

MIRJAM RAJNER

Bar-Ilan University, Ramat Gan

RICHARD I. COHEN

The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

*Wandalin Strzalecki's
„Song on the Destruction of Jerusalem”.
A Homage to Maurycy Gottlieb and Poland**

The destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple has remained a constant cultural, religious, and theoretical preoccupation of Jews and non-Jews. Deeply enshrined in historical memory, the destruction has occasioned a wide range of interpretations, associations, and metaphoric analogies. As such, it has, of course, also captured the imagination and interpretation of a wide range of artists – from Rembrandt and Nicolas Poussin in the seventeenth century, to Eduard Bendemann (1811-1889), the German artist of Jewish origin and Wilhelm von Kaulbach in the nineteenth. While often utilizing the destruction as a metaphor for other historical events or cultural phenomena, artists have chosen to depict either the acts of violence and havoc during the tragic event itself or created a more contemplative atmosphere that focused on the feelings of loss, mourning, and displacement that came in its wake. The Italian artist Francesco Hayez (1791-1881), known especially for his history painting, can serve as an example of the former in his 1867 work (fig. 1), whereas the artist Ephraim Moses Lilien (1874-1925), born in Galicia (in the Austrian Empire) imbued with Zionist leanings, represents the latter tendency with his 1910 creation *On the Rivers of Babylon* (fig. 2).

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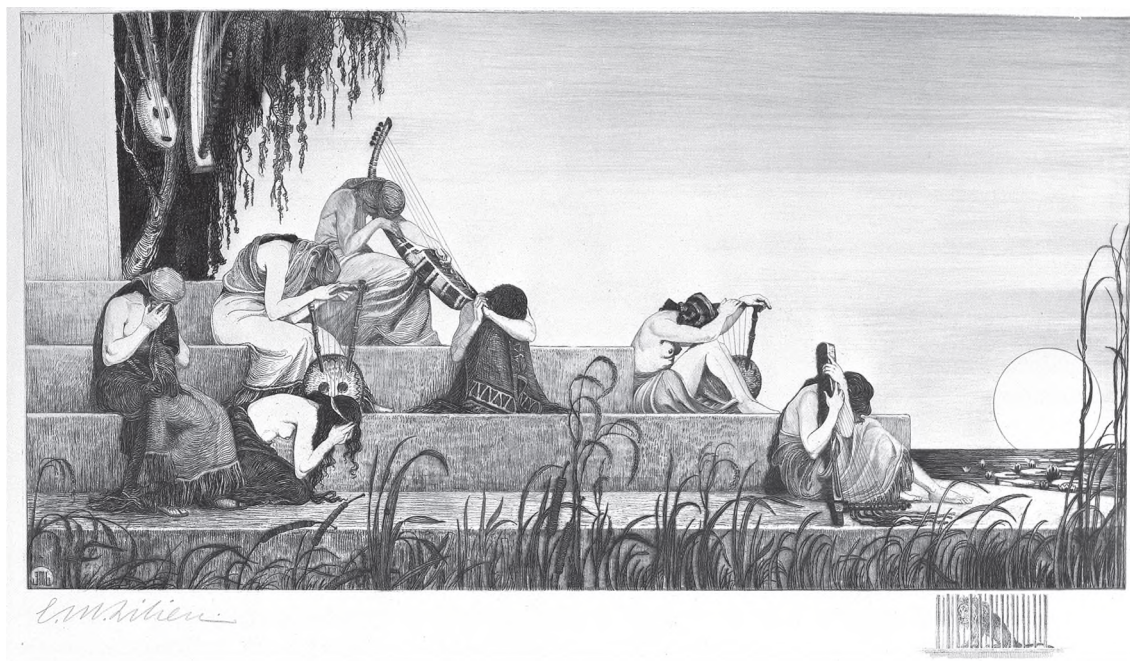


1. Francesco Hayez, *The Destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem*, 1867, oil on canvas, 183 × 252 cm, Galleria dell'Accademia e la dicitura, Venice, "Su concessione del Ministero dei beni e delle attività culturali e del turismo."

Song on the Destruction of Jerusalem created by a minor Polish artist Wandalin Strzalecki (1855-1917) in 1883 and now exhibited in Cracow's National Museum in the Sukiennice Gallery, offers an original interpretation of this theme and is the focus of this article.¹ Although suggestively hung next to Maurycy Gottlieb's *Ahasverus* (1876; fig. 3-4), and alongside a huge historical painting by Jan Matejko, Gottlieb's celebrated teacher, this unusual composition clearly arouses a more direct and unacknowledged dialogue with the most famous of Gottlieb's works – his *Jews Praying* (fig. 5), better known today as *Jews Praying in the Synagogue on the Day of Atonement* (1878), presently in the Tel Aviv Museum of Art. The immediate associations that this painting arouses with Strzalecki's, invites an exploration into Strzalecki's personal motivation for producing this work four years after Gottlieb's death and granting it such a symbolic title.

Even in Poland Strzalecki is an almost forgotten artist. Upon his death in 1917, after having been hospitalized for a mental illness since 1885 and distant from the life of the Polish art scene, he had a moment of "rediscovery". Several Polish authors summarized favorably his contribution to 19th century Polish art, citing the large corpus of historical

¹ It would appear that the painting was first shown in an exhibition in Warsaw in December 1883 at the Society for the Encouragement of Fine Arts in Warsaw (TZSP); see *Kurier Warszawski* 1883, no. 330b, 15 XII, p. 4, Aleksandra KRYPCZYK, "History of the Gallery in the Sukiennice", in *Gallery of 19th-Century Polish Art in the Sukiennice. Guide* (Kraków, 2010), p. 14 noted that Strzalecki's painting was rarely shown in the gallery until its refashioning in 2010. See comments on the painting by Anna BUDZALEK, *ibid.*, p. 106.



2. Ephraim Moses Lilien, *On the Rivers of Babylon*, 1910, engraving and aquatint, 34 × 60 cm, Israel Museum, *Prints and Drawings Collection*, registration no. P78.03.4798.

scenes, portraits, genre scenes, and murals he succeeded in producing during his creative years (from the mid 1874 until 1885).²

Born in 1855 into an artists' family (his father and two brothers were all artists and art restorers), Strzałecki began to study art at the age of sixteen at The Drawing Class in Warsaw under the distinguished Polish artist Wojciech Gerson. Prior to his departure to the St. Petersburg Academy of Fine Arts in 1878 to continue his studies, his work had already attracted some attention – not all positive – as it was illustrated in the art criticism of the day.³ Upon his return to Warsaw in 1879, more of his work appeared in the popular cultural magazines, several of which (e. g. “Tygodnik Ilustrowany”, “Kłosy”, and “Tygodnik Powszechny”) were owned by Poles of Jewish origin, and Strzałecki began to exhibit in certain venues, including the gallery of the well-known Jewish publisher, printer, and bookstore owner Józef Unger (1817-1874), whose adopted son, Gracjan, had by then taken over the family's operations.⁴

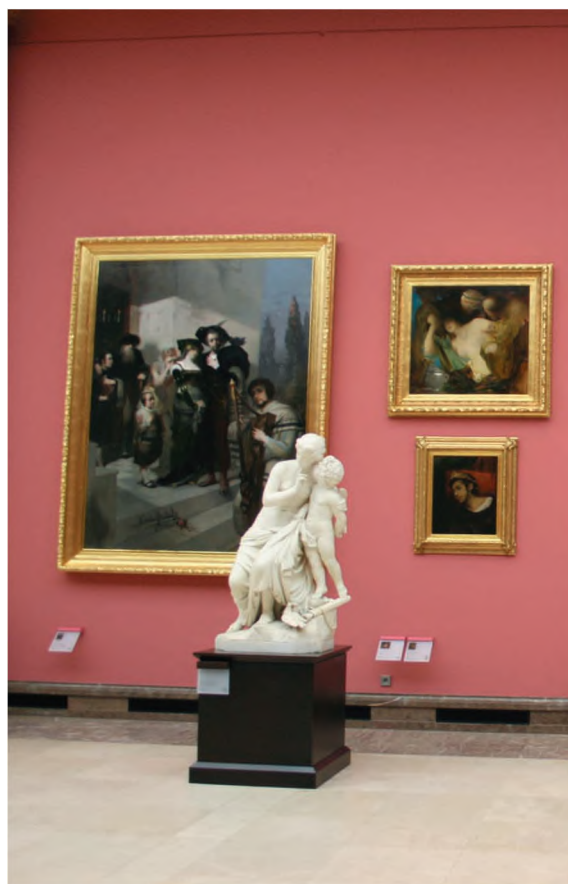
In 1879 Strzałecki was also commissioned by Leon Epstein, a sugar magnate and a baptized Jew, a descendant of one of Warsaw's leading financial families, to prepare portraits of past Polish kings and nobility for the Pilica castle, south-west of Warsaw, that Epstein and his second wife Maria Skarzyńska, of Polish aristocratic descent, had

² Henryk PIĄTKOWSKI, “Ś.p. Wandalin Strzałecki”, *Kurier Warszawski* 1917, no. 48, 17 II, p. 5; T., “Ś.p. Wandalin Strzałecki”, *Tygodnik Ilustrowany* 1917, no. 9-11, p. 127; see also “Wandalin Strzałecki”, in Artur SCHROEDER, *Śladem błękitnym [Following the Blue Trail]* (Lwów, 1921), pp. 90-93.

³ See for example - Z -, *Kurier Warszawski* 1873, no. 199, 17 IX, p. 1.

⁴ *Katalog obrazów wystawionych w Salonie Sztuk Pięknych Józefa Ungra* [Catalogue of Paintings Exhibited in Józef Unger's Salon of Fine Arts] (Warsaw, Oct.-Nov. 1880), p. 6. The owner of “Tygodnik Ilustrowany” and “Wędrowiec”, Unger was also well-known for publishing a yearly calendar in Warsaw. On Jewish publishers in Warsaw in the middle of the nineteenth century, see Stefan KIENIEWICZ, “Assimilated Jews in 19th-Century Warsaw”, in *The Jews in Warsaw. A History*, ed. Władysław T. BARTOSZEWSKI and Antony POLONSKY (Oxford, 1991), pp. 171-180.

3. Photograph of the Exhibition hall at the Gallery of 19th Century Polish Art in Sukiennice building – a branch of the National Museum in Kraków, showing Strzalecki's Song on the Destruction of Jerusalem together with Maurycy Gottlieb's Ahasuerus, 1876.



purchased (fig. 6).⁵ Epstein wished to restore the castle to its former glory and to create a romantic-patriotic atmosphere by covering its walls with paintings of Polish royalty and aristocracy, who were once its residents. Epstein's efforts to recapture a more glorious period in Polish history mirrored in some way those of Maurycy Orgelbrand, the publisher of "Tygodnik Powszechny", who expended much effort to advance the Polish language by publishing in 1861 the *Słownik języka polskiego do podręcznego użytku*, the Polish language dictionary. Epstein and Orgelbrand, both baptized, were part of a coterie of wealthy and assimilated Jews, that included the gallery owner Gracjan Unger, who were all involved in furthering Polish cultural projects.⁶ Each of these figures had some contact with Strzalecki, who knowingly or not, found himself encircled and supported by highly assimilated and influential Polish Jews from Warsaw, a fact that may have contributed to his interest in Polish-Jewish themes.

⁵ We have been unable to find the works that Strzalecki created for the palace, other than several preparatory drawings for various kings, now housed in the National Museum of Warsaw's Prints and Drawings department. We are grateful to the staff of the department, Ms. Kamilla Pijanowska and Ms. Anna Rudzińska, for their cordial assistance. Ms. Monika Sobkowiak, presently of Brunoy, France, the granddaughter of Epstein, was also unable to supply us with any information on the whereabouts of these paintings. She has placed the aquarelle portrait of Epstein and his wife, in her possession, on the internet, and provided us with the name of Epstein's wife. Correspondence in September, 2012. See <http://jura-pilica.com/?1875-1887-leon-epstein,33> (accessed August 2012).

⁶ See Todd ENDELMAN, "Jewish Converts in Nineteenth-Century Warsaw: A Quantitative Analysis", *Jewish Social Studies*, NS, Vol. 4, No. 1 (Autumn, 1997), pp. 28-59; KIENIEWICZ, "Assimilated Jews in 19th-Century Warsaw", pp. 171-80; Artur EISENBACH, *The Emancipation of the Jews in Poland, 1780-1870*, ed. Antony POLONSKY, trans. Janina Dorosz (Oxford, 1991).



4. Wandalin Strzalecki, *Song on the Destruction of Jerusalem*, 1883, oil on canvas, 250 × 192 cm. Sukiennice Gallery, from the Collection of the National Museum in Kraków, Inv. no. II-a-165.

In 1880 Strzałecki moved to Munich where he apparently spent two years creating a number of paintings before returning to Warsaw, where he continued working for the next three years before being hospitalized in 1885.⁷ During this latter period he devoted some attention to Polish-Jewish themes in his art.

Already in his *Reading of a Proclamation in Front of an Inn* (signed and dated, “1874 in Warsaw”), Strzałecki shows his awareness of Jewish presence in Polish society (fig. 7).⁸ In this work, Strzałecki depicts the entry of two soldiers into a village setting, on the outskirts of a town marked by a medieval gothic tower visible in the background. One of the soldiers, still seated on his horse, reads out what seems to be a political proclamation, possibly the 1863 “Golden Charter” (*Złota Hramota*) that promised “rural people of Podolia, Volhynia, and Ukraine” an improvement in their status were they to support the uprising for a free, independent Poland. A diversified crowd of local figures have left an inn (its name is marked on the roof: “POD ŁABĘDZIEM” – Under the Swan), their shops and homes, to hear the announcement. Most of the figures, including men, women, and children seem to be very attentive to the soldier’s words. Their clothing indicates their belonging to various social groups that include dignified members of the community, servants and a priest, who stands to the left.⁹ In contrast, the four orthodox Jewish figures on the extreme right, typical of most village Jews of the period, stand under a caption: “DO KOWALA” (To the smith), and are engaged in their own conversation, showing no particular interest in the proclamation. Strzałecki has inserted the Jews into the painting, intimating that they are indeed part of the village scene, yet he has done so in such a manner that they are construed as being both part of but separate from the village community.¹⁰

Several years later Strzałecki created a work with a pronounced Jewish character. In the *Talmudist* (fig. 8), a woodcut published in 1877 on the cover of “Tygodnik Powszechny” (such magazines occasionally included images with Jewish themes during this period¹¹), Strzałecki portrayed a contemporary, orthodox Polish Jew in his domestic setting, reading what appears to be a sacred text. By enclosing the picture within an imaginary frame that includes the Tablets of the Law flanked with biblical figures contemplating exile, Strzałecki created a link between the Jewish past and their contemporary existence. Possibly inspired by Gustave Doré’s well-known biblical images (1866), such as *Baruch*, prophet

⁷ Strzałecki stayed in Munich from 1880 to 1882. In 1881 and 1882 he was an “ordinary member” of the Munich *Kunstverein*. See Halina STĘPIEŃ, Maria LICZBIŃSKA, *Artyści polscy w środowisku monachijskim w latach 1828-1914. Materiały źródłowe* [Polish Artists in Munich Artistic Milieu, 1828-1914. Sources] (Warszawa, 1994), p. 62, 89.

⁸ *Reading* is in the Museum in Łowicz; according to Halina NELKEN, *Images of a Lost World. Jewish Motifs in Polish Painting 1770-1945* (Oxford and New York, 1991), pp. 75-76, xvi, the proclamation was from 1872.

⁹ Ms. Aneta Biały drew our attention to an article by Maria KACZANOWSKA, “Manifestacje patriotyczne 1861 roku i powstanie 1863 roku w sztuce warszawskiej” [Patriotic Manifestations in 1861 and Uprising of 1863 in Warsaw Art], *Rocznik Muzeum Narodowego w Warszawie*, VIII (1964), pp. 429-444, who claims that the characters in the painting are dressed in pre-modern clothing, probably from the eighteenth century. NELKEN, *Images of a Lost World*, p. 76 describes their clothing as “historic garb”. The use of such clothing was apparently associated with the insurrection and the memory of 18th century independent Poland, prior to the partitions.

¹⁰ Our sincere thanks to Ms. Anna Kośmider of the Museum in Łowicz, who supplied us with digital photographs of the painting and deciphered the Polish inscriptions. Cf. NELKEN, *Images of a Lost World*, p. 76. On Jewish clothing during this period, see Agnieszka JAGODZIŃSKA, “Overcoming the Signs of the ‘Other’. Visual Aspects of the Acculturation of Jews in the Kingdom of Poland in the Nineteenth Century”, *Polin* 24 (2011), pp. 71-83; Ead., *Pomiędzy. Akulturacja Żydów Warszawy w drugiej połowie XIX wieku* [Between. Acculturation of Warsaw Jews in the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century] (Wrocław, 2008), *passim*.

¹¹ NELKEN, *passim*, especially pp. 95-125. Nelken made detailed reference to works on Jewish themes that appeared in such magazines as “Kłosa” and “Tygodnik Ilustrowany”.



5. Maurycy Gottlieb, *Jews Praying in the Synagogue on the Day of Atonement*, 1878, oil on canvas, 245 × 192 cm. Collection of the Tel Aviv Museum of Art. Gift of Sidney Lamon, New York, 1955.



6. Unknown artist,
Leon Epstein and his wife
Maria Skarzyńska,
watercolor. Painting of the
owners of the Pilica castle,
early 1880s. Courtesy of
Ms. Monique Sobkowiak,
Brunoy, France.

Jeremiah's disciple and scribe who wrote down his prophecies, Strzalecki tackled here some of the themes he would develop in the *Song*.

The appearance of the *Talmudist* on the cover of a popular Polish cultural magazine, owned by Maurycy Orgelbrand, continues the extensive treatment of Jews in Polish art and literature in the mid nineteenth century. In this period countless works by major Polish artists and writers treated Jews in a variety of ways and often the comparison between the Jewish fate and the Polish one – their unsuccessful uprisings against foreign rule – was alluded to. In some cases the authors drew heavily and profusely on biblical and post-biblical allusions. For example, in Wojciech Korneli Stattler's painting *Maccabees* of 1830-1842, presently in the Sukiennice Gallery in Cracow, inspired by Adam Mickiewicz, often regarded as Stattler's spiritual father, draws on the history of the Maccabees and their struggle against Roman rule to allude to the Polish uprising of 1830.¹² Based on

¹² *Gallery of 19th-Century Polish Art*, p. 60; Halina BLAK, Barbara MAŁKIEWICZ, Elżbieta WOJTAŁOWA, *Polish Painting of the 19th Century* (Kraków, 2001), p. 342. On Stattler's painting and its literary context, see Dorota KUDELSKA, "Machabeusze – 'różany brzask' malarstwa polskiego. (Stattler i Słowacki)" [Maccabees – 'Rosy Down' of Polish Painting. (Stattler and Słowacki)], in *Czas i wyobraźnia. Studia nad plastyczną i literacką interpretacją dziejów* [Time and Imagination. Studies on Artistic and Literary Interpretation of History], ed. Małgorzata KITOWSKA-ŁYSIAK, Elżbieta WOLICKA (Lublin, 1995), pp. 135-198.



7. *Wandalin Strzałecki, Reading of a Proclamation in Front of an Inn, 1874, oil on canvas, 58 × 106 cm, National Museum in Warsaw, Inv. no. MP 2546.*

allusions to the Maccabees and biblical figures, a common stereotype in Polish literature emerged in the 1860s that identified “Israel’s historical fate with that of insurrectionary Poland”.¹³

Warsaw, where Strzałecki lived, was also home to a thriving and diverse Jewish population of orthodox, modern, and assimilated persuasion. They formed a third of the city’s population and their presence was felt and seen in many areas of Warsaw. The impressive Great Synagogue on Tłomackie Street, inaugurated in 1878 (fig. 9) was an indication of their significant growth and visibility in the city. However, Strzałecki’s engagement with Jewish themes may have been directly aroused and intensified on coming into contact with Maurycy Gottlieb’s work, first shown in Warsaw in 1878 at the Society for the Encouragement of the Fine Arts (*Towarzystwo Zachęty Sztuk Pięknych*, commonly called “Zachęta”).¹⁴ A year later in November 1879, 47 works of Gottlieb’s paintings were shown in Warsaw, commemorating the artist’s premature death in July of that year. The wide range of themes that were depicted in Gottlieb’s exhibition, held at Unger’s fashionable Salon, could certainly have left a strong impression on the young Strzałecki. One of the major attractions of the 1879 exhibition was undoubtedly Gottlieb’s extraordinary *Jews Praying* (fig. 5), previously shown in the *Zachęta* in 1878, that has remained emblematic with the artist’s oeuvre. Several months later, in March 1880, the painting was again shown in an Unger exhibition; we may assume that Strzałecki was present at one of these venues and saw the painting that aroused much discussion in the Polish press.¹⁵ Strzałecki himself exhibited in this salon in November 1880.¹⁶

¹³ Magdalena OPALSKI and Israel BARTAL, *Poles and Jews. A Failed Brotherhood* (Hanover and London, 1992), p. 51. The authors noted the widespread reference to the Maccabees in Polish literature of the 1860s, creating associations between the fate of the Poles and the destruction of Jerusalem; *ibid.*, pp. 51-54.

¹⁴ See Nehama GURALNIK, *In the Flower of Youth: Maurycy Gottlieb 1856-1879*, mus. cat. (Tel Aviv, 1991), p. 215.

¹⁵ On Gottlieb’s painting and its reception, see Ezra MENDELSON, *Painting a People. Maurycy Gottlieb and Jewish Art* (Hanover and London, 2002), pp. 145-149; 156-157; 191-194.

¹⁶ *Katalog obrazów wystawionych w Salonie Sztuk Pięknych Józefa Ungra* [Catalogue of Paintings Exhibited in Józef Unger’s Salon of Fine Art] (Warsaw, Oct.-Nov. 1880), p. 6.



8. Wandalin Strzalecki, Talmudist, 1877, woodcut.
Cover illustration for Tygodnik Powszechny, 2 September 1877.



9. Postcard of the Great Synagogue on Tłomackie Street, Warsaw, inaugurated in 1878.
 Courtesy of Hoffman Judaica Postcard Collection,
 The Hebrew University of Jerusalem,
 Reg. no. hof3-0155.

It was during these years (ca. 1879) that Strzałecki created his version of *Casimir the Great and Esterka* (now lost, fig. 10). The work treats the famous legendary love story between the 14th century Polish king Casimir and his Jewish mistress Esterka, a subject that attracted Polish and Jewish authors as well as several notable 19th century Polish artists.¹⁷ Strzałecki created here a *mise-en-scène* that included an extravagant royal chamber. The richness of the entire interior and the couple's clothes echo the noble Polish past associated with the influence of the Renaissance in the "golden age" of the nation. Moreover, the harp played by one of the valets to entertain the couple, recalls the young, biblical figure of David and adds a touch of an oriental flavor befitting the Jewish element occasioned by Esterka's presence.

Casimir and Esterka brought together Strzałecki's involvement with both Jewish themes and Polish history (the latter, as we saw, expressed in the decorations for the Pilica castle), and in such works as his 1879 *Farewell to the Participants of the 1863 Uprising* (fig. 11). In this painting, Strzałecki portrays a family genre scene taking place in front of a provincial manor house. The young resident, probably a member of a Polish aristocratic family, receives two young insurgents, one of whom holds a rifle and is apparently wounded,

¹⁷ Chone SHMERUK, *The Esterke Story in Yiddish and Polish Literature: a Case Study in the Mutual Relations of Two Cultural Traditions* (Jerusalem, 1985); Nathan COHEN, "The Love Story of Esterka and Kazimierz King of Poland – New Perspectives", <http://www.aapjstudies.org/manager/external/ckfinder/userfiles/files/Nati%20Cohen%20Esterke.pdf> (accessed November 2012). MENDELSON, *Painting a People*, pp. 128-130 relates to the painting by Franciszek Żmurko on this theme. Other Polish artists who dealt with this theme included Matejko, Aleksander Lesser (1814-1884), and Władysław Łuszczkiewicz (1828-1900) (ca. 1850; 1870). One of the latter's works will be discussed in more detail below.



10. *Wandalin Strzalecki, Casimir the Great and Esterka, ca. 1879 (probably lost), reproduced Tygodnik Ilustrowany, 1879, no. 185, p. 25.*

who came to enlist him in the uprising against the Russian rulers. To the left of them, in the center of the painting, a young girl dons an insurgents' hat, as a young woman graciously feeds the arrivals' horse; to the left an elderly gentlemen sits pensively between two children, who are engaged by a valet playing with a red balloon – possibly an allusion to the Polish desire for freedom.¹⁸

Strzalecki thus followed the trend of the great masters of Polish art from the mid nineteenth century who were all involved at some point in their career with the Polish historical past and present – its peaks and valleys. While Jan Matejko, the director of the School of Fine Arts in Kraków since 1873, set the example by turning historical themes into a trademark of his oeuvre, other artists, like Grottger, Kossak, Siemiradzki, and Strzalecki's teacher Gerson, to name but a few, dealt with historical themes and wanted their works to be recognized as part of this historical turn. Strzalecki must obviously have been acquainted with their works and their historical intent. Hardly an important event in Poland's historical past and in the life of contemporary Poles (and Jews in Poland) escaped the attention of these and other artists, part of their agenda to raise Poland's national consciousness and keep alive the memory of its greater moments. However in Warsaw, where Strzalecki lived, relations between Poles and Jews were on the decline in the 1870s and deteriorated in 1881 when acts of violence against the city's Jews broke out on Christmas

¹⁸ The color red, that had become synonymous from the late 18th century with Polish freedom, was commonly employed in Polish artifacts related to the 1863 uprising. See *Polska biżuteria patriotyczna* [Polish Patriotic Jewelry], mus. cat. (Warsaw, 2011). Strzalecki sprinkles the color red on various objects in the painting (e. g. on the insurgent's rifle, the horse's strap, the dog's collar and on various pieces of clothing). Our thanks to the staff of the Museum of Independence, especially Mr. Łukasz Żywek and dr Stefan Artymowski, who graciously responded to all our requests.



11. *Wandalin Strzalecki, Farewell to the Participants of the 1863 Uprising, 1879, oil on canvas, 64.4 × 83 cm, detail, Museum of Independence, Warsaw, Inv. no. M132.*

day and lasted for three days.¹⁹ One wonders how he, an artist engaged in both Polish and Jewish themes, responded to the events of those trying days.

In general, the response to this violent pogrom in Warsaw (which followed the wave of attacks on Jews and their property in other areas of Tsarist Russia earlier that year) was mixed. A number of Polish liberal intellectuals saw the events as a barbaric act, a travesty of the long-lasting fertile Polish-Jewish discourse, disrupted by the Russian occupier. Wiktor Gomulicki and Maria Konopnicka, for example, two of Poland's well-known writers of the day, reacted to this unsettling event by immediately publishing moving works of poetry in which they identified with the Jewish victims.²⁰ Yet these sympathetic voices

¹⁹ Jews were blamed for creating a raucous during a Christmas mass in the Church of the Holy Cross. In reprisal they were attacked by street gangs. No Jew was killed but much Jewish property was damaged. Over the years the event has gained historical attention with no clear consensus on its sources and impact. See *inter alia* Izaak GRÜNBAUM, "Die Pogrome in Polen", in *Die Judenpogrome in Russland, I, Allgemeiner Teil* (Köln and Leipzig, 1910), pp. 134-161; Michael OCHS, "Tsarist Officialdom and Anti-Jewish Pogroms in Poland", in *Pogroms: Anti-Jewish Violence in Modern Russian History*, ed. John D. KLIER and Shlomo LAMBROZA (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 164-189; Theodore R. WEEKS, *From Assimilation to Antisemitism. The "Jewish Question" in Poland 1850-1914* (De Kalb, 2006), pp. 71-86. David Engel has recently called into question whether it should even be designated as a pogrom. See ENGEL, "What's in a Pogrom? European Jews in the Age of Violence", in *Anti-Jewish Violence. Rethinking the Pogrom in East European History*, ed. Jonathan DEKEL-CHEN, David GAUNT, Natan M. MEIR, and Israel BARTAL (Bloomington and Indianapolis, 2011), pp. 19-37, esp. pp. 22-24.

²⁰ See Bogdan BURDZIEJ, "Refleksja poetycka Wiktora Gomulickiego o Żydach po pogromie warszawskim 1881 roku" [Wiktor Gomulicki's Poetical Reflection on Jews after the Warsaw Pogrom of 1881], *Acta Universitatis Nicolai Copernici, Filologia Polska LI. Nauki Humanistyczno-Społeczne*, Vol. 325 (Toruń, 1998), pp. 23-43; Id., "Marii Konopnickiej 'Modlitwy' po pogromie warszawskim 1881 roku" [The 'Prayers' of Maria Konopnicka after the Warsaw



12. Władysław Strzalecki, *Cymbalista*, 1882, pen and ink and sepia on paper mounted on paper, 17.8 × 23.2 cm on 20.8 × 28.2 cm, National Museum in Warsaw, Inv. no. Rys. Pol. 159620.

were not the only ones heard. A lively discussion on the pogrom and its significance took place among the Warsaw positivists, who had been actively discussing aspects of Jewish integration in Polish society for over a decade.²¹ Soon after the pogrom, Eliza Orzeszkowa, the noted author of two widely read novels with Jewish themes (*Meir Ezofowicz* and *Eli Makower*), published a pamphlet (*O Żydach i kwestii żydowskiej* – On the Jews and the Jewish Question) in which she discussed in a forthright and uncompromising manner the background to the pogrom, made clear her strong condemnation of its “antisocial and anticivilized” behavior, while expressing her fear of the consequences if Polish and Jewish society did not learn more about each other and how to behave differently.²² Aleksander Świętochowski, considered one of the leading figures in Warsaw positivism, who had openly called for much greater integration of Jews into Polish society together with an abandonment of Jewish rituals, condemned the pogroms but now advocated with even greater vigor the need for complete assimilation of the Jews and an end to their divisive way of life. He wrote in 1882: “[...] we beg for compulsory education and for the

Pogrom in 1881], in *Maria Konopnicka: Nowe studia i szkice* [Maria Konopnicka. New Studies and Essays], ed. Józef Z. BIAŁEK and Tadeusz BUDREWICZ (Kraków, 1995), pp. 51-62.

²¹ Stanislaus A. BLEJWAS, “Polish Positivism and the Jews”, *Jewish Social Studies* 46 (1984), no. 1, pp. 21-36; Brian A. PORTER, *When Nationalism Began to Hate. Imagining Modern Politics in Nineteenth-Century Poland* (New York and Oxford, 2000), pp. 44-52; 160-64.

²² On Orzeszkowa’s attitude to Jews, see Gabriella SAFRAN, *Rewriting the Jew. Assimilation Narratives in the Russian Empire* (Stanford, 2000), pp. 63-107; Magdalena OPALSKI, “The Concept of Jewish Assimilation in Polish Literature of the Positivist Period”, *The Polish Review* XXXII (1987), no. 4, 371-383.



13. Michał Elwiro Andriolli, Meir, Lejbele and Szmul, illustration for E.P. Orzeszko, *Meier Ezofowicz: een verhaal uit het leven der Poolsche joden*, ('s-Gravenhage, 1886).



14. Leopold Horowitz, *The Ninth of Ab*, 1870, oil on canvas, 58.5 × 77 cm, *Mishkan LeOmanut*, Museum of Art, Ein Harod, Inv. no. 660.

assimilation of Jews to the people among whom they live. We ask for the legal lifting of all Israelite institutions, which maintain divisions. We ask that the education of the Young Israelites be part of a general plan of education. We ask for draconian measures against the present separatism”.²³ Yet, more critical and downright anti-Semitic voices were also being heard, in support of the pogroms. Most vociferous and infamous was Jan Jeleński, a devout Catholic and pro-Russian self-made man, who already in the 1870s dismissed the positivist approach of integrating Jews, and roared against their financial influence and foreign nature. A year after the pogrom he purchased and transformed the Polish newspaper “Rola” into a veritable anti-Semitic magazine, bringing together other elements in Warsaw society who condoned the outbreak of anti-Jewish feeling, seeing the Jews as a threatening and problematic force.²⁴

Whether the troubling days of December 1881 left an imprint on Strzałecki is unclear, but what is clear is his continued exploration into the Polish and Polish-Jewish past, stressing its more consensual moments. While in Munich, still the bastion of historical painting, where he pursued his artistic activity from 1880, he created an image of the well-known symbol of Polish-Jewish symbiosis, *Cymbalista* or *Jankiel’s Concert*

²³ Quoted by Blejwas, “Polish Positivism”, p. 29 from an 1882 publication; see also Antony POLONSKY, *The Jews in Poland and Russia*, Vol. 2: 1881-1914 (Oxford, 2010), pp. 87-88.

²⁴ See Agnieszka FRIEDRICH, “The Image of the Warsaw Pogrom of 1881 in Late Nineteenth-Century Polish Literature”, *East European Jewish Affairs* 40:2 (2010), 145-157; OPALSKI, “The Concept”, pp. 381-382; PORTER, *When Nationalism Began to Hate*, pp. 162-171.



15. *Wojciech Gerson, The Queen Jadwiga and Dymitr from Goraj, 1869, oil on canvas, 95 × 68 cm, Lublin Museum.*



16. Wojciech Gerson, *Casimir the Great and the Jews*, 1874, oil on canvas, 118 × 144 cm, National Museum in Warsaw, Inv. no. MP 2035.

(1882), now in The National Museum in Warsaw (fig. 13). Strzalecki's pen and ink drawing follows the common form of depicting the scene from Adam Mickiewicz's renowned, epic poem *Pan Tadeusz* (1834). Jankiel, an orthodox Jew, and the innkeeper, is seen playing the dulcimer as members of two opposing factions of Polish noble families stand united and listen attentively to his patriotic music. One can only speculate whether by choosing this theme in 1882, one in which Jankiel – the patriotic figure – is granted a unique role in raising Polish national consciousness,²⁵ Strzalecki may have been weighing in with those Polish voices who rejected the pogroms and decried their impact on Polish-Jewish relations.

Strzalecki's dialogues with Polish history, Polish-Jewish life and history, Warsaw, and Gottlieb's oeuvre seem to have merged in *Song on the Destruction of Jerusalem* – 1883 (fig. 4). The painting, created in a somewhat sentimental, academic style which characterizes several of Strzalecki's works, depicts an imaginary scene. Several individuals are placed together in front of a partially sun-lit building positioned diagonally, leading the viewer towards a distant landscape stretching behind it. The positioning of the figures at the head of the steps – as on a stage – in front of the building's entrance, while the harpist accompanies them with his music from below, adds an element of theatricality, turning the entire painting into a metaphor.

²⁵ Reproduced in NELKEN, *Images of a Lost World*, p. 76; for references to Jankiel in Polish literature, see *inter alia* Magdalena OPALSKI, *The Jewish Tavern-Keeper and His Tavern in Nineteenth-Century Polish Literature* (Jerusalem, 1986), *passim*.



17. *Władysław Łuszczkiewicz Casimir the Great Visiting Esterka, 1870, oil on canvas, 94.5 × 79.5 cm, Lviv National Art Gallery named after B. Voznytsky.*



18. Maurycy Gottlieb, Uriel Da Costa and Judith Vanderstraten, 1877,
oil on canvas, 136 × 187 cm,
Holzer Collection, Mexico City.

From the building, which appears to be a synagogue, a couple emerges – an elderly, traditionally dressed Jewish man wearing a fur-trimmed, festive hat and a youngster beside him. They leave a dark interior, lit up by the light of two candles (the others are all burnt out). The two burning candles hover directly above their heads accompanying their exit, from darkness into the bright sunlight that greets them outdoors. The elderly man, who supports himself by a cane in one hand, and by leaning with his other hand on the youth, has difficulty seeing, as his eyes are covered by a deep shadow created by his fur hat. They have just passed a doorframe marked by a *mezuzah* (a case with a piece of parchment on which biblical texts are inscribed and commonly affixed on Jewish doorposts), next to which appears a cobweb. The couple, possibly a grandfather and a grandson, stands beneath a heavy stone arch suggesting an old building. While the elderly Jew at the moment of their exit looks fragile and in need of support, the youth, distinguished by his side-locks and a skullcap, looks toward the fashionably-dressed man standing in the center of the painting. Although very different in appearance, they share a common attribute – a prayer shawl (a *tallit*) – that hangs in similar fashion over their left arms. The youth's forehead and chin are prominent suggesting determination, while he holds tightly with both of his hands a heavy tome (maybe a volume of the Talmud).

Although clearly Jewish, the youth appears to belong to a different sphere, a new type of young Jew, who, while still belonging to the old orthodox world, seems to be in a pensive mood. The youthful figure may have been inspired by the main character in Eliza Orzeszkowa's 1878 novel *Meir Ezofowicz*, especially in the edition illustrated by Michał

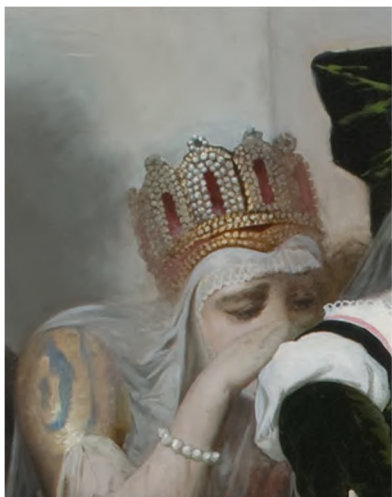


19. Władysław Walkiewicz,
Polish Queen Jadwiga,
1880, lithograph
36.3 × 48.8 cm,
after Wojciech Gerson's
(lost?) painting,
National Museum
in Warsaw.

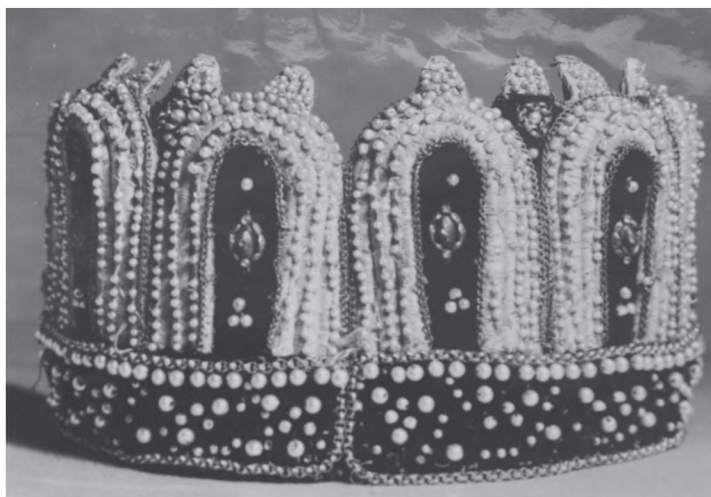
Elwiro Andriolli.²⁶ There, Meir is depicted as an educated and free thinking Jew, striving to widen his horizons, like other enlightened Jews, though still very much part of the Jewish framework. Strzalecki's inclusion of Jews of different ages and persuasions in *The Song* finds some resemblance in some of Andriolli's images (fig. 13).

The old man and youth actually recall a similar couple, only in reverse, which appears in Leopold Horowitz's well-known painting *The Ninth of Ab* (1870; fig. 14). Here the couple *enters* the synagogue in order to join the congregation, whose participants are gesticulating profusely as they bemoan the destruction of the Jerusalem temples as the book of Lamentations (traditionally read on the 9th of Ab, the day that commemorates the destruction of the temples) is being read. The heavy wooden doors behind them are closed,

²⁶ Eliza ORZESZKOWA, *Meir Ezołowicz. Powieść z życia Żydów. Przez... Z 26 ilustracjami M. Andriolliego* [Meir Ezołowicz. A Story from Jewish Life. With 26 Illustrations by M. Andriolli], (Warszawa, 1879). We used an 1886 Dutch edition of the Orzeszkowa novel with the illustrations by Andriolli. See E.P. ORZESZKO, *Meier Ezołowicz. Een verhaal uit het leven der Poolsche Joden, door...* Met zesentwintig platen geteekend door M. Andrioli. Naar de derde dt. uitg. in het Nederland. overgebr. door J. A. Bruins ('s-Gravenhage, 1886).



20. *Wandalin Strzalecki, Song on the Destruction of Jerusalem, 1883, detail.*



21. *Photograph of Sterntichel (Jewish woman's headcover), 19th century, black velvet, 15 × 32 cm, Jan Matejko's House, from the Collection of the National Museum in Kraków, Inv. no. MNK IX/4.236.*

separating them from the outside world while the unlit candles are placed in a candlestick attached to the left wall. Strzalecki most probably knew Horowitz's work since it was exhibited in Warsaw in 1870 and was reproduced in numerous engravings and woodcuts. Leopold Horowitz (1837-1917), the Austro-Hungarian painter of Jewish origin who first came to Warsaw in 1868 was one of the earliest artists in Poland to portray a genre scene from Jewish traditional life in his paintings.²⁷ In contrast to Polish artists, like Strzalecki, who when depicting Polish historical and genre scenes that included Jews did so in outdoor scenes – Horowitz offered with this work an insider's look. He showed the religious holiday (The Ninth of Ab) in a secluded synagogue. Strzalecki, in contrast, leads his two protagonists into the outer world.

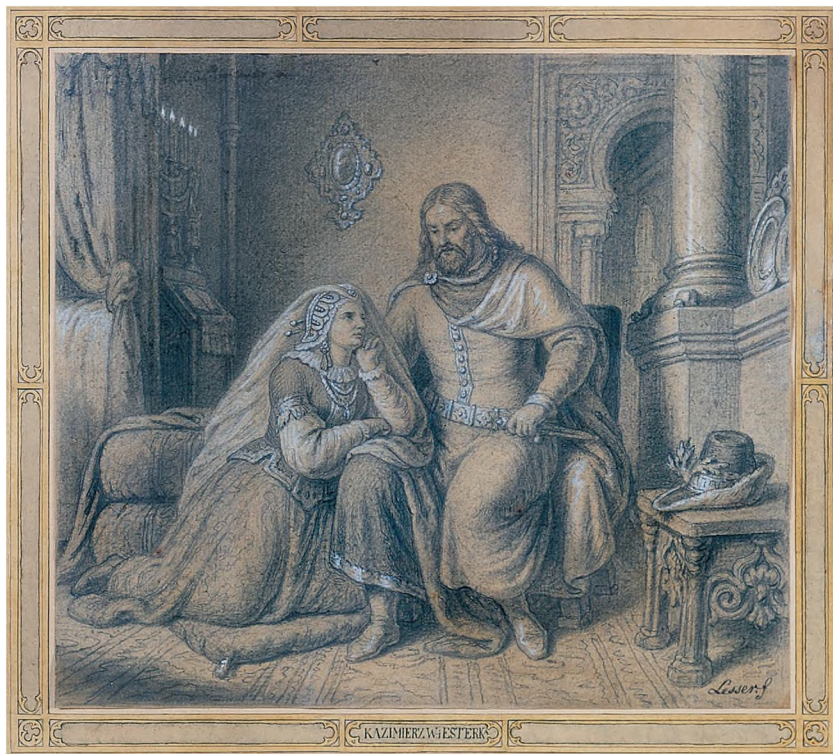
The Song, like other historical works done by Polish artists of the period, acknowledges a state of two worlds – an inner and outer one. In order to transmit the relationship between them, a structure is commonly inserted – usually in the form of a gate – to symbolize this process. Such is the case in various artistic interpretations of Queen Jadwiga's attempt to leave the Wawel Castle in Cracow. In one such painting by Strzalecki's teacher, Wojciech Gerson, he shows the beloved 14th century Queen Jadwiga trying to break out of the castle with the help of an ax. Her guardian Dymitr of Goraj who prevented her marriage with the Habsburg prince Wilhelm of Austria, stops her from leaving the castle (fig. 15). Eventually, as is well known, she conceded to marry Jagiełło, the Lithuanian prince, creating the union of Lithuania with Poland, and the acceptance by the former of Western Christianity, a crucial moment in Poland's development. Jadwiga's claim to fame was her efforts to reopen the famous Jagellonian University in Cracow, which became one of the major centers of learning in Europe.

Among other famous Polish paintings depicting historical encounters and scenes occurring at the gates, two need to be mentioned. Gerson in his *The Reception of the Jews*

²⁷ Jerzy MALINOWSKI, *Malarstwo i rzeźba Żydów polskich w XIX i XX wieku* [Painting and Sculpture of Polish Jews in the 19th and 20th centuries] (Warszawa, 2000), pp. 20-21.



22. Jan Matejko, *St. Kinga*, 1892, oil on canvas, Museum Źup Wielickich, Wieliczka, detail.



23. Aleksander Lesser, *Casimir and Esterka*, after 1850, pencil, gouache, crayon on paper, 39.3 × 33.4 cm, private collection.



25. Maurycy Gottlieb, *Jews Praying in the Synagogue on Yom Kippur*, 1878, detail.

24. Wandalin Strzalecki, *Song on the Destruction of Jerusalem*, 1883, detail.

(1874) sometimes entitled *Casimir the Great and the Jews* (fig. 16), depicts Casimir's openness to Jewish immigration to Poland. The Jews are seen as impoverished and weary, some in torn clothes as they pray and plead for reception. Casimir is also seen arriving at a Jewish home marked by a *mezuzah*, to visit his beloved Esterka in Władysław Łuszczkiewicz's *Casimir the Great visiting Esther*, presently in the Lviv Gallery of Art (fig. 17). The Polish king is greeted in front of the entrance to the house by his mistress's entire family, including her father, a traditionally looking Jew, who stands at the doorpost. In these paintings a symbolic passage is created between two worlds, the Polish and the non-Polish one. Whereas in the case of Jadwiga, who hoped to marry the Habsburg prince, the gates were forcefully closed, protecting the Polish kingdom from losing its sovereignty by uniting with the Habsburgs, in the case of Casimir, the gates were open for the Jews, as was the entrance to the Jewish home for the Polish king. Strzalecki himself created in 1881 a scene of an encounter at a gate simply called *In front of the Gate*.

In depicting the scene on the steps of the synagogue in his *Song on the Destruction of Jerusalem* (fig. 4), Strzalecki also created a dialogue between inner and outer worlds – here, Jewish and non-Jewish. In front of the old Jew, supported by the youth, a young couple stand at the center of the painting, dressed in elegant Renaissance clothes recalling



26. Wandalin Strzalecki,
Self-portrait, 1880,
oil on canvas, 88 × 63 cm,
National Museum in Warsaw,
Inv. no. MP 2418 MNW.

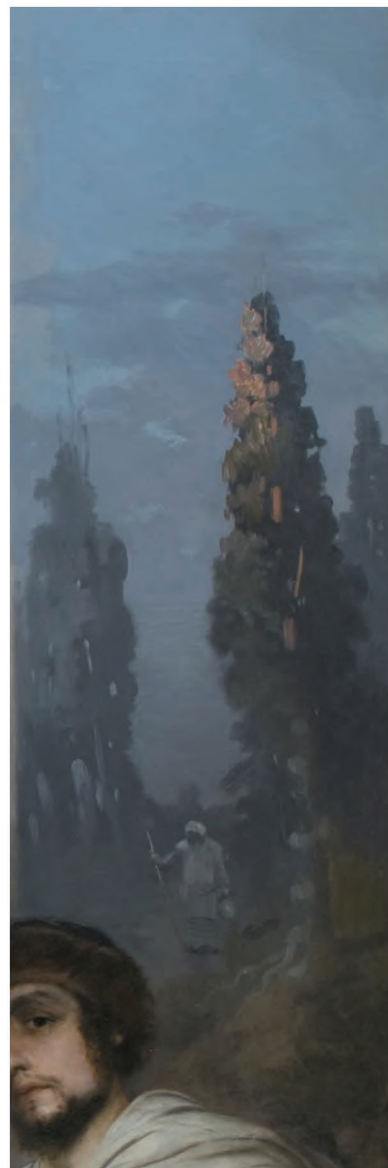
the golden age of Polish culture when humanist learning tolerated the differences between the religions, as exemplified by the Warsaw declaration of 1573. The elegantly dressed man wears an extravagant hat adorned by feathers as a prayer shawl hangs from his left forearm. The young couple appears to represent a further stage in the evolution of Jewish life from traditional Jewish behavior, exemplified by the elderly man and his young companion, also a step removed, to a more modern and secular way of life. The single identifying detail of the young man's Jewish identity is the prayer shawl hanging on his arm; his female companion has no features or appurtenances that distinguish her as a Jewish woman.

Strzalecki's use of the humanist tradition to depict the movement from traditional Judaism to a more modern one raises striking parallels with notions commonly associated with the nineteenth century Positivist school of writing on the Jews, exemplified by the above mentioned novel by Orzeszkowa, *Meir Ezofowicz*. A tradition existed in Polish writing from Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz (*Leibe i Siora*) in 1821 to later Positivist writers to write negatively of the traditional Jews but favorably of Polish Jews who abandoned their traditional and insular way of life and adapted a more modern and inclusive one. According to Gabriella Safran, Niemcewicz treats ideally "the eponymous pair of enlightened Jewish lovers [he writes about in (*Leibe i Siora*)] and their efforts both to free themselves from the

constrictions of Jewish traditionalism and to reform their community as a whole". Polish authors and acculturated Jews encouraged the abandonment of traditional Jewish life and the adoption of a modern way of life, a perspective that Strzalecki appears to have espoused in presenting the young couple in Renaissance clothing as a more advanced, and welcome, stage in the development of Polish Jews.²⁸ Yet, the couple is still both moved and saddened by hearing the music played by the Jewish-dressed harpist, who is placed on a lower level from the other figures. His music is the Song of Destruction of Jerusalem, traditionally attributed to King David, the author of Psalms 79: 1: "O God, the heathen are come into thine inheritance; thy holy temple have they defiled: they have laid Jerusalem on heaps".

Strzalecki's young couple (fig. 4) also recalls the figures in Gottlieb's *Uriel Da Costa and Judith Vanderstraten* (fig. 18), exhibited in Warsaw in 1878 and again in 1880: the sad and melancholy atmosphere that hovers over both couples, especially with regard to the depiction of the female characters as forlorn and withdrawn, accentuated by the position of their heads and the shadow covering their eyes, alludes to the tragedy that envelops both couples. Gottlieb in his painting addressed the personal tragedy of Uriel Da Costa (c. 1585-1640) and his lover: their unsuccessful struggle for freedom from the condemnation by the rabbinical authorities. In the case of Strzalecki's couple, their sadness is provoked by the song of destruction, the lack of Polish independence, and possibly the deterioration in Polish-Jewish relations, exacerbated by the events of December 1881. The couples' sadness may in fact reflect the personal sadness of each of the artists.²⁹

Yet between the figures emerging from the synagogue and the young couple in Strzalecki's work, two figures relate to them in dramatically different ways. The child with side-locks, dressed in a colorfully striped outfit, covered by a religious garment (a *tallit katan*), wears a skull cap and holds a book in one hand as he gazes with adoration at the young man as if he wished to grow up and be like him, acculturated and sophisticated. The child's hand gesture, emulating that of the young man, adds to his innocent and pure



27. *Wandalin Strzalecki, Song on the Destruction of Jerusalem, 1883, detail.*

²⁸ Quotation from SAFRAN, *Rewriting the Jew*, p. 74. Safran's discussion of the way Niemcewicz and the Positivists categorized "good Jews" and "bad Jews" is pertinent to our interpretation of the painting. The "bad Jews" were those who remained dressed in their own, specific clothes, spoke their own language, abided firmly to their traditional texts, while exploiting Polish non-Jews but avoiding contact with them. See also JAGODZIŃSKA, "Overcoming the Signs of the 'Other'", pp. 71-94.

²⁹ It has often been noted that the scene with Da Costa and Judith Vanderstraten may have mirrored Gottlieb's unrequited love for Laura Henschel-Rosenfeld.



28. *Wilhelm von Kaulbach, The Destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, 1846, oil on canvas, 585 × 705 cm. Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen - Neue Pinakothek München /WAF 403.*

desire. Unlike him, the woman beside him, elegantly dressed and wearing a precious crown, leans on the shoulder of the young woman in Renaissance dress, weeping. Her sadness is diametrically opposed to the child's optimistic veneer, highlighting the sense of tragedy in the painting. The child offers a striking resemblance to the one in Gottlieb's *Jews Praying* standing in the lower left corner, further emphasizing Strzałecki's internal dialogue with the deceased Jewish artist (figs. 4, 5). However the weeping woman appears to be associated with an alternative tradition from the rest of the characters in the painting.

Strzałecki may have been thinking here of Queen Jadwiga, who appeared in similar attire in other 19th century Polish historical paintings. As in the work of Strzałecki's teacher Gerson (e. g. the lithograph by Władysław Walkiewicz, 1880, based on Gerson's painting of Queen Jadwiga, 1876), Jadwiga appears as a central figure with a vision of Poland's future (fig. 19). The suggested identification of the weeping woman with Jadwiga is reinforced in the *Song* by a rose lying on the steps, next to the artist's signature (recalling roses scattered on the ground in Walkiewicz's lithograph). According to one of the legends about Jadwiga, it is told that one night while trying to smuggle out food for the poor, she was caught by her suspicious husband. When asked to show him what she hid in her apron – a miracle occurred and roses fell to the ground.³⁰ The rose in Strzałecki's painting (fig. 4)

³⁰ On the legend relating to Jadwiga and the roses, see Norman F. CANTOR (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of the Middle Ages* (New York, 1999), p. 286.

recalls this legend. However, Jadwiga in Strzałecki's painting wears a crown (fig. 20), adapted from a headcover worn by Jewish women in Eastern Europe on special occasions (known as a *sterntichel*; fig. 21), similar to the crown occasionally used for female characters by Matejko in his paintings (fig. 22).³¹ Interestingly a *sterntichel* in its common form appears years earlier in Aleksander Lesser's 1850 portrayal of Esterka and Casimir (fig. 23). There Esterka is seen wearing the particular headgear as she sits at the feet of King Casimir. Strzałecki may clearly have been mixing his associations in bringing together these two figures, the Polish queen and the King's mythical paramour.

Jadwiga/Esterka's sadness and that of the elegant couple in front of her assume deeper meaning as we turn our attention now to the harp player who (fig. 24), according to the title of Strzałecki's work, plays the sad tunes of a song on the destruction of Jerusalem. While the harp with its putto decoration recalls humanist Renaissance culture, the musician standing below the steps introduces a new, oriental look.³² He is strikingly akin to Gottlieb's self-portrait in the center of his *Yom Kippur* painting (fig. 25). Both images wear a striped oriental-looking garment (as does the admiring boy in Strzałecki's painting), while their head covering recalls local, fur-rimmed Polish Jewish hats. However Strzałecki has gone one dramatic step further. He has, like Gottlieb had done in the *Yom Kippur* painting, inserted himself into the painting as the harp player, whose resemblance to the artist's self-portrait painted in 1879, is striking and uncanny (fig. 26). Strzałecki, the Polish artist, presents himself here as Gottlieb the Jew. He not only donned a prayer shawl in a more prominent way than did Gottlieb, but also creates an association with the biblical figure of David, synonymously identified as the harp player, who according to tradition, wrote the Song of destruction (Psalms 79). By impersonating himself as Gottlieb and identifying with the Jewish memory of the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, Strzałecki has clearly reasserted the symmetry of the two nations' historical experience, that arouses the empathy of the Renaissance-dressed, acculturated, Jewish couple.

As a metaphor for Poland's stateless political situation, the *Song*, created in 1883 (twenty years after the abortive 1863 January uprising), was another reflection on Polish failure to regain independence, and possibly on the rupture of Polish-Jewish relations in the pogrom of 1881. The Jewish destiny – the loss of the Temple and sovereignty, and the subsequent dispersion and exile – themes repeatedly referenced by Polish writers to describe their own lamentations, shame, humiliation and national tragedy, had become sources of identification and reference points. By including the symbols of the glorious Polish and Polish-Jewish past in the figure of Jadwiga/Esterka – and by inserting himself in the painting as the Polish David, Strzałecki related to the similarities and ties connecting the two people – the Jews and the Poles – and their common fate: a true homage to Gottlieb and to Poland

Statelessness and dispersion that unified the fate of these two people were further stressed by an additional theme in this painting. In the landscape appearing to the right of the synagogue a figure recalling the legendary image of the Wandering Jew can be seen

³¹ A similar crown appears in Matejko's painting *Hold Pruski* (The Prussian Tribute, 1882), presently in the National Museum of Kraków, inv. no MNK II-a-561 (81133), and later in *St. Kinga* (1892). Matejko possessed such a crown in his own collection. On the crown and *sterntichel*, see Giza FRANKEL, "Notes on the Costume of the Jewish Woman in Eastern Europe", *Journal of Jewish Art* 7 (1980), pp. 50-57. Our thanks to Professor Ziva Amishai-Maisels for suggesting the possibility that the crown may relate to the *sterntichel*, thus creating an association with a figure from Jewish tradition.

³² A similar harp was depicted by Strzałecki in his 1882 painting *Poisoning of the Last Prince of Mazovia* (probably lost; reproduced in "Świat", 1917, no. 11-12, p. 11) recalling a tragic scene from Polish history.

(fig. 27).³³ Walking between the tall trees that recall both European poplars and Mediterranean cypresses, a bearded old man wearing a turban and a white garment with dark stripes at its bottom, resembling those on a *tallit*, supports himself by a staff and carries a rounded bag. It were as if he was walking towards the individuals in front of the synagogue.

As a student in Munich, Strzalecki was certainly familiar with Wilhelm von Kaulbach's monumental 1846 painting entitled *The Destruction of Jerusalem by Titus* exhibited at the Neue Pinakothek (fig. 28).³⁴ This historical work also includes an image of a Wandering Jew. He is shown in Kaulbach's painting on the lower left hand side as a frightened, sole survivor of the massacre, expelled into the world by black-winged demons, and doomed to suffering, solitude, and endless wandering. His misery is heightened when compared to the group of men, women and children leaving the destroyed city on the lower right hand side of the painting. They are accompanied by angels, piously singing songs, bringing Christianity to the world.

In Strzalecki's painting the music and song do not glorify the victory of Christianity over Judaism, as does Kaulbach's, but rather laments the common fate of Jews and Poles. Strzalecki's Wandering Jew approaching from the distance, dressed in oriental garb with *tallit*-like stripes (unlike the torn rags in Kaulbach's work) accentuates the exile and wandering of both people. The harp player's head resides in both worlds (fig. 4) and creates the link that the Sukiennice gallery made with Gottlieb's self portrait as Ahasverus, the Wandering Jew, turning Strzalecki and the Poles into exiled wanderers.

Song on the Destruction of Jerusalem has no parallels among 19th century Polish artists or their predecessors. Strzalecki painted a metaphor by placing the different protagonists – the traditional Jews leaving the synagogue, the enlightened and acculturated Jews standing in front of them, separated by the saddened female heroine Jadwiga wearing a “Jewish crown” – on a stage, taking part in a historical drama. It emerged at a time that Poles and Jews in Warsaw were still trying to make sense of the rupture of 1881, that the Polish art world was bereaving the premature death of one of its brilliant prodigies, and as Poles and acculturated Jews continued to yearn for an independent and reunited Poland. Strzalecki, unfortunately, has left us little written material to help decipher how he assimilated all of these issues into his life and world view; he has however left us a hint on where he stood on all these developments by implanting himself in the painting as a Jew, as the Polish Gottlieb, an interchange of identities of a non-Jew to a Jew, rarely found in the history of modern art. Through this unprecedented measure he remained steadfast in his belief that Jews and Poles will continue to be in dialogue, nurtured by the memories of exile and dispersion.

A Contemporary Postscript

Although Strzalecki's art in general and this painting in particular remained largely unknown to wider audiences interested in the Polish-Jewish discourse, a recent project undertaken by a young Polish artist, Joanna Rajkowska, echoes some of this 19th century

³³ The myth of the Wandering Jew has been treated extensively in art and literature. See *inter alia*, George K. ANDERSON, *The Legend of the Wandering Jew* (Providence, 1965); Galit HASAN-ROKEM and Alan DUNDES (eds.), *The Wandering Jew: Essays in the Interpretation of a Christian Legend* (Bloomington, 1986); *Le Juif errant. Un témoin du temps*, mus. cat. (Paris, 2001); Ziva AMISHAI-MAISELS, “Menasseh Ben Israel and the ‘Wandering Jew’”, *Ars Judaica* 2 (2006), pp. 59-82.

³⁴ Christian LENZ, *The Neue Pinakothek* (London, 1995), p. 71; Avraham RONEN, “Kaulbach's Wandering Jew: An Anti-Jewish Allegory and Two Jewish Responses”, *Assaph* 3 (1998), pp. 243-262.



29. Joanna Rajkowska, *Greetings from Jerusalem Avenue, installation, Warsaw, 2002.*

artist's ideas.³⁵ In December 2002 Rajkowska erected a tall, artificial palm tree (fig. 29) in the middle of Warsaw's busy, urban Jerusalem Avenue, in a location traditionally reserved for a large Christmas tree. This unusual art project entitled *Greetings from Jerusalem Avenue*, received much public attention and raised a number of questions.

Rajkowska's decision to "plant" the palm tree where she did – on Warsaw's Aleje Jerozolimskie – has historical significance. The name of this street was a carryover from the "New Jerusalem", the town settlement that was established in 1775 by Prince August Sułkowski for Jewish inhabitants of the Mazovia district, at the gates of Warsaw. Due to public opposition "New Jerusalem" project failed to materialize, the Jews were expelled, and their homes demolished.³⁶ Nevertheless the name of the street connecting the settlement to the city – Jerusalem Avenue – remained.³⁷

Rajkowska's idea for the project followed a visit to Israel. Designed to connect the real, contemporary Jerusalem – the middle-eastern city filled with deep conflicts – she encountered, with this virtual and symbolic one, the project represents the history of the "New Jerusalem" in Warsaw and the vacuum created by the present absence of the city's vibrant Jewish community. But the "foreign" "oriental" palm tree in such a central street in Warsaw quickly became a challenge for Varsovians to accept a symbolic "other", that related both to the Jews and to the new development and social changes in contemporary Poland. Thus, Rajkowska's project, as did Strzalecki's painting more than a hundred years ago, uses the past to make a statement on Jewish and Polish cultures. However, *Greetings from Jerusalem Avenue*, this 21st century project, articulates a different message: while bemoaning the loss and destruction, it attempts to create a new "Jerusalem", to bridge the tormented past with the present, by sending greetings in a true spirit of the global village we live in today.

³⁵ For the artist's interpretation of the work and the controversy surrounding it, see www.palma.art.pl/?language=en (accessed August 2012). Joanna Rajkowska graciously responded to our queries.

³⁶ Marian M. DROZDOWSKI, "The Jews of Warsaw under King Stanisław August", in *The Jews of Warsaw*, p. 86.

³⁷ KIENIEWICZ, "Assimilated Jews in 19th-Century Warsaw", p. 153.