
A Triumphant Gate of the Polish Narrative

The Symbolic Reconstruction of the Bridge over Chłodna Street in Warsaw vis-à-vis the Crisis of the Dominant Polish Narrative of the Holocaust

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Abstract: The article is a study of the symbolic topography of Warsaw's Chłodna Street. In 1940–1942, Chłodna Street was an "Aryan" border strip, dividing the small and large ghettos. For the past quarter-century, the symbolic dominance of this space has been made manifest by the subsequent commemorations of the ghetto's wooden footbridge that existed here between January and August 1942. These commemorative artefacts evolved from a counter-commemoration (1996), into a commemoration through the use of painting (2007) and photography (2008), into a symbolic reconstruction of the bridge (2011). The analysis of this dynamic, from representation of an object to its materialization, is complemented by a reconstruction of the patterns and stakes of narratives that make up the subsequent layers of the Chłodna Street narrative palimpsest. An important context for the analysis, apart from the history of the site, is the fact that today, the means of control over the space of the former Ghetto are in the exclusive possession of the non-Jewish majority.

A turning point in the commemoration process was Roman Polański's film *The Pianist* (2002). The bridge over Chłodna was reconstructed "one to one" – in Warsaw but outside the space of the former Warsaw ghetto. The film was shot in the midst of a nationwide debate taking place in Poland about Jan Tomasz Gross' book *Neighbors* (2000). The debate concerned the Poles' participation in the Holocaust and the socio-cultural determinants of their attitudes and behavior. Within Polish dominant culture, the narrative shock was so immense that a return to the old Polish tale of heroism and martyrdom seemed impossible. Meanwhile, the mainstream journalistic discourse cast Gross and Polański on two sides of a narrative opposition. The former supposedly represented subjectivism and rash generalizations, while the latter was supposed to embody objectivism and fair judgment. The silhouette of the bridge over Chłodna Street merged at that point with a counterfactual vision of the Polish context of the Holocaust. The international success of *The Pianist* (Palme d'Or and Oscar) sealed the evolution of the bridge as a figure: from an abject to an object of desire, a tourist attraction, and an export commodity. (A separate issue, also addressed in the article, is how the events depicted in the film relate to the story of Władysław Szpilman, mediated originally by Szpilman's ghostwriter Jerzy Waldorff and then by the scriptwriters, Ronald Harwood and Roman Polański. In both cases the most serious discrepancies concern depictions of the Poles' attitudes toward the Jews during, but also before, the Holocaust).

The success of the film was the determining factor in a decision made to invest public funds in another, and up to now the last, commemoration of the bridge over Chłodna: its symbolic reconstruction *in situ*. What was reconstructed was not so much the bridge as it was in 1942 but the bridge as depicted in the film, and with it the film's idealized portrayal of the Polish context of the Holocaust. The figure of the bridge suggests tight isolation of Jews and Poles – an isolation instituted by the Germans. By so doing, it feeds into the image of Poles as helpless bystanders (onlookers/gawkers, at times even witnesses) in the face of the Holocaust. The figure of the Polish bystander/witness to the Holocaust is in turn a key figure of Polish innocence. In addition, the symbolic reconstruction of the bridge draws the attention of the users of this space away from another site on Chłodna Street, where Jews and Poles came into direct contact with each other throughout the entire existence of the Warsaw ghetto. In obscuring the factual state of affairs uncovered as a result of the Jedwabne debate, the symbolic reconstruction of the bridge over Chłodna Street functions as a discourse-reproducing machine of sorts, allowing the dominant majority to "indulge in retrospective hallucination" (Baudrillard).

The article uncovers the workings of a roly-poly narrative mechanism that renders impossible any successful reassessment and rejection of the Polish dominant culture and prevents common knowledge about facts from bearing in any way on the collective consciousness.

Keywords: symbolic topography; spatial turn; antisemitism; philosemitic violence; Warsaw ghetto; Hilberg's triad; Polish bystander (concept revision); collective narcissism; politics of memory; historical politics

Chłodna Street fulfilled the function of an important traffic hub up to the immediate postwar years. It was an arterial road cutting across Warsaw from east to west. It lost its importance as one of the main urban arterials with the completion of the East-West Route (Trasa W-Z, 1949), thereafter falling into disrepair and oblivion. In 2011, on the eastern side (closer to the city center) it was subjected to a so-called revitalization. As a result, it became a busy place again, but this time as a tourist attraction, i.e. a particularly constructed representation of itself and its past. The current spatial and symbolic management exposes its status as a boundary street between two parts of the former Warsaw ghetto: the so-called small ghetto and large ghetto. Chłodna Street, then, cannot merely be looked at as an element of an 18th century urbanist solution, known as the Saxon Axis. One can treat and interpret it as a symbolic axis, and also as a narrative axis in possession of the majority group, as it is the latter which lays down the conditions of access to the public space, creating in this way a narrative about itself.

After the so-called regaining of independence by Poland in 1989, the process of the so-called recovery of memory began, as the *de facto* construction of a new narrative about the identity and past of the dominant community, subordinated to new needs and interests, not necessarily only symbolic ones. Chłodna Street found itself at the center of an accumulation of increasingly intense manifestations of memory and identity. When viewed as a former border strip, Chłodna Street, in particular its present-day formatting, constitutes a model exemplification of Claude Lévi-Strauss' thesis that the energy of a structure manifests itself on its margins. The street resembles a symbolic rift valley, a place of collision of symbolic massifs, of the outcropping of symbolic mountain formations and the resultant creation of a narrative. Is the symbolic topography of this place simply a chaotically increasing surplus, or is it a system of communicating vessels characterized by a recognizable order of inner flows, sensitive to the fluctuations of external pressures? Does the system have a rule, a law governing the spatial-symbolic arrangement?

The street has a long and rich history. At the beginning of the 1990s there was, however, only one memorial: one of the serial plaques by Karol Tchorek, situated on the western side, off the beaten track, marking the burning in this place of the corpses of Polish civilians murdered by the Germans in the Wola massacre during the Warsaw Uprising of 1944. Today, apart from the four memorials to the martyrdom of the Siberians (defined as Catholic Poles deported to Siberia by the authorities of the USSR which occupied the eastern parts of prewar Poland between September 17, 1939 and June 2, 1941¹) located on the eastern side of the street, one can count almost ten com-

1 The above definition is as popular as it is inaccurate, since the policies of the USSR were class-oriented and applied equally to Poland's citizens regardless of their denomination. The construct of the Siberians – while polonizing the deportees – is a tool of exclusion of non-Poles from the community of suffering. Combined with the popular myth of Judeo-Communism (*żydokomuna*), it is commonly used to present Jews as the perpetrators of persecution targeted against the majority populations (Poles, Lithuanians, and Ukrainians). This alleged, entirely fabricated, persecution serves in turn to justify the stance and behavior of the dominant group toward Jews. This antisemitic narrative is known as double genocide theory.

memorative artefacts near the junction of Chłodna and Żelazna Streets alone. Three memorials pay tribute to Father Jerzy Popiełuszko. A further two mark the location of a German gendarmerie station – the Nordwache – directly linked to the events of the Warsaw Uprising of 1944. There is also the well-known and popular Keret House (2011), known as the “narrowest house in the world.” In addition, as many as four objects commemorate the wooden bridge over Chłodna Street, which existed for a few months in 1942.² All commemorations emerged in the second decade of the Third Polish Republic, i.e. from the year 2000 on, culminating in the symbolic reconstruction by Tomasz Lec (2012). The reconstruction of the bridge is the central object in this place, stretched over the street like a brace-gate. It organizes the space and at the same time the narrative.

The Bridge over Chłodna Street (1942): Instrument of Torture, Emblem of Humiliation

The bridge in question is the wooden bridge from the time of the ghetto. The northern side of Chłodna Street belonged to the large ghetto, the southern (although not all of it) to the small ghetto. The middle of the street was “Aryan,” as one would say and write back then, without inverted commas. Through the “Aryan” corridor ran an “Aryan” tram used by “Aryans.” The exclusion of the western side of Chłodna Street and the erection of walls in the middle of Żelazna Street in October 1941 restricted to a minimum the possibility of getting around from the northern part of the ghetto to the southern and vice versa. Crowds of Jews forcing their way into the bottleneck at the junction of Chłodna and Żelazna Streets disrupted the smoothness of “Aryan” traffic flow to such an extent that one can speak of a traffic disaster. (Another consequence of this operation was the fact that thousands of Jews lost the roofs over their heads – and not for the first time for many of them. This concerned for example Stefania Wilczyńska and Janusz Korczak’s orphanage. This disaster, however, concerned solely Jews. The constant changing of borders, the construction of successive walls, the calculated overcrowding along with the arrival of additional Jews deported from other towns and cities in Poland and abroad enabled the Germans to keep the ghetto in a state of a permanent catastrophe concerning housing, supplies, sanitary-epidemiological conditions, and transport – until the end of its existence.)

2 My analysis omits Anna Baumgart’s and Agnieszka Kurant’s spatial installation *Wielokropek* [Ellipsis] (2010) as well as Wiktoria Julia Frydrych’s sound installation *Słyszysz, Mirów?* [Can You Hear, Mirów?] (2015), both of which could be considered as ephemeral realizations addressed to a decisively smaller and more specialist audience mainly connected with the Varsovian intellectual-artistic milieu. Both realizations did not appear to enhance the self-awareness of the dominant group with regard to the Polish context of the Holocaust. *Wielokropek* universalized the matter (see (...), 2009 – published specifically for the occasion by the Museum of the History of the Polish Jews (Muzeum Historii Żydów Polskich, MHŻP), containing statements by the creators Anna Baumgart and Agnieszka Kurant, the curator Ewa Toniał, the installation’s MHŻP coordinator Karolina Sakowicz, the vice-director of MHŻP Agnieszka Rudzińska and art critic Jörg Heiser). *Słyszysz, Mirów?*, by contrast, placed the entire responsibility solely with the Germans (see DUB, 2015, p. 18).

The bridge over Chłodna Street was a development forced upon the ghetto and forced into the ghetto. At the same time, it was something that the Judenrat (Jewish Council) had to insistently strive and ask for. The Judenrat turned to the German authorities with subsequent projects and supplications in November 1940 and in September 1941. The works began in December 1941. They lasted approximately a month. The architect of this largest civil engineering construction in the ghetto was Mieczysław (Mosze) Ring, an engineer working for the Technical Section of the Jewish Council. The contractors were Jewish carpenters. The Jewish Community delivered the necessary materials. The structure was built under the window of Adam Czerniaków, the chairman of the Judenrat, who – after two forced moves resulting from the unremitting shrinking of the ghetto borders – lived in Lewin’s tenement at 20 Chłodna Street.³ Despite the diplomatic success and the spectacular progress of the work, which he could supervise without having to leave the house, Czerniaków noted: “I cannot shake off the fearful suspicion that the Jews of Warsaw may be threatened by mass resettlement” (Czerniakow, 1999, p. 317 – note of January 19, 1942). On the day before the inauguration of the bridge, he added: “A nocturnal fantasy: I was born on Zimna Street and want to die on Chłodna Street”⁴ (Czerniakow, 1999, p. 319 – note of January 24, 1942).

The bridge was opened for use on January 26, 1942. It was two stories high. There were over fifty steps on each side. Vehicular traffic in the ghetto used Żelazna Street, which was divided in half by the ghetto wall. At the crossroads of Chłodna and Żelazna Streets a gate was installed in the wall. Its wings would be swung open, alternately closing off traffic to Chłodna Street and Żelazna Street. The gate was called the Iron Gate,⁵ while the junction was called Scylla and Charybdis or the Dardanelles, which was an allusion both to the Dardanelles from ancient history and the famous battle and slaughter in the Dardanelles Strait during World War I. The junction was operated by the Jüdische Ordnungsdienst (Jewish Order Service) on the instructions of the Polish police, who directed the traffic. The entire operation was supervised by the German gendarmerie. Despite the original intention on the part of the Germans and the Jewish Community to charge a fee, the use of the bridge was ultimately free of charge. The resourceful Germans made up for this financial concession by looting the ghetto at every opportunity. Absorbed by the collection of subsequent levies and ransoms, the chairman of the Jewish Council dispassionately noted: “The *Kommissar* [Heinz Auerwald] demanded 100,000 zlotys today, probably for the overpass” (Czerniakow, 1999, p. 322 – note of February 4, 1942).

From the top of the bridge one could hear the tram bells from the “Aryan” depot in Wola. On the other side, within touching distance, there was the Saint Carolus Bor-

3 In November 1940, Adam Czerniaków moved from 58 Wspólna Street, located on the “Aryan” side, to 11 Elekoralna Street in the large ghetto. He subsequently moved – within the large ghetto – from 11 Elekoralna Street to 20 Chłodna Street in December 1941.

4 Translator’s note: Zimna Street means “Cold Street,” Chłodna Street – “Cool Street.”

5 Translator’s note: Żelazna Street means “Iron Street.”

romeus' Roman Catholic Church with the figure of the Gracious Mother of God at the entrance. Jacek Leociak has noticed that the ghetto bridge was the negation of all the positive meanings which the idea of a bridge culturally carries with it:

In traditional experience of space, a bridge symbolizes something positive. It makes it possible to overcome a divide, or the untamed element of water. It increases the possibility of moving about, and creates greater convenience. It is a sign of victory over adversity. It joins two shores, two edges, and makes a common space, a space for meeting. We imagine a bridge primarily as something that joins broken halves together, and makes it possible to overcome what divides them.

For the inhabitants of the Warsaw ghetto, the bridge lost this positive value. It was spectacular evidence that they were caught up in an absurd spatial order. It reminded them of their humiliating incarceration. It made it clear all links between the ghetto and the rest of the world were to be broken. [The bridge in the ghetto was a sign of division and enslavement.]⁶ (Leociak, 2004, pp. 46–47).

Leociak also noted the associations that the bridge over Chłodna Street evoked in the imagination of the prisoners of the ghetto such as Jan Mawult, Chaim Kaplan, and Henryk Makower.

“The wooden bridge, hindering the steady movement of pedestrians from one side of Chłodna to the other. Thousands of feet in a hasty procession walk on it, daily, hourly. Thousands of hanging heads are lifted, greeting the panorama of Chłodna and Wolska Streets, the Market Halls and the Saxon Gardens [*sic!*], the skyscraper in Napoleon Square, the Cedergren Tower in Zielna Street, the crosses of the churches and the line of the far-off Vistula. The heads fall again with a sigh, the bridge of the ghetto – Ponte di Sospiri, the Bridge of Sighs”⁷ – wrote Jan Mawult with a tone of irony (Engelking & Leociak, 2009, p. 129).

Irony is intertwined here with a bitterly literal form of expression, as the precursor of the ghetto Bridge of Sighs is the Bridge of Sighs in Venice, connecting the Doge's Palace, the seat of the Criminal Court, with a prison. Crossing it, the convicts allegedly sighed for the free world. *Il Ponte dei Sospiri* is the title of an Italian silent film from 1921 as well as a sound film from 1940. (In the film, an unjustly apprehended and convicted lover escaped from his persecutors, jumping into the water from the Ponte dei Sospiri.) It is not inconceivable that Mawult refers to one of these films. Venice is also the city in which Christians established the first Jewish ghetto in the world. The very etymology of the word “ghetto” is Venetian. It refers to the beginning of the 16th century and to the place of forced settlement for Jews, i.e. to the island Gheto Novo (the New Glassworks).⁸

6 Translator's note: The final sentence is missing in Emma Harris' translation of Jacek Leociak's book. The translation in brackets is mine.

7 The fragment cited by Jacek Leociak, who authored this portion of the book, is taken from: Mawult, 1967, p. 108. A new, fuller version of this text has since been published: Gombiński [Mawult], 2010, p. 55.

8 On the subject of the Venetian ghetto see Engelking & Leociak, 2009, pp. 24–25 – subchapter “From the Historic Ghetto to the Nazi Ghetto.” The author of the entire chapter “Jews in Warsaw to 1939” is Jacek Leociak. Leociak makes a direct comparison between the Warsaw ghetto and the Roman ghetto, the construction of which Pope Paul IV began in the heart of the city in 1555 (see Engelking & Leociak, 2009, p. 25).

Chaim Kaplan noted in his diary: “Thousands of people now go up and down like the angels on Jacob’s ladder” (Kaplan, 1999, p. 298). Chaim Kaplan wrote in Hebrew. The Hebrew word *sulam* means both “ladder” and “stairway.” It was also the name for the ramp in the Temple in Jerusalem which was said to lead up from the altar to God. “The numerical value of the word *sulam* is the same as the word ‘Sinai’” (Szwarcman-Czarnota, 2009, p. 40).⁹ This is why at Shavuot, the holiday of the giving of the Torah to the Jewish people – exactly on Mount Sinai, as is believed – the leaven bread is adorned with the symbol of a ladder. This enables us to comprehend how tragically ironic and desperate – and in my sense of this, also blasphemous – the reference to this image in the description of the bridge over Chłodna Street is. In Genesis, God says to Jacob in a dream:

I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac [...] I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you (Genesis 28, 13–15) (*New International Version*, n.d.).

At the same time God gives Jacob the land and blesses him and his descendants. Transposed to the realities in the Warsaw ghetto, Jacob’s dream assumes the form of a nightmare with the prospect of a further nightmare to come. The biblical Jacob makes a vow after he has awoken from his sleep. At least this is how a commentator on the Torah, Bella Szwarcman-Czarnota, writes about this speech act. The vow, however, is formulated in a very complex conditional mood.

If God will be with me and will watch over me on this journey I am taking and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear so that I return safely to my father’s household, then the Lord will be my God (Genesis 28, 19–21) (*New International Version*, n.d.).

“If God will watch over me ...”. And if not, what then? As I see it, this question is implied in the comparison made by Kaplan in his description of the bridge over Chłodna Street.¹⁰

Henryk Makower compared the bridge to “an urbanistic wound on the face of Warsaw,” adding: “The policemen on the bridge politely but firmly ask people not to gawk and to move on” (Makower, 1987, p. 176). For the Jews, it was indeed a bridge. For the “Aryans,” a gate and at the same time a spectacle. One of the refugees from the ghetto,

9 The information on the subject of the existing interpretations of Jacob’s dream are derived from the subchapter “Po drabinie do Tory” [Up the Ladder Toward the Torah] (Szwarcman-Czarnota, 2009, pp. 39–43) as well as my correspondence with the author, who, however, has not taken it upon herself to comment on Jacob’s ladder in the context of the bridge over Chłodna Street.

10 Szwarcman-Czarnota’s reflection on the place in which Jacob dreams of a ladder also seems to validate my intuition: “*Hamakom* – this *place* – designates in Jewish tradition and philosophy either God himself (*Bereishit Rabbah* 8, 10) or – as Philo of Alexandria says – the divine logos, a place completely filled by God’s Presence, a meeting place of man with God” (Szwarcman-Czarnota, 2009, p. 40). In addition, the place in question has been identified by some as Mount Moriah, to which Abraham led Jacob’s father Isaac.

who lived close by the bridge, on the “Aryan” side of Chłodna or Żelazna Street, recalls, blaspheming God in the process:

During the first six months of 1942 the bridge over Chłodna Street was the busiest spot in Warsaw; one’s head reeled with gazing at that continual influx of people. [...] The people on “this side” raised their eyes to the bridge constructed by Schmied and Muntzermann Ltd and asked: “How many are there really behind those walls?”

From my window I could survey a large part of the Jewish district. Every day I gazed over “all the land of Gilead unto Dan, and all Naphtali, and the land of Ephraim, and Manasseh, and all the land of Judah, unto the utmost sea.” Over all the land which had been promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob... (Rudnicki, 1951, pp. 188–189).

Blasphemy however – just as heresy – includes “if not a potential for conversion, then at least a paradoxical declaration of belonging to the community” (Niziołek, 2013, p. 432). If we consider Rudnicki’s technique as parody, it is difficult not to acknowledge that this kind of scandalous abuse provides also the possibility of coping with the Real (see Niziołek, 2013, p. 398).

This corpus of texts has been supplemented by the recently published testimony of Jerzy Jurandot, written in 1943 on the “Aryan” side:

I was never able to look at this bridge and the traffic over it from below, from the aryan [*sic!*] side. I imagine it must have looked like an enormous animal pen in a zoo. On the other hand, I was often able to look down on the clean, uncrowded street, on the so familiar trams, marked with different numbers, and not Stars of David, and the curiously peaceful pedestrians walking down the road (Jurandot, 2015c, p. 76).

The bridge exposed the Jews to the gaze of the Poles and unveiled them to the Germans. For the Jewish children living nearby and being able to move around through their own exertion, it was, however, a shelter from the physically weaker adults who were unable to go up the steps of the construction because of physical exhaustion. This was of significance in the competition for nourishment. (Children in the area of the bridge would snatch food from adults and escape with it to the bridge.) At the same time, the bridge was used for a kind of game with death. One of the street urchins living close to the bridge, a Polish-language writer after the war, left behind a literary testimony. One scene concerns the fiasco over the hunt for food in the litter bins.

They fled, and the skeleton ran after them, shedding his lice in his haste.

They stopped to catch their breath only on the wooden bridge – from where it was just a few steps to their homes – among a crowd of frightened pedestrians who were hurrying along with their heads tucked into their collars. The thin boards bent and creaked; the policeman under the bridge walked slowly back and forth along his beat. [...] Eliahu screwed up his eyes, quickly bent over the railing of the bridge, and spat onto the peak of the red, white, and black booth of the policeman who was now standing with his back to them, busy checking people’s papers. A passerby in a gabardine and black hat screamed when he saw this. “Jews, run away!”

And when the bridge emptied in a tumultuous panic of fleeing people, the policeman turned around, straightened his helmet, looked up, and called out without anger "Juden, was ist los?" astonished by the unexpected commotion (Wojdowski, 1997, pp. 153–154).

For the adult prisoners of the ghetto, the bridge was above all an instrument of torture: physical and psychological. And, as with the ghetto as a whole, an object of hatred:

My dear and only son! [...] You wanted me and no-one else to take you onto the wooden bridge. [...] When you asked me whether I was not afraid that the bridge might collapse, I clutched onto that like a drowning man to a straw. [...] It might collapse. It ought to collapse. [...] Every time I climb up onto the bridge and climb down again, I pray to God that their wooden bridge might fly apart into tiny pieces. Maybe because soldiers in helmets stand under the bridge and, with a smile, look at those climbing on the bridge as if they were monkeys. And maybe because the bridge is terribly dirty, covered with mud that sticks to the ankles. Maybe also because only Jews bustle around on the bridge, because it is swarmed with arm bands of shame like with shrouds. It is their bridge. [...] Don't drag me onto bridges which are bound to collapse one day. Still during my lifetime, I will show you how that cursed bridge of theirs breaks and collapses (Josef Kirman, *Bridges Which Divide*: Kirman, 1978).¹¹

The construction did indeed prove to be an ephemera. Longer-lasting, however, than those condemned to use it. The inhabitants of the small ghetto were deported to the gas chambers of Treblinka between August, 10 and 16, 1942.

[...] in the torrid summer of 1942 the Germans set to work to exterminate the largest Jewish community in Europe. [...]

In just under a week all the inhabitants of the little ghetto were driven across the bridge to the larger area. The steep flights of steps sucked in crowds loaded with bundles and suitcases, packed with the very essence of their homes, for the homes themselves had gone. They did not halt on the farther side of the bridge, but were driven deeper and deeper into the big ghetto, while the streets left behind shrank like a severed limb. During that summer the Germans deported over three hundred thousand people from the ghetto. People who had grown like trees, were sorted out like tin figures. One day I saw an incredible sight: there was no one on the bridge. No one was left in the little ghetto: it was a city without people, as in the fairy tale.

[...] During the summer and autumn of 1942, at the cost of one part of Warsaw, the Germans presented the other part with a royal spectacle. A task [in the Polish original: *rzecz* – "thing"] which our backward minds might estimate to take a hundred years was achieved in a few weeks. One day when I awoke I did not recognize the street: the bridge was gone. From

11 The bridge in the Łódź ghetto evoked similar emotions, as evidenced by Marek Fogelbaum's poem *The Bridge*: "Across the bridge walks the chosen nation / From all professions and all classes / Butchers, usurers, bakers / Pompous young physicians / Plutocratic has-beens / Provisioning Commission fixers / Kitchen maids with airs and graces / Spies sniffing around with their noses and ears / Chassidic Jews, apostates, too / Committee big shots / Activists, Zionists, / Sundry idealists; / And when I get back in the evening / I sigh silently to myself – O my Great God / I would truly adore and praise you / If this bridge suddenly... collapsed." The Polish version of the poem is cited in: Trinh, 2001, p. 19: "Idzie mostem naród wybrany / Wszystkie zawody i wszystkie stany / Idą rzeźnicy, szachraje, piekarze / Idą nadęci młodzi lekarze / Idą panowie z ex plutokracji / Idą macherzy z Apropowizacji / Idą paniusie z domowych kuchen / Szpicle węszący nosem i uchem / Żydzi chasydzi, żydzi mechesy / Komitetowe idą prezesy / Idą działacze, idą syjoniści / Idą przeróżni idealiści; / A ja gdy wracam w wieczornej porze / Wzdycham cichutko – Mój wielki Boże / Jakżebym czcił cię gorąco i chwalił / Gdyby się nagle most ten... zawalił". I wish to thank Henryk Lewkowicz for drawing my attention to this poem.

“all the land of Judah unto the utmost sea” the Germans began to remove the landmarks (Rudnicki, 1951, pp. 189–190).

The career of the “bridge which divides,” to use Josef Kirman’s expression, is then a doubly posthumous phenomenon. It takes place after the liquidation of the thing, i.e. the liquidation of the bridge, and the earlier murder of people against whom the thing¹² was meted out. It is rare that a thing keeps guard over its meaning. Let alone over its representation. The reconstruction of the bridge strikes a similar note as its description in Adam Czerniaków’s diary. The chairman of the Jewish Council noted on January 11, 1942:

[At Chłodna Street they are building a wooden overpass for pedestrians.]¹³ For several days we have had extremely cold weather, the more difficult to endure since the people lost their fur coats. Niunia wears Jas’s topcoat. It seems that everybody has a cold. At Chłodna Street they are building a wooden overpass for the ghetto pedestrians (Czerniakow, 1999, p. 314 – note of January 11, 1942).

The repetition, which is missing in the English translation from the Polish original of Czerniaków’s diary, creates a bracket here. This text bridge, a gate out of words, has a bewitching effect of poetic prose in the context of the convention of a documentary record. The difference being that this is not a rhetorical procedure but a record of events. And, most probably, not the expression of a conscious subject but a symptom produced by the body. A manifestation of exhaustion and torment. An innocent eye does not notice this. The reconstruction of the footbridge works in a similar vein. It looks great. Indeed, so good that in terms of visual attractiveness it can compete with the gate in Auschwitz and the one in Birkenau.¹⁴ The iconic quality of the construction and the designer properties of the reconstruction are a topic to which we shall later return.

The bridge over Chłodna Street existed for a short period of time and it was not the only one. In the Warsaw ghetto, there were three more wooden bridges, all of which had been built earlier. “In chronological order, these were: the bridge over Mławska Street, in the northeastern part of the ghetto (February 1941); the bridge over Przebieg Street, linking Muranowska and Bronifraterska Streets (June 1941);¹⁵ the bridge over Żelazna Street by the crossroads with Leszno Street (November 1941)” (Engelking

12 Translator’s note: I would like to draw attention to the psychoanalytic meaning of the term. Sigmund Freud uses the formulation “the Thing” (*das Ding*) to describe that which is “characterized by the fact that it is impossible for us to imagine” (Freud, cited in: Bailly, 2009, p. 136). It is at the same time characterized by its absence, as Bailly emphasizes (Bailly, 2009, p. 136). In other words, *das Ding* carries an excess that is unrepresentable.

13 Translator’s note: In the English translation of Czerniaków’s diary this sentence is missing. The translation in brackets is mine.

14 In the visual arts, work on this issue is carried out by Haim Maor. The artist “tests” the silhouette of the gate of Birkenau in different contexts: for example transforming it into a tattoo form or placing it in an impersonal and reputedly neutral convention of infographic (see Maor, 2005, pp. 7, 8). The raw material of Maor’s work is his body and his biography, including the history of his family, originating from Poland – from Płońsk and Łańcut.

15 An image of the bridge over Przebieg Street features in the portrait of Adam Czerniaków drawn by Artur Szyk, reproduced on the cover of the Polish edition of Czerniaków’s diary. According to Marian Fuks’ explanatory note concerning illustration no. 86, Szyk’s drawing was done after the war (Czerniaków, 1983).

& Leociak, 2009, p. 115).¹⁶ Three wooden bridges existed in the Łódź ghetto.¹⁷ How – of all things – was it then that the bridge over Chłodna Street became the hero of a reconstructive success story? How and why has the symbolic reconstruction of a German Nazi construction – a symbol of humiliation, incapacitation, suffering and death of Jews – been promoted to the rank of a tourist attraction that meets with societal approval? This did not happen overnight. It was preceded by a long process unfolding in stages. The signifier was hollowed out of its primary, original sense, its conceptual source, filled with a new sense and subsequently reconstructed through the prism of this new sense and subjected to a demonstration *in situ*. Initial counter-commemoration was followed by a restrained form of commemoration which, in turn, was followed by a high-tech-styled imitation. How exactly did the process of raising up the symbolic mountain formation “bridge over Chłodna Street” out of (apparent?) non-existence proceed? What exactly does it mean to call this process revitalization? And, last but not least: What is the meaning and what are the functions of this new object within the system of representation constituted by the symbolic topography of today’s Chłodna Street?

Father Jerzy Square (1996): Apotropaic Counter-Commemoration

The beginnings of the process leading to the current form of symbolic management of Chłodna Street date back to the second half of the 1990s. It was then that Father Jerzy Popiełuszko was commemorated with a granite obelisk, erected near the cross-roads with Żelazna Street. The obelisk itself was devoid of religious emblems, with an inscription in Polish. The site, previously a traffic island in the middle of the street serving as a tram stop, was named Father Jerzy Square. The obelisk, in turn, was supplemented with a large crucifix, facing west.¹⁸ What does all this have to do with the

16 The Germans planned to build at least three more bridges (see Engelking & Leociak, 2009, p. 115).

17 The most well-known bridge was located over Zgierska Street at the junction with Lutomska Street, next to the Roman Catholic Church of the Holiest Virgin Mary. The second bridge was situated on the Old Square, at the corner of Zgierska and Podrzeczna Streets. The third one – over Limanowskiego Street at the junction with Masarska Street, where Zachodnia Street runs today. The image of the bridge with the silhouette of the church has become something of a coat of arms of the Łódź ghetto. Crafted articles featuring its image – a lid of a needle-case, a brooch, a cigarette case – were dug up by archeologists carrying out an excavation in the yard of the palace in Chełmno nad Nerem (Chełmno on the Ner, Kulmhof am Ner), where the victims had to undress themselves before being forced to enter the trucks functioning as mobile gas chambers (see Budziarek, 2004, pp. 72–73; Pawlicka-Nowak, 2004 – unnumbered insert with illustrations, contents of pit 9). Currently, the most well-known of the artefacts is the drawing by Abram Koplewicz (1930–1944) depicting the bridge with the church. It is on the cover of a notebook containing poems which he wrote in the Łódź ghetto.

18 On the occasion of an assessment of natural monuments “the city hall has detected, to their astonishment, a postglacial shortcoming: Six erratic boulders have disappeared. [...] *Gazeta [Wyborcza]* has a certain hypothesis concerning the rock on Chłodna Street. It could have changed its function. But if so, it is no longer a natural monument but a commemoration with a plaque devoted to Father Jerzy Popiełuszko (1947–1984)” (Bartoszewicz, 2013b, p. 5). The unideological (*aideologiczny*) self-sufficiency of nature is often treated by Polish culture as a challenge or, indeed, as a provocation, as something requiring remedy. The cross on Mount Giewont in the Tatra Mountains and the image of the crucified Jesus “adorning,” as Bartoszewicz writes, the biggest erratic boulder in Poland, namely the Tryglów in Tychów in the Zachodniopomorskie Voivodship, both testify to this.

wooden footbridge? At the beginning of the 1990s, the then anonymous and imperceptible island began to be a place regularly visited by small groups of Jews and Israeli school excursions. It is their presence which made that place visible. A presence to which hardly any of the Polish users of the space (passers-by as well as regulars to the pastry shop Calypso in the neighboring apartment building at 15 Chłodna Street) remained indifferent. This was made manifest by the knowing looks of the regular patrons and the passers-by as well as comments, expressed aloud, such as: “Little kikes” (*Żydki*), “Our friends from the Middle East,” “Oy vey” (shouts directed at the groups), “Real sweet Jewesses” (*Żydóweczki istny cymes*), “they are looking for their property” (*patrzą za swoim*), “they haven’t got enough yet” (*jeszcze im mało*). In the cake shop, the comments were expressed loudly, exchanged freely between the tables: a community of thoughts and feeling was assumed among the staff and the guests. One day, excavation work began at the island. A small elevation was built. A signpost, an obelisk, and a crucifix were installed. After the work had been completed, the small groups and the excursion participants gathered in the same place – which was, however, no longer the same. The sight of Jews and Israelis under the crucifix – viewed as humorous, grotesque, and at the same time provocative – became an additional draw for the pedestrians. Among the lovers of confectionaries, an atmosphere of outwitting the adversary reigned.

One day, a woman, who introduced herself as “Chawa, or Ewa, or Chawa,” and whom I asked about the choice of the gathering place, told me about the bridge. In fact, its existence was not a secret to anybody. It appeared in the iconic sphere: in books of photographs, on TV. What was surprising was the fact this was its exact location. Chawa – she did not want to be called Ms Chawa – also pointed to the tenement block at 20 Chłodna Street that survived the occupation, a building in greyish-brown color with an antique clock (out of order) where Adam Czerniaków had lived. (In the 2000s, the building was carefully renovated through funding from the city of Warsaw. The renovators took care to install crystal windowpanes, brass handles and marble stairs in the elegant staircase from the front. The clock on the façade works and punctually strikes on the hour and every quarter of an hour. At night it is spectacularly floodlit.) The crucifix with the obelisk was placed exactly on the axis of the building. When asked about the crucifix, Chawa replied that relocating the gatherings to one of the sidewalks would block the path of other pedestrians.

There are approaches which do not establish a connection between the symbolic management of the traffic island and the appearance on Chłodna Street of the users of space who are identified as Jews by the dominant majority.

On Chłodna Street in Warsaw, there is a pastry shop that I often visit with my family. [...] From the café one can see young foreigners in skullcaps, standing in the street in the rain as they listen to the guide. Perhaps they also pray. One day the neglected square on Chłodna Street was torn up. Soon, a cross appeared there and a plaque bearing the inscription: “Father Jerzy Popiełuszko Square.” I do not think that those who gave the square at Chłodna the name of a martyred Polish priest had any bad, resentment-driven intentions. However,

there are many squares in Warsaw and only one bridge over Chłodna Street. Neither I nor any of the Warsaw bureaucrats remembered this bridge. Our memory is a place in which there are no Jews (Tokarska-Bakir, 2004a, pp. 15–16).

However, one can also describe the whole thing as a phenomenon definitely less accidental and decidedly non-neutral, or in any event – less innocent. The installation resulted from a consensus and a co-operation beyond the circle of city bureaucrats. The commemoration had to be approved by the District Council, and afterwards by the City Council. It therefore required consent among the usually conflict-prone city councilors. The realization lay with the Administration of Public Land (Zarząd Terenów Publicznych) as well as the Administration of Urban Roads (Zarząd Dróg Miejskich). The very idea, however, had surfaced independently of the city authorities and the low-ranking clerks. It was a collective initiative, an expression of *vox populi* and *vox Dei*. The engraving on the obelisk identifies the initiators: the local parish of Saint Andrew the Apostle and “the inhabitants of Warsaw’s [district of] Mirów.” Additionally, media reports did not note any voices of protest or raise any objections. One can therefore say that we are dealing here with unanimity as a product of socio-cultural obviousness. Why not unanimity *tout court*?

All initiators of the installation, numbering at least a few thousand people, saw the Jews and Israelis on the traffic island. Nobody, however, questioned the form of the commemoration, not to mention the very idea of it. And it did warrant questioning. One could regard as problematic the very idea of commemorating Father Jerzy Popiełuszko in the middle of Chłodna Street. The sanctuary of the chaplain of Solidarność (Solidarity) together with his grave and his monument is located in a parish in Warsaw’s Żoliborz district, where he lived and where he carried out his political activities, for which he was murdered by the functionaries of the Ministry of the Interior of the People’s Republic of Poland (PRL) (cf. Michel & Mink, 1985; Mysiakowska, Żaryn, Gołębiowski, & Piekarska, 2009).¹⁹ In Żoliborz there is also a street bearing his name. It is one of the district’s main arteries. The chaplain’s connection with Chłodna Street consists in the fact that in the building at number 15 there was an apartment in his name (belonging to his aunt from America) in which he did not live. The Ministry of the Interior took advantage of this by planting compromising material there.²⁰ According to the tenants who remember the 1980s, the neighbors then placed at the door of the apartment an improvised altar in honor of the priest, imagined as Saint George (Jerzy) on a white

19 See also “Zabójstwo księdza Popiełuszki” [The Killing of Father Popiełuszko], 2014 – special edition of the weekly historical supplement of the daily *Gazeta Wyborcza*.

20 In connection with the case of the apartment at 15 Chłodna Street, Jerzy Popiełuszko was temporarily arrested and subjected to a humiliating body search. After being released on his own recognizance, he was summoned fifteen times for interrogation. This was part of a large-scale policy of harassment of the chaplain by the Ministry of the Interior of the Polish People’s Republic. Popiełuszko described the events as they unfolded, see his diary (Popiełuszko, 1985, pp. 44–56).

horse aiming a spear at a red dragon.²¹ The dragon was supposed to embody communism. The commemoration of the “martyr to faith and fatherland” in the middle of the street can therefore be understood as a kind of extension and external transference of that altar, its elevation in the symbolic hierarchy of prestige in times during which anti-communism not only became permissible but was also elevated to the level of a standard, if not binding, descriptive paradigm of the past and identity.

There remains the issue of the content and form of the memorialization. On the bronze plaque Father Jerzy Popiełuszko is described as a “martyr to faith and fatherland.” He is therefore commemorated here as a heroic figure in whom the cause of the nation is identified with the cause of religion. Indeed, this is how he was perceived during his lifetime – by virtue of his biography and teachings. He was one of the chaplains of Solidarity. He renewed the Romantic institution of the Holy Mass for the Fatherland. The religious services he celebrated drew crowds of thousands. They were in fact patriotic manifestations. A phrase affixed to his name has entered the cultural treasure trove of the community’s wisdom: “Only under the cross, / only under this sign / will Poland be Poland, / and a Pole – a Pole.”²² There has so far been no critical examination of his choices pertaining to identity and belonging. A case in point for this lack of critical engagement is the exhibition of the Museum of Blessed Father Popiełuszko in Warsaw. Clearly, Polish culture is interested in the myth of Jerzy Popiełuszko and in converting his mortal remains into relics, whereas it is not interested in the Belarusian who became a Roman Catholic priest and who placed on his cassock the emblematic eagle of interwar Poland, a state which persecuted Belarusians throughout its existence, and later wherever its ethos raised its head (Weinberg, 2013, pp. 573–584). What we are dealing with on Chłodna Street, is a commemoration of the emblematic figure of *Polak-katolik* (Polish equals Catholic), an icon and muse of anti-communism.

While from a formal point of view both the signpost and the stone place themselves into the convention of acts of memory in the urban space, adding a crucifix to them comes as a surprise in that it goes beyond the framework of a certain commemorative standard, thus constituting a form of excess. The crucifix acts here as a visual exclamation mark, reinforcing the message that is contained in the signpost and the obelisk. However, it also carries its own message, introducing an additional symbolic tension as an intensely antagonizing mark of exclusivity. “Marking of space” is a category used by Manuel Castells for the description of the city as a form – or set of forms – of symbolic expression. According to this depiction, the city is a playground for a game of sym-

21 The painter and ethnographer Andrzej Bieńkowski, who would regularly visit the tenement house at 15 Chłodna Street in the 1980s, confirmed this piece of information in a private conversation I had with him.

22 This formula had existed much earlier in homiletic and seminar teaching. To the students of the Higher Metropolitan Seminary on Krakowskie Przedmieście in Warsaw, it was presented as coming from Adam Mickiewicz’s *Księgi narodu i pielgrzymstwa polskiego* [Books of the Polish Pilgrimage and Polish Nation]. As a quote by Jerzy Popiełuszko, it had already gained popularity among the defenders of the so-called papal cross at the site of the gravel pit adjacent to the former Nazi concentration camp in Auschwitz. Jerzy Popiełuszko began his studies in the Warsaw seminar in 1965. I wish to thank Fr. Wojciech Lemański, who provided testimony about the teachings of the seminary covering the period of the early 1980s.

bolic power, which manifests itself in the aspiration to mark the space “whether according to the signs of power [...] or as a tangible concretization of technocratic values” (Castells, 1979, p. 229).²³ Placing a crucifix in the public space deprives that space of its commonly accessible character. It is a demonstration of power. It constitutes an act of appropriation, of symbolic territorial aggression.²⁴ It establishes a differentiation between the users of space into owners and intruders, even though the aggressor – in order to mask the violence applied – usually prefers to use the terms “hosts” and “guests.” The installation of a cross as a *casus belli* is a gesture typical of Christianity, of religious wars and religious persecution, particularly popular in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (Rzeczpospolita Obojga Narodów) during the time of the Counter-Reformation.²⁵ This practice – consisting in marking author-ownership by erecting a sign and in issuing warnings and at the same time threats – is strongly rooted in tradition and it constitutes part of the cultural code. This procedure was applied for example during the period of the establishment of the ghetto borders. Emanuel Ringelblum documented the fight for the ownership of subsequent streets, even individual houses:

A few days ago Christians stormed into [the tenement house] on 43 [49?] Żelazna Street and took the Jewish apartments by force. They hung up a cross and said: “Just you try and move that” (Ringelblum, 1983, p. 178).

The Christian direct action – supported by means of pressure exerted behind the scenes on the Germans – was highly effective. Chaim Kaplan noted:

Thus they excised piece after piece, street after street, of the Jewish area, and the boundaries of the ghetto grew more and more constricted. Even after the official notice was published, and the boundaries of the Jewish area set forth in detail, changes were made the next day (Kaplan, 1999, p. 211).

23 For an overview of the academic literature on the subject see: Kaltenberg-Kwiatkowska, 2011, pp. 135–165.

24 In Polish academic literature, Bohdan Jałowiecki (see Jałowiecki, 1985) and Lech M. Nijakowski (see Nijakowski, 2007), among others, have analyzed the problem of power relations and the construction of a community as exemplified by control over symbolic space. According to Nijakowski, a “symbolic domain” means a “territory over which a given group has symbolic dominion” (Nijakowski, 2007, p. 108).

25 “In connection with the crosses at the gravel pit in Auschwitz, regret is expressed that the mark of Passion, the symbol of love and redemption, was exploited in order to sow antagonisms, even hatred. This is, however, not a new phenomenon in the confessional history of the Republic” (Tazbir, 1998, p. 83). The Catholics used the cross – in particular the crucifix – as an instrument of religious struggle, of political struggle as well as an instrument of property disputes. “At the same time every attempt to remove the cross or move it to a different place was treated as a blasphemous act. The legal action and trials which resulted in connection with this found a broad echo in the society of the nobility provoking fierce polemics in the land diets (*sejmiki*) and the National Diet (*sejm*)” (Tazbir, 1998, p. 83). There was an intensification of this type of practice in the 17th century. The cross as a symbol of appropriation and exclusion undergoes a genuine renaissance in the public space in the post-1989 Republic of Poland. An example of this are the crucifix placed under the cover of the night in the plenary hall of the Sejm (1997) or the cross installed “spontaneously” – i.e. *de facto* as an expression of willfulness, without prior information and negotiation with anyone – by the scouts in front of the President’s Palace in Warsaw (2010). The so-called Sejm cross is a crucifix which was placed on the grave of Jerzy Popiełuszko during one of the “Holy Masses for the Fatherland.” After the service the priest’s mother handed it over to the members of parliament. It is made of ebony wood, derived from the altar of the Chapel of the Miraculous Image in Jasna Góra, and hence endowed with all the apotropaic attributes, safeguarding it from any possible removal (see “Krzyż sejmowy,” n.d.).

In our times the crucifix, an object never seen before in this place, suddenly appeared in the entrance hall of the apartment house of the Behind the Iron Gate housing estate complex on 5 Grzybowska Street – together with a few Jewish Orthodox families who moved into the building.

Marking out Father Jerzy Square from the doorsteps of the church to the crossroads with Żelazna Street and placing there an outpost of Polishness and Catholicism constitutes a form of symbolic expansion. It changes the symbolic status of this section of Chłodna Street, enlarging the symbolic property of the church, even though from a formal point of view the site remains the possession of the city of Warsaw with the city authorities paying for its maintenance. Before 1996, the symbolic domain of the church ended near its doorsteps, by the figure of the Gracious Mother of God, planted with coniferous bushes and linden trees. At the foot of the figure, one can still see an improvised corner devoted to the cult of the priest, a relic of ancient times. Protected from the rain by means of a home-made shelter is a black and white photograph of Jerzy Popiełuszko in a cassock with a silver eagle emblem of interwar Poland. The photograph bears the inscription “He was one of us.” Both the figure and the photograph face the church. The installation is low-key in character. It seems self-sufficient and remote from the idea of demonstrating anything *urbi et orbi* – to the city and to the world. In 2011, in the course of the so-called revitalization – which at times was difficult to distinguish from plain devastation – the bushes and trees surrounding the figure were cleared away. The site was flanked by signposts with the name of the square, increasing its visibility and with that its audience. The nature of the interference in the urban fabric on that particular section of Chłodna Street reflects the brutalization of the territorial- symbolic economy of the city as a whole.

The Christianization of the former traffic island needs to be situated in the context of the historical moment in which this place – neglected and forgotten – became a highly visible symbolic center. The process (*rzecz*) occurred at the apogee of a turbulent – and more often than not also brutal – nationwide debate on the presence of religious symbols in the field of ashes in the former German Nazi extermination camp of Auschwitz II Birkenau. It was one of the scenes in a Polish symbolic campaign that went on incessantly for more than a decade starting in 1985. What was at stake was the national ownership of the camp complex as a symbol of martyrdom recognizable all over the world. Another way to put it is to say that the very meaning of Auschwitz was being contested. We are talking here about the succession of events centering on: the location of the Carmelite convent in one of the buildings of the Auschwitz I complex (1985–1993); the installation of a church in the former building of the SS Command Headquarters (*Kommandantur*)²⁶ at Auschwitz II Birkenau (1994, still existing and

26 Translator's note: The former SS headquarters building “had not been included in the State Museum, and after the war, was consecrated as the parish church for Brzezinka,” as Deborah Dwork and Robert Jan van Pelt emphasize. The building, including the large cross standing next to it and the smaller cross atop of it, “did not, therefore, fall under the section of the Declaration dealing with the removal of religious symbols from the terrain of

functioning); the scandal in connection with the commemorations of the 50th anniversary of the liberation of both camps (1995); the plan to build a shopping mall in the immediate vicinity of the camp (1996); the above-mentioned interference in the field of ashes in Auschwitz II Birkenau (1996–1997); the placing of the so-called papal cross²⁷ on the gravel pit next to the building which the Carmelite nuns had vacated a few years earlier (1998–1999).

Auschwitz was considered everywhere else as the symbol of the murder of European Jewry, with exception of Poland, where Jews were cast by Poles in the role of the adversary, if not the assailant: living and dead Jews, real and phantasmatic ones, those engaged in the territorial- symbolic camp economy and those not engaged in it. Polish dominant culture offered here the topos of the property (*dobro*) being due to the Poles albeit finding itself, illegitimately, in proverbial Jewish hands. Structurally, the thing consisted in the repetition of an unchanging pattern. It began with the installation of a symbol of Christian presence – in a version usually unambiguously Catholic and identified with Polishness. Following the installation, protests ensued. They were articulated from abroad by Jewish organizations or by people publicly identifying as Jewish. In Poland, what was time and again considered as the real problem, and placed at the center of public debate, was not the appropriation of the terrain of Auschwitz or the area in the immediate vicinity of the camp (*strefa przyobozowa*) but disagreement with this process. The situation was identified through the prism of the myth of the aggressive Jew slandering Poland and the Poles from abroad.

The crucifix on Chłodna Street appeared in the eleventh year of the symbolic campaign concerning Auschwitz, in an atmosphere difficult to convey in a few words. It began with an appeal made by Elie Wiesel to the Polish Prime Minister to remove any religious symbols from the place in which the bodies of murdered Jews, mostly Hungarian, were burnt. The Nobel Peace Prize laureate's call formed part of the conclusion of his speech on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Kielce pogrom and concerned religious symbols – crosses and Stars of David – planted in the field of ashes in Birkenau by Polish scouts in the mid-1980s.²⁸ Voices of protest had been raised earlier but to no avail, as they were not heeded at all. The debate which flared up after Wie-

the State Museum. But directly visible to all visitors of Birkenau, and marking a building of great historic and symbolic importance in the history of the camp, it was a problem" (Dwork & van Pelt, 1998–1999, p. 691).

27 The so-called papal cross was a cross that was placed on the ramp in Birkenau in 1979 as an element of the altar at which Pope John Paul II celebrated mass. Without this and without the papal call "Defend the Cross!", it is difficult to imagine the subsequent willfulness and impunity of the Polish Catholic Church, although its sense of validity for its actions also derived from support from below and by no means exclusively from Catholic fundamentalists.

28 The relevant fragment of Wiesel's speech went as follows: "You were so kind as to promise me that you would personally deal with over a dozen crosses erected in Birkenau, the site of the largest invisible Jewish cemetery in history, a site where there should not be any religious symbols. Birkenau is its own eloquent symbol. The chimneys, the ruins of the crematoria. Nothing else should be there. With all due respect to all religions and all believers, the presence of crosses on sacred soil covering multitudes of Jewish victims in Birkenau was and remains an insult. These Jewish victims, mainly from Hungary, who were gassed and burnt there, were the most pious among the pious. Among them was my family, my grandfather, my grandmother, uncles, aunts, cousins. My little sister. There can be no justification for placing crosses over their remains. Whoever did this may have been

sel's appeal took place in the press, radio, and television of all political orientations: from the extreme right to the so-called left. Public authorities as well as the Polish Prime Minister and the Polish President participated in it. The author of a monograph on the debate, Piotr Forecki, divided its participants, most of them male, into two camps, the national-Catholic and the liberal-progressive one (see Forecki, 2010a, pp. 211–229 – subchapter “Spór o symbole religijne na ‘polu popiołów’ w Brzezince (1996–1997)” [Controversy over Religious Symbols in “the Field of Ashes” in Birkenau (1996–1997)]). Within the national-Catholic strand, Wiesel's speech was taken to be an attack on the cross and – *eo ipso* – on Poles, Poland, and Polishness, in the image and likeness of the one carried out by the Nazis and the communists. Discussants wrote about a foreign dictate as well as a series of unceasing demands made on Poland by Jews. The topos of the Polish land and of Poles as its landlords and hosts was stirred up. The entire affair was placed within the context of the Polish uprisings, martyrdom at the hands of the German Nazi occupiers, resistance to communism and “the fight of the Polish nation for your freedom and ours, which was an inspiration for our Europe and the symbol of which was Solidarity” (Antoni Zambrowski, *Nie stanął Pan po stronie Żydów, ale po stronie czerwonego Nerona* [You Didn't Side with the Jews, but with Red Nero], “Gazeta Polska,” August 1, 1996, p. 9 – cited in: Forecki, 2010a, p. 216).

There is no reason to assume that the majority of public opinion identified with the national-Catholic mindset. The democratically elected authorities then in power were considered left-wing. The point is that the liberal-progressive strand defined the field of debate in the same way as the national-Catholic camp and adopted the same stance regarding the presence of religious symbols in Birkenau. There were differences concerning the vocabulary, rhetoric, and the argumentation schemes, though more than one progressive-liberal statement could easily have surfaced in the national-Catholic field, such as the opinion of a *Gazeta Wyborcza* journalist that “[i]n the Auschwitz controversy *koltun* [Polish plait]²⁹ meets chutzpah, which means insolence in Yiddish” (Jan Turnau, “Krzyż” [The Cross], *Gazeta Wyborcza*, July 13, 1996, p. 7 – cited in: Forecki, 2010a, p. 223). Within both camps, Wiesel's intervention was judged out of order, to say the least. It was his appeal for a removal of the religious symbols that was considered the main problem rather than the actual symbols themselves. The consequence was treated as the cause.³⁰ From the outset, the national-Catholic camp and the progressive-

inspired by good intentions, but the result is a disaster, a blasphemy. I am sure that thanks to you, Mr. Prime Minister, by virtue of respect for the dead, the crosses will shortly be removed” (Wiesel, 1996, p. 4).

29 *Koltun* (Latin: *Plica polonica* or *Plica neuropathica*) – head hair formation glued together with tallow and other secretions. Commonly evaluated negatively as a symbol of lack of hygiene but also good manners, and education. For an introduction to the subject see: “Koltun,” n.d., and “Polish plait,” n.d.

30 Forecki describes how Polish President Aleksander Kwaśniewski declared during the public TV program *Racja stanu* [Raison d'État] that “[i]n Poland, in a society that has such a Catholic, Christian past, one must not say that the cross – anywhere – is blasphemy. [...] Sensitivity is required here from both sides.” The Polish Prime Minister Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz assured the public that he had admonished Elie Wiesel to remember that when it came to the question of the cross in Poland, one had to pay attention to the words that one used. The Israeli ambassador Gershon Zohar assured the public that Elie Wiesel had not meant anything bad, quite the opposite: he had meant well but he was misunderstood. Commentators were looking for mistakes in the translation.

liberal camp conveniently forgot about the Stars of David in order to focus on the removal of the crosses. People subscribing to both strands

laid claim to the rights of the Poles and Catholics, in particular to memory about the Polish and Catholic victims of the former camp in Birkenau. Indeed, given the fact that in Birkenau there are the ashes of murdered Jews and Catholics, did the crosses in this place really have no right to be there? Could Poles and Catholics not – despite the divergent approach to the symbolism of the cross and the protests of Jews against the placing of crosses in Birkenau – commemorate their compatriots by means of the presence of the crosses? These questions informed the contributions of all participants of the debate. However, not all provided so categorically unambiguous answers as was the case with the national-Catholic rhetors. The latter voiced their support for the presence of the crosses regardless of all circumstances and of the arguments put forward by the Jews. Yet they were not the only ones who publicly advocated that the crosses remain. Such opinion was shared by other participants in the discussion, for whom the co-existence in Birkenau of all religious symbols significant for Christians, Jews or Muslims was a sign of tolerance (Forecki, 2010a, p. 226).

Those coming out in favor of the removal of the installation planted in the ground by the scouts were in the outright minority. Among the ranks of this outright minority, there was another outright minority: those who shared Wiesel's arguments.³¹ The remaining voices, who constituted the majority, promoted steps labelled as concessions in the name of rescuing the reputation of the cross as well as the good name of Poland and the Poles, in other words, of maintaining the good image of both the cross and all things Polish. Driven by concern for the "authority of the cross," Michał Czajkowski, one of the priests on the Council of Christians and Jews, was ready to take into consideration "Jewish allergies." *Gazeta Wyborcza* journalist Jan Turnau declared that a removal of the crosses would be better than permitting a situation whereby "for the American Jew and other Jews, for Polish Catholics and other Catholics the cross would mean something different than it actually does" (Jan Turnau, "Krzyż" [The Cross], *Gazeta Wyborcza*, July 13, 1996, p. 7 – cited in: Forecki, 2010a, p. 223). They were supported by Jan Nowak-Jeziorański, who, from a position of moral authority, argued that Birkenau had the same meaning for the Jews as Katyń had for the Poles. In other words, within the circle of the most progressive of the progressive-liberals, antisemitic remarks – as well as no less violent philosemitic ones – persisted.

Yet another phenomenon manifested itself at that time. This would prove to be characteristic of the way events would unfold after the end of the Jedwabne debate.

There was concern about the damage which Wiesel's appeal would cause to the "Polish-Jewish dialogue and the aspiration for truth and reconciliation". In *Gazeta Wyborcza*, Jan Turnau stigmatized equally the "Polish plait" (*kołtun*) and the Jewish "chutzpah," fearing that Wiesel's speech would strengthen present antisemitic attitudes, "infecting" with antisemitism people who until then had not harbored this "prejudice." In *Tygodnik Powszechny*, Katarzyna Janowska called Wiesel's speech "offensive to people of good will," while Janusz Poniewierski worried about Wiesel, expressing a burning concern and a sense of Christian mercy, considering his words as "a complaint of a victim who until today has not completely cured his wounds" (see Forecki, 2010a, pp. 222–229). In other words, the debate was predominantly an ersatz debate. It repeated tried-and-tested patterns of violence and exclusion on the symbolic level.

31 The editor of *Słowo Żydowskie*, Adam Rok (Rok, 1996, p. 3), and *Gazeta Wyborcza* journalist Konstanty Gebert (Gebert, 1996, p. 11) took a clear-cut stand in this respect. Both *Słowo Żydowskie* and *Gazeta Wyborcza* also published voices from representatives of other standpoints.

Shocking information, potentially ruinous to the dominant majority narrative about antisemitism and the Holocaust, was revealed to the public. However, this charge already emerged neutralized and was smoothly incorporated into the safe narrative of the community's past and identity. In 1996, this process was in evidence when the Polish public confronted the meaning of the cross and – by extension – Christianity for the Jews. The declaration made in July of that year by the Committee for Dialogue with Judaism in the Council of the Polish Episcopate stated:

The Committee of the Polish Episcopate for Dialogue with Judaism wishes to draw attention to the fact that Jews and Christians often assess events and symbols from completely different points of view. This is undoubtedly also true with regard to the symbol of the cross, which for Christians is a key sign of salvation and love, and for many Jews – a symbol of fear and hatred, deeply rooted in the psyche, arousing strong emotions, and what is more – the source and the root of Christian antisemitism (Komitet Episkopatu Polski do Dialogu z Judaizmem, 1996).

The same message was transmitted by *Gazeta Wyborcza* and *Tygodnik Powszechny* publicists. The whole thing was built into a symmetrical configuration of equal and equivalent standpoints. Nevertheless, within the progressive-liberal camp this act of symbolic violence was construed by many as an unacceptable concession. From the “conciliatory” viewpoint, the next step was to be the search for a compromise and common ground on which both perspectives – the Christian and the Jewish or the Polish and the Jewish – could harmoniously coexist, resting on the assumption that the physical ground of that coexistence would be the field of ashes in Birkenau.

The symbolic aggression bound up with the installation of the cross in the public space was revealed in a gesture which rendered itself null and void. Józef Tischner, a Polish priest and *maître à penser* of the democratic opposition in Poland,

had indeed admitted that once under the sign of the cross pogroms took place and that innocent blood was spilled. However, since then [according to him,] Christianity had walked “a difficult path of ruthless [*bezwzględny*] criticism.” He thus raised the question of whether “the Jewish thought had not become ahistorical on this point” and if it therefore “had not approached its pain too one-sidedly”? [Józef Tischner, “Nad popiołami” [Over the Ashes], *Gazeta Wyborcza*, July 18, 1996, p. 11] (Forecki, 2010a, p. 225).

Tischner expressed these sentiments from the position of moral authority and from within the Polish Catholic Church, which has made no effort whatsoever to analyze and critically engage with its own past. He made a statement which was to the utmost both new and shocking within the context of Polish dominant culture, considering as closed a case that had never been opened. Neither did he mention that self-criticism of Christianity in its Catholic variant reached its limits at the very outset of the Second Vatican Council. Treating Christian violence against Jews as a matter of a distant past and as no longer current rendered its present manifestations invisible, not to mention constitut-

ing a symbolic form of violence in and of itself. It created a field in which one could use violence in a comfortable way by persuading oneself of one's own non-implication.

The religious symbols were eventually removed. Reference was made to the UNESCO convention specifying conditions for inclusion of the site of the former camp on the World Heritage List.³² The settlement agreed upon was makeshift and illusory in that the debate was cut off by means of evacuating the problem, i.e. moving it outside the context and field of debate. Until the very end of the dispute, no plain speaker appeared in Poland able to name the *rapports de force et de pouvoir* as well as the mechanisms of violence and exclusion organizing the *theatrum* of the crosses. If one reflects upon the events on Chłodna Street, what seems significant is the public actualization of the cultural pattern that took place on the site of the former Auschwitz camp in reaction to the Jewish presence. In 1996, in the field of ashes in Birkenau, there occurred a performative renewal of the meaning of that presence as a threat to the identity narrative and to territorial holding in both the material and non-material sense. In a situation thus defined, the imperative of self-defense through attack by means of the cross was repeated and reinforced. Conditions were produced that allowed for the conscious application of symbolic aggression without jeopardizing the collective self-image.

Patterns passed down within the cultural code work with the force of compulsion, as Stefan Żółkiewski wrote. They are repeated unintentionally, with no participation of consciousness, as in the situation described by Joanna Tokarska-Bakir:

In 2002 in Warsaw, I noted on the basis of the behavior of two pre-school age girls: they threw stones at Israelis on an excursion, praying on Chłodna Street in Warsaw in the place where the bridge between the [small and large] ghettos was (Tokarska-Bakir, 2008, p. 616).³³

With regard to the crucifix on Chłodna Street, however, one cannot speak of unconsciousness. The crucifix on Chłodna Street did not appear in spite of the Jewish presence but because of the Jewish presence – as a consequence or a point-blank element of a symbolic war. The battle for Birkenau was an integral part of it. “Our memory” has turned out to be a place in which there are Jews, and there are ways to deal with them. The crucifix has been used here in order to seal the space with the intention of confiscating it. At the same time, the tried-and-tested apotropaic method “for the Jews” (*na Żydów*) was put into practice. The crucifix, the obelisk, and the square can therefore be

32 The convention prohibits the placing of any “non-historical elements” other than information display boards on the terrain of the former camp complex. “Such a solution was actually advocated by the members of the International Council of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, the presidium of the Council for the Protection of Struggle and Martyrdom Sites [Rada Ochrony Pamięci Walk i Męczeństwa], and the Auschwitz Preservation Society” (Forecki, 2010a, p. 228). The final decision in this matter was taken by the Minister of Culture Joanna Wnuk-Nazarowa in consultation with the local Catholic bishop.

33 Tokarska-Bakir juxtaposes her observation with entries from the diary of Adam Czerniaków: “In the afternoon Polish urchins [keep] throwing stones over the little wall to Chłodna Street. Ever since we moved the bricks and stones from the middle of Chłodna Street, they have not got much ammunition left” (Czerniakow, 1999, p. 377 – note of July 9, 1942). The aggression was chronic in nature. Ten days earlier, Czerniaków noted: “I gave instructions for the removal of rubble from Chłodna Street. I want to avoid the breaking of window panes in the Jewish houses by Polish teenagers, and not only teenagers” (Czerniakow, 1999, p. 371 – note of June 29, 1942).

understood as a form of proto-commemoration of the bridge over Chłodna Street, an indirect one because the entire symbolic set was staged in an indirect connection with the footbridge. They could also be interpreted as a collective reaction to the memory practices of the group considered as counter-group. In accordance with such understanding, one can term the crucifix with the obelisk an apotropaic counter-commemoration. During the revitalization on Chłodna Street in 2011, both objects were surrounded by acacia trees from the front and the behind. In effect, they are lost today in a green thicket, remaining invisible to the observer not in the know.

Freeze-Frame (1942): The View of Power

During the following decade, Chłodna Street remained dormant. Until the moment when the area near the crossroads with Żelazna Street experienced, one year after another, the appearance of the Adam X mural (2007) and of the stela by Eleonora Bergman and Tomasz Lec (2008) – two very different realizations, yet both referring to the same image of the bridge over Chłodna Street. The point of reference was a representation that is probably the most well-known one: a still from the German Nazi propaganda film produced in 1942. The photograph we are talking about is a freeze-frame, and therefore a hybrid form, an element of the bigger picture. What exactly constitutes the latter? The German Nazi “film functionaries” or the *filmiarze* – as Czerniaków calls them – arrived in the ghetto on May 1, 1942, and immediately began the production. As propaganda experts, they adhered to a film genre: that of creative documentary (*dokument kreacyjny*). The list of topics of interest to them comprised socio-economic contrasts (the immoral social set-up), crime (degeneration), self-government (privilege), and traditional customs (freedom of religious practices) – in other words, everything that one could portray as exotic and/or repulsive and abhorrent in a physical or moral sense, preferably both at the same time. The film was never edited and there is also no proof that it was in fact ever screened. Eight rolls of film belonging to the Reichsfilmarchiv were discovered in the 1950s in the GDR. They are currently being stored under the classification “Ghetto” in the Bundesarchiv in Berlin. They are also classified there under the title *Asien in Mitteleuropa*, which is most probably the original Nazi title.³⁴

The German film crew filmed the Ordnungsdienst dispersing dealers (the filmmakers focused especially on the ill-treatment of children), the prisoners in the over-crowded

34 See Horstmann, 2013. This title is mentioned by Jonasz Turkow in his book *Azoy iz es geven*, published in Buenos Aires in 1948. Anja Horstmann provides evidence that the German cameramen Willy Wist and Helmut Rudolph were not members of “a propaganda company.” According to her findings, the Nazis most probably organized them into a separate film team whose sole task was to shoot the film. Horstmann also writes that there are no documents – or that no documents have been found – permitting us to establish on whose order and for what purposes the film material was produced. I wish to thank Katrin Stoll for drawing my attention to this article and for translating excerpts from it for me.

prison on Gęsia Street, the refugees in the building formerly housing the Main Judaic Library on Tłomackie Street, which was full to bursting, as well as Adam Czerśniaków in his office:

A scene was enacted of petitioners and rabbis entering my office, etc. Then all paintings and charts were taken down. A nine-armed candlestick with all candles lit was placed on my desk (Czerśniakow, 1999, p. 349 – note of May 3, 1942).

Two days later:

The film crew is still much in evidence. They are filming both extreme poverty and the luxury (coffeehouses). The positive achievements³⁵ are of no interest to them. Disturbing rumors about deportations persist in the city (Czerśniakow, 1999, p. 350 – note of May 5, 1942).

The following day:

In the city alarming rumors about deportations continue. The *Kommissar* told us to get in touch with the filmmakers. We are to make civilian clothes for them, which they apparently need for work (Czerśniakow, 1999, p. 351 – note of May 6, 1942).

The masters of the situation realize their own vision, disposing at will Jewish time and space, Jewish things and Jewish bodies. From this material, they construct their *tableaux vivants*: still – though barely – living pictures:

Avril [Franz, SS-Sergeant, KdS/III-B-4] arrived with the filmmakers and announced that they would shoot a scene at the ritual baths on Dzielna Street. They need 20 Orthodox Jews with earlocks and 20 upper class women. In addition a demonstration of circumcision. This is to be arranged on orders by Dr. Milejowski. Since the actor weighs 4.4 pounds there is danger that he may not last that long (Czerśniakow, 1999, p. 353 – note of May 12, 1942).

There is something that is always amiss:

We had to replace the women originally assigned. One of them refused to undress. They insisted that the circumcision be performed in a private apartment instead of a hospital (Czerśniakow, 1999, p. 353 – note of May 13, 1942).

Czerśniaków attempted to protest about the film crew's choice of subjects. In response to this – the following day – he has a camera aimed at his temple:

At 4 o'clock, on my return home, I found uniformed filmmakers [*funkcjonariusze filmowi*, "film functionaries"], etc. [They decided to shoot a scene in my apartment.]³⁶ Romcia [Roma] is ill in bed. Niunia, as usual of late, was not feeling well (Czerśniakow, 1999, p. 353 – note of May 14, 1942).

35 Translator's note: The Polish original reads "positive topics," not "achievements."

36 Translator's note: This sentence is missing in the English translation. The translation in brackets is mine.

The next day:

At 8:30 A.M. I am waiting at home for the film crew. I requested that a couple be engaged to be actors. The movie men arrived at 8:45 and were shooting until 12:30. They placed a sign on the door with something written on it. Two women and a male “star” were brought to the apartment. Then an old Jew. They started shooting.

The city is [still] full of rumors about deportations. Tens of thousands are being mentioned. [...]

In the afternoon the filmmakers were busy in the bedroom of Zabłudowski’s neighbors. They brought with them a woman who was seen applying lipstick in front of a mirror (Czeraniakow, 1999, pp. 353–354 – note of May 15, 1942).

Four days later:

The filmmakers came to a Jewish restaurant. They ordered that food be served. [Jewish] chance customers devoured everything with an enormous appetite, several thousand zlotys worth. Somebody telephoned the Council that the Community should foot the bill for the alleged costs. Czerwinski’s funeral took place at 4 P.M. It was filmed. [...]

The movie people ordered a party to be arranged in a private apartment. The “ladies” are to wear dresses (Czeraniakow, 1999, pp. 355–356 – note of May 19, 1942).

Two days later:

Avril came [to the Community] and sharply reprimanded First for the alleged shortcomings in connection with the filmmaking. [...] In the afternoon a hall was prepared for the filmmakers, where a ball with champagne, etc. is to take place tomorrow at 8:30. [...] Later in the day I looked out of my window and saw a hearse full of flowers which were being taken from the cemetery to the ballroom (Czeraniakow, 1999, pp. 356–357 – note of May 21, 1942).

In an act of extraordinary mercy, the chairman of the Judenrat is exempted from the obligation to fulfill the honor of hosting the ball. Izrael First, the head of the Economic Department of the Judenrat, “was also excused from offering a toast at the ball, for he does not speak Yiddish. He was replaced by a professional comedian, Norski-Nożyca” (Czeraniakow, 1999, p. 357 – note of May 22, 1942).

The last entry that concerns the presence of the filmmakers in the ghetto is dated June 2, 1942, when Czeraniaków is once again filmed in his office. The shooting of the film lasted, therefore, over a month. Rumors concerning deportation accompany the film sequence in the diary like a refrain. The word “Treblinka” also appears. Czeraniaków clearly takes it as a reference to Treblinka I, the labor camp. The construction of Treblinka II, the extermination camp, was, however, already under way.³⁷ In mid-June, Czeraniaków received eighteen German journalists. And so it goes on. Until it stops. The great liquidation *Aktion* began on July 22, 1942. A day later Czeraniaków took his own life. In the course of two months, the Germans deported the majority of the prisoners of the ghetto to the gas chambers of Treblinka. Approximately 300 thousand in total. All with-

³⁷ Translator’s note: In their introduction to the English edition of Adam Czeraniaków’s diary, Raul Hilberg and Stanisław Staron emphasize: “All that time Czeraniakow was unaware that the deportees to the labor camp, Treblinka I, would be used to erect the lethal Treblinka II” (Hilberg & Staron, 1999, p. 63).

in the framework of the *Aktion Reinhardt*, the murder, in an industrial manner, of Jews from the Generalgouvernement and the Bezirk Bialystok.

The Warsaw ghetto Jews were thus filmed by the Germans as “the deceased on vacation,” “living corpses,” as Emanuel Ringelblum and Calel Perechodnik, respectively, described their own status. One can also describe them as being walled up alive. We are dealing with the final viewing of them here. The perpetrators are taking pictures of the victims before their deaths. The task of the “film functionaries” lies in taking – or rather producing – the posthumous mask off still living faces, ordered to make grimaces according to the will of the Germans. The posthumous mask is what will be presented, once things are over, as evidence that this is how it was, that this is what it looked like at the moment of transition from life to death. What we are watching in action here is *the final solution in search of a problem*.³⁸ The mechanical image is one of the types of mechanical reproduction, it is a trace – like an imprint or a cast.³⁹ As such, it is endowed with the “authority of realness (*realność*),” which in this case was additionally reinforced by using the convention of the documentary. The “authority of realness” is transformed here into the terror of truth, which has its director, producer, and distributor.

To this day, in the Terror Háza Múzeum in Budapest, when the Nazi film material from the Warsaw ghetto is being displayed to visitors, what the Nazis claimed to be the truth appears as truth *tout court*. No commentary is provided by the creators of the exhibition. Andrzej Wajda’s film *Korczak* (Wajda, 1990) handles the subject in a similar vein. He cites the German version of events as an objective account of reality. That is not all, some of the scenes shot by Wajda – for example the scene of the beating of a small smuggler by a Jewish policeman – are staged in the image and likeness of *Asien in Mitteleuropa*. The architecture of German Nazi omnipotence and manipulation has been exposed and deconstructed by Yael Hersonski in her documentary *A Film Unfinished* (Hersonski, 2010).

The existence of the bridge over Chłodna Street is recorded in numerous textual sources in different languages. A large number of male and female authors left behind testimonies – in the form of personal accounts but also non-fiction and fiction – concerning this subject. The bridge was captured in many photographs. The most well-known image from this collection is a still from Nazi material: the view of the bridge, probably taken on May 14 or 15, 1942, from the window of Adam Czerniaków’s apartment on the second floor of Lewin’s tenement on 20 Chłodna Street. (The tenement building designed by Józef Napoleon Czerwiński and Juliusz Heppner dates back to 1913.) On the right edge of the still, in the foreground, part of a sculpture ornamenting the façade is visible. The location of the sculpture can be precisely determined because the building still exists. It is situated next to the frame of one of the apartment windows, on the left-hand side when viewing the building from the street. This photograph

38 Translator’s note: English in the original.

39 For a brief treatment of this topic, see: Czartoryska, 1998, p. 22.

is an extremely charged cultural text because of both the content and the circumstances under which it was produced.

From Czerniaków's diary we know that nobody asked him for permission to enter his apartment and to start filming. Nobody saw fit to even inform him in advance about the decision to do so. The householder becomes an intruder in his own home. The other householders – who are also ill and indisposed ("Romcia [Roma] is ill in bed. Niunia, as usual of late, was not feeling well") – are deprived of the rest of their intimacy. The backstage changes into a stage in the spotlight. The interior is no longer a protection from the exterior. Not even an illusionary one. The Germans make the decision, invade, let into the apartment whomever they want, they sit there for hours, and also assess (valuate?), checking to see whatever valuables there are that might be worth removing from the apartment, i.e. stealing:

At my apartment, they [the filmmakers] were full of admiration for a little statue of Confucius and for a piece of sculpture, "Motherhood," by Ostrzega. One of them asked whether my Watteau on the wall was an original. I replied that the original was in a Berlin museum. My painting, I added, was a poor copy (Czerniakow, 1999, p. 354 – note of May 15, 1942).

That which Czerniaków describes as disturbance of domestic peace in the film image is a figure of rape. We are watching the penetration of the inside by means of a sharp instrument with which the eye was armed. An eye that wants everything, can do everything and is not embarrassed by anything, least of all by what was formerly a subject and is now turned into an object – still animate but already less significant than non-animate objects. We also have here a passage, a piercing through violated space: from the entrance through the front door – to the exit through the window. The piercing, all-encompassing gaze is a figure of the panopticon, the total power of gaze and not only of gaze.

The omni-seeing power of the supervisor and commander – master and ruler – is emphasized by the overhead perspective. "The gaze from above has something of the arrogance and desire to dominate the city about it" (Świtek, 2013, p. 18 – excerpt from the part entitled "View from Above"⁴⁰). The arrogance of knowledge and power manifests itself in the desire to see "what others are not able to see" (see Świtek, 2013, pp. 18–19 and the photograph on p. 8). We are dealing here with a view from a medium height, from a slanting angle. This view is different from the bird's-eye view which is perpendicular to the ground and eliminates the horizon, giving a flat image. Here there is a horizon, there is a succession of planes, hence the impression of spatiality and of the plasticity of the image. It is a combination of a long shot with a medium close-up, a close-up, and even with a detail shot (as in the case of the texture of a part of the sculpture on the façade). The author of the photograph does not only look "at" his object. He also looks "into" it. (Miron Białoszewski describes in the same way – as

40 The quoted passage is my translation from the original Polish text by Świtek.

looking “into” something – the Christian gaze at the interior of the ghetto at the cross-roads of Chłodna and Żelazna Streets.⁴¹ It is a gaze peering into the depths, or to put it colloquially: a gaze with which one sticks one’s beak into people’s lives or spies on them. That which is not visible from street level stands open to such a gaze. It does not necessarily have to be, but in this case it is, the gaze of the “masters of the situation” (*panowie sytuacji*), to cite Władysław Szlengel’s expression for the Germans decreeing and supervising the extermination of the Jews.⁴²

The analyzed photograph can be termed an administrative view. It is also a view of power⁴³: the real power (the Germans) watches here from a place of illusory power (Czerniaków). The building at 20 Chłodna Street was ironically called the White House by ghetto inhabitants – owing to both the color of the façade and the status of some of its residents: Adam Czerniaków, the chairman of the Judenrat, and Józef Szeryński, the head of the Ordnungsdienst. Looking out of the window of illusory power, the real power documents its holdings of both movable and immovable property. Yet the description of space – which is a kind of stocktaking – is difficult to distinguish from narcissistic self-contemplation. The author of the representation of the object looks at himself in the object of representation. For the object of the picture is space, albeit one – so to speak – highly processed by the Germans. What one sees through the window at 20 Chłodna Street is a spatial model. A full-sized spatial scale model of a desired form of culture and society. Jacek Leociak describes the ghetto as a “drastic interference in the earlier urban organization” (Engelking & Leociak, 2009, p. 71), an ensemble of “topographic aberrations,” an *absurdum* (Leociak, 1997, p. 65). He terms the ghetto an “insane order” (Leociak, 2004, p. 52) and a “*cywilizacyjna patologia*” (Engelking & Leociak, 2001, p. 87), considering it “destructive of civilization” (Engelking & Leociak, 2009, p. 71). It seems, however, that for the camera-wielding perpetrators the management of the crossroads of Żelazna and Chłodna Streets reflected their notion of order and civilization *tout court*: of spatial order as societal order as moral order.

The view from Czerniaków’s window is a visual treatise about divisions to which one can relate in terms of a formulation used by Jakub Majmurek in a different context:

41 “Banged shut against each other, / they shake with an iron lament / the gates of the Small Ghetto / the gates of the Large Ghetto... / Behind the vehicles, by the wall, / a caravan of Christians rolls. / They look into the Small – and the Large – one [...]” (quoted from: *Męczeństwo i Zagłada Żydów w zapisach literatury polskiej: Antologia*, ed. Irena Maciejewska, Krajowa Agencja Wydawnicza, Warszawa 1988, p. 140 – cited in: Leociak, 2004, p. 50). According to Leociak the poem was first published in 1946.

Translator’s note: In Emma Harris’ translation the last of the quoted lines reads: “They look at the Small – and Large – Ghettos [...]” In accordance with Elżbieta Janicka’s interpretation, I have replaced “at” with “into”, following Białoszewski’s formulation: “Patrzą w Małe – i Duże – [...]”

42 See the fourth stanza of Szlengel’s poem *Kartka z dziennika “akcji”* [A Page from the Diary of the “Action”]: “Sometimes a screech like a bird astray / Sounds the death knell without reason, / Rickshaws carrying the apathetic / Masters of the situation” (Szlengel, 1977b, p. 76; the poem is dated August 10, 1942). The Polish original reads: “Czasem krzyk jak ptak zbłąkany / Był podzwonnym śmierci bez racji, / Apatyczni jeździli rikszami / Panowie sytuacji.”

43 I have borrowed this category from Konrad Pustoła, who has photographed views from windows of the locus of power (*instancja władzy*) – state power, local administration power, financial and economic as well as symbolic power – in Warsaw and Kraków (see Pustoła, 2011).

“Views of power or a new division of the earth, this earth (*tej ziemi*)⁴⁴” (Majmurek, 2012). The division was not all that new, either – the idea of the ghetto dates back to Christian practices from the 16th century. One can also convincingly support the assertion that the ghetto was a performative act (*performatyw*) of Polish majority culture, absolutely not only in the inter-war period (Janicka, 2014–2015, pp. 148–227). What we are dealing with in this case, however, is an exceptionally spectacular visualization of divisions, of hierarchy, of configuration of power (*rapports de force*), and of fate (*przeznaczenie*) in the sense of the trajectory which the dominant established for the dominated, which those who exclude established for those they exclude.

Nazism wants to separate everyone – the lords by themselves, the underlings by themselves, the slaves by themselves. The blessed and the cursed must not mingle (Kaplan, 1999, p. 208).

The window of illusory power is an opening, a peephole through which one sees a spectacle of marking space as a practice of real power.⁴⁵ This view is the result of classification, i.e. separation, followed by stigmatization, segregation, isolation, and... The last link in this chain, and at the same the logical conclusion of this view, will be added shortly. Exactly two months and one week elapsed from mid-May 1942 to the beginning of the “Great Action” on July 22.

The view stands in contrast to the film as a whole, which was supposed to depict – *de facto*, to stage – the extent to which the ghetto was a center of physical and moral putrefaction, and how thoroughly unsuccessful the actions taken against the Jews hitherto had been. The film material speciously poses a question: Since the Jews – equipped with sovereign power, deciding for themselves without any outside coercion – are doing such dreadful things to one another, what on earth must their presence inside majority cultures and societies mean? In this context, the view of the crossroads of Żelazna and Chłodna Streets also represents civilization triumphing over barbarism. An element brought under control. On the one side, there is a hotbed of every possible epidemic swarming and crowding around, while on the other side, order, hygiene, and discipline reign – reign indeed. Even if it is true that the Jews are (still) alive and (al-

44 Translator’s note: The phrase *ziemi, tej ziemi* is a reference to Pope John Paul II, who ended his Holy Mass held in Warsaw on June 2, 1979, with the following words: “Niech zstąpi Duch Twój i odnowi oblicze ziemi. Tej ziemi. Amen” [Let your Spirit descend and renew the face of the earth. This earth/land. Amen]. He placed particular emphasis on the words *tej ziemi*, i.e. Poland.

45 A detailed analysis of the construction and production of the view of power has been carried out by Marek Krajewski. He draws, among other sources, on the example of the panoramic window of the Wachenfeld villa, where Adolf Hitler spent almost a year in total during World War II. Power (*władza*), to say nothing of omnipotence (*wszechwładza*), is the power to determine what one wants to see and the power to change the world in such a way so that what appears before the eyes of those in power is only that which is desired by them and which sustains their belief in their own greatness. “The strategy of maintaining the boundary between those who dominate and those who are subjugated (*podporządkowani*) is thus to situate the window of power in such a way so that through it one cannot see the source and result of domination: violence, suffering, exploitation, inhuman utilization, inequality. The view that is thus generated, resulting in blindness to the cost of the introduction of order, permits the maintenance of the belief that the order is just and also serves the dominated and subjugated” (Krajewski, 2011, p. 19). This analysis, then, likewise clearly shows what Czerniaków’s supposed power really looked like.

legedly) they do what they want, in spite of this inconvenience everything functions smoothly. The Aryan trams run, Aryan car-drivers drive their Aryan cars, Aryan pedestrians walk. Nobody gets in anybody else's way. *L'ordre règne à Varsovie*. In aesthetic categories – which are also moral categories – there is an element of harmony in all of this. The real power looks at that which is dangerous and hazardous, but it does so with a sense of security, and therefore, really, from afar. This corresponds to the Kantian definition of beauty. And perhaps of the sublime? Either way, the situation has been contained and is under control. That would be the point of this 20th century *vedute* within the Nazi or, generally, any antisemitic paradigm.

Mural (2007): Urban Symbolic Guerrilla

We do not know when and who first saw in the film sequence an emblematic photograph and took a still from exactly this point in the film. The 1942 freeze-frame of the bridge is referred to by the authors of two commemorative works which appeared on Chłodna Street in two consecutive years. The first commemoration of the bridge over Chłodna Street is the mural by Adam Jastrzębski, who uses the artistic pseudonym Adam X. His work was situated on the west side of the street and thus – from the point of view of the actual location of the original bridge – on the opposite side of the crossroads of Chłodna and Żelazna Streets. As painting support, the artist used an already existing object: a three-element concrete wall (*mur*) or, more precisely, a small wall (*murek*)⁴⁶ *vis-à-vis* an extant modernist building at 25 Chłodna Street (on the corner with Żelazna Street) in which a police station of the German gendarmerie, the so-called Nordwache, was located. The small wall (*murek*) was an insignificant creation, deprived of any functional and proprietary assignment, situated accidentally in this place and not in another. In other words, it displayed all the traits of what might be called an architectural bric-a-brac (*durnostrojka*).

The mural was created in 2007. It was the second work by the same author in this place. A year before that, Adam X had painted on the small wall a scene representing Miron Białoszewski producing a pile of excrement in the pile of debris on Chłodna Street. The mural was painted in the color pink, more precisely, using a whole palette of tones and values of pink. The very choice of color already placed the representation at the polar opposite to the heroic paradigm, while at the same time constituting a reference to the poet's sexual orientation. The work was adorned with an inscription referring to *Pamiętnik z powstania warszawskiego* (*A Memoir of the Warsaw Uprising*), a mas-

46 Władysław Szlengel used the words *murek* (small wall) instead of *mur* (wall) to denote the ghetto wall (see Władysław Szlengel's poems such as *Kartka z dziennika "akcji"* [A Page from the Diary of the "Action"], *Dwie śmierci* [Two Deaths] or *Romans współczesny* [A Modern Love Affair]). This linguistic formulation has up to now not been the subject of analysis and interpretation.

terpiece of poetic prose of Białoszewski, and at the same time a manifesto of civil ethos: “Miron Białoszewski trzyma się kupy konstrukcyjnej” [Miron Białoszewski holds on to the constructive pile]. In this way, the creator of the mural placed the (anti)aesthetic category of constructive pile in the semantic field of pile as excrement⁴⁷ and a pile of rubble.⁴⁸ The project had therefore both an anti-heroic and anti-martyrological meaning, in the sense of a protest against the coercion to heroism and suffering, against the terror of the myth to which the civilian population of Warsaw was subjected in 1944 in the name of the heroic-martyrological imperative constitutive of the dominant version of Polish national identity (see Janion, 1998a, pp. 251–260 – in particular the part “Imperatyw mityczny” [Mythical Imperative], pp. 257–259; see also: Janion, 1998b, pp. 5–22). The mural was also an engagement with the Romantic topos of the ruins used by high culture, and after the war also by photographers who, while photographing ruins, often demonstrated artistry of a pictorial provenance⁴⁹.

The mural was created under the auspices of the Klubokawiarnia Chłodna 25, a café-club that has operated since 2005 on the ground floor of the extant building. Accessible to everybody, offering a cultural program and hosting cultural events (film screenings, book launches, debates), Klubokawiarnia was established within a young liberal-progressive milieu. It has become a recognizable point on the cultural map of Warsaw. It won the *Wdech*y prize for 2012 awarded by the readers of *Gazeta Stołeczna*, the daily Varsovian supplement to *Gazeta Wyborcza*, the largest nationwide newspaper and organ of public opinion in Poland. The origins of *Gazeta Wyborcza* date back to the democratic opposition during the times of the PRL, specifically the milieu of the Workers Defense Committee (Komitet Obrony Robotników, KOR). The name of the prize is derived from the colloquialism *w dechę*, *wdechowy*, meaning: super, splendid, “really something,” positively assessing people, things, and phenomena which we would today call *cool*.

The Białoszewski mural was a distinct message, formulated by an artist not only aware of his technique but also of the meaning of his own activities. The curator of the project was Katarzyna Cieczot, a historian of literature from the Institute of Literary Research of the Polish Academy of Sciences, who is also connected with the Renewing Meanings Foundation (Fundacja “Odnawienie znaczeń”), of which Maria Janion is a patron. One can say that the artistic activity of Adam X was both a voice of a milieu and

47 In Polish *kupa* designates a pooh as well as a pile.

48 During the Warsaw Uprising, Miron Białoszewski and Swen Czachorowski went for a pooh (*chodzili na kupę*) in the cellar of the house on Rybaki Street, i.e. they would go there and read or recite their own literary works to each other and discuss literature. They would read and recite their works to each other “while having a pooh” (*na kupie*), as Białoszewski recounts in his *A Memoir of the Warsaw Uprising*.

49 See Jurkiewicz, 2006, in particular the text by Kurz (Kurz, 2006, pp. 39–45). The Romantic patterns effectively permitted the non-perception of the realities of the Polish experience of the war and the Holocaust, thereby blocking a reassessment of culture and its transformation, if not a cultural revolution. Among the people coming out against the community's narcissist defense mechanisms brought about by Romanticism, such as the Romantic topos of the ruins, was Czesław Miłosz. He “sees post-war Polish culture as caught in the clutches of two Romanticisms: the former one – martyrological, nationalistic and fascistic – as well as a new revolutionary one, revived under the influence of Russia [...]” (Niziołek, 2019, p. 111).

a manifesto of an alternative to the aggressive nationalist paradigm. A paradigm which – in a durable way, so far – has dominated the Polish public space and has taken possession of Polish history politics in connection with the rise to power of the political party Law and Justice (PiS) in 2005. Jastrzębski's work *Adam X – pierwszy Polak na Marsie* [Adam X – The First Pole on Mars] (2005) in the nearby backyard adjacent to the former Law Courts on Leszno Street must also be considered part of the current of contestation.

The choice of Białoszewski as the (anti)hero of the mural on Chłodna Street was definitely not an arbitrary one. After the size of the ghetto was reduced in October 1941, the poet lived on the west side of Chłodna Street, at number 40, in an apartment that had belonged to Jews (*po Żydach*). He later provided a detailed description of this (see Białoszewski, 1991, p. 27).⁵⁰ He experienced the outbreak of the August uprising of 1944 on Chłodna Street. He was also connected with the street after the war. Chłodna Street features extensively in his texts. The choice of Białoszewski can also be interpreted as non-intrusive or non-confrontational towards the Jewish history of the street, towards the history of Jewish Warsaw, the history of Polish Jews, and towards Jews in general. Białoszewski's field of view was not restricted by selective blindness, characteristic of the view of the Polish majority. In his narrative – if one can treat an artist's oeuvre as one narrative – the Jews are an integral part of the picture of prewar and postwar Poland. Chłodna Street is a “post-ghetto space” (Jacek Leociak). The psalms sung in church – for Catholics usually devoid of any content – belong to the Jewish heritage. The Holocaust is unprecedented and exceptional – also in the context of the Warsaw Uprising of 1944. Furthermore, what is at stake in Białoszewski's narrative – this is also unique – is not the image of the majority group. As a result, we get a testimony relating to the differing history of the two groups – the fact that they were “unequal victims” (Israel Gutman, Shmuel Krakowski) of German persecution. We get a testimony of the exclusion of Jews from the community where exclusion is depicted as a structural community-building principle and as a permanently ongoing process.

Białoszewski does not fail to tell the story of how his own father nearly fell over himself to get his hands on a shop on the corner of Leszno and Wronia Streets that had belonged to a Jew (*po Żydzie*), and how he was ultimately successful in this endeavor. He also relates the story of his father buying Jewish furniture at a German auction, getting it dirt cheap. We do not find in these descriptions any of the typical justifications, such as that the shop had been empty anyway, the owner and their family were dead, as were the owners of the furniture, and besides, these were only chairs and used chairs to boot, and, in any event, every chair was different instead of belonging to a set. Describing the ubiquity of the phenomenon, Białoszewski also places himself in the

50 Białoszewski writes that this took place in 1942, i.e. during the existence of the bridge. However, in his poem about the crossroads of Chłodna and Żelazna Streets no mention is made of the bridge. Maybe the family's move to Chłodna Street took place at the end of 1941.

picture, for instance in the postwar poem entitled “Rodowód góry odosobnienia” [Origin of the Mountain of Isolation]: “ta kołdra jest po jednej Stefie / upiekło jej się getto / mieszkała to zostawiła mi” [this quilt belonging once to a certain Stefa / the ghetto she evaded / she stayed with us, so she left her quilt to me]. In his *A Memoir of the Warsaw Uprising* – despite the fact that it is a monument to Polish civilian martyrdom – we read about the affirmative reactions of the Polish street to the suppression of the uprising in the ghetto by the Germans, and, to put it mildly, about the hostile treatment of Jews by the insurgents (we do not know anything about the end because Białoszewski – escaping under fire from Chłodna Street to the Old Town – did not see the continuation of the scene of the separation of the Jews from the “Aryan” civilians on the barricade on Rymarska Street, at the exit of Leszno Street onto the Bank Square [plac Bankowy]).⁵¹ We read about the threat which the Poles represented for the Jews hiding on the “Aryan” side. Many further examples could be given. Białoszewski’s circle of friends and acquaintances is also the source of one of the most brutal testimonies of Polish participation in the Holocaust, namely Ludwik Hering’s autobiographical short story *Meta*.⁵²

Thus, while the choice of Białoszewski as an (anti)hero of the mural was non-confrontational towards the Jewish past of Chłodna Street, it had the value of contestation, to say the least, of the national ethos consisting in: heroism, honor, dignity, militarism, patriarchy, and hetero-normativity. The pink surface, exposing obscenity, invaded the space of the street that had been established as a symbolic domain of the national ethos – by way of a plaque placed on the building at 25 Chłodna Street, i.e. vis-à-vis. The inscription on the plaque proclaims:

On August 3, 1944, during the Warsaw Uprising, soldiers of the Home Army (AK) Chrobry Battalion under the command of Capt. “Sosna” – Gustaw Billewicz – seized this building, in which the headquarters of the German gendarmerie, the “Nordwache,” was located; August 1998.

51 In Jewish testimonies, the barricade on Rymarska Street appears as a Polish checkpoint resulting in deadly consequences for Jews (see Grupińska & Ratajzer, 2000, p. 224; Bereś & Burnetko, 2012, pp. 125–126). “Rotem did not name the place but told me that this had been the last Aryan checkpoint before the Jewish Fighting Organization headquarters, then located at 18 Leszno Street. Later on, it was Anastazy Matywiecki, a representative of the Polish communist underground (Jewish himself and hiding his identity from the Polish anticommunist underground as other Jews did), who helped the ŻOB members pass the barricade on Rymarska Street during their expedition from the New Town to Leszno Street” (see Grupińska, 2000, p. 226). The barricade is described as being located on the corner of Przejazd Street and Leszno Street, which is exactly the same place (see Bereś & Burnetko, 2012, p. 129).

52 Both Białoszewski and Hering had a sense of the importance and sheer scale of the events. Therefore, they did not propagate the discourse about help for the Jews, even though both could have done so. Hering procured “Aryan identity papers” (*aryjskie papiery*) for Adolf Rudnicki, providing the latter with the papers of his younger brother, Leonard Heryng, who was killed in Auschwitz. An acquaintance, Stefa, the one to whom the quilt belonged, lived for some time with the Białoszewski family at 40 Chłodna Street – until the janitress shared the following observation with the poet’s mother: “That lady who’s your boarder [*sylokatorka*, distorted form of “subtenant”], well, when she walks across the yard she twists her head like this and walks somehow sideways; you can tell she’s a Jew [*taka Żydowa*] from a mile away.” So Stefa had to move out. As it turned out, the janitress hadn’t made that remark out of malice, but who could tell. We had to assume that the cat was out of the bag [*uważać metę za spaloną*], as they say” (Białoszewski, 1991, p. 30). Translator’s note: In the Polish original it says *Żydowa*, which is a derogatory term for a Jewish woman. *Meta spalona*, literally “burnt digs,” refers to the apartment that served as a safe hiding place for Stefa until the janitress categorized her as a Jew.

Made from black granite with golden letters and massive brass screws, the plaque is endowed with all the attributes of cultural nobility, attesting to the importance and seriousness of the cause represented. Thus, also in this sense the provisional small wall constitutes its absolute negation as an unimportant and non-serious surface and painting support. In its content, the plaque offers a great accumulation of aphrodisiacal emblems of unquestioned Polishness: the date 1944 (twice, with the second date included in the seal of the Chrobry Battalion on the bottom of the plaque), the word “Uprising,” the name “AK,” the reference to male soldiers, Chrobry (Piast Poland, prewar national-radical camp), the military rank, the conspiratorial pseudonym, the name Billewicz (Sienkiewicz’s *Potop / Deluge*), and, in addition to that, the first name Gustaw (Mickiewicz’s *Dziady / Forefathers’ Eve*). From the repertoire of visual symbols, we have the sign of the anchor of fighting Poland (*Polska walcząca*) – twice: one inscribed into a cross and framed by a laurel wreath, the second in company with an eagle endowed with a crown. The apotheosis of victory over the enemy at 25 Chłodna Street eliminates from the field of vision the historical context and historical reality: the fact that the uprising ended in a military defeat at an exorbitant cost, namely 200,000 victims and a city reduced to ruins. In this sense, the Białoszewski mural – demonstrating the final result of the entire operation – was like the embarrassing and pitiful reverse of the plaque. It discredited, in fact, the narrative full of pathos.

In 2007, the Białoszewski mural was replaced with another mural, featuring the wooden bridge over Chłodna Street, referred to as *kładka*, footbridge. (Nowadays, the word *kładka* denotes pedestrian crossings over arterial roads, used interchangeably with underpasses.) Both murals were realized by the same creator. “Painting the image is a joint idea by Grzegorz Lewandowski, co-owner of the Klubokawiarnia Chłodna 25, and Adam X” (Urzykowski, 2007, p. 4). The unveiling of the mural took place on April 21, 2007.⁵³ The succession of the artistic representations is worthy of commentary because of the socio-cultural context involved. In Polish dominant culture, it is unique that out of the two narratives concerning two histories occurring in the same place at different times – within the space of two years (1942, 1944) – the narrative about Polish martyrdom peaceably gives way to the narrative about Jewish martyrdom. It is even more puzzling than it might appear at first glance because the small wall on Chłodna Street has – like every wall – two sides. The mural featuring the footbridge could thus have been painted on the north side, on the reverse of the Białoszewski mural. This would have created an impression of symmetry between the non-symmetrical histories of the two groups which remained in a relation characterized by violence and exclusion of the minority on the part of the majority. Such a solution would have reproduced asymmetry – and *de facto* violence – by creating disproportional access to sunlight and visibility. The mural on the northern side, namely the Jewish one, would have remained in the

⁵³ The tendency to connect the creation of the mural with the 64th anniversary of the outbreak of the uprising in the ghetto is understandable, given the proximity of the dates. *De facto*, however, this proximity emphasizes the deeply civilian character of Jastrzębski’s thinking.

shadow and thus rendered invisible. We would have had a repetition of the opposing arrangement on the south-north axis which the creator of the monument To the Fallen and Murdered in the East (1995) used with regard to the symbols of the eagle and the Jewish gravestone. A disposition of this type would have reflected the symbolic opposition of *Ecclesia* versus *Synagoga* (light versus darkness, truth versus falsehood) (see Janicka, 2014, pp. 209–256), which is also typical of the urbanistic arrangement of the cities of Christian Europe.

The visual message that is Adam X's mural is composed of a transformation of the photographic freeze-frame from 1942,⁵⁴ a site map as well as three inscriptions, one below the other, from the top down: in Yiddish, Hebrew, and in Polish. The inscriptions read, respectively: "Here was the bridge," "Here was the bridge," "There was the foot-bridge." A superficial glance thrown in its direction by a pedestrian in a hurry may lead to the perception of the entire object solely in terms of its information-providing function. However, each of the three elements mentioned above is a multistage, complex signifying construct. What draws one's attention, first and foremost, are the choice and the order of languages and, following from that, the question of the addressee of the artistic creation. The lack of English indicates the non-touristic character of Jastrzębski's gesture. What we have here, then, is a rejection of the commercial, consumerist practice of producing a Holocaust-themed attraction. What we do not have is the (self-)image motive, epitomized in the sacramental formula "What will they say about us abroad?" (*Co zagranica o nas powie?*). Abroad, as the phantasmatic construct of "abroad" has it, is where they speak English, which is why one must address it (the phantasmatic "abroad") in this particular language.⁵⁵

The first language of the inscription is Yiddish. The second language is Hebrew. Their status in this place requires consideration. They are not languages of communication because in practice nobody with a command of these languages visits this place. Until the "revitalization" of Chłodna Street, groups and individual visitors would stop off under the crucifix, after "revitalization," they assemble at the symbolic reconstruction of the bridge, which means on the east side of the crossroads. In the context thus defined, Polish appears as the third element of the sequence, and therefore as another Jewish language alongside the others⁵⁶. The choice and sequence of the languages might refer

54 It is the shot discussed above, only slightly differently framed: without trams and cars, yet still with the crowded bridge and "Aryan" pedestrians on Chłodna Street.

55 Before the age of globalization, one appealed to foreign countries and their publics in languages considered as strategic. Thus, in 1970, Władysław Bartoszewski's book about Polish help for Jews was published in French, German, and English (see Bartoszewski, 1970). French symbolized European culture, German – the perpetrators of the Holocaust and at the same time the mortal enemy of Poland and the Poles – while English represented so-called America. Three years after the beginning of the antisemitic state campaign (inaugurated by the speech of the first secretary of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party, KC PZPR, in June 1967) Polish citizens – victims of antisemitic violence from above and from below – were still emigrating from Poland. The aim of the PR operation joined by Bartoszewski was to convince the phantasmatic "abroad" of how unfounded and unfair the image of Poland as an antisemitic country was.

56 This has been observed by Elisa Klapheck, a professor at Paderborn University and rabbi in Frankfurt am Main. I wish to thank Helena Datner and Agata Patalas for enabling me to meet Elisa Klapheck.

to possible variants of Jewish identity. Indeed, they might not so much be an indicator of the audience addressed, i.e. the projected presence of the living, as a designation of the actual absence of the dead. In order to provide a fully precise description, one has to speak of absence/presence. For the Jews are made present here. As the absent ones. With the full right to self-definition annihilated by the common denominator of the ghetto bridge. As somebody who should have the full right of presence and the full right to their own mark in the public space.

If we interpret the Polish language as the language of the dominant group, to place it last is a gesture of positioning: the establishment of a hierarchy and an act of questioning the majority group's conviction that they have exclusive rights to the place. The dominant group is, after all, the *de facto* recipient of the message here. However, they cannot feel like the addressees, certainly not the main addressees. What can be seen on the mural is also an unforeseen detail belonging to the behind-the-scenes order instead of that of the proscenium, namely an orthographic mistake in the Hebrew writing, crossed out and corrected underneath by an inexperienced hand, as in a school exercise book or notebook. Because of the intimacy of this gesture-trace (*gest-śląd*), while looking closely at the mural, one might feel like an intruder sneaking a peak over the shoulder of somebody while they are writing. A noticeable feature of the whole mural is, after all, its low-key, non-imposing character. On the one hand, the painted message is visible, on the other, however, it does not contain the compulsion to notice it – in contrast to the pink Białoszewski mural. Even if the eye of the Polish majority is prone to perceive the presence of the Hebrew alphabet in the public space as a form of ostentation and arrogance – termed “Jewish insolence” in Polish – if not an outright act of aggression. This is why the mural may also work as a kind of charge, which is subject to detonation within the sensibility of the viewer as a result of touching it by looking. Jastrzębski's gesture is therefore a paradoxical intervention. Seemingly non-invasive, once noticed, it performs a symbolic invasion into the system of the Polish majority's attachments, emotions, and its notion of the socio-cultural order. It constitutes a penetration of the ob-scene (off-scene) into the sphere of visibility.

To develop further the comparison with the apparatus of theatre, the plane of the mural can be likened to a curtain. Stretched out in emptiness and emphasizing emptiness. Behind the concrete bric-a-brac there is a vacant plot once occupied by a now-demolished tenement on the even number side of Chłodna Street. One of the connotations of the mural may therefore be a grave stela, even though the connection here is not obvious. The mural confronts itself – it also confronts the viewer – with an icon of Jewish suffering. This is not coincidental, as the artist was aware of the historical meaning of the wooden bridge:

“The footbridge is a part of the mythology of this area. It was allegedly built to be convenient for the inhabitants of the ghetto, whereas in reality it was an instrument that helped to control masses of enslaved people,” says Adam X (Urzykowski, 2007, p. 4).

The strategy of confrontation is based here on the gesture of problematizing and showing clearly all kinds of mediation, and therefore of transformation and distance. First of all, the spatial and temporal shifting between the representation of the object and the object of representation is emphasized. A clear indication of this is the use of the pronoun *tam* (there) and the past tense verb *była* (was). Jastrzębski problematizes Roland Barthes' *C'est cela*, establishing distance to the eternal "here and now" that characterizes the photographic image.

Secondly, the artist problematizes the repeatedly compound shifting of the image with respect to the object connected with the use of various media. We are dealing here with a painted image that emerged from a photographic image that emerged from a film image. The gesture of the painting was not hidden. On the contrary, it was underlined by means of choosing a convention completely remote from hyperrealism or realism. The awareness of the transformation manifests itself in the selection of the colors referring to the palette of the monochromatic photograph: from white, to black, through grey. This decision implies a move away from the ambition to produce an attractive image. The artist rejected the possibility of coloring it, which common reception treats as making something contemporaneous to us or even as "reviving," as proven by the traditional *monidło*, i.e. black-and-white portrait photograph subsequently colored by hand, and by contemporary *found footage*. Roland Barthes has pointed to the macabre character of this kind of "reviving," comparing color photography to make-up applied to corpses.⁵⁷ In the case of coloring images originally in black and white, the similarity of both procedures borders on the identical. Jastrzębski's mural is located on the antipodes of this type of aesthetics/ethics. In effect, we are looking at a landscape in mourning tones. Its starkness and gloom is underscored by the cold, sharp, in fact prossectorial whiteness, used in an information-providing function. The white color was reserved by the artist for everything that concerns the bridge. Thus, the bridge itself, the inscribed titles-captions bearing the legend of the map as well as the marking of the bridge on the rudimentary street map are all highlighted in white.

Jastrzębski successfully steered clear of the risk inherent in the use of an image produced by the perpetrators. He managed to do so by means of highlighting clearly the repeated shifting and transformations of the image. What makes the viewer additionally aware of the fact that they are looking at somebody's gaze is the point – or points – of view. The point of view represented in the image is familiar (known from the iconosphere).⁵⁸ However, it is impossible to find it or to place it in the real space.

57 "I always feel (unimportant what actually occurs) that in the same way, color is a coating applied *later on* to the original truth of the black-and-white photograph. For me, color is an artifice, a cosmetic (like the kind used to paint corpses)" (Barthes, 1981, p. 87). Indeed, the method of obtaining a color photograph consists in putting on an additional layer (of tri-color filter mask) on a monochromatic ground.

58 The term "iconosphere" was introduced by the prominent art critic and theoretician Mieczysław Porębski to denote "a sphere where new visual and audial images keep appearing[, a sphere that] constitutes an area of constant informational impulses, which are perceived, classified and verified by the human, an area of increasing human observation and exploration. It includes both the stimuli which together form the natural order of the world and those which come to signify the order made artificially by humans themselves. Being one unity,

On the mural, the cardinal points are not indicated. Hence, one is unable to realize that the perpetrator looked in a south-east direction. We look at the mural standing on the east-west axis, facing north. What additionally confuses the tropes is the map of the crossroads, congruent, as it were, with the view from the building at 25 Chłodna Street – from the east side, in a north-east direction. The streets in the drawing – unlike in reality – do not cross in a perpendicular way. The expected referentiality of the representation is a trap here, an instrument of dislocation and destabilization through which the artist constructed a multi-layered, almost Escher-like *trompe l'oeil*, giving the viewer an exercise in *Das Unheimliche*. In attempting to negotiate the given parameters with each other, one ends up confusing one thing with another. The result is a state of vertigo. The only thing that definitely can be said in this situation is that it is better to watch Jastrzębski's mural while seated.

There remains the question of the status of the viewer, the actual audience of the mural, sitting on the opposite side of the street at a table of Klubokawiarnia Chłodna 25. The gesture of maintaining distance and emphasizing its various forms makes the mural a treatise on distance. Hans-Georg Gadamer noticed that the distance to past objects unknown to the subject is usually filled by the latter with their own prejudices and pre-judgements (*prze(d)sądy*). Here, this would consist in investing present emotions in the representation of the past object – if not in the past object *tout court*. The way Jastrzębski's mural works is akin to the mechanism of anamnesis. If we assume that the inscriptions give direction to the entire piece, in other words: if the piece respects the order from right to left, the mural becomes something akin to an opening through which, as it were, the perception descends into the depths, from the totality to the detail: from linguistic mapping, through cartographic mapping, up to painted mapping of film and photographic origin, descending simultaneously into time. *De facto*, however, anamnesis – *odpominanie* – consists here in projection. In this sense, the mural turns out to be a projection screen.

One can assume with a high degree of probability that the content of that projection consists in an illusion shared by the majority of the critical liberal-progressive *inteligencja*. An illusion in which people imagine the situation of the Holocaust according to Hilberg's triad of "perpetrator – victim – bystander," translated into categories of theatre as "director – actor – spectator" (Niziołek, 2019, p. 72).⁵⁹ The actual object of anamnesis, then, is the imagined position of the majority group – at least the spectators' own group of reference (the *inteligencja*) – as a forced witness to somebody else's suffering.⁶⁰

which bustles with shapes and colors, it is filled with sounds and murmurs, is a source of thermal, olfactory, and gustatory sensations; changing according to daily and yearly rhythms as well as, more permanently, according to the rhythm of the transformations brought about by civilization – the iconosphere is also perceived, remembered as a single unity, it is meaningful in its natural as well as civilizational diversity" (Porębski, 1971, p. 18).

59 In his book, Niziołek deals with the "irremovable results of being in the position of an observer of the Holocaust and accepting the rule of *theatricality* (according to which a witness ceases to be a witness and becomes a spectator, and therefore doesn't have to take action)" (Niziołek, 2019, p. 26).

60 However, Niziołek uses the categories "society of bystanders" and "paradigm of the culture of witness" in order to talk about the "universal experience of the society of *bystanders* (as Raul Hilberg calls the experience of in-

One can understand this as an attempt at experiencing the non-experienced – with reference to what Hanna Świda-Ziemba wrote concerning the *inteligencja*'s non-experience of the Holocaust.⁶¹ Experience reconstructed in such a way is a mystified experience. It is also a mystification to endow the past image with present affect: grief and mourning. What is at stake on Chłodna Street is the well-being of the *inteligencja*, even if it is not for sale and export here.

In considering the mural on Chłodna Street as a voice of a milieu, one has to emphasize that this voice speaks against the paradigm of consumption and the poetics of tourist attraction as well as against the paradigm of national self-defense which rests on an ethnic-religious definition of nation. The task which it sets out for itself is to widen the field of social self-awareness. On the other hand, however, it backs away from a revision of the liberal-progressive paradigm, seeing in it a kind of unproblematic counterbalance to the two other paradigms. The message attempts to avoid the trap of instrumentalizing the sight of Jewish suffering. Unintentionally, however, it has metamorphosed into a kind of sparing operation, if not an alibi, for the elite which refuses to place the history of its own group in a continuum of violence and exclusion.⁶² It is this continuum that encompasses both the neutralizing discursive processing of the Holocaust and the phenomenon of philosemitic violence which has intensified since 1989.

cidental observers)" (Niziołek, 2019, p. 3). Niziołek's reflection – while insightful at its core – is at this point characterized by half-wayness (*połowiczność*): it reveals in order to conceal or it reveals while concealing at the same time. The author is aware of the fact that "Polish post-war culture arose from the interaction of a number of different ideologies, shaped not only by state institutions but also by the Catholic Church and the political opposition. [...] The first post-war paradigm of the literature of witness [...] [heralded a general transformation of the paradigms of Polish culture]. The model of cultural victimhood shaped by Romanticism [intensely stimulated by the war experience] demanded instead something quite contrary: [...] concealment of the other's suffering within one's own or universal experience. [Even the mocking revision of Romantic myths avoided a precise stating of the historical arguments connected with the occupation experience of Polish society, which formed the basis of these revisions.] We should emphasize the existence [...] of a powerful tension between a mocking trend in Polish culture and ideological attempts to revitalize Polish nationalism – mutually goading each other on [and making use of the same hidden energy of collective denial]. [...] A self-perpetuating closed circuit was established" (Niziołek, 2019, p. 35). Niziołek is therefore willing to admit that the elimination took place on the level of high discourse and its producers (including in this category high culture and its producers), i.e. the elite. At the same time, however, he believes that what was eliminated was the experience of the *bystanders* ("there was no place for the experience of the bystanders," Niziołek, 2019, p. 35). This conviction pulls back his reflection and places it in a safe region for the culture under analysis. Translator's note: My translation of the passages from the Polish original that are missing in the English translation is in square brackets.

61 "[T]he Jewish problem was expressed in such a way as if the world had moved back to the prewar period, and the Holocaust had never taken place. The memory of the tragedy was suspended. The antisemites used prewar reproaches. [...]. The Holocaust, however, as a shock, as a fundamental argument, did not figure in these discussions" (Świda-Ziemba, 2003, pp. 93–94). For a polemic with the thesis of the Polish non-experience of the Shoah see: Janicka, 2014–2015.

62 Jan Tomasz Gross was probably the first to draw attention to the violence and exclusion characterizing "the reflection on Polish-Jewish war-time relations – the most open and comprehensive one, conducted in the spirit of tolerance and appreciation for those who believe and think in a different way – within the circle of the secular, progressive, liberal *inteligencja*, the best *inteligencja* that one can imagine" (Gross, 2007, p. 19). One gets a sense of how much the elite of the Polish *inteligencja*, like the members of the Znak parliamentary circle and leading intellectuals, understood from the events of 1968, from reading the existing material, known for a long time as well as published recently (e.g. by the sociologist and director of PAN, the Polish Academy of Sciences: Jan Szczepański, see his diaries from 1945–1968: Szczepański, 2009) and from the collection of correspondence (e.g. from historians of first magnitude: Stefan Kieniewicz, Henryk Wereszycki, see their *Korespondencja z lat 1947–1990*: Kieniewicz & Wereszycki, 2013). This does not mean that there were no exceptions, before, during, and immediately after the war. However, they did not shape the canon of community thinking.

Stela (2008): Marking the Place, Establishing a Trace

The freeze-frame of 1942 appeared once again in the area of the crossroads of Żelazna and Chłodna Streets a year after the creation of Jastrzębski's mural. This time in the form of a traditional mechanical reproduction and as an element of a larger whole, namely as part of a set of material markings-commemorations (*oznaczenie-upamiętnienie*) designed by Eleonora Bergman and Tomasz Lec and positioned at 22 spots indicating the maximum extent of the former Warsaw ghetto and coinciding in several places with the location of the former ghetto gates. The author of this idea was Eleonora Bergman, who submitted the project for the series of commemorations to the deputy president of the city of Warsaw in 1997. Bergman's thinking was embedded in the context of historical architectural research that she had conducted in the Department of the Documentation of Historical Monuments (Dział Dokumentacji Zabytków) of the Jewish Historical Institute (Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, ŻIH) in Warsaw. Her thinking also owed much to the work of three other specialists. Of particular significance to Bergman was the unpublished work *Inwentaryzacja reliktyw granic getta warszawskiego* [Inventory of the Relics of the Warsaw Ghetto Borders] by Ewa Pustoła-Kozłowska and Marek Witecki, carried out in 1993 within the framework of The Workshop for the Conservation of Monuments (Pracownia Konserwacji Zabytków, PKZ). Not long after that, in 1997, Jan Jagielski's book *Niezatarte ślady getta warszawskiego* (*The Remnants of the Warsaw Ghetto*), which grew out of his work conducted in the Dział Dokumentacji Zabytków at ŻIH, was published (Jagielski, 1997, 2008). Jagielski's book contains historical photographs of the Warsaw ghetto collated with testimonies as well as contemporary photographic views of those places. In the same year, Bergman and Jagielski drew up an expert assessment of the territorial extent of the former Umschlagplatz (see Bergman & Jagielski, 1997).⁶³

The Warsaw ghetto was still an abstraction then, associated at best with the Monument to the Fighters and Martyrs of the Ghetto in Warsaw's district Muranów. Apart from that, however, it was not cast in real space. In 1997, Eleonora Bergman's initiative did not attract the attention of the city authorities. Ten years afterwards, the Conservator of Historical Monuments for the city of Warsaw, Ewa Nekanda-Trepka, returned to the matter. The intervention of Paweł Śpiewak, at the time a member of parliament for the party Civic Platform (Platforma Obywatelska, PO), played a part in this development. His stance was supported by the Jewish Community of Warsaw. It seems that the outcropping of the former ghetto, the process of making it real in the field of common consciousness was also significant. 2001 saw the publication of the monumental compendium and reconstruction *Getto warszawskie: Przewodnik po nieistniejącym mieście* (*The Warsaw Ghetto: Guide to a Non-Existing City*) by Barbara Engelking and Jacek Leo-

63 The bibliography of the document features a reference to: Pustoła-Kozłowska & Witecki, 1993.

ciak. The text was accompanied by maps by Paweł E. Wespiański, superimposing on each other plans of two cities – of contemporary Warsaw and of the Warsaw ghetto – and indicating the few remaining buildings. The publication of *Przewodnik po nieistniejącym mieście* was an unquestionable event. Yet what accorded the Warsaw ghetto its status – no longer as a site of memory in Pierre Nora's meaning, but as a pop culture phenomenon – proved to be Roman Polański's feature film *The Pianist* (Polański, 2002), which was released in the same year as Engelking and Leociak's work was published.

In 2007, nobody needed any further persuasion to be in favor of Bergman's idea. Even though it concerned a wide extent of the city, securing the approval of the councillors of two Warsaw districts, Śródmieście (Midtown) and Wola, did not require any special effort.⁶⁴ The remaining stages were also instantly realized. Eleonora Bergman invited Tomasz Lec, with whom she had previously worked with on Ringelblum Archive exhibits displayed in Frankfurt am Main, Berlin, New York, Brussels, and Madrid, to participate in the project. Ewa Pustoła-Kozłowska and Jan Jagielski were involved in the project as well. Pustoła-Kozłowska made a remarkable contribution to the outlining of the localizations of individual objects. Jagielski participated in the selection of the iconography and acted as a consultant on the inscriptions. The realization of the project was financed by the city's Office for the Preservation of Historical Monuments (Biuro Stołecznego Konserwatora Zabytków), i.e. the local city authorities, together with the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage (see Urzykowski, 2008, p. 2).

Delineating and marking the area of the former ghetto entails highlighting the divergent history (*losy*) of Poles and Jews. The difference manifests itself in the different fates of the two cities or the two parts of the city, i.e. the Polish and the Jewish part. Tomasz Lec clearly articulated the issue:

It is often said that 80 percent of Warsaw was destroyed. This muddles our thinking. The high rate of destruction results first and foremost from the total destruction of the district formerly called the North District. Before the war, it was the main residential area of the Jewish population. In 1940, Jews who had been [forcefully] resettled from other districts, also ended up there. Over time, the site of the ghetto was restricted to the area in which the Uprising in the Ghetto took place, which ended with the extermination of its last inhabitants as well as with the systematic destruction of all buildings. The Germans wanted a city not only without Jews but also without a memory of them. [...] What remained was a desert of rubble, the only such place in Warsaw. [...].

On these piles of rubble a district was established, built in accordance with a modernist concept, different from the previous architectural-urbanist concept, with another way of thinking about houses and the space surrounding them, with housing of adequate standard and attention to green space. A completely new fabric of the city emerged, from which it is impossible to read its past (Kosiewski & Lec, 2013, p. 29).⁶⁵

64 The markers stretch across the area between the wall of the Teatr Studio at the Palace of Culture and Science (PKiN) in the south up to the rondo Babka located in the Powązki area in the north; and from Freta Street in the New Town in the east up to the wall of the Jewish cemetery at Młynarska Street in the west.

65 "The only street that partially survived – Nalewki – is today deprived of buildings (with the exception of Arsenal). The name of the street has been changed to Heroes of the Ghetto (Bohaterów Getta). Even that trace was erased" (Kosiewski & Lec, 2013, p. 29).

The initial difference can be seen in aerial photographs taken in 1945.⁶⁶ In the “Aryan” part of Warsaw there are ruins. Houses without windowpanes and roofs. In Jewish Warsaw, except the small ghetto, there is not a single stone left standing. One can barely discern the grid of streets. There is St. Augustine’s Church. There are the ruins of the Gešiówka prison. Two buildings in good condition on the site of the Umschlagplatz. Apart from that, nothing. Undifferentiated space.

The second aim of the commemoration was to make everybody aware of the territorial extent and sheer scale of the ghetto, thereby exposing its central positioning within the city fabric. The establishment of this seemingly neutral fact *de facto* belied the common conviction that the place of Jews, as well as of the Holocaust, was marginal to the history of Poland. It disturbed the common mental and emotional automatism at the core of which lies the notion that the ghetto – not only the Warsaw ghetto – was both far away and someplace else. Warsaw as the capital city, and therefore as a showcase of the country as a whole, constitutes in this respect both a representational and a representative space. The risk involved with the project, then, concerned the visualization of that which took place in the center of Polish culture and society, and which Polish culture and society had strenuously attempted to efface (cf. Ostalska, Janicka, & Wilczyk, 2013).

The visibility and expressibility of the Holocaust in Poland is subjected to “rigorous negotiations and restrictions”:

Even if Jewish experience is revealed, and not “obscured or glossed over,” it cannot strip bare its conflicted position within Polish history and Polish culture. If it is to be expressed openly, it should have a “universal character.” It is to be performed within the bounds of a carefully prepared ideological contract. If it provokes conflict [and it does provoke conflict because of what it was – E.J.], then its historical concreteness should be effaced (Niziołek, 2019, p. 34).⁶⁷

After transgressing this boundary, expression and visibility do not merely provoke rejection but first and foremost – moral panic and aggression, depicted as self-defense. Eleonora Bergman’s project was therefore both simple and fraught with risk. From statements made by Bergman and Lec we learn that it was important to them that the

66 The collection of remote-sensing materials of the state archive of the capital city of Warsaw (Kolekcja Materiałów Teledetekcyjnych Archiwum Państwowego miasta stołecznego Warszawy) contains, among other materials, a photographic map (*Fotoplan Warszawy*) from June 1945.

67 Niziołek points to the emergence of beautified images in this field, which have paralyzed the work of memory, preventing a recognition of the past: “For example, the beautiful melancholy image of the Jewish cemetery, created by Krystyna Zachwatowicz for the Słoty Teatr’s scenery in the *The Dybbuk* [by An-ski, staged by Andrzej Wajda – E.J.], was frequently applauded by audiences as soon as the curtain rose. The imposing beauty of the image, however, may [have masked] fear on the part of the creators of the performance; fear of the hostility or indifference of the spectators towards the Jewish world invoked on stage. Provoking admiration would allow such unwelcome attitudes to be disarmed” (Niziołek, 2019, p. 102). Another strategy of disarmament was the incorporation of *Dybbuk* into the Polish romantic tradition: “Wajda treated Ansky’s play as a *Jewish Forefather’s Eve* [Dziady]; the beginning of the performance makes reference to Stanisław Wyspiański’s production of Mickiewicz’s drama in 1901” (Niziołek, 2019, p. 102). Translator’s note: Ursula Phillips translated *piękno obrazu być może jednak maskowało lęk* as “[...] may reveal fear”. However, “may have masked” or “camouflaged fear” might be more apt.

form the commemoration would take was not “imposing itself nor in any other way aggressive.”⁶⁸ At the same time they emphasized that the markings were to be “noticeable, permanent and coherent with the structure of the city. Not only appropriately befitting the dramatism of events but also connected to Warsaw’s history” (Kosiewski & Lec, 2013). The creators’ thinking was therefore disciplined by the category of appropriateness related in at least equal measure to the object of commemoration and the sensitivity of the recipients. Ultimately, the project has provoked interest and met with a friendly reception. It was inaugurated on November 19, 2008. This date was chosen due to its proximity to the anniversary of the closing of the ghetto by the Germans, which took place on November 16, 1940. None of the twenty-two markers have ever been damaged or vandalized in any way.

The markers were designed as one uniform series of elements. In each of the selected sites we encounter a set consisting of incrustation in the pavement as well as a stela made of concrete with two information plaques on it. The bronze plaque displays a map of the ghetto against the background of the city. The plexiglass plaque comprises texts as well as photographs of the ghetto taken during its existence. Because of the scale of the destruction of Jewish Warsaw, each of the photographs on the stelae is at the same time a document and essentially an abstract image. Most often, due to the lack of even a rudimentary frame of reference, the precise spot from where they were taken is impossible to reconstruct even approximately. The entire – or almost entire – effort rests on the imagination of the viewer. What comes to mind here is one of the first views of Paris by means of the daguerreotype technique, executed by Louis Daguerre. It is an image representing the river Seine and a view of the Île de la Cité with the apse of Notre-Dame Cathedral, dating from circa 1839, the year which is generally accepted as marking the invention of photography. The possibility of placing a reproduction of an object from the first half of the nineteenth century onto an object of reproduction still existing in the twenty-first century is one of the most incredible experiences for a Warsaw city dweller. In Warsaw, the collision of the tangibility of a place with the complete impossibility of placing/fixing a view in that place is a common experience which evokes a feeling of anxiety, if not discomfort. The tangible superimposes itself here on what is given to be believed, unverifiable. The confrontation with the photographs on the stelae is therefore also an exercise in *Das Unheimliche* – but of a completely different nature.

The incrustation in the pavement is a strip of the width of the ghetto wall with the bilingual inscription “Mur Getta / Ghetto Wall 1940–1943.” The elements which have been implanted into the fabric of the city were constructed from a type of metal specifically selected for a purpose:

68 Notes of a conversation with Eleonora Bergman on September 2, 2014, preserved in Elżbieta Janicka’s archive.

I did not want to create anything foreign. I drew on what had already been in the capital city's pavement, i.e. on cast iron, used since the time of Lindley (Kosiewski & Lec, 2013).

We distinctly feel the pavement markers under our feet, even through the thick soles of our shoes. We therefore come into contact, are exposed to and also subjected to touch. Because one cannot touch without being touched oneself:

Touching is a reciprocal act. It is the world that touches us when we touch it. [...] One also needs to consider the possible costs of a potential state of awakening. The hitherto pushing away of touching to the cultural underground might have resulted from the conviction that it was not only useless for the intellect and the soul, but that it furthermore threatened a very important, invigorating function of culture as an imaginative protection from the torment caused by tangible reality. [...] The act of touching is the guardian of reality and when we are imaginatively absorbed, it reminds us of where we are (Brach-Czaina, 2003, pp. 59–61).

Even if we walk without looking down, the disturbance of the surface on which we tread attracts our attention because in the same way – by means of a bump in the ground – the proximity of tracks, rails, and of the precipice (*czeluść*) at metro or railway platforms is marked. The alarm signal works in a destabilizing way: it shakes our certainty and feeling of security at an elementary level. It causes a sense of unease in the body. It is touch activating the senses that transforms the commemorative markers into an experience. The question of conclusivity of touch needs to be raised here – the same question which is raised by the philosopher:

[B]efore the act of touching is able to explain something to us, it at least permits contact with the real and the regaining of consciousness within it. But does it have the power to break tradition, transform consciousness and allow for an impartial, or if this is not possible, at least a down-to-earth way of finding one's bearings in the world? As a matter of fact, one could doubt that. Until now, the act of touching has evaded our thinking, one should not have high hopes that this could suddenly change (Brach-Czaina, 2003, p. 60).

In the case that is of interest to us, the situation is mastered additionally by means of a verbal message which we encounter on the plexiglass plaque:

By order of the German occupation authorities, the ghetto was cut off from the rest of the city on November 16, 1940. The ghetto area, surrounded by a wall, was initially 307 hectares (759 acres); with time, it was reduced. Starting in January 1942, it was divided in[to] two parts called the small and large ghettos. Approximately 360,000 Warsaw Jews and 90,000 from other towns were herded into the ghetto. Nearly 100,000 died of hunger. During the summer of 1942, the Germans deported and murdered close to 300,000 people in the gas chambers of Treblinka. On April 19, 1943, an uprising broke out in the ghetto. Until mid-May, fighters and civilians perished in combat or in the systematically burned ghetto buildings. The remaining population was murdered by Germans in November 1943 in the Majdanek, Poniatowa and Trawniki concentration camps. Only a few survived.

To the memory of those who suffered, fought and perished.

The City of Warsaw, 2008.

The first sentence referring to the German occupation authorities and the cutting off of the ghetto from the rest of the city already restores to “us” a sense of security. The Warsaw ghetto here is a matter between Jews and Germans. What is demonstrated, then – by way of introduction into the sphere of visibility – is enclosed history, the history of a minority hermetically separated from the history of the majority. The city of Warsaw pays homage to the victims of the Germans, being itself a victim of the Germans. The city of Warsaw, i.e. a phantasmatic “we.” Touching and simultaneously recognizing through it a tamed, banal space as the space of the former ghetto can be perceived in one way only: as highly problematic. However, that which the act of touching as well as the identity of space inflame, is subsequently soothed by the emphasis of distance in time and the distinct segregation of collective trajectories.

A factor that additionally cushions the severity of the sharp reduction of distance (*zbliżenie*) – apart from the content of the texts – is the choice of languages for the plaques. The authors opted for Polish and English. In the context of English, Polish loses its status as a Jewish language and appears as unproblematic, the transparent language of the local majority. English is the international language of the globalized non-local majority, i.e. of all possible non-differentiated others. Jews and Israelis also come under the category of tourists receiving professional service, i.e. visitors or – even better – foreign guests. Everybody here is on an equal footing, which successfully masks the historical reality (*konkret*). The same reality which Adam X dragged into the street, suddenly revealing the ob-scene in the city center. English cools down, objectivizes, creates distance with regard to the reality it describes. The role of English as a barrier against an imposing proximity of itching (*zawadzajqce*) languages or images is highlighted by Hanna Krall:

One can even see the bread loaves in their hands. One German cameraman stood at the train car's entrance and photographed the surging crowd, the stumbling old women, the mothers dragging their children by the hands. They are running with this bread toward us and toward the Swedish journalists who have come here to Warsaw to gather material about the Ghetto; they are running toward Inger, a Swedish journalist who is looking at the screen with dumb-founded blue eyes, trying to comprehend why so many people are running toward the train car – and then, suddenly, the shots are heard. What a relief it is when they start shooting! What a relief it is when puffs of dust veil the running crowd and their loaves of bread and the narrator informs us about the outbreak of the uprising, so that it now becomes possible to explain it all to Inger in a matter-of-fact way (*The uprising's broken out, this is April forty-three*)... (Krall, 1992, p. 166).⁶⁹

69 The description concerns the screening of Jerzy Bossak and Wacław Kaźmierczak's film *Requiem for 500,000* (1963). English appears in an identical function in Krall's *Sublokator* (*The Subtenant*): “[S]omeone asked her: ‘And how about Granny?’ meaning Grandmother Hanna, the wife of the grandfather with the butler and the samovar. She panicked, because her grandmother was a very religious old lady, but before her death of starvation she asked for a ‘kotlet.’ ‘[There is nothing one can do about it,’ she said.] ‘It doesn’t have to be kosher,’ she said. ‘Let it be a pork kotlet.’ And now one had to tell it in a relaxed manner, without hysteria, and with the proper sequence of tenses. ‘It was during the Uprising,’ she started uneasily because she still didn’t know how to handle the grandmother’s wish ([I] could imagine the shame of a pious Jewish woman asking for pork!), but she realized it was all to be told in English, so Granny would not ask for a kotlet but for a *pork chop*. Could a woman asking for a *pork chop* still be her grandmother?!’” (Krall, 1992, p. 36). Translator’s note: The translation of the

The presence of English on the plaques persuades the pedestrians that they are dealing with an object of globalized tourism. Indeed, both the stelae and the incrustations reading “Mur Getta / Ghetto Wall 1940–1943” have been turned into objects of tourism. In a way, the memory of the ghetto also becomes such an object. The positioning of the inscriptions in the pavement places people looking at them on the outside, in the sense that one can only read them when standing on the outer side of the line delineating the former wall, on what was the “Aryan side.” Polish and English are the languages of the outside. Because we are and always will be on the outside, without the possibility of reaching the inside, the pavement markers become a sign of impermeability. One can also view them as a meditation on divisions: their assumed, arbitrary, purely conventional character, and at the same time their deadly potential.

It seems, as a matter of fact, that in the recipients’ perception the commemoration in its entirety works in a back and forth movement, in a dialectic of invasive gestures and protective measures. Once the crack carved out (*wyżłobiona*) in one’s perception by means of the act of touching is filled in (*zasypywana*) with words, one has to confront oneself with the map of the ghetto. The cartographic profile seems to be torn out of the city as a whole (*z całości kształtu miasta*). It is a sign of that time and that space. At the same time, however, it says to the beholder: “You are here.” Each of the twenty-two casts of the map of Warsaw from that time features an indicator marking the place in which the given commemoration is located. The compression of time reinforces the effect of identifying the space of the former Warsaw ghetto with that of present-day Warsaw.

Due to the spatial stretching of Bergman and Lec’s commemorative series, its impact unfolds over time, provided that it does constitute itself as a totality in the recipients’ perception. We usually experience subsequent commemorative elements along the way, as we roam through the city. In its totality, Bergman and Lec’s commemoration is a kind of touch installation, not only in the literal sense of the word. Spread out over a large area of the city center, the stelae fall upon the pedestrians somewhat by surprise, thereby constituting a *punctum*, a kind of twinge of pain. Another thing is that one can quickly forget about them. This does not protect us, however, from being touched again, at unexpected moments. It might very well be that the touch – spread out in space and time – accumulates in the body and consciousness of the users of the urban space:

We are used to a poor presence of touchability in [our] culture and we only ascribe a temporary and very limited power to the recognitive value of touch [*rozpoznawcza wartość dotyku*]. It is therefore more reasonable not to burden touch with too great expectations and to allow for it to affect our consciousness tardily (Brach-Czaina, 2003, p. 60).

The sense of obviousness destabilized (threatened?) by the sense of reality quickly regains its balance. Maybe, however, it is being reconstructed on a slightly weakened foundation.

Polish in square brackets is mine. In the Polish original, the Grandmother says *trudno* before asking for the *kotlet*. The original also reads *wyobrażam sobie*, “I imagine,” instead of “she could imagine.”

In a situation of almost complete obliteration of all traces of the ghetto in the architectural and urbanist fabric of the city, Bergman and Lec have managed to produce or to establish a trace which clearly reveals its own parameters and ambitions: informational, educational, and commemorative with a shade of mourning. Eleonora Bergman insists that the word “stela” be used for what is colloquially called a *postument*. In cultures of antiquity, stela did not refer solely to the grave and to grief. However, Bergman does not reject such connotations, even though she does not ascribe the utmost importance to them. Bergman and Lec’s project has introduced into the sphere of visibility boundary posts, border signs, which Bogdan Wojdowski considered, with murderous irony, to be emblematic of the Jewish condition:

What is a border? And what is a guarded border? I do not have to explain that to anybody. Every Jew knows and throughout his entire Jewish life he does not do anything else except breach some border. It may be a green border between one state and another. The soldiers on both sides stand opposite each other, and a Jew runs from one side to the other and escapes from there to here, and on occasion he crosses a border. It may be a border for which a Jew needs a permit to go from one street to the next. And if he does not have a permit? Then he’d better sit at home and not bother!

What else can one say on this subject? The border is a must-have for a Jew. Need I say more? If not, I return to the corner of Żelazna and Chłodna Streets (Wojdowski, 1975, pp. 36–37).

The commemoration at the corner of Żelazna and Chłodna Streets, while adhering to the identical format of the whole project, contains also specific elements connected with its location. Firstly, the following text:

In December 1941, the entire area west of Żelazna Street up to Wronia Street, between Leszno and Grzybowska Streets, was excluded from the ghetto. The ghetto was thus divided into two parts called the large and the small ghettos. On January 26, 1942, the two ghettos were connected by a wooden bridge over Chłodna Street.

The second specific element is the freeze-frame from the Nazi propaganda film: with “Aryan” pedestrians, tram, and cars. When looking at the photograph, we have our backs turned to the place which it depicts. (We stand facing east, whereas the view on the photograph extends in a south-west direction.) On the one hand, then, when we attempt to place the former view into today’s scenery, we experience disorientation and vertigo befalls us. On the other, however, once we succeed in placing the picture of the past in today’s location, we have a chance to combine in one two parts of the view of the street: the photographic view (in a western direction) with a naked eye view (eastward). We are then able to reconstruct, piece together the various parts of the panorama of Chłodna Street, which inform us not only about the existence of the footbridge and the German gendarmerie post in the area of the crossroads with Żelazna Street but also about the presence of the nearby Roman Catholic Church on the opposite side.

Eleonora Bergman attests that when Jan Jagielski and herself were selecting the photograph which was to be placed on the stela, they took into consideration all known

photographs of the wooden bridge, taken at different times, from different directions and perspectives: mostly from street level, from the “Aryan side.” She does not remember, however, why it eventually was the German freeze-frame that was their choice. It seems that it might have been determined by the privileged perspective of the view of power, by that insight “into,” in-sight, which offered the most complete description of the space among all existing descriptions. With the installation at the crossroads of Chłodna and Żelazna Streets of the stela from Eleonora Bergman and Tomasz Lec’s project, it seemed that the process of marking the space and commemorating the events from the time of the ghetto had come to an end in this place.

***The Pianist* (2001): Dislocated Reconstruction**

Subsequent commemorations of the bridge over Chłodna Street made reference to more and more mimetic forms. They also got gradually closer to the place in which the original object was located. The stela by Eleonora Bergman and Tomasz Lec appeared to be a sufficient and definitive commemoration of the crossroads of Chłodna and Żelazna Streets as one of the icons of the Warsaw ghetto. This conviction was, as it turned out, not shared by one of the authors of the project. Tomasz Lec confessed his lack of satisfaction (*niedosyt*) in an interview for *Tygodnik Powszechny*:

Generally speaking, I am skeptical about reconstructing past space. [...] However, there was a strong need to commemorate the footbridge connecting the small and the large ghettos. Even though it only functioned for half a year, for many reasons (among others them the film *The Pianist*) it became a symbol of the Warsaw ghetto throughout the world (Kosiewski & Lec, 2013, p. 29).

For Eleonora Bergman there were, however, already “too many objects in the space, too many emotions, too much of everything”.

In order to understand the path from the dislocated commemoration constituted by the crucifix with the patriotic obelisk, via two direct commemorations (although spatially shifted and mediated through the medium of painting and photography) to a full-height three-dimensional symbolic reconstruction of the bridge in the actual location, one has to examine the event that was Roman Polański’s film *The Pianist* (Polański, 2002). The role which *The Pianist* played during the final stage of the commemorative process is absolutely fundamental. Without the film, there would have been no symbolic reconstruction of the bridge. With its popularity and recognizability, the image of the bridge in *The Pianist* dethroned the Nazi film images of 1942. The whole thing was set – not to say served – within the framework of a big show, with popcorn. Part of the setup were also elements soothing the fear and anxieties of the majority. Since then, the bridge over Chłodna Street has referred to the conceptualization of the ghetto

featured in *The Pianist* as opposed to the historical ghetto – and it is the visualization of the ghetto in *The Pianist* that is the object of the reconstruction carried out on Chłodna Street.

One could raise the objection that the film refers to a primary source in the form of an eye-witness/victim narrative or even that it takes up a servient position towards the original. The original, however... does not exist. That which we commonly call the history of Władysław Szpilman is a multilayered, compound narrative palimpsest or narrative complex, in which the voice of the main character was, from the very beginning, mediated and subjected to corrections in accordance with the requirements of its subsequent exponents. Szpilman's narrative manifested itself in eight variants, in two phases: in the middle of the 1940s and at the turn of the twenty-first century. Going backwards, and therefore reversing the chronology, one has to mention: the film *The Pianist* (2002); the screenplay of the film *The Pianist* (2000); the book *The Pianist* (German edition of 1998, English edition of 1999, Polish edition of 2000); the film *Miasto nieujarzmione* (*Unvanquished City*, 1951); the film *Robinson warszawski* (*A Warsaw Robinson*, 1949); the book *Śmierć miasta* (*Death of a City*, 1946); the screenplay *Robinson warszawski* (1945). In other words, they are: Roman Polański's film; Ronald Harwood's and Roman Polański's screenplay; the second edition of Władysław Szpilman's book edited by his son Andrzej; Jerzy Zarzycki's film *Unvanquished City*; the film *A Warsaw Robinson*; the first edition of Władysław Szpilman's book edited by Jerzy Waldorff; Jerzy Andrzejewski and Czesław Miłosz's screenplay.

In addition to that, we have the first layer, scattered and no longer possible to reconstruct, namely the oral stories from Szpilman himself as well as his "exact notes" to which Waldorff refers in his introduction to *Śmierć miasta*. We do not know what Waldorff as the ghost writer contributed to the book. It is difficult, however, to suspect him of neutrality, since before the war – apart from being a musicologist and a music critic – he was an *endecja* activist, a contributor to the far-right weekly *Prosto z mostu*, the author of an interview with Leon Degrelle, as well as an apologist for Benito Mussolini, whose merits to art are the subject of his book *Sztuka pod dyktaturą* [Art Under Dictatorship]. After all, Waldorff did not abjure the far-right National Democratic movement (*endecja*) until the end of his long life. The symbolic reconstruction of the bridge over Chłodna Street was founded on the basis of the second film, the second screenplay and the second edition of the book. An examination of the archeology of the phenomenon allows us to discern the various stakes played for by means of one biography as well as the place of – and tolerance for – the "Jewish trace" in Polish mainstream dominant culture.

The screenplay *The Warsaw Robinson* by Miłosz and Andrzejewski, which goes back to an idea of Miłosz himself, was written in Cracow, under the influence of Władysław Szpilman's account and the expedition of the authors to the ruined city of Warsaw in the spring of 1945 (see Andrzejewski & Miłosz, 1984, pp. 5–17). The setting of the nar-

rative was thus a given, while the subject was supposed to be the cultural and societal catastrophe comparable to a natural disaster. A lonely castaway was to be confronted by complete destruction and a terrain denuded of everything (*ogolocenie*).

The impulse for the original screenplay were conversations with the pianist Szpilman, who did not surface after the [Polish] uprising [of 1944] and hid in the ruins until January 1945. He lived the life of an animal hunted down. In his situation, an “action” with the participation of a number of characters was therefore out of the question. The idea was therefore strictly realistic, the emphasis placed on loneliness in view of an element foreign to man, that, and that alone, was the motivation behind the title. [...] A man who, due to civilization destroying itself, is a castaway on an uninhabited island (Miłosz, 1984, p. 117).⁷⁰

The Jewish specificity, i.e. the specificity of the history of the eponymous castaway targeted for extermination by Germans and Poles, does not figure in the author’s vision. The protagonists – five in total, despite the original idea – remain in the ruins by chance, by accident or for reasons of honor and dignity. In reality, both Szpilman and the majority (if not the entirety) of Warsaw Robinsons were Jews who, after the crushing of the August uprising, remained in the ruins of Warsaw out of fear for their lives. From their perspective, eking out a truly miserable existence in the ruins in extreme and dangerous conditions was safer than leaving the city together with the “Aryan” population. The catastrophe of civilization clearly did not mean the same for everybody and did not affect everybody to the same extent. The horizon of the panorama painted by Miłosz marked the necessity of a radical reassessment and dismissal in full, *Verwerfung* in psychoanalytical language, of the old – deadly and suicidal – civilization. This idea took shape in the poet’s mind in 1943 in connection with the final stage of the extermination of the Warsaw Jews during the Ghetto Uprising. With regard to the screenplay, however, he did not reveal it anymore. What he desired more was to thwart the renaissance of the Romantic topos of the ruins and the narcissistic rituals of national mourning. Yet most of all, he desired to become someone else:

The film was therefore to be a document, a testimony and at the same time a particular kind of theft of the testimony: the use of the Jewish fate to create a phantasm of radical change in one’s own identity (Niziołek, 2019, p. 112).

The protagonists in the original screenplay *Robinson warszawski* (Zarzycki, 1949) were: an industrial worker, an adult resistance member and his underage brother, an insane bibliophile, as well as an indispensable girl taking care of the household and complicating the emotional plot. Not counting the characters of the adult insurgent, the bad *Volksdeutsche*, bad Germans, and Soviet tanks bringing salvation and heralding

70 This is an excerpt from a letter by Miłosz to the chief editor of the journal “Dialog” Konstanty Puzyna, dated January 5, 1984. Elsewhere Miłosz stated: “The intention was to use the landscape of complete destruction of a big city and place in this landscape a lonely human being who began to live as if the whole civilization had ended and found himself on a desert island. Robinson Crusoe, surrounded by dangers, has to start everything from scratch. That was the idea of the screenplay” (Miłosz & Fiut, 1988, p. 111).

a new beginning,⁷¹ the historical-societal context evaporated from the authors' vision. This renders completely incomprehensible the gold scene, in which a *Volksdeutsche* and the Germans murder a captured man, who had kept in his basement a gold treasure: fifty gold twenty-dollar coins (see Andrzejewski & Miłosz, 1984, pp. 9–10 – Part 3, entitled *Ludożercy* [Cannibals]). In subsequent versions of the screenplay as well as in subsequent films, Andrzejewski and Miłosz's vision was more and more "reclaimed" – on behalf of the existing society, and afterwards of the designed future culture of the new state. The popular press reports from the film set of *A Warsaw Robinson*, directed by Jerzy Zarzycki, left no doubt about that:

Through the burning streets boys run huddled together in dirty, burnt, appropriated army camouflage jackets (*panterki*), with white and red armbands. [...] In front of the house, freshly dug-up graves with crosses hastily thrown together. From Leszno Street, the rattling of machine guns... ((S.K.), 1948.)

The figure of the Little Insurgent (*Mały Powstaniec*), who was originally only the younger brother of the adult resistance member, quickly advanced to the top of the news coverage. The fourteen-year-old boy playing this emblematic character willingly posed for a photograph with a rifle, in a much too big Wehrmacht helmet. He also excelled in colorful stories:

He recounts that as a ten-year-old boy he participated in the Warsaw Uprising and was even wounded three times in the leg. [...] "During the uprising I was a messenger to different outposts," Kazio recalls. "I remember the attack on Napoleon Square. I took part in the seizure of the PAST-a building, where I was injured" ((Pk), 1948).

Czesław Miłosz withdrew his name from the film. Ultimately, however, the final result did not see the light of day. The 1949 convention of filmmakers in Wisła subjected the film to withering criticism from the point of view of the prescriptions of socialist realism (*socrealizm*), which was just being installed.⁷² Two years later, in December 1950,

71 "Some man hoists the Polish flag on the top of the ruins. [...] Soviet tanks. Krystyna and Andrzej are looking motionlessly. They do not say anything. Both have tears in their eyes. [...] They run towards the screen, turn around and look behind them, at the ruins of an exterminated city, in which they survived so many hard weeks" (Andrzejewski & Miłosz, 1984, p. 17).

72 For completely different reasons, *A Warsaw Robinson* also proved to be unacceptable for a powerful individual, who wrote from Paris to the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR), on headed notepaper bearing the imprint "Ambassador of the Polish Republic": "At the end of August this year I viewed *A Warsaw Robinson*, the Polish film submitted to the Cannes film festival. [...] After having viewed the film, I decided not to authorize it to be screened at the festival. [...]"

1. I consider the idea of the film to be excellent. [...] The immediate benefit would be the very fact of showing the so-called 'West' the bestial expulsion of a million-strong population of Warsaw by the Hitlerites and the creation of a 'desert island' in the location of the great capital. [...] But the producers made a caricature out of this idea. [...] Instead of arduous life among ruins, instead of using such themes as the search for water, nourishment etc., we have in the film boring, sentimental, intrusive 'politicized' scenes of a crowded basement, ending with a trashy scene of liberation.

2. It seems to me that the **main reason for messing up the film is its naïve, vulgar, crude 'politicization.'** [...] Some fool must have whispered that the term 'Robinson' did not fit to the subject, that 'Robinson' had been an individualist, a loner, an antisocial creature. That our 'Warsaw Robinson' must display an active attitude against Hitlerism. Hence the hero became a lost member of a partisan unit [...]. But this did not seem enough for the creators of the film. Terrified that the film might be reproached for showing a passive attitude of Polish society towards the occupier, the producers introduced a whole partisan group into the film, rendering it nonsensical [...].

a modified version of *A Warsaw Robinson* was released under the title *Unvanquished City* (Zarzycki, 1950) – “with the People’s Army (Armia Ludowa) and the Red Army on the front line and in the foreground” (Kołos, 2011, p. 63). There was unanimity across political divisions about its reception. Except for the strictly internal circle, no representative of the authorities undertook to defend the film, nor was it defended by any of the critics or the broader audience.⁷³ Seeing the extent and the nature of the mounting alterations, Jerzy Andrzejewski withdrew his name from the credits.

The misadventures of *Unvanquished City* contributed to the growing legend of the unreleased *A Warsaw Robinson*, which emerged in the public debate during the period of the Thaw. Before the so-called Polish October, *Życie Warszawy* already wrote:

A Warsaw Robinson was the first film dedicated to the Warsaw Uprising. However, it was produced during a period in which the works of creators were “corrected” by civil servants. [...] The release of *A Warsaw Robinson* in an unaltered version would also be an act of definite rehabilitation from the side of Central Cinematographic Office [Centralny Urząd Kinematografii, CUK], both in relation to the creators and... its own politics in the last years. And so, we are waiting for *Robinson* ((stg), 1956; see also Kowalski, 1957, pp. 6–7).

A year later *Trybuna Ludu*, in an article entitled “*A Warsaw Robinson* Shot Down,” with much dramatic gravity, reviled *Unvanquished City* as being “close to kitsch,” calling for a reconstruction and a restitution of the original version of the film. The final chords of the dispute over *A Warsaw Robinson* were played in 1998 in connection with the TV broadcast of the original version – featuring the name Czesław Miłosz in the credits – which begins with the words: “General von dem Bach and general Komorowski can shake hands over the rubble of destroyed Warsaw” (Kittel, 1998). What caused outrage in particular were the narrator’s words about the “AK [Home Army] fascists.” The issue of the “Jewish origin” of the original plot (*wyjściowa historia*) thus seemed dealt with, that is liquidated. From time to time somebody mentioned Szpilman’s name in connection with the theme of the Warsaw robinsonade. Generally speaking, however, the discussions were conducted within the framework of the dominant majority perspective. The situation changed diametrically after the release of Polański’s *The Pianist*. From that time on:

the majority of the viewers will look for Szpilman tropes in Zarzycki’s films, not only in the situation faced by the main character. In both versions, there are scenes, the musical parts of

5. Rescuing the film by the mechanical addition of the scenes of the opening of the East-West Route (Trasa W-Z) and introducing President Bierut proves that the producers realized the weakness of the film, but it does not rescue the film of course, it damages it even more. [...].

I am appealing to all of you in the party to discuss our last filmic production [...] and draw the necessary conclusions leading to the improvement of the quality of our films, which has been alarmingly going down. Yours, Jerzy Putrament” (Putrament, 1990 [Letter by Jerzy Putrament, dated September 16, 1949, to the PZPR Central Committee’s Department of Culture]). More on the fate of the film *A Warsaw Robinson* in: Madej, 1990, p. 15).

73 In a letter to Bolesław Bierut, dated December 29, 1950, Tadeusz Janczar, Tadeusz Łomnicki, Wojciech Siemion and Włodzimierz Skoczylas attacked *Unvanquished City* for its insufficient rightmindedness. The film was defended in written response by Paweł Hoffman, head of the PZPR Central Committee’s Department of Culture (see Krasiński, 1985, pp. 150–155).

which will induce in the viewer – who is aware of the history of this film project – exactly such considerations. When Rafalski [the industrial worker – E.J.] stumbles across a piano in the ruins, when he thrashes about in the flames in a room full of notes, when the camera focuses on a sculpture of a face resembling a post-mortal mask of Chopin, finally, when one of the SS-men plays *The Moonlight Sonata* on a piano taken out of a building, the figure of Szpilman as an alleged protagonist will come back (Kołos, 2011, p. 64).

No one listened to the protests voiced by Maria Kaniewska, the assistant director of *Unvanquished City*, who attempted to cut off the discussion on the connections between *A Warsaw Robinson*, *Unvanquished City* and *The Pianist* by saying that it was a myth which was “absolutely untrue.”⁷⁴ The discursive machine for massaging the bruised and battered collective ego had already picked up too much speed for it to be stopped, particularly in view of the failure of the brakes.

Returning Władysław Szpilman’s history to Władysław Szpilman did not at all mean an end to manipulations and appropriations. On the contrary, additional myth-building and obscuring operations took place in all phases of its renewed public exposure. However, what found itself in the center of media interest was not necessarily Władysław Szpilman’s fate. The Polish edition of *The Pianist* was in fact a Polish translation of the German edition: with an introduction by Andrzej Szpilman, an afterword by Wolf Biermann and excerpts from Wilm Hosenfeld’s diary. It was the figure of Hosenfeld which catapulted the book to the top of the bestseller lists in Germany. The German commercial success was the key factor in the decision to publish Szpilman’s history in other languages. (It was the English version, published in Great Britain, that fell into Roman Polański’s hands.)

In Poland, it was two myths that sold *The Pianist*: the myth of its success abroad as well as the myth of brutal interference of censorship in the edition published in the immediate postwar period. The first one was true, although misconceived as a Polish success: a success put down to Poland and Polish culture. The second myth was completely false, but persistently maintained by Władysław Szpilman’s son and the publisher, a figure shrouded in legend as a friend of Polish noble prize winners as well as a former hippie and dissident, and thus someone enjoying great credibility and high social prestige. The back cover of the 2000 edition of the book boasts: “The publication prepared by Znak [publishing house] is the first full Polish edition of *The Pianist*, free of censorship interference.”

A debate about the book *The Pianist*, which Jacek Leociak tried to initiate, never took place. There was also no discussion concerning the fate of the milieu for which Szpilman’s fate was emblematic. The main news about the success of the foreign-language editions and the supposed censorship of the original version of the book was soon sidelined by the news that “Polański himself decided to bring it to the cinema screen”

74 “Myths emerge and so history is changed. Afterwards we believe in something that is not history but is made up” (statement by Maria Kaniewska in: Figielski & Michalak, 2005, p. 53).

(Szwarcman, 2000, p. 122). At that point there was definitely no longer any curiosity about Szpilman himself. An exception was a *Życie Warszawy* report – “Tego nikt panu nie powie” [Nobody Will Tell You This] – explicitly stressing the unprecedented opportunities for career and development offered to Szpilman by the postwar regime until half-way through the People’s Republic of Poland as well as highlighting the antisemitic persecution which he was subjected to in the late 1960s, inflicted both by the so-called system or anonymous power and by particular individuals identifiable by name.

Feeling offended by the radio [the state broadcasting monopoly], he ceased composing. Feeling offended by others over the festival in Sopot, which he himself had invented in the first place, he never went there again.

He locked the door of his home from the inside (Zaczyński, 2002, p. 13).

Finally, the author of the report wrote about Szpilman’s approval of the emigration of his two sons as well as his disapproval of capitalist Poland, using words which did not sit well with the national self-adoration:

Wanda [Warska] and he were in pain because of capitalist Poland.

“We figured, however, that this is unavoidable, that one has to survive it [i.e. capitalism]. There is no way out.”

And Szpilman said he would not survive it. It was in the German embassy that he stated this. Shortly before his death (Zaczyński, 2002, p. 13).

Due to the then declining position of the once widely read *Życie Warszawy*, this was a marginal message. It was additionally weak because of the poor visibility of the problems touched upon by Szpilman within Polish culture, both in general and at that particular moment. The report was published after the figure of Szpilman had become an emblem of the Polish narrative of the Righteous – an emblem consecrated by a two-page spread in the largest daily newspaper in Poland (JSM [Majewski], 2001, pp. 8–9).⁷⁵ To cap it all, the material of *Życie Warszawy* was published on May 24, 2002, two days before Roman Polański was awarded the Palme d’Or at the Cannes Film Festival for best director for *The Pianist*.

The situation which thus emerged had to a certain degree already been foreseen and described by another entertainment and cabaret artist, a user of the ghetto bridge and, like Szpilman, a representative of the Polish *inteligencja*. As opposed to Szpilman, he did not survive because he had absolutely nowhere to go, even though his songs enjoyed no less popularity among the “Aryan” audience in Poland than Szpilman’s songs. The artist in question was Władysław Szlengel, a poet, a clear-sighted chronicler and analyst of culture, including popular culture and show business. He was murdered behind the walls during the uprising in the ghetto. While gradually and slowly dying, he

75 A decade later the same newspaper (*Gazeta Wyborcza*) wrote about Szpilman: “Together with his family he found himself behind the ghetto walls. His immediate family perished in Treblinka in 1942. [...] All the houses in which he hid himself have survived the war” (Majewski, 2011, p. 6).

pre-sensed who would be the architect and beneficiary of the image of the Holocaust in mass culture on a global scale.

Chaplin will build
a wall in Hollywood,
in a cardboard ghetto
hired hands,
dollar-makers
with well-stuffed bellies
“dy bone” they’ll howl in English,
and Chaplin will
make millions
starring as Pinkert
or Gepner.
Huberman will perform,
Welles will add something,
Mann will publish his novel
in four volumes,
they will be moved to tears,
they will shout
that they are full of disdain,
that they were deeply moved by our fate,
I am very sorry
But what about me?
They will make their little fortunes
plus hype and fame,
from what happened
in the city of Warsaw,
they will commemorate,
they will celebrate me,
how can I respond to that,
the blissfully remembered me? (Szlengel, 1977a, pp. 122–123).⁷⁶

What Szlengel’s response to that was, we know. And Szpilman’s? Szpilman was awarded an honorary Fryderyk Award, the most important award of Polish phonographic industry. Posthumously. There was no time for that earlier. The artist died on July 6, 2000, at the age of 88 in Warsaw (Poland), where he had lived his whole life.

To return to Szlengel, he was an outstanding expert in the mechanisms of domination and subordination as well as violence characterizing social relations in Poland. From within the experience of Polish antisemitism, he emitted rhyming messages such as *Futro* [Fur], *Rzeczy* [Things] or *Telefon* [The Telephone] – into a socio-cultural void. For all his perceptiveness and far-sightedness, he was, however, not capable of foreseeing that the ghetto made of cardboard in true Hollywood style – in the original English

76 The Polish original reads: “Chaplin zbuduje / mur w Hollywoodzie, / w getto z tektury / najęci ludzie, / dolaroroby / w obfitym cielsku, / ‘dy bone’ będą wyc po angielsku, / a Chaplin będzie / miliony zbierać / w roli Pinkerta / al[bo] Gepnera. / Huberman zagra, / Wells coś dopowie, / Mann w 4 tomach / wyda swą powieść, / będą płakali wzruszeni bardzo, / będą krzyczeli, / jak bardzo gardzą, / jak ich poruszył nasz los do dna, / bardzo przepraszam, / a ja? / zrobią fortunki, / plus szum i sława, / za to, co było / w mieście Warszawa, / będą obchodzić, / będą mnie święcić, / a ja co na to / błogiej pamięci?”

language – would cause a sensation in his native country, despite the fact that on the social scale, Poland would not undergo any transformation with regard to antisemitism. Antisemitism has remained a political tool and a mode of communication there. In other words, Władysław Szlengel did not foresee the patriotic fervor (*wzmożenie*) which reached its peak in Poland in connection with the Palme d'Or for *The Pianist*. (The reaction to the winning of the Oscar only repeated the discursive patterns worked out then.)

Just as before Władysław Szpilman's history and the book under his name were successfully marginalized, this time the problems touched upon by Polański's film were successfully pushed into the background. The Cannes laurel was, in the unanimous opinion of the filmmaking authorities, evidence that... "Poland is what is most important"⁷⁷:

Stefan Laudyn, director of the Warsaw International Film Festival: "The winning of the Palme d'Or by Roman Polański at the festival in Cannes is one of the greatest successes of Polish cinema ever." [...]

Janusz Zaorski, director: "I am very happy about the Golden Palm for *The Pianist*, even though the film is not a Polish production. However, it was in part produced exactly here, and Roman Polański is connected with our country, in a certain sense he represents Poland on the world film market". [...]

Krzysztof Piesiewicz, screenwriter: "This is a special, very important moment for us. The award-winning film concerns a painful period of Polish history, and the award will have the effect of giving it strong presence worldwide. The award-winning film was made by an artist who through his origins is strongly rooted in the history of Polish cinema." [...]

Wojciech Kilar, composer: "[...] The award came for a great, simple, humanist film speaking of the most important issues, the most important threats which, contrary to how it might appear in Europe, are still looming for us. In particular after September 11 last year. This award is also very important for Polish cinema and for Poland." [...]

Andrzej Wajda, director: "The jury's decision can also be considered as an award for Polish cinema. [...] This film was produced to a large extent in Poland. The novel on which the screenplay is based is Polish. Roman Polański, coming to Poland and taking up a Polish subject, has become a Polish director again. His fellow-workers – Paweł Edelman and Allan Starski – are Poles. The costumes, the make-up, and the organization of the whole enterprise was carried out by the efforts of Poles. The Golden Palm for *The Pianist* is in some sense a confirmation that such a difficult film can be made on a high level in Poland" ((PAP & DP), 2002, p. 20).⁷⁸

The comments in the nationwide Polish press did not differ from the comments in the local press. Those who did not sufficiently enthuse about the film were reproached for a lack of patriotism.⁷⁹ The biggest newspaper in the country announced: "The whole

77 *Polska jest najważniejsza* – election campaign slogan of the party *Prawo i Sprawiedliwość* (Law and Justice) from the year 2010.

78 See also Lew Rywin's and Wojciech Fibak's statements in the magazine *Gala*, June 2002, no. 23 (47), p. 28.

79 "Roughly speaking, it concerns those who had written that the film awarded the Golden Palm was good instead of writing that it was outstanding. The journalists returning from Cannes have been first and foremost reproached for a lack of patriotic feelings, which is the most serious sin [...]" (Pietrasik, 2002a, p. 46). Apart from Zdzisław Pietrasik from *Polityka*, Tadeusz Sobolewski from *Gazeta Wyborcza* also encountered such reproaches.

world will now watch this film,”⁸⁰ and thereafter – in the editor’s commentary – brandished Polański’s Golden Palm like a moral club:

The Pianist is something more than a film. It is an incredible but true history of a Jew who survived the Holocaust because decent people – Poles and Germans – helped him. It is an important and topical subject, it inscribes itself in the heated disputes about the attitude of Poles towards Jews during the occupation. *The Pianist* shows a history which was made by both good and bad people. Such a vision – simple but wise – strips the past of stereotypes and prejudices. It brings to the discussion the great value that is just judgement (Beylin, 2002, p. 1).

In the foregoing statement, the German occupation and the Holocaust – abstracted from the historical and socio-cultural context – acquire the status of an anonymous natural disaster, becoming a universal scene featuring good and bad people. So-called common sense (“a direct but wise vision”) is juxtaposed with the – foolish and thus, as we understand, unfair – stereotypes and prejudices concerning less the past than the attitudes and behavior of the Polish majority toward Jews. All this in the name of the symmetry principle, in accordance with which the balance-sheet always adds up to zero, the truth lies in the middle, and justice is based on complete non-conclusiveness.⁸¹ Long live the rule of the golden mean!

In other words, *The Pianist* enabled the obliteration of the preliminary insight which had been gained during the debate a year earlier about the participation of Poles in the Holocaust – which held a potential for a thorough reassessment of Polish culture. During that debate, it very quickly transpired that the truth does not lie in the middle but in the shallow graves scattered by the roadsides, in the meadows, in forests, in carcass disposal sites, in the gardens adjacent to private houses, in short – in the graves of about 200,000 Jews whom Poles had handed over to be killed or whom Poles themselves had simply killed. The people perpetrating these crimes regarded their actions as being endowed with socio- cultural legitimacy stemming from the dominant culture – a culture whose patterns have at no point, neither then nor subsequently, been named or deconstructed, let alone rejected on a societal scale. Marek Beylin noticed – uncritically yet accurately – that *The Pianist* dismissed, and the subsequent Golden Palm for *The Pianist* blocked, the very possibility of that deconstruction and rejection. The effect of the Golden Palm was solidified and strengthened by the Oscars awarded to the di-

The duo Tomasz Raczek and Zygmunt Kałużyński came to the defense of the “accused,” attempting to ascribe to the patriots materialistic motives, namely instrumental polonization of *The Pianist* in the struggle for continued state financial support of the film industry (see Kałużyński & Raczek, 2002, pp. 114–115). Elsewhere Raczek added: “I protest against associating this award with a success of Polish cinema. That is not true. One has to look soberly at it. [...] For me, it seems like taking credit for someone else’s accomplishments (*Odbieram to trochę, jakby konia kuli, a żaba nogę podstawiała*). In the same way, one could say that Spielberg’s *Schindler’s List* is a success for the Polish film industry because Polish artists were among people working on it and some of them even received Oscars. [...] This award, at best, testifies to the value of Polański’s work, not to the value of the Polish film industry” (Leszczyńska & Raczek, 2002, p. 2).

80 In the lead to the article: Sobolewski, 2002, p. 1.

81 “One appreciates the position, free of stereotypes, of the author-observer who rejects the unequivocalness of evaluations” (Gajda-Zadworna, 2001b, p. 14).

rector and the leading actor. The latter, tears in his eyes – and provoking tears in the eyes of the audience in the Kodak Theatre – assured them that it was thanks to *The Pianist* that he understood what people were able to do to other people: *people to people*.⁸²

The neutralizing procedures – universalization, the establishment of a symmetry, and polonization – had already come to the fore during the production of the film. In the realm of collective emotions they were of particular importance, and – perhaps – they were even foundational to the way in which the recognition of Polish participation in the Holocaust has since been blocked. A considerable part of the filming, including the ghetto sequences, took place in Poland during the climactic phase of the impassioned nationwide debate about the crime in Jedwabne. Roman Polański's opinion on this matter was sought. The daily newspapers reached the film set. Despite being cut off from the world, the film crew and the extras were aware that in the press "they are writing about Jedwabne again."⁸³ The interaction between the journalists and what happened at the film set took place on a daily basis.

The discursive processing of *The Pianist* demonstrated how to cope with and manage a situation whereby facts come to light in a way which makes further silence or denial impossible. Universalization, comprising social-cultural de-contextualization, involved appealing to so-called common sense, usually epitomized by assertions such as "There's all kinds of people," "Things happen – sometimes worse, sometimes better," "Such is life," "This is how man is." The use of such *énoncés de vérité générale* results in a suppressing of the discussion and a reinforcement of the *status quo*. Common sense platitudes of this kind support the principle of symmetry, which produces the fetish of impartiality and objectivity, manifested in the formula that the truth lies in the middle and all conclusions are always premature if not precipitate.

What seemed at stake in the operation was the emotional comfort and psychological safety of the Polish majority. Roman Polański provided reassurance that Szpilman's book on which the screenplay was based "wasn't another chapter in the martyrology known to all of us" (Kowalska, 2001, p. 3)⁸⁴ and averred that what was actually most important in it was its optimism:

I treat Szpilman's memoirs as a story about survival. It's a story full of extraordinary optimism which attracts me (Polański quoted in: Kęczkowska, 2001, p. 8).⁸⁵

82 Translator's note: English in the original. Adrien Brody used this phrase when accepting the Oscar.

83 "Wrapped up in torn coats and hats full of holes, we hear one of the extras read out aloud a piece of an article from the newspaper he holds in his hands. 'They are writing about Jedwabne again,' comments a boy lying next to him and [then] falls silent because he perceives in his remark a kind of inappropriateness which he is not even able to define precisely" (Szaniawski, 2001, p. 14 – the material was also announced under the same title – "I Became a Jew for Polański" – on the first page of the issue).

84 The nationwide edition of the same issue of *Gazeta Wyborcza* contained the article "Crime Scene Inspection in Jedwabne: Investigating the Site of Murder 60 Years On" (Winnicki, 2001, p. 6).

85 The nationwide edition of that issue of *Gazeta Wyborcza* opens with Jan Turnau's comments on the antisemitic statements of the bishop of Łomża (see Turnau, 2001, p. 1), whereas in the home news section another religious

"It is, despite the whole horror, a work full of optimism and belief in people," the director explained. "And this is the most interesting thing in the book" (Kuźnik, 2001, pp. 20–21).

However, there is never so much optimism that there couldn't be some more. Even in the book under Władysław Szpilman's name. The director decided to augment the ending, which he clearly considered a happy one, though insufficiently so. A popular cultural pattern manifested itself forcefully here, resembling an afterimage of *Pan Tadeusz*, Adam Mickiewicz's national epic, in which the happy ending cannot do without a solemn gathering of the dominant group and a Polonaise performed by a "good Jew." As the builders of the Joseph Stalin Palace of Culture and Science already noticed, what cannot be done without Mickiewicz, cannot be done without Chopin. Hence the majestic figures of these two "geniuses of Slavdom" in front of the main entrance, anchoring the edifice within the national symbolic territory. By virtue of the same law of symbolic gravitation Roman Polański's film ends with the performance of the main character as a soloist in the National Concert Hall (Filharmonia Narodowa), where – though that is a minor detail – the real Władysław Szpilman never performed. The film *Szpilman* treats us to the *Grande Polonaise E-flat major* by Frédéric Chopin. In French: *Grande Polonaise brillante* – "with an important contribution of the wind instruments," which appear particularly spectacular on screen. In the press report, entitled "The Last Polonaise," one could read:

The light of the massive spotlights falls only on the musicians, intensifying the brilliance of the wind instruments in their hands. [...] Readers won't find the scenes shot in the National Concert Hall in Władysław Szpilman's book. Neither did they take place during the life of the author. The finale of the film based on Szpilman's wartime autobiography will be the director's own optimistic impression (Solińska, 2001, p. 13).

Allegro molto, as the young Chopin expressed himself in his annotation to the *Grande Polonaise*. Optimism, in its turn, was underpinned by objectivism, understood as specific symmetry and at the same time harmony:

Objectivism matters greatly to me. This is why we will see good Poles and bad Poles. Good Germans and bad Germans. Good Jews and bad Jews. The role of German soldiers will of course be played by German actors (Polański quoted in: Lis, 2001).

The concept of "bad Jews" – an indispensable element of the majority narrative – was to be accompanied by another figure of symmetry, also inscribed in the narrative tradition:

authority gave it everything he had and then some more: "Jedwabne should be a symbol of reconciliation," said Michael Schudrich, the rabbi of Warsaw and Łódź in an interview for KAI [Catholic Information Agency]. [...] Asked if one could charge the Poles with complicity in the Holocaust, Schudrich replied: 'Definitely not. The very question already arouses my objection. One must not ask such questions! It is unbelievable that somebody can make such assertions! It is not only against Poland but against the truth and history'" (KAI & KRZEM, 2001, p. 6).

The producer on the Polish side – Lew Rywin from Heritage Films – emphasizes that *The Pianist* will be the first film showing the two uprisings – the Ghetto Uprising and the Warsaw Uprising (Tawicka & Kocołowski, 2001, p. 31).

The discursive mix of good and bad Poles, Jews, and Germans made Szpilman's history a story about a German and Poles saving Jews – Jews, that is to say, who were also not without guilt. In a few extreme cases, it had the effect of a complete de-differentiation of the entire picture (*całokształt*):

In the film, just like in Szpilman's story, there is no division into black and white characters. Every character is equally vicious and virtuous, as Tadeusz Różewicz wrote in his famous poem *Ocalony* [*The Survivor*]. That poem could be a motto for this film (Likowska, 2002, p. 43).

Another discursive mix was euphoric polonization – possible in the context of de-differentiation and of the phantasm of Cannes and Los Angeles red carpets. In Polish dominant culture – whether high or low – the figure of Roman Polański constitutes a kind of mascot, an emblem of “our” team and a medium through which – by means of unjustified identification – “we are making” a successful career on the global stage and “we are experiencing” various adventures. The mascot of the imagined community constitutes a source of collective transpassive pleasure (*jouissance*). This is why *The Pianist* was from the beginning perceived as a sort of a polonized afterimage or a Polish version of *Schindler's List*.⁸⁶ It incarnated a Polish dream of the great world. It was a film about a “Polish Oscar.” A colossal abreaction of a provincial inferiority complex (*kompleks prowincji*). Before filming on the set was complete, there appeared in the press a short article, characteristically entitled “*The Pianist* and the Scent of the Great World,” about a preview advertisement of the end product:

On the Boulevard de la Croisette [...] a billboard with the title *The Pianist*, Roman Polański's name, Adrien Brody's sad face and the ruins of the Warsaw ghetto attract the attention of the public. Unlike the garish billboards advertizing international productions, “our” billboard is kept in steel grey colors. It contrasts with the glitz of limousines, elegant crowds, palm trees, and the scent of the most expensive perfume. *The Hollywood Reporter* published a picture of Roman Polański on the first page [...] (Wiktor, 2001).

The press report did not even attempt to conceal the frustration and complexes which gave rise to it: “There are no Polish films in the main competition, but the crews of *In Desert and Wilderness* and *Quo Vadis* are promoting their films elsewhere in Cannes” (Wiktor, 2001).⁸⁷ The regret about the fact that it is difficult to impress anybody with

86 See the numerous comparisons with *Schindler's List* in: Hollender, 2001a, p. A8; Tronowicz, 2011, p. 22. The comparisons are quantitative in nature and always work to the advantage of *The Pianist*. *The Pianist* is in color, the shooting of the film lasts four weeks longer, its world premiere takes place in Poland. “During the production of Spielberg's film we clung to the ship and were swimming behind; Rywin says. ‘Now we are at the helm’” (Lubelska, 2001, p. 18).

87 The provincial inferiority complex (*kompleks prowincji*) is capable of invalidating the *meritum* in probably every situation: “Forty years after his Polish debut [...] Polański has gotten down to a Polish book. It so happens that I have not forgotten the answer which Polański gave journalists after the premiere of *Tess* in Warsaw, when the

the classics of Polish ethno-religious nationalism was immediately compensated for, thanks to Polański. The press scrupulously noted the presence of the foreign media, enumerating them one after another. The constant reminder that “[t]he film is supposed to be nominated for an Oscar” (Szolc, 2001, p. 113) was accompanied by the mantra “ARD, ZDF, BBC, Reuters.”

The ghetto – hitherto an abject one does not exactly know what to do with – proved to be a “breakthrough” (*mający przebicie*) export commodity. It transformed from the ob-scene into the scenic. It became an exotic thing, which “takes off.” As in the old days. Except that this time, the exotic thing was Polish, “ours.” White armbands bearing a Star of David, originally a sign of extreme humiliation and death, went missing *en masse* from the film set.

The armbands go missing; in the end, there is no better souvenir, no better proof that one performed in Polański’s *The Pianist* (Szolc, 2001, p. 109).

The characters with the armbands began to evoke fond feelings (*rozzewnienie*) and prompted people to coo: “How nice they look with these Stars on their sleeves” (Szolc, 2001, p. 113). The extras became heroes of mass imagination, celebrities giving interviews and publishing their memoirs from the film set.⁸⁸ The ghetto and the Holocaust became glamorous, and this additionally confirmed the expectation of world splendor on the part of the elite, in the sociological sense of the term. The overall consensus in this matter comprised all echelons of the social ladder.

Indeed, polonization did not only proceed on the discursive level in the mainstream of the debate. It quickly appeared on the level of the embodiment of the Jewish fate (*los*). “I Became a Jew for Polański,” announced one of the extras in an extensive press article under the same title (Szaniawski, 2001, p. 14). Another extra published a reportage entitled “On the Other Side of the Wall”:

I am a Jew. [...] I could have been a Pole, not a Jew; I do not know how on earth that happened but they counted me among this very nation, even though I do not really have Semitic features, I have a straight nose. It doesn’t take much, yet for the first time in my life I allowed myself to think I could be a Jew. I really have nothing against it, it is even more interesting than being a Pole. This role I have known from birth and it doesn’t seem like anything extraordinary to me, whereas with the armband it is completely different, more interesting, mysterious, rich in new and unexpected experiences, with a slight shiver of uncertainty (Gieysztor, 2001, p. 63).

question was asked if he intended to shoot a film with the participation of Polish actors. ‘I have no such intention,’ he replied decisively. ‘I make expensive films, which with reference to the box office success require the participation of world-famous actors,’ the director added. It was not pleasant to hear that as from this [statement] it followed irrefutably that the *crème de la crème* of the Polish acting profession did not figure in the first league of the world market” (Tronowicz, 2011).

88 “Roman enchanted them. And their Mom, too. [...] For ten hours they were wading ankle-deep in mud, carrying heavy bundles. And constantly hearing only the words: ‘Action. Cut. Reshoot.’ They were tired, freezing cold but happy. [...] Sandra liked everything: ‘The foreign actors because they were nice, and the snow made of polystyrene, and the set design’” (Kroczyńska, 2001, p. 16). See also: Piotrowska, 2001a, p. 18, 2001b, p. 13.

Another, female extra expressed pride in the fact that a woman working for the casting agency assured her that she was an “awesome ‘Jewish woman,’” even if the “financial conditions somewhat cooled her zeal” (see Piotrowska, 2001a, p. 18). And so on and so forth. The incarnation was not burdened with any consequences. It was completely safe and paid for according to a fixed price. Nevertheless, it was experienced as authentic, not to say legitimate (*prawomocny*). The ghetto – including the bridge over Chłodna Street – became an instrument and a prop of incarnation:

I was impressed seeing such realistic scenery that I almost felt that time had moved several decades back. I was handed a feather pillow and some bundle. The director yelled that at a predetermined signal we were supposed to walk up the steps of the wooden bridge. Over and over again, we were going up and down. I was reminded of an old riddle: which weighs more, a kilogram of feather or a kilogram of iron? The pillow was heavy as hell, and the constantly slipping stockings turned out to be so irritating that they almost brought me to tears. I looked around and saw that I wasn't the only one who had had enough. [...] Everybody was stone-faced, silent, as they humbly traipsed up and down the stairs. Exactly as Szpilman describes it in his memoirs. [...] I was so exhausted that I barely made it home, and the next day my muscles hurt from carrying the bundles (Piotrowska, 2001a, p. 18).

The usurpation, however, was not deprived of incentive and example coming from the top.

It was not through an oversight that I wrote about the “ghetto,” not the “image of the ghetto,” as an instrument of incarnation of Jewish fate. In thinking about *The Pianist*, the event itself was not differentiated from its reconstruction for the requirements of the film. Guarantees of authenticity and objectivity of the film image existed on all levels: with reference to the text published under Szpilman's name, with regard to the screenplay, the costumes, the set design, the performances by the actors and the extras. Władysław Szpilman's son raised Jerzy Waldorff's text to the status of “a ‘diary of survival’ written [by his father? – E.J.] practically in the ruins of Warsaw” (Gajda-Zadworna, 2001b, p. 14). As if he were top of the class and the darling of the teacher, Władysław Szpilman received posthumous praise from the journalists and the film crew for

objectivity, lack of sentimentalism and, first and foremost, unheard-of optimism – despite the monstrous things which the author describes, a certain belief in the future, a certain hope can be felt (Kwiecień, 2001, p. 9).⁸⁹

Szpilman was praised for “sincerity and authenticity of his report written as the events unfolded (*pisane na gorąco*) [...] [,] the position, free of stereotypes, of the author-observer who rejects the unequivocalness of evaluations,” while Polański complemented him for his lack of “a shadow of desire for revenge” (Kwiecień, 2001, p. 9),⁹⁰ thereby forestalling the voicing of an antisemitic stereotype. (It is a known fact that where

89 Adrien Brody added that “*The Pianist* is a beautiful history, full of pain but not sentimental. What is most important in it, is the truth” (Hollender, 2001b, p. 12).

90 Of a similar tenor was the testimonial given about Szpilman by a neighbor: “Szpilman [...] was a fantastic human being, very cheerful, full of humor, direct. He never mentioned his past” (Solińska, 2001, p. 13).

a non-Jew demands justice, a Jew desires revenge.) Polański anointed Szpilman, but he himself was anointed by the artist and his *alter ego*:

Roman Polański announced that he would take up the project during his stay in Poland. He received the approval for the adaptation from the author of the memoirs himself. Władysław Szpilman was in constant contact with the director and the screenwriter Ronald Harwood.

Szpilman's son Andrzej thinks that only Polański could understand and imbue the adaptation of *The Pianist* with the appropriate meaning [...]. "Father had great confidence in him as an artist and as someone who had survived the hell of war" (Kwiecień, 2001, p. 9).

A consensus is therefore produced, according to which here and now the phantasmatic "we" are directly participating – in the "here and then." Waldorff has disappeared, Szpilman is absolutely faithful to reality, Polański absolutely faithful to Szpilman (if not identical with Szpilman: Harwood recounts how Polański added scenes from his own biography to the screenplay in order to boost the action or to make it more attractive⁹¹), the scenery and the costumes are absolutely faithful to reality experienced by Szpilman/Polański, the main *dramatis personae* are directly embodied by English-speaking actors, whereas the remaining Jews – by Poles. Certificates of authenticity are issued in turn by: Władysław Szpilman's son, the screenwriter Ronald Harwood, Polański as a Holocaust survivor, the co-screenwriter and director, Allan Starski as the scenographer and a Holocaust survivor's son, the costume designer Anna Sheppard, the actors, the extras as well as the journalists repeating their words, finally – people outside of the set, i.e. so-called ordinary inhabitants of Warsaw. People holding the highest positions in the film hierarchy more than once referred to the opinion of the latter. We have thus come full circle.

Truth. This word is floating in the air over the set. Everybody knows that in *The Pianist* there may not be the slightest falsehood (Hollender, 2001a, p. A8).⁹²

This sentence – formulated in a constative mode – supposedly settles the question of the final judgement about the film. *De facto*, however, it is only relevant to the perception of the film. In the press reports, one can clearly see the mechanism and the dynamic of producing a common conviction concerning the complete truthfulness, meaning also legitimacy, of the image of the Holocaust in *The Pianist*.

91 "In search of details and events, he [Polański – E.J.] would often draw on his own memories. One of them particularly registered with me. I transposed from the book to the screenplay the moment when a Jewish policeman saves Szpilman from being loaded onto the cattle car going to Treblinka. Szpilman writes that he escaped by running away. 'No!', Polański said. 'I will tell you how it was with me. That will work out better.' Clearly, he was also saved in a similar way, but when he was pulled out of the crowd and started running, the policeman shouted: 'Don't run, just walk!' And so we changed the scene. In the film Szpilman goes slowly to the gate, while the Germans are loading his family and others onto the cattle cars. Something like this I would not have been able to come up with myself" (Harwood, 2001, p. 16).

92 Everybody, without exception, cares about the truth. "For Adrien Brody, the most important thing in building a character is the truth" (Dziubłowski, 2001).

Even if the ghetto of 2001 – along with the reconstruction of the wall and the wooden bridge – was also described as a dummy (*atrapa*),⁹³ the poetics of *mimesis* dominated. The director personally assured the audience that:

I deeply care about objectivism. [...] I wanted the film to be close to a document. As authentic as possible [...] (Polański quoted in: Lis, 2001).⁹⁴

"I know that epoch. I know Germans and Poles from that time," Polański says [...]. "When it comes to this film, my point is that everything is realistic" (Piotrowski, 2001, p. 36).

Only on one occasion, having been asked about his position concerning the debate on the participation of Poles in the Holocaust, did Polański retreat to the realms of fiction:

It does not seem to me here that my film is somehow useful because it is after all artistic creation, not an objective historical document (Polański quoted in: Kwiecień, 2001, p. 9).

Ronald Harwood, however, vouchsafed that the horror had been – literally – resurrected. Regarding the film version of the Umschlagplatz, he said:

A thousand extras were sitting there or standing, exactly like the Jews 60 years ago, in unbearable heat – with armbands bearing a Star of David, suitcases and bundles in their hands (Harwood, 2001, p. 17).

Allan Starski was among those who sought legitimacy in the "native song" of folk oral tradition (*wieść gminna*),⁹⁵ elevating the reflection about *The Pianist* to a higher level:

Stalowa Street played Chłodna Street so well that old people remembering prewar Warsaw fell for the deception. They began looking, in Praga [district of Warsaw], for the church which once crowned Chłodna Street (Hollender, 2001a, p. A8).

93 "The wall separating the film ghetto from contemporary Warsaw consists of a wooden skeleton and paper bricks, which had to be patinated to make them look old. The top of the wall, made of barbed wire and broken glass, will scare off daredevils who dream of leaving the territory marked out by the screenplay. Somebody from the film crew had to work very hard, stuffing pieces of broken glass into the polystyrene" (Grabowska-Woźniak, 2001, p. 12). "In a room suffused with the smell of paint and lacquer one of the apartments of the Szpilman family, the one on Chłodna Street, is being 'built'. Right next to it is the almost completed basement, which also appears in the film. The wooden footbridge towers above it. It stands on Stalowa Street in order to connect the film's small [ghetto] and large ghetto. 'It is light, and was built in such a way that it can easily be put up and dismantled,' says Marek Kukawski, the assistant set designer of *The Pianist*" (Kęczkowska, 2001, p. 8).

94 With regard to the authenticity issue, the consultant on uniforms and militaria, Andrzej Szenajch, deployed all his skill and professional authority: "The paradocumentary character (*paradokumentalność*) of *The Pianist* stems from the tremendous attention to historical faithfulness" (Gajda-Zadworna, 2001a, p. 15).

95 Translator's note: The Polish original reads: *Allan Starski był jednym z poszukujących uprawomocnienia w wieści gminnej*. In using the expression "w wieści gminnej," the author makes reference to Adam Mickiewicz's *Konrad Wallenrod*. Mickiewicz's *O wieści gminna* has been translated into English as *O Native Song*:

"O native song! between the elder day,
Ark of the Covenant, and younger times,
Wherein their heroes' swords the people lay,
Their flowers of thought and web of native rhymes.
Thou ark! no stroke can break thee or subdue,
While thing own people hold thee not debased.
O native song! thou art as guardian placed.
Defending memories of a nation's word.
The Archangel's wings are thine, his voice thine too,
And often wieldest thou Archangel's sword" (Mickiewicz, 1882, p. 40).

Everything happens exactly as in Baudrillard's theory of simulacra. One cannot tell the representation of the object from the object of representation.⁹⁶ Not only does the simulacrum acquire sovereignty but it also gains power over reality, along with the power of invalidating it. In reality, Saint Carolus Borromeus' Roman Catholic Church in the parish of Saint Andrew the Apostle still crowns Chłodna Street. We can talk about it in the past tense only if we invalidate the actual, existing Chłodna Street and consider its fictionalized film version as the actual one. Then Chłodna Street only counts as an representation of Chłodna Street modelled on the film set design as the prototype. It is in this sense and this sense alone that one can describe today's Chłodna Street as a street without a church. A hyperreal sign eclipses, if not withdraws and replaces, reality.

A struggle ensues between the representation of the object and the object of representation for the palm of victory in the competition for realness and truthfulness. This however, is not the full story, as they are also competing with each other for precedence in the order of chronology. Ultimately, the simulacrum wins:

"None of the movies about that time was made with such meticulousness," says the producer Gene Gutowski. "Roman films every shot with enormous precision. Recently, we received from the Jewish Historical Institute an eight-minute, archival, color film with scenes of Jews crossing the bridge over Chłodna Street. Everything looked exactly like in our film. The gate between the small ghetto and the large ghetto, the crowd of people. When we watched this miraculously discovered archival material, Roman asked: 'Did we shoot that?'" (Hollender, 2001a, p. A8).

The material from 1942 is compared to the material from 2001. Not vice versa. The result of the comparison is graciously favorable for the archival footage. The reconstruction is elevated to the position of the prototype. The actual ghetto bridge located on the left bank of the Vistula gains the status of a replica of the film bridge located

96 Doubts also arise about the continuity of reflection on the traps of representation even within such a sparse circle as professional experts on culture. The observers and commentators of the events on the set of *The Pianist* completely passed over the analysis and criticism of previous cinematographic attempts at confronting the Holocaust. That critical work was carried out in the 1960s by Tadeusz Hołuj in his play *An Empty Field* (*Puste pole*, 1963). Afterwards, it was broadened by Józef Szajna in his production of *An Empty Field* (1965). "The most important dramaturgical move of Szajna was the radical disruption of the temporal relations, the complete fusion of the present and the past, the real and the theatrical. As a point of departure, Szajna used [...] the motif of the shooting of a film. It is exactly in the scenes introducing the work of the film crew that the author of the drama [Tadeusz Hołuj – E.J.] set in train the ghostly ambiguity of language. Thus, we are dealing here with gassing, the cutting off of hair, the operating of the gas chambers in a mode of full performativity, in the present tense. The event being reconstructed is not differentiated from its reconstruction for the use of the film. [...] Hołuj responded with irony to the procedures of cultural memory (such as the shooting of a film, the designing of a monument, the creation of archives), pointing out the impure motives from which they can stem and [indicating] how imperfect, and even untrue they are [...]. [...] In essence, Szajna, by letting himself be guided by outstanding artistic intuition, diagnosed the collapse of the symbolization and commemoration procedures [...]" (Niziołek, 2013, pp. 274–276). [Translator's Note: These excerpts from Niziołek's book are missing in the English translation published in 2019. They have been translated by myself from the Polish original.] As Niziołek writes, in Szajna's performance there were references to the film *Pasażerka* (*The Passenger*, 1963) and to the activities of Andrzej Munk's film crew on the territory of the former German Nazi extermination camp Auschwitz II Birkenau. However, Hołuj's work seems to be much closer to the problems created by Polański's *The Pianist*, as the play touches directly on the construction of a film message undertaken with the aim of making it optimistic and attractive for foreign tourists.

on the right bank. The historical ghetto imitates the ghetto from *The Pianist*. The Jews in it are replacements for Poles.

In the theory of simulacra, the hyperreal signs repress and replace reality. And what about reality? “Reality does not exist.” Baudrillard, however, takes into consideration the possibility that reality does exist and is dying down on the margins of hyperreality.⁹⁷ In *The Pianist*, reality is subordinated and becomes secondary, while at the same time the belief in its existence is upheld – in the image and likeness, i.e. on the conditions of hyperreality.

When the real is no longer what it was, nostalgia assumes its full meaning. [...] There is [...] a plethora of truth, of secondary objectivity, and authenticity. Escalation of the true, of lived experience, resurrection of the figurative where the object and substance have disappeared. Panic-stricken production of the real and the referential (Baudrillard, 1994c, p. 8).

Like in a story which passes itself off as first-hand testimony – in the shadow of the ghetto bridge AD 2001:

From afar, one can see a wooden bridge overlooking the wall, signs of shops, coffee houses, a kiosk from more than half a century ago and people seemingly not from this world. [...] Tucked up with his legs against the wall, a beggar wearing strange glasses looks at me and reaches out a hand. Is he making jokes or what? Is he from around here, meaning from the film, one of us, or a local (*tutejszy*) from Targówek [a neighborhood in Praga]? He has an intelligent face. He does not give up, he fixes me with a long look. I blinked. Defeated, I walk up to him and not knowing why I ask him: “How do you feel?” “Like a Jew,” he replies and he himself asks me in turn: “Are you a Jew?” I don’t know what to answer. Well, in a way I am, but what is his point? “Yes”, I reply. And he says to me: “I personally brought weapons to the ghetto together with my Home Army father during the uprising.” “You carried weapons?” I ask, shocked. “Only ammunition, I proceeded first as a decoy, my father walked with the rest behind me” (Gieysztor, 2001, p. 64).

Baudrillard calls this “indulging in retrospective hallucination” (see Baudrillard, 1994c, p. 12).

Polonization through declaration and embodiment, even if spontaneous, was therefore sanctioned by a two-way equation: “The way it is in the film is the way it was in reality” / “The way it was in reality is the way it is in the film”. It was an effect of self-persuasion on the part of the dominant majority members, underpinned by persuasion on the part of the filmmaking authorities. Collective hallucination ensued. This then led to collective emotional investment, which – instead of passing over and omitting the Holocaust – transformed it into a collection of safe and friendly props evoking pleasant memories:

For the inhabitants of the capital city, the film set for *The Pianist* has become a tourist attraction. People go to Praga in order to have a look and take some pictures (Lubelska, 2001, p. 18).

97 “The territory no longer precedes the map, nor does it survive it. It is nevertheless the map that precedes the territory – precession of simulacra – that engenders the territory and [...] today it is the territory whose shreds slowly rot across the extent of the map” (Baudrillard, 1994c, p. 2).

The armband bearing the Star of David began to evoke euphoria. The so-called everybody wanted to have one – along with a photographic self-portrait with the wall, the bridge, and artificial Jewish corpses, which occasioned great animation. These gadgets began to be associated with the epoch of colorful adventures at the film set, shrouded in the splendor of the Golden Palm for “a Polish film” and an Oscar for “a Polish director,” who managed to narrate so wisely and beautifully about hope and belief in man.

At the same time, on the margins of the film set one could notice a grim reenactment of the wartime attitude of Poles towards Jews. Youngsters observing the work of the filmmakers block the way of one of the female extras, asking: “What do you have under this armband, little Jewish girl (*Żydóweczko*)?” Another example: “three young boys lean out of a window of a staircase and spit on Allan Starski” (Szaniawski, 2001, p. 14). As morning approaches, everyone in the film factory is dead tired: “Only the hyperactive blond man with an injured nose sparkles with humor. Antisemitic humor” (Szaniawski, 2001, p. 14). “Two nippers” in a coach bringing the extras to the set have a conversation worthy of the society of blackmailers (*spółeczeństwo szmalcowników*). They are called “specialists” in “the Jewish question” by the author of the report quoted below, with “Jewish question” functioning in the text without quotation marks:

The first complains with a wistful voice: “My Dad would have also played in this film.” The second specialist explains to him: “I know why they did not choose him, it’s because your dad is not that type.” The first one responds: “You are stupid, my Dad is not a type.” The specialist [says]: “You do not understand, you are stupid, it is about the Jewish type.” The first one again: “Oh, I see, there must be such a special nose.” The second one, the expert: “You’re stupid, you don’t know anything, a Jewish type is one who has a part of his wiener clipped off.” The first one: “My dad’s wiener is not clipped off, not at all.” The expert: “Well, that’s exactly why they did not choose him” (Gieysztor, 2001, pp. 63–64).

No less electrifying was the lack of reaction on the part of adults and some of their testimonies: “A twelve-year-old boy, passing by me, whispers ‘Jew woman, Jew woman’ [*Żydówka, żydówka*], this is a bit weird because I now play a German woman” (Cytowska & MB, 2001, p. 8). The shopkeepers of the surrounding area demanded compensation for the decline in sales, even though such compensation is not paid in Poland, not even in a situation resulting in cutting off points of sale and services from routes of transport, as exemplified by the construction of the metro in Warsaw, lasting for many years. In the case of Warsaw’s Praga district, we are talking about three days of shooting.⁹⁸

98 “Even though there is some time remaining before the first take (March 30 this year), the shopkeepers from Stalowa Street have already been complaining that they are paying a high price for the production of the film. They claim that they are losing customers because the set design covers the shop windows, and nobody has offered them reasonable compensation. [...] ‘In connection with the film we have nothing but trouble. Of course [*sic!* – E.J.] it would not bother me at all, were it not for the fact that I also pay for its realization. [...] They took tram number 4 away from us, by which the customers would come.’ [...] As we learnt in the Public Transport Authority Office, the tram number 4 has changed its route owing to the rebuilding of Bank Square. Work is under way there on changing the flow of traffic organization in connection with the metro route” (Niemczykiwicz, 2001, p. 1).

A liberal-progressive opinion-forming weekly journal – enjoying an established reputation – informed its readership that:

The surrounding shopkeepers do not, however, have to worry about the daily takings, despite the fact that the route leading to their shops is blocked. Depending on the size of the shop and range of products, the producers of the film pay them from 500 to 2000 złoty daily as compensation for the lost profits. Additionally, the inhabitants of Praga can earn something by providing small services for the film, transportation, monitoring the parking space etc. The creators of the film diligently see to it that they “don’t get on Praga’s nerves” (Lubelska, 2001, p. 18).

The author of a report from the film set which was published in that same weekly (*Polityka*) captured this – evidently not understanding her own words:

Behind the wall the blackmailers [*szmalcownicy*] were waiting for the escaping game. It was they who brought the shady deals [*geszefty*] to the point of absurdity. A Jew is a Jew, and *business is business*. Business is going well now in Praga (Szolc, 2001, p. 113).⁹⁹

All that however did not leave a trace in the legend about Polański in Warsaw’s Praga, let alone in his film.

Poles Facing the Holocaust in *The Pianist* (2001): Indulging in Retrospective Hallucination¹⁰⁰

Subsequent stages of the symbolic management of the crossroads of Żelazna and Chłodna Streets constitute a process leading from counter-commemoration through a series of visualizations to embodiment. The visualizations – from painting, through photography, to an object – can be described as representations of an object in search of the object of representation. Symbolic reconstruction is something other than the production of a trace which we encountered in the case of the marking of the course of the ghetto walls. As with every reconstruction, it entails the question of what its object is, since that which a reconstruction attempts to replicate is not the past but imaginings of the past. One therefore has to ask: whose imaginings? Who is their sub-

⁹⁹ It is, as we understand, the blackmailers who are guilty of bringing the shady deals (*geszefty*) to the point of absurdity. Apart from that, however, shady deals (*geszefty*) would be perfectly OK. It is noteworthy in this context that the shady deals in question were based on trade that was difficult to differentiate from plunder – just as the biggest part of so-called Polish help for Jews was difficult to differentiate from violence. The weekly *Polityka* outdid itself publishing, without commentary, a text in which one can also find passages such as: “My Jewish acquaintances to whom I suggested that they come for the casting, mostly declined. [...] [T] rue young Lodzer Jews. Faces simply ideal for *The Pianist*. [...] That’s the young face of the nation of Israel” (Szolc, 2001, pp. 111–112) or: “The reason for additional anarchy are the splendidly made artificial corpses. The extras gather around the immobile figures. Some take snapshots of themselves with the prop [*Ten i ów strzela sobie fotkę z rekwizytem*]” (Szolc, 2001, p. 110), whereupon we see the aforementioned “snapshot.” One of Władysław Szpilman’s grandsons is named “Szpilman youngling” (*Szpilmaniqtko*) and the like. Always well-intended.

¹⁰⁰ This is a formulation by Baudrillard (1994c, p. 12) cited above.

ject and who is their object? Which elements of the past are displayed and which are hidden? What symbolic stakes are played out through them, and by whom?

There had to be special reasons for the symbolic reconstruction on Chłodna Street in a situation where the few surviving original ghetto objects were, and still are, being continuously removed due to developers' activities which circumvent legal protective measures. This applies, for example, to the so-called spontaneous collapse of two buildings on the nearby corner of Żelazna and Grzybowska Streets as well as to the supposedly accidental demolition of the wall at the former Umschlagplatz (Bartoszewicz, 2013a, p. 6), not to mention the fate of the site itself, which in the last few years has been tightly built up with so-called suite buildings (*apartamentowce*), despite repeated appeals by Jewish organizations to have it listed on the official register of historic sites.¹⁰¹ The murky procedure (*proceder*) of the so-called revitalization¹⁰² has also wreaked havoc. Historic cobblestones in excellent condition along with tram tracks and prewar drain covers were destroyed during the "revitalization" of Grzybowski Square. The cobblestones of Próżna Street between Zielna and Marszałkowska Streets were disposed of next. This came after the removal of the original drain cover on Prosta Street through which the group of male and female soldiers of the Jewish Fighting Organization (Żydowska Organizacja Bojowa, ŻOB) led by Kazik Ratajzer emerged from the burning ghetto.

Actual remnants disappear or give way to reconstructions. These reconstructions are sometimes produced openly, as contemporary markings of historical places, while at other times they are presented as originals and also treated as such. A case in point is

101 "In 1988, on part of the site of the former Umschlagplatz a monument was erected, but part of the area is still overshadowed by a threat of being built up by housing cooperatives. Efforts on the part of the Shalom Foundation, taking action along with other Jewish organizations, to have the entire area of the former Umschlagplatz listed on the register of historic sites, have not had any effect. It is difficult to hide bitterness over the fact that a place which should remain a place of memory and silence will not be able to be commemorated in its entirety" (Tencer, 2007, p. 4). See also Olszewska & Urzykowski, 2008, p. 3.

102 "Scientifically, this phenomenon is called 'substitute goals.' The term was first introduced by the American sociologist Robert Merton. In a nutshell, it means that instead of carrying out complicated tasks, we prefer doing something easier in order not to take great pains to do something difficult. [...] A good example of 'substitute goals' is revitalization. In accordance with the initial definition, it was supposed to be a complicated process leading to a restoration of economic and social activity in a certain area, so there had to be people in all this, there had to be a bigger area where, for example, there had once been a factory which closed down. It couldn't be one building. Meanwhile, a lot of revitalization projects are based on a simple renovation of a building, a street, or the redevelopment of a square [...]. One can also term this the taming of the politics of cohesion – instead of revitalization, we do a petty renovation (*remoncik*)" (Sroczyński & Kozak, 2015, p. 16). Marek Kozak, professor at the Center for European Regional and Local Studies at the University of Warsaw and member of the Committee for Spatial Economy and Regional Planning at the Polish Academy of Sciences (PAN), alludes here to the way in which the National Program of Development (Narodowy Program Rozwoju) is realized, i.e. to the allocation of funding from the European Union for tasks unrelated to scientific research, social inclusion and professional activation. However, one can observe "substitute goals" even in the way these un-innovative innovations and non-revitalizing revitalizations have been implemented. Another example of this is: *Rewitalizacja otoczenia fragmentów muru getta warszawskiego. Projekt współfinansowany przez Unię Europejską z Europejskiego Funduszu Rozwoju Regionalnego i budżet państwa w ramach Zintegrowanego Programu Operacyjnego Rozwoju Regionalnego* [Revitalization of the vicinity of fragments of the Warsaw ghetto wall. Project co-financed by the European Union from the European Regional Development Fund and by the [Polish] state budget within the framework of the Integrated Operational Program of Regional Development] (see Janicka, 2011, pp. 35–37, 100–103).

the supposed ghetto wall in the backyard of 55 Sienna Street, built at the end of the 1960s or at the beginning of the 1970s by a tenant of one of the buildings. The reconstruction has gained acceptance as an original to such an extent that a prestigious institution, namely the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, took two bricks from the mock-up wall “to give authentic power to its permanent exhibition,” as explained on the plaque attached next to the cavity. The status of the reconstruction as original has been so successfully authenticated that even the documentary *Les six faces d'une brique* (2012) by Damien Monnier, in which the history of the object is told by the proud reconstructor, did not dispel the belief in its genuineness.

In other words, behind the historical reconstruction there was a fundamental need – not to say vital symbolic interest – of the memory group creating it. The designer of the footbridge referred to this issue in his previously quoted comment:

Generally speaking, I am sceptical about reconstructing past space. Not only because of ideological reasons but also technical ones. The construction techniques still known after the war no longer exist today. That generation remembered the historic buildings and monuments (*zabytki*) and was able to restore their form. Today, only clumsy mock-ups are being built. However, there was a strong need to commemorate the footbridge connecting the small and the large ghettos. Even though it only functioned for half a year, for many reasons (among them the film *The Pianist*) it became the symbol of the Warsaw ghetto throughout the world (Kosiewski & Lec, 2013, p. 29).

The stimulus triggering the “strong need” to commemorate the footbridge is thus an outside gaze: at the footbridge as a symbol of the Warsaw ghetto. It is not the object itself but only its world career that has mobilized Polish collective emotions. The parameters of that gaze from the outside are established by the film *The Pianist*. Here one can clearly see how Szpilman and his history (*losy*) – and also his book – became secondary to Polański and his film.

The pianist's name is associated with our city just as Artur Rubinstein's is with Łódź. [...] Szpilman not only spent his whole life in Warsaw but also described his dramatic wartime history (*losy*) in *The Pianist*, a book brought to the screen by Roman Polański. It is thanks to this that millions of people learnt about his [Szpilman's] experience and survival in occupied Warsaw (Majewski, 2011, p. 6).

Due to massive international recognizability – which he would not have achieved without Polański's film – Szpilman has become a logo of the Warsaw brand. Warsaw latched itself onto a ready-made figure created by Polański. Such was also the fate of the figure of the Jewish boy with his hands up under the barrels of German machine guns. “The Boy from the Ghetto is an Icon of Warsaw,” stated the largest daily newspaper in Poland. This was a reference to the result of a poll organized by the Warsaw History Meeting House (Dom Spotkań z Historią) to choose the photographic symbol of Poland's capital. “Chris Niedenthal's photographs from the first days of the martial law

in Poland [1981–1983] came in second and third: the Cinema Moscow with the *Czas apokalipsy* (*Apocalypse Now*) poster and the meat shop with empty hooks.”¹⁰³

This is characteristic of contemporary culture. We say that everything is PR but that is precisely the reason why we search for things that cannot be created from scratch in a design studio. When creating a brand, we refer to real people and real experiences. We want heroes whose life was really crushed, only then can we build around this some pop cultural ambience (Dłużewska & Gdula, 2015, p. 6).

In the case of Szpilman and the child from the ghetto, the issue is more complicated than merely conferring upon imaginings the authority of realness and granting the subjective a guarantee of objectivity. The mass international recognizability is a condition *sine qua non* of the process – a necessary but insufficient one. The complementary condition is the requirement that the so-called Jewish narrative testifies to the benefit of the so-called Polish narrative. This means above all that antisemitic violence and exclusion are concealed and the canonic set of features that make up the majority's self-image is respected. At that stage it is enough to tag along and just live off the interest yielded by the symbolic capital built on Jewish suffering and the death of the Jews. Apart from fridge magnets and other marketing gadgets, another commodity produced from this raw material is a set of statements praising the maturity, tolerance, and passionate penchant for inclusion of the dominant group. I believe it worthwhile to include these issues in any reflection on how the term “Jewish heritage” functions within contemporary Polish culture.

Thus, it was not first and foremost the footbridge and the ghetto which found themselves at the center of attention on Chłodna Street but their cinematic representation by Roman Polański – a representation constituting a mediation and containing within it further layers of mediation. The conceptualization of the footbridge and the ghetto is *de facto* the conceptualization of the Holocaust. It is therefore an issue central to the image of Poland and the Poles, since it is not the history of the Jews and their experience of persecution which has the power to mobilize Polish collective emotions but care for one's own image. It took a long time for this fact to be problematized. However, it was to a certain extent touched upon already by Jan Błoński:

In almost everything written on this topic in Poland [...] a hidden or repressed fear is evident that we, Poles, “might come out badly,” that we might be taken to be people lacking in heart and conscience (Błoński, 2008, p. 44).

It is noteworthy that a replica of the bridge over Chłodna Street had earlier been materialized by Andrzej Wajda in his film *Korczak* (Wajda, 1990).¹⁰⁴ The role of the leg-

103 Apart from the photograph from Jürgen Stroop's report, the competition featured “photographs documenting breakthrough moments in the history of Poland, among them Józef Piłsudski's arrival at the Vienna Railway Station [in Warsaw] in 1916, scenes from the Warsaw Uprising, the chancellor of the FRG Willy Brandt kneeling before the Monument to the Heroes of the Ghetto in 1970” (Urzykowski, 2015, p. 3).

104 See also Holland, 1991 (*Korczak* – the first version of the screenplay, which was submitted by Agnieszka Holland to the film production team [*zespół filmowy*] Zespół X in 1982).

islator of Polish mass imagination in this domain fell, however, to Roman Polański.¹⁰⁵ The moment in which each of the reconstructions was made was certainly of significance. Wajda dealt with the subject at a time when a considerable section of the audience remembered if not the bridge over Chłodna Street itself, then certainly the historical context in which it was erected. This memory was additionally revived by the long-term repercussions of the Polish reception of Claude Lanzmann's documentary *Shoah* (1985), a reception which was reduced to a nationwide scandal. Even though in his film Wajda was not less kind to the Polish majority than Polański, it did not gain popularity in Poland. There were no pleasant memories bound up with the bridge and its times, which is why viewing the footbridge on screen did not have anything attractive to it.

Polański's film proved to be easier to digest owing to its later production and release, and maybe also owing to the fact that it was in color and Jews were played by Hollywood actors speaking English. What proved decisive, however, was apparently the international success of *The Pianist*. The film *Korczak* not only failed to be a hit in the so-called West, it actually flopped there. Although the French voices on the subject were divided, *Korczak* was reproached for appropriating Jewish history, and even Christianizing it. The antisemitic imaginary of Wajda's film *The Promised Land* (*Ziemia obiecana*, Wajda, 1974) was promptly brought up. Both the director's opponents and his defenders spoke about the whitewashing of the image of the Holocaust through omission of Polish antisemitism during the war and the German occupation. Such a viewpoint was at that time completely unacceptable in Poland, and maybe also beyond comprehension.¹⁰⁶ The debate occurred in the shadow of Lech Wałęsa's antisemitic statements during the presidential campaign, which came as a shock to Western public opinion.

105 What is noteworthy here is the position of both filmmakers in the collective imaginary. Wajda and Polański are two of "our people who have made it" (*dwaj "nasi, którym się udało"*). In the Polish hierarchy of prestige, they occupy similar but non-identical places. In the case of Polański, it is not so much that his success abroad took away all kinds of stigma burdening him. It is more that on the obverse of the stigma – or in its context, against its background – Polański was made a super hero of Polish mass imagination. Wajda was an outstanding figure (*koryfeusz*). Polański is a mascot. On the subject of persons categorized as the phantasmatic Jew in the function of mascots and the figure of *ein prima Jude* see Tokarska-Bakir, 2008, pp. 559–566 – subchapter "Żydowskie losy po wojnie" [Jewish Fates After the War].

106 Here is an exchange between a supporter and an opponent of *Korczak*:

"Claude-Marie Trémois: Are you telling me that Wajda did not sufficiently depict the antisemitism of Poles, who, on the one hand, had shown heroic resistance to the Nazis, while on the other, had been ready to collaborate with them, when it came to the Jews?

Isi Beller: In a very great majority of cases they collaborated: intentionally and unintentionally... At best, the fate of Jews was indifferent to them. In *Shoah*, in Claude Lanzmann's film, we are seeing in action the everyday antisemitism of the Poles, which – it is worth emphasizing – does not evoke any feeling of guilt in them. Well, that does absolutely not appear in *Korczak*. What is more, by showing a Pole throwing a loaf of bread to Jews from the ghetto – an undeniable but isolated fact – Wajda creates the – false – impression of Polish support for Jews.

Alain Finkelkraut: [...] For a long time, this [form of] antisemitism was a family secret which the Jews handed down to each other in the face of general indifference. Now that the secret has come to light, one should not be mistaken with regard to the object of criticism. One should not bill Wajda for Wałęsa's base behavior during the election campaign. [...] It is true that one would prefer that the viewers of Wajda's film were made aware of Polish antisemitism during the war. [...]

Isi Beller: Polish antisemitism was never a family secret. It has been propagated for the world to see, for example by virtue of the resonance of the pogroms" (Finkelkraut, Beller, & Trémois, 1991, p. 21).

The foreign reception of *Korczak* therefore inscribed itself in the discomfort felt by Poles with regard to their image in connection with antisemitism and the Holocaust. Once again, it transpired that the territory continues to be treacherous and the subject – dangerous. The problem was eliminated by the tried-and-tested and for a long time infallible method: dismissing the criticism of Wajda's film as a manifestation of antipolonism.

The Polish reaction to the trials and tribulations of Wajda's *Korczak* disclosed a social-cultural mechanism characteristic of the construction of the Polish majority optics. This mechanism has been termed social automatism by Grzegorz Niziołek. It was also this mechanism which made him reflect on the danger the narrative of the Holocaust is charged with in the context of Polish dominant culture, and therefore also within the context of the architecture of collective identity and of collective memory of the past.

[W]e should ask the simple question as to whether every account of the Jewish fate during the Holocaust is not basically "anti-Polish." [...] Every account of the extermination (not only that told "incorrectly") inevitably exacerbates antisemitism because every such account undermines the myth of Unity and in so doing becomes an anti-Polish or anti-French account. [It does not permit those who feel Polish, i.e. those having an affirmative attitude towards Polish majority culture, to feel good]. One can only add that this state of affairs was characteristic not only of the immediate post-war years, but lasted in Poland for decades. It became established as a form of social automatism, i.e. it took on the features of involuntary reaction [...] Every account of the Holocaust provokes in Poland a "repulsive reaction," since it releases an instinctive fear that this account will inevitably, sooner or later, reveal Polish participation in the process of the Holocaust [...] (Niziołek, 2019, pp. 119–120; the Polish original of Niziołek cited in: Czapliński, 2009, p. 157).

As it turned out, although one does have to display vigilance with reference to the narrative about the Holocaust, it does not necessarily mean that there is always a reason to be fearful. The conceptualization of the Holocaust in *The Pianist* eliminated this threat and its success unlocked emotions and awoke collective enthusiasm. One can therefore consider the reconstruction of the footbridge in *The Pianist* as the prototype for the reconstruction *in situ* on Chłodna Street – along with the entire phantasmatic baggage, which, besides the Cannes and Hollywood red carpets, contains a conceptualization of Polish-Jewish relations that is safe for the Polish majority.

Crucial to that conceptualization appears to be the figure of the cellist, nonexistent in the book, a blonde woman whose appearance corresponds to the idea of so-called Polish beauty. Interestingly, critics noted the changes introduced into the screenplay at variance with Szpilman's history, and considered them... senseless:

Innovations are not always fortunate. [...] It's anybody's guess why new characters, not appearing in the book and not playing any significant role, have been introduced. But these are trifles of no great importance (Pietrasik, 2002b, p. 18).

In my opinion, it is the very opposite which is true: the appearance of additional characters in the film defines more precisely the image of Polish-Jewish relations in a way

that suggests they were mutual and equal until the outbreak of World War II. The Szpilman in the film works in the Polish Radio (the Polish national radio broadcaster) where – in contrast to the Polish Radio where both the film’s and the actual Korczak had a regular program – the relations are absolutely on equal terms and characterized by mutual goodwill and kindness. After the outbreak of the war and the capitulation of Warsaw, Polański’s Szpilman initiates a flirt with the cellist. At the same time – according to Emanuel Ringelblum as well as female and male authors of countless accounts – in the capital city (and not only there) a pogrom atmosphere reigned. Its scenery was not the backstreets of the Northern District or the periphery of the city but Warsaw’s representative and central locations. It is in such a location that Polański’s couple goes for a walk. The problem, however, appears only at the entrance to the coffeehouse marked with a notice saying “*Żydom wstęp wzbroniony*” (“No entry for Jews”). The film’s Szpilman comments: “They want to be better Nazis than Hitler,” while the cellist, as much shocked as outraged by the content of the inscription, wants to lodge a complaint.

Both characters give the impression that this comes as a bolt from the blue – as if there had not been formal and informal apartheid in prewar Poland, the former manifesting itself in, for example, the ghetto benches at universities, separate professional associations, the education system, Scouting organizations of an identical regime but separate for Jews and Poles,¹⁰⁷ the latter – in an economic boycott, the public display of notices such as “Christian boarding house” or the practice of walking on separate pavements. What also disappears from sight is the question of what exactly makes it impossible for an elegantly dressed middle-class man belonging to the *inteligencja* and speaking literary Polish, with impeccable manners and in company of a personable woman, to enter the coffeehouse. Given the fact that this happens before the Germans issued a decree ordering Jews to wear white armbands bearing a blue Star of David and given that there are no Germans around, who would identify him as a Jew and on the basis of what criteria? The who in this case would be Christians – the staff and the customers of the coffeehouse – employing racist criteria far more rigorous than the Nuremberg Laws.

107 This does not refer to a Jewish school system and Jewish scouting organization but to separate school and scouting system structures identical in terms of both language and program to those of the dominant majority. This situation was extraordinary, even set against the background of the generally bad situation experienced by the minority. It concerned people classified as Jews without any consideration of their sense of identity: “The Union of Jewish Scout and Cub Packs (Związek Żydowskich Drużyn Harcerskich i Gromad Zuchowych) was an independent organization, created by Aleksander Kamiński as head of the Department of Minority Packs at the Headquarters of the Polish Scouting and Guiding Association [Związek Harcerstwa Polskiego, ZHP]. Kamiński was appointed head of this department, which had authority over the Lithuanian, Ukrainian, Russian and German scouting packs, in 1931. Wishing to fill an existing gap, he initiated the creation of packs bringing together Jewish youths who did not want to connect to the already existing Shomer (Zionist [or Bundist – E.J.]) scouting organizations. The newly created union was formed outside the framework of the ZHP into an association independent from ZHP, and only with time – according to Aleksander Kamiński’s concept – was it supposed to join the ZHP. Socially and morally, it was [...] his most difficult experience, occurring in an atmosphere of increasing antisemitism in Poland, which also had a significant part of the scouting instructors and authorities [*instancje*] of ZHP in its grip. The attempts to legally establish the Jewish association within the framework of ZHP failed. The organization remained an independent union [...]” (Lepalczyk, 1974, pp. 16–17). For more on this subject see: Janicka, 2014–2015.

The viewer, however, has no time to consider all this, as the verbal exchange repeats itself, this time in connection with the cellist's idea of going to the park. Visiting the park also proves to be impossible by virtue of the German order forbidding Jews from entering all public parks as well as sitting on park benches. The cellist learns about this from Szpilman. Shaken by this, she comments in disbelief: "You are joking. It is absurd." It is beyond doubt that both are confronted with something like that for the first time in their lives. We find ourselves in a world in which – in contrast to interwar Poland – there was no prohibition on entrance to the Saxon Garden or to the Royal Baths (Łazienki Królewskie) Park for Jews in attire associated with Jews, and all benches in public spaces were always accessible for everybody. There is no end to the characters' amazement, as the German order to wear the armbands is followed by the German order to establish a ghetto. It is a ghetto to which the Jews go in silence, driven by nobody and practically unguarded. They walk, without offering any resistance, on their own.

Mainstream European culture cherishes this image of supposed Jewish obedience and passivity in a situation in which – according to the perspective adopted by this culture – every human being worthy of the term would have offered resistance. A characteristic feature of this mechanism is depriving Jews of the possibility of choice, putting them under extreme pressure, and subsequently presenting their actions as the result of their sovereign, unhindered decision – an enigmatic, unfathomable decision, beyond comprehension for the so-called ordinary man, if not man *tout court*. Depicting individuals' choices, attitudes and behavior, caused by oppression as resulting from the allegedly innate characteristics of their reference group, is what Pierre Bourdieu has called the paradigm of all the fallacies of racist hatred (see Bourdieu, 2000, p. 72). The point of departure and point of arrival of the analyzed reasoning is the exclusion of Jews from humanity.

Exclusion from humanity as an unarticulated assumption remains invisible and renders invisible the non-Jewish context of what is termed the Jewish fate (*żydowski los*). In Polański's film, we see a docile procession heading for the ghetto, and afterwards, for the Umschlagplatz – "like sheep to the slaughterhouse." However, we do not learn anything about the continuum of Polish prewar, wartime, and postwar antisemitism, let alone the interaction of Polish antisemitism with German antisemitism and vice versa. The picture of prewar Poland in *The Pianist* amounts to several shots of exclusive districts of Warsaw from a Polish propaganda film, an excerpt from which we see to the accompaniment of Frédéric Chopin's music. No mention is made of the fascization of the state. In the film, there is no marking of Jewish shops or university record books (grade transcripts) of students of the Mosaic persuasion. There are no posters saying "Jews to the ghetto!," which were put up in Warsaw in 1938. There is no Polish state persecution of the Jewish citizens of Poland expelled from the Third Reich to Poland by the Nazi authorities in the framework of the so-called *Polenaktion*. There is no pre-

war series of pogroms and no Easter pogrom in Warsaw in 1940, referred to by Adam Czerniaków as the largest pogrom after that of 1881.¹⁰⁸

Szpilman's family had no intention of wearing the armbands. We do not learn however, why they did in fact put them on. The German order does not explain anything in this case:

It has often been said that the blackmailing of Jews began with the closure of the ghetto, i.e. from November 15, 1940, onwards. Nothing could be more false. The blackmailing of Jews began with the entry of the German army into Warsaw and increased in intensity with every new anti-Jewish decree. [...] The first step facilitating blackmail was the issuing, on December 1, 1939, of the order for Jews to wear armbands bearing the Star of David. All Jews (regardless of creed) over the age of ten were compulsorily subjected to it. As the atmosphere of terror intensified, there was an increase in the punishments imposed on Jews not complying with the orders of the [German occupation] authorities. Along with more severe punishments the threat of blackmail increased. While the financial penalties amounted to ca. 30–150 złoty (until mid-1941), the concomitant detention constituted a cruel punishment, sometimes lasting for several months. [...] The very threat of ending up in a detention center for several months proved a sufficient motive to pay the blackmailers or – to make reference to the jargon used at the time – *szmalcować się*. Numerous (and always unsuccessful) requests for release from imprisonment submitted to the German courts by Jews interned on Dzielna, Daniłowiczowska, or Rakowiecka Streets constitute a telling testimony of the cruel conditions reigning in prison (Grabowski, 2004, pp. 17–18).¹⁰⁹

As far as the period before the establishment of the ghetto is concerned, Polański depicts German terror against people wearing the armbands, but he does not show Polish terror against people attempting not to wear them. However, the persecution of Jews before the establishment of the ghetto and outside of the ghetto would not have been prevalent and effective, had it not been for Polish social control (*polska kontrola społeczna*) – both formal and informal, institutionalized and non-institutionalized:

In some cases functionaries or German citizens carried out the arrests. Yet while Jews handed over by Poles to the [German] police had stayed *incognito* outside the ghetto, without [wearing] armbands, persons arrested by the Germans were wearing the armbands with the Star of David, prescribed by law. The Germans intervened when Jews wore the armbands in a way contrary to regulations (i.e. below the elbows or coiled up). Poles most evidently were able to recognize a Jew on the basis of experience (Grabowski, 2004, p. 40).¹¹⁰

108 Apart from Czerniaków's and Ringelblum's testimonies see: Szarota, 2000, pp. 19–82 (chapter 1, entitled "Warszawa"). "The pogrom atmosphere [...] did not end in the spring of 1940. The underground press reported about further attacks on Warsaw Jews in November 1940" and afterwards "about relatively frequent cases of Jews being beaten up" in November (Grabowski, 2004, p. 32). Grabowski refers here to the *Biuletyn Informacyjny* of July 12 and November 8, respectively.

109 "On the territory of northern Mazovia (incorporated into the Reich), the absence of armbands was punishable by death from 1939 onwards" (Grabowski, 2004, p. 18).

110 "In the files of the German Special Court [Sondergericht] and the files of the Prosecutor we find many police reports concerning detained Jews who had stayed outside the confines of the Jewish district without wearing an armband. [...] Out of 340 detained Jews whose Strafanzeige [a form featuring the letterhead *Strafanzeige/Doniesienie*, or "Criminal Complaint" – E.J.] I was able to find, 224 were apprehended [*'wpadło'*] as a result of denunciations from passers-by, blue policemen, tram drivers or employees of the suburban rail service" (Grabowski, 2004, p. 38). Note that we are only talking here of the cases which are elaborately documented. For the most part, what has survived are merely notes comprising the personal details of the detained and short description of the course of the detention. See also: Engelking & Grabowski, 2010, in particular the chapter "Brak opaski 'syjońskie' oraz ucieczka z getta" [Lack of the "Zion" Armband and Escaping the Ghetto],

In the film, there are no Polish denunciations of those who did not wear the armbands. There are also no gawkers, no insults, no beatings, and there is no robbery of the Jews being driven to the ghetto by the former Polish state police and the German gendarmerie. There is no driving of the Jews out of their homes by the janitors and the Polish police. There are no Dantesque scenes during the enforced occupancy of new apartments.

That is not all. In Polański's film, the Jews heading to the ghetto are surrounded by silence and a pensive expression on the faces of those few non-Jewish pedestrians who decided to stop at the sight of the Jewish procession. Such is not the behavior of gawkers but of people who show compassion and, by means of their compassionate look, bid farewell to a suffering neighbor. The cellist, whom Szpilman spots among those gathered, says *expressis verbis*: "I did not want to come. I did not want to see all this, but I couldn't stop myself." "It is too absurd," she says, in pain, trying with difficulty not to burst out crying. Her eyes are full of tears. One tear – a telling *pars pro toto* – rolls down her alabaster cheek. A poor Christian, a poor Polish woman looks at the ghetto. Polański strips off irony and exorcizes a figure of Polish culture called into existence by Czesław Miłosz in his poem *Biedny chrześcijanin patrzy na getto* (*A Poor Christian Looks at the Ghetto*), recalled years later by Jan Błoński in his text *Biedni Polacy patrzą na getto* (*The Poor Poles Look at the Ghetto*). We are talking here about a horrifying figure, crushingly ironic, which had become an emblem of the narrative of co-responsibility for the course of the Holocaust in German-occupied Poland, even if for a long time this narrative respected the restrictions dictated by the care for the well-being (*samopoczucie*) of the Polish majority. In *The Pianist*, this figure is "retrieved" and converted into the figure of Polish witness or, even better, *bystander*: a passive and helpless witness of Jewish suffering and death, a witness totally separated from the suffering and death brought about by foreign violence – as incomprehensible as it is irrevocable. This figure of the Polish witness is a key figure of Polish innocence.

We are dealing here with a completely arbitrary construction of Polański's. Szpilman's family did not move to the ghetto because their apartment was located within the area subsequently incorporated into it. Szpilman observed and described the establishment of the ghetto from the inside, contact with the outside world was already beyond his reach. In Polański's film, we view the resettlement from the outside, but it is presented as completely extraterritorial, occurring in a social vacuum. The figure of the cellist, added by the director, eliminates from view further facts. It suggests freedom of

pp. 137–152. Among the preserved documents there are, for example, Arnold Szyfman's court and prison files. In his case, he was denounced, sentenced (by the Sondergericht Warschau) and imprisoned for not wearing the armband (*Judenkennzeichen*). He "later claimed that it had not even occurred to him that he should wear the armband bearing the Star of David at all and he lived quietly in the theatre. Asked by the Germans, he explained: 'I am not Jewish (*nie jestem Żydem*), neither in terms of nationality nor in terms of denomination and this is why I do not wear [an armband]' [Arnold Szyfman, *Moja tułaczka wojenna*, Wydawnictwo MON, Warszawa 1960, pp. 61–62]" (Engelking & Grabowski, 2010, pp. 139–140). Arnold Szyfman was one of the founding fathers of the interwar Polish theater and the director of the Teatr Polski in Warsaw.

contact between the two groups amidst an atmosphere of general kindness. In the book by Szpilman/Waldorff, the prewar world is described in a similar way. However, reality imprints itself in a dream, cited without the censorship of the majority gaze:

The armbands branding us as Jews did not bother us, because we were all wearing them, and after some time living in the ghetto I realized that I had become thoroughly used to them – so much so that when I dreamed of my friends [from the time before the war]¹¹¹ I saw them wearing armbands, as if [they were an inherent part of the clothes – like a tie or a pocket handkerchief]¹¹² (Szpilman, 2000, p. 49).

This is how we learn that Szpilman's prewar friends were exclusively Jewish. Szpilman seems to realize it only during the war in the face of German Nazi oppression. In fact, according to the categories utilized by the majority group, they had been Jewish all along. However, there is no trace of prewar antisemitic persecution in the book. Finally, it is difficult to understand the loss of contact, lasting for two years, between the film's Szpilman and the cellist, two people who, as Polański suggest, are so fascinated by each other, when telephones were functioning non-stop in the ghetto until the end of the Ghetto Uprising (see Gregorowicz, 2014, pp. 409–427; see also: Szlengel, 1977c, pp. 61–64).

The aforementioned report *Tego nikt panu nie powie* opens with an unexpectedly similar thread:

Maria Ratkowska lived in the Jewish Waliców [neighborhood]. Back then people still wanted to listen to real music. Sometimes, when the concert was for two pianos, Maria would play with Szpilman. Cheerful and amiable, always well-dressed. Charming.

But the war broke out right away. They still had some concerts. Until the establishment of the ghetto, they continued to play together. Maria still went to her old apartment, as she already lived on the Aryan side, and brought her friends [*sic!* – E.J.] note sheets and chocolate. And afterwards bread.

“And later on, one would go to the other side of the street, pretending that one did not recognize their acquaintance [*sic!* – E.J.]”

Black-haired, eyes framed with dark eyelashes, eyelids, and eyebrows [*z ciemną oprawą oczu*] and a tan complexion. Maria does not know what happened to Szpilman in the following years of the war. He disappeared [*sic!* – E.J.] without a word. [...] She only found out that he was alive when, shortly after the war, he came to her [place] on Żłota Street.

“I had a good instrument: a Steinway.”

“Did Szpilman tell you then how he had disappeared without a word?”

“It was understood (*wiadomo było*) what one could speak about and what one could not” (Zaczyński, 2002, p. 12).

111 Translator's note: In the Polish original, this passage reads “moi przyjaciele sprzed wojny” – “my friends from the time before the war.” In the English translation, it says “my Aryan friends” instead.

112 Translator's note: The translation in brackets is my translation from the Polish version, which reads: “jakby były one [opaski] nieodłączną częścią ubrania – na podobieństwo krawata czy też chustki.” In the English translation, the passage is rendered as: “as if that white strip of fabric was as essential a part of the human wardrobe as a tie” (Szpilman, 2000, p. 49).

The female pianist's narrative, based on – to put it elegantly – contradictions and strategic silencings, would warrant a separate exegesis, also owing to the hypocritical newsspeak which is characteristic of the Polish language confronted with anything Jewish. The author of the text seems to pose this as being the main problem by means of the title (*Tego nikt panu nie powie* [Nobody Will Tell You This]) as well as the recurring leitmotif in the form of its derivations: "It was understood about what one could speak about and what one could not" (*Było wiadomo, o czym można mówić, a o czym nie*), "I did not ask any questions" (*Nie zadawałem pytań*), "He never told me. This is beside the point" (*Nigdy mi nie powiedział. To nie ten temat*), "No. There are emotional states one mustn't go into" (*Nie. Są stany uczuciowe, w które nie można się zagłębiać*), "This was not a subject for conversation" (*To nie był temat do rozmów*) (Zaczyński, 2002, pp. 12–13). Where Michał Zaczyński's report problematizes the Polish idiom, Roman Polański's film reproduces its distinctive features, and while the features are perhaps not exclusively Polish, what interests us here is Polish culture within which the persecution and murder of the Jews took place.

The character of the cellist supplements the world presented by Polański in *The Pianist* with the Polish context. It is through her that the viewer is informed about Polish martyrdom and Polish armed struggle: about the Nazi policy of repression against Polish majority culture and society, in particular against the *inteligencja*. We learn of the arrest of the cellist's cousin, the death of her brother as well as the preparations for the Polish uprising. Despite this enormity of suffering, the oppressed Poles, in their majority, remain ready to give active help to the Jews: from a simple artisan to members of the intellectual elite. Polish self-sacrifice – including the sacrifice of one's own life – finds its way to the very ghetto. We are not spared the details about Professor Franciszek Raszeja, a surgeon, who entered the ghetto with a pass in order to operate on a patient and who was shot to death, together with his Polish assistant as well as the Jewish patient and his family.¹¹³ It is noteworthy that in the narrative about this subject

113 Incidentally, the entire thing (*rzecz*) took place in the immediate vicinity of the wooden bridge, at 26 Chłodna Street, at the corner of Żelazna Street, where the restaurant "Pod Pieskami" [The Little Dogs] was located. "On the first floor Doctor Raszeja, who had been called to attend the patient, was performing surgery. They shot the doctor, his assistant, the patient, and his family. In the house at 26 Chłodna Street – six people. In the house at 24 [Chłodna Street] – two people. In the house at 22 [Chłodna Street] – three people. [...] On July 21, they were still counting the corpses in the Jewish district" (Wasermanówna, undated, p. 9 – a typescript of the unpublished work was submitted to the literary-historical competition *Warszawa moich wspomnień* [The Warsaw of My Memories], organized by the weekly *Stolica*, code: 98-Z; the conditions of the competition were announced in *Stolica* no. 3, January 26, 1947). In this narrative about the ghetto two figures are mentioned by name: Franciszek Raszeja and Janusz Korczak. I wish to thank Natalia Judzińska, who provided me access to the findings of her research in the State Archive of the Capital City of Warsaw, for drawing my attention to Wasermanówna's text.

In the account by Szpilman/Waldorff, the narrative is limited to 26 Chłodna Street. Gutnajer's name does not appear in it, while the figure of Raszeja is foregrounded in a series of periphrases: "The afternoon of the same day something happened that shook the whole of Warsaw, on both sides of the wall. A well-known Polish surgeon called Raszeja, a professor at Poznań University, had been called to the ghetto to perform a difficult operation. The German police headquarters in Warsaw had given him a pass to let him into the ghetto, but once he arrived and was beginning the operation SS men made their way into the flat where it was going on, shot the anaesthetized patient lying on the operating table, and then shot the surgeon and everyone else present" (Szpilman, 2000, p. 88). The last piece of information is not fully correct. Gutnajer's ten-year-old

the name of the Pole is mentioned, whereas the name of the Jew remains unspecified. Meanwhile, Raszeja's patient was Abe Gutnajer, who was a famous art dealer and art collector before the war, extraordinarily well-connected and affluent, an institution, a proverbial figure. Before 1939, his antiques salon belonged to the most elegant ones. It was located at 16 Mazowiecka Street, near the publishing house of Janina and Jakub Mortkowicz and the coffeehouse Ziemiańska (at 12 Mazowiecka Street). "For the more mediocre objects, aimed at the less experienced and affluent clientele, he opened, practically *vis-à-vis* his salon, an antiques shop at 11 Mazowiecka Street" (Cieślińska-Lobkowicz, 2014, pp. 187–188). Both places were thus located in an area of the elegant center of Warsaw frequented by cultivated and cultured people:

To make the reader aware of the quality of the artworks presented [in the main salon – E.J.], suffice to say that the Warsaw National Museum bought a significant part of them from Gutnajer and that to this day, they are considered as outstanding works of their creators.

Abe Gutnajer specialized in traditional painting, Polish above all, even though he also exhibited nineteenth century Russian paintings, and occasionally the old masters, not to mention a rich offer of ornamental art. [...] He was a professional who cared about the trust of his clients, namely museums, institutions, the plutocracy, and the affluent *inteligencja* of liberal professions. He was not the type of art dealer who would promote up-and-coming artists or currents of modern art. He guaranteed, however, a standard of quality in his offer, caring about origin and quality. His conservative profile but also his popularity led to the coining by Antoni Słonimski of the neologism "abegutnajerism" as a term for conservative tastes (Cieślińska-Lobkowicz, 2014, pp. 187–188).

It is not difficult to understand why Gutnajer evaporated from the majority narrative about Raszeja. Such a narrative could not have even emerged if his personal details had been mentioned. Adding that element to this narrative annihilates it, down to the very core. The figure of Gutnajer is a synonym for colossal amounts of money, which explains both the technicalities and the financial aspect of an action considered thus far as a model example of Polish altruism. Furthermore, the name Gutnajer – by virtue of the *pars pro toto* principle – would direct attention to the phenomenon of the boom in the antique market of "Aryan" Warsaw during the German occupation. Nawojka Cieślińska-Lobkowicz, who has conducted research on this subject, writes:

granddaughter, who was hiding under the bed, survived (see Engelking & Leociak, 2009, p. 704). The author of the cited part of *The Warsaw Ghetto. A Guide to the Perished City* entitled "Deportation" is Barbara Engelking.

For comparison, under July 21, 1942, Adam Czerniaków describes the arrest of members of the Council, the intervention undertaken on their behalf, as well as the threat of arrest of his wife: "The evening was quiet. During the night, deaths" (Czerniakow, 1999, p. 384). In the Polish-language edition, there is a footnote (footnote 93) by Marian Fuks, adding: "What is meant is of course the murder of many people" (Czerniaków, 1983, p. 304).

Jerzy Jurandot recounted that day similarly in 1943: "Cars full of SS sped backwards and forwards along the roads, stopping in front of each of the Community offices, all community organisations. They would go inside for a moment and come out in the company of people with armbands. The crowd lining the pavements kept adding to the names it passed from mouth to mouth: Community deputy chairman and secretary, food supply managers, managers of the hospital department, the Arbeitsamt, social services – the list got larger minute by minute, growing into infinity. [...] From time to time, closer or further afield, you could hear gunfire. Then a new name would pass through the crowd, the name of [the person] who had just been killed. At the same time a few SS men burst into a house on Chłodna Street and murdered twenty-seven people at random, men and women, for no reason. The idea was to spread fear around the ghetto, using terror to banish in advance any thoughts [of] or attempt at resistance" (Jurandot, 2015c, pp. 135–136).

As far as Warsaw is concerned, I would be inclined to posit midyear 1940 as a symbolic caesura, ending the rule of professional standards which were obvious in the prewar antiquarian business. It was at that time that Abe Gutnajer, having found an apartment on Chłodna Street and being forced to finally liquidate the closed down antiques shop at 11 Mazowiecka Street, considered it his obligation to return to the owners the objects he had taken in on consignment before the outbreak of the war, even though he could have hidden or discarded them. [...]

From autumn 1940 onwards, respect for the right of ownership with regard to circulating antique objects belonging to Jews started to undergo gradual corrosion. [...] Until mid-November 1940, the price for the objects was probably still arranged with the owners forced to give them up, who were maybe [*sic!* – E.J.] also paid the amount due for the objects. Thereafter, i.e. from the time of the closure of the ghetto onwards, Jewish collectors and those in possession of valuable objects of arts and crafts could only count on the decency of the antiquarians and mediators on the Aryan side to whom they had entrusted their goods. As did Abe Gutnajer, whose private collections were, on his instructions, to be sold [...] by his prewar acquaintance and customer, Edmund Mętlewicz, who was then to transfer the money received from the sale of the objects to the ghetto (Cieślińska-Lobkowicz, 2014, pp. 198–199).

Cieślińska-Lobkowicz draws attention to the fact that from the moment of the establishment of the ghetto onwards, there was a:

growing acceptance of the overt dealing in the antiques “abandoned” by their Jewish owners, which constituted an increasingly large segment of the market. Having them freely at their disposal after the death of the ghetto was one of the reasons for the great boom in the Warsaw art business, noted from mid-1942 onwards, i.e. from the time of the Great Action, in the course of which 300 thousand people were deported to Treblinka.

A good example of this process is the case of Edmund Mętlewicz. He would have been [considered] a scoundrel and he would surely have been condemned, if he had treated the objects placed in the salon on Abe Gutnajer’s instruction as his own prior to the murder of Abe and his family on July 21, 1942, the day before the beginning of the mass deportations in the ghetto. After that date, neither he nor the antiquarians interested in the objects had a problem with this [...] (Cieślińska-Lobkowicz, 2014, pp. 198–199).

In other words, Gutnajer had to disappear from the history of Polish help for Jews before he appeared in it. We are touching here upon the mechanism of the production of the dominant majority narrative. At the same time, we are looking at a case that is paradigmatic for Polański’s narrative. The Polish context is depicted in *The Pianist* in such a way that contextualization means *de facto* a decontextualization of the Jewish experience in its crucial aspect. This applies specifically to the intersection of the trajectory of the dominant group with the trajectory of the minority group.

Postscript from 2019. As the investigation continued indefatigably by Nawojka Cieślińska-Lobkowicz has meanwhile shown, the man shot on Chłodna Street was not Abe Gutnajer but his older brother: Bernard Gutnajer. The meaning of the event, however, remains the same or possibly becomes even deeper. In prewar Warsaw, Bernard Gutnajer, compared to his brother, was a less known but no less respected antique dealer. He resided and worked near Abe, right across the Saxon Garden: he ran an exclusive antiques salon at 6 Wierzbowa Street and lived at 8 Niecała Street (Króla Al-

berta Street at the time). The crime on Chłodna Street took place in Doctor Albert Schulberg's apartment. Schulberg was a high-class jeweller and antique dealer in Lwów until the outbreak of World War II. In the period of interest to us, "together with Mrs Stein [doktorowa Sch. Steinowa] – he was the representative in the Jewish district of Zofia Leśniewska's Art Salon [in German-occupied Warsaw], located on the Aryan side at 7 Mazowiecka Street" (Cieślińska-Lobkowicz, 2016, p. 276).¹¹⁴

In her article on the art market during the German occupation, Cieślińska-Lobkowicz wrote at length about Zofia Leśniewska's (a general's wife) antique shop (see Cieślińska-Lobkowicz, 2014). In a situation where

throughout the Generalgouvernement, valuable Jewish possessions were officially liable to registration and confiscation, and all transactions between the ghetto and the Aryan side had to be conducted via the Transferstelle [...] possessing an official branch [przedstawicielstwo] in the ghetto was absolutely exceptional and was proof of an arrangement made with the Germans, even if testimonies have been preserved claiming that the branch was a cover, serving the purpose of rescuing people and their redeployment from the ghetto to the Aryan side (Cieślińska-Lobkowicz, 2016, p. 276).

Cieślińska-Lobkowicz has not provided a critique of these testimonies. They are not the subject of her argumentation. However, we know definitely that this "cover" rescued neither Abe Gutnajer nor his family. Abe Gutnajer died in the ghetto. His wife, his daughter, and his son-in-law were deported to Treblinka.¹¹⁵ The "cover" was of no use to Bernard Gutnajer either. Just as it was of no use to Albert Schulberg, Zofia Leśniewska's main supplier, who, moreover, dealt with the purchase of jewellery and gold – also illegal in the eyes of Nazi law and also officially allowed by the Nazis in his particular case.

His ability to call Professor Raszeja to the ghetto with the aim of a private medical consultation, especially in the tense situation of the closed district, testifies to privilege and indirectly confirms the correctness of the remark [...] regarding the consent of the Germans for this activity conducted by [Schulberg], which justifies the presumption of collaboration (Cieślińska-Lobkowicz, 2016, p. 276).

Cieślińska-Lobkowicz convincingly argues and adduces evidence that Raszeja's visit to Schulberg's did not take place on the day before but on the first day of the "Great

114 "An announcement in which they offer to purchase paintings, stylish furniture, carpets, artwork, and antiques was published in the *Gazeta Żydowska* [Jewish Gazette] on November 14, 1941. Customers were received from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at 4 Elektoralna Street, instant payment in cash of the full price was guaranteed. [...] The people imprisoned in the ghetto were forced to sell off the hidden valuables, and the possibility of a safe and quick completion of such transactions with trustworthy people was worth – *nomen omen* – its weight in gold for them. The artwork and antiques offered by the sellers required, in their turn, expert evaluation of individual objects and their transfer to the Aryan side, where one could sell them for a considerably higher price. That the Germans commissioning or enabling such procedures were guaranteed profit seems indisputable in this matter" (Cieślińska-Lobkowicz, 2016, pp. 276–277).

115 Imprisoned in the ghetto, Abe Gutnajer entrusted his property to Edmund Mętlewicz, an antique dealer on the "Aryan side." According to Tomasz Mętlewicz, Edmund's son: "the ailing Abe was confined to bed and when there was a possibility of escape from the ghetto, his wife Rena (Regina), considering the state of the ailing patient, thought that it was not possible. After Abe's natural death, the surviving members of the family were shipped [*sic!* – E.J.] to the camp in Treblinka. Abe's wife, his daughter and son-in-law allegedly died there" (Boćdok, 2004, p. 229).

Action,” on July 22, 1942. She writes that Raszeja came to Schulberg arguably [*sic!*] in connection with the latter’s health problems (Cieślińska-Lobkowitz, 2016, p. 276). This would follow from the words of Albert Schulberg’s wife, an eyewitness to the crime. However, in her testimony we also read:

During that time we were visited by: Mr. Bernard Gutnajer, known to me personally as a dealer of antiques from Warsaw, as well as Professor Doctor Raszeja, whose first name I do not remember, a surgeon having been called [to attend] to my husband, who suffered from back pain. I do not rule out that Mr. Gutnajer, who had been informed by my husband about Doctor Raszeja’s visit, was there with the aim of talking over questions of trade the details of which were not known to me (Cieślińska-Lobkowitz, 2016, p. 271).

Bernard Gutnajer’s wife was convinced that her husband visited Schulberg “with the intention of selling several pieces of jewellery and gold dollars” (Cieślińska-Lobkowitz, 2016, p. 275), whereas Gutnajer’s daughter-in-law spoke of the sale of “some personal items of jewellery, and also of at least some gold dollar coins” (Cieślińska-Lobkowitz, 2016, p. 271). From the testimonies of Bernard Gutnajer’s daughter-in-law and Albert Schulberg’s wife, given independently of each other, we know with complete certainty this much: Gutnajer’s visit to Schulberg’s not only took place at the same time as Raszeja’s visit but was also directly linked to it. In other words, Gutnajer went to Schulberg with valuables because of Raszeja’s visit. We also know that, whereas Raszeja went to the ghetto with a legal permit, Gutnajer’s expedition to Schulberg took place *in extremis* “because it was already unsafe then for men to show themselves on the street” (Cieślińska-Lobkowitz, 2016, p. 270).

What did the Germans who perpetrated the crime on Chłodna Street know? They knew definitely that Raszeja would visit Schulberg. They knew the day and the hour of his visit. Their appearance at the apartment of the Lwów antiquarian at this exact moment is hardly a coincidence. The murder on Chłodna Street was intertwined with robbery. As Bernard Gutnajer’s daughter-in-law concludes: “Of course everybody who was killed [...] was completely robbed by the SS men of all valuables in their possession” (Cieślińska-Lobkowitz, 2016, p. 269). From the German perspective, the hierarchy of priorities looked different and in this light, it was the robbery on Chłodna Street that was intertwined with murder, which was a sideshow, not a goal in itself. Indeed, the Germans did shoot to death the men who happened to be in the apartment, yet they left the women alive.

Putting the suppositions and the circumstantial evidence aside, Franciszek Raszeja’s visit to Albert Schulberg’s on the first day of the “Great Action” was not an altruistic act of help to a neighbor that it is regarded to have been, but – in keeping with the principle of the presumption of innocence as well as the most benevolent interpretation – a form of highly paid luxury service. Perhaps medical in nature. The anonymity of the remaining victims of the crime can be explained twofold. What posed a threat to the beautiful legend serving the Polish *Arisches Geschäft* was not one but two antiquarians

imprisoned in the ghetto, whose names were widely known on both sides of the wall as synonyms for extensive deals and sizable money. It is noteworthy that this subject matter appears in *The Pianist* in a version as ostentatious as it is decontextualized, in the form of the antisemitic phantasm of an anonymous Jew with a golden coin. I am thinking here of the elaborate episode in the coffeehouse Sztuka (Art), memorable both for the “Second Coming” of Zbigniew Zamachowski (in Andrzej Wajda’s *Korczak* he had appeared in a coffeehouse scene involving money) and for the reproduction of a well-internalized antisemitic pattern. Thus ends the postscript from 2019.

To return to the confirmation of the dominant majority narrative by Polański’s film: admittedly, there are in *The Pianist* Poles, two in total, who are not good – because “bad” would be an exaggeration: the deceitful purchaser of the piano and the deceitful radio technician who is supposed to look after Szpilman in his hiding place for some time. Both are presented in an abject way. This is, however, nothing in comparison with the figures of the morally repulsive Jews – the prominent smuggler and the member of the Ordnungsdienst – who are depicted on screen. No less important are the abject Jews about whom there is talk in the film: the remaining smugglers, the remaining Ordnungsdienst members, the passive mass being led to its death like “sheep to the slaughter.” There was no shortage of icing on the cake of phantasma either: American Jews, the mythical Jewish lobby consisting of mythical Jewish bankers. And since we are dealing here with a first class device, the Jews themselves inform us about the depth of the moral abyss filled with this entire monstrosity. The father of the main character utters the sacramental formula constituting the emblematic sign of the majority discourse about the Holocaust:

I blame the Americans. American Jews. And there are lots of them. What have they done for us? What do they think they are doing? People here are dying. Haven’t got a bite to eat. The Jewish bankers over there should be persuading America to declare war on Germany.

The brother of the main protagonist in turn speaks the language of the clandestine ghetto press edited by young people whose gender was male and who were members of different political organizations, socialized in a system of rigid reference to the ideals of the majority, among them the honor-dignity paradigm, which they considered emancipatory. In the realities of the ghetto, the abject of this paradigm turned out to be the Jews leading “a Jewish war” – i.e. the struggle for survival by all means available and at all costs – instead of a war for higher values, worthy of human beings. In the scene at the Umschlagplatz the same Henryk Szpilman even speaks to us with the words of Shylock from *The Merchant of Venice*, commenting on the problem of proverbial Jewish passivity. What interests him in the face of impending death is the question of whether Jews are human beings, since they do not respond to the blows inflicted upon them. For all its antisemitic load, *The Merchant of Venice* is more honest insofar as it shows to the full the context and consequences of a Jew striving to return the blow to the Christians.

The omissions constitute a part of *The Pianist* that is no less important than what can be viewed on-screen. Their list is long and symptomatic in the sense that they all refer to the dependence of Jews on Poles. On the margins of the picture we can see individual blue policemen, sleepy and passive against the background of the Jewish Ordnungsdienst members, who are always in the role of the decision makers, always in action. No mention is made in the film of the fact that the Jewish Ordnungsdienst was subordinated to the collaborationist Polish blue police, whose commander, incidentally, was Jan Karski's brother. We do not learn anything about the role played in this formation by Jewish Christians, or more precisely by Christians who were classified as converted Jews subject to imprisonment in the ghetto. We do not learn that the Jewish Ordnungsdienst did not have police powers, that its members did not receive any salary, that after the first week of the "Great Action" – when it became clear what "resettlement to the East" really meant – they refused to continue serving, and that practically all of them were killed along with their families.

It is noteworthy that this diverges from the conceptualization outlined in Waldorff/Szpilman's *The Pianist*, in which we come across something more than mere discursive condemnations of the Ordnungsdienst on the basis of the honor-dignity paradigm. Apart from the Ordnungsdienst member who first shows an interest in the difficult material situation of the Szpilman family, later effecting Henryk Szpilman's release from custody, and finally rescuing the author of the memoirs from deportation, there is also an Ordnungsdienst member who – with the words "It is waiting for us all" (Szpilman, 2000, p. 109) – not only takes Władysław Szpilman in for the night after the deportation of his family to Treblinka, but also shows understanding and compassion for him. Both Ordnungsdienst members treat Szpilman in a completely disinterested manner.

Another strategic element of the picture painted by the film is smuggling, represented by the figure of the little smuggler and, contrasting with it, the figure of the wholesale smuggler. The child is killed (by Germans) while crawling through the hole in the wall, whereas the demoralized adult prospers, doing business in a ghetto restaurant guarded by the demoralized Jewish Ordnungsdienst. The rich do not even think about the poor who die directly on the streets. It is not difficult to arrange these facts in a sequence of causes and effects. The Polish majority audience does not need to watch *The Pianist* to know that this is exactly how it was.

The fact that smuggled goods constituted 98% of the overall supply of the ghetto would come as a shock to them. As one of the prisoners wrote

It should be emphasized most strongly that the ghetto's food supply relied exclusively on smuggling. Without this, the ghetto would have been subject to self-liquidation much earlier, and General Stroop would have been deprived of his medal (Engelking & Leociak, 2009, p. 447).¹¹⁶

116 Cited from: Tadeusz Szymkiewicz [Tadeusz Szymel], *Ja to przeżyłem: Wspomnienia i refleksje z getta warszawskiego: (Warszawa w latach 1939–1944)*, Yad Vashem Archives, reference code E/258. The author of the quoted subchapter of *The Warsaw Ghetto. A Guide to the Perished City* (3.3 "Smuggling") is Barbara Engelking.

A significant role in the smuggling was played by the Jewish Ordnungsdienst bribing the Polish police and German gendarmerie, both of which guarded the ghetto gates and both of which were greedy for additional earnings, whereas for the Jewish Ordnungsdienst members this was often their only source of income. Jerzy Jurandot, to a large extent distancing himself from the established way of thinking about the ghetto, writes about the participation of Ordnungsdienst members in the smuggling of food that “when it came to organising the smuggling [...] you could not deny” that they “did a great job.” In his opinion, “they took on themselves the most responsible part of the work” (Jurandot, 2015c, pp. 93–94). They would sometimes be shot for that by the Germans:

In the place of the executed [...] others appeared and the smuggling continued. Fighting it was hopeless since the lives of half a million people were at stake (Jurandot, 2015c, p. 108).

Jurandot also writes about “wholesale [s]mugglers who had turned grey in battle” (Jurandot, 2015b, p. 255).

As far as the general perception goes, the profits made from this situation by the Germans are not hard to imagine. What does remain beyond knowledge and imagination is the scale of Polish business done with the ghetto, on terms nothing short of robbery:

The smuggling followed a great arch from Parysiak [colloquial name for Parysowski Square] to Leszno Street. Eternal circulation, commotion, shouts, calls from the windows of the ghetto to the windows on “that” side, bargains, arguments of rivals, the crying of the losers, the rumblings of carts, the bustling – did not stop, not even for a moment. Even the quiet of Jewish holiday evenings was shattered by the choir of the paupers calling out to the hearts of the wealthy.

The ghetto lived on Warsaw – Warsaw lived on the ghetto. Everybody knew about it, everybody took advantage of it, apart from those pure ones, who while taking advantage of it, did not want to know about it. Warsaw still lived on the ghetto long after its death – until its own end. The ghetto was the heart of Warsaw. In constant pulsation, it received and doled out: through guards, hiding places [*mety*], holes – like through the aortae, arteries and countless branches of veins, to the reviving capillaries, feeding the most secret soft tissues of the city. Through checkpoints manned by bribed guards the smuggling went on in cars, trolleys, carts, and hearses. The smuggling went through permanent hiding places [*mety*]: secret passages in Aryan areas adjacent to the ghetto; it went through holes in the wall – knocked out and walled up again a dozen times in the course of one night; the smuggling [went] through the sewer system and gutters under the wall; finally, the smuggling went through the wall spiked with glass, any point of which over a space of several dozens of kilometers of guarded circumference – at any one time – could be crossed in exchange for money and at the risk of one’s life. [...]

The process of the conversion of smuggling into money and money into one thing or another affected everybody. Everybody was a link in this chain (Hering, 2011, pp. 36–37, 39).¹¹⁷

117 In his *City of the Damned*, cited above, Jurandot paints a similar picture (Jurandot, 2015c). Both texts – Hering’s and Jurandot’s – were published in the second decade of the twenty-first century, i.e. seventy years after the described events.

Meanwhile, in the version of the events currently in force, smuggling and trading of personal assets take place within a social void. Nobody knows how and whence goods get through to the ghetto, apart from the final phase of the process within the walls. The same goes for the trading of personal assets. The same goes for the attitude of the “Aryan side” toward the members of the work details forced to do work outside the ghetto, so different in Polański’s *The Pianist* from the one in Waldorff/Szpilman’s *The Pianist*. The same goes for the question of where God was, in a situation where – despite the permanently closed church archives – we know well where the Church was. Not to mention the fact that as a result of constructing the film scenery in the Warsaw district of Praga, the building of the Saint Carolus Borromeus’ Catholic Church, which is inseparable from the real footbridge, has disappeared from the film image. The examples of the facelift of one’s image – already numerous in the book – become the rule in the film, with no exception.

From the perspective of the Polish dominant majority, the film *The Pianist* is a narrative that is both comfortable and safe. The guarantee of safety is provided by manifold concealments as well as the patching in by Polański of the Polish witness, a key figure of Polish innocence. The director has thus visualized Hilberg’s triad of perpetrators, victims, and bystanders – at considerable costs for the victims, which was characteristic of Hilberg’s thinking as well, until he came into contact with the diary of the chairman of the Warsaw Judenrat, Adam Czerniaków. The footbridge is of special importance in this image, as a visualization of a rigorous tri-partite division, and thus a kind of distributor of roles and at the same time an alibi – verified positively in the so-called West. The phantasmatic figures of Jan Karski and Irena Sendlerowa as the emblematic (and thus representative of Polish society as a whole) Polish Righteous have come to fulfill the same role in roughly the same period.

Polański acted like a sapper who used all his know-how in order not to detonate the charge but to defuse it. Referring to Marshall McLuhan’s vocabulary, one can say that he cooled down the Holocaust. He did this in relation to that aspect of it which remains poignant – not to say: burning – in Poland.¹¹⁸ *The Pianist* played a decisive part in the decontextualization and the legitimization of decontextualizing the Holocaust. Polański proposed an unproblematic conceptualization of the Holocaust – unproblematic from the dominant Polish point of view. Instead of a modification of the dominant narrative, he ushered in a process of its superficial transformation. The Holocaust was decontextualized and – given the happy ending to the main character’s adventures, to the strains of Frédéric Chopin – perhaps also hollowed out of its meaning. As such, it proved fit for inclusion in the dominant narrative without infringing its rules.

118 At the same time, in a text about the American mini-series *Holocaust* (1978), Baudrillard considered the Holocaust as a cold event, with attempts being undertaken to warm it up by means of cold media – which for this very reason prove unsuccessful: “One attempts to rekindle a cold historical event [...] to rekindle this cold event through a cold medium, television, and for the masses who are themselves cold, who will only have the opportunity for a tactile thrill and posthumous emotion, a deterrent thrill as well, which will make them spill into forgetting with a kind of good aesthetic conscience of the catastrophe” (Baudrillard, 1994b, p. 53).

As a result of Polański's film, the bridge over Chłodna Street – an emblem of the ghetto and indirectly of the Holocaust – ceased to be a threatening sign. Previously, its image had accompanied the discourse on the Polish witness to the Holocaust. It featured on the covers of books such as Jan Błoński's *Biedni Polacy patrzą na getto* [Poor Poles Look at the Ghetto] or *Juifs et Polonais* [Jews and Poles], edited by Jean-Charles Szurek and Annette Wieviorka. This was, however, not enough to soothe that fear named and described by Grzegorz Niziołek and connected with every single narrative about the Holocaust, namely the “fear that this account will inevitably, sooner or later, reveal Polish participation in the process of the Holocaust” (Niziołek, 2019, p. 120). After *The Pianist*, the bridge over Chłodna Street lost its potential for ob-scenity and was tamed. It became the sign of a safe narrative. One could thus turn one's gaze towards it with a feeling of complete safety. This, I think, is why it was granted, without pain and difficulty, the right of citizenship and a place in public space: the real, physical space of the Polish capital and the symbolic space of the Polish narrative. From that time on – mutated according to the precept established by *The Pianist* – it not only began to take root in the Polish ground but also revealed its potential as a tourist attraction and an export commodity. It provided the members of the dominant group with the possibility of “indulging in retrospective hallucination” – no longer only individually but also collectively.

The Bridge over Chłodna Street (2011): In Situ Reconstruction of a Dislocated Reconstruction

The inauguration of the symbolic reconstruction of the bridge over Chłodna Street took place in a festive atmosphere. The event was eternalized in a press report under the title “Stare klimaty na odnowionej Chłodnej” [Old Vibes on Renovated Chłodna Street], and it resembled a festival of Freudian slips, if not a parade of ghouls, which the Foreign Consultant himself would not hesitate to host at his apartment on Sadovaya Street in Moscow:

There were also politicians doing pre-election campaigning, there was music, and bread with lard. [...] The renovated Chłodna Street changed into a bazaar for Saturday's opening. [...] “How much is a kilo of this sausage? And the bacon, how much does it cost?” inquired the residents of [the district of] Wola. [...] Guided tours of Chłodna Street were offered. There were old automobiles on the street. [...] Next to them stood a blue policeman, as if from the prewar times or the time of the occupation.

“Here was the ghetto wall, there the bunker,” reminisces Mr. Henryk Moszczyński, eating cake from the Baptists. He recalled that closer to Żelazna Street had stood a wooden bridge, connecting the small ghetto and the large ghetto, in the place where the metal posts symbolizing this crossing are today. He recounts how, as a sixteen-year-old, during the time of the Warsaw Uprising he landed in a work camp in Gross Wartenberg in Lower Silesia (Syców). From Wola he remembers the shooting of ten people (“I saw it with my own eyes”) and the

smell of burning corpses during the Wola massacre. "They have renovated Chłodna Street so nicely. I bought some home-brew there, excuse me, fruit liqueur, and bacon. Would you like to try?," he asks (Bartoszewicz, 2011b, p. 8).

The subtenant voice appears in its traditional *emploi*:

On the square in front of the church, Ms. Mira (she does not want to mention her surname to *Gazeta [Wyborcza]*) says: "I am from the Jews [*Ja jestem z Żydów*]. Three years ago, the party on Chłodna Street was cheerful. There were boards [a wooden dancefloor], one could dance. There was tripe soup. It was nice, some heart was put into it so that people would cheer up. And today, this atmosphere is gone" (Bartoszewicz, 2011b, p. 8).

And this despite the fact that in the press photograph one can clearly see a couple of dancers whirling on Father Jerzy Square with the figure of the Gracious Mother of God and the outline of the Saint Carolus Borromeus' Roman Catholic Church in the background. Be that as it may, it was and will certainly not be easy to equal the dances organized on Chłodna Street during a time when one danced for significantly higher stakes, and, last but not least, the tripe soup made from humans that had previously been subjected to dietary rigor. A speciality of German cuisine.

The symbolic reconstruction of the ghetto bridge constituted the crowning achievement of the so-called revitalization of the street, impatiently awaited and announced in the press as a return to the "true and beautiful old Chłodna Street" (Majewski, 2009, p. 5). The designer of the installation was Tomasz Lec. Krzysztof Pasternak's topometric investigations enabled it to be situated exactly in the place of the wooden ghetto bridge. On the pavement, on both sides of the street, vertical projections of steps were precisely marked using basalt stones. A new element was also added to the already existing commemoration of the course of the ghetto borders. The cast-iron incrustation in the pavement from the year 2008 corresponds to the course the wall took in 1940. In January 1942, however, in connection with the reorganization of the traffic at the crossroads and the building of the bridge, the wall was moved: it was dismantled and erected anew, closer to the middle of the street, extending part of the pavement in such a way as to make space for the construction of the steps of the new structure. The entries in Czerniaków's diary concerning the breaking, by the Christian population, of the windowpanes in the ghetto houses originate from this time. In the twenty-first century, the two-phase operation of the division of space was repeated: in 2011, a twin memorial with the inscription "Mur Getta styczeń–sierpień / Ghetto Wall January–August 1942" was added to the incrustation that had been set into the pavement in 2008. Two pairs of spans in the original position correspond to the main part of the bridge. They were made from patinated bronze, the texture of which is meant to resemble wooden beams. The dimensions of the reconstruction are identical to the dimensions of the original. Between the spans, over the street, at the height of the platform of the ghetto bridge, fibre-optic cables have been stretched across. At night, they are illuminated in a delicate, phosphorescent light.

The ornamental construction made from patinated cast-iron variegated by fiber-optic cables – the quintessence of today's revitalization style – only works fully as an element of a set. One can consider it as an emblem or the crowning of a process instituted on the eastern side of the street. As a result, to quote Eleonora Bergman's observation, "Chłodna Street became colder" (*Chłodna stała się bardziej chłodna*). The postwar trees¹¹⁹ in the square in front of the church were uprooted and replaced with a low hedge, trimmed according to the spirit level. The aim of the operation was to expose the façade of the building. In contrast, the farther part of the square – previously deprived of trees – has been covered with low-lying acacia bushes in the form of geometric figures. Whether or not the aim here was to eclipse the crucifix, perhaps considered as a troublesome symbolic intervention, nobody knows. What is certain, however, is that the result of the operation was indeed the hiding from view of the crucifix. Flower beds have been implemented. Flowers instituted in the flower beds. A part of the roadway has been permanently closed off to traffic.

The new street has been invested with clinker brick, pavement slabs and cobblestone of different colors and forms with which the divisions and sections have been marked in the ground: the boundaries of the ghetto near Żelazna Street and the former exit of Biała Street, and also the borders of the plots, and therefore the non-existing buildings formerly forming a continuous frontage. Two places connected with Polish heroic history, namely the German bunkers conquered in heavy fighting during the uprising of 1944 have also been marked: on Chłodna Street at the exit of Waliców Street and the second one adjacent to the surviving building of the former Nordwache at the crossings of Chłodna and Żelazna Streets. With a view of the symbolic reconstruction of the bridge, both markings were placed there a year before the reconstruction was put up. The second of them duplicates the plaque – described above – in honor of the AK battalion "Chrobry" under the command of Captain "Sosna." What has thus been visualized – made visible – is a palimpsest of time layers and events corresponding to them. In the middle of this great symbolic accumulation, café terraces are set up during the summer. In winter, there are Christmas markets offering traditional smoked cheese made from ewe's milk from the Tatra Mountains (*oscyпки*) along with Christmas carols. At the Waliców Street exit, one can find a richly decorated and lit-up Christmas tree sponsored by big corporations.

The western side of Chłodna Street – from Żelazna Street to Towarowa Street – and its eastern side – from Jana Pawła II Avenue (former Juliana Marchlewskiego Avenue) to Żelazna Street – are like night and day. Save for the skyscraper on Towarowa Street between Chłodna and Kotlarska (former Krochmalna) Streets and the apartment build-

119 The permission for the cutting down of the trees was granted by Warsaw's Conservator of Historic Monuments (Stołeczny Konserwator Zabytków) – decision no. 91/Z of March 17, 2010. The other decisions of the Conservator connected with the revitalization of Chłodna Street were: permission for carrying out works (decision no. 2163N/09 of December 18, 2009) and permission for carrying out archeological research (decision no. 21A/09 of March 8, 2010). The erection of the footbridge installation also required a building permit issued by the President of Warsaw (decision no. 87/N/10 of March 23, 2010).

ing on the northern side of Chłodna and Wronia Streets, the surge of skyscrapers and apartment buildings (or “suite buildings,” *apartamentowce*) has not yet truly affected this neighborhood. On the section leading from Żelazna Street to Towarowa Street we have dispersed fragments of a prewar tenement area, a so-called thousand-year school (*szkoła tysiąclatka*, one of a series of schools built in the 1960s to commemorate a thousand years of the Polish state – *Tysiąclecie Państwa Polskiego*), and the architecture of makeshift pavilions offering cheap gastronomy, car repairs and sex for money. Behind this essentially frail façade of dusty decorations stretch out the remains of a battlefield (*pobojowisko*), typical for postwar Warsaw and dubbed Wild West. The uneven surface and the hollows are overgrown with straggly flora, which constitutes a refugium for numerous species of animals, among them birds and particularly magnificent golden foxes. The aroma of the meadow exuded by grass, herbs and arid or wet soil crosses with the smell of rusting scrap metal as well as humidity and mould which waft from the gulf of what is left of the tenement houses on Wronia Street, the doors and windows of which have been boarded up.

In this context, even the commemoration of the ghetto border near the junction of Chłodna and Wronia Streets – identical with the format of the whole series, and thus commensurate with the idea of European standards – disappears among the tyres scattered around, gets lost in the unevenness of the pavement, and vanishes into the blackened façade of the solitary prewar tenement at No. 41. Similarly, there is the case of the plaque recording the martyrdom of the civilian population of the Wola district in the 1944 uprising and the neighboring commemoration of the Polish – that is, the non-Jewish – history of the no longer existing J. and M. Roesler National Trading School for Men.¹²⁰ The two artefacts, both located on the plot at 33 Chłodna Street, fade away in the thicket and in the recesses of the surrounding improvised buildings. The western side of the street is a synonym for qualities commonly defined as an eyesore and as cringe-making (*obciach*), seen as a glaring negation of modernization and associated with poverty. While in the neoliberal socio-economic order, poverty, together with its causes, is considered normal, its manifestations are painstakingly removed from the field of vision. It would therefore be difficult to imagine that an eye-catching luxury commemorative gadget that is the reconstruction of the bridge over Chłodna Street could be placed in a similar context.

Most revitalization practices, including the particular case of the symbolic reconstruction on the crossroads of Chłodna and Żelazna Streets, fall squarely within the category of *glamour*,¹²¹ which creates its own world on the antipodes of realness (*real-*

120 The building has also its own ghetto history, which included it being the first *intra muros* domicile of Stefania Wilczyńska and Janusz Korczak’s orphanage – after deportation from 92 Krochmalna Street, before deportation to 16 Sienna Street.

121 Iwona Kurz uses the term “insurgent *glamour*” (*glamour powstańczy*) to denote a set of practices meant to commemorate and popularize the Warsaw Uprising of 1944 (see Kurz, 2016, pp. 269–284). Note that the *glamour*-type processing of Polish heroism and of Jewish martyrdom both fall under patriotic *glamour*: what is at stake in both cases is the image of Poland and the Poles.

ność): of corporeality or of the social-economic *concretum*. The installation by Tomasz Lec is a ghetto bridge in a demo version. Hygienic, neat, and even luminous. Except for the meticulously recreated positioning and dimensions, it has nothing to do with the crowds, the dirt, the stench and also the streams of mud, flowing down from the original wooden construction on wet days. In physical contact with the reconstruction, we do not run the risk that a splinter from poorly planed plank of wood will get stuck in our body. We also do not run the risk of any sort of splinter getting stuck in our souls. Today's bridge has been conceived as a piece of salon furniture. This is how it was described in the press report entitled "Salon z ziemi wolskiej" [Salon from the Land of Wola]. The section dealing with the installation carries the title "Most z muzyczką" [A Bridge with a Tune].

Yesterday, the authorities of Wola boasted about the district salon, costing 13 million. Every district would like to have a salon like that. [...] The civil servants started praising the [visible] changes at the junction of [Chłodna Street and] Żelazna Street centered around four mega posts. [...] Contained in the posts are peepholes as in a Kaiserpanorama¹²² [fotoplastykon]. On the stereoscopic photos with captions one can see the walls of the ghetto and the bridge from the time of the German occupation. "The handle [used] to rotate the photographs [to switch them] is at the bottom. And when one presses the button, there's a tune [...]," explained Ryszard Modzelewski, the deputy mayor of Wola. In other words, it is a multimedia [device] and it is modern. [...] "All the residents are invited to the opening on October 1. There will be a party recreating the atmosphere of the interwar period. Tunes, musicians, and fiddles," are [among] the enticements offered by mayor Modzelewski (Bartoszewicz, 2011a, p. 1).¹²³

122 Translator's note: For further information on the entertainment medium called Kaiserpanorama, mainly used in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, in which stereoscopic photographic images were displayed through pairs of lenses, see: Kaiserpanorama, n.d.

123 "Let's have a look at what's beneath our feet. What a wealth of forms, colors and patterns! There are strips made of red clinker brick which indicate the frontages of the non-existent buildings and entrance gates (unintelligible due to a lack of indication). There are also stone appliques with the numbers of the former properties (another mystery), small yards laid out of darker bricks, road verges made of grey-colored granite bricks, strips of black basalt bricks (symbolizing the steps going up to the ghetto bridge), historic cobblestone rows, rectangular and square flagstones, paving made of red granite like on Krakowskie Przedmieście etc. This whole multitude is to be found within a span of just several footsteps. [...] None of this adds up to any intelligible image. In such a diverse space, a simple 'floor' would have worked out better; it is, after all, not the Royal Route with intelligible lines and divisions" (Bartoszewicz, 2011a, p. 1). This journalistic criticism nevertheless came into conflict with the enthusiasm of a user: "I take great delight in walking that way daily. [...] For lovers of pavements in one color, there is always the second half of Chłodna Street, on the other side of Żelazna Street" (Krankowski, 2011, p. 4). The phenomenon of pavements in public places as a symptom of the state of the culture and society of the Third Polish Republic – in the context of attempts at modernized revitalization – has recently been discussed by a prose writer and urban activist: "At the beginning of the 1990s, a phenomenon emerged in Polish practice of conservation called retroversion [*retrowersja*], consisting in creating imitations of the architecture of old periods. The conservators utterly loved this form of entertainment. [...]. Within the framework of this very practice they not only accept but often also initiate the construction from paving blocks. Everywhere in Poland, on pavements and in public places one can behold genuine orgies of small squares and small circles, fans and peacock tails, strips, curlicues and short zig-zags. [...] In the historic center of Paris the majority of pavements have a surface... of asphalt! Unceremoniously, the old cobble pavement has been covered with asphalt. Everybody who wanders around the capital city of France knows how comfortable it is to walk on such pavements. And what about the aesthetic effect? Well, the effect is that walking down the street, we do not even pay attention to the pavement. And this is precisely the point [...]. The designers of Polish pavements apparently think that their functionality must clash with aesthetics, and in addition they draw from this the absurd conclusion that one therefore has to assign primacy to aesthetics over functionality. A pavement is, first and foremost, [designed] to decorate the street. It is not supposed to be comfortable. [...] One thing is certain: one cannot build a harmonic city without taking attentive care of basic details such as a comfortable pavement. Poorly executed parts can never make up a beautiful and a well-

The new, better bridge over Chłodna Street is also a sort of sarcophagus. *Sarcophagus* means “flesh eater.” Its purpose is to absorb that which is ephemeral, subject to decomposition, unclear, and then to produce an incorporeal image of the consumed. Having put in that which is menacing and beyond control, we take out the safe and the tamed. In literal terms, what appears within our field of vision is not a decomposing body but instead the phosphorescent contour of a skeleton. It is such a phosphorescent skeleton that we are dealing with at the crossroads of Chłodna and Żelazna Streets. As it is a ghost from a cartoon, and we are the cartoon’s authors, we do not have any reason to be afraid of it, or we can pretend to be afraid of it, we can be afraid of it from a safe distance. Distance – according to the Kantian definition of beauty and sublimity – transforms our fear into an aesthetical experience, a source of enjoyment. The status of distance in a reconstruction is a subject of reflection conducted in the artistic field. Katarzyna Urbańska gives an account of this:

Why does the artist revive an image of suffering, evoke this specter, which at the same time haunts and enraptures us? There is in this mixture of realism with evocativeness and aestheticization a specific kind of pornography, pointing to the ambivalence of the gesture of commemoration, which pushes away and creates distance, but at the same time gives the spectator the possibility of coming close, of a cool examination of the destruction, and of deriving perverse enjoyment from communing with the past. [...] If we have so many layers of reconfiguration and new narratives, do we have any sort of access to the past? And, looking more broadly, do the archives, the museums, and in particular the photographs not bring with them the same risk of falsification, mediation, and unconscious creation and projection? (Urbańska, 2014a, unpaginated).¹²⁴

Thus, what we are dealing with here is an act of getting closer which moves away, an unmasking which masks, a making real which makes unreal. The ghetto which appears in front of our eyes performs its own exorcism.

A significant challenge in relation to the symbolic reconstruction on Chłodna Street was to make it visually attractive, which would translate into audience ratings. Tomasz Lec expressed this as follows:

I have tried to sculpt a form that would be a place for contemplation, a structure open to various interpretations. This is why what has emerged is an object subject to constant transformations: it is different in the sunlight, different in rain, different at night. An object which does not bore people (Kosiewski & Lec, 2013, p. 29).

functioning whole. For the time being, the creation of the latter absolutely surpasses our capabilities” (Pacholski, 2015, p. 18).

124 Translator’s note: This is my translation from the Polish. See also the English translation *To Dream Lucidly*, published in the catalogue of Robert Kuśmirowski’s exhibition *Träumgutstraße* (Akademia Sztuk Pięknych w Warszawie, Salon Akademii, 11 September to 11 October 2014; curator: Katarzyna Urbańska: Urbańska, 2014b, pp. LXXII–LXXX). The passage in question has been translated as follows: “[...] one may wonder why the artist has decided to resurrect this image of suffering – this phantasm that is frightening and beautiful at the same time? In this mixture of realism, suggestiveness and aestheticization, there is a kind of pornography that reveals the ambivalence of the artist’s commemorative gesture which, on the hand, creates distance while at the same time allowing the viewers to come closer, to take a cold look at the destruction and find perverse pleasure in communing with the past” (Urbańska, 2014b, p. LXXIII).

The object of contemplation that Lec is talking about here is the afterimage of the highly processed narrative palimpsest offered by Polański's *The Pianist*. Thanks to this, it is a place where the dominant group can retroactively project and at the same time embrace its idealized image with a nostalgic gaze. What would, then, constitute a negation of boredom or a safeguard against it? What would meet the exorbitant demands of spectacularity, which currently spare practically nothing? The creator of the installation decided that it should be a *fotoplastykon* (Kaiserpanorama) installed in the spans of the bridge.¹²⁵ With a pair of magnifying glasses, views selected manually by use of a handle, as well as background music. Just like the one on Jerusalem Alley (Aleje Jerozolimskie) in Warsaw, only it's on Chłodna Street. And how does the new *fotoplastykon* fare? The installation on the crossroads of Chłodna and Żelazna Streets is one big interpellation. It entices with a description of its qualities. It urges people to act and instructs in two languages: "Obróć pokrętko na spodzie i ustaw obraz stereo (4 slajdy)"¹²⁶ / Turn the knob underneath until you see all 4 slides in 3 D." The brass binoculars feature the ornamental inscription "1942." The mysterious button underneath the inscription rivets the eyes with a red light.

We are dealing here with the directing – emotional formatting – of perception. By way of comparison: Bergman and Lec's photographs on the stelae are uncovered and overt. Their presentation is raw and informative. The photographs in the spans of the bridge are hidden, one has to bend over and look through a hole. This endows them with an aura of secrecy and uncanniness specific to a situation of pure voyeurism. This form of presentation works like a lure, the promise of revealing a secret, a sort of announcement of "Attention, a surprise!" We walk up to the optical dispositive already intrigued and excited in advance. This intrigued and excited state is connected with the Jews and the images of their suffering. It is hard not to notice here the repetition of a collective gesture or a cultural script of gawking, ritual gawking at a predictable thing: at exactly this and no other kind of show or spectacle, at which one can and one is free to gawk with a clear conscience (*spokój ducha*), precisely as if at a show. The show itself is preceded by the act of the gathering together of the audience, as described so many times in Holocaust testimonies. To give but two most well-known examples: the short story *Przy torze kolejowym* (*By the Railway Track*) by Zofia Nałkowska or the account of spectators, i.e. indirect perpetrators, of the execution of Henryk Grynberg's one-and-a-half-year-old brother. The thing has its premodern antecedents, about which Joanna Tokarska-Bakir writes as follows:

125 It is noteworthy that the mechanical image being the source of the reconstruction also appears here as the crowning of the reconstruction. Usually, it is the reconstruction that crowns – replicates and strengthens – the existence of a mechanical image. Analyzing this regularity, Katarzyna Urbańska raises a question worth quoting in order to complete this critical perspective: "If photographs or archives give us the impression of bringing back the past and make us feel as if the dead had become present again, then does the physical reconstruction of the object bring us even closer to this past?" (Urbańska, 2014a, p. XLIII).

126 The Polish version translates as: "Turn the knob underneath to set [i.e. select] the stereo image (4 slides)."

“Well, when our synagogue was burning, everybody ran to observe what will happen there...” [Zbiór Wiadomości do Antropologii Krajowej, vol. 4: 1880, p. 201; the text is also repeated in Kolberg’s writings – footnote by J.T.B.] – this is how one of the gawkers recollects the fire of the synagogue in Pogórze. This situation is as clear as day: a community (*gromada*) stands before the burning building, not even pretending to help to extinguish the fire. They are watching what “will happen there” (Tokarska-Bakir, 2004b, p. 67).

After the Holocaust, to gawk at Jewish suffering is an extremely loaded act, which – it would seem – should be tantamount to its loss of previous socio-cultural legitimacy (*prawomocność*). In practice, as implemented on Chłodna Street, it looks, however, completely different. The repetition – or re-enactment – of the situation together with its choreography amounts to an acknowledgement of its legitimacy or restitution of its legitimacy.

The Kaiserpanorama (*fotoplastykon*) provided access to photographic views of distant countries, supposedly savage people, wild animals, also pornography. Here, it’s the Nazi photographs of Chłodna Street and “the people with armbands” on the bridge that fulfill the role of exotica and the forbidden fruit. As the documentary film-maker and writer Ruth Zylberman exclaimed, having looked through the hole to the interior and turned the handle: *Ça fait cabinet des curiosités!* One does not have to be an expert in critical theory to classify the elicited way of looking and being exposed to looking. Jerzy Jurandot, a user of the bridge, wrote:

Other people stand there, people without armbands, and look at us as if we’re animals in a zoo (Jurandot, 2015b, p. 253).

They looked at us with disgust or with pity, but not with human empathy. They looked at us with the pity a human might show an animal.

But one and the other were always humiliating [...] (Jurandot, 2015a, p. 281).

The origin of the viewed images is no secret to anybody:

Every so often a beautiful civilian car would drive along the streets of the ghetto, packed with officers and their dressed-up companions. Cameras clicked, comments were passed. The comments must have been witty because amusement was visible on all their faces.

We hated these tourists no less than our tormentors. It is not nice to be made to feel like an animal in a zoo (Jurandot, 2015c, pp. 67–68).

In May 1942 the leaders of the Polish Underground State informed the Polish government in exile that: “Big tour coaches come here every day, taking [German – E.J.] soldiers around the ghetto as though it were a zoo. Upsetting the animals is all part of it. Often soldiers lean out of their vehicles and hit pedestrians with leather whips” (footnote 48 by Paweł Szapiro and Agnieszka Arnold, in: Jurandot, 2015c, p. 69).

The originators and sponsors of the *fotoplastykon* on Chłodna Street were scared off neither by the authorship of the original photographs nor the circumstances of their production. Analyzing what it means to install a voyeuristic dispositive with reference to the convention of the *peep show* in this exact place entails raising the question of

the viewer's identity. Pondering the question of who looks at whom here, through whose mediation and from what position, we realize that the perspective and the look of the spectator today overlap with the perspective and the look of the perpetrator back then. Moreover, the viewer holds in his hand a handle, which all the more confirms them in their role of Szlengel's "master of the situation." The Jews – incapacitated and humiliated, pinned down by the look of the perpetrator – parade for the viewer and according to his whim. The journey back in time to 1942 is offered as a package to tourists, along with the guarantee of safety and security. The viewers are protected from undesired association by the reconstructed bridge authenticating the truthfulness of Hilberg's triad, in which they are cast in the position of bystanders, helpless witnesses. The comfortable experience offered by the show is expressed graphically in one of the works by the group *Twożywo*: "TO NIE M(C)Y."¹²⁷ This, however, does not alter the fact that both then and now looking proves to be a form of power and violence as well as a source of enjoyment. After all, it was, and is, about enjoyment: entertainment and amusement, a tourist attraction that would ensure that people will not get bored. The creators and sponsors of the open air theater of domination and subordination – and in fact, of unpunished sadism – fully deserve Jerzy Jurandot's comment:

A time of contempt? No, it was not even contempt anymore. It was complete and astonishing, naïve lack of awareness that this other was also a human being (Jurandot, 2015c, p. 65).

Here and then. Here and now.

At this point, I cannot refrain from a digression about the *Fotoplastykon Warszawski*, i.e. the Warsaw Kaiserpanorama (51 Aleje Jerozolimskie) and its representations. The original *Fotoplastykon Warszawski* has been elevated to the status of a branch of the Warsaw Rising Museum due to its merits to wartime underground activity. An entertainment venue in the service of the fatherland. It also appears in this role in feature films and in memoirs. In these, it is an invariably friendly interior with a discrete staff. An oasis and a niche, which – because of the semi-darkness which reigns in it – constitutes a tried and tested point of contact and guarantees respite from external threats. However, what has escaped the *Fotoplastykon* lovers' attention is the role it plays in Andrzej Wajda's *Samson* (1961). Jakub Gold, the film's protagonist, is the same age as the members of the Polish Scouting Association's underground paramilitary *Szare Szeregi* (Grey Ranks).¹²⁸ He has been through the ghetto benches at the Warsaw University of Technology (Politechnika Warszawska), the prewar Polish prison (*sanacyjne więzienie*), and the Warsaw ghetto. Having made his way from the ghetto to the "Aryan side," the first

¹²⁷ Translator's note: In Polish, *TO NIE M(C)Y* is a play upon words. "Nie my" means "not us." With the letter "c," "Nie mcy" reads "Niemcy," Germans. What we get in Polish by leaving out the letter "c" is thus: "It is not us." What we get by adding the latter "c" is: "It is the Germans."

¹²⁸ Wajda's film is a screen adaptation of the micro novel *Samson* (1953) by Kazimierz Brandys. In Brandys' novel, the prototype of the expulsion scene exists but it is set in an apartment and in a completely private context. In addition to that, the novelistic Jakub Gold is decisively older than the scout-soldiers of *Szare Szeregi*. Born in 1916, he is Brandys' *alter ego*.

interior in which he ends up is the Warsaw Fotoplastykon, a room which houses a stereoscopic theatre. Despite the semi-darkness, he is “recognized” in there, i.e. identified as a Jew, by a young female attendant, who demands that he immediately leave the place. Despite strenuous attempts, he does not succeed in negotiating (pleading, begging, trying to bum off) to be allowed to stay in the *fotoplastykon* until nightfall, when his face – brought outside – would be less visible to those whose way of looking made it lethal.

That, however, is not the end of the story. Trying to do something with himself until he leaves the interior – first and foremost figuring out where to look given that meeting his eyes is unendurable for the hostess of the place – the protagonist turns his attention to the lenses and the knobs of the Kaiserpanorama. There, views of Venice appear before his eyes, only the eyes are no longer his, they have become the eyes of the Jew produced by the phantasma of the majority. Venice. For an innocent eye – a typical, downright banal tourist attraction. For the stigmatized eye – an equivalent of stigma. In Wajda’s film, the Warsaw ghetto reflects itself in the ghetto of Venice: the largest ghetto in Europe meets the very first ghetto in Europe. The time loop closes and starts to tighten. The Fotoplastykon Warszawski of the time of the German occupation constitutes a threat to a Jew – literally and symbolically. It is a place of double cornering for him. While designing the investment on Chłodna Street, however, there was apparently no need to be concerned about the Jewish reverse side of the Polish narrative about a safe, patriotically enjoyable and useful fotoplastykon.¹²⁹ Here ends the digression.

Well, not quite. It is to be continued after all. On April 19, 2017, the anniversary of the uprising in the Warsaw ghetto, an exhibit entitled *The Warsaw Ghetto* was opened in the original Fotoplastykon Warszawski at 51 Aleje Jerozolimskie. On the walls of the room in which the *fotoplastykon* is situated, adverts of the original repertoire from the past were hung up: *Beijing, Vietnam, Ceylon. Egypt*. In other words, Asia and Africa in Eu-

129 The actual Fotoplastykon has also joined in the relay run of partly unproblematicized Holocaust memory, transforming into a spectacle the photographic output of one of the Polish collaborators who had photographed the ghetto from the inside. On the first page of the Warsaw supplement to *Gazeta Wyborcza* there was an image of people wearing the armbands on the ghetto bridge: “The photograph of the footbridge is one of the photos from the ghetto which have not so far been shown to the public. The Warsaw Rising Museum [Muzeum Powstania Warszawskiego, MPW] will soon do that. [...] The photographer kept a record of ‘German’ Warsaw [...]. He would also enter the ghetto where, probably on the occupier’s instructions, he documented on film the crowded streets, the paupers lying on the pavements, the junk market as well as piles of corpses thrown into collective graves. Hitler’s propaganda photographers made similar reports – as can be seen in the photographs of well-dressed ghetto inhabitants, who were supposed to offer evidence as to the alleged lack of a sense of community within Jewish society. However, the photos from the collection of the MPW were taken by a Pole. [...] On the 70th anniversary of the Jewish uprising, the MPW will show selected photos of the Jewish district by Bil-Biłażewski. They will soon appear in the Museum’s online photographic library (*fototeka*), from April 17 onwards they will be on display in the Fotoplastykon on 51 Aleje Jerozolimskie” (Urzykowski, 2013, p. 1). The context for Mieczysław Bil-Biłażewski’s work is provided by photographs from the album of an unknown soldier of the Luftwaffe, anonymous photos of the burning ghetto taken on the “Aryan” side, visuals from the Strop report as well as postwar views of the post-ghetto-space (*miejsce-po-getcie*, Jacek Leociak’s category) by Eugeniusz Haneman and Juliusz Bogdan Deczkowski. The press commentary testifies to the well-developed awareness of the specificity of the pictures described. Why then has the presentation of the material been transformed into a voyeuristic sensation, hand-cranked by a handle and with a tune?

rope. To the sounds of the soundtrack from Roman Polański's *The Pianist* a carousel with images revolved, until one's head spinned. A particular challenge under these conditions was to listen to *Grande Polonaise Brillante* by Frédéric Chopin. *Allegro molto*. At some point – whether irritated by the triumphant Chopin phrase, repeated over and over again, interchangeably with a klezmer phrase on a clarinet, or by accident – the attendant switched the music to prewar hits performed by Mieczysław Fogg. *Stos śmieci na podwórzu kamienicy / A pile of trash in a tenement's front yard* (1941–1942), *Mężczyzna żebrzący w podwórzu kamienicy przy ulicy Chłodnej 8 / A man begging in the yard of a tenement on 8 Chłodna St.* (1940), *Policja żydowska w getcie / The Jewish police in the ghetto* (1940–1942), *Schwytani powstańcy żydowscy (kwiecień–maj 1943) / Captured Jewish insurgents (April–May 1943)*. These and the remaining images¹³⁰ were paraded thereafter before the eyes of the viewers/voyeurs to the rhythm of the tango *Mały biały domek* [The Little White House],¹³¹ the piece of music which, daringly performed by Szymon Srebrnik, also opens Claude Lanzmann's film *Shoah*. In an adjoining room, one could admire an advertisement for Warsaw's Keret House. As one can see, Polish dominant culture, centered around the category of honor, also has a heightened sense of humiliation. Thus ends the postscript from 2017.¹³²

The improvements, diversifications of, as well as the supplements applied to the metal structure on Chłodna Street inevitably affect the status of the object. Because of the illustrated supplement, as well as the audio, the symbolic reconstruction of the ghetto bridge continually loses its symbolic character and leans toward literalness. From a sign it has metamorphosed into a simulation desiring to become the thing itself, the designatum. The photographs and the music quite literally attempt to revitalize, i.e. revive, the metal construction. In other words, they attempt to impose symptoms of life upon it. However, this reanimation resembles the colorization of a black-and-white photograph, a procedure that Roland Barthes – as mentioned before – compared to cosmetics applied to corpses. Having pressed the button with the red light, we hear the hubbub of the street, the bell of a tram, a clarinet phrase. Clarinet phrase is a trademark of klezmer music. Klezmer music, in turn, is a trademark of an imagined construct or product called Jewish culture, shaped by mass events called festivals of Jewish culture. This standardization, based on transforming a multiplicity into a unity, tailor-made

130 The junction of Żelazna and Chłodna Streets was (re)presented in two scenes: *Przechodnie i granatowi policjanci na skrzyżowaniu Chłodnej i Żelaznej. 1941 rok – autor nieznany / Passers-by and policemen of the Polish Police of the General Gouvernement on the intersection of Chłodna St. and Żelazna St., 1941* [author unknown] and *Kładka nad Chłodną (przy skrzyżowaniu z ul. Żelazną) łącząca duże i małe getto. Ujęcie z "aryjskiej" strony w kierunku zachodnim, 1942, autor: M. Bil-Biłażewski / Overpass above Chłodna St. (near the intersection with Żelazna St.) connecting the big and small ghetto[s]. A photo from the "Aryan" side westwards, 1942.*

131 Lyrics: Władysław Królikowski. Music: Zygmunt Adam Lewandowski. First performance: Mieczysław Fogg (1936).

132 I wish to thank Łukasz Mikołajewski who – transgressing the limits of his endurance – peeped at the *Warsaw Ghetto* in the Warsaw Fotoplastykon with me. We continued in this way our family sightseeing traditions. In the early 1960s, our Mums, Łódź dwellers of necessity and choice, not knowing each other, and thus independently from each other, admired the display of *Venice* in the Łódź Fotoplastykon. The Fotoplastykon Łódzki no longer exists. What has remained of it is the Fotoplastykon Warszawski scene in Andrzej Wajda's *Samson*, which was shot in Łódź.

to the average expectations of the majority group, has been termed klezmerization by Henryk Grynberg. What he means, I think, is the construction of an image of “the Jew”/ Jewishness as well as the designing of the modes of its visibility and audibility. The operation is generated by the expectation of a clear, visible and audible identity of the other/the stranger (*obcy*), thus enabling their recognition by the dominant majority. The clarinet phrase, then, would be a sort of identifier – the philosemitic version of the armband.

A not inconsiderable part of the phenomenon – in its philosemitic manifestation – also appears to be the enjoyment that the majority derives from the klezmerization of the minority. A significant component of the enjoyment lies in the fact that the Jews appearing through the glass and hand-cranked with a handle, with their Jewish music activated by the button – a little bit familiar (*swojscy*), a little bit Orientalized, a little bit Americanized – are kept at a safe emotional and mental distance, while remaining at the same time completely in the hands of their operators.¹³³ Again, this is a repetition of the historical structure founded on domination/subordination and the priority not to bore oneself and others, a priority which in this place has its historical antecedents:

If you walked down Żelazna Street, you could see a crowd of people on the corner of Chłodna Street at quite a distance [...] waiting for the police to be kind enough to stop the traffic. As the crowd grew so did its agitation, nervousness and restlessness, for the German guards were bored at their posts here, and tried to amuse themselves as best they could. One of their favourite entertainments was dancing. Musicians were fetched from the nearby side streets – the number of street bands grew with the general misery. The soldiers chose people out of the waiting crowd whose appearance they thought particularly comic and ordered them to dance waltzes. [...] The Germans stood around this “dance floor,” roaring with laughter and shouting, “Faster! Go on, faster! Everybody dance!” (Szpilman, 2000, p. 66–67)

The waltz is mentioned twice in the text by Waldorff/Szpilman. It does not appear, however, in Polański’s film, even though the scene itself has been preserved. On the cross-roads of Chłodna and Żelazna Streets, at a space called the *Tanzplatz* by the German guards, we hear a violin, an accordion and, sure enough, a clarinet – playing a melody from Jewish folk repertoire. The background sound in the exterior *fotoplastykon* is therefore an imitation of the soundtrack from *The Pianist* – in accordance with the assumption that *The Pianist* constitutes a point of reference for the whole installation. Without *The Pianist*, the transformation of the *ob*-scene into the scenic, of the cause of shame into a reason for pride – in a word, the application of the nineteenth century procedure of *egzymowanie*¹³⁴ of the area of the junction – would not have been possible.

133 The *fotoplastykon* on Chłodna Street is a sort of embodiment which constitutes a *dis*-embodiment according to a mechanism analyzed by Roland Barthes with reference to striptease. Striptease is not about the body but about the image of the body. It is a negation of contact and a “meticulous exorcism,” in the course of which the body “by the very situation on which the show is based, [is] in fact absorbed in a reassuring ritual which negates the flesh as surely as the vaccine or the taboo circumscribe and control the illness or the crime” (Barthes, 1991, p. 84). I wish to thank Tomasz Żukowski for drawing my attention to Barthes’ text.

134 *Ulice egzymowane* (“exempted streets”) were streets which could not be inhabited by Jews classified as non-assimilated. First introduced by a 1809 decree in Warsaw, with time they gave rise to Jewish districts in cities and towns throughout the Kingdom of Poland. For more information see: Żebrowski, n.d.

Characterizing the structure of the reconstruction, Katarzyna Urbańska writes:

Theoretically, [...] it has all that to which we are denied access by black-white-photography: weight, heaviness, mass, color, real dimensions. [...] [T]hat which is a product of the present time (*współczesność*) overlaps in a multilayered way the foundation with authentic history, brought to light by the illusion of its original substance. The fragment [...], the façade [...] become a false depository of the past, thanks to which in our own imagination we move “there,” being present and not present at the same time, suspended between fiction and fact. [...] This state brings to mind the [condition of] dream[ing] during which our relation to the past is disturbed, in which, as Segal writes: “Mobility and action are suspended and repressed desires seek expression ‘in a harmless hallucinatory experience’ [Freud] [Hanna Segal, *Dream, Phantasy and Art*, Routledge, London 1991, p. 2]” (Urbańska, 2014a, pp. XLVII–XLVIII).¹³⁵

The work of a reconstructionist artist is a formulation of a warning and a realization of a postulate:

imitating the pornographic strategy of revealing, of the plastic realization of our “desire to see” (“*chęć ujżenia*”), [the work] encourages us to engage in “dreaming,” to project our own subconscious contents on the matter of the past. [...] At the same time, however, the “artificial” character [...] of the reconstruction makes us dream consciously (*lucid dreaming*) and analyze the processes occurring in us when we look backwards and when we immerse ourselves in our own narrative and in our own ideas about the past (Urbańska, 2014a, p. XLVIII).¹³⁶

Robert Kuśmirowski is an artist who works in this spirit, classifying his work (*twórczość*) as psychoarchitecture:

Kuśmirowski’s work points to the voyeuristic and creative character of the act of peeping at history, to the fact that when we gain insight into that which draws us into the past, we project onto the observed object our unconscious desires. In this way, the process of physical, even sculptural formation of a quasi-historical object becomes the metaphor of political processes of forming collective memory and social identity (Urbańska, 2014a, p. XLVIII).¹³⁷

The reconstruction on Chłodna Street enables the majority to indulge in safe and comfortable fantasies about the past, meticulously blocking the mechanisms of consciousness. The voyeurism and projection involved in this – having so much in common with each other – situate the entirety (*całokształt*) of the situation within the field of pornography. The extreme objectifying of the object that stimulates these fantasies culminates here in an act of autistic autoeroticism. All’s well that ends well. The happy ending of the operation was foretold by the mayor of Warsaw’s Wola district, struggling in an unequal duel with the Polish language on behalf of the Wola District Administration:

Dear residents,

After many years, we have finally begun the revitalization of Chłodna Street on the section from Żelazna Street to John Paul II Avenue [Aleja Jana Pawła II]. The works also comprise

135 Translator’s note: This is my translation from the Polish.

136 Translator’s note: This is my translation from the Polish.

137 Translator’s note: This is my translation from the Polish.

the redevelopment of Elektoralna Street and the junction with Żelazna Street. After the revitalization, Chłodna Street will become the most elegant [*reprezentacyjna*] part of the Wola District. [...]

I hope that the appearance of Chłodna Street and Elektoralna Street after revitalization will be compensation for all your inconveniences [*wszelkie uniedogodnienia*].¹³⁸

“All inconveniences” faded into oblivion. It was done to us all according to his word.

Landscape After the Battle

In his text “History: A Retro Scenario,” Jean Baudrillard writes that the “reinjection” of history “has no value as conscious awareness but only as nostalgia for a lost referential” (Baudrillard, 1994a, pp. 47–48). He does not, however, problematize the status of the referential itself. On Chłodna Street we are dealing with the production of a referential, of a history, of a screenplay – specifically: of the situation of the powerless, empathetic Polish witnessing of the Holocaust. Nostalgia can only be activated once the undesirable is substituted by the desirable. The bridge over Chłodna Street is far from being a mere object, or – nowadays – a gadget. It signified then – and signifies now – by virtue of being a model for a situation of spectacle, including for the mutual situating of the participants of the social scene. It fulfills the role of a distributor of roles according to the assumptions of Hilberg’s triad: perpetrators, victims, bystanders (rendered as *świadek*, “witness,” in Polish). In this distribution, the Polish majority is assigned the role of the bystander/witness. The Polish witness (*świadek*) is not so much an indifferent as a powerless and helpless bystander or onlooker: completely separated from the Jewish victim by the German perpetrator. *The Pianist* legitimizes this conceptualization in its general terms, supplementing it by a heroic epic of Polish help for Jews despite objective difficulty, not to say impossibility, not to mention the deadly risk. It is this conceptualization which is the real object of the reconstruction on the crossroads of Chłodna and Żelazna Streets.

What role does the symbolic reconstruction of the ghetto bridge play in the entire symbolic management of Chłodna Street? It concentrates the attention on this particular fragment of space, thereby rendering other places and another history less visible, or indeed invisible. It plays its part in diverting attention away from the church which, despite its location in the middle of the street and the exposure of the façade by the felling of the trees, still remains unseen, i.e. unproblematicized. In *The Pianist*, the church disappears completely, symbolically and physically. On the actual street itself, the church has appeared in the sphere of visibility as a visually striking but insignifi-

138 Noticeboard put up at the junction of Chłodna and Żelazna Streets during the period of the revitalization works.

cant element of decoration: central and dominant in the physical sense but peripheral and without qualities, symbolically transparent. The absence of the church and the context of Christian culture form an important structural characteristic of the dominant narrative of the Holocaust. Meanwhile, the sacred building on Chłodna Street has all the elements required to become a point of departure for a discussion: for example the gate on top of the high steps from where the view of the ghetto bridge opened up or – on another side of the church structure – the figure of Saint John of Capistran, a symbol of the criminality of anti-Judaism and the Christian roots of antisemitism. Moreover, in front of the church there is the figure of the Gracious Mother of God. It is possible to interpret it as an unintentional but surprisingly appropriate personification of the imagined figure of the Polish *świadek* (bystander, onlooker, witness): with its back turned to the bridge, outstretched arms, innocent, immaculately conceived.¹³⁹ The mother of poor Christians who (do not) look at the ghetto.

Locating the symbolic center of gravity in the area of the crossroads of Chłodna and Żelazna Streets not only diverts attention away from the church building but also from that which is behind the church and which has the potential for a site of memory (*lieu de mémoire*) – only the very opposite in terms of the symbolic vector. Behind the church there was the exit of Biała Street: an “Aryan” corridor leading to the building of the Law Courts. The Courts functioned throughout the period of the German occupation. Until the end of the existence of the ghetto, the Law Courts were open to its prisoners as well. Property transfers were legalized there. It was also the place where Jews considered criminals on the strength of German law were found guilty. As Jerzy Jurandot writes:

Living on Leszno Street opposite the law courts, I often saw police cars pull up, bringing to trial offenders caught on the other side. How strange these offenders looked. Escorted by armed military and regular police, out of the cars would come pale, thin, sixteen or seventeen-year-old girls, who had wanted to earn a little money by smuggling in from the other side a small amount of bread or a few potatoes, or children caught begging on the other side of the walls. For these criminals the dreaded Sondergericht waited, in the full majesty of the victorious Third Reich. The verdict was known in advance and execution followed two or three days later in the prison courtyard (Jurandot, 2015c, p. 53).¹⁴⁰

139 Agnieszka Arnold, the director of the documentaries *Gdzie jest mój starszy syn Kain* (*Where Is My Older Son Cain?*, 1999) and *Sąsiedzi* (*Neighbors*, 2001), talks about the Immaculate Conception as an attribute of the Polish elites in the context of antisemitism as follows: “To see the mechanism. Firstly, antisemitism pumped into the head of these simple, uneducated people throughout the prewar period by the clergy and political class. [...] What sort of Immaculate Conception is this on the part of the Polish elite who claimed they had no idea that such a thing as Jedwabne could take place?” (Janiszewski & Arnold, 2008, pp. 19–20).

140 Footnote 33 by Paweł Szapiro and Agnieszka Arnold reads as follows: “The Special Courts created in the Third Reich in 1933 were introduced into the Generalgouvernement from November 1939 (the Warsaw Sondergericht started functioning in April 1940). Right up until late autumn 1941, convicted Jews were entitled to apply to the Gouverneur General for a pardon. The applications always received a negative answer but delayed execution of the sentence sometimes even by several months. Jurandot is therefore describing the situation in 1942” (Jurandot, 2015c, p. 53). For a broadening of imagination see Kochanowski, 2013, pp. 488–500. See also: Engelking & Grabowski, 2010 as well as Grabowski, 2004, in particular the subchapter “Sądy i podsądni” [Courts and Defendants], pp. 21–30.

The building housing the Law Courts was practically unguarded. Theoretically, the court ushers and the Polish blue police were responsible for its tightness of security (*szczelność*). However, as a result of the surge of prisoners from the ghetto – sufficiently moneyed and/or extremely determined – the Polish ushers and Polish police *de facto* operated a sluice gate. This activity was a source of profit, i.e. a branch of business termed *getciarstwo* by Ludwik Hering.

Making one's way through the courthouse was not too difficult. The danger started on Chłodna Street at the exit of Biała Street, at the rear of the church. It was at this location that the blackmailers (*szmalcownicy*) "stationed themselves," as Zbigniew Dłubak put it. In his narrative, that "stationing" was a permanent element of the landscape of Chłodna Street, a social-cultural institution, along the lines of a taxi rank. Dłubak compared the corridor of Biała Street to the catwalk of a fashion show. Walking along the long, narrow, empty strip between the walls, one had to pay attention to every step and every gesture, since one was being assessed by the vigilant eyes of experts. Dłubak would go into the ghetto to meet acquaintances – his term – from the prewar organization of the Spartacus Union of Socialist Youth (Związek Młodzieży Socjalistycznej "Spartakus"), and the earlier-established Revolutionary Union of School Youth (Rewolucyjny Związek Młodzieży Szkolnej), a wing of the Communist Union of Polish Youth (Komunistyczny Związek Młodzieży Polskiej). On the "Aryan side," by virtue of his looks, which in Polish are defined as "not obvious," "dubious" or also "of racially indeterminate appearance (*wygląd rasowo niezdecydowany*)" (see Passenstein, 1958, p. 60),¹⁴¹ he himself was once the target of the blackmailers (*szmalcownicy*). Even though – before leaving the courthouse onto "Aryan side" – he had made sure that there was nothing in his appearance that would be threatening to his life, while striding down Biała Street he had to, with the greatest effort, stop himself from checking again if he was definitely not wearing the armband. Dłubak was engaged in armed struggle. He killed people and he would expose himself to be killed. He granted, however, that this completely civilian, non-heroic experience of extreme nervous tension and a will stretched to breaking point on Biała Street caused him to come close to losing his mind.¹⁴²

After the war, Biała Street was moved 200 meters westward. Its current exit is to be found not at the rear but by the entrance to the church. In post-1989 Poland, the location where the blackmailers (*szmalcownicy*) would congregate was named Siberians' Square (skwer Sybiraków). It has become a site of outdoor exhibitions concerning historical and patriotic subjects – none of which have thus far touched upon Polish-Jewish history that divides without offering the possibility of bringing together sensibilities

141 "Racially indeterminate (*rasowo niezdecydowany*) looks" were situated between "good looks" and the situation of people being "similar to a Jew," i.e. "having the look of being Jews" (*"mających wygląd, że są Żydami"*). The latter expression is derived from the denunciation of the Borensztein brothers: fourteen-year old Mojżesz and sixteen-year old Izrael (see Grabowski, 2004, p. 41).

142 Undated notes of conversations that the author of this text had with Zbigniew Dłubak between 1995 and 2005 (in Elżbieta Janicka's archive). See also Janicka, 2011, p. 58.

and perspectives. In the square, there is also a stone commemorating the deportations of soldiers of the pro-independence underground from the eastern parts of Poland to Borovich (Borowicze) and Sverdlovsk in 1944.¹⁴³ The stone dates from 1997, three years after the setting in of a commemorative plaque at the entrance of the church at the top of the steps and two years after the placing of an analogous plaque in the lower church.¹⁴⁴ Next to the stone is one of the concrete stelae designed by Eleonora Bergman and Tomasz Lec, bearing the inscription: "The building of the Supreme Court, not included in the ghetto, was a meeting place for people from both sides of the wall between November 16, 1940 and mid-1942. Biała Street was located here; in 1950, the street was moved some 200 meters to the west." The Siberians Square would thus be an example of a juxtaposition (*zestawienie*) or rather a covering (*obstawienie*), i.e. of a symbolic operation under the banner of two Holocausts (double genocide theory), the same operation which organizes the structure of the Oś Muranowska, the Muranowska Axis (see Janicka, 2014).

In 2017, as if to increase symbolic safety, the whole area of former Biała Street, between Chłodna Street and Ogrodowa Street, was named Władysław Bartoszewski Square (pl. Władysława Bartoszewskiego). Thus, an emblem of the double genocide theory has been supplemented by an emblem of the narrative of the Righteous. Władysław Bartoszewski Square is dominated over, as was the former "Aryan" corridor before it, by the majestic façade of the Law Courts on Leszno Street (currently Solidarności Avenue), adorned with *fascis lictoriae*.¹⁴⁵ Each of the bundles of *fasci* is topped by a crowned eagle. Not to mention the flagpole holders in the form of torch holders that adorn the

143 "After the Soviet army had entered Poland in 1944, the NKVD, in collaboration with the functionaries of the newly established Security Office, began to arrest soldiers subordinate to the [Polish] government in exile. [...] In November 1944, four transports left Poland [two from Sokołów Podlaski and one each from Lublin and Przemyśl – E.J.]. [...] In the spring of 1946, after earlier investigations and an analysis of the files with special attention paid to the type of 'crimes' constituting the reason for their arrest, a considerable part of the internees were sent back to Poland. The officer corps and the leadership of the underground organizations were transferred to Camp 531 in Sverdlovsk. [...] The majority of them returned to the country in November 1947, others only in 1949. [...] According to the available data, a total of 5,795 Polish citizens (among them nine children born there) went through Camp 270 in Borowicze (Borovich). As a result of the deportations, 651 people lost their lives under various circumstances" ("Stowarzyszenie 'Środowisko Borowiczanie – Sybiraków,'" n.d.). The "Circle of Borowicze Siberians Association" was established on September 14, 1992, and operated as a branch of the Union of the Siberians (Związek Sybiraków) until September 2011 – when it obtained official recognition as a legal entity (*osobowość prawna*).

144 In Warsaw, there is a fourth commemoration of the Borowicze/Sverdlovsk internees. The commemoration is in the form of "a railroad tie with the inscription 'Borowicze' as a part of the ensemble of the Monument to the Fallen and Murdered in the East"; according to the website of the Circle of Borovich Siberians Association, it was added to the monument in 2005. Sites commemorating the Borowicze Siberians (Borowiczanie-Sybiracy) can also be found in: Lublin (five artefacts and the Borowiczanie Square), Sopot, Koszalin, Przemyśl, Gorzów in the Lubelskie Region (Lubelszczyzna), Kałków, Dobrze near Mińsk Mazowiecki, Sokołów Podlaski and Ulanów. The earliest commemorations date back to 1994. "The group of Borowicze Siberians was repeatedly singled out by the central and local Polish authorities for cultivating the fighting tradition and martyrdom of the Polish nation and the propagation of patriotic attitudes [...]" ("Stowarzyszenie 'Środowisko Borowiczanie – Sybiraków,'" n.d.).

145 The *fascis lictoriae* feature, among other places, in the unofficial emblem of the Republic of France, they are part of the ornamentation in the interior of the US Congress building or the Abraham Lincoln Monument in Washington D.C. However, no element of those contexts justifies a reading other than one through the prism of reference to the ancient Roman Republic. Unlike in the case of Bohdan Pniewski's building of the Leszno Street Courts (1935–1939).

entrances below. While the fascist ornamentation has been removed from the front façade of the building, the ideal of a fascist Poland on the rear façade does not trouble anybody. The inscription carved over the front façade – “Justice is the anchor of the strength and permanence of the Republic [*Rzeczpospolita*]” – acquires in this way a – *nomen omen* – façade character. Evidently, the history of the building is not a sufficient reason to change its so-called historical design.

Returning to Chłodna Street, out of the two places that are important for the history of the Holocaust, the one on display is that which removes from view the entanglement (*splot*) of the trajectories of the Jews of Warsaw with the trajectories of the non-Jewish Warsaw dwellers. What is offered instead is a narrative of the non-existence of such entanglement – with the exception of cases considered by the majority group as Polish help for Jews. What are the symbolic stakes of the whole operation? Revealing the entanglement of Jewish history (*los*) with that of the dominant group and studying the form (*kształt*) which that entanglement took during the Holocaust brought about the greatest crisis of the dominant heroic-martyrological narrative and thus the greatest crisis of collective identity since 1945. Polish participation in the Holocaust has become the center of attention. The reconstruction of the border strip and of the bridge over Chłodna Street as a model of the social situation and the mutual location of its participants invalidates this problem, thereby rendering it groundless, invalid. The bridge – an icon of Hilberg’s triad – legitimized in the sphere of visibility by *The Pianist*, reinforced by international applause, has triggered a collective enthusiasm. It directs the societal energy onto new tracks which are heading in the old direction. It enables the majority group to perform a safe self-staging and a narcissistic self-contemplation in the role of the powerless, empathetic witness. One can call the reconstructed bridge an instrument for the (re)production of the group’s idea of itself, one based on the notion of clearly differentiated homogenous identities and tight inter-group borders. The bridge constitutes both a projection screen and a fetish enabling the obscuring of the actual state of things (*stan faktyczny*): the actual distribution of roles and their meaning for the course of the Holocaust. The self-image and thus the well-being (*dobre samopoczucie*) of the group are saved; the lost narrative – has been retrieved. For it is this narrative which has proved to be the beneficiary of the process of reviving termed revitalization. In contrast to Chłodna Street.

July 22, 2015

Translated from the Polish by Katrin Stoll (with Michael C. Fitzpatrick)

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Brama triumfalna polskiej opowieści. Symboliczna rekonstrukcja mostu nad Chłodną wobec kryzysu dominującej polskiej narracji o Zagładzie

Abstrakt: Tekst zawiera studium topografii symbolicznej ulicy Chłodnej w Warszawie. W latach 1940–1942 Chłodna była „aryjskim” pasem granicznym dzielącym małe i duże getto. Dominantę symboliczną w analizowanej przestrzeni stanowią dzisiaj upamiętnienia gettowego drewnianego mostu dla pieszych, który istniał w tym miejscu od stycznia do sierpnia 1942 roku. Owe komemoracyjne artefakty ewoluowały od przeciwupamiętnienia (1996), przez upamiętnienia wykorzystujące malarstwo (2007) i fotografię (2008), do symbolicznej rekonstrukcji mostu nad Chłodną (2011). Analizie dynamiki wiodącej od reprezentacji przedmiotu ku jego materializacji towarzyszy rekonstrukcja wzorów i stawek narracji składających się na kolejne warstwy narracyjnego palimpsestu. Prócz historii miejsca istotnym kontekstem analizy jest fakt, że środki kontroli przestrzeni dawnego getta stanowią dzisiaj wyłączną własność nieżydowskiej większości.

Przełomem w procesie komemoracji był film Romana Polańskiego *Pianista* (2002). Wówczas to most nad Chłodną został zrekonstruowany w skali 1:1 – w Warszawie, lecz poza obszarem dawnego getta. Zdjęcia do filmu miały miejsce w trakcie ogólnokrajowej debaty o książce Jana Tomasza Grossa *Sąsiedzi* (2000). Debata dotyczyła współudziału Polaków w Zagładzie oraz społeczno-kulturowych uwarunkowań ich postaw i zachowań. Dla polskiej kultury dominującej był to wstrząs narracyjny tak potężny, że zdawał się wykluczać powrót do dawnej polskiej opowieści heroiczno-martyrologicznej. Tymczasem dyskurs prasowy głównego nurtu ustawił Grossa i Polańskiego w narracyjnej opozycji. O ile pierwszy miał reprezentować subiektywizm i pochopne uogólnienia, o tyle drugi miał wnosić obiektywizm i sprawiedliwy osąd. Sylwetka mostu nad Chłodną zespoliła się wówczas z kontrafaktyczną wizją polskiego kontekstu Zagłady. Międzynarodowa kariera *Pianisty* (Złota Palma i Oscar) przypieczętowała ewolucję figury mostu: od abiektu do obiektu pożądania, atrakcji turystycznej i towaru eksportowego. (Osobno rozważaną kwestią jest relacja filmowej opowieści do opowieści Władysława Szpilmana już wyjściowo spisanej przez ghostwritera Jerzego Waldorffa, dodatkowo zaś zapośredniczonej przez scenarzystów Ronalda Harwooda i Romana Polańskiego. W obu wypadkach najpoważniejsze rozbieżności dotyczą obrazu stosunku Polaków do Żydów w okresie Zagłady, a także przed Zagładą).

Sukces *Pianisty* przesądził o inwestycji funduszy publicznych w kolejne i ostatnie upamiętnienie mostu nad Chłodną: rekonstrukcję symboliczną *in situ*. Przedmiotem rekonstrukcji stał się nie tyle most z 1942 roku, ile most filmowy, a wraz z nim wyidealizowany filmowy wizerunek polskiego kontekstu Zagłady. Figura mostu sugeruje szczelną izolację Żydów i Polaków – przez Niemców. Podsyca tym samym wyobrażenie o Polakach jako bezsilnych świadkach Zagłady (*bystander/onlooker* w porównaniu do *witness*). Figura polskiego świadka Zagłady natomiast jest kluczową figurą polskiej niewinności. Dodatkowo symboliczna rekonstrukcja mostu odwraca uwagę użytkowników przestrzeni od miejsca zlokalizowanego przy tej samej ulicy, w którym Polacy i Żydzi mieli styczność bezpośrednią przez cały okres istnienia getta warszawskiego. Zastępując stan faktyczny odstonięty w wyniku debaty jedwabieńskiej, symboliczna rekonstrukcja mostu nad Chłodną stanowi rodzaj maszyny do reprodukcji dyskursu, który zapewnia większości dominującej „rozkosz retrospektywnych halucynacji”.

Tekst przynosi rozpoznanie narracyjnego mechanizmu typu wańka-wstańka, który sprawia, że rewizja polskiej kultury dominującej nie dochodzi do skutku, a powszechna wiedza o rzeczywistości nie znajduje odzwierciedlenia w świadomości zbiorowej.

Wyrażenia kluczowe: topografia symboliczna; zwrot przestrzenny; antysemityzm; przemoc filosemicka; warszawskie getto; triada Hilberga; polscy świadkowie (rewizja koncepcji); kolektywny narcyzm; polityka pamięci; polityka historyczna



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