modern lay schools, like the school with Yiddish as the language of instruction which Döblin visits. He regards its operation as evidence of “an autonomous emancipation of the working masses of the Jewish people.”<sup>343</sup>

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337 Ibid., p. 55. Döblin came from an assimilated Jewish family. He converted to Catholicism in 1941.

338 Ibid.

339 Ibid.

340 Ibid., p. 56.

341 Ibid., p. 58.

342 Ibid.

343 Ibid, p. 59.

In an attempt to present a complete spectrum of the varieties of Jewish religiosity, the author visits a *shul* belonging to a Zionist Community as well as a Hasidic *shtiebel*.<sup>344</sup> In the former (which also has a separate gallery for women), Döblin notices a political element in the interior design: “At the entrance, there are posters by a Palestinian rabbi and his portrait.”<sup>345</sup> He listens to a traditionally-dressed cantor singing in a strong, big voice and those who fervently participate in the prayer with *tallitot* on their heads. What distinguishes this community is that it has both a religious and a political character – “[. . .] when everything is over [the prayer – A. M.] and they are leaving, someone launches into a song. And old and young, male and female join in: the proud, hopeful ‘Hatikvah’, the Zionist anthem.”<sup>346</sup>

A visit Döblin pays supporters of a great Hasid, a *zaddick* from the Ger dynasty from Góra Kalwaria, who “sit there praying all night long,” makes yet a different impression on him. The author of the reportage first hears “shrill singing, no, not singing” and then is struck by a “wild confused shouting,” noise, and hum. He feels rather odd in his “West European” attire because all those present “everyone wears a skullcap and a caftan.”<sup>347</sup> The visitors are shocked by the great solemnity paired with excitement, the presence of both “old men, dour men” and young boys, who were all immersed in the reading the sacred texts. “The men all read the same passage, but each on his own, a priest to himself.”<sup>348</sup> Their behavior seems positively different to Döblin: “The worshipers here rock in a peculiarly sharp and expansive way,” which is accompanied by an “ecstatic tangle.”<sup>349</sup> The author also listens to distinct Hasidic singing – joyful, animated, and extraordinary, different from that he has heard.

Describing the Sukkot,<sup>350</sup> the observer from Berlin notices unusual bustle: “Planks are already being carried to the courtyards of Jewish streets,

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344 *Shul* (Yiddish) – traditional term for a prayer house or synagogue. *Shtiebel* – Hasidic synagogue or prayer house.

345 *Ibid.*, p. 67.

346 *Ibid.*, p. 68. Written by Naftali H. Imber from Galicia, the lyrics were published in 1886 and later became the anthem of the Zionist movement, while at the First Zionist Congress in Basil in 1897 “Hatikvah” was announced the anthem of the World Zionist Organization.

347 *Ibid.*, p. 68.

348 *Ibid.*, p. 69.

349 *Ibid.*

350 Unterman writes that Sukkot is the most joyful of the biblical holidays, a celebration of the manifestation of nature’s generosity, God’s generosity and protection, about which remind the shoddy shelters in which the Israelites lived in the desert. At Sukkot

ordinary boxboards, raw, to be hammered and trimmed into shape. A door is inserted; the roof is covered with verdure. Hut by hut grows in the courtyards. [. . .] Some do not build their huts on the ground, they prefer balconies, the highest, which are not surmounted by others.”<sup>351</sup> Walking in the Jewish quarter and watching preparations for Sukkot, the author emphasizes that this festival connected with nature is “merely a distant memory to the tribe of merchants and intellectuals, who have no land, no country, and no state.”<sup>352</sup> But the ultimate conclusion is connected with the author’s admiration for the preservation of what is essential for the maintenance of one’s religious identity:

I cannot help it: walking from gate to gate and looking at one shelter after another, I am gripped by wonder and respect. And joy: that the spirit lives and operates in nature. The spirit and the will bind these people together. No so-called misfortune has weighed them down because they would not let it. Wandering, staggering, cast away for millennia, they symbolize the sole mainstay of the future, the birth, and the creation which is the Spirit and the potency of the human I.<sup>353</sup>

Melcer brings up Sukkot (along with other important festivals) when reminiscing about her Lviv neighbors.<sup>354</sup> But she also emphasizes: Everybody goes out, leaves their homes, the stuffy urban rooms, the dens unworthy of man, and lives in the open, builds shelters, and sit under weaved twigs.”<sup>355</sup> The author asks one rhetorical question: “Does it not seem that this festival must be a most poetic one?”<sup>356</sup> However, she gives a judgmental description of the Jewish Varsovians’ Sukkot celebrations, pointing to the wealth inequality in the Jewish community:

Now the wealthy are building real palaces in the courtyards of Warsaw tenements, covered with rugs, strewn with runners, and lit with specially installed electricity [. . .]. The poor suffer cold and dampness in their shabby shelters on cold, rainy, autumn nights as if the weather too turned against those who have no protection from it.<sup>357</sup>

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the most religious Jews eat and sleep in *sukkah*, makeshift shelters with roofs made of branches, to with this festival owes its name and peculiar character.” See A. Unterman, *Encyklopedia tradycji i legend żydowskich*, pp. 256-257.

351 A. Döblin, *Journey to Poland*, p. 70.

352 *Ibid.*, p. 87.

353 *Ibid.*

354 See W. Melcer, *Czarny ląd*, p. 140.

355 *Ibid.*, p. 140.

356 *Ibid.*

357 *Ibid.*, p. 141.

Characteristic here is also the author's commentary frequently emphasizing the detrimental health consequences of strict adherence to the Judaist religious rituals: "Leaving these Arabian shelters put together in Warsaw, both groups are suffering from various diseases such as pneumonia, arthritis, and devastating and painful rheumatism."<sup>358</sup>

The two authors also devote attention to the operation of the Jewish cemetery. The Polish author accompanies a funeral of a poor woman, while the German reporter watches people visiting the graves of their loved ones on "the eve of Yom Kippur."<sup>359</sup> Walking down Gęsia Street, he looks at those who are going to the cemetery, where "they beg them [their dead family and friends – A. M.] for forgiveness and intercession with God."<sup>360</sup> The description of the cemetery resembles a reporter's relation – the author points to the richly-decorated tombstones, inscriptions in both Polish and Hebrew, the main avenue and the part of the necropolis which "is like a vast restless meadow, dotted with small sunken stones and larger ones too."<sup>361</sup> To the newcomer the most peculiar aspects are on the one hand the mass participation in prayers, that is, the crowd that comes to the cemetery, and on the other hand, the women's behavior, which he perceives as somewhat exotic, and particularly the very formula of the prayers: "The men are standing upright with prayer books, mumbling and bowing with ceremonious solemnity. Squatting at their feet in the grass, the women and girls are complaining, moaning, and wailing loudly."<sup>362</sup> The oddity of the cries, moans, weeping, and highly emotional behavior incites the author to make a conclusion highly judgmental of this version of Jewish religiosity:

I shudder after what I have seen and heard. [...] I still cannot compose myself. It is something terrifying. An echo of primal nature, some atavism. Does this have anything to do with Jewishness? Why, these are living relicts of ancient beliefs! Relicts of fear of the dead and of wandering souls. A feeling given to members of this nation with religion. A remnant of a different religion, of animism, of the cult of the dead.<sup>363</sup>

A different but to some degree similar account of a funeral ceremony can be found in the reportage by Wanda Melcer accompanying the mourners, descendants of the dead poor woman: "Her eldest child says *kaddish*, after which the weepers

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358 Ibid.

359 A. Döblin, *Journey to Poland*, p. 77.

360 Ibid., p. 78.

361 Ibid., p. 79.

362 Ibid.

363 Ibid., p. 82.

again fling themselves at the bier, moaning, and then one of the impatient men commands loudly: ‘*Shtill!*’<sup>364</sup> The author also quotes her companion who comments on the ritual’s simplicity and modesty: “As you can see, Miss, there is no pomp. All other religions have always tried to appeal to their followers’ imagination through bell ringing, the grandeur of liturgy, the beauty of churches, and the clergymen’s attire. All this is absent from the Jewish religion [ . . .].”<sup>365</sup>

The reporter devotes separate space to the appearance of the necropolis. She emphasizes the density of the *matzevot*, which she calls ‘grave stones’, and the scant more decorative tombstones. She also tries to explain to the Polish reader why the tombstones look the way they do: “Religion prohibits sculpting human figures in synagogues and on cemeteries, which makes these stones strangely alike.”<sup>366</sup> In Melcer’s opinion, yet another oddity in comparison to Catholicism dominant on Polish lands was the custom of leaving *kvitelach* on zaddicks’ graves. *Kvitelach* have been traditionally brought to tombs of famous zaddicks. These pieces of paper are treated like requests concerning health or disease, family problems, or professional success.<sup>367</sup> These graves different from the other ones, these “small buildings resembling chapels,” stand out in the cemetery space also because of the fact that they have a place, “where, like in the tomb of Romeo and Juliet in Verona, followers place pieces of paper with wishes. Concerning health, success in business, or various family combinations, these pieces of paper are written over legibly and rolled into a tube.”<sup>368</sup> The author clearly treats the Hasidic custom as a kind of a peculiar magical gesture, ignoring its vital religious aspect.

Melcer perceives many issues connected with Judaic tradition in a similar way (and she was not an exception in that regard among *Wiadomości Literackie*’s co-workers as equivalent opinions could be found in numerous texts penned by Antoni Słonimski). But one has to bear in mind that her description concerns only Orthodox Judaism, which the author harshly criticizes: “The savage customs of circumcision, the *mykvah*, and the ritual slaughter of cattle must be wiped off

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364 W. Melcer, *Czarny ład*, p. 169.

365 *Ibid.*, pp. 169 ff.

366 *Ibid.*, p. 169.

367 *Kvitelach* – pieces of paper on which Jews wishing to ask a zaddick for advise write their mother’s name as well as their own name and request/question. *Kvitelach* have also been brought to, for instance, graves of zaddicks and the Waling Wall in Jerusalem.

368 *Ibid.*, p. 170.



the face of the earth [...]. Similarly, religious education has to be completely reformed [...].<sup>369</sup>

In both Melcer's and Döblin's case we have to do with a gaze from the outside in, for they both look at the Jewish community of Warsaw as outsiders. For Döblin it is his actual status for he arrives in Poland to travel, while in Melcer's case the assumption of the 'newcomer's' perspective only emphasizes how exotic the Jewish inhabitants of the capital city were to the Polish community. Unlike the author of *Czarny ląd*, who does not differentiate between different types of Jewish religiosity, Döblin is able to, despite his status, show what is essential: the Jewish religiosity's internal diversity, its different faces present in the urban spaces of Warsaw. The reporter from Germany also takes note of the functioning of the two religions most visible in the Polish capital:

[...] in the crowd [on Gęsia Street – A. M.] appears an eminent personality: a tall man in a long silk gabardine with a white forked wavy beard. He is wearing a large round hat. [...] It is a rabbi. The man walks by; in the crowd of merchants nobody pays any attention to him. And after a while a Catholic funeral appears in the street. At its head on both sides are tall lanterns with burning candles, behind the funeral wagon walk ordinary bareheaded people, and at the end a single horse-drawn wagon transporting women.<sup>370</sup>

What seems interesting for the coexistence of the Jewish and the Polish worlds in Warsaw, is the coexistence of different orders of the sacred recorded by Döblin and his abstention from judgement.

Although Melcer emphasizes that her reportages were to describe the Jewish world unknown to the Polish reader, she not only situates this world in an overly exotic sphere (the title – *Czarny ląd* – the Dark Continent), but also very harshly criticizes the Jewish identity founded on religious orthodoxy (in her opinion these are “dark practices”) which to the author – who is clearly not well oriented in the diverse Jewish life of Warsaw – constitutes practically the only version of Jewish life in interwar Poland. In line with the Enlightenment's ideas, Melcer demands separation of religious life from the functioning of the state and law (“the society as a whole must demand a clear separation of religious matters from matters of the state”)<sup>371</sup> so that the Jews can become fully emancipated. At

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369 Ibid., pp. 173 ff.

370 A. Döblin, *Journey to Poland*, p. 66.

371 W. Melcer, *Czarny ląd*, p. 174. It remains unknown what this remark pertains to, as Jews always respected the law in the place of their residence. It was rather the Catholic Church, which had a dominant position at that time, that aimed at regulating the state law in accordance with its religious doctrine (for instance, the issue of procreation, conscious motherhood, abortion, or civil marriage).

the same time she blames Orthodox Judaism and separate Jewish identity (“the Jews’ distinctiveness through their customs”)<sup>372</sup> for the negative perception of this community by other ethnic groups.<sup>373</sup> That last statement sounds like a frequently repeated cliché attesting to the author’s xenophobic attitude: she deems alien a phenomenon which she does not try to understand and depreciates the distinctness, concluding that the Jews themselves contribute to their negative perception.

It should be emphasized that, unlike Melcer, the German author respects this distinctiveness. He points to not only the peculiarity or exoticism of East European Judaism, but also its spiritual potency. He admits to himself that when he visits the Jewish quarter at Sukkot he notices among those who “[w]ear the robe of metaphysics from morning to evening and are connected to the superterrestrial God”<sup>374</sup> the exceptional power binding together the Jewish nation. Filled with “respect” and “wonder,” Döblin notices that the Jews, particularly the followers of the kinds of Judaism dominant in Warsaw, are exceptionally focused on spiritual life, that they always remain faithful to their identity which is so closely connected with religion, which has remained unchanged for centuries despite their dispersal and the persecution they have suffered.<sup>375</sup>

A description similar to that proposed by Wanda Melcer can be found in Maria Kuncewiczowa’s *Dylizans Warszawski* [Warsaw stage coach], where the Jewish quarter is depicted as a run-down place, inhabited predominantly by lower social strata. On a Friday evening, not only the Shabbat reigns in the quarter: “In the cavernous courtyards stretching into passageways, often partitioned with as many as three gates, in the courtyards which flow out into alleys, halls,

372 Ibid.

373 In the book form the author responds to the polemic and critical remarks addressed at her publication which were published in Polish-Jewish press (*Nasz Przegląd*) and in right-wing periodicals. The latter accused Melcer of having a negative attitude to religion, particularly its presence in the public space and influence on the legislative process. See *ibid.*, pp. 173, 9–17.

374 A. Döblin, *Journey to Poland*, p. 87.

375 Scholars of Döblin’s literary output have pointed also to the consequences of the encounter with the East European version of Judaism, predominantly the Hasidic circles. They emphasized that that experience not only had an effect on the *Ostjuden*’s perception, but also “changed the way of perceiving the world.” Döblin appreciated the value of parabolic tales. In his later texts (for instance, in his most famous novel) he emphasized the very fact of storytelling, a kind of a never-ending conversation. See C. Sonino, *Exil, Diaspora, Gelobtes Land? Deutsche Juden blicken nach Osten*, trans. from Italian by U. Lipka (Berlin, 2002), pp. 107–129.

dumpsters there is little of the sacred silence.<sup>376</sup> The narrator takes note of the local inhabitants' internal diversity. On the one hand, Kuncewiczowa reports on the presence of those who do not abide by the religious rules and do some small-scale trading or serve customers in a confectionery. On the other hand, she sees that "on Nalewki Street there are flowers – candles. In a recess in one of the courtyards is a short and wide window without a net curtain. [Inside is a] poor table with a fish dish at the center, a family, small children, and candles. Tiny Shabbat candles in enormous candlesticks."<sup>377</sup> Kuncewiczowa's narration differs from that proposed by Melcer in its sensitive tone and seeing the religious aspect of Jewish identity as an element binding the community instead of perceiving it solely as a kind of a corset hampering modernization processes. However, the author of *Dyżans Warszawski* takes note of the fact that the sphere of the sacred does not encompass everybody. For instance, girls encountered on the streets of Nalewki, "washed and smartly dressed," do not celebrate Shabbat in accordance with the religious dictates. They definitely stand out in the space where "everything is brown" and where reigns "ugliness so extreme that it becomes poetic."<sup>378</sup> Kuncewiczowa clearly emphasizes the distanced position of the narrator who visits the Jewish quarter, whose inhabitants she calls "this other people."<sup>379</sup>

In Henryk Nagiel's book *Tajemnice Nalewek* [mysteries of Nalewki Streets], which is mostly about sensational criminal acts, the narrator takes note of the exceptional moments when the sacred clearly triumphs over the profane. Following the criminal plot, the reader can also read how beautifully the Jewish quarter of Warsaw looked on Shabbat:

Stores have been closed, the rattle of wagons transporting cargo has stopped. It is quiet and peaceful all around. In the morning, slowly, with solemnness on their lips and bundles in hand, rows of patriarchs walk back from the synagogue. And in the evening, when the moon silvers the square on Nowolipki Street, couples slowly walk by, filled with biblical ecstasy, quiet and somewhat ambling as if they were ghosts of their ancestors from the distant regions of Palestine. . . .<sup>380</sup>

The existence of Jewish spirituality and the potency of the Jewish religious identity were also regarded as testifying to the exceptionality of the space of the Polish capital. "From time to time one could hear a quietly hummed

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376 M. Kuncewiczowa, *Dyżans warszawski* (Warsaw, 1981), p. 101.

377 *Ibid.*, p. 102.

378 *Ibid.*

379 *Ibid.*

380 H. Nagiel, *Tajemnice Nalewek*, vol. 1 (Cracow, 1911), p. 6.

half-*mayufes* half-biblical hymn, which struck the strings of the soul with grief for the destroyed Jerusalem and resounded with triumph in the fact that the Chosen People managed to rebuild fragments of that Jerusalem on the Vistula's dirty wave.<sup>381</sup> From this perspective offered by popular literature, the figure of equating the perseverance of the Jewish legacy with the diaspora's functioning in the space of the Polish capital acquires special significance.

Yet another example of a literary record of the Jewish presence in the Polish capital is to be found in the popular texts penned by Stefan Wiechecki (Wiech), which concern different aspects of urban life. The popularity of his texts, his linguistic mastery and ability to style his characters' utterance are the reasons why both Wiech's columns and short stories are still read nowadays.<sup>382</sup> Among Wiech's many texts published before 1939 one can find not only accounts or descriptions of events in which participated Jewish characters living in the capital, but also, and which I deem a vital aspect of these narrations, the narrator's short explanations regarding, for instance, Jewish festivals and customs, which proves that the author had some knowledge on the culture of modern Judaism. The subject of religion also appears in his texts, a few of which I wish to remark on because they discuss, on the one hand, transformations of the Jewish community, and, on the other hand, – are something like a proof of the continuation of tradition.

Although the processes of assimilation and acculturation had been conducive to conversions since as early as the nineteenth century, that phenomenon continued to inspire considerable interest and a lot of controversy. Wiech's story entitled "Chrzest i ślub neofitki" [A Neophyte's Baptism and Wedding] can be regarded as emblematic (although in that case the conversion was motivated by emotional ties). The events mentioned in the title were the reason why

381 Ibid. According to the dictionary, a *mayufes* is a Jewish song sung during certain religious and customary rites; see also Ch. Shmeruk, "Mayufes: A Window on Polish-Jewish Relations," *Polin* 10 (1997); B. Werb, "Majufes. A Vestige of Jewish Traditional Song in Polish Popular Entertainments," *Polish Music Journal*, vol. 6, no. 1 (summer 2003).

382 Take, for instance, the following contemporary editions: S. Wiechecki, *Koszerny kozak czyli Opowiadania żydowskie* (Warsaw, 1990); *Mąż za tysiąc złotych czyli Opowiadania żydowskie* (Cracow, 2000); *Głowa spod łóżka czyli Opowiadania żydowskie* (Cracow, 2000); *Trup przy telefonie czyli Opowiadania żydowskie* (Cracow, 2001); *Skarby w spodniach czyli Przypadki żydowskie* (Cracow, 2001). These publications could also be connected with the increased interest in the Jewish subject matter in Polish culture, which began a quarter of a century ago.

Relatively large groups of passers-by, engaged in highly animated discussions, began to form on Smocza, Pawia, Dzielna, and Nowolipki Streets at eight o'clock in the morning. After a while such a crowd assembled outside St. Augustine Church that it blocked road traffic.

The subject of all those conversations was the baptism combined with the wedding of 21-year-old Mindla Blima Sendyk (Pawia Street 65), who gave her heart without reservations to Mr. Mieczysław Głowacki, who lived in the same building.<sup>383</sup>

That event, which caused quite a sensation among some local inhabitants, was reported in the press (“Monday *Express Poranny* printed a description of an extraordinary ceremony at St. Augustine Church”)<sup>384</sup> and attracted a crowd of curious onlookers outside the Catholic temple. Describing it, the author at the same time introduces the reader into the world of the Jewish community and reports on the reactions of the family, which was against the woman’s conversion. I point to this fact because it seems that Polish readers knew much more about the phenomenon of the Polish milieu’s lack of acceptance of the conversion of Jews than about the Jews’ reaction to such decisions. Anna Landau-Czajka wrote in this context about a certain paradox:

[...] on the one hand, most Poles and a large percentage of Jews during the interwar period were willing to admit that complete assimilation was conditional on baptism. On the other hand, both sides believed that the intentions of converts were suspicious to say the least and that they were ‘second class’ people [. . .]. Hence, it occurred that the Jewish milieus, even those assimilated ones, and the anti-Semites from nationalist parties saw almost eye to eye when it came to the issue of Jews’ baptism.<sup>385</sup>

Eugenia Prokop-Janiec points to (among others) numerous characters appearing in the ‘Warsaw novels’ published in the *5-ta rano* daily who in colloquial Yiddish were called *shmendrikes*.<sup>386</sup> That word denoted Jews who underwent speedy though superficial acculturation, moved further and further away from Jewish traditions, and distanced themselves from family obligations. Their version of religiosity, if they had any, was limited to having contact with the sphere of the sacred exclusively on high holidays, but one must bear in mind that “even to the most persistent critics of Orthodox ‘backwardness’ baptism was the impassable boundary [. . .].”<sup>387</sup> According to eminent sociologist and demographer Arie Tartakower, 2,000–2,500

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383 S. Wiechecki, “Chrzest i ślub neofitki,” in his, *Skarby w spodniach czyli Przypadki żydowskie*, p. 39.

384 *Ibid.*, p. 40.

385 See A. Landau-Czajka, *Syn będzie Lech...* (Warsaw, 2006), pp. 309 ff.

386 See E. Prokop-Janiec, “Międzywojenna polsko-żydowska powieść w odcinkach,” in her, *Pogranicze polsko-żydowskie. Topografie i teksty* (Cracow, 2013), p. 197.

387 *Ibid.*, p. 198.

people were christened annually at the turn of the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>388</sup> However, Landau-Czajka wrote: “a report of the Jewish Community in Warsaw stated that 78 people left the Community during 1926-1930, which number was negligible in comparison to the number of members of Judaism in Warsaw during that period. However, one must bear in mind that probably not all those individuals were then baptized.”<sup>389</sup> It seems that the said historical context shows us to some degree why the baptism and wedding described by Wiech became such a sensation.

Basing her descriptions of Jewish identity during the interwar period on various sources, Landau-Czajka often mentions in her research the place of religion in the life of the-then Jewish community. Importantly, the author emphasizes that traditional religiosity was abandoned predominantly by the urban middle class.<sup>390</sup> The scholar points here to, on the one hand, the generational differences (the models of the young people’s abandonment of faith) and, on the other hand, to geosocial differences: in that instance urban areas led the way as far as distancing oneself from traditional religiosity was concerned.

Thus, the heterogenous urban space was conducive to records where “the traditional world of Hasidic fathers and God-fearing mothers [. . .] could neighbor on the modern world – independent, emancipated women and men moving freely outside the Jewish circle.”<sup>391</sup>

I wish to discuss here, somewhat as confirmation of the quoted diagnosis, Wiech’s text devoted to conflicts between religious members of the Jewish community of Warsaw and those who ignored the sphere of the sacred. The humorous tale “Uczta szyderców” [Scoffers’ Feast] talks about a restaurant opened “by the Bund party” on Tłomackie Street in the immediate neighborhood of the Great Synagogue.<sup>392</sup> As the narrator explains the bone of contention was kosher food:

Because members of this organization [that is, the Bund – A. M.] promote atheism, the party kitchen does not abide by the Orthodox Judaist rules. Although the dishes look kosher, the cooks have no scruples: they fry meat in butter, they make culets from pork instead of beef, they slaughter geese without a *shechita*, and – low and behold! – cook crayfish soup.<sup>393</sup>

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388 See A. Landau-Czajka, *Syn będzie Lech...*, p. 288.

389 Ibid.

390 See *ibid.*, pp. 237-311.

391 E. Prokop-Janiec, *Międzywojenna polsko-żydowska powieść w odcinkach*, p. 198.

392 S. Wiechecki, “Uczta szyderców,” in his, *Skarby w spodniach czyli Przypadki żydowskie*, p. 162.

393 *Ibid.*, p. 163.

The text suggests that not only the author, but also the reader knew at least some basic kosher rules and principles. The display which triggered a rapid reaction took place on Yom Kippur, when all members of Judaism are obliged to observe a strict fast: “Never before has the Day of Atonement in Warsaw been as dismal as this year. The atheists’ opening of a tref buffet right by the Great Synagogue, the conspicuous sale of cured pork, young Bundists strolling about with the snacks – all that incited the rabbinic spheres to an immediate counter-reaction.”<sup>394</sup> The said reaction consisted in an anathema: “rabbi Jehuda Orzech (Wołyńska Street 11) blew a mutton’s horn thrice. The anathema became effective. Terrible consequences were immediately felt.”<sup>395</sup> In the second part of the account the narrator refers to a report published in *Dobry Wieczór* which listed the misfortunes that befell the cooks, doorkeeper, and restaurant guests. He then adds: “Taking all this into account, pious Hasidic spheres have concluded that the anathema has worked splendidly.”<sup>396</sup> Although during a special meeting the worried Bund activists advocated persistence in the fight against the dominance of religious rules, the balance of the events was unambiguously favorable to the members of Judaism: “Although the resolutions made at the rally called on the party members to carry on fighting against Jehovah by means of conspicuous consumption of tref foods, there is no doubt that many Bundists will not dare go to the eatery cursed by rabbi Orzech.”<sup>397</sup>

An author of popular texts closely connected with the Warsaw space, Wiech knew a lot about the Judaist customs and traditions, which finds confirmation in, for instance, a short introduction to a description of a brawl at a funeral:

On the Jewish Cemetery on Okopowa Street there is a mausoleum of a miracle-working zaddick from Błędów. This monument is not particularly grand. It resembles a station master’s shelter. In the morning, at noon, and at dusk one can see his fans praying there. After singing hymns each of them writes wishes on a piece of paper, addresses it to the dead zaddick and leaves it on the grave. This is why the pieces of paper fill the hut almost to the roof.<sup>398</sup>

Wiech confirms that the *kvitelach* tradition was one of the Jewish customs best known to Poles (as we remember it was also brought up by Wanda Melcer).

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394 Ibid.

395 Ibid., p. 164.

396 Ibid., p. 165.

397 Ibid.

398 S. Wiechecki, “Na cmentarzu,” in his, *Skarby w spodniach czyli Przypadki żydowskie*, p. 126.

Wiechecki gives a similarly thorough explanation of the requirements concerning *tefillin* or the mourning ritual.<sup>399</sup> His story “Epidemia darcia chałatów” [*Kapote Ripping Epidemic*] begins with a dramatic account: “Nalewki was gripped by terror. It originated in Muranów, spread onto Dzika, Smocza, Twarda, Niska, and Lubeckiego Streets, moved to Praga and flowed like a river in spite through all ghettos in the Republic of Poland.”<sup>400</sup> That general shock was caused by the discovery that the *tefillin* “produced since times immemorial in the small town of Holeszyce”<sup>401</sup> did not meet standards dictated by religion. The author explains to the readers what the scandal concerned and describes the actions undertaken by religious leaders: “After the initial shock, Warsaw rabbis contacted provincial rabbis by telephone and called a convention in the capital.” During the congress prayers said by individuals who wore the inappropriate *tefillin* were deemed invalid, while “the falsifiers from Holeszczyce were excommunicated.”<sup>402</sup> Another important element of tradition is the gesture made by one of the story’s characters, rabbi Don: “as sign of the mourning which was tormenting him he stood up and ripped the lapel off his satin coat in one swift pull.”<sup>403</sup> Hence the story’s title. The description of the entire event, though tragic for religious Jews, has a rather humorous punch line characteristic of the author’s sense of humor: “Following the rabbis’ example, Warsaw patriarchs [ . . . ] ripped the lapels off their coats, *kapote*’s, and jackets. Tailors are bound to profit off of that. Throughout last evening, after Shabbat, there was unusual commotion in tailor’s workshops.”<sup>404</sup>

There is one more aspect to notice both in the description of the *kvitelach* ritual and in the story about the *tefillin* falsifiers. It seems that both texts can serve as a good example of the functioning of Jewish culture in the wider milieu, within the framework of the peculiar ‘cultural junction,’ to use Harshav’s term, where events and problems concerning the religious portion of the Jewish community find their place in a (popular) Polish description of the urban reality.

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399 *Tefillin*, phylacteries – two black leather boxes made of a single piece of leather, containing four passages from the Bible inscribed by the sopher (Exodus 13:1–10; 11–16; Deuteronomy 6:4–9, 11, 13–21) which are tied with leather straps to the left forearm and to the upper part of the forehead. *Tefillin* are worn by adult men. See A. Unterman, *Encyklopedia tradycji i legend żydowskich*, pp. 285–286.

400 S. Wiechecki, “Epidemia darcia chałatów,” in his, *Skarby w spodniach czyli Przypadki żydowskie*, p. 206.

401 Ibid.

402 Ibid., p. 207.

403 Ibid.

404 Ibid.



In popular literature (particularly crime and love stories), there appeared topics connected with the experience of both inter-ethnic conflicts and those which contributed to social transformations and the change in stances and attitudes to tradition.

As Eugenia Prokop-Janiec wrote, pointing to Polish-Jewish tabloids, the daily *5-ta rano* also recorded different instances of conflicts between religious milieus and those which accepted modernization and more secular rules of conduct. The scholar refers to, among others, a series of articles regarding court disputes (“Na ławie oskarżonych” [in the dock], 1931). In one instance, a “godless neighbor” from Targowa Street was attacked for smoking cigarettes on Shabbat.<sup>405</sup> Clearly opting for modernity, *5-ta rano* often criticized similar incidents connected with the religious heritage. The daily also published thrillers which belonged to Polish-Yiddish popular literature. Within the framework of those narrations there is a clear thread of a confrontation between the provinces and the big city, which was almost inseparably connected with a juxtaposition of closed, religious communities of the *shtetl* with the urban space, where sharing the world with others proved vital: “The capital city turned out to be a natural and main destination for migrants and a social space open to different, often conflicted groups.”<sup>406</sup>

The urban space of Warsaw was conducive to said processes. Migrating to the big city, most young people were fleeing the world of the *shtetl*, seeking not only a betterment of their financial status, but also different, non-traditional models of modern Jewish identity. However, one must bear in mind that in Schneersohn’s narration discussed earlier the discord between the older and the younger generation had totally different grounds. It was the generation embarking on adult life that was fascinated with the East European version of religiosity, in whose various currents the young saw sources of the truly vital Jewish spirituality, which was harshly criticized by the milieu of the Liberal Community in Berlin, where Grenadierstrasse acquired the status of a symbol. One of the characters makes a harsh diagnosis of *Ostjuden*’s religiosity:

We must remember that these fanatic Jews with long beards have always tried to lead to fanaticism through their customs and manipulation of the Talmudic laws. It was only our Reform movement that put up a fight against them, creating space for development of Liberal Judaism. We, German citizens of Jewish faith [. . .] have broken the chains of Jewish fanaticism and chauvinism. [. . .] And now in the heart of Berlin, at the center of

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405 E. Prokop-Janiec, “Warszawa: ‘5-ta rano’. Sensacja i nowoczesność,” in his, *Pogranicze polsko-żydowskie*, p. 106.

406 E. Prokop-Janiec, “Międzywojenna polsko-żydowska powieść w odcinkach,” p. 197.

flourishing Liberal Judaism, there emerges right under our noses a Grenadierstrasse – a dangerous nest of fanatics with long beards who are poisoning us.<sup>407</sup>

So when one looks at the two separate phenomena – the phenomenon of the East European religiosity and the tradition of German Jewish communities which identified with the *Haskalah*, one can notice various aspects of the sacred present in the urban spaces. Although in Warsaw there operated also Reform organizations, the dominant currents were traditional versions of religiosity, which inspired surprise, ambivalence, or great skepticism (Melcer), and sometimes respect for the vitality of that version of Judaism (Döblin). By contrast, in the Berlin space both forms of Judaism were present which shocked newcomers from the East (Bergelson, Schneersohn) and religious formulas which fascinated German Jews, mostly in the part of the city inhabited by *Ostjuden*.

This kind of dichotomy which, ignoring the nuances, we have to do with when we compare the religiosity dominant in Berlin and Warsaw Jewish communities was clear and noticeable for almost every writer describing the world of different versions of Judaism. The functioning of the East European diaspora and its kinds of religiosity were of great importance for German-Jewish intellectuals. In his 1909 open letter to Martin Buber, Jakob Wassermann wrote: “As a European and cosmopolite a Jew is a literary man. As an embodiment of the Orient, not in the ethnographic but mystical sense [. . .] the Jew can be a creator.”<sup>408</sup> One can see that the image of the East/Orient returns here as a place of authentic and truly vital spirituality. As Krutikov emphasized, in the imagination of German-Jewish milieus functioned two variants of that image. On the one hand, the Orient was understood as Palestine, the symbolic homeland seen as the place from which the Jewish nation originated as well as its language and holy scripture, and that was becoming increasingly politically with the development of the Zionist movement. On the other hand, it was seen as the East which was actually present on the other side of the Polish-German border and whose enclave in Berlin was the Scheunenviertel quarter.<sup>409</sup>

The possible third space, to use Homi Bhabha’s term,<sup>410</sup> sometimes assumed the form of a kind of syncretism: “Celebrated were both Jewish High Holidays and fundamental Christian festivals, predominantly Christmas. Easter, due to its anti-Jewish connotations, was celebrated much less often.”<sup>411</sup>

407 F. Schneersohn, *Grenadierstrasse*, pp. 122–123.

408 Qtd. after: M. Krutikov, Afterword, p. 256.

409 See *ibid.*, p. 256.

410 See A. Zahn, G. Wagner, “Nacja, dyseminacja i trzecia przestrzeń. Wkład Homi K. Bhabha do teorii tożsamości zbiorowej,” *Roczniki Nauk Społecznych* 4 (2012): 19–39.

411 A. Landau-Czajka, *Syn będącie Lech...*, p. 277.

This diagnosis given by the Polish scholar can be also applied to Jewish milieus in Berlin. It is enough to refer to Gershom Sholem's autobiographical text, where he remembers the Christmas tree in his family home and the portrait of Theodor Herzl he found underneath it, or a caricature of assimilation printed in the *Schlemiel* periodical in the early twentieth century, which depicted a Hanukkah candlestick evolving into a Christmas tree, while a synthesis of Hanukkah and Christmas was called *Weihnukka* (a play on words – *Weihnachten* is German for Christmas).<sup>412</sup>



412 The satirical drawing was printed in the Jewish periodical *Schlemiel* (no. 1, 1904). In the original publication the caricature had an ironic caption: “*Wie sich der Chanukaleuchter des Ziegenfellhändlers Cohn in Pinne zum Christbaum des Kommerzienrats Conrad in der Tiergartenstraße (Berlin W.) entwickelte*” [On how the Hannukah candlestick of Cohn, a trader in goat hides from Pniew, evolved into the Christmas tree of commercial counselor Conrad from Tiergarten Street (Berlin W)]. That caption also indicated that the evolution of the symbol of cultural affiliation was also accompanied with a change of one's place of residence (emancipation and a move from Pniew to a posh quarter in Berlin), surname, and occupational self-identification (trader – commercial counselor).

Combining elements of Christmas and Hannukah was harshly criticized. For instance, Ron Wolfson pointed to the two festival's disproportion and distinctness (see C. Kugelman, *Weihnukka: Geschichten von Weihnachten und Chanukka* [Hamburg, 2005]). In 2005 the Jewish Museum in Berlin presented a temporary exhibition devoted to *Weihnukka* (that is a synthesis of the two festivals), which met with a very critical response – both on the part of the Secretary General of the Union of Jewish Communities in Germany and the-then Israeli Ambassador to Germany (see D. D. Kauschke, “Der Rest vom Fest Die Ausstellung ‘Weihnukka’ lost heftige Debatten aus,” *Judische Allgemeine*, 12 January 2006; <http://www.juedische-allgemeine.de/article/view/id/5047>).



## City and Vice

Aside many other dominant stances, one characteristic element of an urban space's existence is the illegal activity of some of its inhabitants. Descriptions of the criminal world can be found not only in the-then press or court chronicles. Portraits of thieves, bandits, and gangsters constitute a part of descriptions of the urban group of Jewish inhabitants of Warsaw and Berlin, also those included in literary texts.

I wish to analyze such records present in literature with reading of a few narratives about the Jewish criminal world. I selected those set in Berlin or Warsaw also because in Yiddish literature petty criminals portrayed as common thieves (for instance, in Sholem Aleichem's works) were often described with a certain dose of kind-heartedness acceptance, particularly when the plot was set in small towns or provincial centers. More interesting, however, seems a more realistic depiction of the Jewish criminal world.<sup>413</sup>

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413 "The specificity of the criminal activity among Jews was connected with their traditional occupations and place of residence (mostly towns). It underwent changes throughout the centuries along with the transformations occurring in the Jewish and the Polish society and the changing legal status of members of Judaism. The earliest information about Jews' connections with the criminal world date back to the fourteenth century. A petition submitted to the king in 1376 by the Cracow bourgeois included a complaint about the Jews' "sheltering thieves and evading punishment." In the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries as many as 65 percent of Cracow profiteers were Jewish (including Jewish women). The situation in Poznań and Lublin looked similar. The profiteers were a very important group in the criminal hierarchy as they bought the stolen items. Aside their criminal activity, Jewish profiteers often conducted legal activity, for instance, trade or usury, and they lived in Jewish Communities. Writing about how expulsion of Jews would have benefitted the Republic of Poland (1602), Szymon Hubicki listed reduction of theft to render sale of stolen items impossible. The Jews' direct participation in theft and robberies was relatively insignificant. The profiteers sometimes initiated break-ins by indicating affluent homes or expensive stores, also Jewish ones. The percentage of Jews who supported themselves through profiteering remained large in the nineteenth century, although there emerged new types of crime, such as smuggling, human trafficking, and pimping. Research conducted by Liebmann Hersch indicates that generally speaking criminal activity among Jews in interwar Poland was smaller than among the Christian population. The percentages for Jews were larger than for the rest of the population only in certain types of offences such as speculation, vagrancy, or beggary, which at that time was deemed by the law as misdemeanors. The Jews much less

I use predominantly works of fiction produced in the first half of the twentieth century. From Yiddish literature these are: Sholem Asch's *Mottke the Thief*, Sholem Aleichem's short story *Der yid fun Buenos Aires* [the Jew from Buenos Aires], and Oyzer Varshavski's novel *Di Shmuglers* [the smugglers]. I compare these narratives with Adolf Sommerfeld's less known novel *Das Ghetto von Berlin* [] – a literary text in German which portrays the world of Jewish criminals, mostly *Ostjuden* active in Berlin. Although these texts do not belong strictly to the sphere of popular literature, they were bestsellers which discussed an important thread in the activity of the Jewish criminal world.

The context for the narratives about the Jewish criminal world is predominantly Isabel Vincent's book *Bodies and Souls*. The author of this historical reportage reconstructs the actions of the world of human traffickers. She focuses on the criminal activity connected with trafficking of women, who were persuaded to leave with promises of marriage, a future professional career, and a certain standard of living.<sup>414</sup>

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often committed murders and crimes such as break-ins, bodily injury, prostitution, sabotage, and espionage. As for crimes and offences of an economic character (fraud, falsification of bills of exchange, or breaking the state monopoly) and profiteering, which has been 'traditionally' Jewish since the Middle Ages, the percentages in the two groups were more or less even. The Depression and the consequent pauperization and also manifestations of legal discrimination undoubtedly contributed to the increase in the number of certain crimes, characteristic only of Poland. Jewish crime in, for instance, the United States, where in the 1930s operated Jewish gangs, had a different structure. Weaker social boundaries in the margin of the two communities, Polish and Jewish, fostered contacts within the criminal world, leading to the emergence of mixed bands of thieves or smugglers. Christian criminals used the services of Jewish profiteers, etc." Qtd. after: A. Cała, H. Węgrzynek, G. Zalewska, *Historia i kultura Żydów polskich. Słownik* (Warsaw, 2000), pp. 213–214.

- 414 I. Vincent, *Ciała i dusze*, trans. A. Rojkowska (Wrocław, 2006) [Original title: *Bodies and Souls: The Tragic Plight of Three Jewish Women Forced into Prostitution in the Americas* (Harper Perennial, 2006)]. I chose this publication not only because it is fairly recent. Although the margin of the urban community has attracted the interest of historians, there are few recent studies devoted to Jewish crime. As far as the legacy of the younger generation of Polish scholars is concerned, very interesting are the works by Mateusz Rodak, though he deals only with Lublin and its vicinity. Other interesting works include publications by American historian Robert Blobaum. See "Kwestia kobieca' w Królestwie Polskim (1900–1914)," in *Działaczki społeczne, feministki, obywatelki...: samoorganizowanie się kobiet na ziemiach polskich do 1918 (na tle porównawczym)*, ed. A. Janiak-Jasińska, K. Sierakowska, A. Szwarc (Warsaw, 2008), pp. 37–56; her, "Panika moralna' w polskim wydaniu. Dewiacje seksualne i wizerunki

The wave of emigration from the East European diaspora, which had been swelling since the end of the nineteenth century, had chiefly economic grounds, though it was also partially caused by a wave of persecutions and pogroms. An opportunity for bettering one's lot was so tempting that young women often ignored the possible danger connected with seemingly attractive propositions. In the late nineteenth century, the issue of human trafficking had not yet filtered into the awareness of the wider Jewish public, although it was soon widely realized that the prospects of a fine life on a different continent were only illusory. One form of fighting that problem was the activity of German Jewish women who tried to help immigrants from the East and warn them against the highly uncertain start of a new life abroad.<sup>415</sup> Social activists paid attention to not only young Jewish women's poor education, but also their lack of orientation in the world outside the traditional *shtetl*. Established in 1904, the Warsaw Jewish Society for Protection of Women performed a similar role.<sup>416</sup> This organization, supported by assimilation circles, boldly took up the shameful topic of prostitution among Jewish women. To just how serious that problem was attest, for instance, the discussions in the-then press.<sup>417</sup> A scholar of those issues writes that the initiatives such as "establishing direct contact with the group of women in danger and working among prostitutes were definitely innovative forms of activity, but they failed to win universal approval even on the part of female

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przestępczości żydowskiej na początku XX wieku," in *Kobieta i rewolucja obyczajowa. Społeczno-kulturowe aspekty seksualności. Wiek XIX i XX*, ed. A. Żarnowska, A. Szwarz (Warsaw, 2006), pp. 265-276; *ibid*, "Criminalizing the 'Other': Crime, Ethnicity and Antisemitism in Early Twentieth-Century Poland," in *Antisemitism and Its Opponents in Modern Poland*, ed. R. Blobaum (Ithaca, NY, 2005), pp. 226-244.

415 In the wake of the beginning of the Europe-wide feminist movement, the mid-nineteenth century gave birth first to the Union of Jewish Women (1865) and then the Union of Organizations of German Women (1894), which associated many women's circles. Those first associations dealt predominantly with emancipation and women's opportunities on the labor market (among them was an association established, by Lina Morgenstern and Henrietta Fürth). The year 1904 saw the establishment of the Union of Jewish Women (*Jüdischer Frauenbund*). The Union's founder and first chairwoman was Bertha Pappenheim. The organization acted for the women's rights, aided Jewish women (particularly those coming to Germany), and provided many types of social assistance.

416 M. Sikorska-Kowalska, "Żydowskie organizacje kobiece Warszawy i Łodzi," in *Działaczki społeczne, feministki, obywatelki...*, pp. 448 ff.

417 J. Sikorska-Kulesza, *Tolerated Evil. Prostitution in the Kingdom of Poland in the Nineteenth Century* (Frankfurt am Main, 2020).

social activists.”<sup>418</sup> Importantly, the said organization co-worked with the Berlin International Committee, the Central Committee of the Jewish Colonization Association in Petersburg, and the Christian Society for Protection of Women. That was vital chiefly because of the international character of the illegal activity called human trafficking.<sup>419</sup>

To the seriousness of the situation attests the organization of international conferences devoted to fighting prostitution and trafficking of Jewish women. Unfortunately, the two conventions, held in 1910 and 1927, attended by a large number of delegates of Jewish communities, failed to bring concrete results. The debates held led mostly to disputes between Orthodox Jews and advocates of progress and reforms.<sup>420</sup> But during the conferences it was found out that the trafficking of women was organized by Jewish criminals<sup>421</sup> and all participants of the debates recognized that issue’s grave social implications.<sup>422</sup>

There are two ways to describe the location of places in Warsaw connected with prostitution. On the one hand, we learn the following: “The center of prostitution in the northern quarter was in the Muranów area, on Stawki, Niska, Dzika, and Pawia Streets. . . There you saw prostitutes walking about or on duty in gates. Their largest number could be found on Krochmalna Street [ . . .].”<sup>423</sup> On the other hand, the Old Town and the adjacent area

were centers of the prostitution of the worst kind. On Rycerska, Piekarska, Kapitulna, Zapiecek, Dunaj, and Bugaj Streets it was easy to find sex because the brothels operated in almost every tenement. It was also easy to lose one’s health or life. A beer hall was an essential part of very brothel’s infrastructure and the element sitting there had little regard for individuals from outside the circle of thieves, murderers, and pimps. By the way, those three professions were almost inseparable.<sup>424</sup>

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418 M. Sikorska-Kowalska, *Żydowskie organizacje kobiece Warszawy i Łodzi*, p. 449.

419 *Ibid.*, p. 454.

420 B. Wasserstein, *W przededniu. Żydzi w Europie przed drugą wojną światową*, trans. W. Jeżewski (Warsaw, 2012), pp. 153–154 [Original title: *On the Eve: The Jews of Europe Before the Second World War*].

421 *Ibid.*, p. 154.

422 Movies also spread knowledge about that phenomenon. See *Szlakiem hańby* [In the Footsteps of Disgrace] (1929) and *Kobiety nad przepaścią* [Women on the Edge] (1938).

423 M. Fuks, *Żydzi w Warszawie. Życie codzienne, wydarzenia, ludzie* (Poznań, 2010), p. 315.

424 M. Wójtowski, “Pogrom czerwonych latarni w ‘Czerwonej Warszawie,’” *Midrasz* 12 (1999): 9.



To the large scale of urban prostitution attests, for instance, the recognition of that social problem by political parties, mostly those associated with the socialist current. That phenomenon was seen as originating predominantly from universal poverty and mass unemployment: “The Bund even published a brochure entitled *Die Yidische prostytutkes* [Jewish prostitutes] devoted to this issue.”<sup>425</sup> An exceptional event in the history of Warsaw was the ‘pogrom of pimps’, that is, the events which took place during 24–26 April 1905. Here is an account of what happened:

One could see in those riots a drive toward a new, healthy society at the time of the Revolution of 1905, although they actually broke out spontaneously (purportedly upon news of a Bund activist’s sister and fiancée having been kidnapped to a brothel). On the first day of the riots groups of Jewish laborers attacked procurers on the streets and vandalized their homes and brothels. On the second day Christians joined in the riots; on the third they were followed by the criminal element (robberies). The police authorities tried to use that occasion to cause an anti-Jewish pogrom, but when they failed they suppressed the riots with the use of soldiers. [. . .] 150 homes were vandalized (the losses were estimated at over 200,000 rubles), 5 people died, 10 sustained serious injury (most of them then died in hospitals) and over 40 became less severely wounded.<sup>426</sup>

It seems noteworthy to point to yet another aspect of those events – the reactions of the Polish and Jewish milieus. The violent riots were reported by various periodicals:

Both official dailies and periodicals of Warsaw socialists spoke out about the brothels. For instance, Stempowski, Krzywicki, and Posner’s *Ogniwo* published the latter’s article entitled “Między północą i świtaniem” [between midnight and dawn] and an unsigned text “Trzy dni w Warszawie (24, 25, 26 maja 1905 r., ich historia i historiosofia” [three days in Warsaw (24, 25, 26 May 1905), their history and historiosophy]. Dawidów, Korczak, and Brzozowski’s *Głos* published perhaps the most famous sentence regarding the May incidents: “That fact was a major practical lesson in historiosophy.” Its author, Stanisław Brzozowski, was seconded by Janusz Korczak in his article “Przeciw rozpuście” [against debauchery].<sup>427</sup>

The author of the article points to the joint position assumed by Polish and Jewish actors on the social scene, to the overcoming of ethnic divisions. He also quotes Korczak who

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425 M. Fuks, *Żydzi w Warszawie*, p. 316.

426 <http://www.jhi.pl/psj/alfons-pogrom>, access 16 June 2016, entry’s author: Rafał Żebrowski.

427 M. Wójtowski, “Pogrom czerwonych latarni w ‘Czerwonej Warszawie,’” p. 11. See also K. Stachowicz, *Korczak* (Warsaw, 2012), pp. 56 ff.

ridiculed the fears of the daily press which attempted to connect the act against prostitution with anti-Semitic tendencies, “for the Christian crowd and the Jewish proletariat came to know one another all too well.” Commenting on the stance of advocates of instilling order with the use of military repressions, he also added: “Wiser are those who call for schools: then the number of social outcasts would fall to the level found abroad.”<sup>428</sup>

The fate of the women who became prostitutes varied. On the one hand, we get a moving depiction of the humiliation, violence, and abasement, which was apparent in Isabel Vincent’s historical reportage. On the other hand, those women were at time portrayed as accepting their lot or even it to pursue a career in the underworld. There are virtually no first-hand testimonies given by the prostitutes, but it is noteworthy that the problematization of the issue of prostitution or the trafficking of women often became a topic of literary works, which to some extent can be regarded as a fictional portrayal of those groups.<sup>429</sup>

Natalia Krynicka wrote:

The topic of prostitution and the trafficking of women, which was a widespread phenomenon in the nineteenth century, relatively often appeared in Jewish literature. One example is the novel *Der gengster* (the gangster, 1913) [. . .] by the playwright, Russian literature translator, and anarchist Moshe Katz (1864–1941). The topic of the trafficking of innocent lost Jewish girls from the provinces also appeared in Mendele Mocher Sforim’s famous novel *Dos vintshfingerl* [the wishing-ring]. Seeking employment as maid, 15-year-old Bejle has just arrived in the town of Glupsk.<sup>430</sup> She is tricked into going into a brothel, where she meets other deceived young girls forced to work as prostitutes. An Enlightenment writer, Mendele, condemned the hypocrisy of the society which despised prostitutes but respected the pious madam who did not spare money on charity.<sup>431</sup>

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428 Ibid.

429 Urszula Glensk wrote about texts on human trafficking penned during the interwar period. See U. Glensk, *Historia słabych. Reportaż i życie w dwudziestoleciu (1918–1939)* (Cracow, 2014), pp. 102–117. The author refers to the research conducted by Mir Yarfitz and other scholars.

430 The name is telling. It could be translated into English as Foolham or Dumbshire (Translator’s footnote)

431 N. Krynicka, “Świat przestępczy w literaturze jidysz,” *Midrasz* 12 (1999). Another author who portrayed the criminal world mentioned by Krynicka was Mojsze Knaphajs, “who in 1936 published his epic poem *Mokem* [literally – ‘a place’, the Yiddish name for the Warsaw Old Town, where as the poet writes in the foreword, he witnessed “murders and assaults, orgies, and brawls on dark nights, lit only with the faint light of old-fashioned bent-down gas lanterns”] (ibid., p. 21).

Ellen D. Kellman also pointed to the similarities between Yiddish literature and European fiction talking about the criminal world which added romantic or sentimental elements to descriptions of its functioning.<sup>432</sup>

In Sholem Asch's novel *Mottke the Thief* the eponymous character is a man who has gone through a lot – difficult early childhood, first violations of the law, and increasingly bold criminal acts. After numerous adventures following his escape from the *shtetl* he grew up in he becomes a procurer for whom 'girls' want to work (to which period in Mottke's life Asch devoted the third part of the novel). As Kellman wrote, to the newcomer from the provinces Warsaw became a place of transformation. While his criminal activity in the *shtetl* almost automatically excluded him from the Jewish community, the urban space gave him opportunities for starting a 'new' life and earning respect in certain circles and partial social acceptance.<sup>433</sup> The 'virtues' of the protagonist, who lives a different life in Warsaw, are carefully listed: he does not force 'his' girls to 'work' on Shabbat, he is not violent with them, and sometimes even acts as a good patron when he takes 'his girls' to the Saxon Garden for a walk:

The girls prepared for their walk by ironing their blouses, brushing their best dresses and consulting what they should wear. [. . .]  
 "That's how they wear them now. All the ladies in the Marszałkowska Strasse wear them wide like that now."<sup>434</sup>

In Asch's narrative, Warsaw becomes limited predominantly to the Old Town and its immediate vicinity. A reader gets a description of the city as a dark, labyrinth-like place where criminal life and accompanying corruption have found the right conditions to thrive. Owing to the quarter's specificity, its social atmosphere did not provide for a condemnation of the young women. The 'girls' felt good in the Warsaw Old Town: "The girls were very strongly drawn to their neighbor. And she for her part had no particular objection to them and their profession. [. . .] And even her pity for them had pretty well died out, for she had got used to them; and she treated them now like her other acquaintances and had intimate friendships with some of them."<sup>435</sup>

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432 See E. D. Kellman, "The image of Jewish Warsaw in Sholem Asch's *Motke ganew*," in *Żydzi Warszawy. Materiały konferencji w 100 rocznicę urodzin Emanuela Ringelbluma (21 listopada 1900–7 marca 1944)*, ed. E. Bergman, O. Zienkiewicz (Warsaw, 2000), pp. 99–110.

433 See *ibid.*

434 Sh. Asch, *Mottke the Thief*, trans. by Edwin and Willa Muir (London: V. Gollancz: 1935), pp. 242–243.

435 *Ibid.*, p. 229.

A peculiar and significant symbolic place in Yiddish literature at the turn of the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries was Buenos Aires, which was treated as an exceptional place, although historically human trafficking posed a problem in many big cities in both Latin and North America. It should be assumed that after some time many Jews living in the East European diaspora knew the danger possibly associated with a proposition to emigrate to America, particularly when that offer was made to young girls. In literary texts there even appears a special type of a character: “a man from Buenos Aires.” One of the writers who used that figure was Sholem Aleichem. A volume of his short stories, humorous anecdotes presented by a travelling salesman who observed the world around him, contains a short text where the reader becomes familiar with a character described in this way. A contemporary reader is unlikely to understand the potency of the allusion contained in that symbolic expression at the time when the novella was published (1909).<sup>436</sup> The narrator discusses his brief encounter with a man who has arrived from Argentina. The description of the ‘businessman’ visiting his hometown clearly indicates that he is a man who has achieved success in faraway countries. He invites the traveler, whom he has just met, for a sophisticated appetizer at the station buffet. He boasts that he can afford travelling first class but says that he chooses the cheapest seats because “he prefers ordinary people.”<sup>437</sup> He calls himself a “democrat” and a “man of simple tastes.”<sup>438</sup> The newcomer’s external appearance is intriguing for he stands out from the traditionally-clad and bearded members of Judaism in Eastern Europe. Clean-shaven and elegantly dressed, he attracts people’s attention not only with his diamond tie pin or golden cuff links, but also with a clearly expensive ring. The story which the narrator hears resembles a fairy tale of leaving a small town and achieving great material success in South America after many adventures and setbacks. The

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436 Such allusions which frequently appeared in Yiddish literature during that period are not always legible to the contemporary reader. For instance, among the secondary characters in Sholem Asch’s trilogy’s volume about Warsaw there is butcher Wewl, who lives alone in the tenement where most of the plot is set. A single sentence characterizes him as a lonely man abandoned by his daughters – “beautiful girls with thick black braids, ample breasts, and broad hips [. . .] [who lived] devil knows why (as Wewl used to say) in Argentina.” Sh. Asch, *Warszawa*, trans. W. Rogowicz (Warsaw, 1931), p. 30. [English edition: *Three Cities* (Carol and Graf Pub, 1983), English translations by A. B based on the Polish edition]

437 Sh. Aleichem, “The Man from Buenos Aires,” trans. Talia Carner, <https://www.taliacarner.com/the-third-daughter/the-man-from-buenos-aires-by-sholem-aleichem>.

438 Ibid.

newcomer not only brags about overcoming many hardships in his life, but also emphasizes his own reliability as merchant: “I should have as good many years as I am an honest merchant.”<sup>439</sup> He also explains vaguely: “I deal square, and I trick no one. You will find no hidden cat in the sac with me. In short, do you want to know what I am? I am simply a procurer, what you’d call a purveyor. I provide the public with merchandise, merchandise that everyone knows, yet no one speaks of. Why? Because the public is too clever, and people are begrudging. They hate to be told that black is black and white is white. Instead, they prefer to say that black is called white and white is called black.”<sup>440</sup> Promises of marriage or even hastily organized weddings provided ‘camouflage’ for the trafficking of women, which from the perspective of the traditional definition of family was supposed to guarantee the women’s safety. Vincent mentions the phenomenon of *stille chuppah* – a silent, hastily organized wedding facilitating the young woman’s journey abroad in company of a man she had only just met.<sup>441</sup> It seems that some women might have relatively consciously opted for pursuing a ‘career’ abroad. The myth of Buenos Aires appears also in Sholem Asch’s aforementioned novel. Mottke, who decided to start a new life, ‘sold’ all his girls:

This is what was said in the Warsaw Café and the Old Town about Mottke. His girls floated in a dream of bliss and good fortune. For Gedajle, the glazier had helped them all. Mottke had made a pile of money, and the red-haired Wewl hadn’t come off badly either. But the happiest of all were the girls themselves, they had escaped from their slavery. They [...] made preparations for the long journey to the land where black princes awaited them, black princes who absolutely raved about blonde Jewish girls.<sup>442</sup>

Although the hope the young women had before the journey resembled the promises made to almost all girls encouraged by the traders to leave, the Warsaw prostitutes had fewer illusions than those lured with prospects of independent work or promises of marriage. In the chapter entitled “*Plaga miast*” – *kobiety międzywojennej ulicy* [‘urban plague’ – interwar women of the streets], Urszula Glensk recalls Jan Dąbrowski’s reportage *Na Zachód od Zanzibaru* [west of Zanzibar], pointing to the conviction present in the prostitutes’ milieu and mentioned in Asch’s narration that emigration did not mean a catastrophe. A heroine

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439 Ibid.

440 Ibid.

441 The commonness of the phenomenon of *stille chuppah* (a marriage often arranged by procurers, inappropriate from the religious point of view) was emphasized by German female activists, for instance, Bertha Pappenheim, at the 1927 conference in London.

442 Sh. Asch, *Mottke the Thief*, p. 279.

of Dąbrowski's text, a prostitute from Krochmalna Street, gives a telling response to her colleague who came across the human traffickers: "You're stupid for having escaped! Don't they live a better life there, in Argentina? They wear velvet. Our girls enjoy great respect there. Their pay is not bad. They live like in "Cristal" or some other place like that. And how's life here? Are you better off on Krochmalna Street?"<sup>443</sup>

In the novel *Mottke the Thief*, it is apparent that the corrupt local authorities were aware of the criminal activity in the Warsaw Old Town. A local barber shop enjoyed special protection: "[Y]ou went to Jankele's for business reasons. Here deals were closed, here the brothel-keeper and bullies sold, exchanged, and bequeathed their alive merchandise."<sup>444</sup> The novel's narrator mentions how that was done:

But this day a regular market was being held at Jankele's. For dealers had arrived, big dealers covered with diamonds, who were laying in goods intended for export to distant lands, and they paid for them to the tune of hundreds of rubles. Everybody waited for this market day with great impatience, the bullies as well as the girls belong to the brothels; for on it many of the were delivered from the Old Town and sent out into the great world beyond the sea, to acquire riches.

But there was no real cause for such fears. The police themselves would see to that. The Commissar, Colonel Chwostow, who knew quite well when the 'Turks', as they were called, were to be expected, had sent two of his most reliable men to patrol the street. The policemen walked before Jankele's shop and saw to it that there was no hitch in the smooth running of the business.<sup>445</sup>

As I have already mentioned, that criminal activity was no secret and the gravity of this social problem was known. The year 1935 saw the publication of a special text – an article which had been printed in the periodical *Lekarz polski* [the Polish physician].<sup>446</sup> Its author, the Minister of Health, pointed to the existence

of a powerful organization of human traffickers in Buenos Aires, composed mostly of Polish Jews, which until recently has been called Varsovia (Warsaw in Spanish) and which has brought us no honor. The exact official name of this association was the Warsaw Society for Mutual Help and Proper Burial. That odd latter part of the name originated from the fact that the Jewish Community of Buenos Aires refused the right of burial on the Jewish Community's cemetery to members of this band after it had been

443 Qtd. after: U. Glensk, *Historia słabych*, p. 117.

444 Sh. Asch, *Mottke the Thief*, p. 274.

445 Ibid.

446 W. Chodźko, "Handel kobietami," copied from *Lekarz polski* 9 (1935), published separately (Warsaw, 1935).

notified about the actual character and source of income of members of this association, the victim of which consisted predominantly of Jewish girls from Poland. Hence, the gang members were forced to establish their own cemetery in the suburbs of Buenos Aires. Officially registered in Argentina, the association operated overtly and legally.<sup>447</sup>

A testimony concerning the Polish diplomatic forces' involvement sounds almost grotesque as it seems that they protested not so much against the crimes as against the group's name which they regarded as inappropriate and detrimental to the Polish state's image: "An envoy of the Republic of Poland in Argentina, Mr. Mazurkiewicz, protested to the local government against that organization's name. In 1928, it was forced to change its name to a Hebrew one – Zvi Migdal, after its first chairman."<sup>448</sup> Urszula Glensk specifies that the new name of the organization was the "Zvi Migdal Ashquenasum i Sociedad de Socorros Mutuos Synagoga y Cementario." The author points out that the new name of the gangsters' organization was not only a reference to its founder's name, but also an allusion to the double meaning of the word *cementario* – it is associated with burial and at the same time symbolizes "mafia's unity until death."<sup>449</sup> Chodźko also quotes a book written by a former Buenos Aires police chief, Julio Z. Alsogaraya, entitled *La prostitution en Argentine* (Paris, 1935), which clearly mentions women from Polish small towns and villages. The scholar emphasizes that despite the efforts of the local police, the law there was lenient with such criminal activity. "Because Argentina has not signed any International Convention on human trafficking of women, which is not recognized as crime by that country's legislation, the Supreme Court of Argentina ordered the release of most traders [424 people had been apprehended – A. M.]; only 8 of them were punished for minor offenses [. . .]."<sup>450</sup>

The author lists the methods used by the criminals active predominantly in Eastern Europe. As one could observe in the literary records, the most popular incentive was promise of marriage, a subterfuge used "with great success predominantly in the milieu of Jewish girls – the traders' task is greatly facilitated by the custom [. . .] of entering into 'ritual marriage' [. . .], which still exists among Jews of Eastern Europe."<sup>451</sup> Other methods of encouraging young women to emigrate was promising them a career in the movies or publishing classified ads in

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447 Ibid., p. 13.

448 Ibid.

449 U. Glensk, *Historia słabych*, p. 104.

450 W. Chodźko, "Handel kobietami," p. 15.

451 Ibid., p. 18.

the press concerning “vacant posts in attractively named fictitious commercial and industrial companies [. . .].”<sup>452</sup>

The popular use of such methods was also mentioned in Adolf Sommerfeld’s crime story *Das Ghetto von Berlin* [the ghetto in Berlin], whose protagonist is a Jewish criminal from Eastern Europe. Ignoring loyalty considerations, he proposes such a journey to a daughter of his landlady whom he has known since the time when he lived in Cracow: “Pufeles winced diabolically and, feigning indifference, stirred his tea. ‘Just look at your daughter! What a bright mind! If you sent her abroad for half a year, she could intern in some large bank.’”<sup>453</sup> The intrigue against his landlady’s daughter and several other girls failed only because young male inhabitants of the tenement, one of whom had a soft spot for the young woman, cooperated with the police.

Nevertheless, the newcomer from the East was developing a large-scale human trafficking scheme. He cooperated with Raja Diamant, who, just like him, was an immigrant living on Grenadierstrasse in the Jewish quarter of Berlin. The midwife from Łódź advertised aid to women and girls in the most widely circulated Berlin newspapers. The motivations of the girls who responded to the ads varied greatly. Some wished to escape from home, others had already come into contact with the local police and preferred to try their fortune abroad. As the narrator stresses, the most “valuable merchandise” was the young women who were unaware of what awaited them abroad. The entire scheme, reported on by the narrator in one of the chapters, consisted not only in finding the right female candidates, but also in falsifying documents, in which specialized the protagonist’s helper. When the two criminals ran into trouble they found various ways to cope: from further falsification through posing as representatives of respected institutions to different forms of blackmail or ordinary bribery. Same as in Asch’s novel we learn about corruption in the local police and their ignoring or silent acceptance of that form of criminal activity.

Isabel Vincent points to the many years of human trafficking and criminal activity in various countries in Latin and North America. Analyzing historical events connected with the trafficking of women and mass prostitution, she

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452 Ibid., p. 19.

453 A. Sommerfeld, *Das Ghetto von Berlin. Aus dem Scheunenviertel. Ein Kriminalroman* (Berlin, 1992), p. 29. Little is known about the book’s author. As Ingrid Kirschey-Feix writes in the afterword, Sommerfeld was born in Środa near Poznań in 1870 and died in 1943 in an unknown location. He was an author of popular books in the 1920s, a translator, screenwriter, and director. However, his name is absent from lexicons German.



discusses similar phenomena which consisted in corruption of both the police and civil servants in numerous cities, predominantly in mythic Buenos Aires.<sup>454</sup> The fact that at the turn of the centuries in Buenos Aires most prostitutes were Jewish (from both the Russian partition and the Habsburg monarchy) finds reflection in *usus*, “where the words denoting the prostitute and the Jewish woman, that is *polacca* or *polaca*, were synonymous.”<sup>455</sup>

Another symbolically charged place on the map of the world was Mumbai (then known as Bombay). Quoting an activist who attended the London congress, Bernard Wasserstein writes:

For instance, in Cherniovitsi the word *bombien* meant ‘procuration’ or ‘human trafficking’. “When one inquired where did the owners of the prettiest houses in the city center get the money from, the answer was: ‘Why, from *bombien* of course.’ That word was derived from the city of Bombay, where purportedly many victims of human trafficking ended up.”<sup>456</sup>

Scholars writing about human trafficking discussed yet another linguistic aspect. As Urszula Glensk repeats after Yarfitz, in the gangster lingo there functioned words originating from Yiddish: “Jewish prostitutes were called *schmates* (translates as rugs), and Christian ones *trejfn* (non-kosher).”<sup>457</sup>

As one might suspect, a permanent motive for leaving the ‘old world’ was the prospect of bettering one’s financial situation. The economic factor played the fundamental role. To the scale of the problem testifies the fact that at the turn of the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries in Buenos Aires alone there

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454 I. Vincent, *Ciała i dusze*, p. 62–65. Interestingly, the author emphasizes the fact that the cooperation between human traffickers, which began as early as in the late nineteenth century, resembled the operation of corporations or a union of enterprises – it was conducted in many countries and on several continents. She also discusses the criminal organization mentioned by Chodźko, whom I have already quoted, which operated for a long time under the banner that alluded to Warsaw and charity.

455 U. Glensk, *Historia słabych*, p. 105.

456 B. Wasserstein, *W przededniu. Żydzi w Europie przed drugą wojną światową*, trans. W. Jeżewski (Warsaw, 2012), pp. 218–219. Martin Pollack also mentions Mumbai in his historical reportage concerning the criminal activity connected with emigration from Central-Eastern Europe. See M. Pollack, *Kaiser von Amerika: Die grosse Flucht aus Galizien* (Zsolnay-Verlag, 2013).

457 U. Glensk, *Historia słabych*, p. 105. The influence of Yiddish and Hebrew on the criminal idiolect was also discussed by Henryk Ułaszyn. See H. Ułaszyn, *Język złodziejski. La langue des voleurs* (Łódź, 1951).

were 4,000 registered Jewish prostitutes, mostly from the East European diaspora.<sup>458</sup> Ways of putting an end to that illegal activity were discussed at a congress in Lviv held in 1903. The persecution and the economic situation were not the only reasons why women decided to emigrate. An important factor was the poor education of young Jewish women or complete lack of it. As I have mentioned, many organizations of Jewish women established in the early twentieth century focused on attempts to convince young Jewish women – many of whom came from traditional families, where the woman's role was determined by the dominant model – to pursue education or become professionally independent.

A slightly different situation was presented in Oyzer Varshavski's novel, which talks about the smuggling activity of Jewish inhabitants of a locality in the suburbs of Warsaw during the city's blockade by German troops during the First World War.<sup>459</sup> The narrative about the smugglers' activity can be read as a peculiar description of cooperation between people who experienced extreme poverty caused by the war, that is, poor Jews from a shtetl and Polish *shiksas* – prostitutes from Warsaw.<sup>460</sup> At the same time, however, the novel can be interpreted as a model example (many other ones could be listed)<sup>461</sup> of the dissolution of the identity of the community founded on family ties and the community of the *shtetl*. From this narrative perspective the city becomes depicted as a space of degeneration and corruption – a source of evil. Those of the young who undertake the smuggling of food into the city are the first to experience the strangeness

458 The exclusion of these women from the circle of the local Jewish community was discussed by, for instance, Isabel Vincent, who reconstructed the history of an unusual Jewish cemetery in Buenos Aires – it was established by prostitutes who bought the land because they had been refused burial on the Jewish cemetery which belonged to the Community. See I. Vincent, *Ciała i dusze*.

459 See O. Varshavski, *Di szmuglers* (Warsaw, 1922).

460 This interpretation was proposed by Henri Raczymow. See H. Raczymow, "Préface au roman Les Contrebandiers," in *L'éclat des crépuscules. Oser Warszawski (1898-1944), un écrivain yiddish entre chien et loup / Oyzer Varshavski: A yidisher shrayber in likht fun beyn-hashmoshes*, ed. I. Boyer and G. Rozier (Paris, 1998).

461 The city is depicted as a space of evil, poverty, spiritual emptiness, and alienation in, for instance, Izrael Rabon's novel *Di gas* [The Street] and to certain degree in Sholem Asch's aforementioned novel *Mottke the Thief*. A classic model in European literatures in this respect is novels by Balzac and Dostoyevsky. The tragic destruction of the *shtetl* identity, sometimes occasioned by pogroms, was discussed by writers Moyshe Kulbak or Hayim Nahman Bialik. There were also idyllic portrayals of the *shtetl* but the nostalgic version is a version of the memory of the past; it does not formulate diagnoses and does not project the future.

of the alien, non-Jewish world. When they emulate the methods they saw being used by Polish smugglers, that is, bribing German guards by offering them women of easy virtue, they themselves enter the world marked by immorality. The Jewish smugglers do not dare make such an offer to any of the girls from the *shtetl* community, but they manage to convince two Polish women, *shiksas* they met on the streets of Warsaw, to cooperate with them over a longer period.<sup>462</sup> The women's remuneration is agreed on and the group begins its successful activity, competing with other groups of smugglers. Unfortunately, the influence of relations typical of a big city, the arrival into the *shtetl* of thus far unknown customs (for instance, one of the main characters' free choice of a life partner without help from a traditional matchmaker) leads to a dissolution of family ties and a division of the close-knit Jewish community. Treating Oyzer Varshavski's prose in the categories of the 'poetics of destruction', as a form of a diagnosis indicating a crisis and gradual destruction of thus far durable social cohesion, one should inquire about the new formulas of Jewish identity which had emerged since the late nineteenth century, precisely those which are most often connected with the heroes' stay in urban spaces. I believe that Sholem Asch's novel can be interpreted in a similar way: although the character has had inclinations towards theft and violence since childhood, it is the big city, Warsaw, that becomes the main area of his criminal activity.

However, it should be stressed that neither Asch's realistic narration, nor Varshavski's expressionist novel consist of entirely pessimistic diagnoses. Aside tragic events, that is the war and the collapse of traditional morality, Oyzer Varshavski introduced into Yiddish literature a bold language of spontaneous and joyful eroticism.<sup>463</sup> Also Aleichem's short story is not particularly dramatic either. It is more like a slightly caricatural portrait, an inclusion of a figure of a suspicious human trafficker into the world of the East European Jewish diaspora.<sup>464</sup>

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462 It should be added that the word *shiksa* has relatively negative connotations. It was often connected with a pejorative stereotype of a woman playing the role of a dangerous temptress (similar to the stereotype of a beautiful Jewish as a *femme fatale*). See E. H. Friedman, *The Myth of the Shiksa and Other Essays* (New York, 2008).

463 This was discussed by Shimon Markish. See S. Markish, "Un chef-d'œuvre innconu," in *L'éclat des crépuscules*.

464 Urszula Glensk points to the presence of the topic of human trafficking in dailies, which published sensational articles. She also remarks that this subject matter was present in popular novels and in film (two films based on scripts penned by Anatol Stern). See U. Glensk, *Historia słabych*, pp. 100-107.

The *Ostjuden's* criminal activity connected with the trafficking of women caused great worry among German Jews not only because prostitution was contradictory to the moral teaching of Judaism, but also because there was fear of, for instance, intensification of anti-Semitism. The gravity of the problem was acknowledged. It was discussed by one of the rabbis at a 1902 conference in Frankfurt, who devoted his special address to the phenomenon of the trafficking of women and the criminal activity of Jewish middlemen.<sup>465</sup>

Aside the Warsaw Jewish community's efforts aimed at preventing prostitution, certain specific and radical actions were undertaken, for this is perhaps how one should describe the aforementioned pogrom of pimps.

An interesting literary text which presents not only the milieu of Jewish prostitutes, but also the role that popular literature played among those young women, is Sholem Asch's short story entitled "Historia 'pięknej Mary'" [tale of Beautiful Mary].<sup>466</sup>

The author gives a brief overview of the functioning of a brothel in the Warsaw's Old Town. The women live there in a positively friendly if not home-like atmosphere. The brothel is frequented by not only regular customers, but also 'gulls' – young men who, on the one hand, use the sexual services offered, and, on the other hand, are almost on friendly terms with the young women. A peculiar character is the "crazy Litvak [who] would storm in [. . .] and always pick a different girl and leave her a ruble without demanding anything in return."<sup>467</sup> Searching for intimacy and the warmth of home, the poor customer found what he was looking for among the young women. He also brought them books which he read out loud, but the female listeners disapproved of his choice of publications. Their favorite story, the reading of which they often demanded, was the melodramatic story of beautiful Mary, which clearly belonged to the sphere of popular or even gutter culture. It was about the pretty and chaste Mary and a gang leader who was only waiting to make her stray from the righteous path. It was read by the 'landlord's daughter, whom the other women adored. The joint reading and the listeners' discussions provoked by the tragic love story proved a not entirely innocent entertainment. The female characters living in the 'cottage', which is how the place where the young women lived and worked

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465 See M. Wuliger, "Vom Schtetl ins Bordell. 'Der gelbe Schein'. Eine Ausstellung zu Prostitution und Mädchenhandel 1860 bis 1930," *Jüdische Allgemeine Zeitung* 16 August, 33 (2012): 18.

466 Sh. Asch, "Historia 'pięknej Mary,'" in his, *Opowiadania*, trans. S. Wygodzki (Warsaw, 1964).

467 *Ibid.*, p. 83.

as prostitutes is euphemistically called, are very different.<sup>468</sup> One of them has a soft spot for the young woman, whose caring father eventually proves unable to protect her from a sexual, and in this case lesbian, sexual initiation which takes place in his brothel.

It seems that in various narrations the milieu of prostitutes and their ‘guardians’ is depicted with a certain kind of acceptance. It is presented as an ordinary group of people joined by not only ‘professional’ ties, but sometimes also positively friendly relations filled with family warmth. Another example of such literary texts are short stories by Stefan Wiechecki (Wiech). I would like to discuss one of them, entitled “Pan się zastanów!” [Make up your mind, sir!], which illustrates close, family-like ties between the world of prostitution and the other actors on the underworld scene. The following genre scene takes place after the death of Chaja Kujawska, the owner of a ‘house of ill repute’. This excerpt is actually a record of peculiar negotiations regarding the deceased woman’s burial. “Upon news of her demise the most prominent dregs of Warsaw society assembled at the dead woman’s home. A decision was made to send a delegation to the Jewish Community.”<sup>469</sup> When the people learned from the Community’s Secretary that Chaja would be buried “right by the cemetery fence,” “[a] great commotion ensued, the delegates began crying that it was a scandal and that they would not allow that [...].”<sup>470</sup> Negotiations began. An arbitrator, “the popular rabbi Don,” was called. The people trying to give Chaja a decent burial were proposing increasing sums of money for permission to do that. This short text has an open ending: “The delegates are not giving up. They intend to start further negotiations today.”<sup>471</sup>

Indeed, that way of constructing the world depicted was in stark contrast to the fabular-plots emphasizing the ethical degeneration and the moral downfall

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468 “Brothels were usually called *heyzl* (small house) or *fraylikh-hoyz* (house of pleasures, literally fun house), *efentlikh-hoyz* (open house), or *shand-hoyz* (house of shame). Prostitutes were called *gasen-meydlekh* (street girls, streetwalkers), *freylikhe froyen* (merry ladies) or the Hebrew word *tmeyim* (impure). For the pimps reserved was the Polish term *alfons* or the more familiar-sounding Yiddish term *feter*, that is, uncle. With a similar dose of familiarity, a woman managing a brothel was called *mume* (aunt).” Qtd. after: A. Kopciowski, “Półświątek przestępczy na łamach lubelskiej prasy jidysz (1918–1939),” *Studia Judaica* 1 (2014), p. 73.

469 S. Wiechecki, “Pan się zastanów!,” in his, *Skarby w spodniach czyli przypadki żydowskie* (Cracow, 2001), p. 210.

470 Ibid.

471 Ibid.

connected with living on the social margin in the urban space, the plots which were perhaps the most popular model, which had been increasingly common in European literatures since the late nineteenth century.

When analyzing the characters from Gojawiczyńska's novel, one should bear in mind that prostitution can inspire completely different emotions. The girls living on Nowolipki Street notice the opening of Kac's confectionary in place of a small corner store. In front of the new locale, which fascinates them, stroll street 'working girls'. In this mixed, Polish-Jewish space the women are not assigned to any specific ethnic group. They are mentioned only as characters whose colorful clothes and makeup attract the heroines' attention.<sup>472</sup> It is also known that they are trying to avoid contact with the local authorities: "The girls on the corner outside Kac[']s confectionery] disperse. A constable is approaching."<sup>473</sup>

The world of Jewish prostitutes was also portrayed in urban folklore.<sup>474</sup> Szmul Lehman, a Jewish ethnographer and scholar, who assembled a large collection of such songs, recorded the lyrics of one that went as follows:

*Oy, di lumpn, zey zaynen shpionen,  
provokators zaynen zey,  
zey geyen oyf birzhes un hern "moves"  
un geyen dertseyln politsey.  
Ober mir prostitutkes, mir  
zaynen naronim,  
mir mukhen zikh baytog  
un baynakht,  
ober di lumpn, zey pashn zikh  
di grobe baykher,  
fun undz prostitutkelekh  
vern zey raykh.*<sup>475</sup>

This song was something like an anthem of Jewish prostitutes of Warsaw.

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472 See P. Gojawiczyńska, *Dziewczęta z Nowolipek* (Warsaw, 1973).

473 *Ibid.*, p. 62.

474 A kind of a group portrait of the world of the Jewish prostitution in Warsaw can be found in Alicja Gontarek's article. See A. Gontarek, "Tolerantki, mamzelki, kamelie i sylfidki czyli warszawskie prostytutki," *Biuletyn Gminy Wyznaniowej Żydowskiej w Warszawie* 4 (2011): 14-18.

475 "Oh, these down-and-outers, they are spies/ and the worst provocateurs/ they go to 'political markets'/ and they inform the police/ But we, prostitutes/ we are stupid/ we toil day and night/ and these down-and-outers are fattening up on our misfortune/ thanks to us, sluts, they grow big bellies/ and grow rich." Qtd. after: A. Gontarek, "Tolerantki, mamzelki, kamelie i sylfidki," p. 17.

A completely separate literary trend is literary portrayal of Jewish crime, mostly urban, which involves strong stereotyping and schematic perception. This time the city is characterized, not as space of progress and transformations, but more as a place of crime and moral downfall, and, at the same time, the figure of the Jew, who acquires all characteristics matching the anti-Semitic clichés of the turn of the centuries.

The topic of Jewish prostitution (and the criminal activity connected with it) was taken up relatively rarely, both in literary texts and historical publications. This finds confirmation in the exhibition presented at the Berlin Centrum Judaicum from August to December 2012. Aware of the anti-Semitic stereotype according to which Jews were responsible for the moral downfall of young women, exhibition curator Irene Stratenwerth boldly presented that shameful fragment of the Jewish community's history. The names of the most infamous human traffickers (Lazar Schwarz, John Meyerowitz) and the women who participated in that illegal activity (Rifka Bender, Mascha Fischer) are well known to historians.<sup>476</sup>

Sommerfeld's aforementioned crime story entitled *Das Ghetto von Berlin* [the ghetto in Berlin] is not only about the criminal activity connected with trafficking of women.<sup>477</sup> The novel is set chiefly in Scheunenviertel as the main characters are Jews from the East. Mister Pufeles, who has already been mentioned, proves a highly suspicious character. Despite looking and dressing like a religious *Ostjude*, Pufeles is not a decent merchant but a smuggler, a criminal engaged in trafficking of women as well as theft and forgery. The local inhabitants portrayed in the novel prove to be predominantly petty thieves and criminals who do not shy away from violence, also against women, with some of them involved in even more serious crimes. Almost all of them come from various localities in eastern Poland. Some continue their criminal activity commenced in their homelands – they loot, trade stolen items, and smuggle various goods across the border. Protagonist Pufeles boasts about having organized a smuggling network which regularly smuggles goods across the German-Austrian border as well as about being on such good terms with the law enforcement that the guards and customs officers bow low before Pufeles' 'boys' with the words "*pardon, monsieur*."<sup>478</sup> The specificity of Sommerfeld's crime story consists predominantly in the fact that the plot is centered on description of various crimes committed by immigrants from the

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476 See M. Wuliger, "Vom Shtetl ins Bordell," p. 18.

477 See A. Sommerfeld, *Das Ghetto von Berlin*.

478 Ibid., pp. 26-27.

East European diaspora. This group portrait is supplemented with only a handful of characters cooperating with the criminal *Ostjuden* – corrupt policemen or German accomplices who provide false documents. Enforcement authorities' had a hard time operating in the Jewish quarter of the city as it was hampered by nobody sympathizing with a rich man who was robbed. On the contrary, his plight was ridiculed. The narrator of Sommerfeld's novel emphasized:

Both the specificity of the ghetto inhabitants and the lack of distinguishing features hampered the police work. It was known from the start that the stolen goods were immediately sold in the area, most probably on the same night as the theft. And because the *Ostjuden* had undoubtedly been accomplices and, making matters worse, they easily smuggled any goods across the border, the chances of recovering the movables seemed slight.<sup>479</sup>

The protagonist not only manages to organize smuggling and drug dealing – his biography is an example of an immigrant's 'career'. When he changes his place of residence he moves to a 'better' quarter, where he begins to live like a typical gangster. In his luxury apartment he meets with people like him, that is, smugglers operating on an international scale. He lives a pompous life.<sup>480</sup>

Narratives about the Jewish criminal world in Poland penned in the interwar period enjoyed great popularity. Good examples here are books by Urke Nachalnik's (Icchak Farbarowicz's nom de plume), Henryk Nagiel's two-volume *Tajemnice Nalewek* [mysteries of Nalewki Street] (despite being written in the late nineteenth century, it was often republished and in 1924 adapted for the screen, so I would like to discuss it), and thriller serials published in the *5-ta rano* tabloid.<sup>481</sup>

The crime depicted in literary narrations was not limited to the world of prostitution and human trafficking. A description of a different criminal space (after those in Asch's and Varshavski's narratives) should begin with *Tajemnice Nalewek*<sup>482</sup> – one of the biggest popular literature bestsellers during the interwar period. Nagiel's book is a model example of a novel about the urban criminal

479 *Ibid.*, pp. 112-113.

480 See *ibid.*, p. 97.

481 Eugenia Prokop-Janiec has written about them. See E. Prokop-Janiec, "Warszawa: '5-ta rano'. Sensacja i nowoczesność," in *ibid.*, *Pogranicze polsko-żydowskie. Topografie i teksty* (Cracow, 2013), pp. 95-115. Nagiel's biography and a short overview of his literary output can be found in Elżbieta Sawicka's text. See E. Sawicka, "Henryk Nagiel i *Tajemnice Nalewek*," in *Warszawa pozytywistów*, ed. E. Ihnatowicz, J. Kulczycka-Saloni (Warsaw, 1992), pp. 101-102.

482 H. Nagiel, *Tajemnice Nalewek*, vol. 1 (Warsaw, 2013).



world. I believe that because it contains an interesting description of the urban space it deserves attention not only because of its popularity. This map of Warsaw is clearly centered on Nalewki Street with its loudest hustle and bustle in the city.

Somebody has called Nalewki ‘Warsaw’s pocket’ [...] Along with its, so to speak, tributaries, that is, Franciszkańska, Geşia, and Muranowska Streets, Nalewki Street is unlike any other street in Warsaw. Nowhere else in Warsaw will you find such a crowd, rushing on blindly, gesticulating and talking loudly, accosting fellow pedestrians, talking business on the sidewalk, frantic, not wasting even a moment.<sup>483</sup>

The sense of press and exceptionally great condensation of space were intensified not only by the presence of pedestrians and traders. Some of the Jewish quarter’s unique local color resulted from the specificity of the local architecture: “Take the buildings. You will not see even an inch of a bare wall for they are completely covered with store signs. Stores on the first floor, storerooms on the upper floors all the way to the attic. Stores in the courtyard. And if you peek into any of these dark burrows you can find stock there, sometimes worth hundreds of thousands of rubles.”<sup>484</sup>

The exceptionally dense urban tissue was not only densely populated, but also an enclave of light industry, petty trade, and also entertainment characteristic of the urban population, offered in cheap locales and bars:

The houses have a special character and physiognomy. They are dirty and shabby but spread out. Several courtyards, a whole labyrinth of annexes, some sloped huts resembling little stables – all this accommodates several thousand people. These enormous buildings, small towns, have a distinct population [...] Besides, is there something you will not find on Nalewki Street? There are factories, workshops, storehouses, money exchanges, hotels, and restaurants.<sup>485</sup>

Nighttime was not only fun time on Nalewki Street – it was also the time of criminal activity in a secret room in the apartment of one of the characters, where everything went according to Lurje and Landsberger’s plans. In the hideout operated something like a small factory of falsified ten-ruble coins and forged customs seals.<sup>486</sup>

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483 *Ibid.*, p. 5.

484 *Ibid.* One should bear in mind that the novel is set in the early twentieth century, when store signs had to be written in Russian. Hence, it was often the case that signs in Yiddish and Russian (and sometimes also in Polish) advertised one and the same company.

485 *Ibid.*, p. 6.

486 *Ibid.*, p. 180.

The Warsaw depicted in *Tajemnice Nalewek* is not limited exclusively to the Jewish quarter. Two other aspects of its portrayal deserve attention. The first one is the emphasis on the existence of peripheral quarters, poor and badly-lit streets, which were places conducive to violence and robberies. The narrator's comment locates this space in a specific spot on the map of the city:

There are remote parts of Warsaw of whose existence most 'true' Varsovians were completely ignorant at that time. Let us take, for instance, the entire suburbs of Wola, located beyond the Wola turnpike. This cluster of houses and cottages, crisscrossed by narrow and muddy streets, the mouths of which open up onto fields sown with windmills, sometimes onto the fence of a local cemetery, or at other times onto clay pits. Bandits of the worst kind circulate near these clay pits. Walking here at night is simply unthinkable.<sup>487</sup>

Another aspect of the construction of the urban space is the emphasis laid on places of contrast, radically different from both Nalewki Street and the Wola suburbs. The other face of Warsaw is represented chiefly by the city center, which was one of the female characters lived: "On the ground floor of one of the new and elegantly furnished tenements on Wspólna Street lived Miss Tema Z. [...] the apartment she lived in was one of the largest in the entire tenement and its furnishings were simply exquisite."<sup>488</sup> Another place contrasted with the not exactly posh Nalewki Street was the vicinity of Theater Square. "At that moment a carriage rolled onto Theater Square from Wierzbowa Street. It rolled along the Theater's colonnade. 'Fryga' had his driver stop on the corner, by the store which at that time belonged to Bocquet. He jumped off and stood by the store window, pretending to look at the displayed liqueur bottles."<sup>489</sup> Posh Nowy Świat Street acquires a somewhat ambivalent status as a street where one can rent rooms known as *chambres garnies* (where Ejteles's partner, Joachim, is staying and meeting with his partner Lurje).<sup>490</sup>

One should bear in mind that not only poor craftsmen and petty traders lived in the Jewish Nalewki Street. One of the things that made that space unique was a chance of multiplying one's wealth. The reader learns about the operation of Ejteles & Co. in the year 1877: "The boss and the head of the company was Abraham Ejteles, an old banker from Nalewki Street, who had been doing business there for forty years – safe, without a hurry, and of his own accord."<sup>491</sup>

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487 H. Nagiel, *Tajemnice Nalewek*, vol. 2 (Warsaw, 2013), pp. 162–163.

488 *Ibid.*, p. 150.

489 H. Nagiel, *Tajemnice Nalewek*, vol. 1, p. 159.

490 *Ibid.*, p. 7.

491 *Ibid.*, p. 8.

The engagement and vigorous actions undertaken by his partners multiplied the owner's profits. Consequently, "[t]he small dirty room in the left annex of one of the enormous tenements on Franciszkańska Street became substituted [in the life of old Ejteles – A. M.] with a wonderful enfilade of luxury rooms, rows of desks and partitions, a crowd of office workers, spacious storerooms, and princely corridors."<sup>492</sup> Because of that increase in wealth the company occupied an increasing amount of space in the quarter: "The Ejteles & Co. banking, consignment, and shipping business occupied half an enormous tenement, a long two-story annex, and the adjacent storehouses. Behind the offices was a garden and deep within it was something like a small palace, which served as an apartment to Abraham, his family, and partners."<sup>493</sup> Another signal of wealth was the sign on the tenement where lived another character, Abraham Meiner, a distant cousin of Josek the clerk, that is, Józef Stiefel. The sign advertised the services of an office:

On one of the tenements on Nalewki Street, on the third floor, one could see, even from afar, a gigantic sign reading "Cashing and Collection Office." Indeed, the office impressed all residents of the tenement. Its owner, Mr. Abraham Meiner, took up the entire third floor [. . .]. The whole world knew that Mr. Abraham Meiner, although still young, was already rich and, thank God, respected. [. . .] In short, Mr. Abraham was an illegal advisor though an ingenious one.<sup>494</sup>

While in the case of old Ejteles' company's operation we have to do with a juxtaposition of, on the one hand, old-school commerce and trade and, on the other hand, the unruly young generation which wants to make a profit without respecting the rights of others, the slightly ironic statement that Meiner was an "illegal but ingenious advisor" unambiguously alludes to the reality of the social margin.

I should also mention the relatively special role played by female characters of *Tajemnice Nalewek*. The policeman conducting the investigation is deeply convinced about the existence of an organized criminal group:

You should know, Sir, that recently there has been about a dozen instances of theft, robbery, and even suicides which cannot be explained in any way. They are centered on Nalewki Street and they are connected with it. [. . .] this must be the doing of a band of villains [. . .], the Nalewki band.<sup>495</sup>

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492 Ibid.

493 Ibid., pp. 8-9.

494 Ibid., pp. 126-127.

495 H. Nagiel, *Tajemnice Nalewek*, vol. 2, p. 144.

One of the supporting characters is the police agent's girlfriend, Karolcia, who helps him conduct his independent investigation. But two other female characters whom Nagiel gave the leading roles prove to be much more vital. After the discovery of the activity of the "Nalewki gang" appears to be led by 'Golden Hand', a sister of Tema Z., who was a "luxurious courtesan." Residing at the Europejski Hotel, the female boss is known for operating on a large scale.<sup>496</sup> Both women – the gang leader and her sister – are Jewish criminals from Vilnius or Grodno.<sup>497</sup>

In both these narrations, their authors make attempts at linguistic stylization. Characters of both Sommerfeld's novel and the bestselling *Tajemnice Nalewek* speak in a peculiar manner which is to emphasize the events' locality and their connection with the space of the East European diaspora.

In the novel written in Polish one can see such measures taken with regard to, for instance, the description of Ejteles' grandson or Jewish merchants, for example, Fajnhand, who also grants loans ("Warsaw has never known a worse usurer").<sup>498</sup> One example of such stylization is the following utterance: "Sir, you need to know that this Kruk – I know him – is a ragamuffin, scamp, and scalawag [. . .] He's Szmargd's regular customer. I know that this Szmargd is telling him to criticize me. [...] He did not sell myself."<sup>499</sup> Another device is using Yiddish, for instance, in the following short dialog which was comprehensive to the Polish reader living in those times:

[. . .] there was great commotion near Nalewki Street.  
 "A revizye. a revizye!" the kikes told one another.  
 "Where?"  
 "Sapieżyńskie gas."  
 "Vus y dues?"  
 "Kontrabande."<sup>500</sup>

Sommerfeld uses a similar device by granting his protagonist, Pufeles, a language which can be deemed a mixture of Yiddish and German. Among other inhabitants of the Jewish quarter in Berlin, even those who arrived from the East, Pufeles stands out with his poor command of the German language and his clear tendency to mix German and Yiddish words. However, he feels in his element

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496 Ibid., pp. 101-102.

497 Particularly in popular novels, figures of Jews coming from the East were often associated with criminal activity.

498 H. Nagiel *Tajemnice Nalewek*, vol. 1, p. 114.

499 Ibid., p. 112.

500 H. Nagiel, *Tajemnice Nalewek*, vol. 2, p. 51.

when he finds himself in the world of first petty criminals and then smugglers and bandits operating in and outside Berlin.

The above Yiddish elements in the literary characters' utterance are connected, though not always, with the image of the Jew preserved in culture. Maria Brzezina calls thus shaped linguistic stylization a 'signaling'<sup>501</sup> one, namely one created by means of selected elements of the language code and intended to create an impression that these elements characterize the entire ethnic group. But one must bear in mind that skillful stylization was usually applied to the language used by highly individualized literary characters, while the figures of Jewish criminals were often merely an outline of a given character's psychological profile.<sup>502</sup>

In his popular texts, Stefan Wiechecki made use of similar devices. In the large collection of his columns and stories, one can find a multitude of threads which allude to the functioning of the urban underworld and fierce conflicts erupting within the Jewish community which inhabited the Polish capital.

A typical example of Wiech's narrations, many of which have the form of court reportage, genre scenes, or short sketches concerning events which the narrator thinks important, is a dialog commenting on two Jewish girls' public demonstration. That "suffragettes' show" began with their consuming homemade plum brandy and ended in their publicly calling for a revolt:

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501 See M. Brzezina, *Polszczyzna Żydów* (Cracow, 1986), p. 522.

502 The lingo of Jewish criminals has been discussed by, for instance, Natalia Krynicka: "One of the peculiar features of this jargon is the several dozen equivalents to the word 'thief' as well as various kinds of thieves, for instance, a *vistavnik* robbed store windows, a *kojecz-gejer* used violence during burglaries, while *achsaniak* was a hotel thief (all examples based on J. Triwaks' article "Di yidishe zhargonon" published in the collection *Bay undz Yidn*, Warsaw 1923). Its vocabulary, as one can see above, reflects the Germanic-Slavic-Hebrew structure of general Yiddish, but in different proportions. The Germanic element is relatively scarce (one should take note here of words loaned directly from German which were not used in general Yiddish, for instance, *hoyn* – to arrest, from German *holen*, or *shtoyln* – to steal, from German *stehlen*). The Slavic component is dominant (like in words such as *tluken* – [to beat, from Polish] *tluc*; *zaboren* – [to steal/take away, from Polish] *kraść*, *zabierać*; *podkopnik* – [tunnel-digging thief, from the Polish word for tunnel —] *podkop*; or *kriyen* – [to shelter, from Polish] *kryć*) and – and this is the most characteristic – the Hebrew one, in the Ashkenazi pronunciation used by Jews from Central and Eastern Europe (for instance, *lakhenen* – to steal, from Hebrew *lakach* – to take or *masematn* – purse with money or a major heist, from a Hebrew word meaning "negotiations, arrangements")." Qtd. after: in N. Krynicka, "Żydowski żargon złodziejski," *Midrasz* 12 (1999), p. 11.

[...] the two of them climbed the dumpster and Miss Chana began to sing to the female pedestrians:

“Come dancing with us and to the cinema [...]!”

“C’mon! Drop your pots, stop cooking and nursing children! A woman lives to have fun!” Miss Fajga echoed.<sup>503</sup>

The passers-by listened to their cries, while ‘respected citizens’ headed for Shabbat prayers to “Czyżyk’s synagogue (Miła Street 5)” commented on the girls’ appeals:

“She’s encouraging our wives to rebel [...]!”

“Vus?” cried Mr. Menasze. “Von, Von, die rude krove!”

“Shlug a paskiem di brabantes kobyles, di smarkates!” bellowed Mr. Judka.<sup>504</sup>

In most cases we have to do here not so much with elements of the Warsaw underworld’s idiolect (although one can also find such examples in Wiech’s texts) as linguistic stylization which is to make the reader familiar with characteristic and peculiar features of the Polish language spoken by Jews.

The coexistence of the two criminal worlds, Polish and Jewish, in one urban organism was conducive to emergence of various mutual relations: “There was quite a lot of Jewish burglars and safecrackers. They were highly valued by their Polish colleagues, who often co-worked with them on major operations, such as, digging tunnels to a bank or jewelry storerooms.”<sup>505</sup> Mutual linguistic influences and loanwords testified to the contacts between the Jewish and Christian underworld established during the criminals’ cooperation. Many scholars have carried out research on the Yiddish or Hebrew lexicon in the sociolect of the Polish social margin.<sup>506</sup> It would also be beneficial to recall and analyze the influence of Polish on the Yiddish lexicon, but this project would reach far beyond the sphere of reflections on the functioning of the phenomenon of crime in urban spaces of Warsaw and Berlin.<sup>507</sup>

503 S. Wiechecki, “Występ sufrażystek,” in his, *Skarby w spodniach czyli Przypadki żydowskie*, p. 237.

504 Ibid., p. 238.

505 M. Fuks, *Żydzi w Warszawie*, p. 313.

506 See A. Małocha, “Żydowskie zapożyczenia leksykalne w socjolekcie przestępczym,” in *Język a kultura*, vol. 10: *Języki subkultur*, ed. J. Anusiewicz, B. Siciński (Wrocław, 1994); H. Ułaszyn, *Język złodziejski*; M. Brzezina, “Elementy żydowskie w gwarze złodziejskiej,” in her, *Polszczyzna Żydów* (Cracow, 1986), pp. 105-108; M. Altbauer, *Wzajemne wpływy polsko-żydowskie w dziedzinie językowej*, selection and ed. M. Brzezina (Cracow, 2002).

507 To the cooperation between criminal milieus testifies also the story of the legendary founder of the organization known as the Band of Daddy Ribbon, which chiefly

Separate urban spaces connected with crime are escape places or areas where a criminal could seek shelter from the police. In most cases those were the suburbs. One of the Warsaw characters

Ran up Nalewki Street, turned back into Gęsia Street and headed on. He walked along Dzika Street until he reached Smocza Street. That was where the rows of tenements ended and small houses began – often hidden deep on the premises, behind fences, old and ruined. Most of them made an unpleasant, unfriendly impression. Numerous here, the pubs belched out alcohol fumes despite the early hour. They were filled with ragged shady individuals with drunken countenances.<sup>508</sup>

The protagonist of Sommerfeld's novel behaved in a similar way in Berlin when he and other criminals were trying to cover up the crimes and murders they committed and hide from the police.

It should be emphasized that even though the criminal world was ethnically diverse, there were almost none or only sporadic internal conflicts on religious or ethnic grounds and that the two groups were guided by a code of honor.<sup>509</sup> Although Adam Kopciowski discusses the Lublin milieu, the criminal groups in other cities had a similar mode of operation. Thus, let me quote him:

The cooperation between Jewish and Christian criminals had [...] a temporary and occasional character. It usually followed a schematic or even stereotypical model of division of duties. The Jews were usually the brains behind the individual criminal operations and took care of logistics and security, while the Christian 'specialists' were in charge of the physical crimes: breaking-in, larceny, or robbery. The loot was usually 'liquidated' by using services of Jewish fences.<sup>510</sup>

The author of the article also points to the role played by the fence, who stored the stolen items and facilitated their sale. He adds that in the texts he is analyzing and the reference literature he is quoting the fence was usually a person originating from the Jewish community: "The figure of the Jewish fence was an

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robbed merchants and racketeered (mainly in the vicinity of the Kercelak market square). It consisted of "Pantelejmon Karpiński (Daddy Ribbon's right hand), Juda Szejnworf, Czesław Janiak, Hersz Dusznicki, Chaskiel Kantor, Stanisław Jakubczak, Aron Perelman, Aleksander Bocheński, Stanisław Cieśliński, Waclaw Osmański, Szymon Śmigiel, and Gabrijel Lipszyc." Qtd. after: G. Jatkowska, *Echa dawnej Warszawy. Kryminalne opowieści* (Warsaw, 2016), pp. 176 ff.

508 H. Nagiel, *Tajemnice Nalewek*, vol. 2, p. 71.

509 This was discussed by, for instance, Adam Kopciowski in his article about Lublin. See A. Kopciowski, "Półświątek przestępczy na łamach lubelskiej prasy jidysz (1918-1939)," pp. 62 ff.

510 *Ibid.*, p. 65.

inseparable element of many crimes reported in the press, including the most serious ones. This testifies to the scale of the Jews' participation in such criminal activity [. . .]."<sup>511</sup> The figure of the fence trading stolen items can also be encountered in literary texts which describe the activity of urban criminals (Sommerfeld).

Eugenia Prokop-Janiec has pointed to the importance of Polish-Jewish tabloids, arguing that they constitute an interesting and thus far unused source of texts concerning Jewish culture's functioning in Poland. She treats the *5-ta rano* daily tabloid as a means of constructing lay Jewish modernity.<sup>512</sup> She discusses both the circumstances in which the tabloid was set up and its profile (non-partisan, in favor of equal rights to Jews and against assimilation), emphasizing that it was addressed predominantly to the Jewish reader and that it represented the hard line of modernization, emancipation, and pursuit of reform of the Jewish community in line with ideas of modernity. It seems particularly interesting that in addition to other important spaces (Palestine, Poland, and the main diaspora countries), Warsaw was "the center of the mental map emerging from the texts published in the daily."<sup>513</sup> In her article on interwar Polish-Jewish serials, Prokop-Janiec discusses the novels connected with the space of the Polish capital which were published in *5-ta rano*.<sup>514</sup> The principles of their authenticity and locality were chosen with deliberation. The scholar mentions the declarations of one of the-then authors, Mieczysław Krzepakowski: "the plot should be set in a very familiar city [. . .]. The readers should be able to go see the street and the building where the plot is set."<sup>515</sup> The said principle was the reason for a large percentage of serials published in the said daily to be set in Warsaw, particularly in the Jewish quarter.

One should bear in mind that that location was connected with the functioning of the-then criminal world:

The Jewish social margin in Warsaw often operated in a sophisticated, well-organized way, particularly when it came to larceny and prostitution. [...] in the Warsaw milieu there were several 'eminent' personas, for instance, famous burglar Icchak Farbarowicz, who operated in the underworld as Urke Nachalnik and enjoyed great respect among his colleagues, both Jewish and Polish.<sup>516</sup>

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511 Ibid., p. 66.

512 See E. Prokop-Janiec, "Warszawa: '5-ta rano'. Sensacja i nowoczesność," pp. 95-115.

513 Ibid., p. 97.

514 See also "Międzywojenna polsko-żydowska powieść w odcinkach," in E. Prokop-Janiec, *Pogranicze polsko-żydowskie*, pp. 194-198.

515 Ibid., p. 194.

516 M. Fuks, *Żydzi w Warszawie*, p. 313.



Urke Nachalnik was the author of many popular bestsellers, which were published in the Jewish and Polish-Jewish press. "During 1938-1939 Urke Nachalnik published sketches about the criminal world entitled *Tamte ulice...* [those streets...] in a Jewish evening tabloid *Hayntige Naves*, thus contributing to an increase in its circulation."<sup>517</sup> Creation of the portrait of the criminal capital was connected with a peculiar sense of pride and mythologization of the urban underworld. Eugenia Prokop-Janiec quotes Urke Nachalnik's novel *Rozpruwacze*, [rippers], published in *5-ta rano*, where the author emphasizes Warsaw's position:

With its scamps and cafés, Warsaw does not think itself inferior to Paris. The shady characters from the Warsaw underworld are more interesting than the peculiarly-dressed Paris scamps. In many cases they even exceed them in terms of cunning, courage, and romantic love affairs. [...] The big city of Warsaw can take pride in its men of the night.<sup>518</sup>

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517 See *ibid.*

518 Qtd. after: E. Prokop-Janiec, "Międzywojenna polsko-żydowska powieść w odcinkach," in her, *Pogranicze polsko-żydowskie*, p. 195.



## City Divided and Contact Zones

Mary Louise Pratt is the author of the conception of interactions in space which is of interest to us in the context of literary portrayals of the city.<sup>519</sup> The term she uses is contact zone. Originally, that category was used in linguistics in reference to a contact language, that is an improvised language invented by users of different systems to facilitate mutual communication. Pratt has taken that category outside the sphere of linguistic research and used it to describe imperial spaces whose inhabitants – belonging to various cultures and differing in terms of access to power – enter into mutual relations in a specific geographical and social context.<sup>520</sup>

For Pratt, the basic issue is not so much indication of hierarchies or divisions, as joint presence, interactions, and crisscrossing ideas and practices. Assuming this perspective in reference to literary texts, we are trying to notice and categorize the ways of narrating – not only from the point of view of the dominant culture – which regard the shaping of relations in a contact zone.

To the operativity of the contact zone category testifies the fact that it can be used in the case of diverse and ambiguous interactions connected with specific spaces. Descriptions of these spaces involve determination of relations between familiarity and strangeness; separation of groups differing in terms of culture, language, or religion which inhabit the same territory; and reconstruction of social stratification. The contact zone category cannot be reduced to simple oppositions categorizing communities living in either peaceful relations or a violent conflict. A contact zone is predominantly a space of ambivalent, subtle relations, both peaceful and those opposing each other.<sup>521</sup>

Reflecting on the history of the Jewish diaspora, one must bear in mind that since the beginning of the emancipation processes, they closely connected with the modernization of the contemporary world, which were a broader phenomenon than a somewhat one-sided assimilation, the colonizer-colonized relations should be not so much completely ignored and perceived as much weaker than previously thought. The contact zone is a more useful model here because it

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519 M. L. Pratt, "Art of the Contact Zone," *Profession* 91 (1991): 33–40.

520 M. L. Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel, Writing and Transculturation* (London, 1992), p. 2.

521 See *Vertraut und fremd zugleich. Jüdisch-christliche Nachbarschaften in Warschau-Lengau-Lemberg*, ed. A. Binnenkade, E. Emeliantseva, S. Pacholkiv (Cologne, 2009), p. 17.

more clearly emphasizes not so much the processes of various formulas of cultural resistance or strategies of adaptation to the dominant structures as the vital phenomenon of ‘exchange,’ which is conducive to emerging new forms. One of the levels on which the consequences of this change can be observed is the emergence of modern Polish-Jewish or German-Jewish literature.<sup>522</sup> Eugenia Prokop-Janiec pointed to this phenomenon, also in reference to Pratt, and stressed the following:

A contact zone is a sphere of ambivalence, a sphere of experiencing coercion, inequality, and conflict, as well as cooperation and co-existence. There is, on the one hand, the establishment of interpersonal relations, and, on the other hand, the processes of selection, adaptation, and adoption of elements of the dominant culture launched by the minority group.<sup>523</sup>

Thus, using the conceptions mentioned, one can analyze various narrations in different languages devoted to a large extent to describing the urban spaces of mutual contacts. Prokop-Janiec, whom I have already quoted, has remarked that the contact zone model makes it possible to describe “[c]ontemporary Polish-Jewish contacts [. . .] as a complex tangle of ‘distinctness and separation, on the one hand, and exchange and osmosis, on the other,’ as a complex and dynamic ‘sphere of interference, [. . .] adaptation, assimilation, [. . .] transgression,’ and negotiation.”<sup>524</sup>

In the urban space, the establishment of what can be called shared places is closely connected with determination of the spheres functioning as social contact zones. Spatial relations point to an important characteristic of contact zones: these spatial relations are usually connected with a relation of power, with that power (understood also as economic power) in a way determining and structuring them.<sup>525</sup>

One must bear in mind that contact between groups is not typically based on parity. A contact zone is more like a space filled with tensions and ambivalence. Some of the space where contact takes place can be determined by the norms set within the given legal system, for instance, by the system of compulsory universal education. However, many contact zones are not so much strictly

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522 I define Polish-Jewish literature in the same way as Eugenia Prokop-Janiec. See E. Prokop-Janiec, *Międzywojenna literatura polsko-żydowska* (Cracow, 1992).

523 E. Prokop-Janiec, “Kulturowe i literackie kontakty polsko-żydowskie,” in *Polacy – Żydzi. Kontakty kulturowe i literackie*, ed. E. Prokop-Janiec (Cracow, 2014), p. 17.

524 Ibid.

525 See *Vertraut und fremd zugleich*, p. 12.

regulated, as set in the course of long-term processes of the structuring of the urban space and social stratification, which are accompanied with both attempts at including minority groups into the broader community and instances of their exclusion from it.

A highly characteristic phenomenon in both Warsaw and Berlin was that there was a separate Jewish quarter functioning within their urban space. In Berlin the most visible Jewish concentration was made up by Jews of the East European diaspora. German Jews, vast majority of who remained under the influence of the *Haskalah* ideas, were to some extent 'invisible' to fellow Berliners. The *maskilim* (*Haskalah* supporters) opted for introduction of lay subjects to schools, which was perhaps the main source of their conflict with traditionalists. They also strived for making Jews familiar with the language and customs of the country they lived in so as to help them leave the cultural ghetto.<sup>526</sup> Since the mid-eighteenth the influence exerted by thinkers associated with the Jewish enlightenment had also been connected with more frequent contacts with the German bourgeois. State reforms and the later assimilation tendencies proved conducive to the Jews' leaving the cultural ghetto. From the start, there were also tendencies to influence the East European communities. And even though initially in the Habsburg monarchy the *Haskalah* movement was gaining popularity (note the tremendous role played by Joseph Perl of Ternopil), in the second half of the nineteenth century the victory of various types of Hasidism was becoming increasingly apparent. Things looked similar in Lithuania, where "some representatives of Rabbinic Judaism [. . .] recognized the necessity to combine science and faith, and thus were in favor of popularization of the natural sciences."<sup>527</sup> In tsarist Russia of the early nineteenth century, the popularization of the *Haskalah* was aided by the tsar's Jewish policy, but in the second half of the century and particularly at its end it underwent a radical change. The tsarist restrictions and violence were not conducive to modernity projects. In the first half of the twentieth century the European Jewish diaspora was relatively clearly divided into its Eastern and Western version.

The solidification of the *Haskalah* ideas in Germany had yet another consequence. The adoption of the more liberal version of Judaism was connected, among others, with changing the attire according to the generally accepted

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526 *Nowy Leksykon Judaistyczny*, ed. J. H. Schoeps, trans. S. Lisiecka, Z. Rybicka, E. Ptaszyńska-Sadowska (Warsaw, 2007), p. 318 [original edition: *Neues Lexikon des Judentums* (Bertelsmann Lexikon Verlag, 1992)].

527 *Ibid.*

norms originating from the dominant community. There was even a common saying that somebody ‘dressed German’, which meant that they had given up the traditional dress code. In the East European diaspora both Orthodox Jews and supporters of Hasidism consistently upheld the tradition of distinct attire in the case of both women and men. That approach resulted in the East European Jews’ wearing clothes that stood out against the background of the urban community.

Thus, we can notice the two capitals’ peculiar likeness when we look at the presence of the Jewish minority in those spaces. The Jewish quarter in Berlin – Scheunenviertel – was co-shaped by Jews from the East. Berliners were often perplexed by their appearance and attire because inhabitants of Scheunenviertel clearly stood out from the rest of the population. In Warsaw the Jewish quarter was partly inhabited by not so much Orthodox as predominantly poor Jews who were almost completely unassimilated. ‘Northern Quarter’ was not the official name of the Jewish district, but many Varsovians used that term with reference to the Muranów, Leszno, and Grzybów neighborhoods.<sup>528</sup> Attention was paid to the local contrasts concerning the social stratification of Jewish Varsovians: “It is enough to peek into the alleys [ . . . ] of Smocza and Pawia Streets [ . . . ] to become petrified at the sight of the magnitude of the apparent human suffering reflected at every step in the hundreds and thousands of emaciated children, the starving unemployed masses, the dirty rooms [ . . . ].”<sup>529</sup> To be sure, within that space there were also ‘better streets,’ for instance, the wealthier Grzybów area, sometimes called a quarter of “wealthy merchants.”<sup>530</sup>

In many literary texts, one can read about the characteristic features of the thus divided city, which were highlighted by various authors.

Döblin visited the vicinity of Alexanderplatz to “touch what is the periphery of the mighty West.”<sup>531</sup> Strolling down the streets of the east part of Berlin, he noticed not only the presence of the working-class milieu and left-wing movements (posters, pedestrians’ discussions) and the widespread poverty, but also an increasing number of “Galician types.” Grenadierstrasse and its vicinity were characterized by, for instance, thick crowds in the streets, with most people speaking “guttural Yiddish.” Walking about, Döblin recorded his observations:

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528 See G. Zalewska, *Ludność żydowska w Warszawie w okresie międzywojennym* (Warsaw, 1996), pp. 68-70.

529 A. Tartakower, “Pauperyzacja Żydów polskich,” *Miesięcznik Żydowski* 3-4 (1935): 118.

530 B. Mark, “‘Literary Tribune’ i ‘Tomackie 13,’” pp. 223-225; qtd. after: G. Zalewska, *Ludność żydowska w Warszawie w okresie międzywojennym*, pp. 68-70.

531 A. Döblin, “Östlich um den Alexanderplatz,” in his, *Kleine Schriften II* (Zurich-Düsseldorf), p. 120.

The relatively scarce small stores had signs written with Hebrew letters. I come across names such as Shaya, Usher, or Khanaine. In one of the store windows is a Jewish theater poster: “*Yudele the Blindman*, five-act play by Joseph Latainer.”<sup>532</sup> Jewish butchers, craftsmen, and bookstores. Everything here moves with unfading anxiety; everybody looks out the window, shouts, forms groups varied in size, and whispers in the shady tenement gates.<sup>533</sup>

The protagonist of Jakub Appenzlak’s novel, who lives on Bielańska Street, that is a meeting point between Jewish and Polish Warsaw, notices the separateness of the Jewish community when reflecting on the stratification of inhabitants of the Polish capital:

Sztrom often reflected on the spatial distribution of the Jewish population in the city which has the largest number of Jews in Europe. He imagined a map with the density of the Jewish population marked with red stripes. The northern part of the city – a completely red shapeless blot. Red smears in parallel strands continue across Karmelicka and Solna Streets, Bankowy Square, Żabia Street, and Graniczna Street to the border of the Grzybów quarter and Twarda Street and all the way to the border of the working-class area. Closer, more to the southern part of the city – red islands. In Jerusalem Boulevards (Aleje Jeruzolimskie), in the aristocratic quarter – red points marking the handful of those who got beyond the hoop; faraway drops of the Red Sea. . . .<sup>534</sup>

Sketched by the protagonist, the telltale map of the city attracts attention with the density of the population of Jewish Varsovians concentrated in one quarter. The handful of “red dots” mark the places inhabited by the assimilated or acculturated Jews, that is those “who got beyond the hoop.” The Jewish quarter of Warsaw is dominated by poor conservative Jews. Even if we take into account the activity of the socialist movements (including the Bund) or Zionist ones, domicile in that space was determined chiefly by the social status and – as one can learn from other texts – lack of complete and universal consent to the Jews’ settling in other parts of the capital.

The noticeable isolation of the Jewish quarter from other parts of the city directed attention to the existence of separate worlds functioning somewhat ‘parallel’ to each other in the same space. The narrator of Appenzlak’s novel emphasizes these forms of Varsovians’ separate life:

The ghetto seemingly [my emphasis – A. M.] did not exist: on Nalewki Street, by Simons’ Passage there was no wall blocking access to the Polish areas. The ghetto was not closed

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532 Joseph Lateiner (1853-1935) was a very popular playwright from Romania who penned many plays staged in Yiddish theaters.

533 A. Döblin, “Östlich um den Alexanderplatz,” p. 121.

534 J. Appenzlak, *Piętra. Dom na Bielańskiej* (Warsaw, 1933), p. 8.

for the night and on Christian holidays like in the past in many a European city. But after having flowed down the main arteries of Warsaw the Saturday torrent had to retreat beyond the invisible demarcation line; it returned into the riverbed.<sup>535</sup>

A similar formulation of the distinctness of the two worlds and the term 'ghetto' can be found in a text on Berlin penned by Adolf Grabowsky, who entitled his description of the Jewish quarter Ghattowanderung [Wandering in the Ghetto]. Grabowsky emphasizes that walking "along Kaiser-Wilhelm-Strasse one reaches further and further into the east of the world. Into that primordial East, characterized by great plains, heavy chernozem, wide idly-flowing rivers and very fiery dances."<sup>536</sup> This generalization, in line with the exoticization of the East preserved in the West European imagination, is supplemented with a description of the inhabitants: "Look at these peculiar individuals! Is this Berlin? *Kapote*-wearing men [the German term was *Kaftanträger* – A. M.] and curvaceous women, scruffy children loudly expressing ecstasy with eyes glowing with curiosity of the future [...]."<sup>537</sup>

That invisible wall, the existence of which was emphasized by the narrator of Appenzlak's novel, was strengthened by social stratification. Inhabitants of the separated quarters almost always returned to them, even if they happened to walk outside them (for instance, the Jews used to go for walks on Saturdays). That was connected to some extent not only with the place of residence, but also with a much more vital phenomenon, that is, the very poor or positively non-existent acceptance on the part of the dominant community.

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535 Ibid. The phenomenon of separate Jewish quarters and the term 'ghetto' appeared in European history very early. The ghetto was a separated area meant to be inhabited by Jews. The term itself originates from Italian. It was used in Venice to denote the quarter outside of which Jews could not settle (the year 1516). In the history of Europe there were also instances of prohibition from leaving the ghetto or settling elsewhere (that found its expression in, for instance, the resolutions of the Lateran councils): "The Church saw separation of Jews from Catholics as a means of preventing the latter from having contact with Jewish heresy and protecting them from the purported danger of ritual murder" (A. Unterman, *Encyklopedia tradycji i legend żydowskich*. Translated by O. Zienkiewicz, [Warsaw, 1998], pp. 99-100) [Original title: *Jews, Their Religious Beliefs and Practices* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985)].

536 A. Grabowsky, "Ghattowanderung," in *Jüdisches Städtebild Berlin*, ed. G. Mattenklott (Frankfurt am Main, 1997), p. 182. The author (1880-1969) was predominantly a political scientist, a co-founder of an antinationalist organization. Fired from a higher education institution in Berlin in 1933, he emigrated to Switzerland. Deprived of citizenship by the Nazis in 1940.

537 Ibid.



It should also be mentioned that the Jewish quarter of Warsaw was also divided internally. A detailed description of such fragmentation of space was recorded by Isaac Bashevis Singer in his 2 July 1944 article printed in the New York newspaper *Forverts* (*The Forward*):<sup>538</sup>

Warsaw Jews divided the capital city into “these” and “those” streets. It is understandable that whoever you talked to, your interlocutor always lived on the best street, the “that” street. This general division of the city was roughly the same as the northern and southern part [...]. The streets located in the southern part of Jewish Warsaw were considered good: Śliska, Pańska, Grzybowska, Twarda, Grzybowski Square, Gnojna, Krochmalna, Mariańska. It is hard to explain why their inhabitants considered themselves to be true Varsovians. Rarely did a *Litvak* get lost here, on Shabbat the Hasidic Jews strolled here in assaults on their *shtreimel*’s, and it was also here that the poorest and most conservative part of Warsaw Jews lived. [...] The “those” streets belonged to the “those” ones: Dzielna, Pawia, Gęsia, Miła, Niska, Stawki, Muranowski Square, and, above all, Nalewki and Franciszkańska. There was eternal confusion. [...] Rents in that area were high, because each inhabitant was not a small enterprise. No one would really count the factories that were located there. Noisy voices remembered the haggling voices and did not weaken even for a moment during the day. There were also houses of learning and Hasidic *shtiblech*, but they were invisible among the stores, workshops and factories that surrounded them. On the “those” streets people walked in an accelerated pace and even wanting to get somewhere nearby, they got on a streetcar. [...] Here, the Hasidim wore stiff collars and ties, because it helped in business. In this area people dreamt of building Israel and the socialist revolution. In the morning Jewish newspapers were being seized here, and here groups of *Litvaks* were hanging around the streets. [...].<sup>539</sup>

In Appenzlak’s novel, the “Saturday crowd” watched by the protagonist is characterized by its Otherness (signaled by, for instance, its distinct attire), usually perceived in the categories of radical strangeness, as an allochthonous element of the urban community of Varsovians: “This human torrent stood out in the mass of pedestrians like a current in an ocean. It was like exogenous particles, an exogenous liquid in the circulating blood of the city.”<sup>540</sup>

Here I should refer to the description of Warsaw penned by Aleksander Kraushar even though it is not a literary text. In his book entitled *Warszawa*

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538 *Forverts* (*The Forward*) – Jewish newspaper published in Yiddish, set up in the United States by Abraham Cahan in 1897, initially a daily, later a weekly (in English and Yiddish); among the authors connected with *Forverts* were Moris Rosenfeld, Icchok Baszewis Singer, Izrael Jozsua Singer, and Elie Wiesel.

539 I. B. Singer, *Felietony, eseje, wywiady*, trans. T. Kuberczyk (Warsaw, 1993), pp. 21–26.

540 J. Appenzlak, *Piętra. Dom na Bielańskiej*, p. 10.

*historyczna i dzisiejsza. Zarysy kulturalno-obyczajowe* [Warsaw in the past and now. Sketches on culture and customs], the author reports on the city's known history and writes about the history of the streets and squares and the buildings that used to stand there. Although he focuses mainly on the nineteenth-century history, when he discusses Nowolipie, Nowolipki, Bielańska, and Tłomackie Streets, Za Żelazną Bramą Square, etc., he fails to notice any traces of the Jews' presence in those spaces, which is highly telling. He gives a detailed description of the churches, cloisters, palaces, and tenements, while completely ignoring the Jewish inhabitants of Warsaw, their presence and the cultural and historical role.<sup>541</sup>

A description which much more clearly divides the city into two parts can be found in Stefan Żeromski's novel *Ludzie bezdomni* [Homeless People]. Entering the space of the Jewish quarter to visit his brother, Judym sees only indigence, dirt, and poverty. The inhabitants are portrayed in an almost caricatural manner ("sick, thin, long-nosed, greenish and brindled faces [. . .], eyes – blood-shot, tearing, or indifferent to everything"),<sup>542</sup> very poorly dressed ("There was not a single pedestrian in a top hat, and a lady in a hat was a rare sight too").<sup>543</sup> When Judym goes past Za Żelazną Bramą Square and is walking along Krochmalna

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541 This might be an expression of Kraushar's total assimilation (he and his wife received baptism in 1903). Kraushar co-worked with periodicals published by integrationists, was an advocate of assimilation, an author of numerous historical publications, a journalist, a poet, and an important figure in the cultural life of Warsaw. As Anthony Polonsky writes: "Perhaps the most important of Kraushar's historical works was his two-volume study of the Frankist movement, *Frank i frankiści polscy 1726-1816* [Frank and the Polish Frankists 1762-1816; 1895], his legal studies, and his local histories of Warsaw. He also edited his father-in-law's *Diplomataryusz dotyczący Żydów w dawnej Polsce na źródłach archiwalnych osnuty (1388-1782)* (1910) and published several volumes of poetry (kept in a conventional romantic-patriotic vein) and two volumes of memoirs. Kraushar played an active role in Polish cultural life. Particularly with the freer conditions that emerged after the Revolution of 1905, he remained faithful to his longstanding liberal principles. He participated in the creation of *Przegląd Historyczny*, cofounded the Society of History Lovers (*Towarzystwo Miłośników Historii*), helped to organize the Warsaw Scholarly Society (*Towarzystwo Naukowe Warszawskie*), and served as a member of the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences (*Polska Akademia Umiejętności*).". Qtd. after: [http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Kraushar\\_Aleksander](http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Kraushar_Aleksander), access 16 August 2015; the text referred to is A. Kraushar. *Warszawa, historyczna i dzisiejsza. Zarysy kulturalno-obyczajowe* (Lviv, 1925).

542 S. Żeromski, *Ludzie bezdomni*, ed. I. Maciejewska (Wrocław, 1987), p. 37.

543 *Ibid.*

Street he notices “Jews swarming there as usual.”<sup>544</sup> The people he saw on the crowded street were, for instance, “an old sickly Jewish woman selling cooked fava beans,” “distributors of sparkling water,” or a woman with a “yellowish dead face,” whose “clothes were so tattered that she was almost naked.” The space of Krochmalna Street is deemed “a gutter in the shape of a street,” which “reeked like a cemetery.”<sup>545</sup> Both the urban landscape of that part of the city and its inhabitants (“extremely dirty children clad in dirty rags”)<sup>546</sup> inspire nothing but revulsion and aversion. The small stores and workshops looked shabby too as Krochmalna Street was not a bourgeois street with posh stores. But in my opinion in this judgmental description one can notice a certain stereotype, a schematic way of perceiving the Jewish community. Here is one of the clearest examples: “Every such burrow accommodated a few people who spend their life jabbering and doing nothing. Siting inside was usually the father, a melancholic with a greenish complexion who sits in the same place from dawn to dusk and, looking at the street, wasting time dreaming about swindles [my emphasis – A. M.]”<sup>547</sup> The stress laid on characteristics such as “idleness” or “dreaming about swindles” places this narration dangerously close to the anti-Semitic discourse, which sets apart the Poles belonging to the Jewish community as aliens. This description of the space inhabited by residents of the Jewish quarter of Warsaw matches the pseudo-diagnoses concerning danger (for instance, the danger of fraud/swindle or the health hazard resulting from the omnipresent dirt). Mary Douglas in her book *Purity and Danger*<sup>548</sup> and after her Zygmunt Bauman pointed to the category of purity and pollution, with the latter connected with living next to people who upset the picture of reality.<sup>549</sup> In another description of the Jewish quarter, the one in *Przedwiośnie* [The Spring to Come], this space appears very peculiar to Karol and Frank who enter it. They point fingers at the “enormous Jewish wagoner holding a huge whip,” and on “Srebrna and Towarowa Streets, where due to the traffic the hackney carriage is rolling very slowly [...] the children’s eyes are popping out of their heads from curiosity.”<sup>550</sup> That Warsaw is characterized

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544 Ibid., p. 35.

545 Ibid.

546 Ibid., p. 36.

547 Ibid.

548 M. Douglas, *Purity and Danger* (Routledge and Keegan Paul, 1966).

549 Z. Bauman, “Sen o czystości,” in *Naród, władza, społeczeństwo. Nation, power, society. Księga dedykowana Jerzemu J. Wiatrowi. Essays in honour of Jerzy J. Wiatr*, ed. A. Jasińska-Kania, J. Raciborski (Warsaw, 1996), pp. 17 ff.

550 S. Żeromski, *Ludzie bezdomni*, pp. 262 ff.

not only by congestion, crush, and loud cries. It is an area of “dirty tenements” and “wild shapes of factory walls,” a place where among the “suffocating walls the panes [. . .] dazzle with a glow which is not their own, which is alien to their nature.”<sup>551</sup> Similarly to Żeromski, Helena Boguszewska takes note, in the formula of documentary prose, of the claustrophobic quality of Krochmalna Street, which she describes as a place “forever [cut off] from air, open space, [. . .] squares and gardens.”<sup>552</sup>

In Gojawiczyńska's novel *Dziewczęta z Nowolipek* [Girls from Nowolipki Street] the reader encounters a literary topography. Here is a description of urban traffic in this part of the Jewish quarter:

Enormous horse-drawn wagons full of crates. Loaded with rumbling, empty barrels, thundering ironware, and coal. In the windows of tall and bleak tenements there was hardly any lamp light [. . .]. Lugubrious tatters of net curtains hung wistfully in the shadow, behind the turbid window panes. Odors bellowed out of the small taverns sunken in the ground. Loud music was coming out of the corner restaurants. By liqueur stores men forcefully slapped the bottoms of the bottles with open palms.<sup>553</sup>

One must bear in mind that in descriptions penned by other authors streets such as Ciepła or Krochmalna were not presented as spaces of order and harmony either. But as in Wanda Melcer's reportage we have to do here with a curious evaluation of the Jewish inhabitants of the capital, which is indicative of internalized modes of perception.

Painting kind of a portrait of the city, in addition to describing streets such as Marszałkowska or, Aleje Ujazdowskie or the Powiśle quarter, Zbigniew Uniłowski also presented the Jewish quarter as an exceptional habitat, completely alien and not contributing to any harmonious place in the capital's space. The expressions he uses now seem exceptionally strong (and shocking). The Jewish quarter is deemed an “urban abscess,” while in the spring “[t]he microbes of the gloomy ghetto crawl out [. . .] of the stinking shelters, stretch out their fragile frames and [. . .] begin to bustle more vigorously. [. . .] Trade begins, but it is actually caricatural and grotesque [. . .]. The dirty trickle of sale and purchase of goods as miserable as these creatures' entire existence trickles down the narrow veinlets of the stuffy alleys.”<sup>554</sup> The bleary-eyed Jewish inhabitants, who do not speak but

551 Ibid., p. 263.

552 H. Boguszewska, “Bijące serce Woli,” in *Przedmieście*, with H. Kraheńska's foreword (Warsaw, 1934), p. 24.

553 P. Gojawiczyńska, *Dziewczęta z Nowolipek* (Warsaw, 1973). 13.

554 Z. Uniłowski, “Moja Warszawa,” in his, *Wspólny pokój i inne utwory*, ed. B. Faron (Wrocław-Cracow, 1976), p. 325.

“slurp and babble,” are described using completely deprecating language: “Jewish children crawl like blind animals on all fours in between the gutters and heaps of manure, on the littered and uneven cobblestones.”<sup>555</sup>

But in many instances it occurs that the space of Krochmalna or more broadly speaking Nalewki Street is, and this should be emphasized, a special Polish-Jewish shared place. For Judym enters this sphere of poverty, illnesses, and ugliness to visit his brother Wiktor. The former clearly sees the fundamental dissonance between the two worlds – the modernizing city juxtaposed with the reality of poverty and chaos. He feels alienated when he approaches his aunt Pelagia to greet her: “It was unpleasant for him to greet her in the square, watched by residents and bystanders. He experienced an unpleasant sense of semi-revulsion [. . .].”<sup>556</sup>

A similar description of the place and inhabitants can be found in Uniłowski’s *Wspólny pokój* [A Shared Room], when one of the characters, Lucjan from Nowiniarska Street, looks out the window:

Right before his eyes, he sees a narrow and elongated courtyard, separated from the street with an iron gate made of spears. The courtyard resembles an Eastern street; roaming about it are bearded individuals in long *kapote’s*. They are speaking Yiddish and gesticulating. The pinched-faced women are wearing wigs. By the wall stand baskets with cookies, fruit, plates, and handkerchiefs. A trembling white-haired Jew in rags is standing in the sun, moaning and slurping and babbling. This courtyard is teeming with petty life concentrated in itself – as if separate from the rest of the world.

In the narrow stone neck, there is a crowd of people haggling and arguing – they are confused, they do not see the sunshine, they do not feel the spring. Frayed with destitution, their eyes glow with a desire to obtain a few cents. And above all that the clear early-spring sky.<sup>557</sup>

Even that “early-spring” sky did not mitigate the sight of the congestion and separation in which the bizarre, exotic inhabitants of the tenement courtyard lived their life. They are distinct not only due to their attire or language – their existence is an existence focused on itself and oblivious to the surrounding world (“they do not see the sunshine, they do not feel the spring”).

Gojawiczyńska’s narrative about Nowolipki Street marks out the local space, closely connected with the heroines’ biography and origin. The description of the immediate surroundings of their place of residence (Leszno, Karmelicka, and Żelazna Streets) includes pejorative expressions – the girls walk “along stinky

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555 Ibid.

556 S. Żeromski, *Ludzie bezdomni*, p. 40.

557 Z. Uniłowski, “Wspólny pokój,” in his, *Wspólny pokój i inne utwory*, pp. 22 ff.

forked streets,” they are aware that that was “the homeland, the quarter of Jewish carpenter’s and turner’s workshops.”<sup>558</sup> The center of the world was the tenement, the annex in the courtyard or, like in the case of the poorest of them, Franka, the experience of actual homelessness. Franka, who “was without a home” (she crashed in her aunt’s basement apartment or slept in the apartment where her mother worked as a servant), liked peeping into lit flats to watch how other people live.

In *Warszawa* [Warsaw], the second part of Asch’s trilogy, the reader encounters Polish neighbors living among the Jewish population of the city. The construction of “the typical tenement [. . .] with a labyrinth of courtyards” enabled Asch to portray the multitude and diversity of the stances represented by the neighbors – from a baker through a butcher and a leather trader to “nature physician” Mr. Kwiatkowski – a platonic, hunch-backed lover of women, a revolutionary, and the sole non-Jewish resident. Interestingly enough, this version of urban life focuses almost exclusively on the Jewish milieu. Even when we read about socialists’ debates or pacifists’ visions originating from the theosophical trends at the turn of the century, we encounter neither a conflict nor a bond with Polish inhabitants of Warsaw. The only Pole whom we get to know as a resident of the tenement is Kwiatkowski. The other residents know little about him: “Nobody could say why he came there or what kept him in that Jewish tenement, which was not particularly clean. The door to his apartment was the only one with a picture of a saint above it and every year the letters K. C. B., which represent the Three Kings, appeared on it,” which “evoked an unspecified sense of dread” on the part of the remaining tenants.<sup>559</sup> Although his relations with his Jewish neighbors were far from familiarity, that “nature physician” offered lodgings to a young escapee from the *shtetl* recommended by Mrs. Hurwicz. He justified his decision in a very stereotypical way: “Our country needs intellectuals [. . .] And you, Jews, are said to be smart.”<sup>560</sup> Later he demanded to be included in the campaign of a solidary establishment of a soup kitchen and to count in his donations. Normally relations between the Polish tenant and the Jews around him were more ambivalent. The behavior of Kwiatkowski, who the Jews simply called a *goy*, varied:

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558 P. Gojawiczyńska, *Dziewczęta z Nowolipek*, p. 6.

559 Sh. Asch, *Warszawa*, trans W. Rogowicz (Warsaw, 1931), p. 43 [English edition: *Three Cities* (Carol and Graf Pub, 1983).

560 *Ibid.*, p. 30. The hero says this mixing Polish and Yiddish: “Wy *yidele* macie dobre *kiepele*.”

Sometimes, or even most of the time, he was [...] incredibly polite. He bowed when people greeted him and he talked with [...] his neighbors, eager to demonstrate command of their language. When he was in a particularly good mood, in an act of humorous exaggeration, he would incorporate Hebrew words he had picked up, but whose meaning he could not apply. Sometimes, however, [...] he was “angry” with the neighbors for no reason. On such occasions [...] he did not respond to greetings and mumbled “ragamuffins” into his brushlike beard.<sup>561</sup>

In this case the space of the tenement is the common space, but even though it is shared by the residents, it is not free of mutual stereotypical perceptions. Even when Kwiatkowski offers to rent a room to Hurwicz’s poor student, he interjects a characteristic remark in a conversation with the teacher’s wife: “Do you think that I do not understand these things? But you, Jews, are always like that! You believe that only you are capable of compassion, that only you can help, while others cannot! We must help one another, all of us, not in the way you, Jews, do it. You turn only to your own folk and you refuse to listen about others.”<sup>562</sup> Another time when we learn about the Polish neighbor’s engagement in the life of the Jewish community of tenants is when in particularly harsh times Mrs. Hurwicz comes up with an initiative to set up a soup kitchen. The space of the urban tenement becomes a community irrespectively of its members’ ethnic affiliation or level of orthodoxy: “All tenants were willing to help. The entire staff of Berek’s ‘factory’ turned up [all of its employees were Hasidim – A. M.]. Even Mr. Kwiatkowski [...].”<sup>563</sup> Deeply convinced that “[w]hen Jews undertake something they know what they are doing,”<sup>564</sup> the “nature physician” comes to a meeting to express his indignation. Let me quote a fragment of a dialog between the tenants:

“What is this supposed to mean? Am I not your neighbor?” he cried out in a mixture of Yiddish and Polish. “Why did you not call me? Jews like to keep everything to themselves and to ‘organize Shabbat’ only for themselves. This is not right. We must stick together. We must be solidary. [...] I understand what this is about. I do,” he said making a gesture as if he meant some secret organization.

“What do you understand, Mr. Kwiatkowski?” cried the scared Jews. “Why, we only want to set up a soup kitchen.”

“A soup kitchen? Let there be one but I too wish to be a part of it! I too am one of the neighbors!”<sup>565</sup>

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561 Ibid., p. 44.

562 Ibid., pp. 45-46.

563 Ibid., p. 221.

564 Ibid.

565 Ibid.

Yet again, what is created is the community of the Polish-Jewish space, a contact zone at the urban tenement. This enables its tenants to establish not only superficial relations but also neighborly ones, which the Polish character emphasizes several times.

In Asch's novel, the division present in the space of Warsaw is funded not only on the Jewish quarter's ethnic separateness from the remaining parts of the city. A different stratification emerges when the divisions are dictated by the economic/class criterion. During his stay in Jewish Warsaw, Mirkin, who arrived from the rich city of St. Petersburg, experienced not only the different religiosity exhibited by Polish Jews, but he also took note of universal poverty and backwardness:

The Jewish poverty surrounded Mirkin all around: it cried from every door, every window, every face, and everybody. [. . .] Although he lived in one of the largest cities in Europe, he felt like in some faraway desert locality in Asia which has been forgotten by the world. Somewhere far away the world was taking gigantic steps towards its future, a bright tomorrow, civilization, and progress, whereas this mass concentrated in the enormous city has been left in a quagmire.<sup>566</sup>

The category of Asianism was often synonymous with civilizational backwardness, underdevelopment, universal poverty, and sometimes also a kind of peculiar 'exoticism.' In most cases, however, that perception of the space of the East European cities was exhibited by Jews who came from the West. But Asch's character came to Warsaw from St. Petersburg, where he did not have a chance to see universal poverty of the Jewish masses for despite the lifting of the bans in the late nineteenth century, the Russian capital had a relatively small population of Jews, many of whom came from wealthy and educated families.<sup>567</sup> In Asch's narrative, Mirkin embodies, on the one hand, those fascinated with the types of religiosity encountered in the East European diaspora, and, on the other hand, becomes to some extent a symbolic figure of the Jewish youth from well-to-do families who noticed the universal poverty and backwardness and engaged in various projects aimed at bettering the socio-economic situation of the poorest Jewish strata.

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566 Ibid., p. 235.

567 The Jewish cultural life in St. Petersburg had been flourishing since the late nineteenth century. The Society for Promotion of Enlightenment was established and the first Yiddish newspaper in Russia, *Der Fraind*, was published during 1903-1908. See "Petersburg", in *Nowy Leksykon Judaistyczny*, p. 654.



Noticing predominantly the distinctness of that space, Döblin gives a different portrayal of Nalewki Street – “the main artery of the Jewish district.” Although “[t]rolleys run along Nalewki Street [. . .] [t]he houses have the same façades as most of houses in Warsaw, crumbling and unclean.”<sup>568</sup> The tenements are excessively developed – they have two or three annexes; it is possible to walk from one courtyard to another. According to the reporter, the courtyards are “full of loud people, Jews, mostly in caftans.” In this part of the Jewish quarter located are numerous small and large enterprises, which are trying to stand out: “Dozens of variegated signs indicate: hides, furs, ladies’ suits, hats, luggage”<sup>569</sup> and when one looks in the direction of Długa Street one can see “large, open, modern storehouses: cosmetics, stamps, textiles.”<sup>570</sup> At the same time the visitor from Germany takes note of the local poverty: “Lots of dirty, raggedy caftans. [. . .] Five utterly shabby men sit in a row outside a house entrance, ropes tied around their waists: porters. Yiddish newspapers are hawked. Men emerge from the huge deep shops, toting sacks. How horribly tattered they are [. . .].”<sup>571</sup> But unlike the other authors, Döblin also takes note of other figures present on the streets of the Jewish quarter – young fashionable men “in clean caftans with their wives in modern garb and piquant Polish makeup. A boy in a sailor’s suit is with them, his cap says ‘Torpedo’ [. . .] Young girls stroll arm in arm, they don’t look very Jewish, they laugh, speak Yiddish, their clothes are Polish down to the fine stockings.”<sup>572</sup> He also notices one more element of Polishness in the Jewish space – “A Polish policeman is directing vehicular traffic in the roadway.” Döblin makes a spot-on diagnosis – this is a meeting point between two nations.<sup>573</sup>

Hence, Nalewki and Krochmalna Streets – two faces of Jewish Warsaw – can be regarded as highly curious spaces. Although located at the heart of the Jewish quarter in Warsaw, Krochmalna Street appears to readers as totally separate. It was usually described in precisely that way – as a curiosity. However, as I have tried to show above, some texts show that the street was the most common Polish-Jewish shared space, where three social categories met, with the first one being the poorest people (in Żeromski’s, Appenzlak’s, Asch’s, and Gojawiczyńska’s texts), the second prostitutes (Dąbrowski) and criminals (Nagiel), and the third

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568 A. Döblin, *Journey to Poland*, trans. Joachim Neugroschel, ed. Heinz Graber (New York: Paragon House Publishers, 1991), p. 51.

569 *Ibid.*, p. 52.

570 *Ibid.*

571 *Ibid.*

572 *Ibid.*

573 *Ibid.*

those whom the reporter saw as having contact with the sphere of Polishness and aspiring to the Polish world, which was seen as superior (Döblin).<sup>574</sup>

Same as in Warsaw, the distinctness of the Jewish quarter in Berlin was marked with its inhabitants' Otherness. In Sommerfeld's novel *Das Ghetto von Berlin* [The Ghetto in Berlin] even the very title is important as for both the author and many of his contemporaries the Berlin quarter known as Scheunenviertel resembled a ghetto. It was inhabited chiefly by Jewish immigrants from the East European diaspora who had been coming to the German capital since the 1880s, often with an intention to later continue their journey to America. Nevertheless, many *Ostjuden* lived in that relatively infamous urban space for many years. It was a quarter of the poor, often completely destitute, the homeless, and beggars. Some of the streets were areas of the activity of prostitutes and their 'patrons'. It was only after 1906 that some of the buildings were demolished, the narrow streets were broadened, and the quarter was rebuilt. In Sommerfeld's novel, which is an example of popular fiction, one encounters the following description: "A ghetto of immigrants from the East, Russia, Poland, and Galicia. In summertime, Grenadierstrasse, which we recognize immediately because of the store signs written in the Hebrew alphabet and the strange surnames, is as crowded as market places in Galicia or Poland."<sup>575</sup>

A slightly different, humorous perspective of looking at Berlin as a city of commerce is offered by Sholem Aleichem. Entitled *Marienbad*, his novel in letters (and wires!) begins with a description of a heroine's short stay in that fascinating urban space. "And how is it possible to be in Berlin and not step into Wertheimer's for a minute? If you would see Wertheimer's just once, you would say that it is not to be believed,"<sup>576</sup> writes Belcia Kurlender to her husband. Impressed with the wide selection of products available at the enormous department store, the heroine makes a long list of all the things one can buy there. She describes the crowds, commotion, and babble of voices as well as the

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574 I refer to Henryk Nagiel's prose, that is, his novel *Tajemnice Nalewek* [Mysteries of Nalewki Street] and the narrative from the volume *Na zachód od Zanzibaru* in the chapter entitled "The City and Vice." The dislocation of symbolic 'Argentina' – the transfer of the description of the phenomenon of popular prostitution into the space of the Muranów quarter – is a reference to the somewhat shared fate of Jewish and Polish women.

575 A. Sommerfeld, *Das Ghetto von Berlin. Aus dem Scheunenviertel. Ein Kriminalroman* (Berlin, 1992), pp. 5 ff.

576 Sh. Aleichem, *Marienbad*, trans. A. Shevrin (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1982), p. 26.

excitement of shopping: “never did I imagine that on this earth there could be such a store.”<sup>577</sup> The shopping at Wertheim’s she has done and that which she is planning ultimately convinces her “Vienna is, they say, a provincial town, a nothing compared to Berlin.”<sup>578</sup> The heroine’s skeptical husband tries to relativize her infatuation with the city’s distinctness: “[. . .] I can’t begin to understand what there is to see in Berlin. I picture a big city, three times, five times, ten times as big as Warsaw with nicer, taller buildings, a great deal nicer, a great deal taller. So what’s so wonderful about that?”<sup>579</sup> As seen by the wife, the city is painted from a peculiar perspective:

You can see more in Berlin in one day than you can see in thirty years in Warsaw. In addition to Wertheimer’s and Tietz’s and other big stores, there is a Wintergarden and an Apollo Theater and a Schumann Circus and a Busch Circus. They even say there is a Luna Park that’s not to be described!<sup>580</sup>

Hence, there are places of material abundance like the enormous department stores, and at the same time the mysterious spaces luring one in with promises of unknown experiences and new sensations, which bring to mind dark, hidden inclinations. This convergence defines the urban appeal.

Same as in the Polish capital, in the German one the spatial divisions are marked predominantly by different clothes worn by the locals, their use of a language different from the official and universally accepted one, and, last but not least, their similar financial status, universal poverty, and attachment to the tradition of East European Judaism. The two Jewish quarters’ exoticism is noticed by other inhabitants of the urban spaces, both those originating from the ethnic majority and those from the group of assimilated Jews.

When explaining to the reader the features distinguishing the Jewish quarter of Berlin, the author of the novel entitled *Grenadierstrasse*, Fischl Schneersohn, introduces information regarding the relations between the city’s inhabitants and newcomers from the East European diaspora:

Jews from Poland and Galicia lived in Grenadierstrasse in line with the Hasidic tradition. There were Hasidic *shuls* and *shtiebels* in that neighborhood. Germans, particularly German Jews, called that part of the city “the *Ostjuden* quarter” or simply “Grenadierstrasse.” Those terms were uttered in such a tone as if they were inhabited by people from a different planet.<sup>581</sup>

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577 Ibid.

578 Ibid., p. 27.

579 Ibid., p. 44.

580 Ibid., p. 32.

581 F. Schneersohn, *Grenadierstrasse*, p. 20.

The emphasis laid on the way in which Scheunenviertel residents were perceived by German Jews is highly significant. The author is well aware of the two group's mutual strangeness and often also mutual aversion, although that might have stemmed predominantly from the separate development of Judaism in Western and Eastern Europe. That division of the diaspora seemed particularly clear in urban spaces like Berlin or Warsaw, but the ratio of the Jews who lived as members of the assimilated group and those who were undergoing acculturation differed in various urban quarters.

The narrator of Schneersohn's novel emphasizes the ambivalence in the evaluation and definition of the space:

To the elegant, wealthy German Jews from the western part of Berlin Grenadierstrasse sounds ambiguous. One the one hand, repulsively – long beards and long *kapote's*; it smells foul, is old-fashioned and pre-historic, impoverished, and swarming with beggars and immigrants. On the other hand, so elusive and abundant, it also sounds very tempting and attractive with its traditional rooting, fiery fanaticism, almost legendary religious devotion, and the patiently endured suffering.<sup>582</sup>

The perception of the Jews from the East European diaspora was connected not only with their peculiar appearance, which seemed exotic in Berlin. The *Ostjuden's* distinctness was often treated as a source of hope for revival of an intense spiritual life.

In Sammy Gronemann's novel the reader encounters a similar description of the Jewish quarter of Berlin, which involves exoticization of that space, same as in the texts quoted above. The streets of that quarter seemed completely alien to the character who came there: "perplexed, he looked round, asking himself whether he did not already need a visa in his passport."<sup>583</sup> Mystified, he watched the forms of the *Ostjuden's* functioning in the city which were completely alien to him. It occurred that that sense of strangeness was connected with not only the store signs and inscriptions in an unknown language (Hebrew alphabet) or 'Orientially-looking' women and men with faces decorated with sideburns and dressed in the characteristic *kapote's* (the *Ostjuden* were sometimes called *Kaftanjuden*). Their presence changed the character of the urban space even further – for the street transformed into a square where violent debates, councils, and meetings took place. One could say that the author himself emphasized the certain dislocation when he wrote that the character "was no longer in Berlin or Germany, but in some miraculous and mysterious way had been moved to a

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582 Ibid.

583 S. Gronemann, *Tohuwabohu*, afterword by J. Schlör (Berlin, 2000), p. 214.

small Jewish town in Russia or Galicia.”<sup>584</sup> At the same time, while walking in the quarter the captivated character watched that exoticism, noticing the stateliness of the old patriarchs or the almost Biblical beauty of the young women.

The similarity between the space of the Jewish quarter in Berlin and the phenomena known from the East European childhood and youth were also pinpointed by Aleksander Granach in his autobiographical narration:

I was instructed how to get to Scheunenviertel. Suddenly, in the center of Berlin I found myself in a space similar to that in Lviv [. . .]. Narrow and dark alleys with stalls on the corners selling fruit and vegetables. [...] Same as on Zosyna Volya in Stanyslaviv or Shpytalna in Lviv. Lots of stores, restaurants, and groceries selling eggs, milk, and butter, and bakeries with signs saying “kosher.”<sup>585</sup>

In his cycle of reportages Bernard Singer also discusses the mutual relations. When he takes note of the violence experienced by Jews in Germany in the 1930s, he emphasizes the change in the mutual relations which until then had often taken the form of scorn and isolation: “The German Jew deliberately distanced himself from the Eastern Jew, seemingly so as not to be held accountable by the Germans for the *Ostjuden*’s actions. He was willing to give to charity for the Jewish poor’s subsistence, he donated money to poor Jews in Poland or Lithuania but on condition that they would be as kind as not to come Germany.”<sup>586</sup> He emphasizes the many years of the establishment and functioning of the two Jewish worlds in the Berlin space.

In the reportage the city becomes marked with the use of physical violence against the Jews, predominantly against those who came from Poland. Describing the wave of brutality which affected the Jewish inhabitants of the German capital in 1933 (the cycle bears a telling title – *L’ordre regne à Germania*), Bernard Singer points to the particularly bad treatment of the *Ostjuden* by the police and local authorities. At the same time he makes a characteristic distinction between the different versions of the Jewish identity, which is also connected with reactions to the persecutions suffered:

[. . .] a clear distinction should be made between the plight of Eastern Jews and the calamity of the German ones. The former Jew looks at the events of the last several days nervously, examining his passport and readying himself to become a wanderer, while the latter is petrified, confused, and does not know what to do. On the one hand, there is the Jewish nationality, and on the other hand – the Germans who are members of

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584 Ibid.

585 A. Granach, *Da geht ein Mensch*, (Berlin 2007), p. 205.

586 B. Singer, *W krajach Hitlera i Stalina. Reportaże* (Warsaw, 2007), p. 99.

Judaism. The latter have tied their lot with the lot of the German nation. [...] They have not taken the enemy seriously. [...] Even now they look about confused not knowing what to do. They are in a state of complete suspension, lacking the courage and power to suddenly become a nation. [...] The situation of Eastern Jews is different. They came here to flee persecutions in the East. They have acclimatized in their own way. The German Jews have not absorbed the Eastern Jews.<sup>587</sup>

Emphasized in this description, the kind of parallel existence of the two Jewish worlds in Berlin, has no equally clear equivalent in the Warsaw space. Although assimilation and acculturation were processes which could be observed in the history of Polish Jews since as early as the mid-nineteenth century, they never assumed such a mass character like in the case of German Jews.

One could liken the role of Grenadierstrasse to that which Krochmalna Street played in Warsaw. The two streets were symbolic markers of the Jewish urban spaces' separateness. But there were also common spheres, places which were conducive to mutual contacts between various inhabitants or made them inevitable. Distinguishing division spheres, at the same time one should point to the spheres called contact zones in line with Pratt's conception. One type of contact zones was tenements inhabited by tenants who differed in terms of ethnicity or the way they defined their own identity, but shared a financial status. The examples listed above (Żeromski and Asch) can be supplemented with that of the community of the Polish-Jewish space recorded in Gojawiczyńska's novel: "[...] on Nowolipki Street everybody knew that the cobbler's name was Fiszel. The washerwoman was widow named Janowa. Dresses were sewn by Mrs. Podgórska."<sup>588</sup> However, the front apartment on the second floor was inhabited by the wealthy Rubinrot sisters from a petty bourgeois Jewish family whose surname and names – Rózia, Sabina, Regina – had already been Polonized. Bored, they sought contact with girls their age whom they invited to tea ("but you had to wash your hands and it was boring there").<sup>589</sup>

The neighborhood formula not only marked the space inhabited by the two ethnic groups, but was often also connected with contacts and mutual help. Wealthy Mrs. Rubinrot, who lived in the best apartment, lends ten rubles to the Mossakowskis' daughter for her to pay a deposit and start working in a laundrette on Niska Street.<sup>590</sup> When grateful Janka bursts into tears, in the lender's

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587 Ibid., pp. 25-26.

588 P. Gojawiczyńska, *Dziewczęta z Nowolipek*, p. 13.

589 Ibid., p. 7.

590 Ibid., p. 170.

response one can notice a stereotypical mode of behavior for she instructs her: "Go take care of business instead of crying."<sup>591</sup>

A secondary or even tertiary character in *Wspólny pokój* is a watchwoman, who lives with her sister and brings Lucjan documents needed to register a tenant. She carefully defines her own place in the social structure and describes her lot: "One lives off Jews' charity. There is two of us here, for there is also my sister [. . .]. We have always prayed and Our Lord hasn't forgotten that for we have some bread to eat and board and 60 zlotys per month. There is a church nearby so one can stand living with these Jews."<sup>592</sup> The neighborly coexistence – the necessity of being in the given place – does not create a community but rather results in indifferent coexistence.

In Gojawiczyńska's *Dziewczęta z Nowolipek* the emphasis laid on the Polish-Jewish co-existence is also connected with the experience of everydayness, for instance, knowledge of Jewish holidays. On Fridays Shabbat was observed in the entire neighborhood: "It was just quiet. Wagons had driven off somewhere. Coal and iron and empty barrels had already been delivered. The store windows were dark. And in homes, behind tiny window panes, glistened golden glimmers of candles in silver candlesticks. Shiny tablecloths now cover the poor, maimed tables. It was Friday, the festival of Shabbat. The turner had surely already closed the turnery!"<sup>593</sup> The presence of the Jewish community is why in the Polish language appear words originating from an entirely different tradition but used as obvious and understandable. One of the many examples is a phrase uttered by one of the heroines. When poor Anielcia has worn down her shoes, her mother informed her: "[. . .] I have already spoken with Fiszel. He will fix your shoes on credit on Saturday after Shabbat."<sup>594</sup>

Similar shared spheres/contact zones can be found in Uniłowski's novel. Two characters, Lucjan and Zygmunt, are engaged in a telltale dialog:

Listen, Zygmunt, before you came somebody was singing so beautifully downstairs that I was amazed, I'm telling you.

"Oh, it was the furrier. The Jew who works in the furriery howls like that every morning. On Krasiński Square, there are plenty of fur stores and the workshops overlook the courtyard. It sometimes gets my goat when this scoundrel starts howling, and it's always in the morning when the weather's good. The rest of them bang hammers – they stretch

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591 Ibid., p. 176.

592 Z. Uniłowski, *Wspólny pokój*, p. 36.

593 P. Gojawiczyńska, *Dziewczęta z Nowolipek*, p. 14.

594 Ibid., p. 92.

out furs on a board and drive in nails. Oh, I've long meant to teach this howler a lesson [. . .]. What, you like it? Well, maybe I'm not musical."

"I did enjoy his singing a lot. Tell me, doesn't this street seem to you a remote part of some eastern town? These people, this strange bubble?"

"Yes, one can get such an impression. Why, everybody who lives here is Jewish. Do you know that in this tenement we are the only Christians aside these two sisters, these watchwomen from downstairs. What you call a street is no street at all but an ordinary courtyard between two tenements. These tenements are long. I don't know what these ragmen roam about there for. [. . .] They trade and shout. There's no plague that could take them.

"My dear friend, you want to send a plague onto this poor man [. . .]? Just think how much he can make in a day. A zloty."

"Don't pretend to be such an altruist. Go on Saturday to Mała [café – A. M.] and I guarantee that you'll see him in a suit tailored according to the latest fashion. He'll be sitting there with an English newspaper. I have no idea what these kikes live off. It's a mystery. When you see them on a holiday you won't recognize these ragmen because they look like lords.

"You're exaggerating."

"I am. [. . .] But you have to have plenty of imagination to associate this place with the East, for as a matter of fact we're in a gloomy city in a sad country, in a dirty Jewish quarter. Yes, you fantast. I'm dreaming of a room just for myself, somewhere on Moniuszki or Warecka Street. [. . .] Ha, the East!"<sup>595</sup>

The quoted utterances about the Jews inhabiting the quarter make it possible to look at the Polish-Jewish co-existence from two perspectives. From the xenophobic point of view, Uniłowski mentions the "dirty" Jewish quarter, the "howling," trading, and "rumpus." Moreover, the Jewish inhabitants are called "ragmen" or, pejoratively, kikes (*gudłaje*). The other perspective consists in perceiving the Jews as personifications of exoticism, the fanciful East. They seem interesting because of their distinctness. Uniłowski does not say that the Warsaw space is as much a place of residence for Jewish Varsovians as for the Polish ones. The Jews are clearly the Other, automatically associated with mystery and peculiarity (similar exoticization was done by Wanda Melcer).

This is how Uniłowski's character expresses his awareness of yet another way of looking at the Jewish inhabitants of the Polish capital:

[. . .] Those downstairs keep on moving and jabbering. How different and at the same time identical is this petty and dirty Jew who sells combs for five groszes and the one in a coat narrow at the waist who is sitting at Ziemiańska [café]. Bowed over the basket full of small combs, the Jew does not even advertise his merchandise and only cries

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595 Z. Uniłowski, *Wspólny pokój*, p. 36.



incessantly: “Five groszes a piece, five groszes a piece.” Why, the only difference between him and his brother is the coat. Aside from that they have similar faces and the same arrogance. Lucjan turned round from the window: “I’m a stupid guy and an ordinary anti-Semite. Why am I thinking about these scoundrels at all?”<sup>596</sup>

From this perspective, both the “petty and dirty Jew” and the assimilated member of elite cultural circles share the same identity trait – “arrogance.” Lucjan calls himself an anti-Semite, but at the same time includes in the group of those whom he dislikes all Jewish Varsovians whom he is acquainted with. He calls them “scoundrels,” which probably results from his many complexes.

A contact zone different than the neighborhood was the specific places in the quarter connected with commerce. Mutual contacts were established when the people noticed that the “elderly Jewish woman who used to sell sprats in winter, now had cooked peas and a wooden measuring cup in her basket”<sup>597</sup> and when they purchased particular products at the “Nowolipie market,”<sup>598</sup> on Długa Street, which was the place to go to buy hats,<sup>599</sup> or, last but not least, “at Grimm’s store on Rymarska Street, which sold various mandolins: from 3 to 40 rubbles, but there might have been more expensive ones.”<sup>600</sup>

A special place in Warsaw was market halls, particularly the Mirowska Market Hall, which had been one of the commercial centers since the early twentieth century. “Walking into the Hall, one enters the dim cold, permeated with the odor of fish. [. . .] Her palms damp, a female Jewish stallholder throws the individual carcasses onto the scale and wraps the fish – which is moving its round mouth, dying in the alien element – in a newspaper so as to hand it the hungry customer.”<sup>601</sup> Döblin also reminisces about this part of Warsaw, reporting on the appearance of the urban surroundings as well as the sellers and customers: “A huge yellow building stands athwart the square, a modern market hall. The entire left side of the forecourt is covered with piles of dirty straw, empty baskets. A small row of fruit stands runs all the way to the entrance.”<sup>602</sup> In the German author’s work, we also find less popular reflections similar to those articulated by the narrator of Uniłowski’s prose: “Then I pass through this hall: fish, fish, fish, basins of water, dead, live fish. A new market begins at the rear of the hall: gewgaws,

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596 *Ibid.*, pp. 23–24.

597 P. Gojawiczyńska, *Dziewczęta z Nowolipiek*, p. 11.

598 *Ibid.*, p. 23–24.

599 See *ibid.*, p. 24.

600 *Ibid.*, p. 31.

601 Z. Uniłowski, “Moja Warszawa,” p. 327.

602 A. Döblin, *Journey to Poland*, p. 21.

clothes. And the second hall: butter, cheese, as well as fruit. Here, almost only Jews are dickerings; in caftans, skullcaps.”<sup>603</sup>

And in the evening, like in Uniłowski’s novel, when the trade for the day was done: “At the mouth of Krochmalna Street we encounter groups of broad-shouldered, tired Jewish porters. Kids crawl into their burrows. In the red, flickering glow of candles and kerosene lamps move women’s heads with unkempt hair and faces contorted with worry about the next day.”<sup>604</sup>

Yet another possible meeting place between the Polish and Jewish world is the spheres connected with professional life (the laborers’ status and the owner’s daughter): “Regina came to her father, to the hat factory. It was noon and the laborers were eating lunch from their small pots. She sat down and talked with them. They let her taste the soup and she did not care at all that it was tref.”<sup>605</sup>

Street prostitution was a frequent phenomenon in the urban space. The capital city proved a space where both Polish and Jewish girls shared the same fate of misery and moral downfall. In Gojawiczyńska’s novel the watchwoman lists all the young women who have had such experiences. She also points to her own experience with her daughter and also lists the names and surnames of others, including “Rózia Fiszlów whom my Józek saw with his own eyes standing on a street corner. This is what her beloved has made of her.”<sup>606</sup>

Urszula Glensk pointed to Jan Dąbrowski’s reportage *Na Zachód od Zanzibaru* [West of Zanzibar], which discussed the girls’ moral downfall. Among the characteristic features of that narration she included allusions to Argentina (Buenos Aires as the symbol of a place with a marked presence of prostitutes from Central-Eastern Europe).

This is how Urszula Glensk characterized that form of reportage: “Dąbrowski’s Argentina lies in the Jewish quarter of Muranów, on Krochmalna Street [. . .].”<sup>607</sup> Analyzing this space, the scholar emphasizes the shared lot and place, where in “the basement brothel Polish and Jewish women work together,”<sup>608</sup> share existential fears (of STDs), and compete against one another.

Pointing to serials as a form of popular Polish-Jewish literature, Eugenia Prokop-Janiec, emphasized that in those narrations “Warsaw [. . .] was both

603 Ibid.

604 Z. Uniłowski, “Moja Warszawa,” p. 328.

605 P. Gojawiczyńska, *Dziewczęta z Nowolipiek*, p. 13.

606 Ibid., p. 59.

607 U. Glensk, *Historia słabych. Reportaż i życie w dwudziestoleciu (1918–1939)* (Cracow, 2014), p. 138.

608 Ibid., p. 139.

the northern quarter and the center with its cafés, opera houses, theaters, and cabarets.”<sup>609</sup> It occurs that plots of thrillers also specified the setting and discussed the division of the city and the crossing of the inter-ethnic spaces: “The characters wander from places in the Jewish quarter such as Nalewki Street, Dzika Street, Gęsia Street, Grzybowski Square, Żelaznej Bramy Square, or Krasiński Garden to the Polish part of the city – Krucza, Mazowiecka, Marszałkowska, and Aleje Jerozolimskie Streets, Trzech Krzyży Square, the Saxon Garden or the Skaryszewski Park.”<sup>610</sup> The scholar emphasizes that “the mono-ethnic presentation of the city is disrupted [. . .] by laying emphasis on the shared public space and the spheres of contact between groups [. . .].”<sup>611</sup>

The places which function as contact zones are chiefly streets, particularly those which serve as meeting places between inhabitants of the city who to a large extent are divided according to ethnicity. A character of Appenzlak’s novel watches the young heading for the “better streets.” They are leaving the Jewish quarter not only because it is “gloomy.” They are attracted by what made Warsaw a metropolis – the attractions absent from the poor space of Nalewki and Nowolipie Streets:

He had to slow down on Wierzbowa Street: the Saturday black human torrent was slowly flowing down the narrow riverbed of the street. The Saturday crowd was leaving the Jewish quarter to take a walk in the better, nicer quarters, not as gloomy as Dzika or Franciszkańska Streets. On Marszałkowska and Nowy Świat Streets, the crowd made up a thick and slowly moving [torrent of] lava. In the crowd dominated young faces, some flushed, others blue from the cold. Youths from the stores, boys dressed like grown-ups in tacky coats and identical hats. A swarm of black eyes casting piercing, anxious looks. Girls dressed with cheap conspicuous elegance of the flashy fashion of the common folk. They carried the babble of conversations and some heated disputes into the forking arteries of the city. They were walking through the city under the whip of electric fires, enticing cinema posters; red, green, and blue letters over cafés; past shiny limousines displayed in enormous windows of car companies; past mirror-like panes separating the street from flowers, cookies, cakes, beautiful and expensive fur coats, silverware and porcelain table sets, stunning dresses, works of art and antiques – all the wonders offered by the flourishing, solid trade in the privileged quarters.<sup>612</sup>

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609 E. Prokop-Janiec, “Międzywojenna polsko-żydowska powieść w odcinkach,” in her, *Pogranicze polsko-żydowskie. Topografie i teksty* (Cracow, 2013), p. 196.

610 *Ibid.*, pp. 196 ff.

611 *Ibid.*, p. 197.

612 J. Appenzlak, *Piętra. Dom na Bielańskiej*, pp. 6 ff.

A separate meeting space was the Old Town Market Square, described in Alter Kacyzne's novel, where the narrator emphasizes the uniqueness of that part of the Polish capital.<sup>613</sup>

It has its own unique, special atmosphere. Even the air here is completely different than in the other Warsaw quarters. And people here look different. This pertains to both Jews and non-Jews. All people here have somewhat greyish and wilted faces. As if the dust of long-gone years and past generations has eaten into the folds of their clothes and stuck to the wrinkles on their faces.<sup>614</sup>

There was some peculiar harmony between the appearance of the buildings and the characters who were staying in the Old Town: "The narrow and relatively tall tenements seem to be standing on swollen legs. For they are wider downstairs than upstairs. The grey walls slide onto the dirty sidewalk as if looking for support so as not to suddenly come tumbling down."<sup>615</sup> In yet another narration, Sholem Asch's novel *Mottke the Thief*, the Warsaw Old Town is a place of the operation of the local underworld (which I discuss in the chapter "City and Vice"). The gloomy atmosphere, the dark, the presence of the shadow people and those who are "much worse than any devil," become supplemented in Kacyzne's narration with the Madonnas in chapel niches who guard this world: "The walls are ancient, grey, and run-down, but the Madonnas shine with the clear glow of their dresses regularly and systematically painted over with heavenly azure paint."<sup>616</sup> The Market Square functions as the Old Town's heart. "[I]ts shape resembles a quadrilateral chest. Its sides are usually five-story tenements with three or four windows. [...] Every [...] tenement has its own face unlike those of any other tenement, a face that has a unique charm, a charm of an impoverished aristocrat."<sup>617</sup> The anthropomorphisation used by the author serves the purpose of painting not so much a veristic portrait as an intimate picture of that specific part of the city. The narrator looks with a similar sentiment at laborers strolling about on summer evenings or complaining elderly women who typically sit on

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613 Very interesting, particularly from the perspective of the shaping of modern Jewish identity, Alter Kacyzne's novel *Shtarke un shwakhe* [The Strong and the Weak] has not been published in Polish in full. Translated by Michał Friedman, its fragment entitled "Stare Miasto" [The Old Town] was made available within the framework of the project of Wolne Lektury [free library]. See <https://wolnelektury.pl/katalog/lektura/kacyzne-stare-miasto/>, access 10 June 2016.

614 <https://wolnelektury.pl/katalog/lektura/kacyzne-stare-miasto/>.

615 Ibid.

616 Ibid.

617 Ibid.

the steps of the pedestal of the statue of the Warsaw Mermaid in the middle of the Market Square. An evaluating reference is the emphasis laid on the community which had lasted for centuries: "Everybody knows one another. Everybody feels at home in this enormous roofless room. Here everybody feels free and breathes at ease. Jews and Poles are closer to each other here than anywhere else in Warsaw. Severe poverty affects them to the same extent. It burdens them equally too. The wealthy do not live in the Old Town. The shadows of the bygone generations of Jews and Poles are intertwined here with a mystery they share."<sup>618</sup> So it is not only the social stratification and a similar financial status that contribute to the mutual relations generated in the jointly used urban space. An additional element which shapes these relations is the secret, unknown past events.

Urban parks and public gardens were important and separate places which constituted potential contact zones. They were often places of lovers' secret meetings and public political debates.

Walking to a date set by Mrs. Rose, who was a married woman, a character of Appenzlak's novel heads for the most famous Warsaw park: "The sun was setting. It had gotten colder and the air had filled with whiteish fog. In that fog, like behind a matt pane, appeared the specter of the silhouette and lights of Aleje Ujazdowskie Street. It was almost completely deserted at that hour. Ringing bells, sledges glided by on the pure snow which still lay there. Boxes of automobiles zipped past."<sup>619</sup> Henryk, who was to meet the woman in the Łazienki Park by the statue of Chopin, "was strolling by the Park's fence. Covered with snow, the bronze willow tree of the Chopin monument was bent down, [as if] caught in a mystical wind. In the spot from which the snow had been blown off, the golden-green verdigris shone with russet glow. [. . .] Across the street was the enormous building of the Officer Cadet School."<sup>620</sup> The discreet meeting was held in a place, which, on the one hand, was marked with emblematic symbols of the city's Polishness (the Chopin statue and the Officer Cadet School) and, on the other hand, remained clearly distant from the Jewish quarter or Bielańska Street, which was something like a border between the two worlds.

A separate place – enjoyed not only by Jewish inhabitants – was the Saxon Garden, where Żeromski's character spent a few hours, reflecting on his ideas of how to transform the city. An idealist, Judym imagines that "the giant of Warsaw

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618 Ibid.

619 J. Appenzlak, *Piętra. Dom na Bielańskiej*, p. 185.

620 Ibid., pp. 185 ff.

has spread over for miles, with pine parks, smothered with trees, from which the basement and the attic have been eliminated, and where tuberculosis, smallpox, and typhus have been eradicated. . . .<sup>621</sup> But it occurs that in the afternoon the space conducive to envisioning a different world becomes radically deformed by the presence of the Other, whom Judym sees with a large doze of ambivalence and aversion: “In the evening whole hordes of Jews began to flock in. The main avenue as well as the side and all other alleys became flooded with people. [. . .] That crowd wore garish clothes. [. . .] The men had brought the cut of the fashionable clothes to a state of vulgarity, exaggeration, and absurd.”<sup>622</sup> Judym was struck by not only the women’s bright clothes or the Park frequenters who were trying to look smart. Walking across Bankowy Square towards Elektoralna Street, he uses more crude language to describe those “hordes of Jews” he saw in the park: “These black masses of heads and trunks gliding fast like ants inspired in him a sense of physical revulsion. He had an impression that he was looking at moving swarms of bugs. Mingling with the riffraff living there, beyond the Square, was unthinkable to him! Never ever! He turned round on the spot [. . .] and entered a posh restaurant.”<sup>623</sup>

Looking at the autumn Saxon Garden and the Varsovians who were there, the visitor from Berlin gets a different impression: “The beautiful yellow leaves on the branches, on the ground: they lie there like hearts. Gangs of kids are playing everywhere. Scores of governesses sit on the benches under the foliage, chatting women, young men, older men, smoking cigarettes. Whole benchloads of Jews, smoking, reading newspapers, conversing loudly; women and caftan wearers laughing and earnestly debating.”<sup>624</sup> The reporter looks at the people visiting the city park in a much more neutral way. He does not judge. Instead, he merely reports and describes the urban phenomenon of the Jewish (and perhaps not only Jewish) inhabitants of Warsaw enjoying the greenery.

To him the space of the Saxon Garden was also – from yet another perspective – a place of mutual contact; it made it possible for the two groups to get to know each other. In one of his stories Isaac Leib Peretz discusses precisely this function of the city park – “He met her by chance in the Saxon Garden when it was raining cats and dogs. She was standing in a white blouse without rubber boots under a tree. [. . .] He approached her with an umbrella and offered help.

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621 S. Żeromski, *Ludzie bezdomni*, p. 50.

622 *Ibid.*, p. 51.

623 *Ibid.*

624 A. Döblin, *Journey to Poland*, p. 22.

She hesitated. He offered help so solemnly and cordially that she gave in and let him walk her home.<sup>625</sup> The relation between the couple – the seamstress and the beginner writer – who met in the city park becomes marked with disparity, with distinction almost at the very start. When the heroine tells the newly met young man that he cannot visit her, this difference becomes articulated:

When she was saying that her voice trembled a little. A visit paid by a stranger and, making matters worse – she averted her gaze and, shaking her head and blushing, finished [the sentence] – a Jew was out of the question.

“How do you know that I am a Jew?”

She simply told by looking at him – the eyes, hair, enunciation, and, last but not least, the nose – ha, ha, ha.<sup>626</sup>

Nevertheless, the ethnic difference and the separation of the Polish world from the Jewish one and even the stereotypical perception (the nose!) were not an obstacle to their seeing each other:

In summer they met in the Saxon Garden. In winter she, though infrequently, dropped by his place for a story. Whenever she had such an intention she would leave a piece of paper with the superintendent. Today he also received such a short letter. She writes in Polish with mistakes,<sup>627</sup> but in a disarming, childlike manner: “Jew, have a story ready. A merry one about a princess. Life is sad anyway. And you can’t touch me. I don’t find you attractive. You’re so ugly. If you touch me, I’ll scream and run away. Do you hear me?!”<sup>628</sup>

Although the heroine clearly emphasizes her considerable distance towards her friend and she addresses him as “Jew,” the two of them for a while continue their meetings combined with storytelling even though the young woman is “actually afraid of Jews. She only likes his stories.”<sup>629</sup>

The Krasińskich Park serves as a point of reference to Maria Kuncewiczowa portraying the capital in the cycle of reportages entitled *Dyżans warszawski* [Warsaw Stage Coach]. The author calls it “the strangest garden in Warsaw,”<sup>630</sup> with this ‘strangeness’ being associated with, among others, the presence of Jews. By the edge of the pond stand children “in black *kapoteś*” looking at the

625 I.L. Perec, *Opowiadanie*, trans. B. Szwarzman-Czarnota, in *Martwe miasto i inne opowiadania* (Cracow, 2019).

626 Ibid.

627 As the Polish translator remarked in the original Peretz wrote: “She writes Noah [Noe] with seven mistakes.”

628 Ibid.

629 Ibid.

630 M. Kuncewiczowa, *Dyżans warszawski* (Warsaw, 1981), p. 101.

swimming swan, who is ineffectively waiting for an expected treat. The Jewish children do not know how to behave towards birds living in city parks. They are unfamiliar with the custom of feeding them bread. To the narrator the children seem scared. She notices that only one child “leans out towards the swan” and “barks quietly.”<sup>631</sup> This one-sentence commentary makes the reader notice not only the exoticization used in the depiction of the Jewish children, but also the emphasis laid on their ignorance of the natural world. Although the child “would like to come into contact with the silver neck, the only thing it knows about free, non-kosher animals is that they bark ‘woof-woof’. Thus, the child barks at the swan [. . .].”<sup>632</sup>

Supposing that urban parks, although not all, can be deemed the contact zones mentioned by Pratt, we see also that the relations between the ethnic groups inhabiting the same urban space and their mutual perception are sometimes marked with superstitions and stereotypes, which are often associated with relations of power in the specific social context.<sup>633</sup> This pertains to the kind of power over space possessed by the one who is better educated and belongs to a different social class.

Yet another perspective of the division of the city emerges when we consider the material status of the characters who are looking at a specific urban area. Gojawiczyńska’s narrator clearly marks out the borders of the worlds, the fragmentation of the space connected with the socio-economic stratification: “The Saxon Garden was a threshold, a threshold to a different world. Immediately beyond it began Marszałkowska Street, broad and sunny.”<sup>634</sup> The space beyond the world of poverty was perceived as different and better than the everydayness marked with greyness and want.

After the gates to the Saxon Garden had been closed, [inhabitants of the poor Jewish quarter], scared off the alleys with the watchmen’s rattles, would convene in groups by the pales. They would stand there for a long time, talking, laughing, shouting, and joking. They then merged with the new waves flowing along Bielańska Street and walked until the end of the main streets.

It was long after midnight when the Saturday crowd returned to their multi-story hives, the dirty, small, and stuffy dens on Niska or Muranowska Streets. The girls walked carefully in the middle [of the stairs] so as not to brush off the dirty railings or the cracked,

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631 Ibid.

632 Ibid.

633 See J.-P. Leyens, “Prejudice in Society,” in *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Science* (2001), online version, pp. 11986-11989.

634 P. Gojawiczyńska, *Dziewczęta z Nowolipek*, p. 110.



moldy plaster. They were afraid of soiling their clothes, their only Saturday's best clothes bought in installments with the money they earned for their hard work amidst the noise and uproar of small shops, offices, and workshops.<sup>635</sup>

Same as in Żeromski's novel, the quarter, where the walls turn the color of "dusty verdigris or some rusty red,"<sup>636</sup> does not seem a place of great beauty. Its inhabitants try, even if only for a while, to also spend time in that other Warsaw, on the 'better' streets and in the park.

The internal diversity in the Jewish quarter of Warsaw was sometimes apparent – it was divided into the familiar spaces and the strange ones, with the latter being attractive on account of their noticeably different material status. Heroines of Gojawiczyńska's novel experience this disparity on the occasion of a trip they make to Chłodna Street when they enter the part of the city which they are not particularly familiar with: "Was it not the same as on Nowolipki Street? The buildings were taller, yes. On the corner of Żelazna and Chłodna Streets there was Sommer's large confectionary, which one would not find on Nowolipki Street."<sup>637</sup> In that different space the girls "could stop by shop windows. The windows were larger there. And the girls walked on, stunned, stupefied, and frightened."<sup>638</sup>

In the novel *Tajemnice Nalewek* [Mysteries of Nalewki Street], which I have quoted in other chapters, there are separate and joint spaces associated with the criminal world. One of the peculiar places which could be called a contact zone, where the Christian and the Jewish communities met, was night clubs or joints which not only facilitated meetings face to face, but were also conducive to jointly planned criminal activity. One of the vital spots on the map of Warsaw was nighttime Nalewki Street, where there was

[...] perhaps the only store not closed shut at that hour [...]. Through the pane in the main, closed door one could see a faint light. On the pane was a red inscription saying "Restaurant" and two painted orange beer glasses tied with a bright yellow ribbon. [...] The rundown and dirty room inside was almost deserted. By the counter was a Jewish woman rocking half asleep and by the stove sat a young kike.<sup>639</sup>

But the front room was only a show put up for chance pedestrians. It served as cover up for the illegal activity going on under the law enforcement services'

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635 J. Appenzlak, *Piętra. Dom na Bielańskiej*, pp. 6-7.

636 S. Żeromski, *Ludzie bezdomni*, p. 37.

637 P. Gojawiczyńska, *Dziewczęta z Nowolipek*, p. 13.

638 *Ibid.*, p. 14.

639 H. Nagiel, *Tajemnice Nalewek*, vol. 2, pp. 169-170.

nose. Only those in the know had access to the next room and only after giving the password to the host called Szapsi, who was a “famous Warsaw strongman.” Deep inside the said ‘restaurant’ was a hazard room where congregated “a few dozen individuals, who looked repugnant and suspicious. Meeting them in a place where you were alone would not be particularly safe. Both Jews and Christians were there and neither the former nor the latter inspired trust. They were drinking, smoking, playing cards and dice.”<sup>640</sup>

Another kind of a second-rate diner which served poor random pedestrians was the soup kitchen. To some extent it was a contact zone not only between different social strata, but also various ethnic groups. While living in Warsaw, Mirkin, who came from a wealthy assimilated Saint Petersburg family, would sometimes drop by that place where he met the poorest Varsovians, although “[h]e would never have imagined standing in this line of people waiting for cheap food [. . .].”<sup>641</sup> Those he encountered in that urban space were chiefly homeless people and beggars, figures “with bulging eyes and swollen noses,” “ugly drunken mugs,” who made “different snide remarks” at the sight of elegant Mirkin. However, the narrator does not assign these characters to a specific ethnic group. A separate figure whose ethnicity is defined by the narrator is the “fat Polish [cook] with a moustache bleached from smoking a pipe and with an unhealthily red mug,” who hands a huge portion of soup and bread to the customer.<sup>642</sup> Unfortunately, despite the initial satisfaction felt by Mirkin who wished to experience the life of the urban folk, the food proved indigestible and he ended up vomiting in a public place, on a street where the pedestrians were passing him by and a Jewish woman unambiguously commented on his behavior: “Such an elegant man, so well dressed, but not ashamed to get drunk.”<sup>643</sup>

In literary texts one can also read about peculiar trips made into the Jewish quarter, which were a form of slightly exotic entertainment. An example of such perception of space is the walk taken by enamored Henryk and Mrs. Rose (from Appenzlak’s novel *Piętra. Dom na Bielańskiej* [Floors. Tenement on Bielańska Street]). Both the heroine, who comes from assimilated circles, and the young Polish teacher, who often reflects on his own identity, notice the different appearance of the quarter and the restaurant where they warm themselves up with vodka and tea:

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640 Ibid., p. 170; emphasis – A.M.

641 Sh. Asch, *Warszawa*, p. 150.

642 Ibid., p. 151.

643 Ibid.

They were far away, on Leszno Street, near Żelazna Street. They were passing a restaurant. The red sign was spiked with icicles. The door opened, steam tumbled in the icy air and hot, tender sounds of a Javanese melody played on a gramophone got out onto the street. Warm yellow light filtered through net curtains. [...] A genuine diner, an original place instead of the stiff comfort of downtown restaurants which she so often visited.<sup>644</sup>

Hence, for Poles and Jews the contact zones functioned not only as places of meetings between various ethnic or religious groups. The world of the Jewish quarter of Warsaw was sometimes (though perhaps rarely for the assimilated bourgeois or the intelligentsia social groups) a temporary and short-lived shared place, exotic enough to be visited once in a while, after which one returned to the familiar world one considered one's own: "They entered the brighter sphere of evening lights. They were approaching Bielańska Street."<sup>645</sup> Thus, on the one hand, people living in the poorer parts of the city, for instance, the heroines of Gojawiczyńska's novel, went on walks to the other, better lit and elegant streets, thus crossing the border of the familiar locality. On the other hand, like in Appenzlak's novel, trips to the Jewish quarter constituted a peculiar attraction to inhabitants of the aforementioned 'better' streets.

Aside joints and taverns, cafés could also act as contact zones. Sometimes a character visited downtown restaurants to experience some luxury:

On his way back from school, mincing on the melty, dirty snow on Franciszkańska Street, he decided to completely switch off his reality. On Nalewki Street he got in a taxi and told the driver to take him to Nowy Świat Street, to a restaurant. He would not have been able to eat lunch at the student cafeteria that day. He sat by the window and ordered cognac. Sunshine scattered in golden bars onto the white tablecloth, the porcelain plates and silverware. [...] He left the restaurant after four o'clock. Green and red patterns of the setting sun shone on the façades and panes.<sup>646</sup>

Taking that opportunity is connected with not only material resources, but also a sense of a being rooted in two culture. In the case of this character, to whom the Polish heritage is close, this is discussed in a direct manner. Henryk refer to Mickiewicz, Reymont, Tetmajer, Fałat, and Wyspiański, and, even more importantly, a quotation from *The Wedding*: "'This is what Poland is!' And it must be present not only in a native Pole, but also under the greasy *kapote* of a Jew from the Kazimierz quarter, who has grown into this country with a part of his entity like the ruins of Esterka's Castle in Bochothnica [...]."<sup>647</sup> He say this also to

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644 J. Appenzlak, *Piętra. Dom na Bielańskiej*, p. 124.

645 *Ibid.*, p. 130.

646 *Ibid.*, p. 184.

647 *Ibid.*, p. 188.

emphasize the connection between Jewish inhabitants of the Polish space and the entire cultural heritage.

Interestingly, Antoni Sobański, who visited Berlin twice, in 1933 and 1934, also points to relations with the culture of the country inhabited by the Jewish minority. During his first visit he noticed many changes in the German capital – the presence of the Nazi propaganda in the public space, the changed street names, and the “wave of puritanism,” as the author himself put it. During his second visit the Polish observer took note of the return to previous traditions, which as we know was only temporary. A few “excellent restaurants” once again become contact zones. “Most of them are run by Jews who tried their luck in Paris because of the situation a year ago [that is, in 1933 – A. M.], but soon began to miss Berlin.”<sup>648</sup> Sobański remarks that these restaurants are frequented mostly by bohemians, but “important government figures in uniforms or plain clothes” also can be spotted there. These are guests who “[c]ordially greet the non-Aryan host, do not complain about the jazz music and do not demand that the band play marches.”<sup>649</sup> Quite the reverse, “after singing the last New York hit [the pianist] will completely spontaneously sing ‘Ich hab’ mein Herz in Heidelberg verloren.”<sup>650</sup> Same as Appenzlak, the author of *Cywil w Berlinie* [A Civilian in Berlin] emphasizes the phenomenon of acculturation, the strong emotional connection with one’s birthplace’s culture and heritage. Same as Appenzlak’s character reflects on Warsaw and the deeply internalized Polish literature, “[t]oday the Jewish pianist is singing about Heidelberg not out of calculation, but quite the opposite – honest sentiment.”<sup>651</sup> Although Sobański thinks that this sentiment is an effect of, for instance, the authorities’ intensive promotion of the beauty of the German landscape, he remarks that “the beauty of Rhineland [. . .] is not Hitler’s doing.”<sup>652</sup> He interprets this phenomenon as attachment to one’s homeland, a kind of spatial patriotism. It seems that this ‘landscape patriotism’ can be regarded as a characteristic shared by both Polish and German Jews.

Żaneta, a heroine of Appenzlak’s novel, reminisces about Berlin cafés. An embodiment of a kind of an escape from Jewish identity, she is seeking her own place in the non-denominational milieu of cosmopolitan Europeans. She thinks that reading a Yiddish newspaper in public is an embarrassment, a disgrace in

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648 A. Sobański, *Cywil w Berlinie* (Warsaw, 2006), p 153.

649 Ibid.

650 Ibid.

651 Ibid.

652 Ibid., p. 154.

the eyes of the waiter and Christians.<sup>653</sup> The narrator lampoons the young fascinated with the European cities, the generation of those whose family fortunes enable them to study in England and go to Paris. Leitner's son and Mrs. Rose's female cousin are representatives of this group. The two of them talk about Berlin in a characteristic manner. The young woman expresses her wonder: "Or take Berlin! The tempo! Oh, Berlin! Ganz amerikanisch! Have you seen how Berlin is spreading? Do you know what Berlin is singing now? 'Der Duft, der eine schöne Frau begleitet.'<sup>654</sup> He confirms her impressions, listing new esthetic trends in a somewhat automatic way without necessarily understanding them: "As for Berlin, I completely agree with you, Miss. I was there a month ago. Their new ethics is wonderful. First class, American import. A new appraisal of values. One is worth this much. No more, no less. It's a matter-of-fact thing. No exaggeration. Die neue Sachlichkeit."<sup>655</sup> For young Leitner the café is a symbol of modernity. He reminisces about one with a telephone and a local switchboard with the use of which the customers could flirt with one another in a modern fashion.

An important element of Berlin described by Walter Benjamin was cafés, which played a special role, not only of meeting places. The constant changes, the quick transformations were permanent features of those public places which were ideal objects of the *flâneur's* observation. His scrutiny of café frequenters led to generalizing conclusions: "One of the most primitive and superfluous forms of entertainment of city dwellers, who are confined to the endlessly multiform social milieu of the family and the office, is visiting a completely different milieu, the more exotic the better."<sup>656</sup>

Wandering in the city, Benjamin does not venture into its eastern parts, which are close to a different Berlin author, Döblin, who penetrated the streets east of Alexanderplatz because he wanted to, as he declared, "palpate the periphery of the mighty West."<sup>657</sup> Evidently poorer, that periphery was marked out by the network of urban "boulevard-like"<sup>658</sup> arteries. For instance, the strip of

653 See J. Appenzlak, *Piętra. Dom na Bielańskiej*, pp. 214-217.

654 *Ibid.*, p. 213. "Der Duft, der eine schone Frau begleitet" is a 1929 famous foxtrot. See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cLJmR2NmKNQ>.

655 *Ibid.*, p. 214. The character uses the term *Neue Sachlichkeit* (New Objectivity), which he interprets in a relatively free way. Proposed by artists such as George Grosz, Otto Dix, and Max Beckmann, *Neue Sachlichkeit* was an important movement in the art of the Weimar Republic.

656 W. Benjamin, *Berliner Chronik* (Frankfurt, 1988), p. 31.

657 A. Döblin, "Östlich um den Alexanderplatz," p. 120.

658 *Ibid.*, p. 120.

greenery in the middle of Frankfurter Alee gave it “character.” Places such as cafés, which Benjamin sees in this part of the city, though still numerous, are less often frequented due to the harsh times. The proletarian atmosphere on the streets around Alexanderplatz is marked by posters dominated by the color red, owing to which “one sees colors well here;” even small leaflets of the working-class party are a “barometer of political excitement.” *Flâneur* Döblin listens in on street debates about Jewish issues and finds out that capitalism is a class issue, not a racial one. He watches debating laborers and party agitators.

The existence of cafés, joints, and restaurants plays a large role in both capital cities even though that phenomenon was widespread in urban spaces. Having gone out for a moment late in the evening, Appenzlak's protagonist meets the tenement administrator, Heine, and then the two of them go for a cup of coffee. At the same time Heine praises the existence of those peculiar places: “For many the café is an existential reservation. The last reservation. For instance, this old attorney comes here every evening. You could kill him by depriving him of evenings at the café.”<sup>659</sup> The administrator explains to the protagonist the idea of creating national parks which are to be “oases amidst the desert of materialized life.” At the same time he notices an apt analogy – in the city a similar function is performed by cafés: “Every man should have such a reservation in his soul. He might be a bank clerk, a physician, or a laborer who has his nose to the grindstone of duties. If he has a reservation it is easier for him to carry the burden of this world.”<sup>660</sup>

Cafés, restaurants, and taverns are spaces conducive to the operation of various milieus which make up the urban tissue. Marian Fuks wrote:

The favorite place [. . .] of the middle-class Jewish youth was the Oaza restaurant and dance hall on Teatralny Square. In spring and summer the center of social meetings was the famed ‘promenade’ along Miodowa Street, Senatorska Street, Teatralny and Saxon Squares (later named after Józef Piłsudski), and, of course, the Gardens: Krasińskich and Saxon, where they strolled, dropped by ‘fruiteries’ or confectionaries or engaged in animated social life.<sup>661</sup>

Fuks also takes note of an entirely separate contact zone – the ‘salons’ of the Jewish plutocracy and intelligentsia (the Toeplitzes, the Natansons, the Epsteins, and the Grossmans with their musical salon), which, before 1918, were frequented

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659 J. Appenzlak, *Piętra. Dom na Bielańskiej*, p. 174.

660 *Ibid.*, pp. 174-175.

661 M. Fuks, *Żydzi w Warszawie. Życie codzienne. Wydarzenia. Ludzie* (Poznań, 2010), p. 240.

more often by Russians than by the Polish landowners, who ignored the Jewish bourgeois (that attitude became less frequent with the assimilation processes and the emerging social relations and marriages). Nevertheless, such salons were also visited by Polish artists, musicians, and writers.<sup>662</sup>

Yet another Warsaw café described in a literary text is a place where the protagonist seeks temporary refuge. It is clearly a more elite place, frequented by those inhabitants of the Polish capital who treat it as a sphere of self-presentation and staging:

He looked round to find a free table in the café but to no avail. At that hour 'the whole Warsaw' was there. People were standing in the aisles waiting for a table. . . The babble of voices competed with the music played by the jazz band. Carrying trays, the waiters were turning left and right at the center of the room, pushed in the crowd. It seemed that the cups, pitchers, and glass goblets would fall down and break into pieces at any moment.<sup>663</sup>

The description of that Warsaw contact zone is accompanied by the narrator's ironic remark: "Everybody knew one another, at least by sight. The regular customers had reserved tables. Those in high places were drinking coffee by the central column. Nearby stood tables occupied by the finance, the bar, the press, and a clan of poets with proto-Slavic surnames and proto-Jewish facial features."<sup>664</sup>

Yet another description can be found in *Wspólny pokój* [Shared Room], which I have already quoted. Its residents go to a café frequented by various Varsovians associated with the milieu of journalists or artists. That noisy café is described by portraying the regular participants of the meetings held there:

Like clucking hens, stout buxom women squeeze in between the tables. At this hour they make up most of the audience. They talk a lot, point at one another and backbite. The men look ahead dully and chain smoke. Others are browsing through periodicals and others still are engaged in a fierce dispute. Noise, occasional laughter and lots of smoke. Elderly painters and writers are looking at the young ones indifferently and condescendingly. The young are deriding the 'old horses' disdainfully and ironically. Sitting in a corner, a bandaged editor of an opposition periodical is drinking coffee. A devilish expression on his face, a small-time novelist is whispering something into his publisher's ear. Journalists are flipping a coin by the mirror. A few sales representatives are showing bills of exchange to one another. A group of film actors is telling jokes to one another. Somebody is recording an interview on tissue paper. A fat man is counting

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662 See *ibid.*

663 J. Appenzlak, *Piętra. Dom na Bielańskiej*, p. 229.

664 *Ibid.*, p. 231.

money. A bearded patron of the arts is wheedling a painting from a young ruddy painter. Attorneys are talking loudly over one another. Perspired and rude, the waiters are bustling about. [...] Everybody's running around [...] Boys in green uniforms are carrying periodicals and cigarettes and arranging the chairs.<sup>665</sup>

A comical version of contacts associated with the operation of cafés can be found in many of Wiech's humorous tales, for example, "Zakazany owoc" [Forbidden Fruit], which is something like court minutes regarding a trip made by Bogumił Wiśniewski, who lived in the Warsaw quarter of Ochota, to a venue in the Jewish quarter. The description concerns not so much the guests' arrival ("One night an ancient Warsaw hackney carriage pulled up in front of the Nasza Riviera café on Stawki Street, which belonged to Mr. Lejzor Kiszka. Obviously, from the vehicle got off Mr. Bogumił, who cuddled up to the sleeve of the driver's uniform, as the latter was helping him get off. The two of them were accompanied by a street butterfly in heavy makeup"),<sup>666</sup> but also the brawl that ensued inside when the guest was not served vodka. The café owner responded to the request articulated in the Warsaw dialect ("Three shots, for me, the driver, and the girl")<sup>667</sup> using a language stylized on Jewish Polish ("Oi, what's this supposed to mean? There's no vodka! It's a café!").<sup>668</sup> The customer reacted by demolishing the café. The whole affair found its finale in court.

In Sommerfeld's text, which belongs to the current of popular culture, a local joint, that is situated in the Jewish quarter of Berlin, is presented as a place of meetings, business dealings (sometimes shady), and exchange of information. Its owner, Mr. Gabe, who resembles a Prussian officer with his dignity, facial expression, and well-groomed moustache, is an émigré too: "Nobody would have thought that the joint's owner was from Lviv and that eight years ago when he saw the faint light of Grenadierstrasse, he was still wearing the traditional caftan and the same sideburns as his buddy Pufeles and others – his customers who now sported European clothes and hairdos."<sup>669</sup> The joint is a relatively primitive, small venue, which consists of narrow dark corridors, a middle-sized room for guests, a bar, and a small separate room with billiards. The dishes served there are beef and roasted geese, while the most popular drink is tea with lemon.<sup>670</sup>

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665 Z. Uniłowski, *Wspólny pokój*, p. 61-62.

666 S. Wiechecki, "Zakazany owoc," in his, *Koszerny kozak czyli Opowiadania żydowskie* (Warsaw, 1990), pp. 49 ff.

667 *Ibid.*, p. 50.

668 *Ibid.*

669 See A. Sommerfeld, *Das Ghetto von Berlin*, p. 37.

670 See *ibid.*, pp. 38-39.



That joint stood out with not only with the speed with which the dishes were served – with almost army-like discipline, but also the general unrest. Few tables were occupied. Most of the guests kept rushing from one spot to another, of course wearing hats as it did not occur to anybody to take off their headwear. Everybody was talking, shouting, and gesticulating.<sup>671</sup>

In line with the image of the *Ostjuden* in literary texts, such frequent guests of that joint belonged to the group of émigrés from the East European diaspora, for they not only behaved in a way characteristic of *Ostjuden*, but also chose the dishes and drinks typical of their culinary taste.

The later years, the time of the anti-Jewish violence, are characterized by yet another depiction of Berlin venues. According to a reporter, aside the ordinary cafés there were also

[...] special cafés in Berlin frequented exclusively by Jews. After taking care of all the café business they sit down to discuss general affairs, read the newspaper, hear some gossip, and debate Zionism and factions in the Zionist camp. There one can find not only German newspapers but also Polish-Jewish, Jewish, and other ones.<sup>672</sup>

The contact zone in the novel *Berlin. Alexanderplatz* looked in yet another way. One of the first experiences of the protagonist who was released from prison was confrontation with the urban space, the commotion, dense development and population. The former prisoner's first contact with *Ostjuden* takes place when a caring Jew speaks to the suffering Franz Biberkopf, who is seeking shelter from the urban noise and the crowds of people in courtyards and gates of tenements near Rosenthalerstrasse: "Now, now, it's not going to be as bad as all that. You're not going to go under. Berlin is big. Where thousands live, one more can also live."<sup>673</sup> Thus, the ex-prisoner receives help from exotically looking inhabitants of the northern quarter. They not only invite him over despite the holiday, but also, ignoring his peculiar behavior, try to remedy his frustration (the red-haired man's stories are intended as instructive and comforting).<sup>674</sup> This lets Biberkopf recuperate. "The walls no longer existed. A small room with a hanging lamp, two Jews running around, one with brown hair and one with red hair, both wearing black plush hats, quarreling with each other."<sup>675</sup> Biberkopf leaves the Jewish home

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671 Ibid., p. 40.

672 B. Singer, *W krajach Hitlera i Stalina*, p. 101.

673 A. Döblin, *Berlin Alexanderplatz: the Story of Franz Biberkopf*, trans. by Eugene Jolas (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing, 1983), p. 9.

674 Ibid., p. 17–20.

675 Ibid., p. 25.

in a completely different frame of mind and starts wandering around Berlin. Having regained his mental balance, he has a different outlook on the familiar features of the urban space (crowded streets, streetcars, city rail, cinemas, and joints) – he treats them as his own natural habitat. Biberkopf meets inhabitants of the Jewish quarter again when he visits the Jews living on Dragonenstrasse to thank them for their help. At that moment the local venue where they meet becomes a contact zone.

Different yet noteworthy spaces which undoubtedly acted as contact zones were certain places connected with culture. Here I wish to devote attention to one literary record. Reporting on his stay in Warsaw, and particularly in the areas inhabited by Jews, Döblin, who was writing for the German reader, makes a relatively ironic remark: “Thursday concert at the Philharmonic, a social event. [. . .] The conductor’s name is Fitelberg. Although he has a tonsure, I don’t think he’s Catholic. Artur Rubinstein at the piano. What can I say; I don’t think I’ll be hearing intrinsically Polish music. The director of this exemplary Polish theater is named Fischmann, even if he spells it Fizzman.”<sup>676</sup> It seems that that kind of urban meetings concerned chiefly the distinct audience, that is, both Polish and Jewish inhabitants of the city (but only assimilated Jews or ones undergoing the process of acculturation). The remaining portion of the population used the cultural offer addressed to the audience differing in terms of ethnicity and language. Those were ‘parallel worlds’: the Yiddish and Polish theaters, cinemas, and cabarets.

A character from Appenzlak’s novel takes the liberty of inviting his Zionist fiancée to a Polish theater precisely because he belongs to the Polish-Jewish world: “He arranged to meet Hela on the terrace of the theater overlooking the driveway. The lights were contracting in the iron frost. [. . .] Private automobiles pulled up noiselessly. In the crowd the ladies’ valuable fur coats [. . .] brushed off Henryk’s worn-out coat. The silver of their epaulets glittering, military men were getting out of the cars. The ladies stamped their tiny elegant boots on the hard surface of the snow, rays of light slid on the bodies of the cars.”<sup>677</sup> This description of the people coming to the temple of art highlights the wealthy audience and its ‘Polishness’ (the silver epaulets of the military men).

A model of Jewish identity relatively far from that most popular in literature is the Hurwicz family depicted in Sholem Asch’s novel, predominantly the father – a

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676 A. Döblin, *Journey to Poland*, trans. Joachim Neugroschel, ed. Heinz Graber (London & New York: I. B. Tauris & Co Ltd., 1991), p. 45.

677 J. Appenzlak, *Piętra. Dom na Bielańskiej*, p. 99.

Polish patriot (a fan of Mickiewicz's *Dziady*, which was banned in the Russian partition), a *Haskalah* supporter (a maskil), an autodidact, and a teacher giving private lessons to students, many of whom had escaped from the traditionally Orthodox circles or emigrated from shtetls. The Hurwicz family (the daughters love Żeromski's prose and the mother is the social activist type) is depicted against the broader background made up of Jewish craftsmen, laborers, and the poor living in tenements with a "labyrinth of courtyards" near Bonifraterska Street. The atmosphere of that space is captured by means of, for instance, a description of the noisy crowd "in those enormous courtyards, [...] where sounded the characteristic song of Warsaw street 'birds' of commerce: 'Handele! Handele! Handele!'"<sup>678</sup> Thus here 'Polishness' is represented entirely by culture, and predominantly literature (Romantic and contemporary), which the Jewish audience finds fascinating. Hurwicz, who embodies Polish patriotism, associates it very closely with an aversion to Russianness and a mission to educate others, with making his Jewish students aware of the complicated "Polish relations."<sup>679</sup> When we look at the history of the entire family, we see its evolution and changes, predominantly of the younger generation – the generation functioning (as I dare claim) almost exclusively without any major conflicts in the categories of double, Polish-Jewish identity. This age group is interested mainly in social relations, the situation of laborers, socialist activity, and new revolutionary currents. After the suppression of a May Day demonstration and the suffering experienced they do return to Jewishness by favoring Yiddish literature over Polish literature, but the later lot of the young family members was tied with the October Revolution (which is discussed in the third volume entitled *Moskwa* – Moscow).

Appenzlak's character has particularly strong emotional ties not only with culture, but also Warsaw spaces. For him the Polish capital is, on the one hand, a place of particularly important emotional experiences, and, on the other hand, his reflections on exclusion and emigration are accompanied with a self-reflexive outlook:

You cannot sever your ties with a city which is the track of your life. [...] Nothing can tear out Warsaw from his soul. He minces here in the Jewish crowd on the dirty snow which covers the sad and gloomy streets [...]. But he shall be tied with this city until the end of his life. Nothing can break this union. He recalled the words emanating primeval awe: "If I forget you, Jerusalem. . ." – a mark of the Jewish soul's memory. But the truth

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678 Sh. Asch, *Warszawa*, p. 19.

679 *Ibid.*, p. 9.

is that I shall never forget you, my hometown. [...] Nothing can weed out Warsaw from [my] soul [...].<sup>680</sup>

Thus, one of the most important contact zones was the sphere of Polish culture. However, one must bear in mind an asymmetry substantial for those relations. While Jewish inhabitants of Warsaw (and Poland) became familiar with Polish culture and had a chance to read literary texts even if they did not know Polish well (most texts penned by Polish authors were translated into Yiddish), the Poles had little chance of reading texts produced by Jews (the number of translations from Yiddish or Hebrew into Polish was much smaller). Moreover, the Polish side took little interest in Jewish culture.<sup>681</sup>

Functioning in a contact zone was also facilitated by professional contacts or mutual interest circles which brought together, for instance, young aspiring artists like in Uniłowski's narrative. One of such characters is a very well-educated young man described in the following way: "Kazio Wermel welcomes Lucjan. His entire figure emanates pathos and in his eyes shines culture, the primeval culture of Jews. Laughing his head off, he talks about the destitution he is suffering. He lives somewhere in Rybaki – seven people in one room."<sup>682</sup> What Wermel, Lucjan, and other characters have in common is predominantly destitution and everyday problems:

Lucjan is listening with a smile. This [Wermel's problems – A. M.] is not foreign to him. Wermel speaks Greek and Latin fluently, speaks English and French well and writes in these languages, and is a talented 20-year-old poet. All this does not give him three lunches per week. And it is difficult to love him dearly because he reeks horribly while reciting Homer in Greek for hours.<sup>683</sup>

We learn about how Wermel gets by from a monologue of a different character from Uniłowski's story – Zygmunt, who discusses how young writers cope financially: "As a matter of fact, Wermel, a young genius, who borrows five zlotys from Fajnsztajn, gives him in return an opportunity to be content with himself on account of his 'helping' a young poet out. All Fajnsztajn has is this money. [...] This cheap scoundrel now regards himself as a philanthropist and benefactor."<sup>684</sup>

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680 J. Appenzlak, *Piętra.Dom na Bielańskiej*, pp. 187–188.

681 Polish-Jewish conflicts in the sphere of literature and culture have been discussed in many texts by, for instance, Eugenia Prokop-Janiec, Monika Adamczyk-Garbowska, Magdalena Ruta, and Maria Antosik-Piela.

682 Z. Uniłowski, *Wspólny pokój*, p. 16.

683 *Ibid.*, p. 17.

684 *Ibid.*, p. 56–57.

Thus, it occurs that the most fundamental divide is not being a member of a specific ethnic group but the material status.

Same as Żeromski, Uniłowski and Gojawiczyńska emphasize the divisions stemming more from the financial status than anything else. The experience of social stratification is visible even within the space of one tenement. Franka from the basement flat, who can see only people's legs and shoes behind the turbid panes, is a neighbor of the Mossakowskis from a "separate wooden hut." Likewise, a seamstress from the attic lives in the same tenement as the Raczyński sisters or the Rubinrots only that the sisters and the Rubinrots reside in luxury apartments. This division is paired with perceiving individual parts of the urban space as better or worse: "The father goes to town with Maria to buy her a spring hat. This is unprecedented. They do not go to Długa Street but to the elegant parts of the city [A. M.'s emphasis]."<sup>685</sup> Ways of spending free time have a lot in common with the experience of poverty and hunger: "Summer. Nobody leaves Nalewki Street to go to the countryside. No, nobody goes to a summer resort or to a summer camp from here. Summer resorts are for the rich and summer camps are [organized] for the poor [who admit that they are poor]. . . Here one spends warm evenings outside the tenement, on the steps leading to stores, or in the church courtyard. Nobody wants to admit that they are destitute [ . . . ]."<sup>686</sup> A similar social division within a single tenement can be found in Appenzlak's novel and in the second volume of Asch's trilogy. Although concentration of the Jewish proletariat is usually associated with Łódź, the Warsaw Nalewki Street or the Wola quarter were also quarters inhabited by laborers, artisans, and the poor. Not only places of residence became contact zones, but also spheres of the activity of, for instance, trade unions, which were zones of both cooperation and conflicts, as illustrated in an article printed in the organ of the Polish Socialist Party (*Polska Partia Socjalistyczna*, PPS):

A conflict erupted in Jewish bakeries in Warsaw. Because of the upcoming [Jewish] festival owners of Jewish bakeries wanted to make their workers work ten hours a day. The workers refused and suggested that the owners hire the unemployed. The owners said that they would not pay their employees for the holidays and would stop giving out bread rations, which was against the collective labor agreement. A conference at the Labor Inspection brought no results. The conflict was deepening. The employers announced a lockout, which generated great outrage. The Jewish and Polish laborers were acting solidarily. There was a threat of a general strike in the bakery business.<sup>687</sup>

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685 P. Gojawiczyńska, *Dziewczęta z Nowolipek*, p. 37.

686 *Ibid.*, p. 77.

687 Qtd. after: M. Fuks, *Żydzi w Warszawie*, p. 312; emphasis – A. M. A reference to publications in the periodical *Robotnik* on 7, 16, and 17 September 1926. Relations

It makes sense to quote a traditional popular anecdote which shows perhaps in the most condensed way the peculiarity of the Jewish world in the East European diaspora: "An elderly Jew can speak Polish, Ukrainian, Russian, German, Czech, and Yiddish. Asked whether he knows any foreign languages, he responds: 'Foreign languages? I don't know any!'"

The indicated Jewish-Polish contact zones and the division of urban spaces in both Warsaw and Berlin were associated with the phenomenon of multilingualism, predominantly in the space of the Polish capital. The following ambivalent words which are a record of the thoughts of Appenzlak's protagonist can be read to some extent also as a reflection of the author's ruminations:

At school the boys spoke Hebrew: it was the language of instruction, the ideal. They were taught love for that tongue, which symbolized national revival. [...] At home the boys spoke Yiddish, thought in Yiddish, quarreled and shouted in their sleep in Yiddish. On the street, in a tram, and in the Saxon Garden it became them to speak Polish. [...] Normally instinctive, the attitude to language here had to be justified, rational, and critical. [...] Every Jewish school, every school located not on Jewish land but in the diaspora was cursed. Children everywhere sit with their noses stuck in some Talmud, a Talmud of Yiddishism or Hebrewism or compulsory linguistic assimilation.<sup>688</sup>

The ambiguity of the evaluation of the Jewish community's multilingualism is clear. From that perspective the use of multiple languages was connected not so much with a multitude of opportunities for comprehension as with a state of disorientation, instability, and troublesome dilemmas: "The permanent internal quandary, the Tower of Babel inside the Jewish head."<sup>689</sup>

The phenomenon of multilingualism existed also in the shared spaces and was noticed there.<sup>690</sup> During an argument Regina Rubinrot's mother spoke in three languages: "She shouted and threatened in German and Jewish and then in Polish, but Mr. Rubinrot did not give in."<sup>691</sup>

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between the Bund and the Polish Socialist Party have been discussed by, for instance, G. Pickhan, *"Gegen den Strom" Der Allgemeine Jüdische Arbeiterbund ("Bund") in Polen 1918-1939* (Munich-Stuttgart, 2001); E. Melzer, *No Way Out. The Politics of Polish Jewry, 1935-1939* (Cincinnati, 1997). See also E. Mendelsohn, *The Jews of East Central Europe Between the World Wars* (1987).

688 J. Appenzlak, *Piętra. Dom na Bielańskiej*, pp. 90 ff.

689 *Ibid.*, p. 92.

690 This can be seen in photographs of old Warsaw, where before 1918 the store signs or advertisements in the Jewish quarter were written in three languages (Yiddish, Russian, and Polish) and after 1918 in two languages.

691 P. Gojawiczyńska, *Dziewczęta z Nowolipek*, p. 131.

Undoubtedly dominant in the Jewish quarter of Warsaw, Yiddish was spoken by almost all of the inhabitants. The same could be said about the Berlin quarter of Scheunenviertel, where the signs, inscriptions, posters, bookstore windows and advertisements were written in that language, unlike in the other parts of the German capital.

Many German Jews first came into contact with the *Ostjuden* milieu and its language and culture during the First World War, when Jewish soldiers of the German army were stationed in eastern Poland or Lithuania. That was when they had a chance to see the *Ostjuden*'s distinctness.<sup>692</sup> Although newcomers from the East had been living in Berlin since the early twentieth century, most of them stayed there only temporarily. Berlin was either a stopover in their journey to the country where they intended to settle or the place where they went to school or pursued higher education. During the military operations and after their end there were numerous migrants in the German capital. Among the refugees from the East were lots of intellectuals and artists. According to Inka Bertz:

The Jewish culture from Eastern Europe altered the self-perception of many Jewish Berliners. For many of them the East European version of Judaism became an ideal model of lasting heritage and a utopia of the Jewish 'community'. Attempts were made at the Jewish Community Center on Dragonenstrasse (nowadays Max-Beer-Str.) to realize this ideal of communal life, education, and residence. The Center tried to combine moral and religious instruction with normal education of the youth, both that living in Scheunenviertel [the quarter dominated by *Ostjuden* – A. M.] and that from the Berlin Jewish bourgeois.<sup>693</sup>

Although the early-nineteenth-century Berlin was a special place which facilitated an encounter between the Jewish East and West, for most inhabitants of the 'Old West' (which was where many of the wealthier newcomers from the East European diaspora lived) the quarter of poor émigrés from Galicia, Russia, or Bukovina was more of a cause for shame and embarrassment.<sup>694</sup>

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692 A completely separate and highly interesting sphere of reflections on the confrontations, meetings, and mutual perception, would be an analysis of the war as a contact zone. Such relations between German Jews and the *Ostjuden* have been discussed by, for instance, Sander Gilman. See S. Gilman, "Die Wiederentdeckung der Ostjuden: Deutsche Juden im Osten, 1890-1918," in *Beter und Rebellen. Aus 1000 Jahren Judentum in Polen*, ed. M. Brocke (Frankfurt am Main, 1983), pp. 11-32.

693 I. Bertz, "Juden in Berlin," in *Jüdisches Städtebild Berlin*, p. 25.

694 This has been mentioned by Gert Mattenklott, who pointed to various texts describing visits to Scheunenviertel and the authors' impressions. See G. Mattenklott, "Jüdische Renaissances," in *Jüdisches Städtebild Berlin*, p. 139.

Despite the existence of the presented contact zones, the two big cities were clearly divided in spatial terms. They had separate Jewish quarters and the formulas of urban order overlapped with two networks of distinctions – marked out by ethnic differences and social stratification, that is, the separate spheres of poverty and wealth. Contact zones could, though did not have to, contribute to the emergence of peculiar forms or ones which could cautiously be called hybridic.<sup>695</sup> The kind of movability of the cultural borders – even if that phenomenon in Polish-Jewish relations was relatively asymmetrical, which I have already mentioned – was not so much conducive to adaptation or resistance formulas, as it rather facilitated emergence of new, previously unknown formations, such as Polish-Jewish literature (whose setting apart as a field of research we owe to Eugenia Prokop-Janiec). Contact zones, of which many more could be listed, are still waiting to be more thoroughly analyzed by historians, culture experts, and historians of literature. Of course, they were not an exclusively urban phenomenon, but their functioning in the space of the two capitals seems to reveal the multitude of their varieties.

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695 This caution in using the category of hybridity stems from the semantics of this expression because hybridity suggests two interconnected unities which would have to be strongly and homogeneously fixed (before mixing).



## City and Emigration

Caused chiefly by economic considerations, mass emigration from Eastern Europe had lasted since the nineteenth century. Caused mostly by scarcity of goods and poverty, often resulting from inefficient or slow modernization and industrialization.<sup>696</sup> Tobias Brinkman stresses that migration from the East European diaspora – since the late nineteenth century – was a global phenomenon which led to the emergence of numerous Jewish communities in various places and also fundamentally contributed to a complete redefinition of various kinds of identity in the diaspora.<sup>697</sup>

For the Jewish community in the East European diaspora, another important pro-emigration factor was anti-Semitism, which had been intensifying since the late nineteenth century. The pogroms which had been absent from Western Europe for years, were a frequent phenomenon in tsarist Russia (Kishinev, 1903; Białystok, 1906; Khmelnytskyi, 1919) and in other cities in that part of Europe (Warsaw, 1881; Vilnius, 1919, and Lviv, 1918, Pinsk 1919). Another factor precipitating the Jews' decision to emigrate on the eve of or during the First World War was conscription, which in the case of most Orthodox East European Jews was connected not only with compulsion to use violence, but also with inability to observe tradition and customs. Earlier, in the nineteenth century, it also often meant compulsory conversion. Aside the factors mentioned, a vital argument for seeking to change one's place of residence was the various restrictions of the rights of the Jewish population (the restrictions differed depending on the partition and then changed in the Second Republic of Poland). One of the arguments brought up by those who intended to force Polish Jews to leave the country was a peculiar evaluation of the Jewish population:

Large-scale Jewish emigration shall contribute to strengthening the Polish element in commerce and the free growth of our middle class. Moreover, it will facilitate the removal from the society of the factor, which, on the one hand, is indifferent to the

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696 A fragment of this text was published as “Literackie ślady żydowskich migracji pierwszej połowy XX wieku,” in *Narracje migracyjne w literaturze polskiej XX i XXI wieku*, ed. H. Gosk (Cracow, 2012), pp. 227-240

697 T. Brinkman, “Ort des Übergangs – Berlin als Schnittstelle der jüdischen Migration aus Osteuropa nach 1918,” in *Transit und Transformation. Osteuropäisch-jüdische Migranten in Berlin 1918-1939*, ed. V Dohrn und G. Pickhan, pp. 25-44.

Polish state, and, on the other hand, radical (communist), that is to say, promoting alien forms of political systems in our culture.<sup>698</sup>

Thus, Jewish citizens were regarded as indifferent to Poland or engaged in promotion of communism. So aside economic considerations (getting rid of competition) emphasis was laid on the ideological factors, which, in line with the nationalist narration, were to lay additional stress on the Polish Jews' social alienation.

Taking the various factors conducive to Jewish emigration into consideration, we must emphasize the two kinds of phenomena that encouraged flight and departure from Eastern Europe. On the one hand, it was the aforementioned poverty, the low socio-economic status, the fear of violence and brutal anti-Semitism. On the other hand, it was the awareness that Jews in, for instance, France, Germany, or Holland, enjoyed equal rights. Particularly attractive to the Jewish milieu was the myth of America as a country seen almost exclusively through the prism of the freedom and liberties guaranteed to US citizens.

Jewish emigration to the-then Palestine had continued since the late nineteenth century. During the First Aliyah (1881-1914) most Jewish émigrés were fleeing from Russia to America to escape mass pogroms. However, some of the immigrants went to the territory of today's Israel. Another wave of Jewish immigrants came to Palestine during 1904-1913. Most of them had socialist-Zionist views and came from Eastern Europe. After the Revolution of 1905 and another wave of pogroms they concluded that only establishment of the Jewish state would guarantee safety and full rights to Jews. During the Second Aliyah approx. 40,000 Jews, mostly from Russia and Poland, came to Palestine. However, I shall not deal with the literary testimonies of the Zionist émigrés.<sup>699</sup> Thus, I consciously exclude from my reflections a very broad current in the Zionist narration (including that penned in Polish).

A much greater number of émigrés sought new a place for themselves and their loved ones either in Western Europe or America. The emigration altered the distribution of Jews in not only various European countries, but also around

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698 Archiwum Akt Nowych [Archive of Modern Records] (later: AAN), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 117, Przegląd informacyjny Polska a Zagranica z 21 VIII 1937 [21 March 1937 report on Poland and the abroad], p. 413. Qtd. after: *Świat NIE pożegnany. Żydzi na dawnych ziemiach wschodnich Rzeczypospolitej w XVIII-XX wieku*, ed. K. Jasiewicz (Warsaw-London, 2005).

699 This was discussed by Maria Antosik-Piela. See: Maria Antosik-Piela, *Tożsamość i ideologia. Literatura polsko-żydowska wobec syjonizmu* (Cracow 2020).

the world. It was also perhaps the main factor in the process which could be called metropolization of Jews, that is their migration to cities.<sup>700</sup> New waves of Jewish emigration from Eastern Europe, beginning with 1881, were estimated at 100,000–330,000 per year (during the initial period).<sup>701</sup> The emigration to infant Soviet Russia in the aftermath of the Revolution of 1917 constituted a separate current.

François Guesnet presented two processes of large Jewish migrations, which in Germany and Poland led to the emergence and strengthening of two stereotypes of Jews which proved extremely durable.<sup>702</sup> At that time the Kingdom of Poland received a wave of newcomers called Litvaks. Coined by Jews in the Kingdom of Poland, that term denoted Jews from Lithuania, which did not have a strong Hasidic movement. However, it was soon applied to all newcomers from the Russian territory. Despite the presence of *Haskalah* supporters in the Kingdom of Poland, Hasidism was becoming increasingly dominant among the various versions of Jewish religiosity. The substantial distance present in the way in which the locals and migrants viewed each other can be seen, for instance, in the skepticism of Hasidic relatives of Bernard Singer, who blamed the Litvak father, who came from the Lublin area, for enrolling his son in a lay school. Thus, the term Litvak indicated not so much one's place of origin as one's distance to Hasidism. The historian reminds that at that time there was the stereotypical conviction that a "Litvak was a half-goy."<sup>703</sup>

An important factor that transformed the Jewish society of Warsaw in the late nineteenth-century was the large post-1881 waves of emigration from the East. They were triggered not only by the change of the borders of the 'settlement zone', but also numerous pogroms in Russia. Called Litvaks, the newcomers

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700 The category of metropolization was mentioned by Tobias Brinkman. See T. Brinkman, "Ort des Übergangs," p. 25. Brinkman emphasizes that the very conception of metropolization was used by sociologist and Zionist Arthur Rüppin, who pointed to not only the unproportionally large migration of Jews between the village/*shtetl* and the city during 1870–1920 in various parts of Europe, but also the Jewish émigrés' preference for big cities as their new places of residence – "from Warsaw, Budapest, Łódź, Chicago, Philadelphia, Odessa, London, Vienna, Berlin, and predominantly New York." *Ibid.*, p. 25.

701 Sh. Dubnow, *Historia Żydów* (1948), pp. 230ff. [English edition: *History of the Jews in Russia and Poland*, tans. I. Friedlander (Bergenfield: Avotaynu, 2000)]

702 F. Guesnet, " 'Litwacy' i 'Ostjuden' (Żydzi ze Wschodu). Migracja i stereotypy," in *Tematy żydowskie. Historia, literatura, edukacja*, ed. E. Traba, R. Traba (Olsztyn, 1999), p. 73.

703 *Ibid.*, p. 75.

were seen, on the one hand, as competition on the labor market, and, on the other hand, stress was laid on their lack of piety. Guesnet emphasizes that some people regarded the influx of Jews from Russia as a part of the tsarist authorities' strategy. Not only Dmowski, but also Unszlicht, who was a supporter of the Polish Socialist Party and a Jew, wrote pamphlets against Litvaks. Entitled *O pogromy ludu polskiego. Rola socjal-litwactwa w niedawnej rewolucji* [On pogroms of the Polish folk. The role of socialist Litvaks in the recent revolution], Unszlicht's work was published in Cracow in 1912. To the almost full and successful integration of the émigrés from the East proves that after the First World War Litvaks appeared only in reminiscences or anti-Semitic phantasmagorias.<sup>704</sup>

The second large group of migrants at the turn of the centuries was made up of *Ostjuden*, that is Jews from the East, who in Berlin constituted an almost ideal personification of the delusions of a political threat which functioned in Wilhelmine Germany: they were Jews and from the East at that.<sup>705</sup> Their decision to emigrate was usually motivated by similar considerations: their objective was to better their material situation and escape violence.

Émigrés from the East were also defined according to social and cultural criteria – *Ostjuden* were regarded as poor, not assimilating, and religiously orthodox. According to Guesnet, the rejection of Jews from the East (from “semi-Asia” as Karl Emil Franzos called Galicia) stemmed from German Jews' fear for their own position.

Despite the emancipation and the universal and tremendous material advancement of a large percentage of Jews, they [German Jews – A. M.] must have felt threatened. The Jews who entered the bourgeois class felt the politicization of hatred in schools, in the military, in professional life, and in higher education institutions. Their position was improving, but their social status remained uncertain. The rejection of émigrés from Eastern Europe was probably partially caused by their fear of losing their fragile position. It was endangered by identification with their own ethnic group, that is by identification of 'neat' German Jews with the 'caftan wearers' from 'semi-Asia.'<sup>706</sup>

A large number of literary texts describing the various experiences of Jewish émigrés were penned in the first half of the twentieth century. One could say that that experience was one of the basic topics of the multi-lingual Jewish literature since the late nineteenth century to the Holocaust. Set by dreams of a new and better life, the emigration directions varied.

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704 See *ibid.*, p. 77.

705 *Ibid.*, p. 74.

706 *Ibid.*, p. 79.

The golden dream of the safe haven in Western Europe or America was also discussed by Joseph Roth, a writer from Austro-Hungarian Galicia and the author of the 1927 reportage *Juden auf Wanderschaft* (*The Wandering Jews*), which is entirely devoted to the Jewish emigration from the East European diaspora. Roth's biography was an example of those mass migrations – from a small town (Brody) to European capitals (Vienna, Berlin and Paris). I would like to make several remarks on Roth's text even though it is not strictly about Berlin. Undoubtedly addressed to the West European reader, the essay played an informative role to some extent as it discussed the *Ostjuden*, that is Jews from Eastern Europe, who differed fundamentally from the Western ones, vast majority of whom were *Haskalah* supporters or had been assimilated for generations. The reader will find passages about Hasidic zaddicks and their courts, a short description of the creation of Hasidism, and a presentation of its numerous supporters in the East. The author not only elaborates on the tradition of oral histories and commentaries, but also points to the sources of Jewish folklore and emphasizes the existence of voluminous Yiddish literature. Last but not least, he mentions a peculiar sort of Jews – 'rural' Jews, not so much concentrated in shtetls as living in villages (that was true mostly of the Austria-Hungary territory, though not exclusively).

The main axis of Roth's text is definitely the issue of Jewish emigration. Same as others, Roth points to the kind of idealization of both the West and America which was present in the consciousness of Jews living in the East. He mentions the symbolical names of Moses Montefiore and the Rothschilds, as two figures in the Jewish European history which marked the path to social emancipation and economic success.<sup>707</sup> Most letters sent home by émigrés were filled with descriptions of the advantages of the new place of residence. Roth emphasizes: "Most Jewish émigrés intended to refrain from writing until they made it."<sup>708</sup> They usually wanted to impress those who stayed put. According to Roth, news from abroad caused a general sensation, with the Jews living in

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707 Moses Montefiore, who was knighted in England in 1837, was a Jewish philanthropist, since 1874 the chairman of a delegate office of British Jews, took an active part in the affairs of his fellow believers. In Palestine he set up industrial enterprises and social institutions. The Rothschilds, who came from Germany, became internationally famous for their successes in the sphere of finance and banking. Members of the family were knighted in Austria and England. The Rothschilds have been a symbol of the rich since the nineteenth century.

708 J. Roth, *Juden auf Wanderschaft* (Vienna-Munich, 2010), p. 13 [English edition: *The Wandering Jews* (W. W. Norton & Company, 2001)].

*shtetls* reacting in an emotional way: "All young people from the *shtetl*, and even the elderly, now felt like emigrating and leaving the country where every year there was a threat of war and every week a threat of a pogrom [. . .]."709 The writer emphasizes the substantial increase in the number of Jewish emigrants, which was caused by not only the wave of pogroms at the turn of the centuries. He points to other historical phenomena which to a large extent helped the Jews to make up their mind about leaving their place of residence. Among them were not only the First World War or the dissolution of Austro-Hungary, but also the revolutions of 1905 and 1917.

Who, according to Roth, were those who decided to emigrate? Emigration was not an attractive prospect to those who felt attached to the country they lived in, that is, both assimilated Jews and those who did feel culturally different, but had an emotional bond with their place of residence, whom Roth called "patriotic Jews."<sup>710</sup> "Some because they had fought for their rights and won and did not intend to flee, others because they convinced themselves that they had rights or because they loved their country as much as the Christian portion of the population or even more."<sup>711</sup> Thus, emigration was chosen by those hoping that abroad the exclusion on national, racial, or religious grounds would be less drastic than back home. In Roth's estimation the economic status of potential immigrants and the pursuit of a better life were the second most important reason. The third category of those who opted for leaving the East European diaspora was the Jews who were fleeing war and revolution, the bourgeois and petty bourgeois, who were "more conservative than the local aristocracy."<sup>712</sup> According to the author, an important characteristic of *Ostjuden* was their frequent mobility and their search for a new place of residence and new opportunities for themselves and their children: "*Ostjuden* have no homeland, but their graves are everywhere."<sup>713</sup>

The development of the Jewish identity in the diaspora diverged at the turn of the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries, that is when the *Haskalah* movement

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709 Ibid.

710 The need to be recognized as a nation same as other nations emerged in the Jewish diaspora community with the increase in the popularity of the conception of the nation in Europe. This category, developed particularly in various nineteenth-century conceptions, might have contributed to some extent to the emergence of movements such as Zionism or the development of the sense of cultural separateness and the demand to maintain its autonomy expressed in the milieu of supporters of the Bund.

711 J. Roth, *Juden auf Wanderschaft*, p. 17.

712 Ibid., p. 20.

713 Ibid.

was born and won popular acceptance in the West and the Hasidic movement emerged in the East and Orthodox Judaism proved its durability. That led not only to the mutual sense of separateness, but also, as ironically emphasized by Roth, the emergence of mutual stereotypes. Analyzing the rhetoric of expression in Roth's essay, Urszula Górska wrote that for him the fundamental juxtaposition was the contrast between the Western and Eastern Jewish diaspora.<sup>714</sup>

The author gives a brief and ironic overview of those mutual schematic perceptions – the West European Jews who were undergoing acculturation saw the Eastern Jewry exclusively as traders or miracle-working rabbis, that is, Hasidic zaddicks, surrounded by the Polish peasantry element. As becomes an essayist, Roth makes broad generalizations. West European scholars of Judaism are known to have been interested in the currents most popular in Eastern Europe. Some of the scholars regarded them as the source of the vitality and durability of tradition. One example here is Martin Buber's publications, which Roth must have been familiar with.<sup>715</sup> There was also a reverse process – in the Eastern part of the diaspora there were also *Haskalah* supporters and followers who were undergoing acculturation.<sup>716</sup> It can be assumed that most Jews from the East, educated predominantly in religious schools, knew less about the social and political life in West European societies. Knowledge about the functioning of Jewish communities in Amsterdam, London, Berlin, or Paris was derived mainly from stories and personal contacts, and only then from political commentaries or literature (Hasidim or Orthodox Jews were less likely to read lay texts).

Roth regards assimilation as a kind of cultural emigration: "Every version of external assimilation is an escape or an attempt to escape the sad community of the persecuted; it is an attempt to obliterate differences which unfortunately still exist."<sup>717</sup> Most works of Yiddish literature (an excellent example here is *The Family*

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714 See U. Górska, "Retoryka ekspresji i etyczny problem asymilacji. Rozważania wokół eseju Josepha Rotha *Juden auf Wanderschaft*," *Przegląd Filozoficzno-Literacki* 2 (2009), pp. 199-223. The author translates the title of the essay as *Żydzi na tułactwie* (Jewish drifters), which I do not entirely agree with. The word *Wanderschaft* means 'wandering', which as a more semantically capacious word, denotes both wandering and voluntary emigration which had very different causes.

715 One should mention the following works penned by Martin Buber about the topic of recording or ordering Hasidic legends: *Die Geschichten des Rabbi Nachman* (1906), *Die Legende des Balschem* (1907), and *Der große Maggid und seine Nachfolger* (1921).

716 See M. Wodziński, *Oświecenie żydowskie w Królestwie Polskim wobec chasydyzmu* (Warsaw, 2003).

717 J. Roth, *Juden auf Wanderschaft*, p. 54.

*Carnovsky* family saga) confirm this diagnosis to some extent, same as – though written from a totally different perspective – the interwar anti-Semitic Polish political journalism, which exposed the assimilated Jews’ enduring “strangeness” in the eyes of the Polish journalists.<sup>718</sup>

Roth’s essay is also a presentation of the fate of Jewish émigrés – a description of three European capitals: Vienna, Berlin, and Paris, and the *Ostjuden* milieus that functioned there. The author points to the establishment of voluntary ghettos – the separate streets where newcomers from the East tended to settle. In Vienna that was Leopoldstadt, the vicinity of Prater and Nordbahnhof, in Berlin – Scheunenviertel, which I have already written about, and the Hirtenstrasse and Grenadierstrasse areas, while in Paris most newcomers chose the Marais quarter, though they were more dispersed. Most of those urban areas were poor, crowded, and separated from other quarters with an invisible wall. Émigrés from the East curiously reconstructed the world they had left, tried to retain their language, traditions, and customs. Of course, that was not a distinguishing feature of the Jewish émigré community, but rather a certain characteristic of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century migrations, which today appears to be much less visible.

The said essay paints a picture of the difficult life in the new space. The fate of *Ostjuden* in both Vienna and Berlin appears particularly difficult. Against this background the French legislation, the curious French conception of citizenship and the peculiar attitude to bureaucratic principles made the life of migrants in Paris or Marseilles more bearable. Roth attributed the fact that only a relatively small number of Jewish émigrés from the East had settled in the republic on the River Seine since the publication of the text mainly to their inability to speak French. Cognate to German and spoken universally among *Ostjuden*, the Yiddish language was why Eastern Jews preferred German-speaking countries, that is Austria or Germany. Watching Jewish inhabitants of Paris, Roth takes note of not only their relatively better social situation, but also their instant assimilation. He points to the operation of two factors. First, their children no longer wanted to speak Yiddish even though they could attend Jewish schools in Paris. Second, the women played a role too: “Assimilation of a nation always begins with its women!”<sup>719</sup> The émigrés from the Eastern diaspora described by the

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718 See M. Domagalska, *Antysemityzm dla inteligencji?* (Warsaw, 2004). The author points to the radical rejection which affected the most assimilated Jews who participated in the creation of Polish culture.

719 J. Roth, *Juden auf Wanderschaft*, p. 107.



author openly declared their pro-French attitude. One of them remarked: “Jews in Paris live like free folk. I’m a patriot with a Jewish heart.”<sup>720</sup> Asked why he decided to live in the French capital, another one replies: “*Excusez, monsieur, pourquoi* not Paris? They will expel me from Russia, lock me up in Poland, and I won’t get a German visa. *Pourquoi* shouldn’t I have come to Paris?”<sup>721</sup>

Newcomers from the Eastern diaspora felt much more alien in Vienna or Berlin. Some of them do tried to put on suitable ‘masks’, enter new roles and socially acceptable forms of existence in the public space. Most of them, however, particularly those who wanted to preserve the traditions and customs of *Ostjuden*, lived in something like a separate world, a society ‘parallel’ to that of the West European Jews – they had their own schools, prayer houses, and a separate cultural life. The problematic status of the émigrés’ stay in Berlin was compounded by the fact that a large number of them had only on a transit visa. Even if they lived there for a longer period, their children born in Germany were not entitled to citizenship (unlike in, for instance, France). According to Roth, the *Ostjuden* did not treat Berlin as their place of residence, but more like an interchange station, a starting point for the next stages of emigration – mostly via Hamburg, Bremen or Amsterdam – to America, the land of their dreams. Berlin as a city (understood here not so much as urban administration as a kind of social consent to the Other) would not let the exotically dressed émigrés from the East take up more and more space; only a few streets were called Jewish (including aforementioned Scheunenviertel). The motif of the city which limits this kind of strangeness – of attire, language, customs, and traditions – represented by the newcomers appears not only in Roth’s essay, but also in Yiddish narratives about Jewish Berlin.

Life in the small space is characterized by a kind of temporariness. Roth looks at this lifestyle from a historiosophic perspective:

In this neighborhood everything is improvised: the temple emerges when a meeting [required for the *minyan* – A. M.] takes place and trade happens owing to those who sell products in the middle of the street. The exodus from Egypt, which has lasted and repeated for thousands of years, is constantly present in the awareness of the *Ostjuden*, who are very attached to tradition and religion. “One must always be headed somewhere, have everything one needs on oneself: bread and onion in one pocket and a tefillin [for prayer – A. M.] in the other.”<sup>722</sup>

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720 Ibid., p. 111.

721 Ibid., p. 106.

722 Ibid., p. 101.

Since the nineteenth century, America had been the most important geographical reference for immigrants from the East European diaspora. It earned a separate, additional proper name in Yiddish – *Goldene Medine* – the Golden Land. It promised freedom, acceptance of Jewishness, and a multitude of opportunities. Not only Jews who were in a difficult financial situation wished to emigrate to America, but also those who experienced anti-Semitic persecutions and, last but not least, the *Ostjuden* who cherished tradition and were fleeing draft (mostly into the Russian or the Austro-Hungarian army).

One comes across similar versions of emigration – not so much to as from Berlin or Warsaw – in texts such as Israel Joshua Singer’s family saga *The Family Carnovsky* or Jakub Appenzlak’s novel *Piętra. Dom na Bielańskiej* [Floors. House on Bielańska Street]. In both cases emigration was an involuntary choice, a kind of flight from lack of acceptance and anti-Semitism. While the two characters of Appenzlak’s narration were motivated to leave Warsaw not only by their experience of rejection and their deep belief in Zionism, the Carnovsky family emigrated to escape the violence perpetrated by the Nazi authorities. Leaving for *Eretz Israel*, Appenzlak’s characters were bid farewell by entire families: “Everybody was crying. He promised his mother to bring her to Palestine as soon as he got some position. [. . .]. A crowd of Jews gathered at the railway station. Cheering, they were bidding farewell to those leaving for Palestine. There were a few flashes of magnesia as photographers from Jewish periodicals were taking pictures. [. . .] The Halutzim and the emigrants travelled squeezed in third class cars.”<sup>723</sup> The Zionist version of emigration clearly constitutes a prospect of the future life of those who had been learning new occupations such as farming or cattle breeding. Emigration from Berlin – increasingly hampered and expensive in the 1930s – was a forced departure, an abandonment of a once chosen place. Its destination was completely different – the American dreamland – and it affected a much larger percentage of the Jewish community:

Long rows of people stood in line before the consulates, people of every age and background: men of distinction from West Berlin next to peddlers from Dragonenstrasse; Jews in long bears and gaberdines and those who had severed all connections with the community but still were marked with the stigma of racial inferiority and damned for the sins of their fathers. [. . .] Quietly, Dr. Carnovsky took place among them.<sup>724</sup>

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723 J. Appenzlak, *Piętra. Dom na Bielańskiej* (Warsaw, 1933), p. 334.

724 I. J. Singer, *The Family Carnovsky*, trans. J. Singer (New York: Schocken Books: 1988).

In this passage noteworthy is the lack of any enthusiasm or joy as well as a sense of the shared tragic fate which befell both German Jews – “those who had severed all connections with the community” – and Jews who came from the East.

Joseph Roth, the author of the essay I have discussed above, devotes less space to a description of the Jewish émigré community in the United States, though he does mention its successes: “The old Jewish God was with them. He rewarded the deserters for their aversion to military violence.”<sup>725</sup> For those who wished to emigrate to America, the Berlin before the Nazi takeover of power was often only a stopover, the first European metropolis where they could try to earn money to continue their journey. But as I have mentioned, some of the population planning to go overseas stayed in the German capital for longer, living in the Jewish quarter, where they felt safe and at home or opted for the lifestyle of German Jews, accepted acculturation, and internalized the *Haskalah* ideas.

Reporting on the reactions of German Jews to new waves of *Ostjuden*’s migration, Ludger Heid stresses that “most of them [émigrés – A. M.] settled in large cities where – isolated culturally and socially from the German Jewish community – they lived in specific quarters [. . .].”<sup>726</sup> Such an enclave in the Berlin space was the aforementioned Scheunenviertel quarter, which stood out not only as inhabited by the less affluent social stratum, but also with the behavior characteristic of the newcomers/émigrés, who maintained relations with the countries they had left, retained their language and tradition, cultivated their culture, and maintained distance towards the German Jews’ cultural models rather than adapted to them. “There was a radical difference between ‘Jews in ties’ and ‘Jews in caftans’. [. . .] There was also the class problem: on the one hand, the German-Jewish bourgeois, and, on the other hand, the Eastern Jewish proletariat, the *Luftmenschen*, who lived in poverty and from hand to mouth, and in the best-case scenario petty craftsmen and traders.”<sup>727</sup>

The various opinions and evaluations encountered among German Jews discussing migrants from the East were characterized by a large degree of ambivalence. On the one hand, Heid quotes Walter Rathenau, for whom *Ostjuden* were an “Asian horde,” “an exotic and generically alien people,” and, on the other hand, Arnold Zweig, who idealized newcomers from the East European diaspora,

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725 J. Roth, *Juden auf Wanderschaft*, p. 116.

726 L. Heid, “Wizerunek Żydów z Europy Wschodniej (Ostjuden) w Niemczech,” in *Nowy Leksykon Judaistyczny*, ed. J. H. Schoeps, trans. S. Lisiecka, Z. Rybicka, E. Ptaszyńska-Sadowska (Warsaw, 2007), p. 632. [original edition: *Neues Lexikon des Judentums* (Bertelsmann Lexikon Verlag, 1992)].

727 *Ibid.*, p. 633.

poetically calling them a “pink-golden afterglow of the Jewish nation.”<sup>728</sup> The negative evaluation was connected not only with reminding the German Jews about their past, but also with a confrontation with their own identity, shaped by assimilation processes or acculturation, and at the same time noticing the need to retain the religious-cultural identification. Consequently, for instance, “the German Orthodox milieu expected that immigrants from the East, most of whom came from extremely religious milieus, would strengthen ‘Jewishness.’”<sup>729</sup> The large presence of *Ostjuden* also led to the internal polarization in the milieu of German Jews:

The controversy within the Jewish milieu, in which the state was involved due to the public-legal character of the communities, had features of a struggle for power, inclusive of the characteristic intrigues and the unnecessary radicalization of stances and ideology. Jews from the East were at the same time “those who prayed and those who rebelled.” Some of them were communists, socialists, anarchists, or syndicalists, others were conservatives or religiously orthodox, and others still were atheists, Zionists, or completely assimilated citizens.<sup>730</sup>

The perception of newcomers from the East as radically different from the community of German Jews and the harsh opinions which often stemmed from acceptance of stereotypes were the reason why *Ostjuden* were regarded as “dirty, noisy, boorish, immoral, and culturally backward.”<sup>731</sup> Moreover, association of Jewish political activists (such as Rose Luxemburg or Leo Jogiches) with revolutionary radicalism and engagement in anti-state activity were the reasons why anti-Semitic groupings often used such cognitive schemata and attributed stereotypes regarding *Ostjuden* also to German Jews.<sup>732</sup>

Although, as Anne-Christin Saß<sup>733</sup> and others have written, Scheunenviertel was not as dominated by newcomers from the East as it was generally thought, it made a peculiar impression because it was densely populated. The scholar quotes Roth’s 1920 article, where he was trying to explain the phenomenon of the Jewish emigration in the following way:

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728 Ibid., p. 631.

729 Ibid., p. 632.

730 Ibid.

731 Ibid.

732 See *ibid.* and also S. E. Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers. The East European Jew in German and German Jewish Consciousness 1800–1923* (Madison, Wisconsin-London, 1982); T. Maurer, *Ostjuden in Deutschland 1918–1933* (Hamburg, 1986).

733 A.-Ch. Saß, “Scheunenviertel,” in *Enzyklopädie jüdischer Geschichte und Kultur* (EJGK), ed. D. Diner, vol. 5 (Stuttgart/Weimar, 2014), pp. 117 ff.

They are known under the generalizing name of a “threat from the east.” Fear of pogroms is why they blend into an avalanche of misery and filth which, slowly growing, is rolling across Germany from the East. In the eastern quarter of Berlin a part [of this avalanche – A. M.] forms huge cakes [. . .]. Nearly 50,000 people from the East have come to Germany. But in fact it looks as if there are millions of them. Their destitution is much more visible – twice, thrice, ten times more.<sup>734</sup>

A while later, in 1921, Josef Lin, a founder of the association called *Verband der Ostjuden*, wrote about the catastrophic situation of the East European Jews.

Each day brings new suffering, the number of Jewish orphans keeps growing, Jewish lives are being destroyed. The rivers of Jewish blood are expanding. [. . .] Who can save us from this horrible catastrophe which has befallen us? Who can we rely on? [. . .] Can one hear any word of consolation addressed to us? Instead of human sympathy – baiting and accusations! Instead of help – exclusion and precautions against the Jewish threat from the east!<sup>735</sup>

Referring to this quotation, Anne-Christin Saß emphasizes that Lin’s words not only are an expression of the shock upon the news of the pogroms in Ukraine and Poland, but also describe the experience of Jewish migrants from the East European diaspora who, coming to Berlin during and after the First World War, experienced alienation and misunderstanding.<sup>736</sup>

The social stratification among immigrants from the East European diaspora – same as in the case of Jewish inhabitants of Warsaw – also played an important role. In the first half of the twentieth century in the German capital lived not only destitute *Ostjuden*, but also Jews who fared better. The popular expression ‘Berlin W’ (although it was applied to streets or areas which changed overtime – from southern Tiergarten through Hansaviertel and Bayerisches Viertel to Charlottenburg) was connected with describing inhabitants of those parts of the city as better off, belonging to the educated strata, or simply better-to-do.<sup>737</sup>

One must bear in mind that the quarter inhabited by *Ostjuden* was a special place, also for other newcomers from the East living in Berlin. The elements of the religious, social, and cultural infrastructure which functioned there were important to *Ostjuden* and attracted immigrants living in other quarters

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734 Qtd. after: A.-Ch. Saß, “Scheunenviertel,” p. 118; J. Roth, “Flüchtlinge aus dem Osten,” *Neue Berliner Zeitung*, 20 October 1920. Reprinted in *Joseph Roth in Berlin. Ein Lesebuch für Spaziergänger*, ed. von M. Bienert (Cologne, 1996), pp. 76-79.

735 Qtd. after: A.-Ch. Saß, “Scheunenviertel,” p. 109.

736 See *ibid.*, p. 109.

737 See *ibid.*, pp. 113 ff.

of the German capital.<sup>738</sup> As Anne-Christin Saß points out, although only some newcomers from the East lived in Scheunenviertel, the image of that part of the German capital as a space dominated by the East European Jews and their customs, forms of religiosity, or traditions became well established.

One example of an autobiographical narration connected with emigration and staying in Berlin is Aleksander Granach's book "Da geht ein Mensch. Roman eines Lebens" ([There Goes a Mensch: A Memoir], first published in 1943 by an émigré publishing house in Sweden).<sup>739</sup> Its author was born in the late nineteenth century in what was then Galicia, in a poor rural family with many children. He stepped onto the path to independence early in his life. His first important stop was Lviv, followed by Vienna and Berlin. Taking up different jobs, Granach remained faithful to his dreams of becoming an actor. During the years he lived in Germany he managed to become a student of Max Reinhardt's acting school. Film proved a more important medium than the theater, with Granach becoming one of the most important expressionist actors. For instance, he played the main role in *Nosferatu* (1922), directed by Friedrich Murnau. Granach's narrative, called autobiographic in the subtitle, is something like a case study, an attempt to record a Jewish émigré's life. Let us add, a life not only successful, but also filled with the author's dramatic experiences and even outright adventures. Granach often emphasizes the abject poverty experienced by vast majority of Galician Jews and also their determination in seeking to change their life and the repeated need to flee the place where they suffered persecution. Already known to the German theater and film audience, the actor was forced to leave Germany. He tried his luck in Zürich and Warsaw. In 1934, he accepted an invitation to work in a Jewish theater in Kiev. His departure to Soviet Russia ended in his arrest during the Stalinist purges in the 1930s.<sup>740</sup> Saved by Lion Feuchtwanger's intercession, he was able to go to Switzerland and then America. While writing the book, in 1942, he wrote the following in a letter: "My friends and enemies should see how such a 'despised' region as Galicia and such 'despised' people looked [. . .]."<sup>741</sup> Most of the narrative is devoted to the years of his childhood

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738 See *ibid.*, pp. 118 ff.

739 A. Granach, *Da geht ein Mensch* (Berlin, 2007) [English edition: *There Goes a Mensch: A Memoir* (Los Angeles: Atara Press, 2019)].

740 Aleksander Granach was one of few Jewish artists who managed to leave Soviet Russia. Most writers and artists connected with developing Yiddish culture were murdered or died in Soviet labor camps in the 1930s and 1950s.

741 Irene Runge presented the letter to Berthold Viertel at a meeting that promoted Granach's book on the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his death. A copy of it is in my possession.

and the difficult emigration experiences of his youth. The places where he stayed later were all to some degree connected with his memories. That lessened the strangeness of the surroundings and prevented him from severing his ties with his homeland, which the author apparently identified with the land of his childhood. At the same time he accepted new places which opened up new prospects to the émigré.<sup>742</sup> Fascinated with Berlin, Granach wrote that it constituted a space completely unlike other urban spaces.<sup>743</sup> The city had a peculiar influence on newcomers – “I felt assaulted there, attacked, torn apart in all directions by the new rhythm, new people, new language, new morality and customs. I had to withstand that, open my eyes wide, and flex my muscles so as not to be pushed to the ground, crushed, and weighed down.”<sup>744</sup> The first moments when the character felt better were connected with getting help from the trade unions in looking for work. Thus, eventually Berlin proved a friendly space smiling at the poor émigrés. A means to get to know the urban structure became two-hour journeys from one terminus to the other. Travelling through the “sea of houses” gave a “faint idea about something enormous and horrible which nonetheless seemed to give us a friendly welcome.”<sup>745</sup> When the protagonist of the autobiographical novel started working in Scheunenviertel he suddenly felt like in Lviv or Stanyslaviv. The alleys were filled with small stores marked as kosher (in the case of groceries) and crawling with inhabitants “dressed like in Galicia.” Laborers working in nearby factories were the *Ostjuden*’s close neighbors. Not only prayer houses operated there, but also cafés and restaurants, which, like Löwenthal on Grenadierstrasse, gave émigré actors a chance to perform on small scenes. The protagonist’s friend who came with him to the big city decides against taking root in Berlin after becoming an object of an older man’s homosexual adoration. He leaves that world of corruption and returns to the East European shtetl. For Aleksander Granach, who decided to stay, the city proves a space filled with politics, a variety of acquaintances, and after a certain point mainly involvement in the theater art.

A different motivation, though one also derived from deep ideological convictions and ambitions to participate in and co-shape Jewish culture and literature, was the reason why one of the key participants of cultural life in Warsaw,

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742 Granach wrote in German.

743 A. Granach, *Da geht ein Mensch*, a fragment published in *Unter Emigranten. Jüdische Dichtung und Prosa aus Berlin*, ed. A. Jendrusch (Berlin, 2003), pp. 37-48.

744 *Ibid.*, p. 37.

745 *Ibid.*, p. 38.

Melech Ravitch, emigrated from Vienna to Warsaw. The author discussed this in his autobiographical texts published after the Holocaust.<sup>746</sup> Recollective texts (by Melech Ravitch, Bernard Singer, or Zusman Segalowicz) closely connected with preserving memory of Jewish Warsaw and its artistic and literary milieu should become an object of a completely separate analysis. Such a project, however, reaches beyond the chronological framework of the production of the texts adopted in this book (the first half of the twentieth century).

One should bear in mind that in the first half of the twentieth century both cities – Warsaw and Berlin – played the role of cultural centers. They were particularly attractive to artists coming from smaller centers in the East European diaspora. I should highlight at least two of the Warsaw milieus which co-shaped the-then cultural life by bringing together those who had moved to the big city. Those were the worlds of Hilel Zeitlin and Isaac Leib Peretz. When the latter moved to Warsaw from Zamość in 1887 he first moved to Ceglana Street. Peretz, who became a leading figure in Jewish literary culture in the-then Warsaw, was greatly respected by a number of locals and individuals who came to Warsaw. He was like a magnet attracting a variety of artists. His apartment became a place of meetings and discussions, debates on the condition and objectives of literature. Many authors remembered meetings with Peretz as one of the most important or breakthrough ones in their life. One example here can be Lamed Szapiro, who reminisced about a visit he paid Peretz:<sup>747</sup>

In 1896, that is at the age of 18, Szapiro came to Warsaw and almost immediately went to Peretz, same as almost all people aspiring to be called Jewish writers. What he remembered about their first conversation in the apartment on Ceglana Street is that they were reflecting on a certain regression in Yiddish literature and that Szapiro asked: “Why is it bad now when a few years ago there was such animation?” Peretz answered laconically: “[It was an animation] of writers, not readers.”<sup>748</sup>

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746 Melech Ravitch (Zechariah Choneh Bergner, 1893–1976) – one of the most important figures in the Jewish literary life, a cultural activist, essayist, author of poetry in Yiddish. Co-founder of the Haliastra group (1922, Warsaw), secretary of the Union of Jewish Writers and Journalists in Poland. Left Poland in 1934. Published his recollective essays as *Dos mayse bukh fun mayn leben* (1962–1975). They concern literary life and the activity of Yiddish artists in Galicia, Vienna, and Warsaw.

747 This was discussed by Bella Szwarzman-Czarnota in her text “The Two Facets of Lamed Shapiro and Yitskhok Leybush Peretz,” in *Trilingual Literature of Polish Jews From Different Perspectives. I. L. Peretz in memoriam.*, ed. A. Molisak, Sh. Ronen, (Cambridge, 2017).

748 *Ibid.*, p. 1.



Such a kind of emigration, that is motivated by one's desire to participate in literary life, was discussed by Szmuel Różański. Writing about the role of Warsaw in Jewish literature, he emphasized that

with Peretz's settlement in Warsaw [...] began a new epoch. Warsaw began to play a more important role in the process of the development of Jewish literature. The position of Yiddish in the cultural-social life of Jews solidified. [...] The activity of Jewish writers, singers, musicians, and painters who came to Warsaw from various parts of Poland and from all parts of Eastern Europe was booming.<sup>749</sup>

Calling Warsaw a city of "literary cosmopolitanism," Różański emphasized on several occasions that substantial element of the animation of the cultural life of Jewish milieus and the support lent to various publishing or literary initiatives by people who had come from the provinces: "The succor which strengthened Jewish literature and art in Warsaw came from the *shtetl*. In other words, the *shtetl* breathed life into the capital."<sup>750</sup> Pointing to other centers of Jewish literature – Vilnius or New York – the author observed that the young people who came to Warsaw who "had [...] the most influence on the entire Jewish literature, often having brought their spiritual heritage from towns and *shtetls* very distant from Warsaw."<sup>751</sup>

Another highly influential figure in the life of Warsaw Jews was Hilel Zeitlin, who was initially active in Vilnius, where he published the periodical *HaZman*. He moved to Warsaw in 1906 and co-worked with periodicals such as *Haynt* and *Der Moment* and published his texts in Yiddish and Hebrew. He was undoubtedly a person who had a tremendous influence on the Warsaw Jewish intelligentsia, for he brought together both writers and politicians, people of various opinions associated with various ideological currents. Elchanan Zeitlin described his father's activity in *In a literarishe shtub. Bilder, bagegnungen, epizodn* [A Literary Salon. Images, Meetings, and Episodes]. A prewar description of those who assembled in Zeitlin's apartment can be found in, for instance, the initial part of the interview which Isaac Bashevis Singer conducted with him for the *Literarishe Bleter* periodical:

Śliska Street is a Jewish street full of small stores, Talmudic colleges and religious schools. Hilel Zeitlin has been living here for two years now. [...] As I have heard, he preaches

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749 Sz. Różański, *Rola Warszawy w literaturze żydowskiej*, trans. M. Friedman (this text comes from the book entitled *Warshe in der yidysher literatur*, published by the YIVO Literary in Buenos Aires in 1979). Qtd. after: *Midrasz* 1 (2001): 8; emphasis – A. M.

750 *Ibid.*, p. 8.

751 *Ibid.*, p. 9.

the Chabad tradition and rabbi Shneur Zalman's philosophy. In his apartment there is always a small crowd of yeshiva students and inquisitive individuals who ask questions concerning Zeitlin's articles in *Der Moment*.<sup>752</sup>

Aside the meetings at Peretz's or Zeitlin's, the third place which brought together the milieu of searchers, zealous and engaged in the creation of Jewish culture, was the seat of the Union of Jewish Writers and Journalists at Tłomackie Street 13 in Warsaw. As Róžański, whom I have quoted, emphasized, the organization and its club (called Buda – Polish for “stall”) were perhaps the most famous and influential centers of Jewish culture.<sup>753</sup> Tłomackie Street 13 is certainly one of the addresses best known among writers at that time. It was also the Warsaw space where many writers who emigrated from *shtetls* or other centers were seeking their own place.

While in the first half of the twentieth century the Warsaw space was dominated by literature written in Yiddish (though one should not forget the texts penned in Hebrew and the many works of Polish-Jewish literature), Berlin attracted German-speaking authors or ones writing in Hebrew or Yiddish. Berlin's attractiveness can be deemed comparable to that of Warsaw, particularly until the early 1920s: there were cultural-literary periodicals and many Jewish authors were published. The German capital also constituted an interesting center attracting Jewish authors who were émigrés or, should I say, migrants (as it has already been said, many of them treated Berlin as a temporary stopover). The arrival of Jewish artists from Eastern Europe in the German capital markedly increased the role of that city also as a literary center (aside Odessa, Kiev, Vilnius, or Warsaw). Yiddish and Hebrew literature was playing an increasingly important role.<sup>754</sup> Living in Berlin facilitated not only various contacts, participation in cultural life, or engagement in the most important debates at that time.

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752 Qtd. after: <http://www.varshe.org.pl/teksty-zrodlowe/o-ludzjach/102-hi-lel-cajtlin>; source: I. B. Singer, “Hilel Cejtlin,” *Literaryshe Bleter*, 7 May 1926, in: I. B. Singer, *Felietony, eseje, wywiady*, trans. T. Kuberczyk, introduction by Ch. Shmeruk (Warsaw, 1993), pp. 182–185.

753 Sz. Róžański, *Rola Warszawy w literaturze żydowskiej*, p. 8. The author mentions the distance and skepticism of other milieus: “It should be added that Tłomackie Street 13 did not win favor with Jewish writers in the Soviet Union. They called that club, which distinguished itself in the sphere of culture, a bourgeois quagmire. Some Jewish writers in America smiled ambiguously when they heard somebody praise Tłomackie Street 13.” *Ibid.*, p. 8.

754 S. Pinsker, “Spaces of Hebrew and Yiddish Modernism – The Urban Cafés in Berlin,” in *Transit und Transformation*, p. 57.

For writers such as Uri Tsevi Grinberg or Shmuel Yosef Agnon, Berlin was an important part of their biography.<sup>755</sup> Perhaps one of the most important meeting places were cafés: Café Monopol on Friedrichstrasse, which was a contact place for Yiddish and Hebrew writers, Café des Westens on Kurfürstendamm, and later the perhaps most famous Romanisches Café, which was a space of debates on culture and politics, a place of meetings and heated discussions, and something like a second home to many artists, particularly newcomers and migrants: “Fleeing pogroms in Ukrainian *shtetls* and revolutions, they created something like a Jewish colony in western Berlin. Its parliament was seated in the Romanisches Café. The café swarmed with famous Jewish intellectuals and activists, famous Jewish lawyers from Moscow and Petersburg, writers from Kiev and Odessa. . . It was like a beehive.”<sup>756</sup> Gennady Estraikh was one of those who wrote about the great energy and passion with which the subject matter of *Yidishkeit*, the condition of Jewish culture, or the various types of modern Jewish identity were debated there in a number of places. He emphasized the activity of the milieu of Jewish writers who were in Berlin both before and after the First World War.<sup>757</sup>

During the interwar period Berlin was not only inhabited by Jewish refugees from Eastern Europe. A vital part of the community of immigrants living in Berlin was made up of ‘white’ Russians and Jews who fled Russia after the pogroms and revolution and were looking for a place for themselves, far away from the new state, which was undergoing a radical transformation.<sup>758</sup> That Russian Berlin can be found predominantly in the prose of Vladimir Nabokov, though he is only one of many representatives of that substantial Russian emigration. Its presence and influence have been described by Karl Schlögel.<sup>759</sup> Scholars who deal with the Jewish émigré community in Berlin distinguish the emigration from the East – before the establishment of the Polish state – as emigration

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755 V. Dohrn, A.-Ch. Saß, introduction to *Transit und Transformation*, p. 16.

756 S. Pinsker, “Spaces of Hebrew and Yiddish Modernism – The Urban Cafés in Berlin,” in *Transit und Transformation*, p. 60.

757 See *Yiddish in Weimar Berlin: At the Crossroads of Diaspora Politics and Culture*, ed. G. Estraikh, M. Krutikov (Oxford, 2010), pp. 3–23; this publication is a collection of articles devoted to Berlin, which is treated predominantly as a city of the 1920s Russian and Jewish emigration, a space where very different artists created their multicultural art.

758 Those were also Russian Jews, including, for instance, those from assimilated milieus (a symbolic example of which can be Vera Slonim, Nabokov’s later wife) or those who did not accept Russia’s new political regime.

759 See K. Schlögel, *Das russische Berlin. Ostbahnhof Europas* (Berlin, 2007).

predominantly from Galicia, Bukovina, and Russia.<sup>760</sup> The refugees were not only seeking to better their material status, but also, as I have mentioned, fleeing the wave of pogroms and violence or service in the imperial armies. A different motivation was looking for a place to fulfil one's artistic ambitions and a chance to find one's own place in the act of the shaping of modern Jewish culture. Some of those migrants were Polish Jews, but a more exact estimation of the number of newcomers from Poland can be given only for the post-1918 period, that is after they became citizens of the Polish state. Before that, coming to the German capital, they proved their identity with documents issued by the partitioners, predominantly the Habsburg monarchy and Russia.

In 1925, according to Estraikh, 25 percent of the over 172,000 Jews living in Berlin were newcomers. In 1921, Dovid Eynhorn, a Yiddish poet and essayist,<sup>761</sup> called Berlin a transit center for

all rugged Jewish immigrants from Europe and a place to which fled the Jewish émigrés who due to some unfortunate circumstances were cut off from the great emigration current flowing to America. Berlin was inhabited by those who were not allowed to board vessels, those rejected by their families, and, last but not least, those who had had their documents stolen. Berlin attracts Jewish deserters from Poland, Jewish laborers expelled from France, and Jews expelled by [Miklós] Horthy's Hungary. It was a stopover from the Halutzim seeking to go to Palestine and Jewish laborers wishing to get to Soviet Russia.<sup>762</sup>

Two years later Eynhorn told readers of *Forverts* (*The Forward*) that while strolling down Friedrichstrasse, he felt like in Berdychiv, which was considered the "Jewish capital" of Ukraine. He heard broken Russian from all directions, paired with Jewish intonation and gesticulation. He could also hear a lot of Yiddish, particularly of the Volhynian and Litvak variety.<sup>763</sup> Estraikh quotes recollections of Sholem Asch, who while in Berlin encountered Jews from St. Petersburg, Moscow, Kiev, and Odessa.<sup>764</sup>

The emigration waves were closely connected with political events in Eastern Europe. A special time was the epoch of the end of the First World War and

760 See A.-Ch. Saß, *Berliner Luftmenschen. Osteuropäisch-jüdische Migranten in der Weimarer Republik* (Gottingen, 2012); S. E. Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers*.

761 [http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Eynhorn\\_Dovid](http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Eynhorn_Dovid).

762 G. Estraikh, "Introduction: Yiddish on the Spree," in *Yiddish in Weimar Berlin: At the Crossroads of Diaspora Politics and Culture*, ed. G. Estraikh, M. Krutikov (Oxford, 2010), p. 6.

763 Qtd. after: G. Estraikh, "Introduction," p. 6.

764 See *ibid.*

the revolution in Russia. That was when a very large group of émigrés came to “Jewish Berlin”: “They had come here from Galicia, having lost their precious King Franz Joseph; from Poland, Romania, Russia – from wherever the war and the carnage had driven them.”<sup>765</sup> Some of those newcomers had nowhere to return to (for instance, Jewish prisoners of war from ‘Russian detachments’), while others stayed in Berlin somewhat because they had to, while trying to treat Berlin as a stopover. Singer writes: “Polish Jews bound for Palestine but unable to obtain visas had stayed on. Deserted wives seeking to rejoin their husbands in America but lacking the fare had remained.”<sup>766</sup>

A characteristic phenomenon in the urban space (of course, not only that of Berlin or Warsaw) was pensions, which accommodated chiefly those who could not afford to rent an apartment or stay in a hotel for a shorter or longer period of time. Many narratives about the life of émigrés emphasize this peculiar kind of ‘anchoring’ one’s life in the strange cities, which they were only beginning to get to know. Such an existence was connected not only with insufficient financial assets, but it also – and this seems relatively significant – introduced a completely new kind of a subjective experience. The existence of the uprooted was temporary, fragile, and ephemeral. It encouraged reflection on the place, often faraway, which one had left behind or abandoned (sometimes involuntarily), and assumption of a distanced attitude towards the different place marked by Otherness, with that space requiring one to build trust to the specific place and find there a chance for shaping one’s life anew.

David (Dovid) Bergelson’s short stories feature a description of the situation of émigrés from the East which differs from testimonies about Russian inhabitants of Berlin.<sup>767</sup> In 1921 the author moved for some time to Berlin, where he became familiar with the situation of the *Ostjuden* living in the German capital. He was aware that that city, attractive not only to Jews, became a refuge or a chance for leaving behind the world of violence, wars, and revolution.<sup>768</sup> Karl Schlögel emphasizes the significant debate that went on in the milieu of Jews who came from Russia.<sup>769</sup> The author stresses that the fact that in 1923 most major Jewish leaders from Russia either had already emigrated or were trying to leave the new

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765 I. J. Singer, *The Family Carnovsky*, p. 161.

766 See *ibid.*

767 Of which perhaps the most famous are the literary portraits painted by Nabokov in, for instance, his novels *The Gift* and *Mary*.

768 *David Bergelson. From Modernism to Socialist Realism*, ed. J. Sherman and G. Estraiikh (London, 2007).

769 See K. Schlögel, *Das russische Berlin*, pp. 300–304.

Russian state testified to just how much the shaping of the new regime diverted from the euphoria of the 1917 revolution. Their engagement in the revolution and the reaction to the revolution were the causes for the revival of strong anti-Semitism in Russia: "In the eyes of the outside world Russian Jews were both representatives of the Bolshevik regime and the aim of anti-Jewish pogroms. They appeared as hated executioners of the red terror and miserable victims of the rowdy riff raff."<sup>770</sup> One of the effects of the very dramatic discussions reported in the émigré press was an appeal addressed to "all Jews in the world," which called on Russian Jews to acknowledge that the revolution had caused nothing but a destruction of the social structures and a real catastrophe. Even though they had experienced violence and terror too, they should have also felt partly responsible and immediately engaged in the fight against Bolshevism by taking the Whites' side. Those were exceptional words, particularly that they were uttered in a place with a substantial Russian émigré community, a place where a lot was known about the pogroms which had taken place in Russia and Ukraine, and which was inhabited by those who had managed to flee those pogroms.

One of the most interesting narratives, the one constructed by aforementioned David (Dovid) Bergelson, described the urban space as a scene of extraordinary dramas, of meeting newcomers marked by radically different experiences. Putting his characters in the space of pensions and rented rooms, the author, same as Nabokov, emphasized that those places were representative of the Berlin experience of many émigrés. That was not only because due to financial considerations they opted for that specific form of accommodation, but also because as social space the pension was a space between the old known hotels and the modern anonymous suites.<sup>771</sup>

In Bergelson's short story entitled "Unter Emigranten" [Among Émigrés]<sup>772</sup> the Berlin pension appears as a place of an extraordinary meeting, a place depicted in a similar, almost 'ghostly' manner – like in Nabokov.<sup>773</sup> The small

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770 Ibid., p. 300.

771 This aspect is emphasized by Marc Caplan. See M. Caplan, "The Corridors of Berlin. Proximity, Peripherality, and Surveillance in Bergelson's Boarding House Stories," in *Transit und Transformation*, pp. 47 ff; Caplan emphasizes that for many authors-émigrés (Nabokov, Agnon, Isherwood) setting the narration in the space of Berlin pensions was a means to highlighting their status peripheral to the German culture.

772 D. Bergelson, "Unter Emigranten," p. 56.

773 In "A Guide to Berlin," one of his early prose texts, Nabokov recorded not so much guidelines for visitors as a few observations concerning the 1920s everydayness in Berlin. He mentions there the 'iron entrails of streets', streetcars, and local joints. In Nabokov's narratives the space of the German Berlin and the Berlin inhabited by

modest hotel is inhabited by characters diverse in terms of their social status and origin. The most dramatic meeting is experienced by a young Jewish man who had fled from an East European town in Volhynia and calls himself a “Jewish terrorist.” He tells the narrator about his Berlin meeting with one of the most dangerous leaders of pogroms in Ukraine: “I have been living for almost three weeks in this cheap pension. I in room 3 and he in opposite room 5. I am a stranger to this city. Nobody knows me. Neither does he. But I know him very well.”<sup>774</sup> The psychological tension felt by the young man makes him see during his sleepless nights, in almost hallucination-like visions, a most peculiar kind of communication. He has an impression that the doors of the two rooms not only look at one another but also inform each other about the tenants who hide behind them and what intentions they have towards each other.

The young man’s monologues leave no doubt – he has recognized the tenant as a person who not only participated in pogroms in the East, but also led them. The character had not come to the German capital straight from the East European diaspora afflicted with pogroms. After the end of the First World War, he first went to Palestine. His later stay in Berlin was connected with his literary aspirations. His testimony draws attention with the very detailed description of his stay in Berlin, his sensitivity to a number of signals, his awareness of the difference between the urban space and that experienced in the place where he

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émigrés from Russia, the Russian microcosm in the center of the metropolis, are clearly separate. See T. Urban, *Vladimir Nabokov – Blaue Abende in Berlin* (Berlin, 1999), pp. 120 ff; F. Göbler, “Vladimir Nabokov Berlin: Zwischenreich und flüchtige Wirklichkeit,” *Zeitschrift für Slavistik*, Berlin, vol. 4 (1994): 582 ff; M. T. Naumann, “Vladimir Vladimirovich in Berlin, *The Nabokovian*, Kansas, 13 (1984); The characters of *Mary*, *The Defense*, and *The Gift* are exiles living in the urban atmosphere like on an island surrounded by a strange element. The modest Berlin pension inhabited by the characters of *Mary* seems to remind the reader about the newcomers’ strangeness and the distinction between the world of the autochthons and the émigrés: “wandering on those broad streets were worlds which did not know about each other.” Situated close to a railroad, the pension often shakes due to the rhythmic rumble. The building acquires an almost extraordinary status, which somewhat harmonizes with its residents’ existential problems: “The rumbling thunder and the sprawling smoke seemed to penetrate the house shaking by the abyss, where the tracks, drawn with the moon’s fingernail, glimmered, and the city’s street spanned by the black overpass [. . .]. The house was like a specter [. . .].” Qtd. after: V. Nabokov, *Maszeńka*, trans. E. Siemaszkiewicz (Warsaw, 1993), pp. 31, 94 [All English translations are based on the Polish translation; for an English edition, see: *Mary* (Vintage, 1989)].

774 D. Bergelson, “Unter Emigranten,” p. 59.

grew up, and, last but not least, his frantic attempts to write first short stories. The executioner-victim relation, which is the crux of the drama, emerges with the other émigré's arrival at the pension. Listening on a Ukrainian dialog, the protagonist registers not only the newcomer's question ("But there are no. . . Jews here, are there?"), but also experiences extraordinary emotions: "I was dumbstruck. In that condition I suddenly felt a pleasant sensation that my loneliness had come to an end."<sup>775</sup>

Observation of the newcomer makes the young man make up his mind – he chooses to kill the pogrom leader. He feels relief when he decides that the best place to take revenge would be the pension's corridor with the telephone that the Ukrainian émigré often used. The young man's arrival and stay in Berlin and not someplace else suddenly acquire a completely new sense and disambiguate the meaning of his existence: the protagonist celebrates his decision with a sumptuous dinner in a restaurant. Strolling in the city, hellbent on killing the pogrom leader, he experiences, on the one hand, a sense of lightness and ease, and, on the other hand, looks at the other inhabitants and pedestrians like at shadows floating about the city he will have to bid farewell to before he has managed to get to know them well. The urban space acquires a completely new dimension – it becomes not only areas where one can meet one's mortal enemy who is paradoxically the closest link between the émigré and his hometown. The decision to take revenge encapsulates the protagonist's existence in a closed circuit, while the city and other people become marginalized and unimportant, acquiring an almost exclusively spectral dimension.

We learn about one more event which later has a fundamental effect on the course of the events. In an urban park, a space open to everybody, the character runs into his friend from the old town – an émigré living in the Jewish milieu, in the circle of fellow émigrés. Sitting for days on end on a bench, the young man ponders on the executioner he has encountered at the pension and the people he knows from his hometown who now live in Berlin. The latter seem as strange to him as the rest of Berliners. The protagonist feels no community of fate with them, though he dreams that they would learn post factum about his heroic deed of killing the pogrom participant. The protagonist's alienation results predominantly from the fact that other Jewish émigrés are trying to build a new life and live in the different circumstances as best they can.

In the diaspora, the refugees in a way copy their traditional way of life – they adapt to the social structures, while maintaining their own community and

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775 Ibid., p. 63.



identity in exile. They are trying to live a life similar to the one they led in towns of Eastern Europe. The protagonist, however, has experienced not only war (he fought in the First World War) and the pogroms in the East, which are things he shares with the fellow émigrés. He also lived for some time in the-then Palestine and his attitude to the enemy, to the one who is guilty of somebody's death was a kind of an acceptance of violence.

That accidentally encountered acquaintance was Boris Blum, a Zionist who wrote to Russian newspapers and not only spoke foreign languages, but also quickly made acquaintances “with strangers, even Christians.” He belonged to a circle of émigrés who, particularly once they came to the diaspora, were as far as possible from advocating the use of force. Blum listens to the young man's monologues justifying the need for violence – “And here, where so many Jews live, numerous pogromers live unpunished and freely, and there is nobody who would kill at least one of them. A ridiculous nation, isn't it? A ridiculous nation!”<sup>776</sup> He was arguing his case with surprise and deep concern, unable to accept his interlocutor's outrage and strong protest.

When, hell-bent on taking revenge, the young man asks for help in obtaining a pistol, arguing that he can put the gun to a good use, he becomes invited to a meeting with other Jewish émigrés. But he is in for a bitter disappointment, because instead of giving him a gun, the émigrés offer him psychiatric help and promise to find him a peaceful place where he could recover psychically and take a rest. The refusal causes the protagonist even more suffering: “The pain I felt was almost the most acute I had ever felt in my life.” Everything that surrounded me caused me pain. Everything that my eyes saw on the way: the city, the street, the cars. The ubiquitous noise. And first and foremost, that hour around seven o'clock in the evening. Every day at that hour ‘he’ would be standing in the corridor by the telephone. . . .”<sup>777</sup>

The alienated hero finds no understanding for his idea in the Jewish milieu. Asked to send him a pistol, the short story's narrator also fails to react in the way intended by the young man. The irony of the title can be seen in the two ways of interpreting the expression “among émigrés.” The character's idea to take revenge fails to find acceptance or understanding in the milieu of the Jewish émigrés, among his own kind. Thus, he mails his final letter to the narrator: “I have found a way out. There is a large hook behind the mirror in room no. 3, where I live at the pension. The rope on which the mirror hangs will do. I understand everything

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776 Ibid., p. 71.

777 Ibid., p. 74.

now. I am an émigré. Among émigrés. I want this to end.”<sup>778</sup> From this perspective emigration occurs to be a deepest disappointment and an existential drama.

In his different short story, entitled “*Dwie bestie*” [Two Beasts], Bergelson again portrays a Ukrainian émigré.<sup>779</sup> One of the three characters is a subtenant who rents a room from a war widow who lives on Cottbuser Damm. Anton Zaremba was a “commune clerk, a ‘defeated’ ataman of a small band which robbed and murdered inhabitants of Jewish *shtetls* in Ukraine. [...] He has lived in Berlin for five years and he can barely say anything in German or understand it.”<sup>780</sup> The author emphasizes his primitivism, lack of refinement and education: “Zaremba is always sporting an embroidered shirt because he belongs to a White Guard balalaika band which plays drunkenly all night long in some night cabaret-restaurant.”<sup>781</sup> The schematically and stereotypically sketched character acquires a demonic dimension when juxtaposed with another character – a dog.

The short story is an embedded narrative. We learn from the story within the story why the dog owned by the main female character, the widow who rents the apartment to the former ataman, had acquired a peculiar status. Following the death of her husband, who died during military operations, the woman was persuaded by her female neighbors to adopt a baby. From then on she had to frequently punish the animal which was jealous of the attention and concern she showed the child. All it took was a moment of her absence for the dog to instinctively abreact the wrong done to it and bite the infant to death. The widow, the dog’s owner, feels a relatively peculiar kind of pride taken in the fact that her dog “became a criminal” and one who, despite the investigation, could not be tried and punished, which was why the dog became infamous and why the press wrote about him. Although the woman distrusts her tenant and considers him a “savage from the East,” she does find the time to tell him the whole story.

We know that ataman Zaremba does not speak German well, but he does know it well enough to understand the story about the dog: “The way she spoke German [of the Berlin variety – A. M.] reminded him of the way Jewish women talked in small Ukrainian towns, where he had and his band had committed robberies and murders; this memory makes him miss his village.”<sup>782</sup> This combination of the émigré’s nostalgia and the memory of the brutal events he took

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778 Ibid., p. 76.

779 See D. Bergelson, *Dwie bestie i inne opowiadania*, selection and translation S. Wygodzki (Warsaw, 1960).

780 Ibid., p. 6.

781 Ibid.

782 Ibid., p. 7.

part in seems relatively shocking. One could assume that the three characters are connected by violence, which is seen as an ordinary element of living in a society. The kind of acceptance of the operation of force and the recognition of predatoriness and mercilessness become foundations of the new community. The widow even coquettishly encourages the tenant to touch her palm so as to see the animal's rapid and strong reaction.

After hearing the woman out, the man sees the images he remembered and in a peculiar way compares the widow's account with his own experiences:

The story about the bloodstained baby lying on the room's floor with its throat bitten through reminded him of a number of similar stories which had taken place in Jewish *shtetls* in Ukraine, where he and his band had murdered and robbed. Blood. . . He remembers the blood in all the Jewish homes, the blood on the street where amidst broken glass and lots of various rags and objects scattered were bloodstained corpses, with the white-haired heads lying next to them.<sup>783</sup>

From this perspective cruelty seems a natural element of the world. The woman's response after hearing the ataman out, sounds shocking. She has understood little aside the fact that there were bloodstained corpses of children laying on the ground in the place where he came from. He widow inquires whether there was a trial. When she gets a negative answer (“‘No,’ Zaremba shook his head, ‘there was no trial.’”), she exclaims almost with sorrow: “Poor thing! As poor as my Tell” [the dog – A. M.]. It seems that the female character represents an almost inhumane attitude – according to her, one should pity humans and animals who committed atrocities and murders but have fallen into oblivion and were not ‘appreciated’ enough to be put on trial. The entire narrative about unpunished evil is in stark contrast to the final scene, where two creatures – the animal and the man – look at each other with eyes filled with sorrow and longing. The trio which finds their place on earth in the apartment on Cottbuser Tor resembles a small group of beings who exhibit psychopathic characteristics to say the least.

Warsaw was also perceived as a refuge by refugees fleeing from the terrains of the military operations during the First World War. One of the writers who discussed that was S. An-sky (Shloyme Zanvl Rappoport) in his report-like text, devoted predominantly to the anti-Jewish violence in Galicia, published after the end of the military operations. An-sky stayed in Warsaw for a short time working on a construction of a field hospital for the wounded before obtaining permission to go to Galicia. This is how he described the-then Warsaw:

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783 Ibid., pp. 11-12.

I found Warsaw frantic. The city was still under the impression of the violent attack which Germans had staged in October. [. . .] You saw ambulances, paramedics and nurses wherever you went. The street traffic was very heavy, the streets were crowded, there was great squeeze and crush caused by the great masses of people who were still there.<sup>784</sup>

As An-sky emphasizes, not only wounded soldiers were brought to the city: “[. . .] together with them arrived dozens, hundreds of poor souls from nearby cities, towns, and villages who fleeing war atrocities or had been exiled due to racial hatred [A. M.’s emphasis], denunciations, and calumny.”<sup>785</sup> The writer points precisely to the Jewish refugees: “All possible misfortunes that befell the Jewish population of Poland were felt more acutely in Warsaw than anywhere else. Every day thousands of Jewish souls arrived, mostly on foot, robbed, naked, hungry, panicked and helpless [. . .].”<sup>786</sup> One of the places which An-sky visited with Dinensohn and Peretz, who was very active despite his old age, was the Jewish literary club called HaZomir, which was transformed into a temporary shelter for refugees. An-sky was struck by the peculiar indifference visible on the faces of those who had experienced violence and exile and had lost all hope, by their unemotional and monotonous accounts of the tragedies which had befallen them and their families.

Motifs of psychical destabilization, frustration, and dissatisfaction set against the background of the urban space appear not only in the story entitled “*Dwie Bestie*” [Two Beasts] discussed above, but also in other texts by David Bergelson. Let us take a closer look at his short story entitled “*Pensjonat u trzech siostr*” [The Pension Run by Three Sisters], whose title and characters constitute elements of an intertextual game with Czechow’s literary idiom and esthetics.<sup>787</sup> The narrator

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784 Qtd. after: <http://www.varshe.org.pl/teksty-zrodlowe/o-ludziach/46-an-ski-z-perecem-w-hazomirze>; source: *Churbn Galicje*, translated from Yiddish by A. Ciałowicz (Vilnius-Warsaw-New York, 1923), vol. 1, pp. 17-24. The Polish edition of Anski’s book was published in translation from Hebrew: Sz. An-ski, *Tragedia Żydów Galicyjskich w czasie I wojny światowej. Wrażenia i refleksje z podróży po kraju*, translated from Hebrew by K. D. Majus, introduction, footnotes, and editing by K. D. Majus and S. Stępień (Przemyśl, 2010). The original text was written in Yiddish. The title of the original is *Der yudisher hurbn fun Poylen, Galitsye un Bukovine: Fun togbukh 1914-1917*; the Hebrew translation by Samuel Leib Zitron was published in 1929 in Berlin and in 1936 in Tel-Aviv.

785 Qtd. after: <http://www.varshe.org.pl/teksty-zrodlowe/o-ludziach/46-an-ski-z-perecem-w-hazomirze>; source: *Churbn Galicje*, pp. 17-24.

786 Qtd. after: *ibid.*

787 D. Bergelson, *Die Pension zu den drei Schwestern*, pp. 111-119. This has been discussed by Joseph Sherman. See J. Sherman, “Bergelson and Chekhov: Convergences

highlights the pension's peculiar atmosphere by stressing that those who experience the way in which it operates feel at home there, like in a place very close to them: "One feels like in the city center and at the same time far away, separated from the millions of people. Immediately emerges a thought: 'It's very decent and modest, but. . .'"<sup>788</sup> The pension not only generates an aura of safety, but also becomes a space where one not only peeks into the life of the three sisters, but also – by voluntarily paying substantial rent – becomes an object of other people's glances. The ambiguous character of this space is stressed by means of a peculiar monologue of one of the tenants who has been living there the longest – Mr. Mojżesz Lewenberg, who spends entire days in his room but always leaves the door ajar. During several conversations he has with his neighbor who visits him, he reveals his suspicions: "All this is fishy."<sup>789</sup> But nobody clarifies what the pension's shortcoming could be. Another source of the sense of the pension's strangeness is connected with a kind of theatricalization of one's own and other people's life. The interest taken in the three sisters fails to bring any clear explanations. The guests' living at the pension eavesdrop and know that they are also being listened in on. It is a kind of game which almost all guests living there play with the landladies, who come from Riga or Białystok. Among the guests is both Tartakower, a rich invalid, and Mr. Mojżesz, most likely a former Orthodox Jew who left his family in Russia, who tries to put even more emphasis on the strangeness of the relations between the landladies and the pensioners. This description of the Berlin pension is a depiction of not so much reshaping one's life abroad (the landladies are émigrés too), as a kind of transplantation of the old lifestyle, old home into a different urban space. Thus, to those émigrés – at least some of the Jewish émigrés – Berlin became not so much a place where they settled and a new space where they took root, as more like a peculiar version of dislocation.<sup>790</sup>

The East European Jews' shorter stays in Berlin were often connected simply with an opportunity for making money, particularly at time of high inflation. On such occasions the Jews chose places which made them feel at home (like the aforementioned pension) and enabled them to find their place in the familiar cultural circle:

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and Departures," in: *The Yiddish Presence in European Literature: Inspiration and Interaction*, ed. J. Sherman and R. Robertson (Oxford, 2005), pp. 117-133.

788 D. Bergelson, *Die Pension zu den drei Schwestern*, p. 111.

789 *Ibid.*, p. 118.

790 See M. Caplan, *The Corridors of Berlin*, pp. 52-54.

The most crowded of all hotels was the Franz Joseph, owned by Reb Herzele Vishniak of Brody, which stood in the old secondhand clothes dealer's quarter. [...] Immigrants from Galicia and Poland stopped here; Jews in short coats and in not-so-short coats, all eager to catch a bargain in a city gone economically mad. Although hotel rates were cheap all over town, they preferred Reb Herzele Vishniak's strictly kosher establishment where they felt so completely at home.<sup>791</sup>

A similar atmosphere of maintaining the traditional identity in the culturally alien surroundings can be found in the narration about a secondary character of Israel Joshua Singer's novel – Salomon Burak, who came from the East European diaspora and treated Berlin as a chance for bettering his family's financial situation. He started off as a door-to-door salesman and went all the way to owning a store on Landsberger Allee.<sup>792</sup> With his business growing, his store was frequented "by entirely "gentile clientele, he did not try to conceal his origin as did most of the Jewish merchants in the neighborhood. His Jewish name was inscribed in huge letters on his sign. Neither did he embellish his store with flaxen-haired salespeople as did the other Jewish merchants in an attempt to conceal their own Semitic background."<sup>793</sup> One can see here the ways of dealing with strangeness and alienation which were characteristic of the immigrant clusters in metropolises. It was a kind of not so much total emigration as aforementioned dislocation. Even economic problems which troubled the German state after the First World War did not result in a reduction or disintegration of the thus-shaped way of the émigrés' life. "Just as before the war, when he had entertained his relatives from Melnitz (Mielnik), he now addressed his Yiddish aphorisms to his gentile help, who were already accustomed to his humor."<sup>794</sup>

As we have seen, the city – depicted in the texts as a space of émigrés or refugees – acquires at least an ambiguous status. It becomes a place of refuge for both victims of violence and those who perpetrated it. It provides some anonymity and guarantees discretion. For many people it is a space where they can begin a new life and better their lot. At the same time, however, it is also a place which helps escape the responsibility for the acts committed elsewhere. Another look at the space of Berlin makes us realize that the city attracts not only émigrés looking for a chance to pursue a career (economic considerations) or find refuge (from brutality, the judiciary, or revenge of those they have wronged), but also refugees motivated by other considerations.

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791 I. J. Singer, *The Family Carnovsky*, pp. 165-166.

792 *Ibid.*, p. 19.

793 *Ibid.*, p. 20.

794 *Ibid.*, p. 167.

An interesting example of the description of the Jewish émigré milieu is an anti-Semitic narrative about Warsaw which paradoxically says a long also about the migration from the East to the Polish capital. In his novel published in 1920, Artur Gruszecki paints a portrait of both Polish Jews who live in Warsaw and newcomers from the East, who treated emigration to that city as, on the one hand, a kind of forced settlement on the frontiers of the empire, and, on the other hand, a chance for doing lucrative business.<sup>795</sup> As I have mentioned, *Litvaks* (*Litvakes* in Yiddish) were Jews from the territories incorporated into the Russian Empire, which were partly Russified.<sup>796</sup> The shifting of the borders of the ‘settlement zones’ and the anti-Jewish legislation as well as persecutions and pogroms constituted the main impulses towards the decision to emigrate, as I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. The arrival of that group in Congress Poland caused great controversy, also within the Jewish community. Immigrants from the Empire were far from Hasidism. They stood out not only in terms of religion (as the *Misnagdim*) and language (a different variety of Yiddish), but they also knew the Russian language and culture. Both Polish Jews who supported assimilation and Polish nationalists often regarded them as promoters of Russification. They were envied for their knowledge of the mechanisms of the functioning of the Russian administration and market, which constituted a major advantage over those who wished to do business in Russia. “The Litvaks formed close-knit groups resilient to acculturation not only to Poles, but also to the local Jewish community. They prayed in their own synagogues. But as a rule, they lost their distinctness from Polish Jews as early as in the next generation.”<sup>797</sup> The difficulties and conflicts between the newcomers from the East and the Jews living in Warsaw were discussed by, for instance, Motti Zalkin, who emphasized the fact that the contacts between the two groups were characterized by distrust or even hostility.<sup>798</sup>

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795 See A. Gruszecki, *Litwackie mrowie. Powieść współczesna* (Warsaw, 1920).

796 The expression ‘Litvak’ has negative connotations also in Sholem Asch’s *Warszawa*. Lea Hurwicz, the protagonist’s wife, says the following when she wants to reprimand the oldest tenant: “You’re a parasite yourself. You’re a smart doctor or attorney yourself. And even if you’re not, then you surely will be. [. . .] You are a Litvak (that was the worst insult used in the Hurwicz’s home), you have no heart [. . .].” Qtd. after: Sh. Asch, *Warszawa*, trans. W. Rogowicz (Cracow, 1931), p. 26. [English edition: *Three Cities* (Carol and Graf Pub, 1983)].

797 <http://www.jhi.pl/psj/litwacy>, entry by Rafał Żebrowski, <https://yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Litvak>.

798 M. Zalkin, “What is There, in the Litvak’s Head?,” an address at the Warsaw – the History of a Jewish Metropolis Conference held in London during 22–25 June 2010.

Gruszecki's novel entitled *Litwackie mrowie* [The Litvak Swarm] pertains directly to the phenomenon of the changing situation of Jews in tsarist Russia. The narrator, who does not conceal his aversion to Jewish inhabitants of Warsaw, tells us a story about newcomers from the East in a peculiar manner. The plot's construction is to make the reader conclude that even though Jews were not accepted compatriots, representatives of the Litvak milieus constituted an even greater threat to Polishness than they did. "Litvaks, for that was how the Jews [as in the original – A. M.] called them, have arrived and dispersed all throughout the Kingdom, settling mostly in Warsaw."<sup>799</sup> The protagonist, merchant Mojżesz Dawidowicz Fiszkun from Moscow, and his wife have a highly critical attitude to the local Jews who speak Polish, Yiddish, or a mixture of those two languages. Fiszkun thinks that Warsaw Jews who undergo Polonization put themselves in an unfavorable position with the authorities and that they should be loyal subjects of the tsar. The Litvaks' critical outlook on the local Jews is also connected with the conviction that the latter conspire with the local population ("they politicize with Poles").<sup>800</sup>

The Warsaw space is not only conducive to making easy money, but also proves unfriendly and uglier than Moscow. Strolling in the city, the protagonist watches the inhabitants and the local atmosphere:

The evening was cloudy and with occasional sleet. Jabbering and calling one another in various tones, pedestrians (mostly Jews) were moping about, walking on the muddy sidewalk. Reminiscing about Moscow, Fiszkun sighed. In Moscow there should be snow and frost and dry sidewalks, whereas in Warsaw there is so much mud that even wellingtons do not help. From the scantily lit numerous small stores faint light was shining on the street. In almost every entrance, there stood a merchant, male or female, or their children, encouraging the pedestrians to purchase the poor-quality merchandise. Fiszkun's expensive attire, which did not give away his Jewishness, incited the storeowners to warmly invite him in.<sup>801</sup>

In the Polonized Kleinwegs' living room, the rich newcomer, who lived in a rented apartment on Twarda Street (a mostly Jewish neighborhood), explained his choice of that location: "I am among my own kind there. Lots of us live in this area. I am going to open my business on the main street to lure in goys, but I live near my own people as this is my nature."<sup>802</sup> But that neighborhood proved unacceptable to both sides:

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799 A. Gruszecki, *Litwackie mrowie*, p. 9.

800 *Ibid.*, p. 106.

801 *Ibid.*, p. 64–65.

802 *Ibid.*, p. 153.



Both the locals and the newcomers were unhappy with that community [they used the same synagogue – A. M.]. Hence, soon Fiszkun and his companions rented out a separate Beth Midrash for themselves and furnished it exactly like the old one in Moscow. This house of prayer became a meeting place for wealthier Litvaks who prayed there, held councils, and got various more or less important things done.<sup>803</sup>

Thus, the location in the Jewish quarter of the city was also internally heterogeneous, depending not only on the material status, but also the social position, in which regard the newcomers differed from the locals. Thus, Fiszkun, who wanted to make a fortune, had a critical outlook on Polish Jews. For him they were not only those who, as I have mentioned, “politicized with the Poles,” but also ones who took up many spots on the market, thus making it more difficult for émigrés to start their own business; they also remained their competitors. Gruszecki describes the newcomers from the East in line with the anti-Semitic stereotype: “the whole mass of those people seemed like an anthill which somebody had transplanted from the old place into the new one. Those people bustled about, grappled, searched, and looked about – frantically, making violent movements, talking too loudly and pushing one another, concentrating into a mass, looking for advice and a way out.”<sup>804</sup> In Gruszecki’s narration the Litvaks come to Warsaw to take it over in the economic sense. Thus, in line with the stereotype, all anti-Polish conspiracies could be traced back to Jews.

To the protagonist Warsaw stands out in one more respect. The Polish-Jewish family of the Kleinwegs, particularly the young generation, belongs to the socialist circles and considers itself Polish members of Judaism, which, unfortunately, affects the younger generation of the Fiszkons. The conflict which emerges in the family concerns, on the one hand, “not harming the laborers,”<sup>805</sup> and, on the other hand, the overall evaluation of the space inhabited. The dialog between Fiszkun senior and his son testifies to the civilizational differences between the said cities:

“Sasza, [...] you haven’t seen a thing... Moscow is a city, isn’t it? And what is Warsaw?” he pouted his fat lips with scorn. “It is a small provincial hellhole with no commerce or industry.”

“What do I know about commerce and industry? But the traffic here is heavy, the stores are beautiful, the people are kind and polite. This is the European civilization.”<sup>806</sup>

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803 Ibid., p. 54-55.

804 Ibid., p. 56-57.

805 Ibid., p. 262.

806 Ibid., pp. 68-69.

For the father the ideal place is Moscow, while the young are impressed by Warsaw's distinctness.

Another type of émigrés whom one could see in the Warsaw space was mentioned in a text that belongs to popular literature, that is, *Tajemnice Nalewek* [Mysteries of Nalewki Street]: "There is this special kind of migrants. They have long curly beards and Eastern features. They smell of onion and wear kaftans. Enterprising and generating a turnover counted in thousands, they have come from Odessa, Tyflis, and even Isfahan, but they are all tied to Nalewki Street with a thousand of knots. They speak its language and understand the business done there."<sup>807</sup> In the vivid narrative about the criminal world appears – same as in the novel about the Litvaks – a motif of the Jews' Eastern origin. Police agent 'Fryga' and his girlfriend Karolcia are conducting an individual investigation. This is how the former explains the existence of the 'Nalewki band,' which was something like a gang: "You should know, Sir, that there has recently been about a dozen instances of theft, robbery, and even suicides which cannot be explained in any way. They are centered on Nalewki Street and they are connected with it. [. . .] this must be the doing of a band of villains [. . .], the Nalewki band."<sup>808</sup> The issue of Eastern origin becomes revealed when it occurs that the gang is led by a woman nicknamed Smooth Operator, who is a sister of Tema Z., a "luxurious courtesan."<sup>809</sup> The two female criminals come from Vilnius or Grodno.

Yet another reason for emigration, critical in the case of Jewish communities, was of an ideological nature. Carnovsky senior, David, came from Mielnitz (Mielnik) in Greater Poland and was a keen advocate of the *Haskalah*. His decision to settle in Berlin was motivated by religious considerations.<sup>810</sup> Penned by Israel Joshua Singer, the Carnovsky family saga is one of the best examples illustrating the fiasco of the project of the assimilation of European Jews. One should bear in mind that the historical context of the texts analyzed is the fundamental difference between the West European Jewish communities, which were under a strong influence of the *Haskalah*, and the East European ones, dominated by Orthodox Jews and the Hasidic movement. Existing at least since the 1770s, that division did not lead to an emergence of mutually alien, separate worlds. East European Jews were trying to implement the *Haskalah* in their own milieu (the main *Haskalah* centers were Vilnius and Odessa), while the perception of

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807 H. Nagiel, *Tajemnice Nalewek*, vol. 1, p. 6.

808 *Ibid.*, p. 144.

809 H. Nagiel, *Tajemnice Nalewek*, vol. 2, pp. 101 ff.

810 I. J. Singer, *The Family Carnovsky* (New York: Schocken Books: 1996).

the *Ostjuden* by West European Jews was ambivalent to say the least. They were criticized for misunderstanding the modern world and an aversion to emancipation and modernization of life. At the same time, however, one should bear in mind that attention was paid to their deep and fascinating religiosity. West European Jews noticed not only that newcomers from the East differed in terms of attire and language, but also practiced their religion in a different manner (I devote more space to this in the chapter on religion).

The symbolic dimension of the ideologically-motivated emigration can be seen in the place which the head of the family chose for his family to settle: "His elegant apartment located in the front of the house on Oranienburger Strasse became a gathering place for servants and scholars."<sup>811</sup> The choice of modern Jewish identity proposed by the *Haskalah* ideas is marked by, for instance, the said statue of Moses Mendelssohn, who is regarded as not only a precursor of the *Haskalah*, but also a great reformer of Judaism.

While the main character from the Carnovsky family (at least for some time) has a chance to act on his own fascination with the development of Reform Judaism and *Haskalah* conceptions, his wife experiences acute alienation in the urban space. In conversations Leah "interjected expressions from Mielnitz," that is Yiddish words: "Despite all the extravagant compliments, she felt like a servant who has finished her tasks and been dismissed. [. . .] She still longed for [. . .] the town where she had been born and raised. [. . .] And just as alien to her were the prayers of the cantor in the synagogue. Although they were said in Hebrew, they sounded as if they were spoken by a priest. And just as un-Jewish to her were the choir and Dr. Speier's sermons."<sup>812</sup> David Carnovsky finds himself a place in the circle of Berlin scholars, while his wife limits her acquaintances to the group milieu of Jewish émigrés from the East whom she already knew. Carnovsky senior changes his life radically. He feels an integrated citizen of the society not only because he is a conscientious and honest merchant, but also because his son had served in the Austrian army during the war. He perceives himself as somebody who "had taken special pains to familiarize himself with the language and customs and to rid himself of every trace of his Eastern background."<sup>813</sup>

In yet another version, émigrés perceive the city as a space where they can not so much better their economic status, as pursue education.

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811 *Ibid.*, p. 9.

812 *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17.

813 *Ibid.*, p. 214.

Some, like rabbi Efraim Walder come to Berlin to attend a rabbinical school and then settle in the German capital, while others come to the city for an opportunity to pursue higher education. The *Ostjuden* for whom Berlin is a place where they study are staying there temporarily. However, their pursuit of education is not always accepted by German Jews:

The black-haired and black-eyed students from the West avoided black-haired and black-eyed students from the East even more than they themselves were avoided by their fair-haired colleagues. They wanted as little contact as possible with the “beggars” and “nihilist” who, with their Asiatic Semitism, stirred up the Jewishness that they, good Germans who happened to be of the Hebrew faith, had worked so hard to conceal.<sup>814</sup>

The students from the East European diaspora differed from other students: they dressed scantily and had less money, but at the same time are much more at ease: “These ragged strangers were not as strained and inhibited as were the Jewish students from West Berlin. They wore their identity easily and proudly and bore themselves in a free and open manner.”<sup>815</sup> Similarly, on the one hand, Warsaw offered a chance to pursue education or enabled the Jewish youth to study (although in the late 1930s that became much more difficult in both capitals). On the other hand, it was a space where one could seek education different from the traditional, religious one. Examples of such institutions were the private school run by teacher Hurwicz (Sholem Asch’s *Warszawa*) or the Jewish school where a hero of Appenzlak’s *Piętra. Dom na Bielańskiej* taught Polish. In both those cases – set in different times, which should be emphasized – the teachers were convinced about the need to familiarize their students with Polish literature and culture. Critical of forced Russification, Szloma Hurwicz, who was active in Warsaw during tsarism, appreciated Polishness<sup>816</sup> and emphasized the role of education: “[. . .] he was a born Jewish enlightener, a Maskil (which was how Eastern Jews called advocates of the Enlightenment). [. . .] He helped everybody who was trying to pursue education.”<sup>817</sup> The scene where Hurwicz talked with a young man who came from Krasieczyn is the best illustration of how Hurwicz treated students, particularly those who emigrated from smaller localities in pursuit of lay education. Despite problems, the former accepted the latter’s presence

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814 *Ibid.*, pp. 63–64.

815 *Ibid.*, p. 64.

816 Sz. Asch, *Warszawa*, pp. 9–10.

817 *Ibid.*, p. 13; The Polish translator probably did not really know what words to use to describe the stance of the supporter of the Jewish Enlightenment and thus opted for words connected with education..

in the school he ran, while energetic Lea was looking in the entire tenement for accommodation for the newcomer from the *shtetl*. That was no exception because almost all of the young people seeking education “settled in the city with help from Hurwicz the teacher and even greater help from his wife.”<sup>818</sup>

The certain kind of heterogeneity among the Jewish émigrés from the East living in Berlin could be seen from yet another perspective. The outbreak of the First World War highlighted the differences resulting from the Jews’ state affiliation: “The Galician Jews displayed Austrian flags alongside the German in their butcher shops, restaurants, and synagogues. Next to the portrait of Kaiser Wilhelm [ . . . ] they hung pictures of their Austrian emperor with his benevolent white side whiskers and paternal eyes.”<sup>819</sup> The state affiliation of the subjects of the Russian Empire was the reason why those were “trying times for the Russian- and Polish-born Jews in the Quarter” when they were warned that they would be interned.<sup>820</sup> The German state did not categorize émigrés from the territories of the Russian Empire as Polish, Russian, or Lithuanian Jews. The Jews tried to explain in “their broken German that they bore no love for the Tsar who authority they had fled,”<sup>821</sup> but to no avail. The severity of the repressions was significant – among the victims were also those who had achieved a relatively high financial status and those who regarded themselves as assimilated émigrés.

The differences between émigrés became all the more pronounced with the advent of the epoch of increasingly dominant nationalism. Deeply convinced about their own place in the community of the German capital, David Carnovsky and Ludwig Kadish realized how much separated them from other newcomers from the East. Originally from Mielnitz, Carnovsky senior, even if he did feel some compassion towards the poor or persecuted, had a very unfavorable attitude to the new émigrés, who arrived during or after the war: “He was also secretly repelled by the large number of Jews in earlocks and *caftans* who had infiltrated the city [ . . . ]. They did Berlin’s Jews no credit with their exotic appearance and execrable manners. He himself could not bear their ways – was it any wonder they provoked resentment among the gentiles?”<sup>822</sup> Ludwig Kadish, a merchant and Salomon Burak’s neighbor and competitor, also found occasions to articulate his grievances and grudges: “The troubles he now had to suffer were

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818 Ibid., p. 97.

819 I. J. Singer, *The Family Carnovsky*, p. 109.

820 Ibid.

821 Ibid.

822 Ibid., p. 214 ff.

the fault of Burak and his kind from the other side of the border. Ludwig Kadish, and the other Germans of Mosaic faith had always lived in peace with their Christian neighbors. Things would have remained the same but for the Polish and Russian Jews who had overrun the country. It was they, with their swinish antics, the exaggerated Jewishness that they literally pushed down the gentiles' throats, their speech and their manners, who had fanned the sparks of latent anti-Semitism [...].<sup>823</sup> Jewish newcomers from Eastern Europe stood out in the eyes of other people not only with their distinct attire, language, and a different way of practicing their religion. In line with the nationalist propaganda, they became accused of promoting socialist and Zionist ideas, of staying in the German capital illegally ("forged passports"), and, last but not least, of a kind of inter-urban emigration, that is living outside the isolated quarter. At critical moments those who had come from the East European diaspora interestingly articulated the way they saw themselves. The times of nationalism were conducive to making distinctions. Thus, Jewish émigrés referred to their historical heritage, differentiating between the categories of 'familiarness' and 'strangeness' in accordance with, for instance, their pre-war state affiliation:

The proprietor of the Franz Josef Hotel, Reb Herzele Vishniak, was as sure as two plus two equaled four that he and the other Austrian Jews would not be bothered. After all, had not Austria been Germany's strongest ally during the war? [...] True, the section from which he came, Galicia, was not ruled by Poland, but its roots were inexorably bound to Germany.<sup>824</sup>

Other divisions within various communities of Jewish émigrés were marked by legitimization of one's stay. Those divisions were most visible among Russian Jews: "[...] between those who had proper papers and those whose credentials were in doubt."<sup>825</sup>

A different diagnosis can be found in the reportages penned by Bernard Singer, who visited Berlin in 1933. Meeting with various milieus – of both German and Polish Jews living in the German capital – Singer notices that to some degree the persecutions paradoxically lead to a formation of a completely new kind of community of fate, which brings together social groups which differ significantly in their experiences. Earlier German Jews "were cross with Eastern Jews. Even though they did help them, deep down they wished for them to emigrate from that country as soon as possible."<sup>826</sup> The radical shift, that is the time when

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823 Ibid., pp. 216 ff.

824 Ibid., p. 215.

825 Ibid.

826 B. Singer, *W krajach Hitlera i Stalina. Reportaże* (Warsaw, 2007), p. 36.

they suffered increasingly brutal persecutions, not only resulted in shocking experiences (loss of employment and property, prohibition from practicing one's profession, and the looting of their property), but also made them feel as helpless as their fellow member of Judaism who came from the East. The transformations make the German Jews realize that they shared their fate with the *Ostjuden*, whom they disrespected, instead of with the German society: "Those two worlds, of Eastern and German Jews, are beginning to gradually vanish. Mutual understanding begins. [...] The Jews are debating the issue of emigration, emergency aid, and finding resources [...]." <sup>827</sup>

Singer emphasizes the emigration of the young in whose lot "it fell to wander, and along with that wander the perspective of emigration to Palestine."<sup>828</sup> Emigration is not only ideologically motivated but is at times a consequence of rejection – and both those factors contribute to a formation of a new identity: "The *Ostjude* enlightens the German Jew and drags him into the nationalist life. There is a slow voluntary return to the ghetto even though the Jewish youth in Germany claims that it is not a return to the ghetto but to liberation and that it is just a transit station on the way to Palestine."<sup>829</sup>

Antoni Sobański, who in his reportages entitled *Cywil w Berlinie* [A Civilian in Berlin] discusses the issue of emigration from Hitler's Germany, does not notice this Zionist option: "I asked all of the Jews with whom I had no-nonsense conversations whether they intended to emigrate. Most of them replied rather dryly that they were Germans and that the fact that they were going through a rough time was not enough for them to leave their homeland."<sup>830</sup> The sense of affiliation and the conviction that they were German citizens were almost universal. The small number of Jews who decided to emigrate from Germany in the 1930s told Sobański about the difficulties they encountered on the part of the new administration (for instance, when they tried to take with them any of their property). Emphasizing that German Jews constituted a small percentage of the entire society, the author concludes: "It is safe to say that vast majority of German Jews are only waiting impatiently for the moment when they can once again become one-hundred-percent loyal Germans."<sup>831</sup>

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827 *Ibid.*, pp. 49–50.

828 *Ibid.*, p. 95.

829 *Ibid.*, pp. 95–96.

830 A. Sobański, *Cywil w Berlinie* (Warsaw, 2006), p. 86.

831 *Ibid.*, p. 82.

A separate formula of emigration was migration within the city, which could be observed in the Jewish milieus inhabiting both Berlin and Warsaw. It was mentioned by Sammy Gronemann:

In Berlin the *Ostjude* and the Western Jew (*Westjude*) were conceptions connected not so much with geography, as with time. It was often the case that newcomers from the East initially landed on the streets in their quarter listed above [a reference to the vicinity of Alexanderplatz – A. M.]. Once they managed to achieve success, they moved to more posh quarters like Bellevue, the homeland of the middle class, after which they climbed the social ladder even higher and moved to Charlottenburg, thus becoming Western Jews and often treating the émigré elements from the Eastern quarter with utmost contempt.<sup>832</sup>

Bernard Singer also took note of that spatial emigration when reporting on the transformations of the vicinity of Oranienburgerstrasse and Rosenthalerstrasse, where the Jewish Community was seated and Moses Mendelssohn had his statue: “The German Jews who lived on those alleys just a few dozen years ago have gradually moved to wealthier quarters. Here remain only the seat of the Jewish Community and new wanderers from the East.”<sup>833</sup>

A literary example of such interurban emigration can be the character of the criminal from Adolf Sommerfeld’s crime story. This depiction shows, however, that assimilation and economic success were not the only factors that could lead to advancement and changing one’s place of residence. Having made a fortune on smuggling and trafficking women, the main character, Pufeles, changes his place of residence. He dreams about moving out of the Jewish quarter of Scheunenviertel: “Satisfying those desires was difficult because there was a shortage of vacant apartments and their owners carefully picked the individuals to whom they rented or sold their apartments. But somebody like Pufeles was completely unimpressed by rules and regulations.”<sup>834</sup> Using appropriate legal subterfuges and owing to the wealth he had acquired even he managed to move into his own apartment in a respected quarter. Following a helpful assessor’s

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832 Qtd. after: T. Brinkman, “Ort des Übergangs – Berlin als Schnittstelle der jüdischen Migration aus Osteuropa nach 1918,” in *Transit und Transformation*, p. 28; Brinkman also refers to a sharp satire written by Gronemann and published in 1920, where that advocate of Zionism voiced harsh criticism of assimilated Jews and called on them to not distort their own history and to accept émigrés, the *Ostjuden*, instead of increasing the distance to the newcomers from the East. See *ibid.*

833 B. Singer, *W krajach Hitlera i Stalina*, p. 34.

834 A. Sommerfeld, *Das Ghetto von Berlin. Aus dem Scheunenviertel. Ein Kriminalroman* (Berlin, 1992), pp. 95 ff.



advice, Pufeles changed not only his surname (to a French-sounding one) and his first name. The émigré was trying, same as others, to adapt to the lifestyle of “acclimatized *Ostjuden* with a thin layer of the German glitz.”<sup>835</sup>

The fate of the characters of several of the novels discussed here – including the Carnovsky family saga by Israel Joshua Singer and the story of the Hurwicz family by Sholem Asch – can be regarded as formulas of symbolic emigration. Both seniors, advocates of Jewish modernity and enthusiasts of German and Polish culture respectively, return to the bosom of Jewish culture after experiencing rejection and exclusion from the community which they wanted to belong to. They cast aside Goethe and Mickiewicz and turn to Yiddish writers. Appenzlak’s character undergoes a similar evolution. Even though he perceives himself as rooted in Polish culture, he eventually comes to support Zionism and opts for emigration due to his aforementioned experiences.

According to Anne-Christin Saß, the Berlin spaces inhabited by the *Ostjuden* had a status of an “in-between” area (*Zwischenraum*) – the area between the Eastern and the Western world, between settlement and further emigration, a kind of a transit space, both territorially and chronologically as well. The Jewish quarter of Berlin, where many lived only temporarily (although that temporary period could be rather long), acquired a status of a space where newcomers from the East European diaspora lived for some time, but they belonged to a specific social group – distinct both in terms of its (lower) financial status and adherence to a specific version of Judaism (Orthodox Judaism, Hasidism).

A separate wave of emigration – actually the one which put an end to the socially and culturally complex presence of the *Ostjuden* in Berlin – was the attempts to escape the increasingly brutal violence in the Nazi-dominated state. This is how historian Simon Dubnow characterized that period: “An atmosphere of panic: everybody is talking about fleeing. The day before yesterday the leader of the Mensheviks, Abramowicz (Abramowitsch), bid farewell to me on the telephone because he is going to Paris with a whole group of people. Today friends meet up and ask each other where they should leave. [. . .]. I’d prefer to wait some more.”<sup>836</sup>

As the scholar who quotes the great historian emphasizes, the opinions she quotes are not so much a reflection of personal experiences, as a paradigmatic experience of the end of the way in which the German capital had functioned, where émigrés from the East European diaspora not only could find shelter, but

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835 Ibid., p. 97.

836 Qtd. after: A.-Ch. Saß, *Scheunenviertel*, p. 433.

also create – mostly after the First World War – their own, transnational and cultural spaces. The latter enabled them to stay in the transit place as well as to take root and function on the territory which in many respects was almost like their homeland.<sup>837</sup>

I should emphasize two more issues. First of all, narratives about émigrés living in urban spaces often featured various kinds of stereotypization or schemata in the way the characters were created. That might have resulted from perceiving groups of newcomers as homogeneous milieus, which was the case with the *Ostjuden*. It seems, however, that descriptions penned by various authors, both in fiction and the reportages (Singer, Sobański, and Döblin) discussed here, enable us to see the internal diversity of the phenomenon of urban emigration.

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837 See *ibid.*, p. 434.

## Concluding Remarks: City and Variants of Identity

Cities have been a space of complex social transformations since the end of the nineteenth century. On the one hand, cities became an area of the realization of projected visions or utopian ideas of modernity. On the other hand, they became a site of a kind of a spectacle of transformations, a space where many factors affecting the dynamic and form of evolution of attitudes were at play. Literary texts written in the first half of the twentieth century – both fictional and those employing the poetics of a reportage – present to the contemporary reader a curious image generated by those who were not only producers of the perceptions, but also observers of and participants in the changes of the-then urban identity. That identity was affected by the heterogeneity of the communities, the various ideological currents, and the organization of the social structures. One could try to read these texts in a manner which treats the images and representations, the constructions and descriptions of urban spaces as a peculiarly articulated object of artistic activity not entirely separate from the-then reality.

Contemporary readers are aware that identity is not a fixed attribute of individuals and social groups and that it does not constitute an area of cumulative knowledge, but can be “an inclination to asking questions.” Thus, questions about identity can refer to the ways of reading texts produced earlier.<sup>838</sup> Particularly that as Ewa Rewers writes:

Identity, tradition, memory, and oblivion recall [...] the past, interpret the present, and forecast the future, while largely ignoring the linear order of the phenomena selected. On the contrary, the past appears there as a more or less mysterious space, in which hidden are the texts important to us which belong to various cultures, were prepared by various discourses and recorded in various ‘languages.’<sup>839</sup>

Thus, an interpretation of identity can be connected with reading literary records, with particular attention paid to what they did not notice, hid, or marginalized. This can be paired with ways of reading which treat relations between various texts and various identities as a proposition of an ongoing effort to interpret the cultural transformations.

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838 E. Rewers, “Niepewny urok tożsamości,” in *Kultura wobec kręgów tożsamości*, ed. T. Kostyrko, T. Zgółka (Poznań-Wrocław, 2000), pp. 109-118.

839 *Ibid.*, p. 111.

In her other reflections, bringing up the conception of *oligopticon* (though in a different context), which was created by Bruno Latour, Ewa Rewers emphasizes:

The principle of *oligopticon* consists in [...] “seeing not much but well” – seeing predominantly everyday places and objects in the city whose identity consists of multiplied, conflicted partial views. [...] Ultimately it is the subject, immersed in the dense urban space, that decides about what shall be noticed and how, but it faces only a specific point in that space – That Place.<sup>840</sup>

Both the perception of the urban cultural heritage (including literary narrations) in the categories of a palimpsest and an outlook from the perspective of the *oligopticon* are conducive to an interpretation of the urban experience recorded in the texts penned in the first half of the twentieth century.<sup>841</sup> This view differs from, for instance, that proposed by Elżbieta Rybicka. These perceptions are a proposal to look at the presence of specific recorded places, in this case the two Jewish quarters which were an element of the space of the two European capitals (also today, though in a different way).

To some newcomers Warsaw appeared as a city somewhat similar to Berlin, to which testify, for instance, opinions of Guibal-Roland quoted by the author of *Paryże Innej Europy* [Parises of the other Europe]. The artist thought that the Polish capital was a “city of apparent luxury,” a kind of space subject to various kinds of mystification. In 1931 historian Halévy stated that the Polish capital had “characteristics of a crossroads” and in many respects was closer to Berlin than to old European cities. The capital city resembled Berlin also because those “associations were born in the medieval network of the streets of the Old Town which documented the history of that center as well as amidst the straight downtown blocks which seemed to suggest that Warsaw did not have a long tradition.”<sup>842</sup> A certain similarity was also noticed in the way the two capitals looked in the evening. Both in Warsaw and Berlin the time when the faint shapes of the

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840 E. Rewers, “Od miejskiego *genius loci* do miejskich *oligopticonów*,” *Konteksty*, vol. 3-4, no. 282-283 (2008): 29.

841 In her work devoted to the literary experience of the city Rybicka proposes reading various ways of expressing those practices: from perceptual poetics through the poetics of a didactic novel and parabolic esthetics to the “aestheticization of the urban space” and the subjection of texts to ideologies. But most of the texts she refers to are marked by the anti-urban attitude (which has actually been popular in Polish literature ever since). See E. Rybicka, *Modernizowanie miasta. Zarys problematyki urbanistycznej w nowoczesnej literaturze polskiej* (Cracow, 2003).

842 B. Brzostek, *Paryże innej Europy. Warszawa i Bukareszt, XIX i XX wiek* (Warsaw, 2015), pp. 185 ff.

houses remained in the dark, while the “irregular and ugly” streets were lit by streetlamps and neon signs, was the only time when one could compare those cities with largest European urban centers. In the Polish and German capital various forms of “trumpery and poverty” contrasted with the “garish neon signs and blinking illuminated advertisements.”<sup>843</sup>

The manner of the organization of space in the two capitals which had the separate Jewish quarters was long a reminder of the geographical division of that part of Europe. Inhabited to a large degree by migrants from the East, Scheunenviertel was perceived as a separate part of the city, clearly exotic and distant from the community of German Jews. The existence of the Jewish quarter in Warsaw made the city seem exotic and certain texts even emphasized the ‘Asiatism’ of the city on the River Vistula. In the space of Berlin that separateness did not lead to a clear disintegration of the social and political tissue of the city as it was perceived as a separate element though still subject to the urban order (for instance, on the occasion of architectural changes or reconstruction of streets. By contrast, the Warsaw Jewish quarter, which was in stark contrast with the more ‘European’ city center, seemed a completely different world. An evaluative description can be found in, for instance, one of the travel reportages penned in the early twentieth century: “I have been on a number of ugly and gloomy streets of big cities, but I have never seen such sour, faded, rundown [. . .] houses. Wherever I looked I could see only Jews.”<sup>844</sup>

Discussing right wing texts, Monika Bednarczuk pointed to how often descriptions of the Polish capital were connected with depreciation of the urban space – from that perspective Warsaw was an embodiment of anti-values.<sup>845</sup> The arguments used by the writers who had a negative outlook on the city were rooted not only in the anti-urban attitude, the perception of the city as an evil, chaotic space conducive to degeneration, reigned by anonymity, moral indifference, and profanation of everything that generated the “truly Polish” identity. Bednarczuk refers to texts from the sphere of popular literature, which suggest the following: “In the capital there was either no place whatsoever for patriots or they had to force their way through numerous obstacles [. . .]. Those wishing to save their values opt for escaping to the countryside [. . .].”<sup>846</sup> The distinction

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843 Qtd. after: *ibid.*, p. 187.

844 Qtd. after: *ibid.*, p. 116.

845 See M. Bednarczuk, “Warszawa jako antywartość: stolica w międzywojennym piśmiennictwie prawniczym,” in *Obrazy stolic europejskich w piśmiennictwie polskim*, ed. A. Tyszka (Łódź, 2010), p. 308.

846 *Ibid.*, p. 309.

between Polishness and strangeness is very clearly marked in these narrations, with the aliens proving to be various Others – capitalists (“Jewish-Prussian”) or Masons, Jews, atheists, and communists. The scholar quotes very concrete diagnoses: “Our tragedy, our specifically Polish tragedy [. . .] is that people have been separated from land, deprived of the roof over their head, and crammed into the communist barracks called urban tenements.”<sup>847</sup> From this perspective, Warsaw, inhabited by a large Jewish minority appears to be a space where processes of the domination of ‘alien’ thought occur, which results in losing the foundations of one’s identity. The heterogenous urban element leads to a fiasco of morals: “The decline in morals results from the corruption caused by the war, the large number of Jews [*zażydzenie*], copying alien models, and detachment from the nation’s tree trunk.”<sup>848</sup> Frequently recurrent was the anti-Semitic stereotype which associated Jews with moral downfall and rejection of traditional values, which was paradoxically linked with both communism and aggressive capitalism. One of the most dangerous phenomena in cities was the new media such as the cinema or the radio, which – along with the hegemony of Jewish milieus over literature – contributed to the moral downfall and deformation of “true Polishness.” Described in that way, “Warsaw lacks trees, open spaces, rural Polishness, decency, and patriotism.”<sup>849</sup>

In texts penned by authors not associated with the right wing, such as Uniłowski, Żeromski, Kuncewiczowa, and Gojawiczyńska, the urban space constitutes a kind of a reference point for bringing up the Our—Other/Alien dichotomy. The weak tradition of urbanization was conducive to idealization of places associated with peasants and the nobility (one should bear in mind that the manor has always been a permanent element of the Polish national landscape) and evaluation of the city as something created by the element alien to the national tradition. In various European narratives urban growth was associated with processes of alienation and degeneration of the traditional civilization. Noteworthy here is the radicalism of the judgment and the durability of certain ideological schemata in the Polish way of thinking. It should be emphasized just how strongly present in it was the following evaluative dichotomy: “In Poland culture existed only in the countryside, both in manors and peasants’ cottages. Our cities (partly because they were not o u r s) brought up only stinking dregs, except for a handful of worthy working men.”<sup>850</sup> From this perspective the urban

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847 Qtd. after: *ibid.*, p. 310.

848 Qtd. after: *ibid.*, p. 313.

849 Qtd. after: *ibid.*, p. 318.

850 Maria Dąbrowska; qtd. after: B. Brzostek, *Paryże innej Europy*, p. 191.

space becomes to some degree the place of residence of those who lack stronger ties with Polish culture. By way of contrast let me quote Thomas Mann. This is what he said about Zionism during a 1931 radio program:

It would be a misunderstanding to expect that Zionism will make the Jewish nation return to its traditional homeland in mass numbers. Such an expectation would be non-sensical because most Jews are too deeply rooted in the West European civilization and culture of their many different homelands to be able to separate themselves from them and settle in the land of their ancestors.<sup>851</sup>

The German writer's perspective proves entirely different from the Polish one when we also remind ourselves that vast majority of German Jews lived in cities. The Jews' rooting in the West European civilization and culture mentioned by the author of *Buddenbrooks* is also a rooting in the urban space, which is perceived as the natural place of the functioning of modern societies.

But as Wolfgang Benz emphasizes, the emancipation of German Jews was incomplete, to which testified, for instance, the separation of the two groups' professional life from their personal one.<sup>852</sup> This kind of a social relation reminds the scholar of the relationship between participants and plebeians: "Owing to emancipation, the Jews got the *ius commercii* but did not get the *ius connubii* [. . .]."<sup>853</sup> Benz and other scholars dealing with the transformation of the Jewish community in the first half of the twentieth century point to the crystallization of the processes accompanying the events in Europe – the cultural assimilation of Jews and the almost simultaneous dissimilation, which intensified particularly during the interwar period, predominantly in the 1930s.

But there is also a legend which Benz aptly calls a "legend about symbiosis,"<sup>854</sup> which was also present in variants of the Polish versions of the discourse. The German scholar claims that this "imagined symbiosis" associated with the later reaction to the Holocaust, resulted from a certain combination of mourning of the cultural losses and philo-Semitism, but is nonetheless completely untrue.<sup>855</sup>

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851 Qtd. after: W Benz, *Bilder von Juden. Studien zum alltäglichen Antisemitismus* (Munich, 2001), p. 49.

852 See *ibid.*, p. 51.

853 *Ibid.*, p. 52.

854 *Ibid.*, pp. 54ff.

855 More about the contemporary kinds of the 'philo-semitic violence' present in the urban space see, for instance, E. Janicka, T. Żukowski, *Przemoc filosemicka? Nowe polskie narracje o Żydach po roku 2000* (Warsaw, 2016). [English edition: *Philo-Semitic Violence. New Polish Narrative about Jews after 2000*, trans. P. Chojnowska, K. Kaszorek, K. Stoll (Warsaw, 2016)].

Theses about the symbiotic coexistence of the Jewish and non-Jewish community or ones emphasizing integration, which seems to pertain to both German and Polish Jews, were based on the premise that Jewishness should have remained hidden, invisible. That was the source of the requirements/expectations of baptism, emphasizing connections with the German/Polish culture, and dreams of a uniform version of patriotism. This is why prominent/famous Jews were Germans/Poles in the eyes of non-Jews only so long (or until a recall), which means that they remained aliens with a status of guests.<sup>856</sup> When, as Benz writes, their “Jewish qualities/features” (*jüdische Eigenschaften*) were noticed, the immediate reaction was “aha!” (or the very offensive “filthy Jew” – *Saujud*).<sup>857</sup>

According to Benz, one could speak of some kind of community in the case of the assimilated Jews who held important social positions, whose “Jewishness could be defined inasmuch as they became an object of anti-Semitic accusations despite their assimilation,” and after the Holocaust were treated as co-creators of culture (the scholar lists such German Jews as Walter Rathenau or Albert Einstein, while in the Polish version those could be, for instance, the artists around the *Wiadomości Literackie*). Benz ironically observes that somehow nobody thought of treating in a similar way all those Jews who, for instance, traded cattle or were stockbrokers and lived on the territory of Germany or Poland before the Holocaust.<sup>858</sup> According to Benz, another confirmation of the weakness of the foundations of the myth of symbiosis and coexistence was also that even though the assimilation processes and the never fully realized emancipation of the Jews had gone on for years, only a short time was needed for the exclusion of the Jews and the Holocaust.

In the Polish space, as I have mentioned, we had to do with a peculiar asymmetry of interest, which, as it seems, confirms the existence of the myth of symbiosis analogous to that described by Benz: Jewish writers knew Polish culture, read Polish literature both in the original and in Yiddish translations. Although as Chone Shmeruk wrote, for instance, Polish-Jewish periodicals informed their readers about the “entire Jewish polysystem in all of its languages,” it seems that aside a small group of people it would have been relatively difficult to find Polish recipients of Jewish culture – readers of Yiddish, Hebrew, or Polish-Jewish literature.<sup>859</sup> The attitude of Polish writers to Yiddish literature and the postulated and

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856 This aspect is also visible in the contemporary Polish discourse.

857 W. Benz, *Bilder von Juden*, pp. 55–56.

858 See *ibid.*, p. 55.

859 See Ch. Shmeruk, “Hebrajska – jidysz – polska. Trójjęzyczna kultura żydowska,” trans. M. Adamczyk-Garbowska, *Cwiszn*, 1-2 (2011): 32.



discussed Polish-Jewish cultural closeness and the Jewish author's awareness of the fact that they were marginalized have been discussed by, for instance, Maria Antosik-Piela. She quotes an interesting text by Lewenstein, where he postulated a suprareligious literary union and invited Poles to take more interest in Jewish literature "because gods lived there too."<sup>860</sup> The scholar includes a significant quotation from the last secretary of the Union of Jewish Writers and Journalists:

Unfortunately, we did not manage to reach the Polish reader. To blame is the Polish literary press, which is an intermediary between the reader and the book. The Jewish book met with persistent silence on the part of the Polish critics. Let us clarify right away that Polish critics should by no means act as philanthropists promoting less valuable literature. They should perform their rudimentary duty, same as they do with regard to foreign literature: they should fulfill their duty. Polish culture has been greatly depleted by ignoring our literature.<sup>861</sup>

Pointing to what introduces disorder in the classifiable, ordered world, Mary Douglas points to the existence of ambiguity. Ambiguity as a characteristic is also connected with unrecognizability, a kind of helplessness in the face of phenomena. Douglas stresses that in such cases ambiguity is treated as an anomaly.<sup>862</sup> Thus, due to their vague definitions or unspecified affiliation, individuals/phenomena remaining in transitional stages between different sets/groups are deemed by their surroundings as dangerous and threatening the order of divisions and classifications. It occurs that this being 'in-between' – in other cases metaphorized (positively) as a bridge or crossroads – becomes particularly dangerous. From this perspective it is regarded solely as a stigma.

Writing about facilitating a creation of a space of potential community, Tadeusz Sławek quotes Derrida, who emphasized that to create the space of a home to be inhabited, to create a home, one needs openings, doors, and windows – one must make a passage to and from the outside world.<sup>863</sup> Reflections on the experience of community and relations with the Other/Alien are connected with categories of dominance/subjection and distance. Sometimes, however, this distance is not conducive to perceiving Otherness as a value and leaving the closed space. The idealist model mentioned by Sławek is a version of establishing

860 M. Antosik-Piela, "Jesteśmy zawsze na wpół trefni? Rozmowy z pisarzami jidysz na łamach '5-tej Rano' i 'Nowego Głosu,'" *Kwartalnik Historii Żydów* 4 (2014): 675-689.

861 Qtd. after: *ibid.*

862 See Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger* (Routledge Classics, 2002).

863 J. Derrida, *Of Hospitality* (Stanford, 2000), p. 55; qtd. after: T. Sławek, "Wprowadzenie do lektury. 'Peribolos,'" in *Wizerunki wspólnoty. Studia i szkice z literatury i antropologii porównawczej*, ed. Z. Kadłubek, T. Sławek (Katowice, 2008), p. 9.

identity where “the wise community forms through what in it anticipates the future, namely through the untraditional, unfinished, unfamiliar, and non-domestic.”<sup>864</sup> In such a space it is possible to find a radically different understanding of space defined as what is ‘in-between.’ “The ‘in-between’ is also the area where the familiar can meet the unfamiliar without a tendency for neutralizing all unfamiliarity, without translating it into its own national language. [. . .] Thus, the ‘in-between’ means a coexistence without dragging the other to one’s side [. . .].”<sup>865</sup> It seems, however, that the German and Polish Jews functioned in the ‘in-between’ sphere which was closer to Mary Douglas’ reasoning than the conceptions presented by Ślawek.

An example of functioning ‘in between’ – one of many, some of which have been discussed in the previous chapters – can be the figure of Jakob Wassermann, one of the German authors popular in the early twentieth century, and at least two of his publications: his autobiographical book *Mein Weg als Deutscher und Jude* [My Path as a German and Jew] and his final novel which diagnosed the tragic paradox of assimilation, entitled *Josef Kerkhovens dritte Existenz* [Josef Kerkhoven’s Third Existence], published by an émigré publishing house (Amsterdam, Querido-Verlag).<sup>866</sup> Like many Jews from the assimilated milieu, Wassermann, aware of his double existence, defined his German identity as being rooted “in the German landscape and language.”<sup>867</sup> I refer to Wassermann and his books as a kind of an exemplum, the kind of identity close to both German and Polish Jews who were trying to function in the aforementioned cultural ‘in-between.’ Their Jewish identity was connected more with the memory of their ancestors. It encompassed the Jewish and non-Jewish heritage, that is familiarity with German/Polish literature, knowledge of the country’s history, and being oriented in the symbolic sphere important for the given imagined community. Wassermann understood Judaism in a relatively peculiar way, not really as a religion or an ethnic/national foundation of the community, but actually as a special formula which was to act as a “translator” or “intermediary” between the

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864 T. Ślawek, “Zastanówmy się nad tym jak żyjemy”. Henry David Thoreau i praktyka wspólnoty,” in *Wizerunki wspólnoty*, p. 43. One should also pay attention to the author’s reflections included in that text which talk about the fundamental difference between profit and benefit.

865 *Ibid.*, p. 45.

866 See B. Stengel, “Jakob Wassermanns Weg als Deutscher und Jude,” in *Kurt Tucholsky und das Judentum*, ed. M. Hepp (Oldenburg, 1996).

867 *Ibid.*, p. 141.

nations.”<sup>868</sup> For him it was a way to “legitimize” the double – German and Jewish identity – particularly when it came to the diaspora’s “historical mission.”<sup>869</sup>

A variety of civilizational transformations in twentieth-century Europe included not only transformations of identity but also those conducive to the spread and popularization of national conceptions in the milieu of the Jewish diaspora.<sup>870</sup> The closest changes observed by East European Jews consisted in, for instance, the emergence of the Polish national identity, which in literature was connected with the activity of Polish Romantic authors. I think that they became a source of inspiration in the sphere of expression of the Jewish national identity. The efforts to preserve social cohesion and the sense of community during the partitions, maintain the community of identity in divided Poland among people living for many years in different countries could become a model for

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868 See J. Wassermann, *Zwei Briefe an einen deutschen Philosophen*; qtd. after: B. Stengel, *Jakob Wassermanns Weg als Deutscher und Jude*, p. 168).

869 The variants of Polish-Jewish identity were discussed by, for instance, E. Prokop-Janiec, *Międzywojenna literatura polsko-żydowska jako zjawisko kulturowe i artystyczne* (Cracow, 1992); her, “Międzywojenna literatura polsko-żydowska jako zjawisko etnograficzne,” in *Etniczność, tożsamość, literatura. Zbiór studiów*, ed. P. Bukowiec, D. Siwor (Cracow, 2010); her, “Tożsamość, inność, różnica w zapisach międzywojennej prozy polsko-żydowskiej,” in *Żydowski Polak, polski Żyd. Problem tożsamości w literaturze polsko-żydowskiej*, ed. A. Molisak, Z. Kołodziejska (Warsaw, 2011); her, *Pogranicze polsko-żydowskie: Topografie i teksty* (Cracow, 2013); M. Melchior, *Společna tożsamość jednostki w świetle wywiadów z Polakami pochodzenia żydowskiego urodzonymi w latach 1944-1955* (Warsaw, 1990); her, “Tożsamość żydowska bez jidysz,” in *Jidyszland – polskie przestrzenie*, ed. E. Geller and M. Polit (Warsaw, 2008), pp. 304-320; I. Hurwic-Nowakowska, *Żydzi polscy (1945-1950). Analiza więzi społecznej* (Warsaw, 1996); K. Steffen, *Jüdische Polonität. Ethnizität und Nation im Spiegel der polnischsprachigen jüdischen Presse 1918-1939* (Göttingen 2004); H. Datner, *Ta i tamta strona. Żydowska inteligencja Warszawy drugiej połowy XIX wieku* (Warsaw, 2007); M. Shore, *Caviar and Ashes: A Warsaw Generation's Life And Death In Marxism, 1918-1968* (2006); A. Landau-Czajka, *Syn będzie Lech... Asymilacja Żydów w Polsce międzywojennej* (Warsaw, 2006); M. Dąbrowski, “Rody polsko-żydowskie: dyskursywizacja tożsamości,” in *Żydowski Polak, polski Żyd*; B. Wasserstein, *On the Eve: The Jews of Europe Before the Second World War* (Simon & Schuster, 2012).

870 I quote here fragments of my more comprehensive article published in *Shofar*. See A. Molisak, “Jewish Nation – Few Remarks on Literature,” *Shofar. An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies*, vol. 29, no. 3 (2011).

the dispersed diaspora, particularly in times of the gradual weakening of the centuries-old religious ties.<sup>871</sup>

The emergence of new Poland was often treated by Jews as a chance for emphasizing their own national identity. That sense of national affiliation was why some of them hoped to convince their Polish compatriots that Jews were not only loyal inhabitants of the new country, but also, same as Poles, a nation and not only a separate religious community.

A very interesting testimony to the perception of the Jewish nation – which can also be treated as an *exemplum* – is Jakub Appenzlak's 1918 political commentary (I discuss his prose in other chapters) which is a kind of a manifesto modelled on Emil Zola's famous *J'accuse!*,<sup>872</sup> which was a very important voice of the French elite in the Dreyfus Affair. Appenzlak's text is an indictment of Poland.<sup>873</sup> Poland's main fault as a country which "had once generously taken in the dispossessed and given them human rights,"<sup>874</sup> is that in the early twentieth century it acts to the detriment of Jewish efforts aimed at their national emancipation. The author looks into the past searching for the sources of the Polish aversion to Jews and anti-Semitic as well. He points to Poles' fundamental fault: their placing of the Jewish community outside the scope of the general public, their inability to see the Jews as a separate social stratum (beside, for instance, the peasant estate or the bourgeois) or an ethnic group for centuries. According to Appenzlak, the Poles' most serious fault was their "notion of us."<sup>875</sup> In the Jewish historical memory there were the "unforgettable Polish alms," the Poles' "great nobleness," and the awareness that Jews arriving in Poland were given privileges by princes and the king. Emphasizing the Polish rulers' magnanimity, Appenzlak asks a fundamental question about the ten-fold return on

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871 Same as Benedict Anderson I think that the times of the weakened religious ties were conducive to creation of different ties that bound the identity of social groups. The national idea has proved a highly durable bond since the end of the eighteenth. See B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (Verso, 2012).

872 One should bear in mind that the open letter entitled *J'accuse!* which Emil Zola wrote to the president of the Republic was published in 1898. The letter concerned not only the falsely accused and sentenced officer of the French army, who was rehabilitated only after a retrial, but also the condition of the French society, the relations between the civilian and military authorities and the use of anti-Semitism by the nationalist right wing.

873 J. Appenzlak, "Oskarżam!," *Almanach Żydowski* (1918): 125-130.

874 *Ibid.*, p. 125.

875 *Ibid.*, p. 127.

that “nobleness,” about the interestedness of the welcome given to the Jewish nation on Polish territory. For the newcomers performed many essential functions and undertook tasks disdained by the nobility. Despite the Jewish inhabitants’ undoubted contributions to the modernization of the country, despite their many manifestations of patriotism, both in the Napoleonic epoch and later during the uprisings, despite the blood they shed for Poland, despite the fact that “they were hopelessly in love with Poland and died nameless for it,”<sup>876</sup> Poles did not regard them as their compatriots. Appenzlak reproaches those who at the beginning of the existence of the Jewish diaspora on Polish land deemed Jews the Other. He criticizes them for their failure to see the greatness of the Jewish nation and its contribution to the history of the Polish state and the creation of Polish culture. Jews in Poland had experienced exclusion long enough to justify accusations of a disregard for their nation and their separation from the rest of the compatriots despite the Jews’ many contributions: “[Poland] made us rot in the mud of the ghetto when we were digging gold for her with our arms and when the spirit of our geniuses was breathing life into her achievements.”<sup>877</sup> The author does admit that some “took pity on us and were ready to save us if only we would stop being ourselves,”<sup>878</sup> but then quickly goes on to harshly criticize all assimilation projects. He demands that the Polish society let Jews participate in the collective life on equal terms, without demanding that they forsake their own Jewish identity. The place of Jews in the Polish historical memory is marked by symbolic figures of Jankiel the cymbalist<sup>879</sup> and Berek Joselewicz<sup>880</sup>, but this space is strictly limited. They have not been given a chance to speak on behalf of their own nation. Appenzlak’s bitterness is deepened by the fact that in his opinion the Polish

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876 Ibid., p. 128.

877 Ibid.

878 Ibid.

879 Jankiel the dulcimer – a symbolic figure in one of the most important Polish literary works *Pan Tadeusz*. The author of the poem, Adam Mickiewicz, introduces the figure of a Jew-Polish patriot into the space of Polish history and culture. Jankiel’s ‘Jewishness’ is accepted by others precisely because of his patriotic, pro-Polish attitude. See more: Maria Janion, *Hero, Conspiracy, and Death: the Jewish Lectures*, trans. Alex Shannon (Frankfurt am Main: PL Academic Research – Peter Lang, 2014).

880 Berek Joselewicz (1764–1809) – colonel in the Polish Army. “[. . .] Joselewicz was the only Jew in Praga among the subscribers to a loan in support of the uprising against the third and final division of Poland. [. . .]. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Joselewicz’s military career and achievements were held up as an emblem and a model by Polish Jews who identified with Poland’s quest for national independence.” See, [https://yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Joselewicz\\_Berek](https://yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Joselewicz_Berek).

nation, which suffered under the partitions and tried to maintain its own identity in the most difficult of times and remain faithful to the idea of Polishness, has failed to appreciate the Jews' willingness to remain faithful to their own heritage. Appenzlak emphasizes that the heroic Poland which referred to freedom and justice among the nations of Europe took note of the faults of others, criticizing England or France for their indifference to the Polish cause, but unfortunately, Poland failed to find "a single moment to give full justice to the Jewish nation."<sup>881</sup> Even the best, most noble Poles could not perceive their close neighbors other than in a very schematic and stereotypical way (here Appenzlak mentions Polish writers such as Wyspiański, Reymont, and Żeromski). This accusation regards not only the past, but also contemporary historical events – the boycott of Jewish stores or the fact that a young man "who was dressed like a Jew and wanted to read a book, perhaps Adam Mickiewicz's poems, on a bench under the spruces"<sup>882</sup> was denied entry to a park. As for Żeromski (and the Polish elites *en masse*), Appenzlak asks rhetorically what readers must feel like when they read depictions of Polish Jews as a swamp that simply could not be drenched, which could not be helped even by Świętochowski.<sup>883</sup> Thus formulated, the question is connected with a diagnosis that the Polish intelligentsia lacked interest in the Jewish heritage and culture generated on Polish territory and could not appreciate the grandeur of the Jewish nation: "And same as entire Poland refuses to know, Żeromski does not know either that [...] a great poet of ours, some Bialik or Peretz, is writing, honing some new, momentous works [...] in the strange and disagreeable language for the hosts in this country."<sup>884</sup> Appenzlak believes that Poles fail to notice the Jewish nation's existence. It should be emphasized that Peretz and Bialik did not write in Polish. Thus, there are two possible interpretations of the remark that they were authors who wrote their works in a "strange and disagreeable" language, that is in the Jewish languages (Yiddish and Hebrew). On the one hand, this can be read as an appeal to give attention to the Polish-language Jewish literature, which could give birth to writers as brilliant as Peretz or Bialik. On the other hand, there is another possible interpretation, though perhaps a bolder one – the writers writing in languages "strange" to the

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881 *Ibid.*, p. 129.

882 *Ibid.*

883 *Ibid.*

884 *Ibid.*, p. 130. I should add that the names mentioned by Appenzlak — Bialik and Peretz — are clearly an emphasis laid on some of the most important authors, regarded as great writers and restorers of language (in Bialik's case — Hebrew, and in Peretz' case — Yiddish).

Polish reader, in “disagreeable” Yiddish and Hebrew, are Poland’s hosts too. The text is oriented towards the future, a shared Polish-Jewish future (let us bear in mind that it was published in 1918). This strong accusation is not aimed at passing judgment on history, but “at making Poles think about tomorrow.”<sup>885</sup>

Appenzlak realizes that, paradoxically, the Polish Jews’ Zionist drive was supported by those who dreamt of “Poland for Poles.” That “feigned friendship” hid a face “contorted by an anti-Semitic convulsion.”<sup>886</sup> Many scholars have written about the double role of anti-Semitism. They have also emphasized that modern anti-Semitism meant exclusion and evoking a sense of inferiority, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, was sometimes a factor strengthening the Jewish identity.<sup>887</sup> The European modernization, the roots of which reach back to the Enlightenment, was connected with relative tolerance for Otherness and it gave hope for achieving a state of equality of all social subjects. That fostered Jewish acculturation and assimilation. One should bear in mind, however, that the nineteenth century brought crystallization of national ideas in many countries, which was often connected with various forms of the Jewish environments’ isolation or exclusion. The fears of being marginalized or excluded could also lead to a renewal and strengthening of the ties with the Jewish ancestors’ tradition. Zionism, or rather its various kinds, constituted an attractive choice for members of the diaspora painfully caught in the dilemmas of modernity. Appenzlak’s text is not only an accusation on the part of those “pushed aside, dispossessed, and ignored,” to which clearly testifies its ending, where on behalf of the younger generations of Jews the author declares the expectation that the “Poland of tomorrow” will offer a compensation, one possible form of which was appreciation of the Jewish national pride.<sup>888</sup>

That disappointment with infant Poland found its expression also in political commentary journalism. At the beginning of the Second Republic of Poland one encountered enthusiasm on account of Polish independence, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the concern and worry about the intensification of anti-Semitism. It was particularly painful to Polish Jews that the official authorities reacted to anti-Semitic incidents either too weakly or did not react at all.

The projects of the renewal of the Jewish world found their expression in both rejection of living in the closed religious group and rebellion against assimilation

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885 Ibid.

886 Ibid.

887 See M. A. Meyer, *Jewish Identity in the Modern World* (Washington, 1990), pp. 50 ff.

888 J. Appenzlak, “Oskarżam!,” p. 130.

tendencies. The call to a fight for the national dignity resembled the visions developed by Polish Romantics. With time, the author increasingly clearly emphasized in his texts (for instance, in *Piętra*) that the vision shaped by Zionism posed a chance to the Jewish nation.

Perhaps similarly to other writers who wrote in Polish, Appenzlak can be regarded as a representative of a certain generation. His experiences and the evolution of his worldview proved highly typical. As Renata Piątkowska remarks, that made Jakub Szacki coin the term ‘the Appenzlak Generation’, which denoted those who “dreamed of Zion on the River Vistula.”<sup>889</sup> Those dreams, however, were confronted with the reality of those times which was unfavorable to their realization. For the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and times before the First World War saw an intensification of anti-Semitism, which was becoming stronger not only in the Polish community, but also in other European countries. Many Polish Jews originating from the bourgeois or intelligentsia who belonged to the Appenzlak Generation did notice the fiasco of the assimilation project and experienced an open conflict. Analyzing anti-Semitic texts which contributed to the formulation of the definition of Jews as enemies to Polishness who were more dangerous than the partitioners, Andrzej Żbikowski emphasizes that that process of spreading ideological anti-Semitism intensified significantly during 1905–1914 and later after 1918 and in the 1930s.<sup>890</sup> Other important factors shaping the Appenzlak Generation’s stances were the currents which competed with the project of assimilation, which were gaining popularity in the Jewish community in Central-Eastern Europe, that is Zionism and the project of cultural autonomy, which was connected with the Bund movement. Those were two innovative propositions of defining the Jews’ own modern identity.

I do not point to Appenzlak’s text only to reconstruct certain stances assumed by Polish Jews or present the model of identity situated in the aforementioned ‘in-between’. It would be difficult to precisely calculate and describe all the variants of the Jewish identity present in the Polish cultural space at the beginning of the

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889 Qtd. after: R. Piątkowska, *Jakub Apenszlak jako współtwórca Żydowskiego Towarzystwa Krzewienia Sztuk Pięknych* – paper given at a symposium in Wrocław, September 2007; J. Shatzky (Szacki), “Pokolenie Apenszlaka,” *Nasza Trybuna/Our Tribune* 9 (February–March 1951): 1–2.

890 Żbikowski brings up predominantly two texts – Roman Dmowski’s 1909 *Separatyzm Żydów i jego źródła* and Andrzej Niemojewski’s 1911 *Skład i pochod armii piątego zaboru*. There were many more similar publications. See A. Żbikowski, “Antysemityzm,” in *Żydzi w Polsce. Leksykon*, ed. J. Tomaszewski, A. Żbikowski (Warsaw, 2001), pp. 19–27.



twentieth century, but this is a topic for a separate text. The range of the identities would be wide: from traditional Orthodox Judaism or Hasidism (that is the identity founded on religion) through the stances of assimilation and (less often) dissimilation (the identity which would be categorized as 'negotiative') to various kinds of the ethnic/national discourse. Thus, we have to do with various kinds of complex identities transforming due to social and political changes in the Polish-Jewish relations.

Describing the milieus of Polish and German Jews from a comparative perspective, Yfaat Weiss points to two central, yet completely contradictory models of Jewish existence.<sup>891</sup> Bearing in mind the internal diversification of the East European diaspora – the strong Hasidic movement, the weaker influences of the *Haskalah*, the circles of traditional Orthodox Judaism, and the substantial engagement in socialist movements (the establishment of the Bund), the scholar points to the dissimilarity between the two versions of Judaism (understood not as a religion, but a culture). At the turn of the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, the impulse for the two groups' transformations were the modernization processes, which could have led to a gradual disappearance of the Jewish ethnic identity. That prospect was opposed by, for instance, both some German supporters of the *Haskalah* and Polish Bund activists, who aimed at retaining cultural separateness. Weiss writes that the models of Jewish identity were also affected by phenomena such as the positivistic emancipation of the Jews, which did require assimilation, and the fact that during the partitions Polish Jews lived in different countries, which regulated their status differently. Intensifying since the second half of the nineteenth century, anti-Semitism was becoming increasingly influential. The scholar emphasizes, however, that "unlike in the East European diaspora, the sense of state affiliation among German Jews stemmed from equal civil rights, which constituted the cornerstone of their self-awareness."<sup>892</sup> That was the fundamental difference because that process took a completely different course among Polish Jews, who were granted full civil rights as a result of the Treaty of Versailles, which guaranteed rights to national minorities in reborn Poland. By contrast, German Jews were not recognized by the law as a national minority. The situation changed radically in the 1930s after the Nazi takeover of power and the introduction of the anti-Jewish legislation. One

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891 See Y. Weiss, *Deutsche und polnische Juden vor dem Holocaust. Jüdische Identität zwischen Staatsbürgerschaft und Ethnizität 1933–1940*, trans. from Hebrew by Matthias Schmidt (Munich, 2000), pp. 10–45.

892 *Ibid.*, p. 11.

should also remember that that was also when the situation of Jews in Poland deteriorated despite the state's fundamental international obligations. The difference between the two groups was the sense of citizenship, which was stronger on the part of German Jews and weaker on the part of Polish Jews, who more often connected their identity with a sense of ethnic separateness. Weiss also reminds that the "image of East European Jews in the eyes of many German Jews was burdened with negative stereotypes and that the East European diaspora's community was perceived as backward."<sup>893</sup> It was a highly complex combination of schematic perceptions and direct experiences of contact with the East European diaspora, be that during military operations on the Eastern front line during the First World War or during encounters with the *Ostjuden* emigrating to Berlin.<sup>894</sup>

Applying his ruminations predominantly to the earlier epochs, Karl Grözinger describes numerous contacts between Jewish communities in Western Europe and the East European diaspora (*Ostjudentum*). Analyzing these relations with regard to the shaping of the Jewish identity, one should bear in mind that we are talking here mostly of religious literature, commentaries, interpretations of the law, and moralizing tales. It was as late as in the nineteenth century that evident became the interest taken in the *Ostjuden* heritage that could be regarded as common or at least connected by various ties. That was observable on the level of both rabbinical and folk literature.<sup>895</sup> The scholar observes that a lot of what was regarded by German Jews as "originating typically from the East (*aus dem Osten*)" constituted not only the aforementioned inherited community of the European diaspora, but also connected both parts of the diaspora. One should also bear in mind the similarity of the relations between the Jews and their non-Jewish neighbors (in Poland and Germany), which is something that Grözinger emphasizes. In both those spaces the relations with the non-Jewish surroundings assumed a similar form, because they were both dominated by, for instance, the economic competition or the aversion of the clergy/the Church to Jews. But in the latter sphere (also owing to reading literary texts) one can see a series of differences resulting from the professional structure and the financial status, which was completely different in the case of the poor *shtetl Ostjuden*. Yet another

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893 *Ibid.*, p. 13.

894 The literature that thematized these contacts has been discussed in the previous chapters.

895 K. E. Grözinger, "Jüdische Literatur zwischen Polen und Deutschland," in *Die wirtschaftlichen und kulturellen Beziehungen zwischen den jüdischen Gemeinden in Polen und Deutschland vom 16. bis zum 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. K. E. Grozinger (Wiesbaden, 1992), pp. 53–78.

disparity, clearly visible in the nineteenth century and until the 1930s, was that in the social position: the situation of the East European Jews was marked by uncertainty and insecurity, particularly during the partitions.

Shulamit Volkov's reflections constitute an interesting attempt at an analysis of various social debates about the role and place of German Jews. He brings up one more issue, namely that of language treated as a space of discussions about Jews and perceptions of Jewishness.<sup>896</sup> The scholar looks at a large area of historical reflections, from 1780 to 1933 (the 1780s are widely recognized as the beginning of the modern history of German Jews). She describes the narrations accompanying this part of history – from the narration about the German society which had been shaping itself since then and which had a positive attitude to the Jewish integration and the Jewish population, which initially had an enthusiastic attitude towards integration, through the alternative narration conducted mostly by opponents of assimilation and acculturation of Jews to the apogee during the Nazi times. Volkov presents the full spectrum of using competing narrations treated as elements of the construction of the modern Jewish identity. Another important issue she discusses is that of education. In reference to George Mosse's already classic work (*German Jews Beyond Judaism*), the scholar writes about the long-term process of emancipation, the result of which was the "Jews' transformation into the bourgeois."<sup>897</sup> At the same time she points to the key aspect of that process, that is the complete adoption and internalization of the German idea of education (*Bildung*), which was a multifaceted cultural ideal. In line with Mosse's thesis, the fundamental conflict which became evident as early as in the late nineteenth century regarded the influence of Romanticism and Neoromanticism on that education ideal. The consequences of those influences increasingly hampered the Jews' incorporation into the German society (through the *Bildung* process). Basically agreeing with this diagnosis, which to some extent explains the Jews' attachment to the German culture even at times of danger, Volkov is striving for important disambiguations. She emphasizes the peculiar ambivalence of the German *Haskalah* project and points to certain paradoxes – the equality postulates and the egalitarianism of education or the tensions between rationalism and sentimentalism. She points

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896 S. Volkov, *Pomysł na nowoczesność. Żydzi niemieccy w XIX i na początku XX wieku*, trans. J. Górny, P. Pieńkowska (Warsaw, 2006); I wrote about Volkov's book in 2007, see A. Molisak, "Projekt żydowskiej nowoczesności – perspektywa historyczna. Recenzja," *Midrasz* 1 (2007).

897 See S. Volkov, *Pomysł na nowoczesność*, pp. 186 ff.

to not only those participants of the cultural and public life in Germany who maintained the old traditions, but also those who contributed to the transformations within the scope of the conceptions of education. She reminds that when in the early nineteenth century the national idea was linked with liberalism, it was winning wide support among the assimilated German Jews. Nevertheless, the scholar notices the boundaries of formal education as early as in the first generation which underwent acculturation – she brings up the biographies of Feliks Mendelssohn-Bartholdy and Heinrich Heine and the attacks which they suffered and the accusations that their art was “disingenuous” and lacked authenticity. Volkov also takes note of the various efforts which German Jews made in the late nineteenth century, on the one hand, wishing to maintain their own German-Jewish tradition, and, on the other hand, reformulating it already on the ground of modernism. Very interesting proves the justification of the choice made at the turn of the centuries not only by German Jews, which is something that one should bear in mind. Volkov writes:

Jewish intellectuals opted for *modernity* regardless of its form, predominantly because – basing on the many centuries of experience – they knew that owing to that choice they could remain relatively safe in their cultural milieu and because they thought that that way they would not be marginalized or outpaced by their non-Jewish compatriots.<sup>898</sup>

Although Volkov’s reflections regard history and the transformations of the identity of German Jews, they can be applied to some degree also to the project of modern Jewishness in the Polish reality, first in the nineteenth century during the partitions and later in the interwar period, which was a time of debates regarding the formula of ‘Polish Jewishness’. It seems that particularly evident were the processes of the shaping and manifestation of various kinds of identity precisely in the urban space. This perspective, as I tried to show in the previous chapters, is a promising area of reflection, a departure from the perception (solidified in the previous decades) that the small town/*shtetl* microcosm was the most important model of the culture of East European Jews.<sup>899</sup>

Treating Jews as a community perceived not only as the People of the Book, but also as a community that located its identity topographically, Karl Grözinger points to the great role that specific places played in the shaping of the narration

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898 S. Volkov, *Pomysł na nowoczesność*, p. 202.

899 An analysis of selected novels written in Yiddish led Irene Wekstein to similar conclusions, particularly regarding the characters of this prose. See I. Wekstein, *Le roman des Juifs d’Europe de l’Est. Figures de la modernité dans la littérature yiddish de l’entre-deux-guerres* (Paris, 2009), pp. 270–281.

about the East European Jewish identity. Writing about the “spiritual geography,” he reconstructs the process of the shaping of the legends and parables set in specific places, particularly in the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries.<sup>900</sup> The scholar emphasizes that the Polish lands were the place of the shaping of the tales connected with the sense of being at home (spiritual rooting) in the places preserved in the memory of religious members of Judaism. Of course, those were not so much cities, as predominantly such identifying locations as Rymanów, Przysucha, Góra Kalwaria, Berdychiv, Vitebsk, Kock, or Leżajsk. Grözinger also reminds that in comparison to the close relations between Hasidism and its religious topography connected with small towns in Central-Eastern Europe, non-Hasidic legends connected with Polish towns are much less frequent (for instance Moses Isserles’s Cracow and Shalom Shakhna’s Lublin).

Modern Jewish identity – shaped also somewhat in opposition to the *shtetl* – found its topographic location in urban spaces.

Eugenia Prokop-Janiec very clearly emphasizes that in the contemporary outlook on the cultural and literary Polish-Jewish contacts there is a retreat from the previously dominant model.<sup>901</sup> Earlier “insularity, authenticity, and purity” were regarded as distinctive features of the Jewish culture developing on Polish lands, as features which “were to set the East European Jewish culture apart from the culture of West European Jews, which was subject to outside influences and integrating with the neighboring culture. By contrast, now scholars paid more attention to phenomena such as contact zones (which I discuss predominantly in the chapter about the shared places) or the various relations between the Jewish and Polish cultures. The scholar brings up Benjamin Harshav’s conception, the concept of the cultural polysystem present in scholarly reflections since the 1980s (Shmeruk), and, last but not least, the category of hybridity. All these proposals open up new perspectives and possibilities of reflecting on the multiculturally perceived modern Jewish identity. These processes, which were thought of in different ways – as intercultural relations, interaction and exchange, transfer, negotiations, or hybridization – occurred precisely in the urban spaces though not only.

A figure illustrating these phenomena can be the following passage written by historian Szymon Dubnow:

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900 See K. E. Grözinger, “Spirituelle Geographie,” *Aschkenas. Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Kultur der Juden* 11, notebook 2 (2001): 489–495.

901 See E. Prokop-Janiec, “Kulturowe i literackie kontakty polsko-żydowskie,” in *Polacy – Żydzi. Kontakty kulturowe i literackie*, ed. E. Prokop-Janiec (Cracow, 2014), pp. 9–16.

Before my eyes I still have the symbolic scene which I saw on Dorotheenstrasse, near the University. Amidst the stream of pedestrians and cars congesting the narrow streets stood a pale young man holding a provincial travel basket which looked like from a yeshiva. He must have become lost in the urban whirlpool of the unfamiliar capital city. Like many newcomers from Eastern Europe, he might have gotten off at the railway station on Friedrichstrasse, and because he did not know which way to turn he headed for the University. I thought to myself then: "Yes, this is the type of a Russian *yeshibotnik* who intends to attend a higher European yeshiva – a German University – to learn and suffer."<sup>902</sup>

Closely connected with the history of the Jewish diaspora since its emergence, the phenomenon of migration also had an influence on the shaping of the variants of Jewish identity. For centuries, in the diaspora circles the conception of building identity had been based on the sense of religious separateness, which was why Judaism defined as a religion was the foundation of the communities' permanence and cohesion.<sup>903</sup> That phenomenon was also connected with the kind of understanding manifestation of identity which in a way favored narration, that is talking about one's experience of emigration. Triggered by social-political circumstances to a larger or smaller degree, migrations were conducive to contacts with other cultures and they placed Jews in the sphere of the aforementioned frontier (Gilman), that is the borderline area which was an area of the shaping of the "fluid culture in between."<sup>904</sup> On the one hand, the peregrinations were conducive to preserving memory and making references to tradition (the permanent dependency was sometimes articulated as a rebellion or surrender). On the other hand, they created new, palimpsest narrations.

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902 Sz. Dubnow, *Buch des Lebens. Erinnerungen und Gedanken. Materialien zur Geschichte meiner Zeit*; qtd. after: V Dohrn und A.-Ch. Saß, "Einführung," in *Transit und Transformation. Osteuropäisch-jüdische Migranten in Berlin 1918–1939*, ed. V. Dohrn und G. Pickhan (Berlin, 2010), p. 13.

903 According to Ricoeur's conception, identity is shaped precisely around the sense of separateness, unity, and permanence. See P. Ricoeur, *O sobie samym jako innym*. Translated by B. Chelstowski, edited and the introduction by M. Kowalska (Warsaw, 2005) [English edition: *On Oneself as Another*]; K. Rosner, *Narracja, tożsamość i czas* (Cracow, 2003); E. Karczyńska, "Odkrywanie siebie w narracji. Koncepcja tożsamości narracyjnej Paula Ricoeura i Charlesa Taylora," in *Humaniora. Czasopismo internetowe* 1(5) (2014): 65–76; H. Mamzer, *Tożsamość w podróży. Wielokulturowość a kształtowanie tożsamości jednostki* (Poznań, 2002).

904 See E. Prokop-Janiec, "Kategoria pogranicza we współczesnych studiach żydowskich," in her, *Pogranicze polsko-żydowskie*, p. 134.

Analyzing the German autobiographical texts penned by East European Jews, Maria Kłańska points to the relations between the Jewish and non-Jewish surroundings, the authors' awareness, and the experiences of assimilation and strangeness.<sup>905</sup> The scholar characterizes the narrations she discusses laying emphasis precisely on the migrations of the subjects, their religious and ethnic heterogeneity, and the multilingualism, which was somewhat more natural to the *Ostjuden* than to German Jews. It is noteworthy that Kłańska looks at this pluralism like at a source of a creative potential, but without losing sight of the perspective where the multitude of languages and meaningful places can become a trouble spot and a source of crises. Jewish migrations/emigrations from the East European diaspora were most often connected with not only changing one's surroundings, but also moving to the sphere of different social structures. A frequent phenomenon – and a factor co-shaping identity – was the phenomenon of metropolization.<sup>906</sup>

In his introduction to a book on various interpretations of Jewish spaces in Eastern and Central Europe, Joachim Schlör laid emphasis also on the far-reaching urbanization of the Jewish life both on the territories of Western Europe and in the East European diaspora.<sup>907</sup> He quoted Jacob Lestshinsky's 1929 opinion, which pointed to the connection between the urban space and the modern Jewish identity. Lestshinsky observed that the

technical and industrial revolution which in the course of the nineteenth century changed the face of the whole world, brought new means of transport as well as new connections between places located in distant parts of the globe, and also shifted the center of economic activity from the countryside to towns, thus transforming the urban population into carriers of human history. That revolution brought about the spread of the Jewish population and its urbanization in large concentrated groups. [...] The urban revolution [...] opened new prospects for using [...] the Jews' potential and experiences.<sup>908</sup>

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905 See M. Kłańska, *Aus dem Shtetl in die Welt 1772–1938. Ostjüdischen Autobiographien in deutsche Sprache* (Vienna, 1994).

906 T. Brinkman, "Ort des Übergangs – Berlin als Schnittstelle der jüdischen Migration aus Osteuropa nach 1918," in *Transit und Transformation. Osteuropäisch-jüdische Migranten in Berlin 1918–1939*, pp. 25–44.

907 See J. Schlör, "Jewish Form of Settlement and their Meaning," in *Jewish Space in Central and Eastern Europe: Day-to-Day History*, ed. J. Šiauciūnaite-Verbickiene, L. Lempertiene (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 1–6.

908 Qtd. after: *ibid.*, p. 5.

According to Lestshinsky, only in cities could Jews partake in the emancipation processes feeling equal and at home. The occupations they had been limited to for centuries (due to the strict restrictions on working in certain lines of work) and which they had adapted to prove useful, profitable, and important. Identity traits such as activeness, ability to adapt to the changing conditions, fluidity, and mobility were the reason why the dynamic figure of the Jewish merchant, alien to the countryside, became a harmonious element of the urban space.<sup>909</sup> Schlör adds that a lot has been said about the aversion to the city and the aversion to urban life in the European cultures of Germany, Poland, and France. Time has come for studies of awe at the city.<sup>910</sup>

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Analyzing the literary records about the two Jewish quarters in Warsaw and Berlin, I tried to combine an outlook on this process of metropolization with an analysis of narrations. That facilitated identification of various variants of modern Jewish identity and treatment of the narrators not only as narrators, but also as those who in many of the discussed texts have a status of narratives. I also took into consideration the aforementioned 'in between' positioning, to which the manifold urban experience is conducive.

The fact that I treated the literary texts as a portrayal of the two Jewish quarters and that I bore in mind their performative character and the creation and allocation of meanings helped me take note of such characteristics of urban areas as transitivity (seen particularly in the context of migration), pragmatism of power over space (the manifold presence of politics), heterotopy (in the context of contact zones), and ethnicity.

It seems that from this reading perspective one can observe the cultural roles of the two Jewish quarters in Warsaw and Berlin as well as the experience of the marked-out spaces that accompanied those records and the transformations of the identity of the characters representing the entire spectrum of the variants of modern Jewish identity. In both capitals functioned parallel worlds separated by an invisible wall, to the other side of which one went usually only on special occasions. That was conducive to looking from the outside in, which was limited by the stereotypical perceptions and the schematic exoticization of the Other. The urban space is relational,<sup>911</sup> which means that it bases on the identity relation

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909 Ibid., p. 6.

910 Ibid.

911 See A. Giddens, *Nowoczesność i tożsamość*, trans. A. Szulżycka (Warsaw, 2002), pp. 20-68 [English edition: *Modernity and Self-identity: Self and Society in the Late*



between the inhabitants and the city. Thus, one should also pay attention to the different identities of the two cities inhabited by the diverse populations. The interrelation between the individual experiences and the social context makes it possible to notice the highly interactive nature of the model of identity that set apart both the citizens and the newcomers, migrants and émigrés, who inhabited the two Jewish quarters and had contact with a multitude of cultural messages and symbols.<sup>912</sup>

Charles Taylor wrote that he determined his identity by specifying the place from which he spoke, his place in the genealogical tree, in the social space, in the geography of social positions and functions, in the intimate relations with people he loved, and in the space of the moral and spiritual orientation inside which he entered the relations which were the most vital for characterizing his life.<sup>913</sup>

The connection between the subject's identity and the place (or actually several places, including the cultural heritage and the social space and geography) is connected with what is internal and external, both in the individual dimension and in the dimension of the group to which the given subject belongs or is ascribed to. If we look once more at the existence of the separate Jewish quarters in Warsaw and Berlin bearing in mind the dynamic of the modernization of the cities in the first half of the twentieth century, we can also notice phenomena such as, on the one hand, isolation and division, and, on the other hand, the contact zones described earlier.

The multitude of affiliations recorded in the literary narrations is a common urban characteristic. We come across its special dimension, as I have tried to show, in the milieu of the Jewish inhabitants of the two cities and the two quarters. For in such spaces there occurs not only a crisscrossing of various affiliations, but also – owing to the spatial record – the generation (and reproduction in the literary texts) of the records of the functioning and existence of groups which can be called 'topographical communities.'<sup>914</sup> A special feature of these two Jewish

*Modern Age* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992)]; one should bear in mind that Giddens associates identity with locality; M. Madurowicz, *Miejska przestrzeń tożsamości Warszawy* (Warsaw, 2007), p. 19.

912 See Z. Bokszański, *Tożsamość, interakcja, grupa. Tożsamość jednostki w perspektywie teorii socjologicznej* (Łódź, 1989), pp. 26–32.

913 Ch. Taylor, *Sources of the Self: the Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992).

914 M. G. Esch, "Sozialmorphologie und Netzwerkanalyse," in *Deutsche Handwerker, Arbeiter und Dienstmädchen in Paris. Eine vergessene Emigration im 19. Jahrhundert*, ed. M. Kónig (Munich, 2000), pp. 93–119.

‘topographic communities’ would be the existence of something which Csáky (though in a different context) calls the “urban ‘in-between’” marked by the conflict interaction between cultural diversity and national homogenization.<sup>915</sup>

Modern cities facilitate transgressing ethnic distinctions or coexistence in various shared spheres, the functioning and shaping of political actions substantial for the community, and the existence of many different cultural areas. Thus, this reflection on them can contribute to understanding both the local and the international version of modernism.<sup>916</sup> The dynamically changing urban spaces were a natural habitat for the evolution of stances and transformations of identity, while the expression of those experiences was sometimes conveyed also through literary creations and textual records. The proposed reading formula which takes into consideration the functioning and transformations of the urban Jewish quarter shall hopefully contribute to further research on the legacy of modernism connected predominantly with conceptions such as transformation, mobility, and exchange.

In both cases of Jewish Berlin and Warsaw, the literary records make a complex mosaic, which reveals the multifacetedness and complexity of the portrayals of the urban spaces. The Jewish and non-Jewish characters inhabiting those spaces differed in terms of their social background, education, political sympathies, and, last but not least, very different approaches to tradition. They also had different relations with the non-Jewish surroundings and visions of the future Jewish life in the two capital cities. That heterogeneity was something that characterized these two cities (now so different) and brought them closer to each other. One should also bear in mind the aspect of the existence of space, which is connected with a society’s lasting memory and is closely connected with shaping the identity and constructing the imagined communities, even though the metropolis was transformed into a necropolis.<sup>917</sup>

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915 See M. Csáky, *Das Gedächtnis der Städte. Kulturelle Verflechtungen – Wien und die anderen urbanen Milieus in Zentraleuropa* (Wien, 2010); Csaky writes about Vienna but he applies this comment to many cities in the Habsburg monarchy. I think that thus-formulated diagnosis is also a good description of the Jewish spaces in Warsaw and Berlin in the first half of the twentieth century.

916 This has been discussed by, for instance, Desmond Harding. See D. Harding, “Wyobrażenie miasta i jego przestrzeń,” trans. E. Godlewska, *Konteksty* vol. 3-4, no. 282-283 (2008): 5-20.

917 A separate and perhaps an interesting project would be to analyze the functioning of the two Jewish districts after 1989, that is in the sphere of transformations, in the areas of memory and forms of commemoration, and in the contemporary outlook on the Jewish past of those places in Warsaw and Berlin.

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