

Jewish Masculinity in the Holocaust

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PhD Thesis

Declaration of Authorship

I, Anna-Madeleine Halkes Carey, hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it are entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

Signed:

Date:

Abstract

This thesis considers the prevailing historical representation of Jewish masculinity in Holland, Belgium, France and Poland during the Holocaust and asks to what extent it is an accurate reflection of the source material available. Having concluded that such scholarship as exists on the subject is inherently flawed, my thesis will attempt to consider exactly how it might more accurately be represented. Beginning with a broad understanding of theories of masculinity and discussions of Jewish gender my thesis will lay out a clear approach both to the study of masculinity and to the questions and key features of Jewish masculinity in the interwar period in Europe. Treating the period largely chronologically, this thesis will then go on to its substantive research, looking at the sources, contemporary and modern, written both by survivors and those who died during the Holocaust, to attempt to determine the impact of persecution upon several elements of male gender identity, specifically, conformity to normative identities, the impact of gendered environments and, finally, more individual elements of masculinities. Ultimately, this thesis will argue that whilst Jewish masculinities were severely damaged in the initial phases of persecution, particularly due to an environment which was gendered feminine and the near impossibility of practising normative gender identities, the period of enclosure, and particularly ghettoisation, which followed was one in which many men were, within reason, able to reassert clear masculine identities. Finally, my thesis will conclude by considering the role of fatherhood and father-son relationships in the Holocaust and what this can tell us about generations within masculinity and the impact of fatherhood on the masculine identity of the individual.

Table of Contents

<i>Title Page</i>	p.1
<i>Declaration of Authorship</i>	p.2
<i>Abstract</i>	p.3
<i>Table of Contents</i>	p.4
<i>Acknowledgement</i>	p.5
Introduction	p.6
Methodology	p.14
Chapter 1 – Masculinity in Theory	p.37
Chapter 2 – Jewish Masculinity in Practice on the Eve of the Holocaust	p.53
Jewish Masculinity in the Holocaust	p.74
Chapter 3 – Jewish Masculinity in Crisis: the beginnings of Holocaust persecution and the deconstruction of male gender identities	p.76
Chapter 4 – The Reassertion of Jewish Masculinity: ghettoisation, enclosure and the destruction of European Jewry	p.118
Chapter 5 – Fatherhood: filial respect and parenting as a sustaining force in gender identity	p.168
Conclusion	p.203
Bibliography	p.207

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Introduction

In spite of burgeoning academic interest in the history of modern masculinity, a small but detailed understanding of Jewish masculinity, and an established body of work relating to gender in the Holocaust, the question of Jewish masculinity during the Holocaust is one that has barely been considered by historians. No systematic attempt has been made to analyse the impact of humiliation, ghettoisation and genocide on the gender identities of the Jewish men who experienced them, and whilst some conclusions have nevertheless been drawn, little attention has been paid to the detail of such a question including the role of men in the home and in public, the significance of fatherhood and parenting, and the multiple and diverse masculinities practised by Jewish men in this period. It is this gap in the scholarship that my thesis will begin to fill, considering the impact of persecution on the masculinities of Jewish men in Poland, France, Belgium and Holland during the Holocaust: a carefully chosen range which is both broad enough to allow me to draw useful conclusions concerning gender identities and limited enough in scope to form a manageable research project.

The starting point for this thesis must necessarily be the small body of work which, whilst not considering in detail the gender identities of men in this period, nonetheless draws clear conclusions concerning the negative gender implications of loss of work, problems of supporting one's family, and the consequent slide into depression. However, not only are these conclusions extremely perfunctory and reliant on limited research, but, perhaps more significantly, they have been drawn in the service of another master. Written predominantly by historians whose primary interest lies in understanding the impact of the Holocaust on Jewish female gender identity, much of what we know about Jewish masculinity is no more than a corollary of important and successful attempts to show the significant role that Jewish women played in enabling families and communities to endure and survive the Holocaust. And whilst titles do sometimes suggest a more balanced approach to the study of gender in the Holocaust, in most cases for 'gender' it would be fair to read 'women'. This is particularly clear in the case of Judith Baumel's work *Double Jeopardy: Gender and the Holocaust* which, in spite of this ungendered title, notes in the introduction: "Gender and the Holocaust complements the existing

literature by presenting a volume of historical essays illuminating the factors which shaped the lives of Jewish women during and after the Holocaust.”¹

Whilst I quibble over neither the importance of women’s actions during the Holocaust, nor the negative results of unemployment and persecution on Jewish men,² the relative neglect of male gender history in the Holocaust has had several consequences. First, it has led to the marginalisation of the male experience, for example when Heinemann references women particularly as being “doubly damned,” since they were attacked both as Jews and as women, she appears to ignore the significant ways in which men were equally “doubly damned.”³ This lack of consideration of Jewish men must necessarily lead the historian to question her other conclusions about men and their behaviour, including her attribution to Jewish men of a greater tendency to diminish and exert power over the weak when she writes, “[w]hat has been described as a universal adoption by inmates of Nazi values of domination of the weak is apparently much less true for women than for men in memoirs.”⁴ Not dissimilarly Tec, who has much to say about the male experience of the Holocaust, writes that, “Jewish mothers had often to experience the unimaginable pain of watching their children starve to death.”⁵ That she seems to consider this pain specific to women is problematic not only because it directly contradicts the work of Raul Hilberg, who suggests that in general men took the deaths of children and family harder than women, but because it does not seem to be based on any particular research.⁶

¹ Judith Tydor Baumel, *Double Jeopardy: Gender and the Holocaust* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1998), p.x. This problem is not particular to the Holocaust, but rather is only one example of a larger phenomenon in historical writing. As Filene laconically comments, “[t]he vanguard of women’s historians are looking toward gender history, but the gender includes only one sex.” (Peter Filene, ‘The Secrets of Men’s History’ in Harry Brod, ed., *The Making of Masculinities: The New Men’s Studies* (Boston, MA: Allen & Unwin, 1987), p.113).

² Interestingly Pleck (Joseph Pleck, ‘The Theory of Male Sex-Role Identity: Its Rise and Fall, 1936 to the Present’ in Brod, ed., *The Making of Masculinities*, p.27) suggests that, such theories were particularly significant following the Depression, because they allowed men to be seen as masculine even if they were unemployed, so long as they thought and acted the right way. However as important as this might have been at the time, it seems certain that unemployment does nevertheless play a role in understanding masculinity and cannot be ignored because it suits social conditions. This is a point stressed by John Tosh, ‘What should Historians do with Masculinity? Reflections on Nineteenth-Century Britain’, *History Workshop Journal*, 38 (1994), p.184.

³ This is something I shall go on to consider throughout the thesis and therefore will not detail here. Effectively I argue, however, that the gendered imagery of antisemitic rhetoric alone could be understood to target men both for their race and their gender.

⁴ Marlene Heinemann, *Gender and Destiny; Women Writers and the Holocaust* (New York: Greenwood, 1986), p.26.

⁵ Nechama Tec, *Resilience and Courage: Women, Men and the Holocaust* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), p.75.

⁶ Raul Hilberg cited in Joan M. Ringelheim, ‘The Unethical and the Unspeakable: Women and the Holocaust’, *Simon Wiesenthal Center Annual*, 1 (1984), p.72.

This tendency to sideline the gendered experiences of men is also a reflection of a gender discourse which occurred during the Holocaust. One key example of this is found in *Oneg Shabbat*, whose founder Emmanuel Ringelblum wrote in his diary of the role of women in the Holocaust: “The historians of the future will have to devote a fitting chapter to the role of the Jewish woman during the war. It is thanks to the courage and endurance of our women that thousands of families have been able to endure these bitter times.” He goes on to talk about women working tirelessly, taking over from tired and depressed men in the Housing Committees.⁷ That men also worked tirelessly in the Housing Committees goes unmentioned, not, I would argue, because it did not happen, but because it is assumed. Women would not have been able to assume men’s roles in the Housing Committees had they not previously been filled by men, but the line about men performing tirelessly does not exist and has not been sufficiently considered by historians of gender.

The second product of the existing bias in the history of Jewish masculinity in the Holocaust has been the nature of analysis which has, as the end of a logical equation rather than as the result of research, led to the conclusion that the Holocaust left men diminished and depressed. Historians of women and the Holocaust have particularly stressed that, in the face of persecution, Jewish women found reserves of strength to fight for themselves, their families and their communities and that they rose to the challenge of the assault they faced, taking on whatever roles and tasks were required of them. In many cases this is described as an assumption of the male role in which women retrained and went out to work to earn money, petitioned public bodies on behalf of their families and took the lead in researching and organising emigration opportunities. As women assumed men’s roles (or, more correctly I would argue, performed tasks more usually performed by men) the argument follows, they became masculinised and the men who were, for whatever reason, failing to perform their gender roles, became feminised. Taking exactly this logical step Tec writes, “[t]he majority of the adult men who survived the initial Nazi onslaughts were prevented from fulfilling their main traditional roles of provider and protector. Equating these roles with masculinity, many men became depressed and apathetic when they found themselves unable to meet these obligations.”⁸ If we look simply at

⁷ Emmanuel Ringelblum, *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto: The Journal of Emmanuel Ringelblum*, ed. Jacob Sloan (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1958), p.294.

⁸ Tec, *Resilience and Courage*, p.73. It is not the conclusion here that I question; indeed with much greater nuance this is one of my own conclusions. My question here is about the logical steps taken to reach this conclusion. Interestingly Sarah

men, however, rather than men as a product of changes to female gender identity, then this need not necessarily be the case. In my research, therefore, by relinquishing the gender comparison inherent in so much scholarship, something I shall go on to discuss in detail in my methodology, I shall also relinquish this assumed connection between male and female behaviours and gender identities and the negative conclusions about Jewish men that it has provoked.

Finally, the primary focus of these authors on the gender identities of women has meant that men have tended to be judged principally in the spheres of society in which women have traditionally been understood to function. This has led to an over-reliance upon the domestic sphere in discussions of male gender identity, with a particular emphasis on men's depression and decision-making limitations within the home, whilst the role of men in the community, particularly in collective decision making, and the importance of public space and the workplace as spheres in which men form and reinforce their masculine identities, have been partially overlooked. In contrast, my own work, again as I shall go on to discuss further in my methodology, will take a universal approach to the spheres debate, arguing that a study of a man's role in all spheres, including his work, public and private lives, is necessary to an understanding not only of the ways in which masculinity is undermined but also of how it can be strengthened and reinforced.

The highlighting of these problems, however, should not suggest that I do not value highly the research conducted by these historians or that this research is not of great value as a basis for my own. Conclusions concerning women and gender in the Holocaust were overdue when they were first considered in Joan Ringelheim's groundbreaking work, and subsequent scholarship has made an important contribution both to our understanding of the history of the Holocaust and to the historical study of gender. Kaplan's work, in particular, offers some important research useful for gauging men's responses to the Holocaust,⁹ whilst the nuance of Waxman's and Ringelheim's later work form a starting point for my own research, highlighting and resolving some of the key problems of studying gender in this period. Nevertheless, this strength does not detract from the fact that research into

Horowitz, 'Gender, Genocide and Jewish Memory', *Prooftexts*, 20 (2000), p.13, discusses a precedent for such opinions in the midrash discussing the idea that, when in Egypt as slaves, the Jews were forced to perform the tasks of the opposite gender. On this matter Horowitz comments that in the midrash the men are weakened by this reversal whilst the women find it empowering. This comparison does not appear in any other work I can find, but certainly presents one interesting way of understanding the assumptions of authors writing about gender in the Holocaust.

⁹ Marion A. Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair: Jewish Life in Nazi Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), p.31.

Jewish masculinity in the Holocaust should be conducted not as a by-product of the study of Jewish women but in its own right and on terms which are relevant to the lives and gender identities of those it studies.

In attempting to redress this imbalance, however, my thesis, the first independent study on the subject, must also be limited, most significantly in two areas. First, I will not attempt to consider gender identities once men entered the camps, since the lack of traditional social units, families and communities comprising both men and women, made the practice of traditional gender roles near impossible and a study thereof even more so. Second, the scope of this thesis is limited geographically to Poland, France, Belgium and Holland. Whilst a study of all countries in which Jews were persecuted would be unmanageable, the cross-section of countries I have chosen for comparison offers the widest possible range of experiences, encompassing the ghettos of Poland, situations of hiding in the West, and the obvious contrast of orthodox and assimilated Jews, all of which had a significant impact on changing notions of masculinity and are thus relevant for understanding the impact of specific conditions on gender identities. The limited inclusion of the free zone of France also allows the inclusion of examples of Jewish male involvement in government and social life which were impossible in Poland or even Belgium and which do much to illustrate some of the key themes of masculinity in practice. Ultimately this range will enable me to ask whether changes in the practice and understanding of masculinity extended from specific circumstances of persecution or whether they can more universally be understood to extend from the themes of gendered persecution affecting most Jewish men, despite the very different conditions in which they experienced the Holocaust.

Bearing in mind these restrictions, then, and due to the limited and problematic nature of literature on the subject, my thesis will begin by drawing on the three central bodies of existing theory and research: the primarily sociological study of masculinity; the historical application of masculinity theory; and the history of Jewish masculinity. The first of these, which I shall go on to consider in depth in chapter one, attempts to define what masculinity is, what it comprises and how it is formed and adapted. Significantly, however, this body of research has been heavily influenced by currents in gender studies, often connected to politically motivated trends in feminism. It is also, as I shall discuss in some detail, burdened with the corrective tendency of many sociologists which has sought

to improve the practice of masculinity. It will be important for my own research to acknowledge, and avoid, these tendencies, particularly since effective historical gender research rests upon attempting to understand masculinity as it was practised in the past and must perforce include, without judgement, characteristics of male gender identity including patriarchy, authority and the self-serving exercise of power which might be seen as compromised or negative.

Beyond this sociological study, chapter one will also consider the extent of historical studies of masculinity, the ways in which the theory of masculinity has been applied and the conclusions that historians have drawn. Whilst this research does not relate directly to the Jews in the Holocaust there is plenty of scholarship surrounding the masculinity of the German aggressors in the same period, as well as numerous studies from a range of historical periods which illustrate different ways of tackling the core questions of methodology that I shall go on to consider. However, whilst many of these studies have produced strong and valid conclusions concerning the development of modern masculinity, which feed into my own work, few outline a clear definition of masculinity to which they are working or methodically answer the key questions of how masculinity might be looked for in historical sources. These are pitfalls which I shall attempt to avoid, both through my methodology and theoretical study, since the nature of my sources often makes it hard to interrogate them closely about masculinity - particularly in a period where some would argue gender identity became subsumed by more basic questions of survival - and therefore calls for clear and workable definitions.

This theoretical overview will be followed, in chapter two, by a consideration of scholarship in the fields of sociology and history concerning Jewish masculinity. A study of this body of work, which includes such broad themes as the Jewish body, the Diaspora and gender, what some would see as the inherent femininity of Jewish religious masculinity and the impact of Aliyah and Zionism, is central to understanding what we know about the often diverse nature of Jewish masculinity in the years before the Holocaust. Only by focusing on these trends in Jewish gender identity before the Holocaust, and by considering such questions as the extent to which Jewish masculinities in this period were a response to discourses of assimilation, will it be possible to understand the particular Jewish masculinities which my thesis seeks to analyse. Masculinity, I would argue, depending on culture, location and generation, can include almost any element of behaviour and identity; therefore, in order to discuss the impact of the Holocaust on these identities it is important to understand,

necessarily broadly speaking, those elements of identity and culture which most strongly impacted upon masculinity for Jewish men before the Holocaust.

Between them, these first two chapters will consider the background, theory and literature relevant to my research, providing a framework on which to base my work and some important insights into the structures and sources of analysis I might usefully employ. This done, chapters three, four and five will present my substantive research into Jewish masculinity in the Holocaust and will be based on a range of primary sources, including diaries written during the Holocaust, sources written and recorded after the war, either in published format or as oral interviews, and collective sources such as *Oneg Shabbat* and the *Łódź Ghetto Chronicles*. Chapters three and four are divided chronologically into the periods before and after 'enclosure', enclosure being defined loosely as a period spent by an individual, family or community in a space which they were not free to leave, either owing to German regulations or for their own security. The bulk of chapter four will necessarily focus on ghettoisation and the Polish case, considering closely the impact of enclosure upon gender identities. The chapter will also, however, include some cases from Belgium, Holland and France of families who spent long periods in hiding. This comparison will consider whether these conditions raised similar questions for male gender identities to those raised by the circumstances of ghettoisation and will ultimately argue that the significant factor for masculinity in this period was not the immediate context of the ghettos but the larger question of enclosure. Whilst these chapters are broadly chronological, what divides them is not a point in time, a date or an event, but a shift in circumstances, which came to different families and communities, for various reasons, at very different times.¹⁰

Finally, chapter five is a study of Jewish fatherhood during the Holocaust. It considers whether fathers understood and managed their masculinity in the same way as other men, or whether the impact of children, questions of paternal respect and the increased importance of providing and protecting changed male gender identities and practices. Many sources pertaining to fatherhood are written by children, often those who were teenagers during the Holocaust, about their fathers. Whilst this presents some methodological questions for a study of fatherhood, something which I shall consider in the introduction to chapter five, it also highlights some points of study concerning the

¹⁰ The exact nature of this chronological shift is something I shall detail at the beginning of chapter three.

masculinity of youth and its formation which form an interesting addendum to the key conclusions of my thesis.

Methodology

A number of issues present themselves when attempting a study of Jewish masculinity in the Holocaust, from the relevance of studying gender, particularly masculinity, to questions of source selection. And whilst this section attempts to address these questions by detailing and explaining the methodologies I have applied throughout the thesis, some problems cannot be avoided. In certain cases, most obviously the limitations set by source availability, the most I can do is to acknowledge an issue and thereby hope to limit its impact upon my work. For this reason the thesis should be read with these methodologies and acknowledgments in mind, their presence here signaling their ongoing presence in the mind of the author during research and writing.

The Holocaust resulted in the deaths of around 90% of Polish Jewry, including 254,000 Jews from the Warsaw ghetto in two months of 1942, 80% of Dutch Jewry and near to 50% of Belgian Jewry, on which basis one might question the relevance of studying the gender implications of a persecution in which basic survival was so clearly paramount. Some would argue that the conditions faced by European Jewry from 1939 onwards were so dire that considerations of gender were, and remain, of no importance: that in their struggle simply to survive, and in light of the primacy of the paradigm of race, questions of gender became redundant for Jewish men. This thesis, however, strongly rejects the teleology of such an approach to the Holocaust. From 1939 onwards the lives of Jewish men in occupied Europe became gradually harder but it was not until significantly later, if at all, that they understood the likelihood of their ultimate deaths. For most of the period between 1939 and 1941 or 1942 (depending on their circumstances and the country in which they lived) most Jewish men expected, however hard life might be in the short term, to survive – they continued their lives, their marriages, bringing up children, earning money and socialising, to varying degrees, and, in doing so, practised their gender roles.

If we accept, then, that this period was one in which men continued to develop their identities influenced by gender, class and race, it is clear that understanding the detail of those lives constitutes a valuable historical study. It enhances our knowledge of the victims of the Holocaust, our understanding of Jewish masculine identity and, more broadly, the role of gender in managing horrifying experiences, providing more of Marion Kaplan's 'little picture' of Jewish life in order to 'cast

new light on the big picture.¹¹ As Ofer and Weitzman, historians whose work on gender in the Holocaust is widely respected, have eloquently argued, "...questions of gender lead us to a richer and more finely nuanced understanding of the Holocaust. They help us envision the specificity of everyday life and the different ways in which men and women responded to the Nazi onslaught."¹²

Nonetheless, these accepted explanations for the relevance and importance of a gendered approach to history almost invariably relate specifically to a study of women and some would argue that a gendered study of men requires more skilful gymnastics of reason. Those who pioneered the study of women in the Holocaust argued that the history which had previously been written was *de facto* a history of men.¹³ Written by men and about men, they argue that, although such works purported to be general studies of the Holocaust, they in fact documented only the lives of men during the Holocaust and failed to recognise conditions and experiences specific to women, of which menstruation and sexual assault are two very obvious examples.¹⁴

¹¹ Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair*, p.4.

¹² Dalia Ofer and Lenore J. Weitzman, 'Introduction' in Dalia Ofer and Lenore J. Weitzman, eds., *Women in the Holocaust* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), p.1.

¹³ Ringelheim comments "Current Holocaust literature focuses on the lives of men as written and perceived by men" (Ringelheim, 'The Unethical and the Unspeakable', p. 69), whilst Hardman refers specifically to a 'masculinist perspective' (Anna Hardman, 'Women and the Holocaust', *Holocaust Educational Trust Research Papers*, vol. 1, no. 3, 1999-2000, p.5).

¹⁴ In the first case, historians have found sources which discuss the equally negative results both of menstruation and amenorrhea particularly in the camps, including the physical realities of menstruation without the necessary sanitary wear resulting in women being punished, both by Kapos and Germans, for being unclean, and the shame and humiliation of not menstruating, often at a young age, combined with a very real fear that amenorrhea indicated permanent infertility (Brigitte Halbmayr, 'Sexualized Violence against Women during Nazi "Racial" Persecution' in Sonja M. Hedgepeth and Rochelle G Saidel, eds., *Sexual Violence against Jewish Women during the Holocaust* (Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press, 2010), p.34). In the case of sexual assault, which took numerous forms throughout the Holocaust, from attacks in the home during roundups and searches to examinations and shaving on arrival in the camps and later rape and the establishment of brothels, the impact on women were also multiple, from physical damage or pregnancy to severe emotional damage (Halbmayr, 'Sexualized Violence against Women', *passim*). Through a study of these, and other, gendered subjects, historians have not only increased our understanding of the realities of the Holocaust for women, itself a laudable end, but they have also uncovered complexities in the way we think about the Holocaust and gender. One example of this is the assault, or sexual coercion, of Jewish women by Jewish men. Previously largely unmentioned, such detail blurs the boundaries between victims and persecutors, forcing historians and survivors to reconsider the absolute victimhood of Jewish men and highlighting a tendency to give primacy to Jewish actions seen as heroic. As Waxman notes, "[o]nce again, an exclusive, if understandable, emphasis on heroic resistance and Jewish solidarity has inadvertently silenced alternative voices." (Zoë Waxman, 'Rape and Sexual Abuse in Hiding' in Hedgepeth and Saidel, eds., *Sexual Violence against Jewish Women during the Holocaust*, p.131). Of equal significance are the reasons many women give for not recounting cases of sexual assault: whilst some suffered from ongoing shame and a wish neither to discuss such matters nor to have their children be aware of them, others also emphasize the relationship between their own testimony and those of other survivors. Something I shall consider in chapter three, the tendency of survivors not to recount issues that do not arise in other testimonies has pushed women into silence concerning experiences alien to men. Such gender history has forced the historian to reconsider the nature of testimonies and thus doubly impacted upon our understanding of the Holocaust (see footnote 244).

In attempting to redress this perceived imbalance in historical writing Joan Ringelheim looked not only at women's experiences but beyond them to attempt to understand women's responses, the emotional and physical impact of the Holocaust, the coping mechanisms used and, most importantly, the social conditioning that allowed/enabled/forced women to respond as they did.¹⁵ Effectively, Ringelheim sought to understand both the impact of the Holocaust on the gender identities of the women who lived it and the impact of their gender identities on those women's behaviour. Whilst our understanding of the Holocaust was greatly in need of such a gendered approach to women's lives, and Ringelheim, and those who followed her, did a great deal to add nuance to our history, it is exactly the depth of their study which justifies applying their approach equally to men in the Holocaust. Although the early histories of the Holocaust were predominantly written by men (which ought anyway to be as irrelevant as my own status as a gentile woman) and about men, they do not consider men as men. Indeed they say no more about the gender identities of men than they do of women. In presenting men's experiences as universal, such histories fail either to understand the impact of the Holocaust on male gender identities or to analyse the importance of these gender identities on men's behaviour and experiences; traditional histories may present the Holocaust according to men, but they do not acknowledge those men as gendered. Therefore, the arguments used to explain the importance of a gendered history of women are equally applicable in the case of men – to quote Ofer and Weitzman, “[t]he discussion of women's unique experiences provides a missing element of what we must now see as an incomplete picture of Jewish life during the Holocaust.”¹⁶

Beyond simply making the case for a study of masculinity in the Holocaust, the development of a history of women in the period over the last twenty years has produced two key lessons which inform my study of masculinity: first, the dangers of combining a historical study of gender with gender politics; and secondly, the importance of not assuming the primacy of traditional gender roles. In a radical rethinking of her original work on gender, Ringelheim, in her article 'Women and the Holocaust: A Reconsideration of Research', questions the impact of her 'cultural feminism' upon her

¹⁵ Ringelheim, 'The Unethical and the Unspeakable', p.72.

¹⁶ Ofer and Weitzman, 'Introduction', p.1.

historical study.¹⁷ This work, which sought to find value in - and celebrate women performing - traditional female roles (in contrast to more radical feminism based around overturning the power imbalance), Ringelheim suggests, led her to seek out examples of women performing positive female roles during the Holocaust rather than questioning their position on a more fundamental level. Moreover, she observes, her 'cultural feminism' led her to attempt to prove that women were better than men, rather than asserting the argument that the sexes were fundamentally the same and should be treated as equals. According to Ringelheim, the ultimate impact of this process was that, "[m]y use of cultural feminism as a frame (albeit unconsciously) changed respect for the stories of the Jewish women into some sort of glorification and led to the conclusion that these women transformed "a world of death and inhumanity into one more act of human life."¹⁸ Writing some time later Zoë Waxman identified an approach to gender similar to that of Ringelheim commenting, "[s]uch studies respond to Ringelblum's challenge by focusing on women's testimonies to show how it was women and not men who mostly acted in moral, heroic or noble ways."¹⁹

Not only does Ringelheim's auto-review do much to explain the representation of men in the Holocaust that this thesis attempts to problematise, making its work all the more important, but it also illustrates the political pitfalls of gender history.²⁰ A study of masculinity raises less obvious questions in this field due to the largely uncontested nature of male power and the resultant weaker gender politics which attach to it; nonetheless the unquestioning, negative representation of men in the Holocaust so far provided by historians provokes one, just as Ringelheim did initially, to look for examples of men performing strong, positive gender roles rather than questioning the accuracy of the gender representation itself. In avoiding this overlap of gender politics and history in the study of Jewish masculinity, therefore, I would argue for a focus on the ambiguous nature of masculinity stressing both the positive and negative elements and impact of its practice.

¹⁷ Joan M. Ringelheim, 'Women and the Holocaust: A Reconsideration of Research' in Carol Ritner and John K. Roth, eds., *Different Voices: Women and the Holocaust* (New York: Paragon House, 1993), p.384.

¹⁸ Ringelheim, 'Women and the Holocaust', p.386.

¹⁹ Zoë V. Waxman, 'Unheard Stories: Reading Women's Holocaust Testimonies', *The Jewish Quarterly* 177, (2000), p.53. The Ringelblum in question is the organiser of *Oneg Shabbat* (see footnote 7).

²⁰ That said, it is not clear from Ringelheim's more recent work that the complications between historical study and gender politics have been overcome; nor, I think, would Ringelheim wish them to be.

Whilst historians have found the strength of women predominantly in the positive behaviours of nurturing, adapting, caring and bonding (although historians are now reconsidering this approach)²¹ a search for masculinity must necessarily include a consideration of violence, distance and domination. This point is best illustrated with an example: in more than one case historians have suggested that men in the ghettos stole food from their children, an action often cited in contrast to women giving up food for their children and as an example of the compromising of men's gender identities that occurred in response to the Holocaust.²² It is possible to argue, however, following Evelyn Waugh and the bananas, that far from symbolising moral or gendered damage such an act might be an active display of masculinity.²³ For a man, as head of the family and used to being fed more and better food than his children, to prioritise his own hunger over that of his family might not be seen as a collapse of manhood but an exercise thereof. That Dawid Sierakowiak, the most commonly cited recorder of this phenomenon, finds such behaviour from his father objectionable is not surprising, but it does not necessarily mean it wasn't masculine.²⁴ Likewise when Zyskind's uncle offered her bread in the ghetto and she refused it, she records him becoming angry and shouting, "[y]ou little upstart! Who's asking your opinion? It's still mine that counts around here!" Whilst his response was clearly objectionable, in his outburst Zyskind's uncle showed his overt masculinity through a display of patriarchy and dominance. If one acknowledges, therefore, both the potential negative aspects of masculinity and its strong positive attributes, one can hope to avoid attempting to use historical conclusions to prove a gendered political position.

The second development in the history of women in the Holocaust significant for my work is the shift in focus which has occurred from studying women performing traditional female roles to studying those who conform less easily to stereotypes. The childless and those who acted as camp *Kapos* are two examples of women who did not fit caring, nurturing roles and, as a result, had been largely overlooked by historians until more recent research began to redress the balance with attempts to write a more nuanced view of women's behaviour.²⁵ In line with this approach, my thesis very

²¹ Waxman, 'Unheard Stories', p.53.

²² I will challenge the extent to which men stealing food from their children can be understood as a general problem in the ghettos elsewhere in this thesis.

²³ In a possibly apocryphal story, during the war Evelyn Waugh's wife obtained three bananas. Waugh took the bananas and ate all three in front of his children.

²⁴ Dawid Sierakowiak, *The Diary of Dawid Sierakowiak* (London: Bloomsbury, 1996), p.151 and elsewhere.

²⁵ Waxman, 'Unheard Stories', p.54.

consciously addresses the idea that masculinity is not a unitary concept and that men, dependent on class, age and circumstances, have vastly differing ideas of what it is to be masculine.

Finally, in looking at trends in gender history methodology it is important to note that my thesis, by design, is not gender comparative; rather than looking for differences between men and women my research focuses on understanding the implications of the Holocaust on men alone. Several historians have argued for the importance of a comparative approach to gender in the Holocaust,²⁶ on which subject Tec writes, "I realized that to concentrate on women alone would yield skewed results. In effect, knowing how intricately intertwined are the lives of women and men, I recognized that to exclude the male experiences would offer only limited insights, whereas comparisons of the experiences of both sexes would result in a broader understanding." Whilst such commitment is often not closely reflected in the ensuing work, my broader concerns regarding such an approach to the writing of gender history are well illustrated by the most common example of such comparison: "Here, at Birkenau, only a day after their arrival, the differences between the sexes was already striking. The men, in hats with cut-off brims and in trousers and coats thrown to them at random – too short, too long, too wide, too small – looked like sad black storks. The women, also wearing garments that had been distributed to them at random, had somehow succeeded in only twenty-four hours in adjusting them to their bodies and sewing up the holes, using needles made out of wooden splinters and threads pulled out of the one blanket allocated to them."²⁷ I would argue that whilst this example teaches us that women in the early- to mid-twentieth century were more likely to be skilled at altering clothes than men,²⁸ it does not necessarily tell us anything about comparative gendered behaviour, let alone about gender identities. More interesting for a gender historian, and the route my thesis will follow, would be to look only at the women and attempt to understand the impact of such acts on their identities – did performing such a task remind them of home, did they do it to look and therefore feel better or as a distraction and what was the relevance/impact of this – both for themselves and for the Germans who ran the camps? Ultimately, it is my contention that more nuance and detail concerning

²⁶ Tec, *Resilience and Courage*, p.5. See also Lisa Pine, 'Gender and the Family' in Dan Stone, ed., *The Historiography of the Holocaust* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p.370.

²⁷ Ruth Bondy, 'Women in Theresienstadt and the Family Camp in Birkenau' in Ofer and Weitzman, eds., *Women in the Holocaust*, p.323.

²⁸ This is of course a generalisation since tailors in this period were usually male. Nonetheless, the average woman would have been used to sewing in the home whilst men would not.

Jewish lives and gender identities can be gained by studying one gender in detail than by making obvious, banal comparisons between the two.

* * *

Beyond the theoretical justifications considered above for writing about gender and masculinity it is necessary to outline the particular methodological approach to reading sources for gender that I have applied in this thesis. In forming such a methodology the principal question faced is, how does one interrogate the sources, contemporary or otherwise, for gender when direct references to masculinity are so rare and the defining features of masculinity remain unclear? This is in spite of the fact that historians have not seemed reticent about using terms such as 'masculine', 'manhood' and 'manly' when writing about Jewish men in the Holocaust.²⁹ The answer to this question lies in the fact that men in this period had strong ideas of what it was to be a man: their duties to, and their rights accorded by, their communities and families. It is for these, their own notions of masculinity and manhood, regardless of how they might have been termed, which this thesis searches because this is a properly historical approach to masculinity.³⁰

My approach has been to look for the outward manifestations of masculine identity (e.g. pride, valuing hierarchy and paternalism) and then find the elements that seem, in this period, to influence them – whether they are traditional questions of employment and affluence or more personal factors, for example the body. This process can be self-perpetuating however, since one tends to find the elements of masculinity that one is looking for, leading one to conclude that ideas of masculinity are relatively stable throughout the period. To counteract this effect it is important to be open to new and alternative outward manifestations of masculinity as well as different elements influencing them. If, as historians have suggested, men did struggle in continuing to perform their prewar masculine roles once the war had begun it does not necessarily follow that their masculinity collapsed. Instead they may have adapted their masculine identities to suit their changing lives, something which is allowed for by this approach.

²⁹ One good example of this is Sara R. Horowitz, 'Women in Holocaust Literature: Engendering Trauma Memory' in Ofer and Weitzman, eds., *Women in the Holocaust*, *passim*.

³⁰ The exact definition of masculinity I have discussed in more detail in chapter two.

In most historical study, having looked for indications in the sources available, one would then attempt to corroborate them by considering more factual evidence on the subject. Were one to study, for example, nutrition in the ghettos, it would be possible, having consulted relevant testimonies and diaries, to attempt to confirm one's findings using alternative documents from both the Germans and the Judenräte regarding the quality and quantity of food available in the ghettos and its distribution. A similar process would be possible in this case if the focus of my thesis was related to differences of the sexes rather than gender identity, since documents are available to confirm details of the different experiences of men and women in relation to employment, remuneration, illness and survival rates. Such an approach is, however, of little use in a discussion of gender identities since there are no facts to be confirmed and no statistical realities. In a few cases I have been able to apply close analysis to confirm or deny the gendered reading of a source, for example some men have recorded numerous testimonies, both written and oral, and a study of the differences and similarities between them can be illustrative. In other cases, relatives, including brothers and sisters or fathers and daughters, have survived to record overlapping testimonies, allowing me to cross-check their impression of events and their analysis of gender. One example of this is Ben Helfgott who has been particularly effusive in interviews when speaking about his father.³¹ Helfgott's sister, Mala Tribich, also survived the Holocaust and her interviews, despite her being much younger than Ben, and therefore providing vaguer descriptions, confirm many of Helfgott's impressions.³² Of course this approach is not definitive; the siblings have had many years since the Holocaust to merge their memories to form a family narrative; nonetheless it does suggest that their father was indeed as described. In contrast, the testimonies of Halina Sand and her father Martin Parker, seem to contradict one another concerning the behaviour of their mother/wife. Whilst Parker tends to describe his wife as overly emotional and even hysterical, thereby promoting his own role in protecting the family, Sand offers a much more positive portrayal of her indefatigable mother.³³ Neither impression is definitive, making the question of Parker's masculinity during the Holocaust problematic; nonetheless, such confirmation is all we have and, as such, treated carefully, constitutes a valuable check to our analysis of sources.

³¹ IWM - Ben Helfgott – 9165/20.

³² IWM - Mala Tribich – 9121/4.

³³ IWM - Martin Parker – 12597/9 and IWM - Halina Sand – 12526/7.

This type of corroboration is, however, possible in only a few cases and so, in order to form a general picture of gendered identities, it is important that this individual approach be combined with some form of collective corroboration. Having interrogated individual sources for masculinity, but still being largely unable to objectively confirm any impressions derived from them, the historian is left with a group of discrete results. No individual's experience of gender can tell us anything definite, or even probable, about the gender identity of another, and there are no collective sources upon which to fall back. My approach to turning this data into meaningful analysis of gender therefore, relies on two methodological keys: first, that branch of gender theory relating to normative and individual constructions of masculinity and, second, Christopher Browning's work on the 'individual plural'. In the first case, explained in more detail in chapter two, it is my contention that gender identity during the Holocaust adhered to a more rigid frame than modern sociological approaches allow. Whilst acknowledging Bob Connell's arguments concerning contrasting masculinities as developed in counterpoint to, and often in conflict with, one another, I contend that, as a basis for developing their own, individual masculinities, men in this period largely conformed to one of several socially constructed masculinities.³⁴ If this was indeed the case then the capacity of several men to speak for the collective becomes clearer. For example, if through the biographies and testimonies of several intellectuals I detected a thread which seems to unite them, then I can argue that this amounted to an 'intellectual masculinity' significant to men with certain class and social identities during the Holocaust. Of course the approach is not conclusive and there will be exceptions to every socially constructed idea of masculinity I write about, nonetheless such an approach presents a valid generalisation significant for using individual sources to provide collective answers.

The second methodological key I have used to address the individuality of the sources is Christopher Browning's work on the Starachowice labour camp. In his book Browning offers a way of managing collected data, using a finite number of testimonies from the postwar period recorded in different times and places, by "looking at memory not in the collective singular but rather in the individual plural, not collective memory but rather collected memories".³⁵ In applying this theory Browning looks not for repetition from the sources but corroboration, such that together they make up something

³⁴ Robert W. Connell, 'The Social Organization of Masculinity' in Stephen M. Whitehead and Frank Barrett, eds., *The Masculinities Reader* (Cambridge: Polity, 2001), p.40.

³⁵ Christopher Browning, *Collected Memories: Holocaust History and Postwar Testimony* (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), p.39.

more than their individual parts. Browning applies this process in attempting, predominantly, to reconstruct factual events, dates, time-lines and actions, where corroboration is quite apparent. And whilst such clarity is not possible with my own work, I nonetheless believe his approach can serve as a model for allowing sources to collectively represent experiences and perceptions of gendered identities. In both my own and Browning's work similar trends can be found: where several men mention the same thing, for example doffing their hats to Germans as a source of intense shame, this suggests that it may have had collective significance, however where this tips over into repetition, most obviously individuals recounting seeing Mengele on the ramp at Auschwitz, it can appear suspicious. Here it is worth noting an interesting phenomenon that there seems often to be more corroboration across several sources, than internally within one. Whilst one man might quite differently describe the impact of one event in several accounts, or very similar events in one account (encounters with Germans in the street), across several testimonies it becomes easy to identify clear and consistent gendered responses, for example to the physical assault of Jewish men in the street. It is this phenomenon which allows me to apply Browning's theory to my work, suggesting that whilst individual sources provide poor proof of anything, collectively they can paint a clear picture.

Finally, having outlined this method for reading sources for representations of gender identities, it is necessary to consider the specifics of my thesis, its scope and approach, available sources and the problems which arise with source selection, all of which offer their own challenges to the methodology described and many of which are explained by considering my thesis as an attempt to answer the question: "How may a historian of the Holocaust use a variety of different, often conflicting and contradictory, in some cases clearly mistaken, memories and testimonies of individual survivors as evidence to construct a history that otherwise, for lack of evidence, would not exist?"³⁶ Thus, whilst this thesis might seem overly, or problematically, broad - covering too wide a range of people, events, circumstances and lives - this is the necessary result both of the questions I hope to address and the state of the historical field into which my work fits. The original impetus for my thesis was the following question – how have historians reached their potentially erroneous conclusions concerning Jewish men and their masculinity in the Holocaust and what are the implications of such conclusions? The thesis then attempts to answer the question – what is the reality of the impact of the Holocaust on Jewish masculinity? In both cases the question necessitates a response based on

³⁶ Browning, *Collected Memories*, p.39.

broad research; a micro-history of Jewish masculinity in any given family, region or even class would not suffice. Moreover, those historians who have so far worked on the subject have not limited themselves to writing about any particular group of men, instead their conclusions are applied to all Jewish men in the Holocaust regardless of circumstance. Ideally, therefore, my response must equally address a wide range of Jewish men and their masculinity. Finally, since no general work on the subject has been undertaken, to conduct a “micro-historical” study within the field would seem premature.

The best way then to answer these questions and to write a history with a broad enough base to allow valid conclusions to be drawn, whilst not being so broad as to make research impossible, has been to approach my study comparatively. Strongly rejecting critics of comparative history who have argued that “stories are not told better because they are told together”, in the case of this thesis I would argue exactly the opposite. The story of gender in the Holocaust, told through the diaries and testimony of Jewish men from a carefully selected range of countries makes more sense because they form a collected whole and tell us something important about the nature of gender identity in horrifying circumstances outside of a strictly national context. To focus on any one nation or nationality would be to ignore the central questions of this thesis which address the impact of persecution, enclosure and genocide upon masculine identities regardless of location. A comparative approach, therefore, will incorporate some of the very different circumstances in Poland and Western Europe to understand the extent to which gender identity has cross-national implications.

It is worth briefly considering, however, some of the criticisms of comparative approaches in order to better define the limits and benefits of my own work. First, Cohen and O'Connor describe a traditional historical comparative approach as focusing on the similarities and differences of units [in this case countries] in relation to a given phenomenon [masculinity]. The focus of this thesis however, whilst drawing on these similarities and differences, is rather the attempt to define and understand the phenomenon itself, the comparative element serving more as a means of considering the extent to which the phenomenon exists in a broader context, than as a focus of study for its own sake. In particular this approach, which one might instead therefore consider as “multi country analysis,”³⁷

³⁷ Deborah Cohen and Maura O'Connor, 'Comparative History, Cross-National History, Transnational History – Definitions' in Deborah Cohen and Maura O'Connor, eds., *Comparison and History. Europe in Cross-National Perspective* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. xviii.

stresses the assertion that whilst the practice of individual gender identities is personal and must necessarily correlate with national circumstances, the normative elements of masculinities, something which I shall go on to argue are particularly important, have shown themselves to exist outside of clear national boundaries. This approach particularly draws on recent developments in comparative cultural history and, in contrast to mainstream comparative history which seeks most clearly to explain causality often in quantitative terms (as in economic history),³⁸ “sets itself the task of identifying elements of culture that are wider than the nation.”³⁹

A second problem arises in the arguments of many historians that a comparative approach can limit the depth of one's research. However, as well as being something I shall go on to consider in choosing my source base, to manage this problem, which Cohen and O'Connor describe as “(unspectacularly) uncontentious”, arguing that in some cases, whilst depth is certainly lost, it also “avoids the dangers of irrelevant details while capturing broader patterns”,⁴⁰ I shall mitigate this problem by employing an asymmetrical approach to historical comparison. Such an approach stresses the experiences of one country within the comparison, in my case Poland, and uses the others to compare and problematise the analysis of the first, rather than drawing a complete series of cross-national conclusions.⁴¹ This approach allows both for breadth, across national borders, and depth, in the focus on a primary country, in my analysis. The focus of the thesis on Poland, therefore, is not to create a history of Poland, but to ensure that the comparison retains a depth of research. The central criticism historians have made of this approach is that it can assert “asymmetrical counterconcepts” on which nation states thrive, in this case most obviously the East/West European divide. The conclusions of my research, however, far from asserting such counterconcepts,⁴² do more to override them, highlighting instead the unifying features of these two regions in relation to gender identity.

Attempting a study of such breadth as to adequately address my questions and form a platform for future study of specific areas of Jewish masculinity, however, means facing a range of sources beyond the scope of any one historian – Kushner estimates the number of accounts of the Holocaust

³⁸ Heinz-Gerhard Haupt and Jürgen Kocka, 'Introduction' in Heinz-Gerhard Haupt and Jürgen Kocka, eds., *Comparative and Transnational History: Central European Approaches and New Perspectives* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2009), p.18.

³⁹ Cohen and O'Connor, 'Comparative History', p.xv.

⁴⁰ Cohen and O'Connor, 'Comparative History', p.xvii.

⁴¹ Haupt and Kocka, 'Introduction', pp.5-6.

⁴² Haupt and Kocka, 'Introduction', pp.5-6.

including diaries, written testimonies and interviews, to be around 100,000.⁴³ To be added to this number are sources ranging from clandestine newspapers and archives such as the *Łódź Ghetto Chronicle* or *Oneg Shabbat* to 'non-factual' works of memory such as *Maus*, all of which have something to offer our understanding of masculinity in the period. In the first instance, therefore, to limit my source base I have chosen to rely on sources published in English, whether written originally in English or translated.⁴⁴ The reasons behind this are threefold and all drive towards creating a manageable set of sources upon which to base my study of gender. First, given the scope of my thesis, a choice I have already considered in detail, it was important to illustrate this breadth of research with as many examples as possible. In the time available, therefore, to read sources in other languages, given the shift from my mother tongue, would have significantly reduced the number of sources I was able to use in writing this thesis and thereby its ability to be representative. Through limiting myself to the English language I have been able to read a greater number of sources and thereby to write a more representative study.

Secondly, in order to use all the languages in which sources from these countries were written one would have been required to speak and read not only the obvious Flemish, Dutch, French and Polish, but Yiddish, Hebrew, Russian and German. Almost any historian would therefore, have needed either to limit the scope of the thesis, which I have argued would not have been suitable in this case, or to read a certain number of sources written in translation or written in English by those for whom that language was not a mother tongue. To avoid translated sources altogether and read only in the original language would have biased any historian's research significantly towards particular languages, French and German and the assimilated Western European Jews most likely to write in those languages. The answer to this unmanageable range of languages, whilst avoiding such bias, therefore, was to read all sources in English. Necessarily this means that almost every source is a translation, whether the author's own, writing in a second or often third language, or an external translation. Once this is acknowledged as being the case one can maintain historical integrity by applying the same care in using all sources, something which I shall discuss in detail in relation to the

⁴³ Tony Kushner, 'Saul Friedländer, Holocaust Historiography and the Use of Testimony' in Christian Weise and Paul Betts, eds, *Years of Persecution, Years of Extermination: Saul Friedländer and the Future of Holocaust Studies* (London: Continuum, 2010), p.71.

⁴⁴ I have made a limited exception to this rule of using only English language sources and admitted a handful of sources written in French. Almost without exception these sources pertain to the *Eclaireurs israélites de France* (EIF), a group of French-Jewish boy scouts who, living in both the occupied and free zones of France during the war, offer an interesting case study in Jewish communities in the West with which to contrast the situation of the ghettos in the East.

analysis of testimony, and in this case stressing where possible the broader discussion of the individual's gender and the sense of their testimony rather than the meaning and use of individual words.

The final benefit of this approach is that English has already become a *lingua franca* for Holocaust testimony resulting in many sources only being published in English, regardless of their author's mother tongue. A decision to prioritise English language sources, therefore, responds to this tendency, allows the historian to draw from the broadest possible range of sources (a key to my approach) and acknowledges the important role played by language in the formation and transmission of Holocaust history.⁴⁵

Even once language has been selected, however, a study of all sources remains out of the question, and yet to select one type of source and make a comprehensive study thereof would undermine my conclusions. Not only is every type of source flawed, so to choose only one would not avoid considerable methodological questions, but every type, more optimistically, also offers something different. Ultimately the best possible study of masculinity, already a relatively fluid concept, therefore incorporates all types of sources, using them to cross-check, problematise and corroborate one another.

Perhaps the least problematic source type to focus on, were I to limit myself, would be diaries written during the Holocaust by those in hiding or in the ghettos. Our only access to the voices of the real victims, often clearly dated and thus easily confirmed as genuine and largely accurate (both strong bulwarks against the criticisms of Holocaust deniers and historians alike), diaries are respected as more 'authentic' sources than postwar testimony. It is on such sources that Saul Friedländer bases his work, using them to underpin his historical studies, and yet diaries are not without significant methodological problems. Often written not just for personal record but with the intention of recording for posterity, and therefore, with the idea of publication or dissemination in mind, many diaries comprise a selective recording of those things that the author considers meaningful, and therefore

⁴⁵ An interesting discussion of English-language Holocaust sources can be found in Simone Gigliotti, *The Train Journey: Transit, Captivity and Witnessing in the Holocaust* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2009), p.19, whilst Alan Rosen, *Sounds of Defiance: The Holocaust, Multilingualism, and the Problem of English* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), offers a detailed consideration of many of the questions pertaining to the use of the English language in writing about the Holocaust more broadly.

perhaps blur the distinction between 'intentional' and 'non-intentional' documents upon which historians rely. One extreme example of this tendency is Anne Frank who began to edit her diary towards the end of her time in hiding to prepare it for later publication, but many writers who did not get this far still reference a need to testify in their reasons for writing, suggesting that a process of personal editing might have been in existence throughout. Whether or not such writers would have considered the everyday experiences needed to understand gender as 'meaningful', and therefore worthy of record, is questionable but certainly many choose not to include such a level of detail in their diaries.

Even these sources are not, however, free from controversy, and some historians have criticised them arguing that only with hindsight can one even begin to 'witness' the Holocaust, so great was its impact – an approach which effectively renders contemporary sources irrelevant. In this vein Dori Laub comments, "...the degree to which bearing witness was required entailed such an outstanding measure of awareness and comprehension of the event... of its radical *otherness* to all known frames of reference... that it was beyond the limits of human ability (and willingness) to grasp, to transmit, or to imagine."⁴⁶ However, despite the limitations I acknowledge in such sources, this is an approach I strongly reject – this thesis does not look for an understanding of the totality of the Holocaust but seeks to reconstruct the daily lives of those who lived it, and diaries, exactly because of this lack of hindsight, provide an understanding of how men managed on a daily basis *before* they fully understood their likely fate. To rely only on those sources recorded after the war would be to ignore the detail of the life in lieu of the totality of the death.

Other contemporary sources, including archives and newspapers, whilst possessing the same stamp of 'authenticity' as diaries, have a perceived added level of objectivity which might be beneficial to the historian.⁴⁷ Nonetheless, as sources, these too have their drawbacks, the most significant of which, fear of discovery, limited the range of topics such sources covered, the information they were willing to record and the opinions they presented. Most notable in this regard is the *Łódź Ghetto Chronicle*, which used code words and often wrote in praise of ideas or legislation which logic suggests it would

⁴⁶ Dori Laub cited in Rachel F. Brenner, *Writing as Resistance: Four Women Confronting the Holocaust* (University Park, PA: Penn State Press, 1997), p.4.

⁴⁷ The clearest example of this is *Oneg Shabbat*, the underground archives of the Warsaw ghetto established by the historian, Emmanuel Ringelblum.

have opposed. Whilst some of these feints have been identified, others have not been, making such sources problematic to handle. Moreover, these sources often privilege the experiences of the collective over those of the individual, recording broad changes in ghetto conditions, whether it be laws, illness, work or roundups, rather than personal experiences. Again, this tendency is particularly problematic for my own research since collective experience can tell us a good deal about the gendered treatment of Jews, but much less about Jewish gender. In spite of these limitations however, collective sources offer a good compromise between the authenticity of contemporary sources and the distance and reflection of postwar writing and form, as a result, an important element of my research.

Finally there is postwar testimony to consider: perhaps the most problematic source for the historian, but also one of the most plentiful, including some of the most revealing accounts of masculinity in the Holocaust. The way in which historians approach testimony has been developing since the war ended and early scepticism, strongly favouring the voice of perpetrators over that of victims, has turned into a more grudging respect for the irreplaceable detail that such sources can provide when used correctly. Nonetheless, an ongoing cautious treatment of testimony hinges on two central failings: factual inaccuracy, particularly stemming from confusions concerning time and space; and inaccuracy of perception due to vested emotional interests and lapse of time. The question then is whether these issues can be overcome and a suitable methodology found to allow the use of such sources in historical writing.

Clearly the question of factual accuracy in testimonies is a valid concern recognised by historians and survivors alike, as Levi wrote, “[t]he memories which lie within us are not carved in stone; not only do they tend to become erased as the years go by, but often they change, or even increase by incorporating extraneous features.”⁴⁸ However, I would suggest that this is not so different from any other written source, all of which are potentially inaccurate and, importantly, open to interpretation. The historian's skill, therefore, lies not in finding perfect sources but in the analysis of the sources available, taking these potential inaccuracies of fact or interpretation into account in the conclusions they draw. One might argue that these inaccuracies are more commonplace in postwar testimony than in other historical sources, nonetheless the same methodology of rigorous historical analysis

⁴⁸ Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved* (London: Michael Joseph, 1988), p.11.

should apply in both cases. A further burden of accuracy, provoked by the claims of Holocaust deniers, has, however, been imposed upon testimonies. This argument, which invariably cites Wilkomirski as a cautionary tale (although he is no more of a threat to the legitimacy of testimony than the Protocols of the Elders of Zion are to political manifestos as historical sources), blames testimony and its inaccuracies for exposing the entire field of Holocaust history to the challenges of deniers. For some this threat effectively renders sources unusable unless they can be proved to be unimpeachable. I would suggest however that such an argument employs faulty logic. Holocaust deniers will always find fodder for their claims, and if testimony did not exist something else would take its place. The fault is not with the source but, as I noted above in the case of legitimate historical use of testimony, with its analysis.

For this thesis in particular, moreover, it is doubtful whether the question of factual accuracy is entirely relevant. Gender identities do not rely heavily on a chronological thread and therefore, unless inaccuracies are so great as to question the veracity of the source altogether, conclusions should not be undermined by what might appear to be relatively superficial errors. Writing during the Holocaust Chaim Kaplan noted "I risk my life with my writing, but my abilities are limited; I don't know all the facts; those that I do know may not be sufficiently clear, and many of them I write on the basis of rumors whose accuracy I cannot guarantee... But for the sake of truthfulness, I do not require individual facts, but rather manifestations of the fruits of a great many facts that leave their impressions on the people's opinions, on their mood and morale. And I can guarantee the factualness of these manifestations because I dwell among my people and behold their misery and their soul's torment."⁴⁹ It is for this 'impression' that my thesis searches, and therefore, whilst alert to significant errors of fact which might suggest a greater problem, I consider that the potential contribution of such sources outweighs their flaws.

More methodologically problematic, however, is inaccuracy of perception since, even with careful analysis, it is much harder to identify. Amongst postwar testimonies one can note several tendencies in representation, from idealising one's prewar childhood to idolising one parent whilst diminishing the efforts of the other or, in the case of those who were already parents in the period they discuss,

⁴⁹ Chaim A. Kaplan, *The Scroll of Agony. The Warsaw Diary of Chaim A Kaplan*. (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1965), p.30.

diminishing the coping abilities of their spouse whilst vaunting their own achievements. Whilst I shall go on to discuss these specific cases in more detail later in my thesis it is important to consider the regularity with which these patterns assert themselves, and the scepticism this provokes amongst historians (can so many people really have had halcyon childhoods in spite of often back-breaking poverty and overt antisemitism?) There is, however, little one can do either to confirm or to deny these doubts and whilst for every person who idolises their father the criticism can be leveled – “maybe they are only saying that because their father died during the Holocaust?” – it is equally likely that their father did in fact behave in the way in which they describe. All we can do, which a historian ought to do with any source, is to look for corroboration or evidence to either support or reject the claim. In some cases this is possible: as discussed earlier, Ben Helfgott's opinion of his father is mirrored in his sister's testimony whilst, in the case of Roman Halter, overt criticism of his father make his praise seem more honest,⁵⁰ however in the majority of cases the best we can manage is an educated guess. This lack of clarity does not, however, render the sources unusable. Rather, as with the other caveats in my work, it simply means that my conclusions cannot be universally applied.

These problems of source veracity are not, however, unique to my study and several specific methodologies have been developed for managing the issues presented by postwar testimonies. The first of these involves limiting oneself to writing micro-studies of a few, or even one, such testimony, enabling a reassuring level of confirmation concerning the ‘truth’ of the source.⁵¹ In the case of Helen "Zippi" Spitzer Tichauer, Jürgen Matthäus and his fellow academics offer us as near to a cast-iron source as we will ever find, every moment of her multiple testimonies being checked and cross-checked, confirmed and corroborated.⁵² In particular Matthäus stresses the importance of relying, where possible, on the original testimony, oral or written, in its original language and by doing so avoiding errors of translation and truncation.⁵³ However, whilst this is an admirable work offering interesting insights into ways to analyse and understand a source, it cannot set a benchmark for future study since its historical impact is secondary to its theoretical impact: such an approach does

⁵⁰ IWM – Roman Halter – 17183/17 and Roman Halter, *Roman's Journey* (London: Portobello Books, 2007). On several occasions in his accounts Halter criticised his father. This suggests that he is not obviously hero-worshipping his dead father, which may make his praise, when it comes, more believable.

⁵¹ Amongst others Brenner, *Writing as Resistance*, is a very good example of this phenomenon.

⁵² Jürgen Matthäus, ed., *Approaching an Auschwitz Survivor: Holocaust Testimony and its Transformations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

⁵³ Matthäus, ed., *Approaching an Auschwitz Survivor*, p.70. Such direct access to the source is not, however, necessarily unproblematic.

not allow the historian to present anything other than the experiences of one individual, which is of interest in a few cases but not broadly applicable.

Other historians have attempted to sidestep these methodological questions by elevating testimony to a status above that of a normal source. In this way Wierworka describes them as the “ethereal representation of a mood”, writing “testimony contains extraordinary riches: ...not factual truth but the more subtle and also indispensable truth of an epoch and of an experience”. Whilst I would not quibble over the importance of testimony for providing something *beyond* factual truth – indeed gender relies on such a reading – to suggest that fact is lacking altogether both patronises those who experienced the Holocaust and undermines the historian who reasonably attempts to use such sources. Hand in hand with this comes a reverence towards sources which can be found in the approach of Saul Friedländer who comments that sources are there to “tear through seamless interpretation and pierce the (mostly involuntary) smugness of scholarly detachment and 'objectivity’” – something which he sees as relevant not in all historical study but specifically for those writing about “mass suffering”.⁵⁴

Problematically, this approach often leads to a questioning of the vigour with which one could or should analyse and question a Holocaust testimony, the answer to which I believe to be simple – “[s]urvivor testimony cannot be accorded a privileged status, immune from the same careful examination of evidence to which our profession routinely subjects other sources.”⁵⁵ To do so would be to render these sources unusable. It is exactly because they are historical sources to be rigorously analysed in the same way as any other source type that they are useful to us. For the rest, although the sources are not perfect, and cannot be made so even with clever analysis, I believe Browning was on the right lines when he wrote of two of his monographs which rely primarily on testimony, one perpetrator and one victim, “...if one can attempt to write a history from sources in which the witnesses are mostly trying to lie, surely... I can try to write a history from sources in which the witnesses are mostly trying to tell the truth.”⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Saul Friedländer, *The Years of Extermination: Nazi Germany and the Jews, 1939-1945* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 2007), pp.xxv-xxvi.

⁵⁵ Browning, C., *Collected Memories*, p.84.

⁵⁶ Christopher Browning, *Remembering Survival: Inside a Nazi Slave-Labor Camp* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2011), p.12.

The sources themselves present one final, important limitation on the capacity of my thesis to comprehensively address Jewish masculinity in the Holocaust. Broadly speaking, the problem, which is essentially insurmountable, is that the available sources are not representative. On this question, two criticisms might be leveled at my research concerning the ghettos: first, that I do not consider the ultra-orthodox, specifically those charedi Jewish men devoted to religious study; and second, that a majority of Jews succumbed to starvation soon after entering the ghettos and found themselves in a situation too dire for gender to be considered an issue of any importance. The following quotation is the basis for my response to both: "There are twenty thousand, perhaps thirty thousand, people who really have enough to eat; these are the social elite. They contrast with the quarter-of-a-million-strong mass of beggars and paupers who are only struggling to postpone death by starvation. ...And in between these two is a group of about two hundred thousand 'ordinary people' who more or less manage, and retain some sort of human face. They are still clean, dressed, their stomachs are not swollen from starvation."⁵⁷

Overlooking a slight numerical inaccuracy,⁵⁸ this statement presents an important truth: the only significant group available for historical study are the "ordinary people." Beyond this section of society my thesis makes no attempt to be inclusive or comprehensive. Much as I would like, I cannot successfully consider the masculinity of the "beggars and paupers" due to a lack of sources; they did not write diaries which survived, they were not represented amongst the employees of *Oneg Shabbat* or other underground publications, and few of them had the means either to survive the war in hiding or to live long enough to emerge from the ghettos and camps and therefore to record their testimonies. The need to overlook this group is not ideal, it is simply a reality of the sources.

Not dissimilar is the question of the masculinity of ultra-orthodox Jewish men who experienced the Holocaust and the extent to which my conclusions will be relevant for such men, who may have had very different ideas of masculinity to Jews with more mainstream beliefs. Whilst again I would ideally include these charedi Jews in my analysis, and indeed a study of their masculine identities might

⁵⁷ Stefan Ernest cited in Barbara Engelking, *Holocaust and Memory. The Experience of the Holocaust and Its Consequences: An Investigation based on Personal Narratives* (London: Leicester University Press, 2001), p.104. Whilst the situation in Warsaw was not exactly mirrored in all other ghettos, I would argue that it is representative enough to form a basis upon which to approach this subject.

⁵⁸ At no point, it seems, were there half a million Jews in the Warsaw ghetto. At most the ghetto held around 400,000 but sources vary.

provide an interesting comparison for my broader conclusions, I am largely prohibited by the sources available. For reasons of circumstance, adaptability and targeted persecution, ultra-orthodox, charedi men seem to have been less likely to survive the Holocaust and to record their testimonies, making them harder to trace.⁵⁹

The importance that is often placed on the inclusion of this group, I would argue, stems from two issues. First, historians are keen not to be seen to be prioritising the experiences of assimilated, westernised Jews and thereby ignoring the 'Jewishness' of the Holocaust when writing on the subject – a largely political problem which I intend to avoid by using as broad a range of sources as possible including a number written by Orthodox Jews and by highlighting the Jewish, religious or cultural, masculinities which I shall go on to discuss in detail in chapter two. Secondly, I suggest, this concern arises from misconceptions regarding the religious affiliation of the Jews of Poland in this period. Attempting to rank the religious commitment, not in any case a static or definable concept, of those about whom one is writing is impossible; however, it is noteworthy that in Poland at least, religious dress, the wearing of long coats and hats, was commonplace amongst Jews with very different religious commitments. In the Łódź ghetto it was said to be obvious when Western Jews⁶⁰ had been transported to the camps, because the streets were again full of men in eastern dress, but this does not mean that they were necessarily charedi, or even Orthodox. Moreover, particularly in certain areas of Poland - here I think of those areas east of the Bug river occupied by the Soviets before being re-occupied by the Nazis in 1941 in Operation Barbarossa - many ultra-orthodox Jews would have been killed in the early Einsatzgruppen shootings and would not have ever made it to the ghettos.

Therefore, although my study cannot consider the ultra-orthodox, it does consider orthodox Jewry, which comprised the large majority of Polish Jewry in this period, since many of the testimonies and diaries used are written by men from strongly orthodox backgrounds.⁶¹ Without this study of the ultra-orthodox I am clear that my thesis cannot, and does not try to, offer a detailed analysis of those

⁵⁹ There are limited exceptions to this and I have, on a few occasions, made reference to individuals from this group where such references provide clear supporting evidence for other aspects of my arguments.

⁶⁰ Those deported from Western European countries to live in the ghettos.

⁶¹ Chief amongst these is Chaim Kaplan (Kaplan, *The Scroll of Agony*) but equally David Kahane (David Kahane, *Lvov Ghetto Diary* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1990)) and Sam Pivnik (Sam Pivnik, *Survivor: Auschwitz, the Death March and my Fight for Freedom* (London: Hodder, 2013)) are good examples.

elements of religious Polish Jewish heritage relating to masculinity. Rather, my own explicit aim, which for the reasons explained above does not suffer significantly from the inability to consider the ultra-orthodox, is to look more broadly at the masculinities of Jewish men living through the Holocaust in an extremely wide range of national, social and religious contexts. Outside Poland the question of ultra-orthodox, or even orthodox, Jews is much less significant. A tiny proportion of Jews in Holland, Belgium or France would have been ultra-orthodox and as such an inability to consider them as a valid exception to my ideas on masculinity does not amount to a theoretical failing, much as it regrettable.

More generally, however, the problem of representation permeates all of the sources. An unavoidable reality of our records of the Holocaust is that sources are largely skewed by the age and circumstances of those who survived and were therefore able to testify. Statistically, those who were in their teens during the Holocaust, had fewer ties than older men (ties which often limited their ability to survive by hiding, working and finding enough to eat) and were most physically able to cope with the labour and deprivation of life in ghettos, camps or hiding. Moreover, a significant number of such survivors had parents who were caring for them, at least for some period of the Holocaust – a care and protection which, either providing food, assistance in finding work or simply relief from finding one's own shelter, aided the individual's long term survival. Beyond this, the boom that has taken place in the last twenty years, both in recording testimony and in the public's appetite to understand the Holocaust, favours those who were younger during the Holocaust and therefore alive towards the end of the century. For similar reasons of survival, testimonies are also skewed towards those in particular trades and socio-economic classes. One example of this is the intellectuals I shall go on to consider who, due to particular problems adapting to conditions in the ghettos, were often victims of starvation, roundups and deportation. In contrast, those with trades which simultaneously made them employable and physically fit were more likely to survive longer in the ghettos and therefore to be deported to concentration camps, rather than the death camps of the Aktion Reinhard campaign.

* * *

At this point, given the number of caveats concerning the ability of the sources to answer questions about the masculinity of Jewish men during the Holocaust, it seems necessary to again consider the

relevance of this thesis and its conclusions. In the first case it is important to note again the lack of detailed historical study which exists on this subject, particularly compared with the wealth of work concerning women in the Holocaust. This thesis is, therefore, an overdue and important contribution to the field of Holocaust history which will add detail and nuance to our historical understanding of the Holocaust, offer some controversial and significant arguments to debates within both history and gender studies and will form a basis of research and analysis upon which historians can build. Even if we accept that we are reading sources for a gender which is never clearly defined or acknowledged and that those sources do not evenly represent the Jewish men who experienced the Holocaust, still the conclusions of this thesis remain valid and significant. Challenging Holocaust historians who have written about gender, they question not only the gender politics, assumptions and stereotyping found in writing about men, but necessarily question those conclusions drawn about women since the two are so often related. Moreover, my conclusions address several broader questions concerning the impact of conflict and the damage it causes to men and their masculinities which are of significant value both within academia and more broadly. My conclusions are not universal and do not purport to be; there are numerous sources I did not consider and countless men who did not survive or who did not record their testimonies, any of whom may have experienced their masculinity in the Holocaust very differently from those I have studied and described. Nonetheless, my thesis does tell us something specific about the responses of certain groups of male Jews to the events of the Holocaust. If it is not enough that this is historically interesting then we will once again turn to Ofer and Weitzman - “[t]he discussion of (wo)men’s unique experiences provides a missing element of what we must now see as an incomplete picture of Jewish life during the Holocaust”, and surely the same must be true for men. Regardless of my caveats, therefore, it is important that this research has begun, even if it must, perforce, begin with broad brush strokes.

Chapter 1 – Masculinity in Theory

At the core of this thesis lies the question of how we define 'masculinity' and yet for a historian it can have no fixed meaning. Instead, a historicised understanding of the way in which gender identities were formed and negotiated in the period under study is necessary. For my research, therefore, it is important to consider how masculinity was formed, negotiated and practised in the interwar period in Europe, both in Jewish communities and more generally in western society. This aim is confused, however, both by the nature of the sociological writing which comprises much of the relevant theory of gender and by the way in which such theories have thus far been applied by historians.

Most sociologists argue, not incorrectly, that masculinity is heavily dependent upon a patriarchal structure which oppresses women, but many also attempt to use their research to begin to redress this imbalance in male/female power relations, a point which Whitehead and Barrett clearly make when they comment, “[w]riters within this genre [the sociology of masculinity] are understood to be personally/politically aligned with feminist agendas and to have a desire for gender justice.”⁶² Significantly, this agenda has not been entirely eschewed by historians working on the subject of masculinity, and can be seen in, amongst others, Roper and Tosh’s *Manful Assertions*, which optimistically notes that, “in our assertion that both male dominance and masculinity have shifted over time lies the possibility that they will not always be entirely fused”.⁶³ It is my firm contention, however, that, whilst questions of power and domination are relevant to historical research, the attempt to rectify or alter them, is not.

Well-researched history may have the capacity to impact upon the way in which gender identity is understood and therefore practised, but either an uncritical reliance on corrective sociological theory which potentially confuses actual gender identity with desired identities, or a reversal of cause and effect where the historian chooses his gendered outcome and writes his history to that end, renders the resulting history potentially inaccurate. This latter was exactly the reason behind Ringelheim's auto-review, 'Women and the Holocaust: A Reconsideration of Research', which she wrote through

⁶² Stephen M. Whitehead and Frank Barrett, 'Introduction, The Sociology of Masculinity' in Whitehead and Barrett, eds., *The Masculinities Reader*, p.15.

⁶³ Michael Roper and John Tosh, 'Introduction: Historians and the Politics of Masculinity' in Michael Roper, ed., *Manful Assertions* (London: Routledge, 1991), p.19.

concern that in her previous conclusions that women had coped well with the impact of the Holocaust she was in danger of “valorising oppression.”⁶⁴ Whilst Ringelheim's work is scholarly and groundbreaking, her self-confessed motivation for writing places her historical conclusions in severe doubt. Moreover, a rigorously, non-judgmental approach to masculinity is of particular importance to my own work since, as I have discussed in my methodology, in order to fully understand male gender identities it is as important to consider acts of masculine practice which could be considered negative, for example physical displays of strength, as those which are understood as positive, most obviously providing for one's family. In observing this tendency amongst sociologists therefore, and whilst relying on their theories, I hope to avoid any such corrective trajectory in my own work.

The process of defining masculinity is further complicated by the way in which the term has been used by historians. With notable exceptions (I think first and foremost of John Tosh⁶⁵) historians have either employed the term masculinity without attempting to adequately define it, or they have written complex theories of gender which cannot then be located in their substantive research. The aim of this chapter, therefore, is to define a theory of masculinity which is relevant to the practice of male gender identities in Europe in the interwar period. The chapter will then go on to discuss and outline a structure through which gender might be studied, the clarity of which is particularly important due to the broad scope of the thesis, both geographically and theoretically, and its source base.⁶⁶

* * *

Masculinity was defined by sociologists in the 1930s using a theory called Sex Role Identity (SRI) which posited the idea that there existed a single, socially agreed notion of what it was to be masculine to which all men attempted to conform. This masculinity was, according to SRI theory, the route to contentment – the greater one's conformity, the more successful, manly, and therefore

⁶⁴ Ringelheim, 'Women and the Holocaust', *passim*.

⁶⁵ Whilst Tosh's historicised approach to the theory of masculinity makes it a role model for my own, it does not offer me a workable approach to gender due to vast differences in the period and conditions of our research.

⁶⁶ For reasons of historicity I shall immediately reject theories which attempt to reconsider the concrete nature of sexual difference. Discussions concerning the nature of gender tend to work from the premise that gender exists as a social representation of sex difference, however, theorists including Judith Butler and Monique Wittig have considered the argument that sex itself is not a biological concept but a socially constructed one. Whilst this may indeed be the case, men in the interwar period, and for some time after, would not have understood it as such. When writing about the 1930s and early 1940s it is legitimate to rely on the basic premise that men considered themselves to be unquestionably biologically sexed as men.

happy, one was.⁶⁷ Criticisms of this theory in the intervening period have been myriad, and for the most part focus on the fact that, formed in the aftermath of the Wall Street Crash and the ensuing depression and unemployment, it did not so much consider the realities of male gender identities as impose its own. The normative masculinity it presented avoided questions of employment and material achievement in favour of behavioural characteristics, effectively creating a masculinity which was accessible to those without work or money but which, in the process, was alien to lived gender practice.⁶⁸ A second criticism centred on the positive teleology of SRI. Whilst the theory seemed to promise that those men who could conform to the norm presented would be fulfilled and content, to many of its contemporaries this was demonstrably untrue. Established to correct this tendency, the theory of Sex Role Strain (SRS) argued that, whilst there was indeed a single normative notion of masculinity, its impact on many men was extremely negative. Those who tried to conform and failed in any way were condemned as unmasculine whilst even those who were able to conform were not assured happiness since, it was argued, conforming to characteristics not necessarily your own could lead to psychological disturbance. Moreover, according to Pleck, a key theorist of SRS, some of the characteristics of the sex role, particularly those related to patriarchy, were, in themselves, psychologically dysfunctional.⁶⁹

SRS, in turn, had its own critics who questioned the impact of its overt feminism on its ability to be understood as an independent theory of gender identity. However, more importantly, both SRI and SRS have been heavily undermined by more contemporary sociologists on account of their reliance upon a singular notion of masculine identity and the lack of attention paid to the capacity of the individual to influence his own gender identity. If we assume, as SRI and SRS both do, that society allows for only one normative masculinity we would have to conclude that it is that of white, middle-class heterosexual men and that those who cannot fulfill its requirements, gay men, old men and black men to name a few, would be, as Kimmel and Messner put it in their attack on such theories, “enacting “problematic” or “deviant” versions of masculinity.”⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Joseph Pleck, *The Myth of Masculinity* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1981), p.4.

⁶⁸ Pleck, *The Myth of Masculinity*, p.158.

⁶⁹ Pleck, *The Myth of Masculinity*, *passim*.

⁷⁰ Michael S. Kimmel and Michael A. Messner, ‘Introduction’ in Michael S. Kimmel and Michael A. Messner, eds., *Men’s Lives* (Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon, 2001), p.xiv.

If, however, we concede that not all men who do not match this description necessarily see themselves as inherently unmasculine then we must consider whether normative gender identities are in fact multiple with alternative masculinities existing for those men whose broader identities - including class, race and sexuality - do not match that defined above. In line with this argument various sociologists have presented theories of multiple masculinities which allow for individuals to orient themselves towards one of several masculine identities - effectively allowing men to behave in a variety of ways and still to consider themselves masculine. Yet, whilst these theories offer an approach to gender identity which seems better to reflect reality than that of a single normative masculinity, the way in which these multiple identities interact with one another remains contested and sociologists are divided between those who suggest a series of related but parallel masculinities and those who argue for a hierarchical approach to masculinities.

The theory of 'parallel masculinities' is most clearly found in Kimmel and Messner's 'matrix of masculinities',⁷¹ which posits the idea of a web of gender identities related through ideas and values rather than linked by power or dependence. Frameworks such as this matrix, however, have presented problems for scholars attempting to understand the gender identities of repressed minorities, since they tend to disassociate the formation and reinforcement of normative identities from questions of power. For many, Jewish men and homosexuals for example, this association between identity and power is incontrovertible, and gender is better represented, therefore, by a hierarchical approach to gender identities. One key example of this alternative approach is Connell's theory of 'hegemonic masculinities', which argues that at any given time in a society there is a dominant, or hegemonic, idea of masculinity, that which is "culturally exalted," and which "embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women."⁷²

Whilst the basis of this hegemonic structure is domination of women, Connell, who relies on a Gramscian approach to the exercise of power, defines a number of alternative masculinities created by, and designed to reinforce, the dominant masculinity. These alternative masculinities fall into the

⁷¹ Kimmel and Messner, 'Introduction', p.xvi. Another example of this is Hadley's work which suggests competing dominant masculinities of medieval secular and ecclesiastical men (Dawn Hadley, 'Introduction: Medieval Masculinities' in Dawn Hadley, ed., *Masculinity in Medieval Europe* (London: Longman, 1999), *passim*).

⁷² Connell, 'The Social Organization of Masculinity', p.38.

categories of complicit and subordinate masculinities, the first of which refers to those men who do not embody the dominant masculinity but nonetheless benefit from a tacit acceptance of its relations of gender hegemony and power; in Connell's words they reap the 'patriarchal dividend'. In contrast, subordinate masculinity, according to this theory, refers to those men who have been rejected by the dominant masculinity as inherently 'unmasculine' or "expelled from the circle of legitimacy."⁷³ Connell develops this theory using the example of gay men, arguing that they are established as a feminine other by a dominant masculinity seeking to reinforce its own gender identity, as he describes it: "gayness, in patriarchal ideology, is the repository of whatever is symbolically expelled from hegemonic masculinity."⁷⁴

Several historians have relied on Connell's theories to foreground work on masculinity and Tosh particularly has applauded Connell's theory of hierarchy and the way in which it views alternative masculinities through the prism of the dominant gender. However, whilst acknowledgment of the hierarchy of many gender identities has been an important and positive step in the development of gender theory, the sidelining of theories of parallel dependent masculinities, like that of Kimmel and Messner, comes at a cost. I would argue that Connell's theory struggles as a comprehensive approach to normative gender identities exactly because it too completely rejects such theories. For some minorities, in different times and circumstances, it has been possible to create gender identities which, although built around the same social influences as dominant gender identities, should not be principally defined through their subordination. It is these masculinities to which Shepard alludes in his division of masculinities into patriarchal, anti-patriarchal and alternative. Shepard's tripartite division, which is aimed at the intent behind the masculinities rather than at the structures of power that created them, is accompanied by an analysis of the "internal inconsistencies and contradictions" of patriarchal manhood and the resulting influence that might be exerted by alternative masculinities.⁷⁵ Although Shepard is writing about early modern England, nonetheless, the approach he offers, and particularly the role played by 'alternative' gender identities, when combined with the hierarchical, power-based approach of Connell, creates a means of attempting to understand masculinity which might well be applied to Jewish men in the period in question here.

⁷³ Connell, 'The Social Organization of Masculinity', p.40.

⁷⁴ Connell, 'The Social Organization of Masculinity', p.40.

⁷⁵ Alexandra Shepard, *Meanings of Manhood in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p.251.

Beyond simply acknowledging the existence of multiple masculine identities, however, one must consider debates over the ways in which men engage with normative identities in the performance of their own masculinity. Early theories of gender identity clearly define masculinity as something classically normative, an imposed ideal of what it is to be masculine to which men attempt to conform. However, whilst historic examples of such overt gender imposition exist - one thinks principally of the widespread use of didactic texts in the Early Modern period, or of totalitarian regimes including Nazi Germany - such an approach has been largely rejected by historians and sociologists alike who argue against understanding masculinity simply as the “acquisition and internalisation of social norms”. Connell specifically rejects such an approach on the grounds that it suggests a clear top-down decision as to the masculinity to be promoted which is not evident in most societies. Instead, it is often argued, normative identities should be understood as formed and reinforced through our engagement with them, a process which establishes our own subjecthood. In this vein Peterse n writes, “[a]s Foucault’s concept of practices of the self suggests, identity is never simply imposed on (pre-social) subjects but involves a process of self-constitution within specific socio-cultural contexts. Through engaging with culturally prescribed or suggested practices of the self, one comes to understand oneself as a subject with a particular way of viewing and acting in the world.”⁷⁶ And it is this understanding of ‘normative’ identities, upon which this thesis will rely.

Minimising the importance of such normative identities, however, and influenced by the work of Lacan and Jung amongst others, writers like Lyn Segal have argued that stress should be placed upon psychological influences, often preverbal and including the individual's family background and upbringing, in the formation of gender identities. However, whilst acknowledging the importance of understanding gender identities as personalised, as well as the role of the individual in the performance of their own gender, such theories have been criticised both for being ahistorical (Segal herself has noted that Anglo-American applications of Lacanian thought concerning the ways in which gendered power is socialised into infants do little to show how such a cycle originates⁷⁷) and for seeming to ignore or side step the strong collective tendencies in gender identity. On this question I would support those who argue that the consistency of masculine identities over decades and centuries, even if we acknowledge the relative instability of individual masculinities, cannot be fully

⁷⁶ Alan Petersen, *Unmasking the Masculine: 'Men' and 'Identity' in a Sceptical Age* (London: SAGE, 1998), p.130.

⁷⁷ Lynne Segal, *Slow Motion: Changing Masculinities, Changing Men* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1997), p.90.

explained by engaging with gender identities on a purely individual basis.⁷⁸ As Whitehead and Barrett comment, “any sense of self can only come about through working to achieve a sense of ‘belonging’ in the social world”.⁷⁹

Before establishing the approach to these questions of gender that I will take in this thesis, however, it is necessary to add to this complex series of gender theories the historical specificities of the interwar period. Whilst Jewish masculinity between the wars should not be understood as being based upon a strongly imposed normative notion of gender identity, neither should the interwar period be seen as one in which masculinities were more personalised and individual than collective. Rather, various governments and social bodies in the early twentieth century made clear attempts to influence, but not necessarily to prescribe, the practice of gender identities through the dissemination and promotion of, amongst other ideas, the importance of a healthy body, achieved through exercise and diet.⁸⁰ These general trends in masculinity were developed in the 1930s into an overt emphasis on the strong male body as governments and societies attempted to redress the damage to the association between violence and heroism caused by World War I, and to prepare themselves for the expected conflict. This period, therefore, should be understood as one in which competing normative masculinities embodying different ideals and identities were encouraged, formed and practised.

Bearing in mind these historical realities, then, this thesis will rely on an historicised approach to gender identity formation which sees gender formed cumulatively, starting with the individual situating himself in relation to a number of normative identities, before incorporating the relevant elements of his own background and personality in order to form his individually practised masculinity: a process in which one cannot read individual agency but rather the impact of a broader context of identities and circumstances. The normative masculinities towards which each individual was oriented would have varied depending on those available to them but based on the premise, discussed above, that society is largely formed around a hierarchical structure of dominant, complicit and subordinate masculinities, but also includes alternative, less dependent, identities. The way in which I have

⁷⁸ Questions of change and continuity in gender identity will be further considered later in this chapter.

⁷⁹ Whitehead and Barrett, ‘Introduction’, p.20.

⁸⁰ There is a large and developing body of work on the question of state manipulation of the body and its image at the turn of the twentieth century. Amongst many others see the work of George Mosse, John Tosh and Joan Tumblety.

attempted to engage with this definition of masculinity in my research is the question this chapter will go on to consider.

* * *

Historical analysis of Jewish masculinity in the face of the Holocaust almost without exception describes Jewish men as feminised - a description that suggests an alteration in gender practice where male and female roles and identities are confused and exchanged. It is therefore to questions of change, continuity and crisis in gender identities that this chapter will now turn. Received wisdom tells us that gender identities are significantly redefined in wartime, both on an individual and a collective level. In many periods, and for many men, the effect of war has been to curtail masculine practice, as, amongst other things, conscription distanced them from their work and families and thus any immediate capacity to provide or protect, although certainly for many the defence of the nation was an alternative form of protection on which they could hang their masculinity. Whilst such limitations impacted heavily on gender identities, so too did the increased opportunities that war offered to both men and women. For some young men war provided the means to escape relatively predictable futures, something which would have been impossible during peacetime, whilst for many women the absence of men, particularly in the workforce, offered them the possibility of assuming new responsibilities and even the capacity to alter the ways in which society understood the role of women.

Normative identities have also historically been significantly altered by war as governments have asserted particular gendered requirements: heroism as a masculine trait when in need of new recruits, for example.⁸¹ At other times old identities have become unsustainable: the unavoidably large numbers of disabled men in the aftermath of World War I arguably having this impact.⁸² And yet despite all of these changes being largely undisputed, historians have conversely argued for the

⁸¹ Mosse writes a good deal about the background to this subject (George Mosse, *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996)). Similarly, Michael S. Kimmel (Michael S. Kimmel, 'The Contemporary "Crisis" of Masculinity in Historical Perspective' in Brod, ed., *The Making of Masculinities*, p.147) goes into detail on the topic.

⁸² Various historians have written about the impact on society of invalids returning from the First World War amongst them Sabine Kienitz (Sabine Kienitz, 'Body Damage: War Disability and Constructions of Masculinity in Weimar Germany' in Karen Hagemann and Stefanie Schueler-Springorum, eds., *Home/Front: The Military, War and Gender in Twentieth-Century Germany* (Oxford: Berg, 2002)) and Deborah Cohen (Deborah Cohen, *The War Come Home: Disabled Veterans in Britain and Germany, 1914-1939* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001)).

durability of gender identities in the face of war. Foyster stresses the importance of not assuming that changes to masculinity occur simply because they ought to, suggesting instead that periods of great social change are often times when gender proves most durable.⁸³ This is a point supported by Tosh, who sees such changes to masculinity, when they occur, as the outcome of major social change on an otherwise solid base of masculinity. "Might it make more sense", he asks, in relation to the extreme social upheaval of the period 1750-1850 which saw the transition to modernity, "to conceive of gender as a structure of practices and attitudes which was particularly *resistant* to change?"⁸⁴

These contrasting realities direct us to what seems to be the most credible way of understanding gender in wartime: as both extremely stable and eminently flexible. This is a dichotomy which, when broadened to include masculinity and gender identity more generally, seems to remain largely valid. Despite monumental changes in society, and what might be considered a gender revolution in the last century, the structure and practice of normative gender identities have changed little and those limited changes that can be charted, for example the shift away from the honour-based masculinities of the early modern period in Western Europe,⁸⁵ tend to take place over centuries rather than decades. In contrast to this stability, the masculinities of individuals, and even the particular manifestation of any given normative identity, seem to have fluctuated and altered greatly, even over the course of a lifetime; as McGuffey and Rich argue, "gender is a social construction that is constantly being modified as individuals mature".⁸⁶

One way of understanding this dichotomy, then, is to see the base of masculinity as largely impervious to change, whilst the superstructure of individual gender identity is flexible and adaptable. Brittan refers to this base as 'masculinism',⁸⁷ which he defines as "the ideology that justifies and naturalizes male domination", arguing that there exist essential, inalienable, gender traits common to

⁸³ Elizabeth Foyster, *Manhood in Early Modern England: Honour, Sex and Marriage* (London: Longman, 1999), p. 210 - "Linking changes in the wider political, economic and social structure to those in personal relationship is not only extremely complex, it tends to subsume gender to those structures rather than seeing gender itself as a force for change in people's lives."

⁸⁴ John Tosh, 'The Old Adam and the New Man: Emerging themes in the History of English Masculinities, 1750-1850' in Tim Hitchcock and Michelle Cohen, eds., *English Masculinities, 1660-1800* (London: Longman, 1999), p.218.

⁸⁵ Foyster, *Manhood in Early Modern England*, *passim*.

⁸⁶ C. Shawn McGuffey and B. Lindsay Rich, 'Playing in the Gender Transgression Zone: Race, Class and Hegemonic Masculinity in Middle Childhood' in Kimmel and Messner, eds., *Men's Lives*, p.76.

⁸⁷ Arthur Brittan, *Masculinity and Power* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 1989), p. 4. However such a 'core' of masculinity might also be associated with Connell's 'hegemony' - the fundamental elements of masculinity which seem to sustain patriarchy.

all masculine identities. The universality of this theory is supported by little or no evidence, and can be easily contradicted by any anthropologist with enough knowledge of social structures around the world.⁸⁸ However, a limited alternative which posits the idea of culturally specific core features of masculinity, such as violence or competition, sustained through social conformity rather than genetics, is a more interesting theory. For the purposes of this thesis then it will be worth considering whether there are some elements of masculine identity which are common to all masculinities - whether individual practice or normative identities - in the interwar period and, if so, whether they respond to assault in a different way to more peripheral elements of masculine identity and practice.

Finally, when considering questions of change and continuity, it is necessary to discuss 'crises of masculinity': a term which is commonly used in relation to this period but rarely defined or examined. Theorists describe a crisis in masculinity as being a time when men are significantly hindered in practising a previously stable and successful gender identity. One clear example of this can be seen in the impact of mass unemployment in communities where masculinity is closely tied to work and financial provision for families (as is often the case), but a crisis can also occur on an individual basis, for example when an adult man becomes physically disabled and ceases to be able to perform actions previously central to his gender identity.⁸⁹ The ability to recover from a crisis, in such circumstances, involves either the return of the capacity to successfully practise one's masculinity (finding new work being an obvious example of this) or adapting masculine practice to conform to one's new circumstances. On this question, Gerschick and Miller have shown that men who become disabled, after an initial depressive period, often create for themselves an alternative gender identity, based on the same themes as their original masculinity but adapted to fit their new status and capabilities.⁹⁰ In this scenario, whilst dominant masculinity might continue to see these disabled men as emasculated, the men see themselves as having reclaimed their masculinity.⁹¹ For my own research, therefore, it is important to look beyond notions of crises in masculinity to consider whether,

⁸⁸ David D. Gilmore, *Manhood in the Making: Cultural Concepts of Masculinity* (London, Yale University Press, 1990), *passim*.

⁸⁹ This could be anything from playing skittles with his friends to carrying out his paid work or having sex.

⁹⁰ Thomas I. Gerschick and Adam S. Miller, 'Coming to Terms: Masculinity and Physical Disability' in Kimmel and Messner, eds., *Men's Lives*, *passim*. This is something I will discuss in more detail when attempting to understand practical changes to Jewish masculine identity.

⁹¹ In a different context similar conclusions are drawn by Timothy Nonn, 'Hitting Bottom: Homelessness, Poverty and Masculinity' in Kimmel and Messner, eds., *Men's Lives*, p.247.

after an initial crisis, it was possible for Jewish men to employ either of these approaches to restore or reform their gendered practice so that they could again consider themselves masculine.

* * *

Beyond considering how masculinity changes and adapts it is also important for this thesis to understand where and with whom gender identities are formed, practised and renegotiated. Whether some relationships are more significant to masculinity than others, to what extent gender identities are practised both in the home and outside of it, and whether indeed any division of spheres can helpfully be made, are all relevant questions in understanding masculinity.

On the first question, sociologists and historians have stressed the importance of seeing masculinity as integrally tied to patriarchy and therefore highlight interactions between men and women as central to understanding gender identity. This approach is best illustrated in Segal's observation that "the meanings of 'masculinity' inhere not within individual men and their behaviour, but within institutional, cultural and discursive formations conceived hierarchically with men on top".⁹² In much the same vein Foyster argues that, "gender history, as it has been defined, is above all relational history. It seeks to examine the sexes not in isolation, but rather the relationships between the sexes."⁹³ In conducting my research, however, I shall partially challenge the primacy given to such heterosocial relationships.

I do not question the importance of heterosocial relationship in gender formation and, to a more limited extent, practice, and my research will make full use of sources written by women as an important key to understanding men's gendered behaviour. Moreover, where men are writing about relations with women these will be one significant way of understanding gendered practice and, potentially, the changing nature of gender identities. I shall, however, follow Shepard in stressing the equal importance of homosocial relationships in the practice of male gender identities for two central reasons: the relationship between hegemony and patriarchy and the changing debate concerning gendered spheres of influence. In the first case Tosh has convincingly argued that, whilst in our

⁹² Segal, *Slow Motion*, p.xxiii.

⁹³ Foyster, *Manhood in Early Modern England*, p.1.

society hegemonic masculinity is principally used to uphold a patriarchal system, this is not an essential facet of masculinity but simply the current contextualisation thereof. In asserting this, Tosh uses the example of colonialism to show how hegemonic masculinity has also been used to reinforce structures of racial, rather than gender, domination.⁹⁴ If such a paradigm shift is possible then the notion of the necessary elevation of heterosocial over homosocial relationships in analysing masculinity is baseless and the two must at least be considered on an equal footing in attempting to understand what power dynamic, if any, was reinforced by masculinity during the Holocaust.

The second reason to focus on homosocial as well as heterosocial relationships in understanding masculinity in the Holocaust is found in the current application of separate spheres theory which, advanced by Davidoff and Hall, argues that, from the nineteenth century onwards, the role of women in public life was diminished in favour of the “glorification of domestic womanhood”, leading to the home being defined as a female gendered sphere and public space as male.⁹⁵ Significantly, however, historians have begun to question the applicability of such a neatly dichotomous approach to the gendering of society. Foyster’s research begins to problematise the spheres argument by stressing the central role played by women in public in reinforcing the gender identities of their husbands, as well as the importance of running a successful home for any man wishing to hold public office.⁹⁶ Moreover, sociologists have observed that in contemporary society men who are unable to assert themselves in the workplace for any reason use the home as the place to prove their masculinity.⁹⁷

Whilst neither of these observations necessarily contradicts the spheres theory, they do begin to present some questions as to the complexities of gendered living which others have developed to offer more concrete criticism. Vickery has argued that separate spheres theory relies too heavily upon didactic texts which, whilst showing that society believed that women *should* inhabit the sphere of the home, provide little evidence that they actually did so. Instead Vickery argues, such texts may

⁹⁴ Tosh references Sinha’s work on Bengal and Du Pisani’s work on Afrikaners in John Tosh, ‘Hegemonic masculinity and the history of gender’ in Stefan Dudink, Karen Hagemann and John Tosh, eds., *Masculinities in Politics and War: Gendering Modern History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), p.53.

⁹⁵ Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850* (London: Routledge, 2002), *passim*.

⁹⁶ Foyster, *Manhood in Early Modern England*, p.4.

⁹⁷ Yen Le Espiritu, ‘All Men Are Not Created Equal: Asian Men in U.S. History’ in Kimmel and Messner, eds., *Men’s Lives*, p. 39, is one clear example of this.

well have been a “defensive and impotent reaction to public freedoms already won”.⁹⁸ Finally criticism has considered the realities of the overlapping spheres of home and work for many communities and classes. Whilst spheres theory may apply to the emerging middle classes of the nineteenth century, who are the centre of Davidoff and Hall's study, for other groups, notably those whose workplace was within the home, such a division of spheres was impossible. This last question is particularly significant for this thesis if we consider the number of Jewish men, both independent artisans and those who ran small businesses, who worked in the home with the help of their wives and family and for whom the home and workplace were parts of one indistinct body.

In response to these debates, my own work will argue that, even in heterosocial environments, in order to understand male gender identity it is important not to focus too heavily on traditional male/female dichotomies but to look also at competing or conflicting masculinities.⁹⁹ Moreover, in order to understand masculinity it is necessary to consider the full range of spheres in which it is formed, conditioned and practised, and to understand those spheres as necessarily interdependent and overlapping. Not only should the historian consider the home and workplace, which may be one and the same, but also public and semi-public spaces,¹⁰⁰ a distinction which seeks to differentiate between how a man behaves as a public person in public (public), e.g. at work, and as a private person in a public place (semi-public), for example in a café, and will be of particular interest for this thesis as it concerns a period when access to public spaces was significantly curtailed for Jewish men.

* * *

Exactly because gender identity is formed and practised throughout all of the various spheres of daily life and through engagement with both other men and women, the final problem to consider is how one might subdivide masculinity in order for it to be studied. A clear structure like that offered by Tosh in his early work, which looks through the prism of spheres, dividing the world into 'home, work and

⁹⁸ Amanda Vickery, 'Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Men's History' in Robert Shoemaker and Mary Vincent, eds., *Gender and History in Western Europe* (London: Arnold, 1998), *passim*.

⁹⁹ Shepard, *Meanings of Manhood*, p.2.

¹⁰⁰ Karen Walker, "'I'm Not Friends the Way She's Friends': Ideological and Behavioural Constructions of Masculinity in Men's Friendships' in Kimmel and Messner, eds., *Men's Lives*, p.371.

social networks', risks losing access to the spaces between the spheres. More than this, however, if we agree that, beyond engaging with normative gender ideals, the practice of masculinity draws on personal gendered positions, as discussed above, then we must consider that masculinity should not be viewed uniquely through one's relationships with others. Amongst these non-relational elements of masculinity, historians and sociologists stress the role of the body and the way in which men talk about and engage with their body in understanding gender identity. Hadley sees the body as serving as a "crucial medium in which to discuss the social order",¹⁰¹ whilst Petersen deputises Foucault to make the argument that "bodies are discursively constructed within modern systems of power".¹⁰² Petersen goes on to relate the body directly to other systems of identity such as race and class, embedding it firmly in the contrasting identities that influence gender construction, when he comments that "[p]articular male bodies, namely the bodies of white, European, middle-class, heterosexual men, have been constructed as the standard for measuring and evaluating other bodies".¹⁰³ Yet, a spheres approach to masculinity lacks any obvious space for considerations of personal influences, the body or otherwise, on gender identities - a significant enough failing to render the division of spheres unworkable as a structure for analysis. As Tosh himself has more recently commented, "no longer can masculinity confidently be located in specifically 'masculine' contexts... Its discursive traces are to be found in every area of culture and society, and are certainly not confined to explicit ideologies of manliness."¹⁰⁴

For some historians it has been possible to abandon altogether structured approaches to the study of gender identity - specifically, cultural historians with a focus on particular sources have been able to allow those sources to define the form of their research.¹⁰⁵ Tosh, however, has argued that the studies of masculinity, to date, have relied too heavily on such cultural history and thereby on "discourse and representation", whilst he favours the approach of social history, looking more closely at "experience",¹⁰⁶ an approach which less clearly lends itself to this loose structure. My own work, and the focus of this thesis, is certainly an approach to masculinity which looks at experience and events as much as representation and might best be classed as social history. However, the question

¹⁰¹ Hadley, 'Introduction: Medieval Masculinities', p.17.

¹⁰² Petersen, *Unmasking the Masculine*, p.41.

¹⁰³ Petersen, *Unmasking the Masculine*, p.41.

¹⁰⁴ Tosh, 'Hegemonic masculinity', p.44.

¹⁰⁵ This is perhaps particularly the case where such sources are defined and limited as in the case of Jean E. Howard and Phyllis Rackin, *Engendering a Nation: A Feminist Account of Shakespeare's English Histories* (London: Routledge, 1997).

¹⁰⁶ Tosh, 'The Old Adam and the New Man', p. 219 and Tosh, 'Hegemonic masculinity', p.52.

of how these histories can be structured remains problematic, and, to date, is something with which social historians of gender have struggled, commonly resulting in largely teleological approaches to writing about masculinity. In this vein, Fletcher divides her work into 'Before the Gendered Body', 'The Working of the Patriarchy' and 'Towards Modern Gender'¹⁰⁷ and Foyster takes a similar approach with chapters entitled 'Discovering manhood', 'Constructing manhood', 'Asserting manhood', 'Lost manhood' and 'Restoring manhood'.¹⁰⁸ Whilst this approach problematically often seems to follow a narrative arc tending towards a positive and logical outcome, it is, nevertheless, the structure which my own study of gender in the Holocaust follows, in spite of these misgivings. Importantly, I believe that such a teleological approach lends itself to the conclusions of my work and the trajectory of Jewish masculinity in the Holocaust which forms the basis of this thesis. My research will therefore have two central chapters – 'masculinity in crisis' and the 'reassertion of masculinity' – which will suggest a trajectory of collapse and rejuvenation for Jewish masculinity although clearly not for the Jewish people as a whole, a distinction which should clearly be made since gender identities do not as closely ape lived circumstances as we might expect.

* * *

Whitehead and Barrett define masculinity as a “fluid arrangement of multiple subject positions which together provide the means by which the individual achieves a sense of identity”,¹⁰⁹ and I shall follow this approach. My thesis will be based on the principle that subject positions in the period in question were formed both through positioning one's self *vis-à-vis* a range of normative, socially defined, gender identities and through engaging with elements of one's own personality, physicality and background; coming together however, not as Whitehead and Barrett would suggest to “achieve a sense of identity” but more actively, to form the practice of one's own gender identity. Whilst many of these positions are enduring gendered ideals, personal or collective, that can be seen throughout the life of one man or over centuries in a community, many are also flexible and transient elements of one's masculinity. The notion, therefore, of a ‘fluid arrangement’ skilfully represents the way in which the relationship between the subject positions and identities can alter, promoting different aspects of

¹⁰⁷ Anthony Fletcher, *Gender, Sex and Subordination in England, 1500-1800* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995), *passim*.

¹⁰⁸ Foyster, *Manhood in Early Modern England*, *passim*.

¹⁰⁹ Whitehead and Barrett, 'Introduction', p.11.

one's gender identity at different moments in one's life and in some cases altering the subject positions themselves. Exactly what the subject positions are depends on each individual, but for every man I would argue there are one or two key normative masculine identities toward which he orients himself and which can be best understood through Connell's theory of a hierarchy of masculinities: something I shall go on to discuss in detail in the next chapter.

Using this approach to masculinity, and acknowledging that the Holocaust left most men unable to perform elements of all normative identities, the substantive body of my thesis will attempt to understand the ways in which the circumstances of the Holocaust impacted upon these subject positions. In light of the discussions above I will consider the ways in which changes in men's lives impacted upon normative identities and whether, on an individual basis, men were able to rearrange or reorder their subject positions to better manage the effects of the Holocaust or, instead, if Jewish men did, as historians have asserted but not proven, experience a complete collapse in their gender identities.

Chapter 2 – Jewish Masculinity in Practice on the Eve of the Holocaust

In the aftermath of World War I, and facing previously unknown levels of mortality and injury amongst young men, European states set about (re)forming twentieth century masculinities. Whilst the fascist states of Germany and Italy imposed gender identities upon their citizens in order to further embed their political projects, the more democratic nations also attempted to influence gender identities to support their social and political needs. Unlike these nations, however, the Jews lacked a state that might have imposed forms or imperatives of masculinity upon its people, making it harder for the historian to define Jewish gender identities in the period clearly. Jewish men were, of course, influenced by the governments and gender positions of the countries in which they lived, however, for most this influence vied with Jewish religious and cultural impositions to form a range of alternative masculinities. No single 'Jewish masculinity' can, therefore, be understood to have existed amongst the Jews of Europe in the years immediately preceding the Holocaust. In spite of this, however, in seeking to understand the impact of the Holocaust on Jewish masculinities it is imperative to form an understanding of what those Jewish masculinities comprised. This chapter will go on, therefore, relying on the structures outlined in the last, to consider exactly the form that Jewish masculinity took in the interwar period including its influences, conflicts and variations. Specifically, I argue in the following substantive chapters that three key masculine norms – dominant, subordinate and independent – when considered in the light of cultural, scientific and political developments, formed the basis of the masculinities practised by Jewish men throughout Europe before the Holocaust.

* * *

The population of twentieth century Europe included a large number of acculturated families who had not been practising Jews, in terms of either religion or culture, for several generations. They spoke the local language and identified themselves first and foremost as natives of the country in which they lived rather than as Jews. Whilst many of these acculturated Jews lived in Germany they were also present amongst the urban elites of most European countries including, importantly for this thesis, Poland, France and Holland. However, even for these acculturated Jews, life was not often completely separate from religious practice. Both Holland's *Hoofdcmissie tot de zaken der Israëlitien* (Supreme Commission for Israelite Affairs), which dealt with such questions as religious

responses to military service and responded to the persecution of less acculturated Jewish minorities in parts of their empires¹¹⁰ and the Central Consistory in Paris, which trained Rabbis, selected the chief Rabbi and oversaw worship and religious education, were staffed almost entirely by secular Jews who oversaw the complex problems of interweaving religious and national identity on a daily basis.¹¹¹

In contrast to these acculturated populations, each country under study also had a more 'traditional' Jewish population, some of whom practised the Jewish faith, whether with reformist, orthodox or charedi affiliations, whilst others had effectively given up their religious adherence but retained a strong attachment to 'Jewish culture' including rituals of dress and diet or even simply by speaking Yiddish – although this latter declined greatly in the early part of the twentieth century. In Poland these culturally Jewish populations were largely native born Jews living both in urban and rural environments, many in the area formerly belonging to the Russian Empire, whilst in Western Europe they were more often immigrant populations fleeing pogroms and later persecution in Eastern and Central Europe. In each country a different history of Jewish presence with its own answers to questions of affiliation, loyalty, religion and nationalism existed and was under constant development in the interwar period.

The Jewish communities of France and Belgium at this time both included large numbers of non-national Jews who, whilst statistics vary, are thought to have comprised around 90% of the 70,000 strong Belgian Jewish community¹¹² and over half of the French community of just over 300,000.¹¹³ In stark contrast, 85% of Holland's Jews at the same time were Dutch nationals with a long history in the country, who spoke little Yiddish and who would not have been easily identifiable as Jewish.¹¹⁴ However, even these numbers only tell a small part of the story. In the fifty years before the Holocaust France admitted more than 100,000 Eastern European Jews from Russia, Poland and the Baltic states amongst others, many of whom retained strong religious and cultural affiliations to

¹¹⁰ Bart Wallet, 'Dutch National Identity and Jewish International Solidarity: An Impossible Combination? Dutch Jewry and the Significance of the Damascus Affair (1840)' in Yosef Kaplan, ed., *The Dutch Intersection: The Jews and the Netherlands in Modern History* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), p.320.

¹¹¹ Renée Poznanski, *Jews in France during World War II* (Hanover, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2001), p.4.

¹¹² Dan Michman, 'Research on the Holocaust in Belgium and in General: History and Context', in Dan Michman, ed., *Belgium and the Holocaust: Jews, Belgians, Germans* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1998), p.30.

¹¹³ Esther Benbassa, *The Jews of France: A History from Antiquity to the Present* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), p.166.

¹¹⁴ Michman, 'Research on the Holocaust', p.30.

Judaism, and yet by 1939 only two percent of school-age Jewish children in France attended a religious institution or Yiddish language school – something in the order of 2,000 out of a population of more than 300,000. The rest all attended the secular public schools of the Republic.¹¹⁵

Political affiliations also varied greatly amongst the Jews of Europe and whilst some western Jews avoided expressing strong political opinions that might somehow identify them as Jewish,¹¹⁶ other western Jews and those in Poland supported a number of different parties, from the Communists and the Bund to Zionists and Orthodox parties (although this last rarely in the West). In Poland the political affiliation of Jewish men was further complicated by their regional loyalties and the political systems within which they had resided before the creation of independent Poland in 1918: broadly speaking whilst Galicia and the territories of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire had strong support for the Zionist cause the former Russian territories were more traditional, voting Orthodox in far greater numbers than elsewhere.¹¹⁷ Voting statistics in the period even varied greatly within one city depending on whether they were local or general elections, on which subject Polonsky records the words of Abraham Meir in Krongrad that, concerning the *Sejm* elections, the *Agudah* ‘fights to avoid being ignored’, whilst in the *kehilah*, ‘it fights for hegemony’.¹¹⁸

Finally the question of employment and its impact on degrees of cultural integration and cross-fertilisation is significant to understanding Jewish-European identities in the interwar period, particularly in the East. The shtetls of Eastern Poland are most commonly seen as the core of unintegrated Jewish communities, and yet for most who resided in them contact with the gentile community was a daily occurrence. Traditionally in such shtetls Jews and gentiles lived quite separately, with Jews residing in the centre of town and gentiles surrounding them. To complicate this, however, gentiles also comprised many of the customers and suppliers of Jewish craftsmen and businessmen, particularly since in many cases restrictions on Jewish land ownership meant that Jews were largely unable to work as farmers to provide the raw resources that Jewish craftsmen and salesmen needed. Equally, for those Jews employed by large land owners, which was not an

¹¹⁵ Poznanski, *Jews in France*, p.2.

¹¹⁶ Poznanski, *Jews in France*, p.4.

¹¹⁷ Antony Polonsky, *The Jews in Poland and Russia: Volume III, 1914-2008* (Portland, OR: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilisation, 2012), p.121. The statistics that explain this diversity of voting habits are complex and lengthy, however one good example is the 1938 local elections which saw the Zionists receive less than 25% of the seats (as part of a bloc) in Warsaw, around 22% in Łódź and all 16 seats in the Lviv council.

¹¹⁸ Polonsky, *The Jews in Poland and Russia*, p.126.

uncommon occurrence, work often involved acting as a go-between for a gentile landlord and his gentile peasants.

In contrast, many of the most unassimilated Jews were those living in poverty in the cities of Poland, where they were often, effectively, ghettoised; urbanisation only really brought assimilation where it also brought wealth and not always even then. Statistically the majority of Jews in the towns were employed in 'trade and industry', however, such a description is misleading in so much as it sounds more lucrative, and therefore potentially assimilated, than it was in reality. Those who were considered 'tradesmen' also included the high numbers of street peddlers who would not necessarily have left the Jewish quarters on a regular basis; moreover, 'industry' amongst the urban Jewish populations was largely cottage industry, which employed only a small number of, mainly Jewish, workers.¹¹⁹ And yet, also to be considered in this period was the rise of state-funded education, and the use of the Polish language that accompanied it, which contributing to a slow secularisation and integration.¹²⁰

The role of this chapter is to understand and explain the central norms of Jewish masculinity in the European countries in question before the Holocaust so that I may then consider whether and how they changed as persecution escalated. Since my aim here is to outline broadly relevant themes in masculine identity I will not consider the ways in which particular men practised individual elements of their gender identities, saving this instead for the substantive chapters. Moreover, for two reasons, I shall not attempt to problematise the question of which Jewish men conformed to which of the three masculine identities I shall outline. First, these norms are effectively ideal types,¹²¹ no individual, I would argue, directly conforms to one single normative identity, rather each man uniquely orients himself towards one or more such identities, all of which are themselves fluid concepts. To attempt to define exactly who does what, therefore, would be to miss the point of these normative identities. Secondly, defining the identities of individual men, and how they negotiate with normative masculine identities, is the work of my substantive chapters and something I will do in detail later in the thesis. The question then of how individual, or even communities of, Jewish men specifically defined their

¹¹⁹ Polonsky, *The Jews in Poland and Russia*, p.62.

¹²⁰ This is discussed in various works but an overview can be found in Polonsky, *The Jews in Poland and Russia*, p.204.

¹²¹ The theory of ideal types is closely associated with Max Weber and is detailed in numerous scholarly works including Max Weber, *The Methodology of the Social Sciences* (New York: Free Press, 1949), p.90.

masculine identities before the war is, whilst interesting, beyond the scope of this thesis. It is for these reasons, however, that the above, brief consideration of the cultural, political and religious diversity that existed amongst European Jews in the interwar period is significant. Such an overview will inform the following explanation of the three norms by illustrating some of the many factors involved in gender identity, and the ways in which integration and assimilation impacted upon masculinity in this period.

Dominant Western Masculinity

My research has led me to the conclusions that Jewish men in the interwar period oriented themselves towards three masculine norms, the first of which was the dominant western masculinity of the time – that created by, and reserved primarily for, gentiles. Although gentile society had clearly framed Jews, and others including homosexuals, as the 'other' on which their dominant masculinity rested, it was possible for some Jewish men, nonetheless, to access this identity, either by ignoring their Jewishness or by rejecting the antisemitic elements of the discourse. The dominant masculinity was not a static concept and continued to develop, particularly in response to war, embodiment and economics, throughout the century, and yet as Mosse concludes, its key elements had not changed since the mid-18th century: power, honour and courage seen through a unity of "external appearance and internal virtue".¹²² Moreover, Mosse has persuasively argued that, although variations on this masculinity did exist, in the period in question bourgeois masculinity clearly triumphed over its competitors and, as the dominant masculine norm in European gentile society, was also that most relevant to acculturated Jewish men, particularly those in Western Europe.

The First World War had sustained the dominance of a gender identity built upon strength and military masculinity,¹²³ however, this identity could not survive the realities of the aftermath of the conflict, as both the impact of the war on individuals and the presence in society of the very visual effects of the war, seen in the mass of disabled and mutilated veterans, fatally undermined the image of the masculine soldier. Mosse alone has attempted to suggest that when applied to Germany, and

¹²² Mosse, *The Image of Man*, p.5.

¹²³ Mosse, *The Image of Man*, p.105. Significantly even those men who actively opposed the First World War, Sassoon, Owen and Renn for example, did so largely on the grounds that it was an illegitimate war, rather than by opposing the concept of war entirely, so strong was the association of masculinity and warfare, p.108.

perhaps other smaller nations, the physical realities of warfare had a lesser impact than some have suggested.¹²⁴ Whilst this may be true (and certainly Germany maintained a more militarised masculinity than the rest of Europe in the interwar period and particularly as war again approached) Kienitz clearly makes the case for the “traumatizing experiences and consequences of the war” on the “militant male image”.¹²⁵ The space left by the perceived failure of this military gender identity allowed several alternative masculinities to present themselves, central amongst which was a socialist identity which stressed education rather than physicality as the dominant trope of masculinity. However, this socialist image also failed to gain dominance for a number of reasons including its inability to manage the question of the embodied male, an image which had been sustained in spite of the damage caused by the war. Ultimately, Mosse persuasively argues, 'bourgeois masculinity' offered the only embodied gender identity which nonetheless was not overly reliant on violent or military physicality and, as such, became dominant in most interwar European societies.¹²⁶

Whilst it sacrificed the more hardened or violent images of military masculinity, this bourgeois norm succeeded in retaining both its dominance over women and its image of the body. Exercise and physical fitness remained key to gender identity in this period and membership of sports clubs increased, yet the purpose of this physicality had changed. Instead of symbolising power through aggression and might, the body became a way to show power through self-control, discipline and proportion, all of which were well represented by the fit and healthy, contained, strong man. These traits, combined with ideas of duty, honour and respectability, informed the dominant masculinity of the interwar period. Key to this bourgeois masculine identity was a man's ability to provide for, and manage, his own family so that they were a credit to him in society. It also hinged, however, on his status and performance outside the home. In homosocial environments, like clubs, both for working men and gentlemen, and in their employment, men strove to prove their “individual industry, energy and uprightness”,¹²⁷ all of which contributed to their gender identity.

¹²⁴ Mosse, *The Image of Man*, p.117.

¹²⁵ Kienitz, 'Body Damage', p.182.

¹²⁶ Mosse, *The Image of Man*, p.132.

¹²⁷ Mosse, *The Image of Man*, p.136.

One caveat here is worth stressing, however. The Second World War was not unexpected. For some time it had been clear that the combination of emerging dictatorships and ongoing discontent with the outcomes of the Versailles treaty made a second European war a likely event. With this in mind, the 1930s saw nations prepare themselves again for war, and one important tool in this preparation was the manipulation of notions of masculinity. Whilst gentler ideas of male gender became sidelined, more overtly physical, militarised gender identities were reasserted,¹²⁸ a shift most clearly seen in Germany where the body of the masculine ideal changed from the joyful physicality of Surén's *Der Mensch und die Sonne* to the harder, more perfect form, epitomised in the work of Arno Brecker. The extent to which this change effectively influenced the masculinity of those men who had experienced the First World War for themselves is open to question, and the strength of the preceding ideas of masculinity should also be taken into account, particularly, one might argue, for those men who were not eligible to fight. Nevertheless, when writing about the eve of the Holocaust it is important to acknowledge this trajectory of changing masculinities.

For all the attention I have given this dominant interwar masculinity, I would not suggest that a large number of Jewish men closely oriented themselves towards this gender identity which, due to its inherent antisemitism, necessarily rejected them as subordinate. In only a limited number of cases would Jewish men, most notably in Holland and France rather than Poland and Belgium, have been able to sidestep the antisemitic imagery that rejected them and to perform the dominant norm described above. Most clearly this possibility would have been available to those who did not conform to the gentile image of the Jew: that is, those whose appearance and clothing were more Aryan, perhaps with successful careers in the army¹²⁹ or who had in some way proved themselves physically, i.e. those who were most assimilated into mainstream bourgeois society and were already, therefore, conforming to its ideas of masculinity. However, beyond its direct application to those few men able to access it, this masculinity played another, more significant, role. The structure of the dominant masculinity is key to understanding the contingent, Jewish subordinate form which I would

¹²⁸ Karen Hagemann, 'Home/Front: The Military, Violence and Gender Relations in the Age of the World Wars' in Hagemann and Schueler-Springorum, eds., *Home/Front: The Military, War and Gender in Twentieth-Century Germany*, p.15.

¹²⁹ There were certainly numerous Jewish men, even amongst those who had not converted, who despite blocks to advancement, managed to have successful army careers. For a discussion of this see John Hoberman, 'Otto Weininger and the Critique of Jewish Masculinity' in Nancy A. Horowitz and Barbara Hyams, eds., *Jews and Gender: Responses to Otto Weininger* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1995), p.147.

argue was central to the gender identities of a significant number of Jewish men in the interwar period.

Subordinate Jewish Masculinity

In defining a subordinate Jewish masculinity, the second norm of Jewish gender in this period, I have built upon Connell's structures of masculinity, discussed in the last chapter, in which the dominant masculinity creates the subordinate as an undesirable 'other' in order to reinforce its own hegemony. Subordinate Jewish masculinity in the interwar period, in line with this theory, was created by the dominant masculinity and then internalised by Jewish men who, striving to conform to the western stereotype, internalised its virulent antisemitism. The coadunation of self and 'other', that this caused, in many cases resulted in 'self-hatred',¹³⁰ a condition central to subordinate Jewish masculinity in this period and described by Gilman as "outsiders' acceptance of the mirage of themselves generated by their reference group ... as a reality".¹³¹ This self-hatred, it is important be clear, rested upon an internalised stereotype which needed in no sense to be a reflection of any reality; indeed it could be so far from being a reality that it could alter, or even reverse, itself and yet retain its power.¹³²

One central target of this self-hatred was language, both spoken and written. Accused of lacking their own language (since Yiddish did not count as a language of its own and Hebrew was no more than a language of study for most Jewish men), it was instead suggested that Jews spoke *Mauschel*, which was understood to be the way in which Jews perverted other languages through the manner in which they used them. In some case this was linked to accented speech on the part of Jews but where this was not possible, which it often wasn't as numerous Jews spoke a completely unaccented vernacular, choice of words or subject might instead suffice to define the Jewish 'other.' As Gilman comments, "[s]ometimes this rhetoric was clothed in the intonation ascribed to the Jew, but more

¹³⁰ The term "self-hate" is retained provisionally here, and throughout this thesis, to represent a complex phenomenon within Jewish identity formation in the period which was broader, both theoretically and geographically, than the early twentieth century discussions particular to Germany to which the term "self-hatred" is normally applied.

¹³¹ Sander Gilman, *Jewish Self-Hatred: Anti-Semitism and the Hidden Language of the Jews* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), p.2.

¹³² Gilman writes in detail about the shift in the negative image of the Jew, as seen by Jewish writers, from the eastern traditional Jew to the western assimilated Jew whilst at the same time the eastern stereotype became a positive image as it seemed to represent a more authentic, spiritual Jewish existence. Gilman, *Jewish Self-Hatred*, p.270.

often than not it was the mode of discourse that was important. Whether revolutionary or conservative, journalistic or philosophic, it could always be seen as a specific language of the Jews.”¹³³ Gilman goes on to argue that written language can also be seen as a key element of self-hatred since, as a post-enlightenment signifier of culture, it was a common tool of assimilation. The argument follows that this attempt to assimilate the written language “confirmed to the reference group the superiority of their language” and thereby the distance of the Jewish ‘other’. Thus Jewish men reinforced their alienation from language and the dominant type through attempts, in the form of writing, to assimilate.

Whilst I do not question Gilman's theory, I would, however, suggest that it had limited impact. Requiring a high degree of linguistic self-analysis, it would have affected only a small number of Jewish men who chose to intellectualise their language transmission in this way. Instead, I shall argue, it was overwhelmingly, but not uniquely, the assault upon the Jewish body which provided popular access to the process of self-hatred, since not only was it more easily understood and more commonly applicable, but its dissemination, in the form of scientific and political discourse, provided a top-down imposition of gender, not unlike that found in other nation states, which acted to reinforce self-hatred and the contingent subordinate masculinity. Moreover, it is generally agreed that, as Gilman writes, “the Jew at the *fin de siècle* is the male Jew”, an elision of gender and sex which ensured that even seemingly ungendered antisemitism directed at the body targeted specifically the male body and was, thereby, inherently an assault on gender.¹³⁴

The antisemitism of the dominant masculinity created a wealth of ways in which to target the Jewish body,¹³⁵ but it was predominantly the core image of the Jewish male as inherently feminised, weak and feeble, damaged both by his own Jewishness and by life in the ghettos, that was internalised and led most obviously to questions of self-hatred and a subordinate masculine identity. Discussion of the

¹³³ Gilman, *Jewish Self-Hatred*, p.18.

¹³⁴ Sander Gilman, *Franz Kafka. The Jewish Patient* (London: Routledge, 1995), p.21. Whilst stereotypes of the Jewish female do exist, according to common characterisation, ‘The Jew’ is inherently male, and yet since the gentile is manly, its antithesis, the Jew, is necessarily feminine. This meant that the Jewish male became unavoidably feminised. On this matter Ann Pellegrini writes “Significantly, in the homology Jew-as-woman, the Jewish female body goes missing. All Jews are womanly; but no women are Jews.” Ann Pellegrini, *Performance Anxieties: Staging Psychoanalysis, Staging Race* (New York: Routledge, 1997), p.18.

¹³⁵ The various elements of the Jewish male body targeted by antisemitism are detailed in Sander Gilman, *The Jew's Body* (London: Routledge, 1991), *passim*. However problematically, I would argue, these are very much seen from the perspective of the gentile, with little consideration of how a Jew might feel about specific elements of his own body.

physical frailty and femininity of the male Jewish body was by no means new in the twentieth century having been a part of gentile discourse for several centuries. Moreover, historically, the conflation of men and femininity had not necessarily been negative, since, in certain periods, Jews themselves had seen it as aiding their survival in the Diaspora.¹³⁶ However, as dominant masculinity developed to include duelling, warfare and physicality it excluded Jewish men who had for some time, in countries throughout Europe, been banned from bearing arms.¹³⁷ This limitation on Jewish men proving their masculinity was extended during the Great War when it was suggested, repeatedly and in several countries, that Jewish men had not enlisted or fought in adequate or representative numbers. Whilst statistics suggest that this was not the case, the slur on Jewish masculinity seems to have fed into the pre-existing feminisation of Jewish men by making it impossible for them to assert their masculinity in the way society prescribed.

Charting exactly the dissemination of self-hatred is problematic, and yet one way in which this can be done is through a consideration of writing in this period, which shows a widespread tendency amongst Jewish authors, particularly but not uniquely in Germany, at the turn of the century, toward themes of self-hatred. Amongst the first was Walter Rathenau, who, in 1897, wrote of the Jewish condition including its “unathletic build...narrow shoulders...[and] clumsy feet”, but only ever referred to Jews as ‘you’ and whose work is described by Boyarin as, the “undertheorized total internalisation of the dominant faction by Jewish men”.¹³⁸ A few years later Weininger published his *Geschlecht und Charakter*, another key example of self-hatred based upon the Jewish body, and which saw twenty-five editions in twenty-five years. The work, which contained one particularly significant chapter repeatedly detailing the inherent femininity of the Jewish male, was popularised by Weininger’s suicide soon after publication – an act which seems unlikely to have been one of self-hatred (Weininger was a converted Jew) but was certainly presented as such to suit popular discourse and might therefore have been understood by other Jews as such. Significant in its time, Weininger’s work has since been cited by numerous historians for its accurate representation of the way in which the Jewish condition and Jewish gender identity was portrayed. As Hoberman writes, “Weininger’s

¹³⁶ Jay Geller, ‘Freud, Blüher and the *Secessio Inversa*: Männerbünde, Homosexuality, and Freud’s Theory of Cultural Formation’ in Daniel Boyarin, *et al*, eds., *Queer Theory and the Jewish Question* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), p.106. This also links to Boyarin’s ideas of a positively feminised Jewish male which I shall discuss later in this chapter.

¹³⁷ Mosse, *The Image of Man*, p.142.

¹³⁸ Jonathan Boyarin and Daniel Boyarin, *Powers of Diaspora: Two Essays on the Relevance of Jewish Culture* (London: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), p.45.

ostensibly ungendered defamation of the Jews as a type is in fact an unerringly precise defamation of the Jewish male as he was commonly portrayed at this time.”¹³⁹

Eilberg-Schwartz has gone further to consider how Jewish men in the period managed this popular negative physical stereotype,¹⁴⁰ and presents two possible coping mechanisms both significant to understanding the development of self-hatred: pursuing embodiment by acknowledging one’s weakened state before attempting to strengthen it, and the creation of an alternative focus, for example, by stressing the image of the Jews as a “people of the book”, to whom physicality is irrelevant. The latter case is particularly intellectually problematic since the Torah includes numerous references to the body and sexuality and is by no means beyond physicality,¹⁴¹ and yet, I would argue, more significantly neither strategy attempts to contradict the stereotype, the first internalises it (if with the intention of defeating it in the longer term) and the second ignores it. Both of these strategies, therefore, leave the Jewish male lacking positive embodiment, and underpins self-hatred by reinforcing the status of Jews as countertypes to the strong, healthy, embodied Germanic type¹⁴² - something which was ultimately irrevocably ingrained by the discourses of Zionism and race science.

Begun in the late nineteenth century, but finding increasing support through the early twentieth century with the rise of the nation state and antisemitic persecution, Zionism can be seen both to play on and to disseminate pre-existing ideas of Jewish self-hatred. With the aim of obtaining a national homeland for the Jewish people, Zionists relied heavily on the physical representation of feminised Jewish men, to suggest that the Diaspora, the ghetto and the loss of the land had damaged the Jews. The Zionist answer to this was to create a homeland for Jews in the Middle East where the race might rebuild itself through hard work and dominance and the rebuilding of the body was an integral part of this for, as Biale notes, “[t]o create a new image of the Jewish body became a symbol for creating a new Jewish nation.”¹⁴³

¹³⁹ Hoberman, ‘Otto Weininger and the Critique of Jewish Masculinity’, p.142.

¹⁴⁰ Howard Eilberg-Schwartz, ‘Introduction’ in Howard Eilberg-Schwartz, ed., *People of the Body: Jews and Judaism from an Embodied Perspective* (Albany, NY: State Press of New York, 1992), p.5.

¹⁴¹ Eilberg-Schwartz, ‘Introduction’, p.5.

¹⁴² Hoberman, ‘Otto Weininger and the Critique of Jewish Masculinity’, p.143.

¹⁴³ David Biale, ‘Zionism as an Erotic Revolution’ in Eilberg-Schwartz, ed., *People of the Body*, p.284.

The primacy given to the weakened Jewish body in such discourses, the associated self-hatred and its public dissemination, are best understood through a consideration of a number of well publicised books and speeches by Zionists in the period. One of the earliest amongst these is Herzl's 'A Solution of the Jewish Question' published in *The Jewish Chronicle* in 1896, in which he wrote of life in the ghetto where "we had become somewhat unaccustomed to bodily labour". The strength of this sentiment and its mode of expression developed through the early twentieth century leading to Lessing's *Der juedische Selbsthass* in which he famously wrote, "[f]or centuries, his [the Jew's] national identity has been like a small and calm pond, constantly endangered by an underlying swamp. He has had only the company of his dead, and he has forgotten their language. No soil has supported him, no history relieved him of his sins, no cultural heritage [*Bildung*] has been *his own*; his hero is the sufferer."¹⁴⁴ This emphasis on the importance of soil in the collapse and rebuilding of the Jewish body reflects the work of other key Zionist writers who specifically argued that time spent in the ghetto had separated the Jew from the land and weakened him physically and that only a return to the soil could heal him. This focus is reflected in the writings of Ha-Shomer Ha-Zair, a Jewish youth movement, which argued that nature would "straighten our crooked back, stretch our muscles and strengthen our resolve".¹⁴⁵ The peak of the Zionist project as it related to the Jewish body, however, can be seen in Max Nordau's idea of the *Muskeljuden*. In 'Jewry of Muscle', published in 1903 in the *Juedische Turnzeitung* and again in 1909 in *Zionistische Schriften*, Nordau argued that Jews had been involved in the "mortification of our own flesh". It was time, he wrote, for their bodies to "live again", entreating, "let us once more become deep-chested, sturdy, sharp-eyed men".¹⁴⁶

More specifically, the themes of Zionism and the weakened Jewish body were popularised through the link made between the Jewish body and *Aliyah* – the process through which young Jewish men and women volunteered to emigrate to Palestine, establish settlements and begin to create a Jewish society – with Zionist discourses of physicality establishing an effective dichotomy between the weakened (subordinate) Jew in exile and the Zionist (dominant) Jew in Palestine, as Biale argues, "[p]hysical strength, youth, nature, and secularism were the constellation of Zionist symbols set

¹⁴⁴ Theodor Lessing, 'Jewish Self-Hatred' in Paul R. Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz, eds., *The Jew in the Modern World: A Documentary History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p.272.

¹⁴⁵ Ha-Shomer Ha-Zair, 'Our World View' in Mendes-Flohr and Reinharz, eds., *The Jew in the Modern World*, p.579, originally written and published in 1917.

¹⁴⁶ Max Nordau, 'Jewry of Muscle'/'Muskeljudentum' from *Juedische Turnzeitung* (June 1903) in Mendes-Flohr and Reinharz, eds., *The Jew in the Modern World*, p.435.

against the degeneracy, old age, urban and religious signs of the Exile”.¹⁴⁷ The strengthening of the Jewish body was not, however, entirely ideological. *Aliyah* was necessary in order to convince Britain and the world of Jewish claims in the Middle East, the Zionist discourse of the weak Jewish body could be seen, therefore, not as self-hatred but as pragmatic politics – by persuading young people that their bodies were being damaged in the Diaspora they could convince them to perform *Aliyah*, thereby both furthering the Zionist cause and improving their own Jewish bodies. Whilst this pragmatism may indeed have been significant to the Zionist representation of Jewish bodies, the reason behind the Zionist representation of the Jewish body is less important than how it was intended to be received, and the intention was certainly to convince European Jews that their bodies had become inherently weakened and feminised.

A counterpoint to these ideas did exist and involved a “Jewish critique of the Germanic male type”,¹⁴⁸ focusing on the Germanic male as overly aggressive in contrast to the peaceable Jew. However whilst this is something I shall consider in more detail when looking at ‘independent’ Jewish masculinity - the third normative identity - I would argue that ultimately it did little to undermine the power of the Zionist discourse as it pertained to masculinity. Instead, although Zionists writers and politicians intended to help create a new Jewish body, in the period in question they were able only to confirm the reality of weakened Jewish masculinity. This confirmation, combined with the striving for a ‘new’ physicality so clearly and closely based up on the dominant gentile ideal and the success of Zionism, particularly in interwar Poland, provided the perfect conditions for the dissemination of self-hatred.

The second development that I would argue significantly affected the dissemination of self-hatred, and thereby subordinate masculinity, amongst the Jewish population of Europe was the advancement of race science, which reinforced antisemitic stereotypes both in gentile discourse and in discourses of self-hatred, and led to the establishment of ‘Jewish race science’ which not only did little to redress the antisemitism of race science but may even have aggravated it.

¹⁴⁷ Biale, ‘Zionism as an Erotic Revolution’, p.285.

¹⁴⁸ Hoberman, ‘Otto Weininger and the Critique of Jewish Masculinity’, p.147.

From the middle of the nineteenth century, and especially after Darwin, scientists began to develop theories of inherited characteristics not only particular to individuals but to entire races. This discourse saw the conversion of the Jews from a religious group to a race, with the associated problem that race could not easily be renounced or altered. Social policy soon followed science in understanding the Jewish condition (i.e. antisemitic stereotypes) as inherent in the entire Jewish race and, as elsewhere, the type that became 'genetically' Jewish was the feminised male, both physically weak and mentally unstable. Where self-hatred already existed and relied upon a negative projection of the Jew as 'other', this scientific confirmation of that 'other' reinforced the division between dominant and subordinate and the associated self-hatred. Moreover, the widespread interest in the development of science and race science brought these ideas to a wider audience and lent them credibility, if indeed such was needed.

The antisemitism that the developing race science seemed to fuel did lead to the establishment of a group of Jewish race scientists, however they were in some ways as damaging as their gentile counterparts. For Jewish race scientists it became clear that if genetics could be used to prove inherent, negative characteristics of the Jewish race then they might also be used to prove inherent, positive characteristics. As Efron comments, some Jews were able to "mount a sustained campaign of self-defense, self-assertion, and ethnic identity building".¹⁴⁹ Whilst a few Jewish scientists attempted to do this through the prism of Darwinian science, suggesting that the sustained persecution of Jews had, in effect, weeded out the weak or unfit, and left only a core of the strongest possible men,¹⁵⁰ this was not a commonly attempted argument, the strength of the stereotype of the weak Jew being too great to easily combat. In most cases, therefore, this self-defence was done through the assertion of a Lamarckian approach which allowed for the positive 'hereditary' impact of Jewish culture and psychology on the race. On the question of the Jewish body, however, many of these Jewish scientists still conceded that Jews were, for whatever reasons and perhaps not

¹⁴⁹ John M. Efron, *Defenders of the Race: Jewish Doctors and Race Science in Fin-de-Siècle Europe* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994), p.3.

¹⁵⁰ One example of this is Francis Galton in the *Jewish Chronicle* (UK) in 1910 cited in Raphael Falk, 'Zionism, Race, and Eugenics' in Geoffrey Cantor and Marc Swetitz, eds., *Jewish Tradition and the Challenge of Darwinism* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2006), p.147, whilst Mitchell B. Hart (Mitchell B. Hart, *The Healthy Jew: The Symbiosis of Judaism and Modern Medicine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p.109) quotes Dr Mark Blumenthal speaking in New York in 1859 as saying, "[D]uring the dark ages, the Israelites, if at all tolerated, were compelled to live in the most crowded state and confined to the lowest localities in the various cities of Europe, under conditions undoubtedly every way favourable to the production of miasma, fever, and pestilence. They nevertheless preserved their innate vigor of body and mind as their history, as well as their present state abundantly testifies."

permanently, physically weak or inferior, as Efron notes, “[a] poor physique or neurasthenic temperament was said to have been brought on by the debilitating effects of ghetto existence or antisemitism”.¹⁵¹ Even Hart, who more than any other historian lauds the positive correlation between Jews and health and cleanliness in modern Europe, asks “how does one account for the survival and vitality of a group that appears to be so physically debilitated?”, belying his own contention that a purely positive representation of the Jew was also possible.

The problems facing Jewish race scientists were compounded by their own, sometimes chequered, intellectual pasts. Ignaz Zollschan, one of the leaders of the Jewish race science movement, had himself begun his scientific life decidedly more nationalist, with more conviction concerning inherited racial characteristics, than he ended it, provoking the accusation that his scientific conversion was as much about undermining antisemitism as it was authentic scientific opinion. As persecution of Jews increased into the middle of the 1930s Zollschan set about forming an international committee to renounce antisemitic race science and its conclusions. Whilst the committee was eventually established in 1938, the field was extremely small and, I would argue, compromised by the notion that it was more concerned with the political implications of science than the science itself¹⁵² – a charge faced by many anti-fascist scientific movements in the same period, Jewish or otherwise. Ultimately, as Efron notes, “Jewish race science [was] unable to dispel the malicious opinions of the antisemites”, instead describing it as “like all apologia written by Jews, able to offer Jewish readers comfort, dignity, and hope”.¹⁵³

Whether through the reading of individual texts, such as those of Rathenau and Weininger, or whether by engaging with international discourses of Zionism or race science, Jewish men engaged with the gentile community could not avoid confronting antisemitic images of the Jew. For many, but by no means all, this led to the internalisation of such images, self-hatred and ultimately an identification with the subordinate Jewish masculinity. Depending very much on engagement with the various discourses discussed, as well as levels of assimilation and independence, some Jewish men

¹⁵¹ Efron, *Defenders of the Race*, p.177.

¹⁵² One reason the committee took so long to form, which goes to the heart of the ideological problems therein, was that scientists were uncomfortable with the idea of science being conducted in some sense in reverse: starting with the conclusion and then performing the science afterward. Paul Weindling, ‘The Evolution of Jewish Identity: Ignaz Zollschan between Jewish and Aryan Race Theories, 1910-45’ in Cantor and Swetitz, eds., *Jewish Tradition and the Challenge of Darwinism*, *passim*.

¹⁵³ Efron, *Defenders of the Race*, p.180.

would have been well placed to avoid this rejection as an 'other'. However, for many, if not most, who lived their lives somewhere between the extremes of total assimilation and isolation, in a period of increasing acculturation when Yiddish was being quickly lost to the vernacular and when Jewish religious conviction, practice and education were all on the wane, some orientation towards a normative masculinity encompassing self-hatred and subordination would have been almost unavoidable.

Independent Jewish Masculinity

Finally, I would argue, and here I depart from Connell's approach to masculinities, that in the interwar period there was a third, 'independent', Jewish masculine norm, which was not the product of a power relationship with the dominant norm but which was instead established independently thereof. This is not to say that the two masculinities were mutually exclusive, or that one could not have an identity which included an adherence to both, but that they developed in parallel rather than in a hierarchy as was the case with the dominant and subordinate normative identities.

Exactly the form of this masculinity, however, is debated. Boyarin has repeatedly made his case for a form of Jewish masculinity which, particularly related to the notion of Diaspora being inherently female, frames masculinity around an alternative approach to power where feminisation is not construed as a 'lack', as in the subordinate masculine norm, but as an active choice.¹⁵⁴ In Lacanian terms, key to Boyarin's theory, "[i]t was the condition of not being imperial, of being Diasporic, that presents this possibility to the Rabbis, a possibility not of a temporary disruption but of demystifying "the phallus" for what it is, a violent and destructive ideological construct."¹⁵⁵ The Rabbis then rejected the phallus, without rejecting the penis, thereby creating a feminised, but still sexualised, masculinity which some might explain using the term *Edelkayt*. This approach details a masculinity, exemplified by Rabbis, which eschews the elision of power and violence with masculinity found in western gender identity, and instead orientates itself towards the body and its sexuality, something which Boyarin sees as more closely linked to early modern masculinity than its modern successor

¹⁵⁴ This discussion is elucidated in both Boyarin and Boyarin, *Powers of Diaspora, passim*, and Daniel Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct: The rise of heterosexuality and the invention of the Jewish man* (London: University of California Press, 1997), p.11.

¹⁵⁵ Boyarin and Boyarin, *Powers of Diaspora*, p.45.

with its racialised approach to Judaism. Significantly, however, Boyarin's evidence for the existence of this masculinity overwhelmingly comes from ancient religious texts,¹⁵⁶ and whilst there is little reason to doubt Boyarin's understanding of Jewish religious teachings, and there may indeed be some Jewish men who practise their masculinity in this overtly religious way based on a close reading of the scriptures,¹⁵⁷ Boyarin does little to show the practical existence of this gender identity amongst Jewish men in general or in interwar Europe specifically.

However, even if we leave Boyarin's religious, feminised masculinity aside for want of evidence, a lack of discussion in modern gender history makes the framing of any independent Jewish masculinity problematic. Studies of modern masculinity have tended to overlook the subject altogether whilst Jewish histories invariably deal more with the assimilated end of Jewry than the traditional one, focusing heavily on the engagement between Jewish and western cultures rather than on the points where the two bisect. One good example of this is Judd's article, 'Moral, Clean Men of the Jewish Faith: Jewish Rituals and their Male Practitioners, 1843-1914' which discusses the move of *Mohelim* and *Shochetim* towards embodying a more western masculinity based around hygiene, cleanliness and "bourgeois respectability"¹⁵⁸ - themes which tie-in well with the dominant masculinity discussed above. However, whilst we are briefly provided with the western stereotype of the 'Jewish' background they are attempting to eschew - single men in unhygienic conditions (bachelorhood being a sign of limited respectability in this case) - we are told little of its reality. It seems unlikely that Jewish culture saw its own *Mohelim* and *Shochetim* as filthy, backwards and immoral, but we are not privy to the reality; a reality which might help us to better understand independent Jewish masculinity.

On the question of this alternative masculinity, however, historians have not been entirely silent and Mitchell Hart writes, "...there did exist a significant body of literature that represented Jews and Judaism as healthy and vital, that did not feminize the male Jew, or associate him with the sorts of social and political pathologies so common in the anti-Semitic imagination. There might very well

¹⁵⁶ All of Boyarin's examples in this work are taken from ancient texts including the Babylonian Talmud and specifically the Haggadah.

¹⁵⁷ Here I am thinking of the Charedim, many, but not all, of whom choose to practise Judaism by devoting their time to the study of the Torah rather than taking paid work. However, for reasons explained in my methodology this thesis does not specifically cover the Charedim or other ultra-Orthodox groups.

¹⁵⁸ Robin Judd, 'Moral, Clean Men of the Jewish Faith: Jewish Rituals and their Male Practitioners, 1843-1914' in Ben Baader, Sharon Gillerman and Paul Lerner, eds., *Jewish Masculinities: German Jews, Gender, and History* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2012), *passim*.

have been real Jewish men out there who did not internalize anti-Semitic imagery, who did not come to understand their own minds and bodies through the prism of the negative stereotypes of Jews.”¹⁵⁹ So, who are these men and what comprises their masculinity? Potentially it is to this masculinity that Stefanie Schüler-Springorum alludes in her article, ‘A Soft Hero: Male Jewish Identity in Imperial Germany through the Autobiography of Aron Liebeck’. Although she does not entirely make the argument for a ‘soft’ man in the case of Liebeck, who wished his tombstone to read “here was a man, and this means, here was a fighter”,¹⁶⁰ nonetheless in so much as Liebeck’s autobiography presents a man able and willing to admit to “crying bitterly” on several occasions and to repeatedly commenting on the beauty of other men, beauty being a manly attribute connected to charisma in this case, Schüler-Springorum does show us elements of an alternative, Jewish, normative masculinity. This masculinity can also be seen in broader Jewish culture and writings, one example of which is the relationship with the circumcised penis. Whilst many elements of antisemitic discourse concerning the Jewish body have been internalised, as discussed earlier in this chapter, and despite strong and constant antisemitic assaults on the circumcised penis as a site of feminisation, castration and emasculation, dominant discourse seems to have retained a positive relationship with the penis.¹⁶¹ This positive approach to circumcision, not as lack but as a choice, although not a feminising choice as Boyarin would have it, reflects this independent Jewish masculinity.

We can also see in the relationship of the Jewish male to his family, and its presentation both in Jewish and gentile discourses, a clear alternative masculinity. The image of the Jewish male as the head of a warm and stable home, and its positive reflection of both the man and the father,¹⁶² seems to be a key element of the independent Jewish normative masculinity. This relationship between gender identity and the family, however, extends far beyond the immediate members of the household. As is detailed time and again in writings from various periods of Jewish history, which certainly does not wane in the twentieth century, a strong association exists between the Jewish man and his male ancestry and is an element of masculinity that I will discuss in detail later as key to understanding the practice of gender and gender identities during the Holocaust.

¹⁵⁹ Hart, *The Healthy Jew*, p.25.

¹⁶⁰ Stefanie Schüler-Springorum, ‘A Soft Hero: Male Jewish Identity in Imperial Germany through the Autobiography of Aron Liebeck’ in Baader, Gillerman and Lerner, eds., *Jewish Masculinities: German Jews, Gender, and History*, p.103.

¹⁶¹ Amongst others Gilman writes about this question in Gilman, *Franz Kafka*, p.22.

¹⁶² Hoberman, ‘Otto Weininger and the Critique of Jewish Masculinity’, p.152. Significantly this concerns only the *image* of the Jewish father in Jewish and gentile discourse. For the purposes of my thesis it does not matter if the reality differed from this.

This focus on inheritance and ancestry can be seen particularly in literature. One good example is 'The Little Shoemakers' written by Isaac Bashevis Singer, which begins by naming nine generations of the shoemaking family of Frampol, a list which in itself shows a clear pride in descent and heritage. The story goes on to tell the life of Reb Abba and his seven sons who, one by one, all trained as shoemakers, emigrated to America and set up new lives working as shoemakers but using a highly mechanised process. One day, several decades later when they are all grandfathers, Reb Abba goes to visit, however on arrival he is taken very ill. After several weeks it is only the finding of his shoemaking tools that brings Reb Abba back to health and thereafter he begins to make shoes again. The story ends with Reb Abba in his workshop surrounded by his seven sons all making shoes by hand and singing as they had when their father had trained them in Poland.¹⁶³ Although this example is purely anecdotal and was written long after the Holocaust whilst Singer was living in America, nonetheless, it is only one example of very many where the significance of descent and paternal ancestry can be seen and is clearly linked to the gendered identity of Jewish men. This approach to heritage and ancestry can also be seen in a quotation from Leo Baeck that Katz notes in his diary after seeing him speak in Berlin in 1940: "Baeck says that in these times, when the house we live in threatens to collapse, we should sit down to observe the ancient Jewish tradition of study in order to understand the spiritual heritage of our ancestors. 'We don't put our people into uniforms!' he cries 'Never forget that you are looking with eyes and hearing with ears that are centuries older than those of your fellow men'."¹⁶⁴

This Jewish masculinity, perhaps softer and less violent than the western equivalent, although not feminised, seems therefore to be rooted in an embodied state, confident in its Jewishness, religious or cultural, and tied to the Jewish family and ancestry. Whilst this might be understood as a descendant of Boyarin's *Edelkayt*, first and foremost this independent masculinity, particularly its embodied elements, seems to be a Jewish confrontation with itself in a modern context. Whilst a man who oriented himself towards such a traditional normative masculinity might have been Orthodox and lived a life steeped in Jewish tradition and isolated from gentile culture, I would argue that this was not a prerequisite. As in the Singer story, such an identity is equally possible for a Jewish man with

¹⁶³ Isaac Bashevis Singer, *The Penguin Collected Stories of Isaac Bashevis Singer* (London: Penguin, 1984), *passim*.

¹⁶⁴ Katz, *One who came back*, p.8.

knowledge and experience of the cultures and traditions of Judaism, even when held in balance with a westernised existence, who manages to avoid being too closely drawn into a gendered identity linked to, and in a power relationship with, the western dominant form.

* * *

Significantly, common to all three of these normative masculine identities - much as they also vary in their particular manifestations, from assimilation and the importance of culture and language to questions of descent and heritage for culturally Jewish gender identities - is a core set of masculine traits: providing, protecting and status. Key to the formation of all normative masculine identities considered for Jewish men in Europe in this period, these three traits might therefore be seen as Brittan's "essential, inalienable, gender traits" which make up "masculinism". And whilst I would continue to argue, as I have done in the last chapter, that these traits cannot be understood as entirely universal with the lack of limits that Brittan imposes upon them, they can be understood as universal in the context of European Jewry as it faced the Holocaust in 1939 and will, therefore, form the cornerstone of the analysis of normative gender identities in my substantive research.

* * *

Attempting to understand the multiple natures of Jewish masculinity in the period in question, Gillerman writes of the Jewish strongman of interwar Europe thus – "Yet even while Breitbart was exemplifying German masculine ideals, this analysis will also suggest that a dichotomized view of a gentle ("traditional") Jewish masculinity, on the one hand, and a ("modern") capitulation to gentile culture, on the other, does not do justice to the range of conceptions of Jewish masculinity available to Jews at the time. Based on the Breitbart example, I will propose that in place of conceiving only two forms of masculinity that were mutually opposed to one another, we instead consider the Jewish masculinities that Breitbart performed, and that were perceived by different audiences, as a loose and flexible assemblage of images, a mosaic, or even a cacophony of divergent discourses."¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁵ Sharon Gillerman, 'A Kinder Gentler Strongman? Siegmund Breitbart in Eastern Europe' in Baader, Gillerman and Lerner, eds., *Jewish Masculinities: German Jews, Gender, and History*, p.199.

And yet, with one addition, this dichotomy is exactly what I am suggesting. Whilst I do not contest the multiple personalities and characters of Breitbart, nor the divergent masculinities they seemed to present, I do not concede that normative masculine identities were either myriad or cacophonous. Rather, as I have laid out here, and as I shall detail in the following substantive research, normative masculinities in this period were finite and socially prescribed. Beyond these normative identities the gender that one then practised was a product of the individual elements of gender identity that each man sustained. However on one matter Gillerman is correct – the normative masculinities should not be so simply dichotomous. As well as the dominant western and the independent Jewish masculinities, both of which played an important role in interwar Jewish male gender identity, for many Jewish men it was the third, subordinate masculinity which played the most significant role in underpinning individual gender identities. I do not suggest that a majority of men consciously hated themselves for their physical degeneration and wished they could look more like Erwin Huber,¹⁶⁶ but that the interplay between the dominant western norm and the independent Jewish norm, when combined with the unavoidable impact of omnipresent antisemitism, drove many Jewish men into orienting themselves towards a subordinate, specifically Jewish, masculinity.

This thesis will now go on to consider in detail the impact of the Holocaust on Jewish male gender identities, to question the assumptions of historians concerning the disempowerment and feminisation of Jewish men and to use evidence to show the complex and diverse ways in which different masculine identities responded to persecution. This substantive research will rest heavily on the analysis and conclusions of the previous two chapters, understanding the gender identity of any given Jewish man who experienced the Holocaust to be a product both of individual experiences and traits, and of an orientation towards one or more of the three fundamental normative masculine identities. Whether men were able to sustain a sense of masculinity and if so whether they did this through upholding normative gender identities, through establishing new normative identities, and/or through more individual elements of their masculinities, will be some of the questions this thesis attempts to answer. Ultimately, whilst warfare has been shown in some cases to explode gender identities leading to their radical restructuring, in other cases stable gender identities have been key to retaining levels of social unity during times of war. The following chapters will show which one of these was the case in the circumstances surrounding the persecution of the Jews in the Holocaust.

¹⁶⁶ The discus thrower at the beginning of Leni Riefenstahl's *Olympia*, 1936.

Jewish Masculinity in the Holocaust

The following two chapters form the basis of the substantive research of this thesis and are divided chronologically, which is to say, for each individual discussed their experiences in the first chapter preceded those of the second. There is, however, no single date, or even year, in which the first period ends and the second begins: the distinction is instead one of circumstance.

The first chapter, chapter three, will discuss the beginnings of the Nazi persecution of European Jewry, in which the lives of Jewish individuals were diminished and damaged, but in which, for the most part, Jews managed to remain with their families and communities, were not physically enclosed and were not separated by age, gender or physical capacity to work and survive. As I shall go on to consider in detail, this period did not see a unity of experience for those who lived through it. Depending on the country in which they lived, their material wealth, their social status, and for the most part luck, individuals and families experienced this persecution in extremely diverse ways. What united them, however, and what therefore unites this chapter, was not necessarily similar experiences, but instead a similar process, one of, almost without exception, attrition, diminishment and deconstruction. At different speeds, and in different ways, the lives of all of Europe's Jews were dismantled, from the loss of work and the means to support one's family, to the slow alienation of public space as Jews lost access to social organisations and the right to walk on the pavement. It is this process, the dismemberment of people's lives, in some cases very fast and in others quite slow, which typifies and unites the experiences of the early period of the Holocaust, which I shall henceforth call the deconstruction,¹⁶⁷ and which will be the subject of this chapter. The period which followed, and which is the subject of chapter four, was one of enclosure in which European Jewry either entered hiding in fear of deportation or murder, or was forced into ghettos as part of a broader strategy enacted by the Nazi occupation. Whilst for most this enclosure presented a daily struggle simply to survive, it also represented the point at which 'normal' lives in one's home and community ceased, and with them the inexorable decline of those lives also ceased, and instead entered a new,

¹⁶⁷ The term 'deconstruction' used in this way is my own. Drawing upon the quotation from Chaim Kaplan at the beginning of the next chapter, it represents the period between normal life (construction) and Holocaust (the destruction of the ghettos and camps) in which the lives of Jews were dismantled. In those countries occupied by the Germans and under consideration in this thesis, the occupying forces, through a process of legal discrimination and physical diminishment, deconstructed the lives of Jewish men, taking away their jobs and their rights until they could no longer walk in the street without risking harm or arrest. It is this period, and this process, which was a part of the lives of almost all Jewish men in this period, that I hope to encapsulate with the term "deconstruction".

unbearable, but often more stable, phase. Significantly, I shall argue in these chapters, it is these contrasting situations of deconstruction and stability which often had a greater impact on gender identities than the degrees of horror involved in people's daily existence.

These two periods are not defined by dates; different countries were invaded at different times, the point at which lives passed from the painful deconstruction to the petrified stability of enclosure varied, and the time at which families and individuals died also varied drastically. But for most Jews who lived through the Holocaust, the former preceded the latter, and it is to this chronology that my chapters relate.

Chapter 3 – Jewish Masculinity in Crisis: the beginnings of Holocaust persecution and the deconstruction of male gender identities

Described in Chaim Kaplan's diary as a period in which Jews "hover[ed] between destruction and construction",¹⁶⁸ the beginnings of occupation and war across Europe are key to understanding the impact of the Holocaust on masculine identities, and indeed Jewish identities in general. Throughout Europe the German invasion brought with it an end to a period of "construction" which, in spite of the presence of antisemitism, has been generally understood as a period of growth, success and stability for many Jewish populations. Yet, as Kaplan notes, whilst this stability was ending, Jewish communities had yet to become aware of the comprehensive "destruction" which would become unavoidable with the creation of the ghettos and camps. This interim period, then, was marked by a more or less swift, but inexorable, decline in living standards and liberties where the lives of Jewish people were disestablished piecemeal as businesses were Aryanised, access to education and public spaces limited and then removed and random physical abuse and humiliation became commonplace. Encapsulating the atmosphere in Europe for Jews in late 1939 and 1940, it is this gradual deconstruction of lives, seemingly endless but not necessarily catastrophic or terminal, which was key to the inability of many Jewish men to practise strong masculine identities – an inability that this chapter will argue developed during the period.

The form that the deconstruction took varied from one city to another and from one country to another, and yet it affected Jewish communities across Europe in a startlingly similar way. Creating an atmosphere of confusion and collapse that is clear in the sources, it is notable that many works both by contemporary diarists and by survivors writing decades after the Holocaust had ended, cannot find terminology to describe the period. Failing to offer either the clear trajectory or the ethical clarity of later periods, some accounts have even gone so far as to ignore the period altogether, beginning instead with entry into the ghettos or camps and, when asked about life before the Holocaust particularly in oral interviews, returning directly to their childhood and to life with their family before occupation and leaving out this interim period.¹⁶⁹ Whilst there are exceptions to this rule, and

¹⁶⁸ Kaplan, *The Scroll of Agony*, p.76.

¹⁶⁹ Numerous examples of this tendency to ignore, or only briefly consider, the deconstruction when writing accounts include Calel Perechodnik, *Am I a Murderer? Testament of a Jewish Ghetto Policeman* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996) Julius Feldman, *The Krakow Diary of Julius Feldman* (Newark, NJ: Quill, 2002), Kahane, *Lvov Ghetto Diary*, Alex

many diaries and accounts cover the period comprehensively, for a number of writers the deconstruction remains unrecorded and perhaps unrecordable; considered neither 'normal' life nor a part of the Holocaust that followed.

In contrast to this reticence amongst survivors, historians have, if anything, been too keen to use the experiences of the deconstruction to draw universal conclusions concerning the Holocaust. Much of the existing scholarship on masculinity in the Holocaust, discussed in my introduction, highlights writings which describe men as being confined to the home, restricted in their movement and depressed due to loss of businesses and income, conditions and responses which I would argue are quite particular to this period and far from common in the period of destruction I shall write about in the next chapter. The impact of this bias in historical sources, I would argue, has been to promote this collapse of masculinity which I do not reject as a specific phenomenon, into a universal Holocaust experience, ignoring the reassertion of masculinity which occurred, I shall go on to argue, as the Holocaust progressed. There remains, however, a discrepancy between my own understanding of masculinity in this period and that presented by historians in general. Whilst I shall argue that Jewish men in all of the countries under consideration were indeed emasculated by the deconstruction that accompanied occupation and antisemitic persecution, the nature of this emasculation was more complex than historians have suggested. The response of Jewish masculinity to the early stages of Holocaust persecution was, I will argue, closely related both to environmental questions (broader discussions of gender and security) and to an inability to perform established gendered norms, but the extent to which this is easily represented by depression, confinement and role exchange has been overplayed by many historians.

Meijer, *Alex's Diary, 1942-45* (Israel: Biblio Books, 2005) and Roman Frister, *The Cap or the Price of a Life* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1999). Vladka Meed, *On Both Sides of the Wall* (Tel Aviv: Beit Lohamei Haghettaot, 1977), only begins her account after entering the ghetto, a trend which can also be found in recorded accounts in the Imperial War Museum including Ben Helfgott (IWM - Ben Helfgott - 9165/20), who records only one reel of 20 on the period and Roman Halter (IWM - Roman Halter - 17183/17) who records only one of 17. This tendency, however, is also linked to the questions they are asked, which diminishes our ability to discuss the accounts themselves as proof of the deconstruction but again suggests a problematic approach to the period by historians. For Zyskind this period is one of extreme activity and turmoil including the relocation of the entire family, her father's assault and the loss of all of their belongings, and yet only 16 pages detail the events from September 1939 to the closure of the ghetto in May 1940. In stark contrast the time spent in the ghetto is meticulously detailed (Sara Zyskind, *Stolen Years* (Minneapolis: Lerner Publications Company, 1981).

Before considering the impact of deconstruction on masculine identities, however, it is worth considering its exact form in each of the countries under consideration, since the different speeds and circumstances of occupation are key to highlighting the importance not of those circumstances, but instead, of their impact. This chapter will argue that the similar collapse in masculine identities found in the different countries under consideration is best explained through the idea that it was the deconstruction of one's life, rather than the actual conditions of that life, which impacted most heavily on masculine identity. That is to say, the process of deconstruction which involved losing one's job, one's right to socialize in certain ways and ultimately to even walk in the street without fear of assault or deportation was of more significance to gender identities in this period than the distinctions between those lives such as wealth, location or degrees of assimilation.

German troops entered western Poland on 1 September 1939 and very quickly pushed east crossing the Bug river in a matter of days, forcing a formal Polish capitulation on 27 September. This was swiftly followed by the imposition of the terms of the Molotov-Ribbentrop agreement which saw the Germans withdraw to the western side of the Bug and the Russians move in to occupy its eastern banks. From September 1939 until June 1941, when Operation Barbarossa began, those Jews east of the Bug lived very different lives from those on its western banks. Life under the Communists was not easy for Jews: persecution on the grounds of religion and class was not uncommon, and the situation was further complicated by the large numbers of Jewish refugees from the west stranded in eastern Poland placing a strain on already limited resources, and later by Russian deportations of Jewish and gentile Poles to Central Asia. Nevertheless, Jews throughout the area managed to live relatively stable and secure lives and write off the period as distasteful but not damaging in the way that German occupation had briefly been and would become again after 1941. When the Germans did invade eastern Poland, ghettoisation and labour camps were already well established in the west and were therefore quickly imposed on the larger cities and towns in the east, whilst smaller ones were almost immediately rid of their Jewish populations. For many of those Jews who lived east of the Bug this interim period of deconstruction was therefore extremely brief, their lives instead changing suddenly from straitened stability under the Russians to complete destruction after the German (re)invasion.

In contrast, for Jews who remained west of the Bug, or returned there after the division of Poland, the period of deconstruction was protracted, beginning with the German invasion and lasting until the establishment of ghettoisation, something which did not reach all cities until late 1940 and beyond. The intervening year or more comprised some of the most random and yet extremely violent and disruptive experiences for European Jewry under occupation and is therefore key to understanding the perhaps disproportionate impact it had upon Jewish gender identity and masculinities. This argument builds upon a strong body of scholarship which sees the Polish experience as key to understanding later developments in Europe both in the context of genocide and more generally and includes the work of Rossino who argues for the “historical importance of the Polish campaign”,¹⁷⁰ stressing the origins of racio-biological identification of “political and ideological enemies” in the Polish campaigns of 1939 rather than later in 1941 as is usually argued.¹⁷¹

Following a similar pattern to western Poland, Belgium and its Jewish population experienced a rapid occupation followed by a long period of deconstruction and a late shift towards internment and deportations to camps. During some two weeks in May 1940 Germany occupied Belgium. Whilst some Jews had fled Belgium, predominantly to France, with many returning almost immediately, most remained in Belgium and, at least initially and within limits, with their freedom. The deconstruction that followed was a contrast to that experienced in Poland and lacked the extremes of violence and humiliation that became commonplace in the East. Through 1940 and 1941 Belgian Jewry experienced increasing ostracism, unemployment, humiliation and confinement and by 1942 deportations to camps in the East via holding camps in Belgium had begun, with the first transport from Malines to Auschwitz in August of 1942 representing the beginning of destruction in Belgium.

Again in contrast to the occupation experienced by the Jewish population of Belgium before 1942, Jews living in Holland endured an occupation more closely resembling the severity and barbarity of that of Western Poland with their swift invasion followed closely by immediate and severe restrictions on the lives of Jews culminating in the establishment of an internment camp at Westerbork from where Dutch Jews were deported. Finally, the experiences of French Jewry were quite different again from those of Jews in the other countries in question. The German invasion began in June 1940

¹⁷⁰ Alexander Rossino, *Hitler Strikes Poland: Blitzkrieg, Ideology and Atrocity* (Lawrence, KA: University Press of Kansas, 2003), p.xiii.

¹⁷¹ Rossino, *Hitler Strikes Poland*, p.xv.

when over half of French Jews fled to the South, the unoccupied zone, leaving around 120,000 in Paris and the occupied North. In the South, although some limitations on work and movement were imposed, relative stability endured for some time and might almost be seen to mirror the experiences of Jews in Eastern Poland. Despite the ultimate fate of the Head of the UGIF (*L'Union générale des israélites de France*), Raymond Raoul Lambert, and the strong antisemitism of the Vichy regime, the South was able for some time to use its position to defend Jews in both the occupied and free zones. In the North, Aryanisation and restrictions began from 1940 onwards, however, by mid-1941 the mass internment, and ultimate deportations, of Jews had begun, culminating, when such moves were only just beginning elsewhere in Western Europe, in July 1942 with the Vel d'Hiv roundups.¹⁷²

All of the countries which this thesis considers experienced different occupations. In each case German intentions combined with different levels of compliance and power to ensure very different lives for Jewish inhabitants. In almost every case Jewish companies were Aryanised, curfews were imposed, Jewish associations were closed and Jews were randomly humiliated and assaulted. The speed and severity with which this was done varied greatly between countries and even cities but this chapter will strongly argue that these differences were largely irrelevant when compared with the fact that each country experienced a period of deconstruction and confusion during which the totality of Nazi intentions had not become clear. This process gradually and consistently diminished and eroded the lives of those Jews who experienced it, a significant factor in the collapse of masculine identities ultimately linked to a failure to perform the normative identities towards which they oriented themselves.

Environment

As important as the normative and individual elements of masculinity, which this chapter will go on to consider, is the impact that a broader gendering of society can have upon masculinities. By 'gendering of society' I mean to suggest that a given society might actively encourage or discourage behaviours which were commonly understood to be characteristically gendered, either male or female. Where a society encourages behaviours in men which those men understand to be feminine, I shall argue that it can produce an internal contradiction for gender identities: either men continue to

¹⁷² Yehuda Bauer, *A History of the Holocaust* (New York: Franklin Watts, 2001), p.253.

behave in ways they see as masculine, and risk being condemned for doing so, or they must behave as society expects, in a way they consider feminine, and risk undermining their own masculinity. It is just such a feminisation of society that I shall argue took place during the deconstruction with deleterious effects upon the ability of men to perform their masculinities.

Generally in pre-war European society, an association can be found linking masculinity to 'action' and femininity to 'passivity', a division which applied to all spheres of life from the work place, the social arena and politics to household management and relationships.¹⁷³ During the deconstruction, however, this association was turned on its head as the Nazi occupation, and the antisemitism and persecution that it imposed and encouraged, appeared specifically to target men. Initial physical assaults were directed principally at men, whilst the early roundups, both of political enemies and to co-opt forced labour, were entirely comprised of men. Examples of this gendered persecution are myriad but many reflect Kotlar's clear statement when Germans arrived at her door that, "the bandits were more interested in men than in women"¹⁷⁴ and her reflection that, "[i]t crossed the minds of many of our women how much easier it would have been if only our men had been women".¹⁷⁵ This opinion is mirrored by Jacob Frank who comments, "[w]e figure this way: the women and the children, what interest would they have to harm them? But with the men, the Nazis will do what they want to do",¹⁷⁶ and Donat who wrote of his wife, "Lena was sure the Germans would be vicious, but what could happen to women and children?"¹⁷⁷ This belief in the relative safety of women compared to men in Poland is also reflected in cases in the West including Fania Freich who, living in Paris, hid her husband when the Germans came, an act which ultimately led to her own internment and that of her children¹⁷⁸ and in the shock expressed by Albert Hipzmann when he writes,

¹⁷³ Contradicting this, some might argue that in Jewish families where women commonly worked with, or occasionally even in lieu of, their husbands, this might not be the case, however, Hyman has convincingly shown that many Jewish families, even in the more traditional East, were, by this time, aspiring to bourgeois formations of the family, with male breadwinners and decision makers and increasingly passive, child-oriented women, even where realities continued to dictate that both parents work to support the family. Paula E. Hyman, 'Gender and the Jewish Family in Modern Europe' in Ofer and Weitzman, eds., *Women in the Holocaust*, p.27.

¹⁷⁴ Helen Kotlar, *We Live in a Grave* (New York: Shengold, 1980), p.33.

¹⁷⁵ Kotlar, *We Live in a Grave*, p.17.

¹⁷⁶ Mark Lewis and Jacob Frank, *Himmler's Jewish Tailor: The Story of the Holocaust Survivor Jacob Frank* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2000), p.28. Similarly, Rena Zabiela looked after her father, hiding him or protesting that he was ill when the Germans came to their home. The family assumption that women were safe and men were not seems, in this case, to have been sustained since she was not hurt (that we know of) and her father remained safe, (IWM – Rena Zabiela – 17369-4).

¹⁷⁷ Alexander Donat, *The Holocaust Kingdom* (New York: The Holocaust Library, 1978), p.4.

¹⁷⁸ Fania Freich quoted in David Boder, *I Did Not Interview the Dead* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1949), p.64.

“[o]n avait aussi entendu dire qu’à Metz des allemands avaient arrêté des femmes et des enfants, mais cela apparaissait impossible à croire pour tout le monde”.¹⁷⁹

Perhaps even more important than its practical implications, this gendered persecution neatly conformed to perceptions, held by Jews throughout Europe, that men were under greater threat in times of war in general and, specifically, to antisemitic assaults, than women. This elision of perception and reality confirmed for Jewish communities the importance of focusing their protective efforts on men and resulted in two main responses, also both targeted towards men: faced with economic and social hardship, notably Aryanisation and limited movement, Jewish communities and individuals largely opted for compliance rather than direct resistance; faced with physical hardship, specifically assault, humiliation and roundups for labour, communities encouraged men to hide or flee. Moreover, as this compliance and inactivity was considered to offer the best possible chance of survival, attempts to fight back or protest, particularly unorganised attempts, were condemned as deleterious both to the conditions of the individual and the community. Such was the strength of belief in the compliant approach in Holland that the General Strike called in 1941 in support of Dutch Jewry (the only gentile uprising of its kind during the Holocaust) was put down by the Jewish community in fear of reprisals.

This approach to persecution, adopted almost universally across Europe by Jewish societies which had endured centuries of antisemitic persecution and understood this to be their best hope for survival, effectively forced men into positions of extreme passivity: obeying, hiding and running. Whilst many men resisted this leaning strongly, with sources overwhelmingly showing women and children forcing men to accept their protection rather than men requesting it,¹⁸⁰ ultimately, the combined impact of understanding assault as predominantly targeting men, both a reality and a misconception of Nazi intent, and the imposition of passive, feminine, behaviours, adopted by many, if not most, men at some point, established the damaging, gendered environment in which the

¹⁷⁹ "We had also heard that in Metz the Germans had been arresting women and children, but not everybody could bring themselves to believe it". Albert Hipzman brother of Marcel in Marcel Hipzman, *Souvenirs d'enfance de Marcel: Un enfant dans la guerre* (unpublished, 2003), p.10, shown to me by the author in Paris, September 2010.

¹⁸⁰ Bernstein (Bernstein, S., 'I was a Refugee in Oppressed Dereczin' in Jacob Berger, ed., *The Dereczin Memorial Book: A Book of Remembrances Honoring the Communities of Dereczin, Halinka, Kolonia-Sinaiska* (Mahwah, NJ: Jacob Berger, 2000)), is one very clear example of this.

Holocaust took place. Becoming the targets of violent antisemitic persecution, Jewish men were at once emasculated as victims, and again as passive, feminised, victims.

In understanding the impact of targeted persecution upon Jewish men it is also worth considering the argument made by Dalia Ofer and others, that some women were empowered by the gendered nature of persecution. Whilst their spouses became more and more constrained in their actions, many women, it is argued, not feeling the same threat, instead used their altered circumstances to assert their own position, both within the family and the community. In this vein Ofer argues that, “[m]any [women] testified that the new situation, in which the men were more often endangered and abused than the women, filled them with courage and a sense of mission. It was now their responsibility to take care of the family.”¹⁸¹ One example of this empowerment can be seen in *Born Jewish*, the biography of Marcel Liebman who spent the Holocaust in Antwerp with his family, which describes his father’s initially strong reaction to becoming unemployed - finding alternative work and ways of making money where possible. Whilst this was the case Liebman describes his mother as “obliterated” and “negated”, however once her husband began to decline, becoming depressed by his inability to act, Liebman’s mother came into her own and is clearly described as getting stronger and taking control.¹⁸² This argument leads one to speculate as to whether the inverse might also be true – that empowered women further increased the likelihood of men becoming disempowered and depressed – suggesting an alternative way of understanding the emasculation experienced in the period. Limited source material makes drawing any conclusion on this question virtually impossible, nonetheless this argument makes an interesting contribution to understanding the outcomes of gender specific persecution and environmental changes on male and female gender identities.

The detailed impact on Jewish men of the gendering of society through passivity and inactivity can be best understood by considering the ways in which men write about action, a theme which is notable for the frequency with which it is referenced in accounts and diaries. Primo Levi closely links a failure to act with 'shame', something he writes about at length in his work, *The Drowned and the Saved*, concluding that the shame which arose for many Jews after the Holocaust came directly from having failed to act. In contrast such shame very rarely came from action, even action which did not

¹⁸¹ Dalia Ofer, ‘Gender Issues in Dairies and Testimonies of the Ghetto: The Case of Warsaw’ in Ofer and Weitzman, eds., *Women in the Holocaust*, p.147.

¹⁸² Marcel Liebman, *Born Jewish: A Childhood in Occupied Europe* (London: Verso, 2005), p.13.

ultimately have a positive outcome.¹⁸³ In explaining this theory Levi comments, “[i]t was the same shame which we knew so well, which submerged us after the selections, and every time we had to witness or undergo an outrage: the shame that the Germans never knew, the shame which the just man experiences when confronted by a crime committed by another, and he feels remorse because of its existence, because of its having been irrevocably introduced into the world of existing things, and because his will has proven nonexistent or feeble and was incapable of putting up a good defense.”¹⁸⁴ This idea of inactivity as shaming is born out in numerous other testimonies including that by Abe Mohnblum who, in an interview soon after the Holocaust, when discussing watching a man being beaten by a *Kapo*, commented, “I couldn’t do a thing. I couldn’t open my mouth. It does something to a person. It does something to a bystander more than to the one who is actually beaten.”¹⁸⁵

Whilst both of these sources refer directly to the camps and therefore lie outside the remit of this thesis, they eloquently describe an approach to action which is mirrored in the deconstruction. Writing of this period, Friedländer records his father’s deep depression and the reality that, “[d]oubtless the worse thing of all in those days was to go on waiting, reduced to complete passivity. What could my father have done?...Nothing depended on him now. A safer hiding place depended on the good will of others, as did fleeing the country.”¹⁸⁶ This shame at inactivity is also clearly reflected in the responses men were forced to make in public when confronting their German occupiers. Another topic I shall discuss in more detail when writing about loss of status, the wearing of stars and the doffing of hats, which were both seen as passive responses: passive in the sense that it would have taken more action to resist them than to concede. Both had a significantly damaging effect on male gender identities. Moreover, the great pride that a few men took in ignoring or actively defying these instructions, casts light on the way in which even limited, and often self-destructive, action could alleviate the shame of passivity.

¹⁸³ Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, p.58. Levi particularly writes about shame emanating from a failure to act, in this case to help a friend, but rarely from actions, even ones which damaged others - such as stealing bread. He also describes how gentle prisoners were able to escape the shame because they had enough power in the camp structure to act.

¹⁸⁴ Emphasis my own. Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, p.54.

¹⁸⁵ Abe Mohnblum in Boder, *I Did Not Interview the Dead*, p.109.

¹⁸⁶ Saul Friedländer, *When Memory Comes* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1979), p.55.

As well as being the chosen response of the Jewish community, gendered inactivity was also imposed by the Nazi regime as it occupied cities and took over their administration. For the Jewish community at large restrictions were introduced daily to close down organisations, limit movement and diminish association and, whilst the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (Joint) continued to function during the deconstruction, for the most part the institutions and establishments of the Jewish community were destroyed. Schools and libraries were closed, political organisations abolished, Jewish industry appropriated and social networks scattered. Not only did these changes impose inactivity, but they impacted predominantly on Jewish men, who were more significantly involved in such institutions. Through the closing of political and social groups, men were again forced into passive behaviours they would have understood to be feminine. Yitzhak Katznelson's experiences are one example of the impact of inactivity through loss of association. An active poet heavily involved in Polish-Jewish cultural life, the German invasion and the ensuing inactivity led to crippling depression for Katznelson, something he was only able to escape after the establishment of the ghetto and his involvement with Dror, a Jewish underground organisation, which inspired his return to writing.¹⁸⁷

One final element of the shame of passivity relevant to this discussion of the deconstruction is found in the capacity to reflect upon one's circumstances. Levi writes that his shame was worst on Sundays, since that was the day when work was reduced and the camp inmates had more time to reflect upon their actions, "[c]oming out of the darkness", he wrote, "one suffered because of the reacquired consciousness of having been diminished".¹⁸⁸ Again if we apply this to the deconstruction, one might argue that continuing to live within one's old society, community and home, whilst the bulwarks of that society are demolished, could lead to a similar reflectivity. Jewish men in this period were more likely to be at home and unemployed than in earlier or later years, allowing ample time for reflection on their own inactivity and the changes in their lives.

The importance of action in sustaining masculinity is further emphasised if we consider that those Jews who were able to remain active often cite that activity as being of importance in sustaining their strength and reference it specifically when discussing behaviours which might be directly associated

¹⁸⁷ Yitzhak Katznelson, *Vittel Diary* (Tel Aviv: Ghetto Fighters' House/Beit Lohamei Haghetot, 1972), p.17.

¹⁸⁸ Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, p.56.

with male gender identity. Moshe Flinker, writing during the Holocaust, observed that activity was necessary to “better my soul or to elevate my spirit”.¹⁸⁹ Flinker’s privileged situation living in Belgium during the deconstruction enabled him to continue to be active, remaining in education, regularly discussing employment and developing ideas for life after the war. Later, having decided to be a statesman once the Holocaust had ended, before changing his mind, Flinker commented, “I now understand that ideas and thoughts are worthless if one cannot convert them into action”.¹⁹⁰ In contrast, during periods of imposed inactivity Flinker clearly recorded bouts of depression. Raymond-Raoul Lambert, living in the free zone of France, was rare in his success at using the occupation to increase his capacity to act, becoming a key player in the French Jewish community as president of the UGIF until his deportation and death in October 1943. Whilst working for the Jewish community Lambert retained his freedom of movement and his power and ability to affect events. The impact of this ability to act is clear throughout his diary but particularly in the winter of 1941 when he commented, “I am acting and that is what matters”.¹⁹¹ A few weeks later he wrote “[t]aking action is intoxicating and satisfying.”¹⁹² Importantly, Lambert often associated the ability to act with his role as a father and protector, reinforcing the connection between action and a strong male gender identity.

The significance of action, perhaps even despite its potential threat, is made particularly clear by Liebman and his brother who describe being called up for labour duty, showing masculine delight in their ability to act and commenting, “[t]here was an element of dread and a kind of pride in the excitement we felt. Yes, pride! And I’m sure my memory does not deceive me on this point. When my brother and I paid a visit to some friends that afternoon to say goodbye to them, we quite openly and without inhibition displayed an air of resolve, a martial demeanour, as if we were obeying a call-up order that turned us into soldiers fighting for a noble cause. I can picture myself walking along the street next to Henri, at a marching pace, admiring my brother’s calmness and determined to emulate him by remaining steadfast in the face of the test to come.”¹⁹³ Even in dire circumstances the elision of action, physicality and martial behaviour, was enough to encourage masculine strength. Of course, examples such as these are limited and those men who managed to retain or increase their power or

¹⁸⁹ Moshe Flinker, *Young Moshe’s Diary. The Spiritual Torment of a Jewish Boy in Nazi Europe* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1971), p.24.

¹⁹⁰ Flinker, *Young Moshe’s Diary*, p.88.

¹⁹¹ Raymond Raoul Lambert, *Diary of a Witness 1940-1943* (Chicago, IL: Ivan R Dee, 2005), p.79.

¹⁹² Lambert, *Diary of a Witness 1940-1943*, p.93.

¹⁹³ Liebman, *Born Jewish*, p.44.

ability to act in this period are few; nonetheless, those who did, even for a brief time, clearly saw it as an important element in sustaining their identity and strength, reinforcing the idea that an inability to act would have had the opposite effect. For the most part, however, the initial targeted persecution of men, leading to the imposition of passivity by Jewish families and communities, combined with the destruction of Jewish institutions which accompanied occupation, forced men into positions of passivity and inaction which conflicted with their traditional ideas of male gender identity as active and created the damaging and emasculating gendered environment in which the deconstruction took place.

Normative Masculinities

Whilst the gendered environment is important in understanding the impact of the Holocaust on masculinities, it was the inability of Jewish men during the deconstruction to perform the normative identities towards which they had previously oriented themselves that had the most damaging impact upon masculinities during the Holocaust. Whilst each Jewish man's ability to orient himself towards normative masculine identities was particular, affected by his work and continued potential to earn money, his status within the community and his ability to protect his family, it is hard to escape the conclusion that ostracism, Aryanisation and assault made it virtually impossible for most men to attempt to perform any normative identity during the deconstruction. Ultimately, although some men succeeded in mitigating the damage to their ability to perform their normative masculinities, very few managed to avoid it altogether: the outcome of which is the subject of this chapter.

Amongst the core elements of gender identity which made up masculinity, and key to the normative identities I have outlined, the capacity to provide (hereafter provision) seems to have presented many of the most immediate and obvious problems for Jewish masculinity during the deconstruction. Performed primarily through employment and financial support of families, provision reinforced masculinity through the feeding, clothing and housing of one's family and confirmed for the individual his own status and success in the degree of comfort he was able to afford. As Nazi Germany occupied countries across Europe, however, the combination of Aryanisation of Jewish businesses and the ban placed on Jews working in the professions resulted in the immediate impoverishment of families and the impossibility of adequate provision. The damage caused by this situation was

exacerbated by the realities of Jewish trade: whilst large numbers of Polish Jews owned factories, less than half employed more than five men, compared with 93 percent of non-Jewish factories.¹⁹⁴ Instead, the Jewish economy comprised primarily small cottage industries which, rather than hiring outside assistance, often employed their own family members. In such a work climate, the Aryanisation of one business could damage the material wealth of several related families whilst also removing the possibility of reliance on one's close community for financial support. For those men who did not own their own businesses the Nazi occupation was equally damaging. As lawyers, doctors, teachers and other professionals were forced to give up practice, first being barred from working for gentiles and later altogether, they were left with no means to make money or to support their families.

Whilst these policies impacted upon all members of Jewish families, the immediate effect was most keenly felt by breadwinners who, as the people upon whom the onus of provision generally rested, were most exposed to the immediate ramifications of unemployment. Joanna Dobschiner writes of her father, who had previously run his own company in Germany, going out every day in Amsterdam failing to find work; she notes his unsuccessful return on many nights, "a beaten, tired, human being".¹⁹⁵ Similarly, Abram Lancman records his father's collapse after the decline of his business, a decline closely linked to the appropriation of property and goods essential to its successful functioning. Lancman's sister was forced to take over running the family business and when she did so, Abram records that she "understood immediately the extent of our father's embarrassment, the depth of his grief and the reason for his collapse".¹⁹⁶ This quotation highlights not only the impact of unemployment and disenfranchisement upon men but more significantly the extent to which even their families were sheltered from the full impact of deconstruction.

One should be careful, however, not to over-emphasise the impact of Aryanisation and loss of work on the capacity of Jewish men to continue to provide. In some cases business owners were able to use Aryanisation to establish a sustainable way of providing for their families: many men hid tools and materials in order to sell them or to continue working clandestinely, whilst others donated goods, or even entire businesses, to particular gentile families in exchange for later support, hiding goods or

¹⁹⁴ Polonsky, *The Jews in Poland and Russia*, p.62.

¹⁹⁵ Johanna-Ruth Dobschiner, *Selected to Live* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 2000), p.17.

¹⁹⁶ Abram Lancman, *Youth in the Time of the Holocaust* (Warsaw: Rytm, 2005), p.35.

people, or for financial benefit.¹⁹⁷ Similarly, those men in the professions who were barred from working did not all simply cease to provide, instead many were resourceful in finding ways to earn money by working privately, often on the black market, or by selling possessions. Liebman's father continued to make money through small-time trading, despite losing his job, and his success clearly represents a key element of his own strength and morale.¹⁹⁸ Nevertheless, whilst it is important to note the sustained efforts men made to perform this element of their masculine identity, in most cases replacement work and provision was limited and temporary, and the overall impact of Aryanisation and the de-registration of professionals was disastrous for Jewish men attempting to provide for their families and thereby to their masculine identities.

The second key element of masculinity, the capacity to protect (hereafter protection), primarily one's wife and family, much like provision, was rendered almost impossible under Nazi occupation. During the deconstruction, particularly in the West, instances of murder or deportation of family members were less common than they would become. For many, therefore, the focus of protection was from roundups for forced labour and public assault, both of which occurred in every country under study and were common in some places. For the most part men were unable to protect themselves or male relatives from this threat and, although attacks on women were comparatively few, this reality had more to do with women being targeted less than men than with men being able to defend or protect them. When assaults did occur, both on men and women, there was little that other men could do to stop them – occasionally bribes were used to free sons from custody or to distract marauding soldiers or policemen from assaulting people in the home, however a lack of work made money limited in such cases and bribes often risked increasing the anger of the assailant – and the impact of such impotence upon male gender identities was significant.

Assaults on women when they came, moreover, often occurred when men were out of the home and more than one example exists of Germans knocking on a door, only for the men to flee and the women to become victims of assault.¹⁹⁹ Although these records tend to be written by women, and therefore we lack a male perspective on such events, we can imagine that such a series of events

¹⁹⁷ Examples of this are numerous but include the fathers of Roman Halter (IWM - Roman Halter – 17183/17) Ben Helfgott (IWM - Ben Helfgott – 9165/20) and Lili Pohlmann (IWM - Lili Pohlmann – 17340/18).

¹⁹⁸ Liebman, *Born Jewish*, p.13.

¹⁹⁹ Barbara Stimler records that when the Germans came her father fled, her mother was then beaten and she was sexually assaulted (IWM - Barbara Stimler – 17475/5).

was catastrophic for the masculinity of any man forced to flee, both by his own fear of persecution considered already but also by his wife's pressure to protect himself for the sake of herself and her children.²⁰⁰ Frank describes just such a case in which the Germans arrived prepared to appropriate the materials from his tailor's workshop.²⁰¹ Frank records his wife saying, "Officer, you can do with me anything what you want-but my husband, he is the father of my two children...if you'll do that to him something [sic] he would not be able to feed my kids."²⁰² Whilst a quotation such as this suggests that a continued belief existed in the ability of men to protect their families, it also highlights the incredible pressure placed upon Jewish men in this period to perform a task which was out of their hands. Ultimately, therefore, to the extent to which it relied upon an ability to protect one's dependents, the capacity of men to perform their normative masculine identities was largely voided, with an incalculable impact on masculinities.

Significantly, however, in very few cases did this clear inability to protect their families lead men to stop attempting to do so. Rather, the importance placed on attempting to protect, even where they could not hope to have any real impact, is clearly shown by the numbers of men who returned from relative safety, predominantly in the East, in order to defend their families. As the Germans invaded Poland, large groups of Jewish men fled east across the Dnieper and Bug rivers into areas of Poland they believed would be safe from German invasion. Initially a response to calls by the Polish government for men to regroup in the East for a counter offensive, this exodus became a way for men to protect themselves and attempt to establish new lives which might later allow their families to join them.²⁰³ However, for many men the act of abandoning their families became too much and numerous men returned, often from relative security, in order to fulfill what they saw as their duty to protect. In exactly this way Alexander Bronowski reached safety and applied for his wife to join him.

²⁰⁰ Katznelson is one clear example of this. He fled to Warsaw from Łódź because his wife begged him to do so (Katznelson, *Vittel Diary*, p.15).

²⁰¹ Lewis and Frank, *Himmler's Jewish Tailor*, p.28.

²⁰² Lewis and Frank, *Himmler's Jewish Tailor*, p.28.

²⁰³ Whilst this massive displacement of Polish and Jewish-Polish men has been written about by numerous historians it has most commonly been analysed from the perspective of those women left behind. Historians of gender have tended to argue that this movement of people shows the transfer of responsibility for caring and protection from men onto women, regularly ignoring, however, the impact of such a move, often made unwillingly, upon the men themselves. Many of these men struggled hard to establish new, safer lives, the only aim of which was to bring their families out of danger. One example of this is Kruk who fled Warsaw for Vilnius where he received a visa to go to the USA, however he refused to leave until his wife could join him, by which time it was too late to leave and they both died in the Holocaust (Herman Kruk, *The Last Days of the Jerusalem of Lithuania. Chronicles from the Vilna Ghetto and the camps, 1939-44* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002)).

Her application was rejected, as was his subsequent application to return to Poland, so he instead arranged to return illegally.²⁰⁴ Similarly, Frank reached safety in Russia before choosing to return on the basis that security for himself alone had little value²⁰⁵ and Donat, who fled to Russia, returned for his wife who refused to leave and then fled again, returned for a second time commenting in language clearly denoting its relevance to his masculinity, "I was there to stand and fall with them [his wife and son], to shield and protect".²⁰⁶ For many men in the West, however, rejoining one's family in an attempt to provide such protection was less relevant since, in many cases, Holland, Belgium and France had been the country to which the family had fled together initially, and onward escape was often impossible due to a lack of documents and passports.

Where all else failed, for some men, attempts to die or be deported with their families were a final attempt at protection. Following the occupation of Lvov, Leon Wells was arrested along with many of the town's men, including his own father, and taken to a sports field where the men were separated into groups, his group being taken to a cellar and viciously beaten. When Wells regained consciousness the first thing he claims to have seen was his father's face; having heard screams from the cellar, and assuming the boys were being killed, his father had volunteered to join the group in order to die with his son.²⁰⁷ Similarly, when Liebman's brother was arrested in Antwerp and taken to a holding camp for deportation his father ordered the whole family to pack their belongings so that they might all report for deportation together. Although his father ultimately decided against such a course of action, the instinct to die together, or at least to enter the unknown together, was clearly a protective one.

Individual attempts to protect families were also made by innumerable Jewish men in whatever way was offered by their circumstances. Kroh describes surviving the Vel D'Hiv roundup in Paris because her father was a Prisoner-of-War in World War I and still received some special treatment in the form of food and protection.²⁰⁸ Also exercising his position within the gentile community Liebman's father, early in the occupation, decided that something had to be done to protect his own family and Belgian Jewry. To this end he organised an audience with the queen, which he was granted, and although his

²⁰⁴ Alexander Bronowski, *They were Few* (New York: Lang, 1991), p.4.

²⁰⁵ Lewis and Frank, *Himmler's Jewish Tailor*, p.33.

²⁰⁶ Donat, *Holocaust Kingdom*, p.5.

²⁰⁷ Leon Wells, *The Janowska Road* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1978), p.39.

²⁰⁸ Aleksandra Kroh, *Lucien's Story: A Memoir* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1993), p.2.

efforts were ultimately unsuccessful, they were nonetheless clearly significant both to himself and to his son.²⁰⁹ Whilst these examples largely reflect the futility of continued attempts to protect one's family, they also show the importance of those attempts. Liebman records his father being lifted from depression when he was "restored to his duties as head of the family – to which he attached such extraordinary importance..."²¹⁰ and the complete collapse of the masculinity of Liebman's father came, both in his son's eyes and in his own, only when he sent his children away to stay in hiding and "ceased to be [their] protector".²¹¹ Nevertheless, these numerous individual attempts to continue to protect should not distract one from the harsh reality that, for most Jewish men, the ability to protect was barely an option to attempt, let alone something at which they might succeed. Furthermore, the fact that both of these examples come from Western Europe clearly illustrates the greater capacity that many men in the West had to act during the initial phases of persecution when compared to Jewish men in Poland.

The final element of masculinism significant to understanding the inability of many Jewish men to perform the normative gender identities toward which they oriented themselves, was status; not that status was marked in the same way for all men, but that for all men status had significant gender implications. Status questions are also, however, the most complicated element of masculinism to identify since, more than protection or provision, status impacted not only upon gender identities but on racial, religious and class identities amongst others. I would argue, nonetheless, that those elements of status which seem most clearly to be related, for example, to religion, might also interact with question of racial or class identity. Exactly representing this overlapping of identities Pivnik writes of his uncle, "[he] had been a handsome man – I remember the photographs – but now he was an elder of the town, with a beard to match. He had status; we boys knew that."²¹² As beards acted as signifiers of multiple identities and positions, the public cutting of beards during the Holocaust can be seen both as a humiliation of the individual's religious status and identity, but also, and exactly because of their religious significance, as an assault on the masculine identity and social status of the men who wore them.

²⁰⁹ Liebman, *Born Jewish*, p.47.

²¹⁰ Liebman, *Born Jewish*, p.94.

²¹¹ Liebman, *Born Jewish*, p.113.

²¹² Pivnik, *Survivor*, p.8.

The point during the deconstruction at which these broader questions of status became particularly significant to issues of masculinity can most clearly be seen in the relationship between loss of status and public space: where public space had previously offered an area of male domination in which men, Jewish or otherwise, had conducted male homosocial interaction and formed and asserted their status and position, the deconstruction saw the loss of ownership of that space, with rules of conduct being imposed from above and the alienation of Jews from within that space. Living in Amsterdam Samuel Shryver summarised the severity of this shift in his comment that, “[t]hey [Jews] were not allowed to participate or to do anything that had to do with the public...”,²¹³ whilst the impact of the loss of public space can be seen in Kaplan’s reference to the “excommunication” of men from their “legitimate social or moral community”²¹⁴. This impact was then exacerbated by the numerous humiliations which took place within the space that Jewish men had formerly felt to be their own.

The initial alienation from the public place came for Jewish men soon after occupation as bans were placed upon walking on the pavement or using certain types of public transport and in many countries curfews were placed on the movements of Jewish men and women altogether. Dominance in the street shifted from being gendered to being racial and with it the status of those Jewish men who had previously asserted their status in the public space was diminished. This is something which Kaplan notes repeatedly in his diary and is reflected in the comments of Josef Katz that, “...walking by myself I feel excluded from human society. The streets are poorly paved, and the puddles and garbage make it hard to walk on the cobblestones. I wonder how it feels to be walking up there on the sidewalk?”²¹⁵ Ringelblum also makes repeated references to Jewish men being forced to walk in the street rather than on the pavements, a repetition which attests to the importance this appropriation of space had for those who experienced it.²¹⁶ The damage caused by this loss of domination and space was, however, exacerbated by the loss of interaction which occurred in the streets as men ceased to find the space secure enough to conduct such relationships. As a means of establishing, advancing and proving one's status and manly credentials this homosocial interaction was a key element of gender performance, and its loss had a significant impact upon masculinities, particularly when

²¹³ Shoah Foundation Interview with Samuel Schryver (found at sf.usc.edu and viewed repeatedly between 01/01/2013 and 20/12/13).

²¹⁴ Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair*, p.5.

²¹⁵ Josef Katz, *One who came back: The Diary of a Jewish Survivor* (Takoma Park, MD: Dryad Press, 2006), p.86.

²¹⁶ Ringelblum, *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto*, p.69.

combined with the closing of Jewish institutions – traditionally the other site of male homosocial relations.

Although managed at different speeds in the countries in question, in all cases Nazi occupation regimes chose to close down Jewish organisations and institutions. The involvement of Jewish men in political parties, whether specifically Jewish or not, were early casualties of occupation, as were cultural organisations such as orchestras, Jewish theatres and male clubs designed for leisure and sports. For younger men the exclusion from higher education, a space clearly used for developing masculine identities whether through intellectual achievement, sporting prowess or simply socialisation, was critical, whilst the closing of Jewish schools impacted indirectly on Jewish men as they lost a means through which to assert their position in the Jewish community. This point is expanded by Zuckerman who explains in his *Chronicle of the Warsaw Ghetto* that sending one's children to religious school was, for many, not a testament to religious commitment but instead a means of proving and sustaining one's place within society.²¹⁷ Ultimately, the numerous limitations placed on Jewish involvement in public space, in all its many guises, particularly when combined with the loss of work spaces which also represented sites of male status and interaction, left men either using public space, but risking assault, humiliation, alienation and the loss of status that necessarily accompanied those experiences, or confined to the home, away from their traditional space of domination and at risk of depression.²¹⁸

The stress placed in accounts by Polish-Jewish men on efforts to move east in order to rejoin the army, or to involve themselves in public defence, provides another way of understanding the importance of being associated with society through public action. On this subject Mary Berg referenced her uncle walking from city to city looking for his army regiment²¹⁹ whilst Perechodnik was keen to note that he, his brother and his father all tried to enlist when Germany invaded Poland.²²⁰ The preponderance of accounts in Yiskor books written by young men is also not unrelated to the fact that many of them fled east to join the army and avoided ghettoisation. Amongst them Dr Asher

²¹⁷ Yitzhak Zuckerman, *A Surplus of Memory: Chronicle of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993), p.18.

²¹⁸ Exactly how this affected different Jewish men depended on their levels of assimilation and exclusion from society and is something I will consider later in the chapter.

²¹⁹ Mary Berg, *The Diary of Mary Berg: Growing up in the Warsaw Ghetto* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2006), p.2.

²²⁰ Perechodnik, *Am I a Murderer?*, p.1.

Heller recorded his flight east along with a group of town men in the Wald Yiskor book,²²¹ Bernstein fled from Łódź to Dereczin with his father and brother²²² and Eisenberg fled Szydłowiec in a group of men and, although they did not attempt to join the army, Eisenberg is keen to note his respect for and support of their efforts, recording, “[o]nce in a while a truck drives by filled with armed Polish soldiers. Whenever that happens, the Jews jump up from their seats, remove their hats and greet the soldiers sincerely”.²²³ Later in the Holocaust Ringelblum recalls the heroism of Jewish troops in this early period in attempts to stop the German invasion, recording that, even when all the other soldiers in a battalion had fled, the Jews would stay.²²⁴

A similar emphasis on commitment to military and social involvement can be found in the numerous references made by those who did not flee, to efforts to join in civil defence, in particular ditch digging in Warsaw. Chaim Kaplan records joining efforts to build defences against the German invasion, noting that it was the first time he has ever done physical labour – interestingly this seems to have freed him briefly from earlier depression, showing the impact that such social involvement could have upon masculinity.²²⁵ Yitzhak Zuckerman and Marylou Ruhe, writing about her father, note similar actions²²⁶ and, beyond recording the building of city defences, these accounts often included some reference to a sense of camaraderie with the gentile Poles involved in the efforts. Finally Lancman records attempting to defend his building during bombardment, noting that he was aided by another Jewish man but that no one else was willing to risk their life in this way.²²⁷ Although one might argue that such comments seek to prove the involvement of Jews in order to rebut suggestions that they were separate from society or weak,²²⁸ it also seems important to Jewish men and their families to assert the homosocial bonds built up in this period as proof of masculine involvement and cohesion. This emphasis on the place of Jews in the public domain before the German victory contrasts sharply with their immediate eviction from that space once the Germans took power and can also be

²²¹ Dr. Asher Heller, ‘The Destruction of the Jewish Community of Rzeszow’ in Moshe Yari-Wald, ed., *Rzeszów Jews Memorial Book* (Tel Aviv: Rzeszower Societies in Israel and U.S.A, 1967), p.74.

²²² Bernstein, ‘I was a Refugee in Oppressed Dereczin’, p.213.

²²³ Motl Eisenberg, ‘Running From Death’ in Berl Kagan, ed., *Szydłowiec Memorial Book* (New York: Shidlowtzer Benevolent Association, 1989), p.166.

²²⁴ Ringelblum, *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto*, p.108.

²²⁵ Kaplan, *The Scroll of Agony*, p.2.

²²⁶ Yitzhak Zuckerman, *A Surplus of Memory*, p.6 and IWM - Marylou Ruhe – 17753/4.

²²⁷ Lancman, *Youth in the Time of the Holocaust*, p.22.

²²⁸ Perechodnik (Perechodnik, *Am I a Murderer?*, p.108) notes several stories about Jewish heroism during the struggle to stop the German invasion, suggesting that when all the other soldiers in a group would flee only the Jews would stay on to fight.

understood as a key example of how masculinity is formed and its importance: the loss of such a sense of masculine camaraderie and space clearly being seen as significant.

Despite their loss of dominance within the public space, Jewish men seem, nonetheless, to have continued to spend a good deal of time occupying that space, and it was in this limited occupation that the most damage to their status was done, through acts of humiliation. Many historians have suggested that during this period Jewish men were driven into their homes, both as a response to their own depression and to avoid humiliation, something made possible by unemployment and the fact that most shopping was done by women. However, whilst in many cases shopping may have been done by women, there are also enough examples of men going out to do the shopping and references to this being a male role for us to question assumptions in this respect. Although not in the area under consideration it is worth noting Victor Klemperer's comments that he did the grocery shopping because women could not get served in many of the shops (this is particularly notable in Klemperer's case since his wife was gentile). Similarly Castle Stanford, originally from Düsseldorf but residing in Holland, commented that men were visible in the streets as they were commonly doing the family shopping,²²⁹ and it is Mary Berg's father in Poland who queued in line for bread during an air-raid despite the fact that his wife, an American citizen, might have been afforded more protection in the event of an assault. Similarly, Kaplan, who was based in Warsaw, comments that men who had never before bought anything got up in the night to queue for food saying "[e]very important man now carries a bag full of potatoes on his back, and a live chicken or a duck in his hand"²³⁰ and Zyskind records her father coming home from the breadlines where men with beards were being pulled out and sent home.²³¹ Therefore, whilst acknowledging that many men in this period did lose work and stay at home, which was in itself damaging to their status and gender, the sustained nature of public humiliation to which Jewish men were subjected was only possible because of the continued and unavoidable presence of men in the streets.

Throughout the period of occupation, particularly in Poland and the East, ritual humiliations were visited upon Jewish men, by both Germans and gentile locals, during the time they spent unavoidably

²²⁹ Julius Castle Stanford, *Reflections: The Diary of a German-Jew in Hiding* (Oakland, OR: Institute for the Righteous Acts of the Judah L. Magnes Memorial Museum, 1965), p.32.

²³⁰ Kaplan, *The Scroll of Agony*, p.33.

²³¹ Zyskind, *Stolen Years*, p.27.

in public space. On a daily basis diaries and accounts from the Holocaust record examples of humiliation ranging from the wearing of the star and doffing of hats to forced dancing and singing in public and even the desecration of holy articles. In many of these cases the act of humiliation itself was not targeted towards gender identities, particularly obvious in cases which focused on religious symbols (including phylacteries, locks or scriptures) or sites, nonetheless, the collective impact of the multiple humiliations which most men endured or observed was to diminish the status of Jewish men, both as individuals and collectively, which necessarily altered the gender identities of those involved.

Some of the most frequently referenced, and clearly extremely damaging, humiliations visited upon Jewish men in this period were acts of obeisance to the Germans, chief amongst which was the forced doffing of hats. Kaplan recorded that “[s]ome psychopathic Nazi is demanding that every passer-by take his hat off in his honour. Many fled, many hid, many were caught for their transgression and beaten...”²³² whilst Ringelblum made repeated references to such events including the relatively innocuous note that, “[i]n Lublin the Jews have to take their hats off to the German guards”.²³³ These are just two examples of comments which can be found in almost all of the written and recorded accounts of the Holocaust. For many men the humiliation of tipping one's hat was so great that they would try to avoid it, often at great risk to their personal safety. Many also avoided the problem by not wearing a hat at all, an omission which, in this period and in the east in winter, would at the very least provoke a degree of surprise and even ridicule,²³⁴ and the fact that men continued to do this is testament to their need to avoid the extreme humiliation of the act. Not dissimilarly Michael Zylberberg noted that on returning to his village (Plock) he found that many men were refusing to leave their homes because they did not wish to salute the Germans²³⁵ – a rejection of obeisance which, in the circumstances, might seem disproportionate, unless we consider its indirect impact upon status and masculinities.

²³² Kaplan, *The Scroll of Agony*, p.135.

²³³ Ringelblum, *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto*, p.39.

²³⁴ “My father avoided this problem by never wearing a hat, not even on the coldest days of those terrible Polish winters. “Why give them the pleasure?” he would say when people called him a *meshoogene* (crazy man) for not wearing a hat.” Thomas Buergenthal, *A Lucky Child* (London: Profile Books, 2009), p.43. Likewise Susan Sinclair comments on the embarrassment of her father leaving the house without his hat on (Lyn Smith, *Forgotten Voices of the Holocaust* (London: Ebury Press, 2005), p. 54).

²³⁵ Michael Zylberberg, *A Warsaw Diary, 1939-1945* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1969), p.21.

Of course not all Jewish men found that forced obeisance diminished their status and, living in Warsaw when the Germans invaded, Szpilman recorded how his father went out of his way to find Germans and to greet them with exaggerated bows.²³⁶ Whilst this seems to have provided Szpilman's father with a degree of hard earned childlike pleasure, he is perhaps the exception that proves the rule. Both Szpilman and his brother had decided they could not bow to Germans, a decision which effectively placed them under house arrest avoiding the possibility of meeting a German, refusing to bow and the beating that would necessarily follow. Ultimately many men were beaten either for failing to doff their hat, or indeed for doffing them, and we cannot ignore the arbitrary violence that seemed to be linked to various acts of humiliation. Nonetheless most commonly referenced by men, and most humiliating for them, seems to be the doffing of the hat not the potential or actual violence attached to the act.

Also of particular note, and mentioned briefly already, was the undermining of status through the humiliating public cutting of beards and locks, although it is much more commonly referenced as having been seen happening to other men than written about as a personal experience, something which may indicate its shaming impact upon the individual.²³⁷ The large number of diaries and accounts written by younger beardless men or assimilated, and therefore also beardless, older men affect this; still, those accounts written by Jewish men who wore beards, even if not locks, still rarely reference personal experiences. The importance of haircutting to individuals can also be seen in Ringelblum's account of the abuse of several men held for days in a labour camp and assaulted. Despite a range of extreme treatments, and a very lengthy description of the ordeal, the central focus of Ringelblum's account is the cutting of the men's hair.²³⁸

The beard, and equally sidelocks, were first and foremost symbols of religion and for many men their cutting was a severe assault on their religious identity. However, they were also a symbol of masculinity, both specifically for Jews, since in many cases masculinity was linked to religious commitment, adulthood and even status within the religious community, and also for gentile masculine identities in this period, and an assault on the beard necessarily impacted upon both

²³⁶ Władysław Szpilman, *The Pianist. The Extraordinary Story of One Man's Survival in Warsaw, 1939-1945* (London: Phoenix, 2003), p.49.

²³⁷ For example Chaim Kaplan (Kaplan, *The Scroll of Agony*, p.36).

²³⁸ Ringelblum, *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto*, p.32.

religious and gender identities. Moreover Zyskind writes, simply the wearing of a beard diminished one's status since it instilled one with a fear and altered one's public behaviour, commenting, "[w]ell-known and respected Jews, whose bearded faces had never failed to arouse veneration, now slunk like shadows along the walls of houses, desperately trying to elude detection".²³⁹ Much as the refusal to shave was a religious one, the loss of position, freedom and status that came with this decision, and its impact upon how "well-known and respected" one was, clearly show its impact on identity questions broader than purely religious ones. Not only, therefore, was the removal of the beard itself humiliating, but living with a beard effectively in hiding or living without a beard after its removal would have been equally damaging and a constant reminder of one's diminished status and therefore diminished capacity to conform to any normative masculine identity.

In a similar way the use of 'Du' rather than 'Sie' by Germans when speaking to Jewish men seems to have been a cause of humiliation, however it is less commonly referenced than other humiliations (a lacuna which is likely linked to the frequency of such occurrences, but should also be understood within the geographic parameters of this thesis). German men who wrote accounts in this period very often reference such a humiliation of status, however, for reasons of language Polish men are less likely to do so. Those in Poland of German descent or who spoke Yiddish would have understood the slur, however Polish, French and Dutch speakers would not necessarily have been speaking German to their occupiers and therefore the distinction would not have been made. It is not unsurprising then, that references to this tend to be made by men born as Germans, regardless of where they were living by the time of the Holocaust. Nevertheless, where it is mentioned such humiliation shows a clear damage to the status of the individual. Men would have expected to be referred to as 'Sie' as a sign of respect for their age and position, and a refusal to address them as such, particularly by young German soldiers, would have been clearly disrespectful and an outright rejection of the status they felt they had earned.

The final humiliation impacting upon the question of status is the wearing of the Jewish star in public, referred to by Kaplan as his "badge of shame"²⁴⁰ and described by Kahane as the "branding" of Jews, in his comment that, "[t]he armband singled out its owner like an animal..."²⁴¹ Maurice White and his

²³⁹ Zyskind, *Stolen Years*, p.31.

²⁴⁰ Kaplan, *The Scroll of Agony*, p.53.

²⁴¹ Kahane, *Lvov Ghetto Diary*, p.9.

father, living in occupied Paris, found the shame so unbearable that they refused to wear their stars, choosing instead to leave behind their Mother/Wife and Sister/Daughter and move to the unoccupied zone where it was not worn at that time.²⁴² Although women also referenced the shame that they felt in wearing the star, it was men who extended this to seeing the star as representing their being owned by someone else, and who were most likely to have had particular trouble wearing it in public. Whilst in a few cases this gendered difference is tied to the ability of women to remove the star – there are more accounts of women doing this than men since they were less likely to look ‘Jewish’²⁴³ – in general women did wear their stars, and simply do not seem to write about humiliation in the same way as men. Similarly, although accounts written by women do occasionally reference the range of humiliations of status described above, they are overwhelmingly found in the accounts of men in the Holocaust.²⁴⁴

In a very different way, unemployment, already discussed at length, also impacted upon status and masculine identity since a man's job was often a significant element in defining his role within the community. Kruk, who was himself a refugee, described other Jewish refugees arriving in Vilnius, and listed their former professions... “[a] week ago a landlord, the director of a bank, an industrialist; today hungry, naked and hunched up. Ten days ago a merchant, a factory supervisor, a cobbler, a baker; today naked and barefoot, crushed.”²⁴⁵ That they are now barefoot refugees is significant, but this can only be understood when related to what they have lost and where they were. Similarly Bernstein writing in the Dereczin Memorial book noted the link between employment and status, writing, “[m]y status in the mean time had also changed: before I was a teacher, a person who commanded respect; but now, as a Jew, I found myself outside the framework of the law; I was worse than a dog

²⁴² Shoah Foundation Interview with Maurice White (found at sf.usc.edu and viewed repeatedly between 01/01/2013 and 20/12/13).

²⁴³ And less easily identified as Jewish if questioned.

²⁴⁴ Here we need to consider arguments made by Ringelheim (Joan M. Ringelheim, ‘The Split between Gender and the Holocaust’ in Ofer and Weitzman, eds., *Women in the Holocaust*, p.343) and Waxman (Waxman, *Writing the Holocaust*, p.138) that women only mention those events that seem important in the light of subsequent events (i.e. assault seems irrelevant when placed next to mass murder and the horror of the ghettos). Both argue that what these women consider important is strongly influenced by a gendered discourse concerning the history of the Holocaust, which is to say that women tend not to write about things which only affect women since there is little precedent for it in the historiography as constructed predominantly by men. If this is the case, however, male writings which regularly reference humiliations of status as discussed in this chapter, would give women permission to do likewise, and yet they do not, reinforcing the impression that such occurrences were more common in the lives of men than women.

²⁴⁵ Kruk, *The last days of the Jerusalem of Lithuania*, p.28.

in their eyes.”²⁴⁶ Moreover, different types of employment had a specific status attached to them. Zuckerman records shovelling snow on behalf of his father, although he was too young, because, “I did not want him to suffer the humiliation of the physical labor”.²⁴⁷ For a man such as Zuckerman’s father the very act of physical labour, regardless of assault or public space, was a humiliation of status to be avoided.

The relationship with public space was not, however, universal. The degree of alienation, and therefore humiliation and loss of status, depended on a range of factors including which country and even city one lived in, the extent of native gentile complicity,²⁴⁸ and the German presence on the streets. For some, therefore, a relatively safe public presence remained an option for some time during the deconstruction and was significant in the sustaining of status and therefore in the performance of normative masculine identities. Beyond this, and in strong contrast to these numerous and deep humiliations, a few Jewish men in this period experienced a reversal of this trend, and their diaries and accounts note in some detail the rare occasions when gentiles, and sometimes even Germans, showed them the respect that they had become used to forgoing. Notably these were not acts of kindness and they rarely affected the material well being of the individual concerned, but instead can be seen as acts which reinstated traditional notions of respect, restoring pride and a sense of status to the Jews involved, even if only for a short time. Again, given their limited impact on questions of sustenance, employment and liberty, which in this period might seem to have been more pressing, the fact that such events are as well-detailed as they are shows their clear significance to those involved.

Castle Stanford relates an experience on a tram in Amsterdam when one gentile doffed his cap to him, and another offers him a seat. On another occasion when he offered to give up his seat on a train several gentiles refused to take it. When Castle Stanford explained that he would be in trouble if a German found him sitting whilst gentiles stood, a number of men left the carriage in order to enable him to sit without fear of reprisal. These were not acts of kindness that Castle Stanford notes, he does not note that he was particularly uncomfortable or needed the seat overly much, but rather acts

²⁴⁶ Bernstein, 'I was a Refugee', p.219.

²⁴⁷ Zuckerman, *A Surplus of Memory*, p.27.

²⁴⁸ This was particularly the case in the Baltic states which are outside the remit of this thesis, but varied significantly between different European countries and cities.

of respect, which clearly frame the same humiliations as showing a lack of respect rather than physically damaging. Similarly, Katz specifically recorded an occasion on which he observed a Catholic Priest raise his hat to a group of Jews being forced to clean the streets whilst being taunted by Polish children.²⁴⁹ Examples such as these are rare, however when they do occur they are dwelt on with some attention and the restorative nature of such acts for the men involved clearly shows the importance of status to those individuals.

Accounts are not, of course, all unified on this topic. Humiliation is a particularly personal experience, and those who recorded their stories immediately after the war, particularly those who did so with an eye to assisting prosecutions against the perpetrators of the Holocaust, tended to place particular emphasis on those crimes they believed would receive the worst punishments, thus physical abuse took precedence over mental or emotional abuse. Moreover, as Ofer notes, men writing in this period were keen to stress the collective experience, and thereby the universality, of the Holocaust, making a record of events in order to ensure that knowledge of the Holocaust could not be suppressed (as many Germans had threatened during the war) rather than writing simply for personal record, as was more common later.²⁵⁰ Early accounts, therefore, tended towards detailing the most sensational or shocking events and away from the mundane humiliation which in fact seems to have had a deep impact on its victims. That not all accounts reference such humiliation is therefore unsurprising, nonetheless that so many men, in the process of recording their personal experiences, do mention humiliation and loss of status is a good indication of its importance to the individual, even if not to his understanding of the collective.

Almost without exception, therefore, sources indicate that the performance of those elements of normative masculine identities common to almost all men, here called masculinism, was almost entirely impossible. In spite of making great attempts to sustain all of these elements, Jewish men were largely unable to protect and provide for their families, or to maintain a sense of their own status within society and the public space, when faced with the assault of antisemitic occupation. However,

²⁴⁹ Katz, *One who came back*, p.7.

²⁵⁰ Dalia Ofer, 'The Community and the Individual: The Different Narratives of Early and Late Testimonies and Their Significance for Historians' in David Bankier and Dan Michman, eds., *Holocaust Historiography in Context. Emergence, Challenges, Polemics and Achievements* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2008), *passim*.

there were also elements of masculinity particular to each of the three normative identities outlined earlier, and it is to these divisions and specificities which I shall now turn.

* * *

For those men who oriented themselves principally towards an assimilated normative masculine identity, perhaps the most significant outcome of occupation and persecution was rejection from the group to which they understood themselves to belong. For those who did not identify themselves as Jewish, whether in a religious or a cultural capacity, the gentile community was their own, and the rejection of Jews by that society which occurred across Europe to a greater or lesser degree would have been particularly damaging to the gender identities of assimilated Jewish men. This eviction from their own space and social milieu might have been mitigated, in a limited sense, at the beginning of occupation since the earliest assaults were largely targeted at those men with a stereotypically Jewish appearance. Nevertheless, as persecution increased, and particularly after the wearing of the star became mandatory, assimilated Jews were as easily targeted as any others and they experienced the same humiliation as other Jewish men. One notable difference between the oral testimonies of assimilated Jews and 'Jewish' Jews, however, is seen in the discussions of antisemitic assaults which occurred, particularly in Poland, in the decades before the Holocaust. For some men these formative experiences seem to have acted as a preparation for the humiliation and early persecution of the deconstruction,²⁵¹ a preparation which was not afforded to assimilated Jews, particularly those from the cities which often provided a degree of anonymity. Of course I do not suggest that the antisemitism of the interwar period could prepare one for genocide or the Holocaust. I do note, however, simply that the physical assaults and antisemitic persecutions of the prewar period, particularly from childhood, are often cited by men as a forerunner to the early humiliations and ostracisation of the persecution.

Sources also seem to suggest that assimilated Jews were more able than others to exploit friendships and associations with gentiles during the early period of Aryanisation, and thereby

²⁵¹ One example of this is Abraham Zwirek who references his father banning him from attending football matches before the German invasion because of antisemitism, (IWM - Abraham Zwirek – 9192/6). However, plenty of other examples appear, particularly in audio accounts where interviewees are asked directly about such matters. One question arises here concerning the extent to which these men were prompted to discuss such events by their interviewer, but still when asked they do make a link between prewar assaults and the early humiliations of the deconstruction.

mitigate its impact. Despite these limited benefits, however, it is clear that once persecution became established, assaults and humiliations increased against all Jews and assimilated Jews were, if anything, increasingly vulnerable as they were ostracised by their gentile communities. In contrast Jews who remained within the Jewish community were less isolated by the occupation and persecution, retaining, as they did, their contacts, associations and communities for a longer period.

For those men who oriented themselves towards a specifically Jewish masculinity, deconstruction had a very different impact, central to which, the sources suggest, was the question of descent and heritage. In contrast to assimilated masculinities, Jewish male gender identity was associated closely with familial descent, inherited business, and continuity of the male line, all of which were severely threatened by the deconstruction. However, sources also suggest that for some during the early persecution of the deconstruction, belonging to, and living within, a Jewish community brought with it a heightened sense of unity and belonging. The point is alluded to by Ringelblum who notes the importance of the historical past for Jews in understanding themselves both as individuals and within their community. After speaking to a Jewish scholar he records, “[t]here’s been the growth of a strong sense of historical consciousness recently. We tie in fact after fact from our daily experience with the events of history”, going on to note, “[t]he Jews created another world for themselves in the past, living in it to forget the world around them...”²⁵² Similarly Kermish wrote after the Holocaust about the reasons for which Jews recorded their experiences, citing the opinion of Simon Dubnow that, “Jewish history is the chain uniting the generations, and someone who does not know the past is not a Jew”.²⁵³

Finally, the normative identity of self-hating Jews is perhaps the hardest identity to chart in this period. Easy to pinpoint in the pre-war period, self-hating masculinity seems to have been consumed by the Holocaust and references to it are very few both during the years of the deconstruction and later in the ghettoisation and hiding of the destruction. One noticeable reaction, however, is a limited intensification, or perhaps reinforcement, of discourses of self-hatred in the early part of the deconstruction. For many Jews in the period before the war self-hatred had manifested itself in a distancing from their Judaism combined with an overt criticism of the 'Jewish character'. The effect of

²⁵² Ringelblum, *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto*, p.82.

²⁵³ Laura Jockusch, *Collect and Record! Jewish Holocaust Documentation in Early Postwar Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) p.37.

the deconstruction was to force these Jews into unavoidable contact with those they had previously disdained and in it is in the attempt to negotiate this shift into closer contact with traditional Judaism that we see some of the few references of the period to the Jewish body. Schupack writes of his brother being arrested, for reasons the family cannot decipher, “[h]e was tall, broad-shouldered, strong and abounded in good health...My brother’s physical appearance contradicted the Nazis’ racial theory”. Significantly, this physical distinction was noteworthy to Schupack, and played a role in his understanding of his brother’s arrest and detention.²⁵⁴ More common, however, was the continuation of self-hatred which manifested itself in the internalisation of antisemitic stereotypes of Jewish masculinity. Particularly notable in this way is the surprise described by numerous survivors in the Dereczin Memorial book upon meeting Dr Yekhezkiel Atlas. Jews were universally astonished to find that Atlas, a famous Jewish partisan leader known as a brave fighter, was in fact, “a short, scrawny young man, wearing a short officer’s jacket, whose appearance was very much like that of a Jew: dark hair and dark eyes”.²⁵⁵ Of course, these examples are too limited to allow a detailed discussion of their implications, nonetheless, it seems to be in representations of the body that the normative masculinity of self-hatred makes itself clear during the deconstruction.

Individual elements of gender identity

Besides the attempts men make to orient themselves towards normative ideals of masculinity there exist numerous more personal and individual elements of male gender identity, formed and shaped within the family and dependent on, amongst other things, relationships, physique and one’s own personal strengths. As a boy matures the importance of preverbal experiences, parenting and male influences are added to by his own personal attributes: a physically strong man will likely develop different ideas of masculinity from a weaker man. During the deconstruction the ability of men to sustain these elements of their gender identities, whatever they might be, varied greatly depending on what exactly was significant to their personal masculinity. Broadly speaking, however, the sources suggest that this was a period in which men were, predominantly, able to continue to perform the individual elements of their masculinity with comparatively few hindrances. I do not suggest here that

²⁵⁴ Joseph Schupack, *The Dead Years* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1986), p.37.

²⁵⁵ Bernstein, 'I was a Refugee', p.230, Masha and Abraham Kulakowski, 'Two Years in the Partisan Forces' in Berger, ed., *The Dereczin Memorial Book*, p.273 and Shmuel Borenstien, 'With the Dereczin Fighters in the Forest' in Berger, ed., *The Dereczin Memorial Book*, p.283.

the deconstruction did not challenge these individual elements on a daily basis, forcing men to reconsider questions related to, amongst other things, their bodies, clothing, emotions and knowledge; yet in comparison to the almost impossible task of performing normative masculine identities, such individual elements, perhaps due to their flexibility, were adapted and sustained during the deconstruction.

Of the body and its relationship to masculinity, Gerschick and Miller uncompromisingly write “[t]he body is a central foundation of how men define themselves and how they are defined by others”.²⁵⁶ For this reason, but also particularly due to its significance in enduring discussions of Jews and the Jewish man, the body ought to play a role in our understanding of masculinity during the deconstruction. And yet to write about the body the historian must necessarily write from an absence of sources. Perhaps surprisingly, very little is said about the male body during this period, either in diaries written during the Holocaust or by those who recorded their experiences after and, whilst we cannot say why the body seems to go largely unnoticed, its absence does contrast sharply with the period of destruction that followed, in which Jewish men seem to have spoken more openly about their bodies. One difference between these two periods, which is significant to understanding these varied approaches to the body, is the question of starvation. For many men, with very definite exceptions, the deconstruction was not a period of extreme starvation and, although sources of food were scarce, many men were able to acquire enough to avoid going hungry.²⁵⁷ In contrast, the period of destruction was marked by mass starvation, even for those who were able to survive, and in many cases it seems to be this starvation, and its impact upon the male body, which provokes a discussion thereof amongst men. A second reason why bodies only become involved in later discussions of the Holocaust can be found in the encroachment on personal space experienced particularly after Jews were forced to leave their own homes either to share with family or to enter the ghettos. At this stage the loss of privacy elicited a number of comments, on the edges concerning sexuality, but more commonly simply about bodies and their realities. Again, in contrast, the deconstruction was a period

²⁵⁶ Gerschick and Miller, ‘Coming to Terms’, p.313.

²⁵⁷ This is at least partially a question of sources – those men who were starving in the very early period were often very poor and had extremely limited resources. These were, therefore, unsurprisingly some of the first men to die and very rarely managed to live to record their experiences. As is generally true for this thesis, those who survived to record their stories, given that the Holocaust lasted over five years, had some resources which allowed them to endure the early years in limited comfort.

in which many people remained in their homes and in their own spaces, a reality which seems to have lessened the extent to which men felt the need to discuss their bodies.²⁵⁸

Clothing, and the individual's relationship with it, seems to have had a similar trajectory to that of the body in Holocaust writing. The period of deconstruction impacted upon most resources, and very definitely upon clothing, sources for which can be found in the records of the *Winterhilfe* in Germany²⁵⁹ as well as throughout Poland and the West, particularly for those Jews who were displaced or fled and lost many of their personal belongings. Nonetheless, the impact of this shortage seems rarely to have been severe enough to make it into people's memories or indeed diaries when writing about the deconstruction. Szpilman does note a particular decline in standards of appearance once war begins,²⁶⁰ however, although he is not entirely alone, he is something of an exception in writing thus. Again, in contrast, once people had entered the ghettos or hiding, clothing became a common subject of discussion due to the problems that it presented. Therefore, although we cannot be certain why men during the deconstruction chose rarely to mention their bodies or attire, the contrast sources present between this and the later period of enclosure, when both subjects were regularly referenced and clearly traumatic for the men involved, suggests that the absence of early references may simply reflect the relative unimportance of the subject. Men in the deconstruction would seem to have been sufficiently content with, or at least unconcerned by, their bodies and their presentation to ensure that the subject remained a relatively insignificant element of daily life.

One might counter this argument concerning the relative stability of the body and attire as elements of masculine identity in the deconstruction, by arguing, following Langerwey, that women tend to be more embodied than men,²⁶¹ and that men are, therefore, less likely to consider or reference their bodies regardless of their circumstances, an argument which Langerwey particularly uses to explain

²⁵⁸ This act of appropriation figures more rarely in men's accounts than, for example, 'Aryanisation' and loss of work however, and the real damage in such cases seems to have been to women who, enduring any number of other losses, were unable to bear the loss of the home. This conclusion, born out in the testimonies, reinforces the suggestion that women's gendered identities were more closely formed in the home, whilst men relied more heavily on their role in public for gender affirmation.

²⁵⁹ Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair*, p.32.

²⁶⁰ Szpilman, *The Pianist*, p.31.

²⁶¹ "They [G & J] emphasise the close identification of women with their bodies, and the consequent fact that "violations of the body are defacements of identity, and so are investments of the body in others' modes of unifying self and other". They contrast women's embodiment with a male pattern of minimizing the "significance of intimates." The exception to this lack of male embodiment, Langerwey argues, is the death of the father, something I shall deal with in more details in chapter five (Mary Langerwey, *Reading Auschwitz* (Walnut Creek, CA: Alta Mira Press, 1998), p.72).

the different impact of sexual and physical assault upon men and women during the Holocaust. If this were indeed the case then one might argue that the limited references men make to their bodies say little about their ability to sustain this particular element of masculine identity in the circumstances of deconstruction, and instead can help us only to understand more generally their limited relationships with their bodies. However, not only would I argue that a broader study of masculinity in the interwar period shows a clear connection between men and the body,²⁶² but I would also, again, argue that the stark contrast between the silence of the deconstruction and the multiple references and discussion found in the later period of destruction and ghettoisation, suggests instead that where it became a significant or problematic element of their lives men were very much aware of their bodies. We can conclude, therefore, that silence should be understood as proof of, at least, a neutral relationship with the body and, thereby, argue that masculinity through physicality was not severely challenged during the deconstruction.

When considering the emotional capacity of men to manage the experiences of the Holocaust, however, quite the opposite was true. During the deconstruction numerous Jewish men seem to have been unable to suppress their depression, instead succumbing to sustained periods of intense emotional collapse. Numerous sources speak of men falling into a depression during this period, usually following loss of work and confinement to the home. Amongst many others Fania Freich, a Pole living in France wrote, "I am now here with my husband, and my husband is sick, ninety-nine percent sick, and this is the end of life. We have no courage. We have no morale."²⁶³ Similarly Chaim Kaplan repeatedly referenced not only his own depression, his broken heart when his radio was taken away and his inability to continue writing his diary due to sadness and depression,²⁶⁴ but also that of his friends including A.W., who appeared, "[s]o broken and crushed. He had turned grey, his voice was hoarse and low, he was sloppily dressed – the inner beauty that had always illumined the face of this scholar was gone. He was a broken man."²⁶⁵ Likewise Yitzhak Katznelson was noted as being "in the throes of utter depressions. His creative powers were numbered and had ceased to function."²⁶⁶ Roman Halter speaks about his father falling into a "deep depression from which little

²⁶² See again, amongst others the work of George Mosse, John Tosh and Joan Tumbelty, not to mention books like Hans Surén, *Der Mensch und die Sonne* (1924) and the culture to which it was responding.

²⁶³ Fania Freich, quoted in Boder, *I Did Not Interview the Dead*, p.86.

²⁶⁴ Kaplan, *The Scroll of Agony*, p.56.

²⁶⁵ Kaplan, *The Scroll of Agony*, p.15.

²⁶⁶ Katznelson, *Vittel Diary*, p.17.

could rouse him”,²⁶⁷ Friedländer describes his father as appearing to “founder in a sort of wordless sadness” and Pivnik writes, “[l]ooking into my father’s face I could see that all the fight – all the life – had gone out of him.”²⁶⁸

Yet, whilst I do not dispute the veracity of these references to depression *per se*, nor their relevance to discussions of masculinity, it is important to note that in many cases these accounts are written by the wives and families of men experiencing this depression. Whilst this does not invalidate them – indeed it is perhaps unlikely that men would chose to document their own depression and collapse whatever its reality - it is interesting to consider conversely how men wrote about women and their emotional response to persecution.²⁶⁹ In such cases we find that men very often recorded their wives as experiencing similar, although usually more transitory, emotional collapse. On 9 December 1939, soon after the Polish surrender to Germany, Adam Czerniaków noted in his diary, “[m]y wife does not cease crying”,²⁷⁰ whilst around the same time Chaim Kaplan commented that “[h]ysterical women gasp and wail and beat their breasts”.²⁷¹ In a similar vein Michael Diment comments that the “quiet crying and sobbing of women was heard long into the night”²⁷² but makes no references to a similar, or any, collapse amongst men.

It light of this parallel framing of the emotional state of the other sex one might then argue that, in accounts of the Holocaust the concept of depression is in itself a tool of gender negotiation. In both cases we might argue that each gender is largely incapable of recording its own depression, although given the range of admissions recorded in the diaries and accounts of the Holocaust this seems perhaps a little simple an answer, but also that each gender engages in describing the diminished coping capacity of the other in order to draw attention to their own gendered strength. This argument is reinforced if we consider that in many cases those who record their partner’s collapse simultaneously assert their own strength and resilience, often either in caring for that partner or in assuming the burdens of their duties and caring for the family. One exception to this is the case of

²⁶⁷ IWM - Roman Halter – 17183/17.

²⁶⁸ Pivnik, *Survivor*, p.53.

²⁶⁹ On this question, Wells records an early bombardment during which women cry and hold onto their children whilst men “try to look brave”. Wells, *The Death Brigade*, p.24.

²⁷⁰ Adam Czerniakow, *The Warsaw Diary of Adam Czerniakow: Prelude to Doom* (New York: Stein and Day, 1979), p.97.

²⁷¹ Kaplan, *The Scroll of Agony*, p.18.

²⁷² Michael Diment, *The Lone Survivor: A Diary of the Lukacz Ghetto and Svyruukhy Ukraine* (New York: The Holocaust Library, 1992), p.7.

Barbara Stimler who records her mother's collapse when her husband (Barbara's father) is taken away. In a similar pattern however, Barbara uses her mother's collapse to assert her own emotional strength writing, "[s]o I could see I am going to be breadwinner here. I went over to them and I begged them to give me a job there."²⁷³

Nonetheless, even taking into account this process of mutual diminishment, there are certainly fewer references to depression and collapse amongst women, particularly as a sustained emotional response rather than a fleeting outcry, than amongst men in this period. Therefore, whilst acknowledging the problematic nature of sources on this question, it seems, nonetheless, that we can begin to understand sustained depression in this period as gendered. If we then accept that men did indeed experience depression during the period of deconstruction, something which clearly has implications for male gender identities, a second question arises as to the impact this depression might have had upon the performance of masculine roles, significantly the exercise of power and control within the home.

This discussion is perhaps where historians have had most to say on the question of Jewish masculinity in the Holocaust and where, I would argue, they have most seriously erred. Arguments have tended to suggest that many of those men who were depressed also experienced complete collapse and emasculation, consequently opting out of making decisions in the home, supporting their families and, notably, seeking ways to escape the Holocaust. Significantly these arguments are used to reinforce the idea that as men abandoned their 'duties' their wives assumed them, supporting the conclusions of numerous historians discussed in my introduction that women rose to the challenges presented by the Holocaust. That this connection is made, notably using sources written by women, is perhaps unsurprising since, although men were not universally decision makers in the home before the Holocaust, the home was the place where a loss of power by men could most clearly be translated into increased or assumed power for women.²⁷⁴ However, for a number of reasons I would reject the universality with which this conclusion has been applied. Whilst, of course, examples exist of men absolving themselves of all decision making duties or responsibilities within the home and family, this, I would argue, was a relatively rare occurrence. Instead, sources suggest

²⁷³ IWM - Barbara Stimler - 17475/5.

²⁷⁴ I have already discussed this debate in some detail in my introduction and methodology.

that far more common were men who, although extremely depressed, continued to function, attempting to provide and protect as discussed above, but also acting as head of the household, making significant decisions for their families and thereby sustaining a key element of their own gender identities.

One particular example worth considering in more detail is the conclusion that women played a key role in exploring ways to emigrate and escape Nazi occupation, whilst men tended not to be involved in such research. Where families who had found a means to escape did not leave, this is also often blamed on the refusal of men to leave their communities and businesses and is linked to the inactivity of depression that accompanied disenfranchisement and exclusion. For the most part I do not question either the realities of women more than men seeking opportunities to emigrate, or the suggestion that decisions to stay were often taken by the men in the family – although this latter is certainly a vast generalisation and whilst Donat writes of his flight east, his decision to return for his wife and child, and his wife's subsequent refusal to leave, noting, “[s]he took me on a tour of our beautiful seven-room apartment and talked about how miserable life was in Russia”,²⁷⁵ Elisabeth Harrison describes her father's early decision to leave Germany for the UK and her mother's refusal to go any further than Holland where they had friends, commenting, “[i]t was the only time he listened to my mother, and the worst mistake he ever made”.²⁷⁶ I strongly challenge, however, the conclusions concerning masculine identity which have been drawn from these facts. Numerous sources show that the decision not to emigrate was rarely a passive failure to act, which might reflect an emasculated identity, but instead was a clear and conscious decision that survival was more likely in the home, surrounded by one's resources, contacts and community, than as an anonymous refugee. That for many families this was a disastrous decision in not under question, but the nature of the decision men made, is.²⁷⁷

Zuckerman's father is a clear example of this active decision making in his decision that his family would stay in Krakow rather than attempt to flee Poland – whilst this was ultimately the wrong decision, Zuckerman's account never described it as a default decision, even less a failure to decide.

²⁷⁵ Donat, *The Holocaust Kingdom*, p.4.

²⁷⁶ IWM – Elisabeth Harrison - (8304/5).

²⁷⁷ It is important here to note that there are several cases in which men try to leave and women bring them back, either through fear of the unknown or because of children and family ties. One example of this is Zyskind whose father wished to flee but her mother wanted to stay to protect her family, (Zyskind, *Stolen Years*, p.23).

Rather, his father had seen numerous other families attempt to flee and return materially diminished, often having lost their homes, goods or money in the process and with family members either dead or injured.²⁷⁸ For him, therefore, survival seemed better served by remaining. Such decisions were particularly reached by men who remembered World War I and the fruitless and often damaging displacement of people which accompanied it.²⁷⁹ Amongst others, Wallach describes her father's attempts to use his experiences in World War I to predict World War II. This led him to put all his money into the family farm which, he believed, wouldn't depreciate like money. However, the area in which they lived was occupied by the Russians who collectivised their land and animals leaving them with nothing and her father heartbroken. Equally, Sem Hartz's family discussed leaving Holland but decided to stay based on their positive experiences in the country during World War I.²⁸⁰ In neither case could these decisions be understood as a lack of action, but rather only as incorrect action.

I would argue, therefore, that it is important to understand these decisions concerning emigration as an exercise of the individual's masculinity through decision making and familial control, rather than an example of its absence and therefore of feminisation and collapse. Of course, men rarely made these decisions entirely alone and often such choices were made in larger family units – with more junior members deferring to elders and parents – or within couples, with numerous sources speaking of marital fights concerning the decisions around whether or not to emigrate.²⁸¹ Ultimately, therefore, whilst each family managed this decision in its own way, the sources clearly show that in very few cases were men making decisions to stay which might be seen as representing a failure to act or could be understood as a product of the emasculation of the individual.

Leaving aside the particular decision as to whether or not to flee, decision making within the home, and the masculine reinforcement it implies, can be found in numerous cases amongst men who would otherwise be considered as depressed. Roman Halter's father is described on several occasions as being in a deep depression during the deconstruction and yet it is not a contradiction for his son also to detail his father's attempts to draw resources from the Aryanisation of the family business, to hide possessions for later use or sale, and to remain a strong and commanding

²⁷⁸ Zuckerman, *A Surplus of Memory*, p.28.

²⁷⁹ Jafa Wallach, *Bitter Freedom: Memoirs of a Holocaust Survivor* (Schuylkill Haven, PA: Hermitage Publishers, 2006), p.10.

²⁸⁰ IWM – Sem Hartz - (12888/4).

²⁸¹ One particularly good example is Moshe Flinker (Flinker, *Young Moshe's Diary*, p.30).

patriarch.²⁸² Similarly, Pivnik notes, "Father, a broken man though he was becoming, still had the energy to smuggle scraps of cloth out of Rossner's uniform factory and he'd sit at home at Number 77, cross-legged on the floor with his needle and thread, making clothes for gentiles in exchange for flour or sausage",²⁸³ whilst Katznelson, who became severely depressed and stopped writing or associating in any way during the deconstruction, retained an entirely different position with regard to his family, his biographer noting, "[h]e was a devoted husband and father, and in the bosom of his family he radiated warmth and glow...He loved them all dearly and in their midst he was intensely happy, in spite of the cold and hunger."²⁸⁴ Whilst this latter is not an assertion of power it is a clear example of the ability to distinguish between one's role within the family and one's response to more global problems and to sustain a strong patriarchal position despite compromising depression.

One final way in which Jewish men were able to sustain personal elements of their male gender identities during the Holocaust was through the intellect. For those men who exercised their masculinity as much through their intelligence as their bodies, the deconstruction offered relative stability. These men certainly had to endure the abolition of the numerous clubs and associations through which they were used to asserting their intellects and, perhaps more damagingly, were also extremely vulnerable to loss of work, with all its contingent implications for gender identity: as Kessler notes, Jewish white collar work decreased much faster than blue collar work and those who "worked with their minds using pen and paper" were now required to "wield shovels and picks".²⁸⁵ However, in spite of these limitations, ongoing gendered performance through the intellect can be seen first and foremost in the number of men who record others asking for their advice or suggestions as circumstances developed and changed during the deconstruction. Understanding events as they progressed through the war and counselling family or community accordingly, as Elie Wiesel so proudly reports his father doing, were central elements of masculine identity for many Jewish men in this period.²⁸⁶

²⁸² IWM – Roman Halter - 17183/17.

²⁸³ Pivnik, *Survivor*, p.58.

²⁸⁴ Katznelson, *Vittel Diary*, p.18.

²⁸⁵ Edmund Kessler, *The Wartime Diary of Edmund Kessler. Lvov, Poland* (Boston, MA: Academic Studies Press, 2010), p.45.

²⁸⁶ Elie Wiesel, *Night* (London: Penguin, 1981), p.21.

Moreover, as relevant to religious or culturally Jewish men as to assimilated men, sources suggest that the deconstruction was a period in which intellectuals were defended and supported by their communities, further allowing them to sustain this element of their gender identities. As long as these men remained in their homes the capacity to wield pen and paper was not completely removed from them and access to work and books was an important element of sustaining morale. Although outside of the realms of this thesis, the diaries of both Mihail Sebastian in Bucharest and Victor Klemperer in Dresden are particularly clear on this subject, detailing the available options, particularly in the early period of persecution, for intellectuals in continuing to function as such.²⁸⁷

One question which often presents itself in such universal discussions of gender, and which must be considered here, is the impact of age upon masculinity. Both due to a lack of sources for certain age groups and a close correlation between age and circumstance, however, conclusions on the subject remain problematic. For a raft of reasons discussed in my methodology, including family loyalties and physical strength, survivors of the Holocaust and therefore the sources available to us, come predominantly from men who were in their late teens or early twenties during the Holocaust. Where older men survived it was often because they had fled early on in the Holocaust, which, for very different reasons, makes them problematic as sources. Moreover, where sources from older men *do* exist, their circumstances are often so different from those of younger men that it is difficult to compare their experiences. Whilst young men had family ties, they very often had limited responsibilities. In contrast, older men were often struggling to provide for and support children and wives, a level of responsibility which altered completely the way in which they acted. And yet, perhaps surprisingly, behaviours impacting on masculine identity, where we can chart them, vary less between the age groups than one might imagine.

In the initial phases of persecution younger men were more able to flee than older men, since leaving behind parents was a very different decision to abandoning children. However, within a relatively short period many of the younger men had chosen to return to their families, effectively placing themselves in similar positions to those of older men. Further, as I suggest in the above discussion of the prevailing gendered environment of the deconstruction, sources show this period to be

²⁸⁷ Mihail Sebastian, *Journal, 1935-1944* (London: Heinemann, 2003) and Victor Klemperer, *I Shall bear Witness: The Diaries of Victor Klemperer, 1933-1941* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1998).

predominantly one of inaction, and in their inactivity the responses of men of most ages were not dissimilar. In contrast, as I shall go on to consider in the next chapter, when activity and reconstruction became possible, through employment, social involvement and even resistance activities, men of different ages did respond differently. In particular, where homosocial interaction and hierarchy reasserted itself, we see significant references to age and masculinity. During the deconstruction, however, where homosocial activity was suppressed, and passivity was the dominant position, the deconstruction of masculine gender identity and the internalising of activity within the family and the self seem to have been similarly performed by men of all ages, even if their initial reactions to invasion varied.

Conclusion

Philip Friedman distinguishes between responses to the Holocaust in Western and Central Europe, where slow change allowed for the gentle adaptation of society and sustained social codes, and Eastern Europe, where faster change, due to Soviet control in 1939, and 'radical equalisation' occurred, writing, "[i]n the east the German abuses and atrocities followed one upon another so rapidly that no new social order could be established. It was not only a radical but a continual revolution, which maintained a constant state of flux in the society."²⁸⁸ However, whilst this is an interesting comparison with an acute use of language, I would conversely argue that, although the speed of change in Western and Central Europe may have allowed for social adaptation, the evidence regarding gender identity suggests something quite different. Masculinities in Western and Central Europe, like those in Poland, exactly experienced a state of "continual revolution" in the months and years following German invasion. Moreover, it was this state of constant flux regarding those elements of life which impacted on gender identities and made it impossible for masculinities to stabilise and reform themselves after the initial damage of occupation, Aryanisation and loss of status.

This process can be particularly clearly understood if we return to Gerschick and Miller's argument that men who become physically disabled, for whatever reason, respond, after an initial period of

²⁸⁸ Philip Friedman, *Roads to Extinction: Essays on the Holocaust* (New York: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1980), p.139.

depression linked to an inability to perform their gender identities, with a reassertion of their masculinity. This process, according to Gerschick and Miller, occurs in one of three different ways: reformulation, reliance or rejection.²⁸⁹ The first response involves the “redefinition of hegemonic characteristics on their own [the disabled person's] terms” - a response which often relies heavily upon having the financial means to alter one's lifestyle to suit one's new situation. “Reliance” requires less adjustment and is instead based on stressing, even more firmly, certain elements of the hegemonic masculinity of one's society and through asserting one's own ability to conform to those ideals in spite of physical limitations. Finally, “rejection”, which often comes after some time and once other options have been exhausted, involves the renunciation of hegemonic standards and “either the creation of one's own principles and practices or the denial of masculinity's importance in one's life”.²⁹⁰ Above all, however, what all three of these reformulations require is the space and stability to assess one's own abilities and capacities, and to develop a theory of masculinity which plays to those strengths whilst minimising one's limitations. In much the same way, I have argued in this chapter that Jewish men in the deconstruction very often experienced a loss of the capacity to perform the normative masculine identities toward which they had previously oriented themselves. Significantly, however, the nature of the deconstruction, as a constant and incremental erosion, did not allow the space and stability required to reconstruct or reassert normative gender identities. This approach, therefore, neatly explains one reason why the deconstruction was a particularly damaging period in the masculine identities of Jewish men.

Ultimately, Gerschick and Miller write that to ignore normative notions of gender is to “court gender annihilation”,²⁹¹ an observation which makes it clear why the ability of Jews to access many of the individual elements of gender identities, from the body to decision making roles in the home, was not enough to defend them from the incredibly damaging impact of the “constant revolution” which they experienced during the deconstruction. This is particularly the case when we add to the damaging impact of the inability to perform normative identities the broader gendering of society which saw Jewish men being pushed towards behaviour patterns they themselves understood to be inherently passive and therefore feminine.

²⁸⁹ Gerschick and Miller, 'Coming to Terms', *passim*.

²⁹⁰ Gerschick and Miller, 'Coming to Terms', p.315.

²⁹¹ Gerschick and Miller, 'Coming to Terms', p.323.

Following this analysis of the deconstruction with its near impossibility of maintaining a strong masculine identity, my next chapter will go on to consider in detail the period of enclosure and destruction that followed, arguing that, for many Jewish men, the reassertion of a masculine environment of action as well as the ability to perform elements of normative masculinities, overrode the significant damage done to individual elements of gender identity and enabled them to reassert their masculinities.

Chapter 4 – The Reassertion of Jewish Masculinity: ghettoisation, enclosure and the destruction of European Jewry

Historical discussions of Jewish male gender identities are even less common in works concerning life in the ghettos than in those concerning the preceding deconstruction, and yet, often with extremely limited debate or analysis, historians continue to represent Jewish men in the period as weak and emasculated. One of the clearest examples of this tendency is found in *Hitler's Ghettos*, where Gustav Corni argues, effectively, that the weak character of many men resulted in their too speedy consumption of rations and, ultimately, their deaths, writing, “sources demonstrate that women were generally more disciplined than men in this terrible task of self-control and this very probably accounts for their lower mortality rate”.²⁹² Corni’s reference for this conclusion is Michal Unger’s article ‘The Status and Plight of Women in the Lodz Ghetto’ which itself comments, in relation to men’s higher mortality rates in the ghettos, “[b]y inference, women were better able than men to tolerate the ghetto conditions”.²⁹³ Leaving aside the fact that Unger’s comment is unreferenced, so that it remains unclear on what basis she makes such a claim, I would still reject such conclusions since, whilst men in the ghettos certainly did have a higher mortality rate than women, in writing thus Unger seemingly ignores a range of relevant facts including that women can survive on fewer calories than men, that the chief cause of death in the ghettos, heart disease, commonly kills more men than women,²⁹⁴ and that men in the ghettos often undertook more physically demanding work than women.

I would also contest the findings of Corni and Unger on a more substantive level, departing from the accepted historical narrative and arguing, as I do in this chapter, that, far from being weakened and demoralised by ghettoisation, many Jewish men were, in fact, able to use the ghetto conditions to revitalise their gender identities. In an exact reversal of the impact of the deconstruction on masculinities, the combination of a masculine environment in the ghettos which encouraged and enabled action, and the ghetto conditions which allowed many Jewish men to once again perform,

²⁹² Gustavo Corni, *Hitler's Ghettos: Voices from a Beleaguered Society, 1939-1944* (London: Arnold, 2002), p.134.

²⁹³ Michal Unger, ‘The Status and Plight of Women in the Lodz Ghetto’ in Ofer and Weitzman, eds., *Women in the Holocaust*, p.127.

²⁹⁴ Whilst heart disease was listed as the main cause of death we do not know how many of these were cases, which we know occurred often, in which deaths by starvation were listed as ‘heart disease’. Nonetheless, nor does Unger, and the statistical reality of heart disease cases is something she completely ignores.

within limits, the key elements of their normative gender identities, seems to have allowed many men to reassert strong masculinities. The focus of this chapter will be the ghettos of Poland, for reasons of source availability, due to the number of Jewish men who experienced it and because the ghettos offer a clear and definitive example of enclosure in comparison to the more complex, less common, western alternatives of hiding or resistance work. However, through comparison with a number of cases in Western Europe, I shall argue that my conclusions can be applied more broadly than simply to the Polish ghettos. Ultimately, I shall argue that the ghetto was only one, albeit the clearest, manifestation of a broader phenomenon which shows the reassertion of strong masculine identities where stability, principally of living conditions and expectations, existed; a stability which contrasts with the persistent change that marked the deconstruction.

In focussing such an argument on the ghettos, however, it is important to explain how it is possible that the extreme conditions the Jewish people experienced in the ghettos of Poland can be understood as in any way stable, empowering or masculine. Trunk refers to the ghetto as “something like a camp with a milder administration”,²⁹⁵ Leni Yahil observes that “[t]he ghetto’s function was essentially no different from that of the labour camp: both were designed to exploit the Jews and to destroy them ‘naturally’”²⁹⁶ and many survivors are keen to stress the impossibility of conducting a ‘normal’ life inside the ghetto when one’s entire being was focussed on eating and survival.²⁹⁷ I would argue, however, whilst acknowledging absolutely the backbreaking hardship and horrors that the Jewish people experienced in the ghettos, that a reassertion of masculinities was made possible by the perception of limited autonomy and a sense of living within a Jewish micro-society. For many Jews the ghetto provided an entirely false, but powerful and beguiling, sense of political autonomy, social freedom and Jewish independence which gave its inhabitants a security not found before its walls were erected. Donat calmly anticipated the establishment of the ghetto commenting that “people actually began to hope that the rumors about establishing a ghetto which would seal off the Jews from the rest of Warsaw were true”,²⁹⁸ whilst, as Kruk noted in his diary, entering the ghetto, for many, created a sense of “relief that people will finally be with their own and not exposed to all sorts

²⁹⁵ Isaiah Trunk, *Lodz Ghetto: a History* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006), p.13.

²⁹⁶ Leni Yahil, *The Holocaust: The Fate of European Jewry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), p.167.

²⁹⁷ Amongst others, Roman Halter talks about this single-minded struggle for survival. (Halter, *Roman’s Journey*).

²⁹⁸ Donat, *Holocaust Kingdom*, p.25.

of provocations”.²⁹⁹

The sense of increased security within a Jewish society can be found in the writings of numerous voices from the ghetto, among them Vladka Meed who wrote, “[t]he stilled ghetto streets were dear to me; they were closer to me than the liveliness and cheerfulness of the streets on the Aryan side. Within the ghetto was my own bitter reality, my own world where I no longer had to maintain my forced smile before my Polish neighbors. Here my ears were no longer assailed by their acrimonious remarks about the Jews deserving all that was coming to them and about Hitler’s purging Poland of the Jewish plague; here there was not the constant fear of being unmasked as a Jewess – here I was among my own.”³⁰⁰ Similarly Adler writes, significantly in a chapter entitled, *The Period of Normalization in the Quarter*, “[t]herefore, when the Jews found themselves behind the walls of the ghetto, though under unbearably harsh conditions of existence, they felt relieved of fear for their lives. Until then, they could be slain with impunity by any indiscriminate soldier or even by a civilian, since in practice, and sometimes also in theory, they were deprived of the benefits and protections of the law. Therefore, the walls of the shut-in Jewish Quarter provided the only protection possible in those days. Besides, the lone soldier desiring to go on a rampage through the ghetto for plunder or any other purpose undoubtedly would fear the reaction of a mob brought to desperation, and would therefore have to temper his ardour somehow. Jews felt more peace of mind and hope of survival.”³⁰¹ This strength drawn from being enclosed with other Jews can also be seen in the decision that some Jews made to smuggle themselves back into the ghetto after escaping from deportation trains. Whilst this was not a common occurrence, that it happened at all shows that there was a belief, genuine or false, that there was something worse than life inside the ghettos. Likewise, that Katznelson’s depression ‘intensified’ and his writing once again ceased when he reached Vittel, a situation which appeared at the time to be much safer than the Warsaw ghetto he had left but where he found the other inmates petty and annoying, shows the strength he drew from the ghetto community.³⁰²

Beyond the comfort of unity found within a Jewish society, the sense of limited autonomy, clear throughout the sources from the ghetto, and significant to masculine reassertion, is perhaps the most

²⁹⁹ Kruk, *The Last Days of the Jerusalem of Lithuania*, p.101.

³⁰⁰ Meed, *On Both Sides of the Wall*, (published first in 1948), p.132. Similarly Pinkus notes, “...there was a deceptive sense of strength, the illusion of safety created by the fact of living within an exclusively Jewish community.” (Pinkus cited in Corni, *Hitler’s Ghettos*, p.51).

³⁰¹ Stanislaw Adler, *In the Warsaw Ghetto* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1982), p.220.

³⁰² Katznelson, *Vittel Diary*, p.27.

controversial claim I make about the ghetto. It is beyond question that the Jews in the ghettos were completely powerless, moreover, it is clear that where the Judenräte did exercise some limited powers, it was power entirely conferred, and which might be immediately revoked, by the German authorities. Nonetheless, either the ghetto population was not privy to this truth about their situation or they chose to ignore it. For, as Feierstein argues, many saw the ghettos as a way of achieving Jewish autonomy,³⁰³ a suggestion supported by Web who notes, “[t]he system of government included its own police, court, rabbinical authority, post office, ghetto currency, telephone system, transportation, etc. Indeed, on the surface it looked as if the ghetto had total autonomy over its own affairs.”³⁰⁴

This analysis of ghetto life is supported by myriad contemporary sources including Zuckerman who noted that, “the autonomy of the ghetto wasn’t only a delusion. It was, of course, ‘an autonomy of corpses,’ but there was some development in our enterprise”.³⁰⁵ In much the same vein Kaplan commented that, “Polish Jewry has become a self-contained organism”³⁰⁶ and Perechodnik repeatedly wrote of the Jews governing themselves, the limited influence of Germans and the protection that the ghetto provided from marauding Poles.³⁰⁷ Ultimately I shall argue, therefore, that the power the ghetto authorities exerted over their populations and the attempts they made to appear to have influence with the Germans all contributed to a widely held, false, belief that the ghetto was governed by Jews.

A similar sense of unity, both as a community and a unity and purpose, can be seen amongst the members of the *Eclaireurs israélite de France* (EIF), the French Jewish scouting movement formed in

³⁰³ Feierstein, S.A., ‘The Jewish Resistance Movements in the Ghettos of Eastern Europe: Reflections of the Relationships of Force’ in Eric J. Sterling, ed., *Life in the Ghettos During the Holocaust* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2005), p.237.

³⁰⁴ Marek Web, *The Documents of the Lodz Ghetto: An Inventory of the Nachman Zonabend Collection* (New York: YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, 1988), p.23.

³⁰⁵ Zuckerman, *Surplus of Memory*, p.124. The enterprise which he notes stemming from this autonomy was an increase in activities, including singing and teaching, which had been impossible before the ghettos were enclosed but which returned in the courtyards of the ghettos.

³⁰⁶ Kaplan, *The Scroll of Agony*, p.207.

³⁰⁷ Perechodnik, *Am I a Murderer?*, p.11. Likewise Adler noted “[w]ith the closure of the Quarter, the rummaging of German soldiers, the S.S., and the scoundrels working on their own account had stopped. The plundering had ceased and the unorganized stealing of furniture had become a rare occurrence. For the moment, the price of food had stopped rising. It is understandable, therefore, that we experienced a sense of relief in our part of the ghetto because living within an exclusively Jewish society, we were rid of the annoyance and degradation we had experienced in the Aryan Quarter...” Adler, *In the Warsaw Ghetto*, p.53.

1923 which became a focus for Zionism and clandestine activities for young Jewish men and women during the Holocaust.³⁰⁸ However, whilst other examples of unity found within a Jewish society can be found in the West, Hermann Bodner, for example, speaks warmly of being involved in a Belgian underground organisation with a number of other Jews and being trained by a Jew from Germany,³⁰⁹ for the most part, Jewish men in the West involved with underground groups joined organisations most of whose members were gentiles. In some cases the group knew that the individual was Jewish but in many others this knowledge was entirely hidden. Whilst this made it virtually impossible for these men to have a sense of Jewish community like that I have spoken of in ghettos and the EIF, they nevertheless often found a unity of purpose within these organisations. The fact that many men emphasise membership of such an organisation with great pride, even when, when pressed, it becomes clear that they played a rather silent role, shows the importance simply of belonging to this kind of community.³¹⁰

Also not about Jewish identity, but instead familial, this sense of stability and unity, and the comfort they offered, can equally be seen amongst many of those in hiding in the West. This is particularly the case for Otto Frank who, following a period of extreme emotional and personal turmoil during the deconstruction,³¹¹ described his period in hiding thus: "I have to say that in a certain way it was a happy time. I think of all the good that we experienced, whilst all discomfort, longing, conflicts and fears disappear. How fine it was to live in such close contact with the ones I loved, to speak to my wife about the children and about future plans, to help the girls with their studies, to read classics with them and to speak about all kinds of problems and all views about life."³¹² Finally, Kampelmacher, an Austrian by birth but living in Holland during the war, who belonged to a Zionist group which placed

³⁰⁸ Sources pertaining to the wartime activities of the EIF are relatively limited but include Anny Latour, *La Résistance Juive en France (1940-1944)* (Paris: Stock, 1970) and Annette Wieviorka, *Ils étaient juifs, résistants, communistes* (Paris: Stock, 1986) as well as a number of documents and interviews held in *Le Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine* in Paris.

³⁰⁹ Shoah Foundation Interview with Hermann Bodner (found at sfi.usc.edu and viewed repeatedly between 01/01/2013 and 20/12/13).

³¹⁰ Joseph Brenig is one clear example of this. Shoah Foundation Interview with Joseph Brenig (found at sfi.usc.edu and viewed repeatedly between 01/01/2013 and 20/12/13).

³¹¹ Sources suggest that in the period before they went into hiding in the annex, Otto's behaviour was particularly erratic, and that he seemed to struggle with the conditions of the deconstruction, the loss of work and, in his case, the fact that he was being blackmailed by a gentile; unedited versions of Anne's diaries even suggest that on one occasion during the deconstruction Otto ran into the street with a knife, threatening to kill himself. (Carol A. Lee, *The Hidden Life of Otto Frank* (London: Penguin, 2002) citing Anne's diaries from 7.5.44).

³¹² Lee, *The Hidden Life of Otto Frank*, p.86.

young Jewish men on remote farms during the war, noted, “[s]ometimes I had the feeling of being on an island that provided some security, and which I shouldn't leave for the time being”.³¹³

I do not suggest that all hiding spaces provided this level of stability and potential masculinity, however, for, as Meed noted, “[o]ften a *melina* turned the hiding Jew into a bundle of nerves and fears, less a person than a hunted animal”³¹⁴ and the impact of one's hiding, one's capacity to find some stability and the possibility of reasserting one's masculinity all depended very much on the nature of one's hiding space. For those in the West who could find neither the stability of a relatively secure hiding place nor a Resistance group, the deconstruction effectively extended either until their capture or until the end of the war. One clear example of this was the father of Marcel Liebman who spent the war in Belgium. Whilst he was able to find a hiding place for Marcel and his brother, thereby allowing them some stability, he himself remained for the duration of the war in a limbo between legal existence and hiding, a constantly shifting position which did not allow for any stability or reassertion of masculinity and can be seen in the steady decline of his masculinity, through the Holocaust.³¹⁵

Finally, it is important to address the argument made by survivors that the unbearably hard life that most lived in the ghettos precluded them from also living a 'normal' existence with everyday concerns such as gender identity. Two responses are relevant here: the realities of daily life and the nature of masculinity. First, contemporary sources, whilst stressing the horrors of existence in the ghettos also clearly note the ongoing nature of daily life - *Oneg Shabbat* recorded that “street emotions” in the ghettos included “[o]ptimism and pessimism. Joy and sadness. Hopes and resignation. Illusion and apathy...Cowardice and courage...” In line with this argument Sterling describes the ghetto as “a transitional life...where many Jews maintained their hope, their faith, and their culture while enduring harsh and atrocious conditions” and when Janine David records the struggles of her parents' marriage, her father staying out late gambling and drinking, and her mother's seduction by a more attentive male friend, she needn't be writing from the ghetto at all. The second important point to make is that masculinities, and gender identities more generally, do not necessarily require a conscious thought process – when Roman Halter says he was too hungry to think about gender, it is

³¹³ E.H. (Dan) Kampelmacher, *Fighting for Survival* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2006), p.104.

³¹⁴ Meed, *On Both Sides of the Wall*, p.199.

³¹⁵ Of course this is through his son's eyes but nevertheless clearly depicts the impact of instability on his father. (Liebman, *Born Jewish*), *passim*.

not a contradiction to say he might still have been practising a strong masculine identity. Whilst accepting the realities of ghetto life, therefore, I shall continue to argue that gender formed a part of the lives men lived during the period, even if not consciously, and is, therefore, worthy of consideration.

Due to a sense of autonomy and a life within a Jewish society, many Jews in the ghettos, in hiding or involved in organized resistance in the West, felt more in control of their lives during the later period of destruction than they had during the deconstruction. That this sense of autonomy was a perception rather than a reality is undisputable, nonetheless it impacted heavily on the way in which lives were lived, ultimately providing a strong basis for the reassertion of masculinity for which this chapter argues.

Environment

I argued in chapter three that the deconstruction was inherently feminine, forcing Jewish men into passivity and, in doing so, making the practice of traditional masculinity almost impossible. It is my contention, conversely, that the period of stabilisation represented by the ghettos was overtly masculine in nature; the societies and authorities within the ghetto encouraged men to act wherever possible, and in doing so enabled them to perform in ways that they would have considered masculine, thus providing the potential to practise positive gender identities. Whilst not all men were ultimately able to access the elements of masculinism which this environment made possible, I would argue that the environment itself was universal within the ghetto – action was encouraged and not frowned upon, regardless of whether all men could act. This environment of action is very clearly alluded to by Adler who, in writing of the “Homeric battles” that men fought to gain a place in the Order Service (The Jewish Police, henceforth OS), notes, “...for most men in the prime of life, there was a need for some kind of occupation, some kind of discipline, after more than a year of compulsory and oppressive idleness”.³¹⁶

This positive approach to action with its connotations of masculinity, however, can be found throughout the sources from the ghettos, particularly in representations of those who fought the Germans. Rotem writes of a fellow resister and friend killed in the bunker, “[a]s he lay wounded, he

³¹⁶ Adler, *In the Warsaw Ghetto*, p.11.

insulted and cursed the Germans and challenged them to approach him. They didn't dare and came close only after pumping a full magazine of ammunition into his body, which they then mutilated"³¹⁷ whilst one resistance fighter writing after the Warsaw ghetto uprising says, "[t]his rising didn't result from any political reckoning, any calculation of purpose and powers, whether right or wrong; it wasn't based on any estimation whatever, no matter how preposterous, even if seemingly logical. It wasn't self-defence, either; nor was it – according to some opinions – a simple impulse of despair. The rising was an heroic gesture of those who have squared their accounts with the degenerated world and didn't count on anybody nor anything. The nation on which an unprecedented slaughter had been performed, bade the ages a fiery dying farewell – through this nation's best sons..."³¹⁸ This representation of action for its own sake as masculine is carried through the sources and seen both in Corni who quotes Draegerova as saying, "our end is not a decline, but rather it is a death knowingly chosen by strong men"³¹⁹ and *Oneg Shabbat* which records the response of S.Z. Stupnicki to a questionnaire distributed in the ghetto, "Jews don't feel like passive victims but rather as active fighters. The dead fallen in this gigantic battle for freedom are war heroes, active combatants. The Jewish folk-masses are saturated with this consciousness which strengthens their persistence, their readiness to give battle and to endure until the final victory."³²⁰

Of course action, where it risked the lives of others in the ghetto, was not uncontentious. Both armed resisters and smugglers received their share of opprobrium from the community, and yet both were also clearly lauded for their efforts. Diment records the murder of a man caught smuggling grain but rather than condemning him concludes that his actions did not put people off smuggling; on the contrary they became more daring, more keen not to die of hunger but to die fighting to survive.³²¹ Similarly Ringelblum writes about the Resistance in the ghetto fighting the German army. He knows their struggle is futile and yet he sees their actions as heroic nonetheless. In a passage entitled "Little Stalingrad' defends itself" he lauds the actions of the resisters describing, "...desperate young men,

³¹⁷ Simcha (Kazik) Rotem, *Memoirs of a Warsaw Ghetto Fighter: The Past Within Me* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994), p.2.

³¹⁸ Leon Kruczkowski, 'The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising' in *Bleter far Geszichte*, Czasopismo Zydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego w Polsce (1983), p.xlvi.

³¹⁹ Corni, *Hitler's Ghettos*, p.305.

³²⁰ The answers of SZ. Stupnicki to a ghetto questionnaire cited in Joseph Kermish, *To Live with Honor and Die with Honor!...: Selected Documents from the Warsaw Ghetto Underground Archives "O.S."* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1986), p.737.

³²¹ Diment, *The Lone Survivor*, p.89.

armed with poor quality revolvers, who knew that extermination awaited them".³²²

The actions men were encouraged to perform were myriad, and ranged from these heroic acts of sacrifice to finding work, both for themselves and their family, or using connections to find accommodation within the ghettos. Of course all of these elements of 'action' were available to both men and women in the ghettos, although perhaps not in equal measure, nonetheless I would argue that the same sense of action had different implications for male and female gender identities and could therefore, for men, have the effect of creating a masculine environment in which action was rewarded and respected.³²³ The impact of this environment can be seen extending beyond the encouragement of action, however, in the gendered discourses which pepper the writings of ghetto inhabitants and which were conspicuous by their absence during the deconstruction. Diaries and accounts from the ghettos are filled with descriptions that belittle, undermine and make comparisons between the masculinity of the writer and other men, all of which are key elements of active masculine identities and part of the traditional language of masculinity.³²⁴

One of the clearest examples of these comparative descriptions of masculinity is found in the description Turkov provides of the two leaders of the Order Service: of Shmerling he notes "la carrure athlétique, grand, fort, un cou de taureau..." whilst of Tshaplinski he comments "[i]l passait pour l'officier le plus beau et le plus elegant de la police juive..."³²⁵ The positivity of Turkov's comments, however, is relatively uncommon, and writings from the ghetto more usually describe the masculinity of others unfavourably, most probably in many cases to bolster one's own gender identity. Comments in this vein range from attacks on the individual, "that small ridiculous roly-poly manikin with his round belly, his cut-off caftan, his tiny yarmulke and fattened cheeks..."³²⁶ or Adler's description of Lejkin, an applicant for the OS, as a "caricature-like figure...in his *rejtuzy* (jodhpurs), and his canary-yellow cardigan, the future "Napoleon of the Order Service",³²⁷ to entire groups – either those with power like

³²² Kermish, *To Live with Honor*, p.600.

³²³ One might also argue that this idea of an active ghetto environment feeds into broad readings of the term 'resistance' used to refute suggestions that Jews "went like lambs to the slaughter", a phrase first attributed to Abba Kovner in the Vilnius Ghetto, but which appears throughout writings from the Holocaust

³²⁴ Robert W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), *passim*.

³²⁵ "Built like an athlete - tall and strong with a bull neck" and "he was considered the most handsome and elegant officer of the Jewish police". Ionas Turkov, *C'était ainsi: 1939-1943, la vie dans le ghetto de Varsovie* (Paris: Austral, 1995), p.118.

³²⁶ Kermish, *To Live with Honor*, p.302 – a description of the man who ran the cemetery.

³²⁷ Adler, *In the Warsaw Ghetto*, p.21.

the Jewish police “these little young men, dressed up in high shiny boots and uniform caps”³²⁸ or those explicitly without, notably German Jewish refugees.³²⁹

Not overtly derogatory, but clearly a commentary of sorts on masculinity, is the story of David Feinberg who attempted to break out of the Lachwa ghetto – at the last minute he was set upon by the town Rabbi (someone who might be considered the most feminised of men) and a group of women who forced him to turn back. Ultimately the Jews of the Lachwa ghetto were killed and Feinberg was powerless to stop it.³³⁰ The association of Feinberg’s final decision to stay with a Rabbi and women is a subtle denigration of his masculinity and again makes it clear that gendered analysis of events continued to hold significance in the ghettos. In representing Feinberg’s actions as unmasculine, I would argue, his detractors show that masculinity was at that point still an available option.³³¹ Similarly, in September 1942 Lewin wrote, “I saw with my own eyes how a young, strong man and a young, attractive woman were shot.” It is interesting that, even at that advanced stage of the Holocaust, Lewin’s description of the young man as ‘strong’ and the young woman as ‘attractive’ show a sustained gender discourse within the ghetto using the same language of gender as found before the war. Finally, the *Chronicle of the Łódź Ghetto* refers to the “last and final privilege” – to take a “bag and a stick” with you when deported³³² - which, I would argue, although some women do use sticks, was a significant piece of a man’s gendered paraphernalia and, as such, both the fact that it was retained until relatively late and that its removal is referenced in the *Chronicle*, shows its ongoing importance in ghetto life and, therefore, the ongoing insistence of questions of masculinity.

Finally, the masculine environment in the ghetto was reinforced by the strong patriarchal system inherent in its organisational structure. The ghettos of Eastern Europe were managed almost

³²⁸ Kermish, *To Live with Honor*, p.94.

³²⁹ This is most clearly seen in the *Chronicle of the Łódź Ghetto* (Lucjan Dobroszycki, ed., *The Chronicle of the Łódź Ghetto, 1941-1944* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984), p.163 and p.167).

³³⁰ Taken from *Fun Letztn Hurbn*, No.3,6 and cited in Dov Levin, ‘The Fighting Leadership of the Judenräte in the Small Communities of Poland’ in Yisrael Gutman and Cynthia J. Haft, eds., *Patterns of Jewish Leadership in Nazi Europe 1933-1945: Proceedings of the Third Yad Vashem International Historical Conference – April 1977* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1979), p.146.

³³¹ Another reading of this source might be that the author is praising Feinberg for placing his commitment to family and community over his own survival and perhaps even commending a more feminised masculinity. Nevertheless, by tying his choice to a group of women and a Rabbi the author is clearly commenting on Feinberg’s masculinity, regardless of exactly what that comment is, thereby proving, as I suggest above, that questions of masculinity remained pertinent to ghetto discourse.

³³² Dobroszycki, *The Chronicle of the Łódź Ghetto*, p.164.

exclusively by Jewish men, however more than this, many of them were men who had played important roles in prewar Jewish society.³³³ As such they were men who respected, and belonged to, traditional patriarchal hierarchies and it was these hierarchies that they replicated in the ghetto.³³⁴ Furthermore, the structure of the ghetto was established by the Germans, who also functioned through a strongly patriarchal organisational system, whose influence penetrated the entire ghetto leadership, seen most clearly if we consider Adler's reference to the *Führerprinzip* in the Warsaw ghetto. Adler's main point is that the ghetto employed an extremely complex and developed bureaucracy which mimicked that of the Germans, however his comments can be extended to include the nature of the hierarchy employed.³³⁵ The hierarchy promoted by the ghetto leadership also created new levels of status, which in turn reinforced a gendered atmosphere in the ghetto. Most notable in this regard is the infighting seen amongst the members of the Judenrat, and even amongst their wives, something which Kruk notes taking place in the Vilnius ghetto.³³⁶ With reference to these struggles for status and position Corni stresses that, "[f]rom what is known about the subject, this was not a conflict based on profound ideological differences, but was purely a question of power".³³⁷ In this case, as in others, I would argue that the struggle for power itself is a struggle for, and display of, masculinity, even if in some cases women were involved, and contrasts starkly with a lack of such competition in sources from the deconstruction, since a lack of institutions and organisations of power made struggles within any such institution impossible, and is proof of the very different gendered environments in the two periods.

For a few Jewish men in the West the conditions of this period created a similarly male gendered environment. Particularly this can be seen in the case of the EIF, sources from which time and again emphasise the action of those involved and their attempts to improve themselves, both by assisting others (particularly young children who crossed into Switzerland to avoid deportation) and by spreading Zionism and religious Jewish practice amongst their group. Just as in the ghettos, this favouring of action over passivity created an environment which encouraged masculinity. This was

³³³ A number of notable Jewish men fled Poland before the Holocaust - a fact which became significant in the formation of the masculinities of younger men, nonetheless many remained and were involved in the establishment of the ghetto leadership.

³³⁴ Yosef Kermisz, 'The Judenrat in Warsaw' in Gutman and Haft, eds., *Patterns of Jewish Leadership in Nazi Europe 1933-1945*, p.76.

³³⁵ Adler, *In the Warsaw Ghetto*, p.228.

³³⁶ Kruk, *The Last Days of the Jerusalem of Lithuania*, p.156.

³³⁷ Corni, *Hitler's Ghettos*, p.153.

most obviously seen in the continuation of *La Route* - a process of mentoring and self-development which allowed a young man to “prendre sa position d'homme”.³³⁸ Despite the limitations presented by the persecution of Jews and the clandestine activities in which they were also involved, sources suggest that this practise continued throughout the war with young men taking the time to develop their masculine identity in this overt way, something which clearly indicates a strongly male gendered environment. Moreover, for the young men in the EIF, power struggles, as described above in the ghettos, existed and attest to the ongoing discourse of masculinity that encouraged such battles.³³⁹

Involvement in gentile underground organisations also provided a masculine environment which encouraged, and even imposed, action on many young Jewish men in the West during this period, offering a stark contrast to their experiences during the deconstruction. The underground organisations of the West, as was also the case in many, if not most, similar Polish organisations, whilst involving women – performing select, dangerous and extremely important roles – largely comprised men, and were established with the primary aim of acting, whether just in a defensive manner or whether proactively attempting to sabotage German efforts. This sense of action, very different from that found during the deconstruction and discussed in the previous chapter, can be most clearly seen in Samuel Schryver’s comments when helping his mother and sister to escape from Westerbork, “[w]hen you are in the resistance you do things differently”. Later when he decides to find his mother a hospital bed to protect her, an almost impossible thing to achieve, he simply but proudly comments, “I got it done”.³⁴⁰ Nonetheless, for most Jews in Western Europe, particularly those in hiding, this kind of gendered environment encouraging action was not available in the way it was for many of those in the ghettos.

Normative Masculinities

Where the deconstruction had little by little rendered Jewish men virtually incapable of performing the normative identities toward which they had previously oriented themselves, life in the ghettos, in spite of its horrendous hardships, offered, or perhaps imposed upon men the possibility of a lifestyle where

³³⁸ “Assume his position as a man”. This process is mentioned in several sources in the CDJC but particularly CDJC - CCXX -45 written on the 15/03/1942 attests to the fact that it continued throughout the war.

³³⁹ CDJC - CDXXVII – 1 is a series of letters between Monsieur Eskenasy and F. Musnik, both of the EIF, detailing their internal power rivalry during 1942.

³⁴⁰ Shoah Foundation Interview with Samuel Schryver.

those norms could again become a reality. Building upon an environment which encouraged masculine action, opportunities to provide and protect, as well as gain status, were all, to varying degrees, available and practised by Jewish men in the ghettos and were key to the reassertion of tentatively and intermittently strong masculine identities during this period. This sub-chapter will argue therefore, that whilst a considerable number of men never managed to establish stable ghetto lives for themselves and their families, entering the ghettos starving and penniless without any influence or connections and dying soon thereafter, those who did were able to reassert their masculinity through the renewed performance of normative gender identities.

The ghettos of Poland encouraged men to seek work, industry and opportunity in ways that had not been open to them since the German invasion and allowed them, within clear limits, to attempt to provide for and protect their families. Certainly I am not talking of re-establishing careers, or finding work that suited an individual's skills and interests or was in any way comparable to pre-war employment, nonetheless high levels of employment in the larger ghettos, combined with a belief in a productionist agenda and employment-linked rations meant that the notion of provision became an option for many men once the ghettos were established and for some time after. By July 1940, 40,000 of the 146,000 Jews in Łódź ghetto were employed in *ressorts* [workshops] and offices and by March 1942 production workers alone numbered 53,000.³⁴¹ Tabaksblat goes as far as to suggest that in 1942-43, 95% of the ghetto was employed. Perhaps this number is an exaggeration, nonetheless it denotes a trajectory of employment very different from that seen before the establishment of the ghettos. In Warsaw, employment figures were lower, perhaps 30% of the ghetto population was in work, however this still represents the involvement in the working process of "all men aged 15-60 who are fit for work and of more than 30,000 women".³⁴²

Most immediately, the work that these statistics represent provided food: lunch during the day,³⁴³ and limited money with which to buy more food when it was available, thereby avoiding starvation. The benefits of such work for entire families were, however, far more wide ranging. From their establishment, and in line with interwar approaches to economics, the ghetto authorities considered

³⁴¹ Trunk, *Lodz Ghetto*, p.xli.

³⁴² Kermish, *To Live with Honor*, p.259.

³⁴³ In the case of doctors this was a particularly large ration, showing how one's work could directly affect survival and provision.

family as dependents of the worker. Gainful employment for the individual, therefore, had ramifications for their entire family. One example of how this theory was applied can be seen in Łódź ghetto where the Order Service petitioned the Judenrat for improved conditions, with extra food and fuel. Whilst their request was denied, the OS mess was extended to provide food for the men's families,³⁴⁴ a move which both established the policemen themselves as *de facto* providers for their families and saved fuel. For most this provision was aimed at immediate family with whom they lodged in the ghetto, however in some cases it extended to men providing for family in hiding or in other ghettos, as in the case of Perechodnik who regularly sent money to provide for his mother who lived in another town.³⁴⁵

Beyond the provision of food and shelter, men's roles as workers in many ghettos, perhaps more decisively, offered protection, both for themselves and for their families. One means of protection came in the form of the 'work card' which, in various ghettos, at different times, was the basis upon which one's legal existence, and therefore the right to ration cards, limited supplies, accommodation and the 'right' not to be deported, rested.³⁴⁶ Whilst it was certainly not the case that those with work cards were never deported, on several occasions where it was found that someone listed for deportation did possess a work card, their status as a worker was enough to save them, at least in the short term. This was affirmed in Łódź in June 1942 when several men with work cards were listed for deportation, but were ultimately not deported because of their status as workers. The Ghetto Chronicle noted that, "[t]his incident ought to be regarded as extremely important and significant",³⁴⁷ reinforcing the link between work and protection established by Rumkowski and confirmed in his speech of 17 January 1942 in which he stated "only work can save us from the worst calamity".³⁴⁸ Beyond saving himself, a man could sometimes use his work card to secure the safety of his immediate family or, in certain circumstances where a man did not have a wife and children, he could help a sister, other family members or even a friend's family.

Some types of employment offered men further opportunities to protect their families, and members

³⁴⁴ Dobroszycki, *The Chronicle of the Łódź Ghetto*, p.3.

³⁴⁵ Perechodnik, *Am I a Murderer?*, p.92.

³⁴⁶ Ringelblum goes as far as to suggest that people only really existed in the ghettos if they possessed a workcard (Ringelblum, *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto*, p.319).

³⁴⁷ Dobroszycki, *The Chronicle of the Łódź Ghetto*, p.202.

³⁴⁸ Mordechai Chaim Rumkowski from a speech given in the Łódź ghetto on 17 January 1942.

of the OS were in a particularly strong position not only to protect but to use their position to provide their families with employment and preferable accommodation. Perechodnik, as a Jewish policeman, records a round up in which although initially threatened with deportation, the families of policemen were ultimately saved.³⁴⁹ In light of this Perechodnik criticises the behaviour of a police colleague who had given up his armband and hat in order to be deported with his wife suggesting that he had shown “contempt” for his uniform. Not in fact a member of the OS, Zylberberg pretended to be a policeman in order to save himself and later the wife and child of a friend, an act which shows the power held by the OS.³⁵⁰ Zylberberg records that he did not tell his own wife about this event, or several others it later transpires, as it would seem instead that he is attempting to protect her, assuming the danger both of the act and of knowledge of the act, burdening himself alone with the responsibility in a traditionally masculine way.³⁵¹

Clear in the administration of some ghettos, but in the discourses of individuals in almost all of them, and perhaps of most importance in understanding the role played by work in the reassertion of masculine identities, was the productionist agenda. Whilst the administration of ghettos had quite varied approaches to the question of production, and whilst the belief that exploiting the worker potential of the ghettos would secure the ongoing existence of the ghetto was not universal, the hope that the safety of Jewry could be best secured by making a ghetto productive was uppermost in the minds of many Jews. Particularly early on in the life of the ghettos, when mass extermination was barely conceivable for the Jewish masses, the most logical explanation for their existence was as *de facto* labour camps. It followed, therefore, that a productive ghetto would not be liquidated and, equally, that a productive Jew would not be liquidated. For the individual this approach is manifest in Ringelblum's comment that, “[t]here are Jews who wear ribbons on their arms that read: “Jews useful for the economy””³⁵² and in Hurwitz's diary which records, “[w]e need employment to save our families from starving to death and from annihilation”.³⁵³ Whilst the importance of productionism to the collective is summarised by Gutman when he writes, “[b]oth in the maintenance of industry, and in our work in individual units, we must prove that contrary to the accepted assumption that we are not fit for

³⁴⁹ Perechodnik, *Am I a Murderer?*, p.44.

³⁵⁰ Zylberberg, *A Warsaw Diary*, p.71.

³⁵¹ Zylberberg, *A Warsaw Diary*, p.90.

³⁵² Ringelblum, *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto*, p.167.

³⁵³ Hurwitz cited in Alan Adelson and Robert Lapides, eds., *Lodz Ghetto: Inside a Community under Siege* (London: Penguin, 1989), p.95.

any kind of work, we have been very useful, and under present wartime conditions, there is no viable substitute for us. Work in general, and work for the Wehrmacht in particular, are the order of the day.”³⁵⁴ Kessler also notes that, “the Jewish masses rapidly became proletarians in their efforts to keep the Jewish community alive. The slogan of making the Jewish masses productive was translated into reality so as to rebut the accusation that Jews are an antisocial unproductive element.”³⁵⁵

Ultimately the notion that “there was no viable substitute” for the Jews and their labour proved irrelevant to German decision makers, and yet something, perhaps the need to feel at least partially in control of their own destinies, compelled ghetto populations to believe in productionism and to act accordingly. By adhering to the productionist agenda the individual could provide food for his family and perhaps use his own position to find work for family or friends whilst believing that he was not only protecting himself and his family due to his role as a necessary worker, but the broader stability of the ghetto as an entity, and thereby, again the safety of himself and his family.³⁵⁶ This collective effort, however, also arguably caused conflict, both for the individual and the community. Although not something referenced in diaries, one might argue that the masculinity that came with being able to protect one's family must have been balanced by a shame or emasculation associated with aiding one's oppressor. Without sources any such conclusion must remain speculative, yet more concrete is the impact of productionism on the collective since the necessary corollary of one's own contribution supporting the continued existence of the ghetto labour force, is that another man's limited contribution might actively undermine it. As Gutman noted during deportations in Warsaw “skilled workers in the various workshops complained about the employment of unskilled workers, claiming that they endangered the continued existence of the shops and the skilled or professional nucleus”.³⁵⁷

Of equal importance, the sense of being able to provide for one's family seems to have extended beyond formal employment, and the belief that some had in the ghetto as a semi-autonomous entity, discussed above, seems to have encourage many ghetto inhabitants to see themselves as

³⁵⁴ Yisrael Gutman, 'The Concept of Labor in Judenrat Policy' in Gutman and Haft, eds., *Patterns of Jewish Leadership in Nazi Europe 1933-1945*, p.162.

³⁵⁵ Kessler, *The Wartime Diary of Edmund Kessler*, p.46.

³⁵⁶ Christopher Browning, *The Origins of the Final Solution* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2004), p.125.

³⁵⁷ Gutman, 'The Concept of Labor in Judenrat Policy', p.171.

autonomous and therefore as having the power to act to provide for their families. This will to provide was manifested in numerous ways but included smuggling, bribery and the exploiting of connections or position to secure food and shelter. As Trunk comments, “[i]n the ghettos (for example, Warsaw, Vilnius, Bialystok et al.), the individual ... could attempt somehow to keep himself from going under with his own strength, independent of the ghetto administration...”³⁵⁸ In most ghettos smuggling played a central role in sustaining ghetto life and those who took part in it, whether on an individual level or in large scale movement of food and goods, were able to perform an act seen as daring and dangerous, and therefore masculine, whilst also providing for their loved ones. Again, although smuggling was by no means carried out uniquely by men, where it was, it was accompanied by a discourse of masculinity. Plotkin quotes Max Glauben, a young smuggler: “I was frightened most of the time. I don’t think I ever felt like a hero. None of us did. I felt like I was being a provider, like I was defying the Nazis, like I was keeping some Jewish people alive and not allowing the Nazis to get the best of me”³⁵⁹ – although Glauben denies heroism he cites the two key masculine elements of provision and protection in his reason for smuggling.

Men, however, were not the only workers and they were certainly not the only smugglers; the requirement that smugglers be able to move easily in and out of the ghetto favoured children, whilst the need to spend periods of time passing as a gentile made smuggling easier for women than men. On this basis historians have suggested that the importance of work and smuggling for provision had a significant impact on power brokering within families – Corni cites an example of a young child who sat at the head of the table at mealtimes as befitted his status as provider,³⁶⁰ whilst Unger comments, “[w]hen a mother and children worked while the father did not – a situation which arose frequently –

³⁵⁸ Trunk, *Lodz Ghetto*, p.401 – Trunk contrasts these examples of Warsaw and other ghettos with the situation in Łódź where, due to its particularly harsh administration, such self-determination was not possible. More closely managed than other ghettos and hermetically sealed, all but removing the possibility of smuggling, it has been suggested that decisions concerning work, and therefore provision, and ultimately life and death, could only be made by Rumkowski himself. Whilst one might argue that this led men to feel less independent and powerful than in other ghettos, the success of Łódź’s productionist aims may also have given added confidence to its inhabitants concerning their own survival as workers and that of their families as workers and, or, dependents. Moreover, if Trunk is correct in his suggestions that one key reason for establishing production in the Łódź ghetto was to bring money into the ghetto in order to allow workers to provide for their families, then it is not unreasonable to suggest that the inhabitants too might have appreciated this reasoning, flawed as it was.

³⁵⁹ Diane Plotkin, ‘Smuggling in the Ghettos: Survivor Accounts from the Warsaw, Lodz, and Krakow Ghettos’ in Sterling, ed., *Life in the Ghettos During the Holocaust*, p.96.

³⁶⁰ Corni, *Hitler’s Ghettos*, p.137.

family tensions sometimes built up”.³⁶¹ If this was indeed a “frequent” occurrence one might argue that it undermined my thesis that men were able to use their employment, and the consequent provision, to secure their masculinity. However, with the exception of Donat, who writes of his humiliation at having to ask his wife for money to buy cigarettes, I can find no examples of such issues arising.³⁶²

Moreover, I would suggest, conversely, that those few cases that we know of, and particularly that cited by Corni, reinforce my argument, illustrating the continued reliance on a patriarchal social and familial structure which rewarded provision. Whilst that child’s father might well be undermined, the fact that the child, as chief provider, becomes patriarch shows the importance of provision, a traditionally masculine act. It follows therefore, that in families where the father remained the chief provider, and statistics from the ghettos suggest that men continued to be paid more than women or children and were more likely to be employed, he would be rewarded for doing so, retaining his role as patriarch and consequently reinforcing his own masculinity.

Further reinforcing this traditional patriarchal structure were the ghetto priorities seen in a letter to the Jewish communal self-help organisation on 24 June 1942 concerning employment for refugees in the ghetto which noted that any available assistance should be aimed at men, despite the fact that they constituted a minority amongst the refugees. Clearly, in spite of their statistical minority, it was understood that men’s employment was more important than that of women.³⁶³ I would suggest that this illustrates my earlier point concerning a masculine space and discourse existing in the ghetto: whilst women and children also worked, earned money, provided food and protected their families, for men to work was to conform to the masculine environment which prevailed in the ghetto, thus reinforcing their masculinity.

Finally we hear numerous examples of random acts performed by men to protect their friends, family or comrades. Such events show men performing key elements of masculinism but, as importantly, the way in which they are recorded makes it clear that they were overtly understood as such. Both men themselves and their families are keen to note acts of heroism and bravery and tend to record them

³⁶¹ Unger, ‘The Status and Plight of Women in the Lodz Ghetto’, p.135.

³⁶² Donat, *Holocaust Kingdom*, p.21.

³⁶³ Kermish, *To Live with Honor*, p.361.

in a way which shows the masculine defiance of the man involved.³⁶⁴ Janine David records her father leading the family away from the Umschlagplatz and ultimately it is his masculine bravado in doing so that saved their lives - as a German confronted them, shouted at her father and pointed a gun at his chest, her father kept his cool and almost seemed to smile.³⁶⁵ Similarly, writing of himself, Zylberberg records changing route through the sewers when trying to escape, he goes on to comment, "Thank God I had decided to change the route, or we should all have died".³⁶⁶ Breitowicz, in one of many such descriptions, writes about his role in helping several Jews to escape a deportation train, "[a]s the train gathered speed, I began to work on the door and noticed that there was something wrong with the lock".³⁶⁷ In each case Breitowicz does not simply note such action but attributes it directly, and uniquely, to himself. Each of these examples shows a man who writes about himself protecting others and, in each case, either he himself or one of those protected clearly depicts it as a masculine act.

Certainly for many of those in Western Europe these elements of normative masculine identity could not be so clearly reasserted as they were in the ghettos. Particularly for those in hiding the diversity of circumstances makes any universal conclusions even harder than for those in ghettos or resistance organisations and renders discourses of productionism irrelevant since returning to work was very rarely an option. Nevertheless the importance of provision and protection for those in the West who were able to secure it, highlights its ongoing significance in discourses of gender. Some Jewish individuals and families in Western Europe were able to find a stable hiding place which offered men the chance to reassert elements of their masculine identities. For many simply the fact of finding that hiding place, when others could not, was a masculine act, leading to their own and their family's survival, a point which is stressed by Hans Angress who tells the story of a friend who went into hiding on the advice of Hans's brother. After the war the friend directly credits Hans's brother with his survival and thereby with the ultimate ability to protect.³⁶⁸ Beyond the masculinity inherent in finding a hiding place for one's family, installing one's family in that space and then conducting a

³⁶⁴ Whilst sources which involve men recording their own bravery are clearly questionable, still the nature of the record at least tells us something about the ability and desire to act in a masculine way as well as a general sense that such action was possible in the ghettos.

³⁶⁵ Janine David, *A Square of Sky, A Touch of Earth: A Wartime Childhood in Poland* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981), p.189.

³⁶⁶ Zylberberg, *A Warsaw Diary*, p.173.

³⁶⁷ Jakob Breitowicz, *Through Hell to Life* (New York: Shengold Publishers Inc., 1983), p.39.

³⁶⁸ Shoah Foundation Interview with Hans Angress (found at sf.usc.edu and viewed repeatedly between 01/01/2013 and 20/12/13).

relatively stable existence for whatever time possible, were both ways through which men were able to provide for and protect their families.

One example of this is Benno Benninga's father who found a hiding place for his entire family in Holland and was able to pay for it using diamonds in which he had invested early on in the war, and Benninga's account shows his father's clear pleasure in his ability to provide for and protect his family. Once installed the family settled into traditional gendered patterns with the male host, Benninga and his father sitting down to play cards together regularly in the evening. Later this situation became abusive, with their hostess regularly asking them to leave, accusing the family of theft and verbally assaulting them. However, whilst these circumstances were particularly damaging to Benninga's father, who tried to protect his wife and children from the worst of the situation, significantly, it was not the realities of hiding, enclosure or reliance which damaged his father, as they were initially reaffirming for his masculinity. It was instead only the uncontrollable hostess that limited his masculine ability to provide and protect.³⁶⁹ A similar masculine reassertion can be seen in Alex Meijer's father who was very clearly proud of his success in finding a hiding place (in a farm in the Dutch countryside) and in equipping it in advance with provisions and their possessions to support their time in hiding. As with Benninga's family the Meijer family settled into very traditional gender patterns of behaviour whilst in hiding, with Meijer Sr. behaving in an overtly patriarchal manner, taking control, educating and disciplining his children, and delegating housework to his wife and daughter whilst he and his son spent periods of time smoking together and playing cards.³⁷⁰ Effectively, not only did Meijer Sr.'s masculinity benefit from providing his family with a stable hiding place but the hiding place itself then allowed him to perform his role as patriarch, thereby doubly asserting his normative masculine identity.

Also very clear in his masculine success, Otto Berets responded, when asked if he would like someone to take his children from the family hiding place he had organised to another, commented, "I have protected my family and my children up to this point, I will protect them further".³⁷¹ A similarly

³⁶⁹ Benno Benninga, *In Hiding: Surviving an Abusive 'Protector' and the Nazi Occupation of Holland* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2007), p.22.

³⁷⁰ Meijer, *Alex's Diary*, p.2 and *passim* – Meijer notes that as his mother lived with them in the attic she did the cooking. Had she been hidden elsewhere, as had originally been the plan, the men would have eaten with their hosts (p.18).

³⁷¹ Shoah Foundation Interview with Otto Berets (found at sf.usc.edu and viewed repeatedly between 01/01/2013 and 20/12/13).

stable hiding placed allowed Otto Frank to continue performing his role as patriarch within his family, indeed Miep Gies, who supported the family throughout their period in hiding, later wrote that whilst in hiding Frank grew in confidence and decisiveness, losing much of the nervousness that she felt had characterised his behaviour during the deconstruction.³⁷² Finally, is the example of Joseph van West who, initially in hiding alone on a chicken farm in Holland, lost both his mother and sister in a roundup.³⁷³ On hearing the news van West gave up his hiding and returned to Amsterdam no longer caring about his own survival. However, on reaching Amsterdam he found a letter from his wife requesting his help. In his testimony van West is insistent that it was only the fact that someone needed him that kept him alive at that time. He was able then to organise hiding for himself and his wife, and for his mother- and father-in-law in a nearby house, allowing him to continue providing food for all three and protecting them when required. Joseph van West makes it clear in his account that he preferred this situation greatly to the period of the deconstruction which he had spent in Amsterdam since he was much safer and with his 'family'.

For these reasons, for men in hiding with their families, as long as circumstances allowed, a sense of masculine assertion was easier than for those who were in hiding alone. For men on their own, either because of their age or because families were often separated in order to find suitable hiding spaces, a lack of involvement with others made it virtually impossible to protect or provide, let alone seek any type of status and, as with the deconstruction, where these were lacking, relative success in individual elements of masculinity, for example physical improvement, had a minimal impact. Some of these men, however, were able to combine situations of hiding with working clandestinely, often for underground organisations, and were able thereby to assert elements of their masculinity. Sem Hartz spent some time hiding alone forging stamps for false identity documents and communicating with another man in hiding nearby through writing notes and letters. Whilst forging documents seems to have allowed Hartz to feel that he was achieving something, both acting and protecting others, his association with a neighbour supported this action by providing a limited amount of homosocial interaction and engagement, effectively giving him with an audience for his achievements. Similarly Eric Baruch, who like many men hid in a number of different places throughout the war, often alone and always without his family, found masculine assertion by assisting in hiding others. At one point

³⁷² Lee, *The Hidden Life of Otto Frank*, p.86.

³⁷³ Shoah Foundation Interview with Joseph van West (found at sfi.usc.edu and viewed repeatedly between 01/01/2013 and 20/12/13).

placed in a castle in Belgium, Baruch was involved in designing and building false walls and hidden rooms to assist in concealing a number of Jews and Communists, actions and skills of which Baruch was very clearly proud.

Another option for some young Jewish men in the West was 'hiding' in plain sight, posing as itinerant farm labourers and finding work in rural locations using false papers. Many of these men speak in very masculine terms of the period, with such work allowing them to provide for and protect themselves, whilst also often using the minimal money or food they earned to support other family members in hiding. In this vein Kampelmacher notes his satisfaction at being able to provide for both himself and his host family with the money he earned working on farms.³⁷⁴ Jewish men working on farms in this period were also able to assert their masculinity through the labour they undertook, which both provided them with status, on the farms and locally, as well as making them physically fit – something I shall go on to consider later with regards to those working on resistance farms. This is something which Kampelmacher also emphasises, showing great pride in the work he undertook when placed by the resistance on a farm in Holland which later turned out to be notorious for testing its workers with hard labour.³⁷⁵ Joseph Brenig seemed equally to thrive whilst working on a farm in France, performing physical feats he had not known he was capable of and being part of the local community. Brenig further comments that he became so absorbed in this new life and false identity that he virtually forgot his former existence, something which particularly allowed him to feel all the masculine achievements of a farm labourer. Whilst I found no other examples of men admitting to assuming their false identities in quite the way that Brenig did, the way in which many write about the period might lead the historian to wonder if Brenig was perhaps not alone in this act and in feeling its benefits on his gender identity.³⁷⁶

For those in the West involved with underground resistance organisations the opportunities to reassert their masculinities, in many of the same ways as in the East, through the normative elements of their gender identities – particularly providing and protecting – were numerous. Relatively well-equipped, one way in which many of these groups allowed men to reassert their normative masculinities was through training in, and the use of, weaponry, allowing men to feel powerful for the

³⁷⁴ Kampelmacher, *Fighting for Survival*, p.140.

³⁷⁵ Kampelmacher, *Fighting for Survival*, p.106.

³⁷⁶ Shoah Foundation Interview with Joseph Brenig.

first time in many years and also, importantly, to attempt to protect both themselves and others. Whilst many testimonies are relatively circumspect when it comes to detail, when asked what they had done in the Resistance most men noted first and repeatedly this training with comments like, "I learned how to handle weapons".³⁷⁷ A teenaged member of a resistance group, Harry Alexander records how, if tackled by Germans, the younger members of his group would run whilst the older members stayed to fight and draw the attention of the Germans.³⁷⁸ Clearly for these men protecting other, younger, members of one's group was as significant as protecting oneself and family. In the case of Samuel Schryver this extended beyond protection to violent action and he speaks, with clear masculine pride, of when his boxing club (eight young men) "knocked the daylight out of those two dozen Nazis".³⁷⁹ Equally important, raids on German convoys and relationships with local farmers and communities allowed these Jewish men to feel that they were again providers. And whilst, for the most part, the men in this situation were young men without wives or children, provision for themselves and their groups remained of key importance to the reinforcement of male gender identities.

The final element of masculinism undermined so severely during the deconstruction was status. However, where, once in the ghettos, providing and protecting were replaced in much the same form as they had been removed, the reestablishment of status was more complex. There was a minimal return of status based in public space particularly seen through the sense of the ghetto as a Jewish society, discussed above, and the return to public life in the form of organisations and events including theatres, libraries and political meetings, the importance of which is discussed throughout numerous diaries and accounts, even if they were largely still required to conduct their business in secret. For the most part, however, it was an assertion of newly gained power and positions which provided status for most Jewish men in the ghettos.

Key to these positions and power were leadership roles, which many exercised for the first time in the ghettos. Regardless of the extent to which the power they seemed to exert was in fact referred, or

³⁷⁷ This particularly comment is from a Shoah Foundation Interview with Kurt Leuchter (found at sf.usc.edu and viewed repeatedly between 01/01/2013 and 20/12/13), but many other survivors who spent time in resistance organisations had similar experiences.

³⁷⁸ Shoah Foundation Interview with Harry Alexander (found at sf.usc.edu and viewed repeatedly between 01/01/2013 and 20/12/13).

³⁷⁹ Shoah Foundation Interview with Samuel Schryver.

even imagined, the Judenräte, OS, housing committees and most other organisations with significant influence were predominantly peopled by men and the power they seemed to wield translated into masculine status. Also of importance to masculine status, these roles and positions of power re-established a hierarchy where men wielded power over other men, providing the homosocial masculine exchange which I have discussed as central to masculine identity.

The Judenräte, the highest echelons of Jewish ghetto leadership, however, far from providing the best example of the impact of this male ability to wield power, in fact raise most questions for the historian concerning the limits of this power, and perhaps consequently concerning the limits of the masculinities of those involved. Direct contact with the German occupying authorities meant that many members of the Judenräte had a greater understanding of their own powerlessness than those below them. Often forced into positions of leadership, these men faced both the disappointment and anger of the Jews who looked to them for impossible solutions and the humiliating derision of the Germans with whom they dealt.³⁸⁰ Immediately aware of their limited bargaining power, members of the Judenräte were later among the first to understand the true nature of the Germans' intentions towards the Jews, and throughout the period placed themselves in physical danger from contact with the Germans. That several entire Judenräte, as well as many individual members, were killed by the Germans as a display of power only confirms the real danger of their position despite the power they also wielded within the Jewish community.

In certain cases, however, the Judenräte also faced challenges to their power from the ghetto community. In Warsaw, Trunk argues, for example, "[t]he Jewish Society for Social Aid (Z.T.O.S.)...had such social prestige that the *Judenrat*, whether it wanted to or not, had to reckon with their position."³⁸¹ Similarly, Sterling quotes Zuckerman of the Jewish Combat Organisation (ZOB) in Warsaw saying, "[a]nd so we defeated the *Judenrat*. The situation reached a stage where Mark Lichtenbaum didn't know whom to fear more: the Germans or the Jewish Combat Organisation. When the Germans came to him and insisted that he appear before the Jewish activists and organise the pacific evacuation of the ghetto, he answered them: I am not the government in the ghetto. There

³⁸⁰ Sources for this powerlessness in the face of the Germans are myriad but a clear example can be seen in Isaiah Trunk, 'The Typology of the Judenräte in Eastern Europe' in Gutman and Haft, eds., *Patterns of Jewish Leadership in Nazi Europe 1933-1945*, p.20.

³⁸¹ Trunk, *Lodz Ghetto*, p.402.

is another government: the Jewish Combat Organisation.”³⁸² Whilst in analysing this quotation we should allow for a degree of bravado on the part of the ZOB, nonetheless it raises questions concerning the dominance of the Judenrat in the ghetto. Moreover, regardless of who prevailed, Feierstein argues that the struggle for power itself was masculine.³⁸³

These realities of life in the Judenräte lead one to conclude that the idea of masculinity exercised through power and leadership is an extremely questionable assumption in their case,³⁸⁴ and yet one might also argue that it was exactly their exposure to danger which placed these men in a position to reinforce their masculinities. First, their vulnerability to the Germans was based directly upon their position within the ghetto; chosen in many cases specifically for their influence within the prewar Jewish community,³⁸⁵ it was only as men of influence and fame that they were useful to the Germans for their sacrificial value. Thus their arrest, detention or humiliation by the German authorities, whilst clearly having an extremely negative impact, also served to affirm their position and status. Secondly, some have argued that the poor reputation of the Judenräte amongst the Jews has been exaggerated. Specifically, Gustavo Corni has suggested that negative appraisals of the Judenräte and their members, with which the historian is well acquainted, are a product of postwar Israeli socio-political influences rather than contemporary opinion, an argument which is reinforced by numerous diaries from the ghettos which seem to hold the Judenräte in high esteem.³⁸⁶ If this was indeed the case, then the respect in which they were held within the ghetto would also have acted to reinforce masculine identities amongst the members of the Judenräte. Finally, on a more practical level, as overall managers of the ghetto, the Judenräte controlled housing, food distribution, work, security and taxation and were therefore well placed to exercise power, even if this power brought with it extra responsibilities or burdens. In some cases, although heavily dependent upon their particular circumstances, these men were able to exploit this internal power to boost their own masculinity.

³⁸² Feierstein, 'The Jewish Resistance', p.241.

³⁸³ Feierstein, 'The Jewish Resistance', p.238.

³⁸⁴ This is a point stressed by Kermisz who references a member of the Judenrat who resigned because he felt 'impotent'. If this has not been altered in translation it is interesting here that he uses a language of masculinity, which suggests that even if his own masculinity is damaged, the discourse still exists and holds some power, (Kermisz, 'The Judenrat in Warsaw', p.86).

³⁸⁵ Corni, *Hitler's Ghettos*, p.65.

³⁸⁶ Amongst these is Kaplan's diary (Kaplan, *The Scroll of Agony*) which refers to the members of the Judenräte as "musclemen", a term which seems to value the masculinity of those it referred to, particularly if we consider discourses of the 'muscle Jew' prevalent in relation to Palestine in the prewar period.

For those Jewish men one or two levels down the ghetto administration the impact of power and responsibility seems to have had clearer results for gender identities. Still with enough power to influence events to their own advantage, but without the notoriety and heightened risk of those at the very top, men with less visible roles in the ghetto administration were able to perform numerous acts to gain status and to reinforce their masculinity. One of the clearest examples of this is given by Adler, a lawyer before the war, who worked in the Warsaw Ghetto administration for many years and recorded the numerous acts of personal benefit that this work afforded.³⁸⁷ Adler, or so his account would suggest, did not avail himself of such opportunities, but he notes many others who did, and his style of living suggests that somehow he was able to use his position to survive the war with only limited hardship. Perks for those working in the ghetto organisation, depending on their position, included not only the usual ability to protect and provide for their families that were synonymous with being a worker, but access to better housing and food, the ability to find work for members of their families, protection from deportation and forced labour, advance information concerning German plans and, perhaps most importantly, the self-esteem and power that came with leadership itself. Of course the perks of involvement in the ghetto administrations were not available to most Jewish men and varied depending on one's position; nevertheless, particularly in the bigger ghettos, large unwieldy organisational structures, involving a little over 12,000 people (mainly men) in Łódź, and at least 6,000 in the Warsaw Jewish Council which employed only 500 workers before the war, provided access to power for significant numbers of Jewish men. The fact that the ghetto administration, in contrast to the Judenräte or the OS, would also have employed a small number of women, reinforces rather than undermines the impact of these positions of power on masculinities since the nature of their roles largely underscored the strongly patriarchal structure of the ghetto administration and therefore the masculinity of those men it employed.

The OS were another group of men who used their leadership and power within the ghettos to assert their status and thereby their male gender identities. Entirely staffed by men,³⁸⁸ the OS, beyond the aforementioned ability to protect and provide, enabled their workers to reinforce their masculinity through traditional masculine tropes – physicality, in many cases violence, uniform and order. In contrast to the Judenräte which tended to comprise men of experience and standing, each OS was

³⁸⁷ Adler, *In the Warsaw Ghetto*, p.86.

³⁸⁸ Dobroszycki, *The Chronicle of the Łódź Ghetto*, p.286. The late creation of women police confirms rather than challenges the point made above.

made up of younger men with no previous experience of power who were often outsiders from other cities with fewer family ties.³⁸⁹ For these men the OS offered the novel experience of leadership and power. As Turkov notes, Scherinski had few troubles recruiting men for the OS since, “ces gens avaient vu dans cette ‘institution’ nouvelle créée un moyen de faire carrière, une source de revenus et une occasion d’assouvir leur soif de pouvoir”.³⁹⁰ Drawing strongly on masculinities prevalent in much of Europe since the First World War, but also upon that of the dominant Germans, the OS seem to have thrived through an *esprit de corps*, seen in Kaplan’s writings but also made clear by Adler, despite his own professed detachment.³⁹¹

Beyond the image that the OS had of themselves as masculine, the broader ghetto community, despite many misgivings about their behaviour, clearly also saw the OS as masculine, with their position and power conferring upon them a status within the ghetto community, something which would also have acted to reinforce the masculinities of those involved in the OS. In this vein Kaplan comments, “[t]he residents of the ghetto are beginning to think they are in Tel Aviv. Strong, bona fide policemen from among our brothers, to whom you can speak in Yiddish.”³⁹² Very few had anything positive to say about the OS, but many comments still speak in this way of a grudging acknowledgement of their masculinity.

Outside the official ghetto leadership, other positions of power existed and, again, we can clearly see them being used to reinforce the masculinity of the men who held them. Of particular note in this regard, are the men involved in the resistance organisations of the ghettos. Some male members of these organisations used their roles to assert themselves as leaders and to exercise a degree of power and influence, in some cases over their own troops, and in some ghettos more universally as they became seen by the Judenrat as “an alternative to the conventional form of leadership, to be activated when mediation failed”.³⁹³ This was particularly the case for those men involved in resistance organisations run along military lines, such as Pinkus Kartin, a former captain in the international brigades during the Spanish Civil War and founder of The People’s Guard (GL)

³⁸⁹ Corni, *Hitler’s Ghettos*, p.108.

³⁹⁰ “They saw this recently created institution as somewhere to build a career, earn some money and slake their thirst for power”. Turkov, *C’était ainsi*, p.114.

³⁹¹ Political parties and social groups also thrived on a similar military style *esprit de corps*, something which Sierakowiak records as does Trunk, *Lodz Ghetto*, p.33.

³⁹² Kaplan, *The Scroll of Agony*, p.234.

³⁹³ Levin, ‘The Fighting Leadership of the Judenräte’, p.145.

established in the Warsaw ghetto.³⁹⁴ Similarly, in his postwar account, Rotem writes about his work with the ZOB in Warsaw noting that Zuckerman, their leader, referred to him as “the major link of the ZOB, my aide-de-camp and assistant”,³⁹⁵ a position of power which clearly bolstered his masculinity. Led by a triumvirate of men along traditionally military lines, the patriarchal leadership structure of the ZOB clearly acted to reinforce the masculinities of its members. Status through position remained a more illusive element of their normative masculinities for Jewish men in Western resistance organisations than for some in the East, however. Whilst the resistance organisations of the ghettos were run by Jews, as slightly disadvantaged members of Western resistance organisations, either due to the need to remain circumspect concerning their Jewish identities, or because of foreign nationalities and accents - many were German or Austrian Jews with clear accents which could only partially be explained with reference to Alsace-Lorraine – Jewish men were rarely able to rise in the ranks and thereby assert their status, either through power over others or through use of the public space.

The assertion of status, even if not through leadership roles, was also available, however, to those lower down in resistance organisations both in the East and West and pride in their activities can clearly be seen in the very masculine language used throughout accounts of their work. One example of this is Mary Berg’s description of a group of volunteer farmers as “...ranks of boys and girls who march along the ghetto streets, returning from work outside. All of them are tanned by the sun and refreshed by the free air they have breathed in the fields beyond the city.”³⁹⁶ References to marching in ranks as well as to tans and fresh air link this Zionist group closely to prewar movements in Europe and Palestine which openly espoused new ideals of strong Jewish masculinity. Like wise the Pioneering Youth movements, Brith Hehalutzim and Toporol,³⁹⁷ which became powerful enough to challenge Merin, the head of the Jewish Council in Sosnowiec,³⁹⁸ all of which involved themselves to some degree in agricultural work, spoke in terms clearly affirming their masculinity. Involved in

³⁹⁴ Waclaw Poteranski, *The Warsaw Ghetto: On the 30th Anniversary of the Armed Uprising of 1943* (Warsaw: Interpress, 1973), p.38.

³⁹⁵ Rotem, *Memoirs of a Warsaw Ghetto Fighter*, p.22.

³⁹⁶ Berg, *The Diary of Mary Berg*, p.52.

³⁹⁷ The masculinity of such organisations was reinforced by their composition, largely comprising young people, their leadership roles were often filled by men from working backgrounds including communal workers and trade unionists with strong traditional masculine identities, Kermish, *To Live with Honor*, p.342.

³⁹⁸ Yahil, *The Holocaust*, p.209.

Toporol in the ghetto, Janina Bauman commented, “[w]hat a day! Eight long hours of hard physical work under the blue sky. Can’t imagine anything better.”³⁹⁹

Similarly, resistance organisations in the West often had direct connections with male scouting organisations, reinforcing a predominantly male membership and approach with similar themes of physicality and strength to those seen in the ghettos. Most obviously this link can be seen in the testimony of Joseph Brenig who, too old to be cared for by the *Oeuvre de Secours aux Enfants* (OSE – a French organisation which hid Jewish children during the war), was nonetheless partially supported by them. Most importantly the OSE provided him with a group, a community of young Jewish men with whom he could live and struggle. On many occasions he was fed and protected by the OSE and on one particular occasion he and his group were provided with uniforms and “marched” to a field where they pretended to be a scout group for several weeks before “marching” back to the local railway station and returning the outfits.⁴⁰⁰ Whilst, similarly asserting masculine pride and action through his involvement in the resistance, Poteranski wrote, “[i]n those days especially, nothing was as important as the Movement. We had to amass force and turn it into acts that would be transformed by the meaning of those days.”⁴⁰¹

Although there were women involved throughout the resistance in all countries, the terminology of the organisation varied for men and women, and in the former case is clearly gender affirming. A member of a Dutch, gentile, Resistance group during the war Jonkje Grandia-Smits clearly commented, “it was a man's world”,⁴⁰² Freddie Knoller called his French resistance group “the boys”⁴⁰³ and David Lederman, from an Orthodox Belgian family, recounts his time in the underground like a Boys' Own adventure story including tales of seducing women, stealing life-saving rubber stamps from under the noses of Nazi generals and narrow escapes, finally commenting of his own actions, “[y]ou've got to have a little dose of courage to do that”.⁴⁰⁴ Equally true of ghetto resistance groups, Checinski writes about his resistance ‘cell’, which included six other men and one woman, Genia Szlak, whose role he described as, to “service us, in other words, she delivers to us

³⁹⁹ Janina Bauman, *Beyond These Walls: Escaping the Warsaw Ghetto, a Young Girl's Story* (London: Virago, 2006) p.62.

⁴⁰⁰ Shoah Foundation Interview with Joseph Brenig.

⁴⁰¹ Poteranski, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, p.38.

⁴⁰² IWM - Jonkje Grandia-Smits - (8635/6).

⁴⁰³ IWM - Freddie Knoller - (9092/13).

⁴⁰⁴ Shoah Foundation Interview with David Lederman (found at sf.usc.edu and viewed repeatedly between 01/01/2013 and 20/12/13).

instructions and assignments from the leadership”.⁴⁰⁵ This division of labour is reinforced by Poteranski who notes that the majority of leaders in resistance groups in Łódź were men until later in the life of the ghetto when a few women were admitted. In the main, he suggests, women were more important in forming resistance links outside the ghetto than in resistance organisation within the ghetto.⁴⁰⁶ Even if this division of labour was not quite so clear cut in reality, it is significant that writers have chosen to represent it as such, arguably because of the significance of such a suggestion for their own masculinity. Not dissimilar is Vladka Meed’s description of five fellow resisters shot and killed outside the ghetto. The three men are described thus: Zygmunt, “[h]e had risked his life to save his comrades, and had perished in the attempt”; Yurek, “[h]e had always volunteered for the most arduous tasks and had carried out the most dangerous missions eagerly and skillfully”; and Luszek who distinguished himself in battle and was rewarded with a revolver. In stark contrast, the two women killed with them in identical circumstances are described as “an exquisite but modest girl, like a mother to her brothers...zeal, devotion...carried out her duties faithfully...” and “eighteen, vivacious, stunning, sprightly, always witty”.⁴⁰⁷

Almost identical terms can be seen in descriptions of those in the resistance organisations in hiding in the Polish forests, amongst whom Werner describes four brothers from a town called Zahajki, between 13 and 25: “[t]he oldest...tall and broad-shouldered, with a dark complexion, curly thick black hair, and a fierce look in his eyes. The second... also tall, dark and fierce looking...wore a German hat at a rakish angle...” The youngest they called “the Patzan”, about which Werner comments, “[h]e disliked being called Patzan (“little one”). He wanted to be treated as an equal. He smoked cigarettes and even drank a little with the older partisans. He could ride a horse and had proven himself many times as a fearless fighter against the Germans.”⁴⁰⁸ Effectively, the work such resistance fighters undertook was inherently masculine and therefore gender reinforcing for the men, but quite other for the women involved.

Much the same can be said for those involved in the clandestine resistance organisation, the EIF, in France as for those in the ghettos. In his recorded testimony Climaud, a member of the 6ème,

⁴⁰⁵ Michael M. Checinski, *My Father's Watch* (Jerusalem: Gefen, 1994), p.129.

⁴⁰⁶ Poteranski, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, p.35.

⁴⁰⁷ Meed, *On Both Sides of the Wall*, pp.199-200.

⁴⁰⁸ Harold Werner, *Fighting Back: A Memoir of Jewish Resistance in World War II* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), p.168.

records, with some swagger, living under the same roof as several members of the Gestapo and regularly eating with them. Moreover, he notes with pride that, of around 2000 children he attempted to save, only one was deported.⁴⁰⁹ Maurice Behnson, also a member of the Gême and who was part of a group which joined the maquis after their own organisation was disbanded in 1943, writes of the Jewish recruits immediately, “nous sommes devenus très puissants”, noting that they were considered the most organised and disciplined in the maquis.⁴¹⁰ The status and position that the EIF affords these men clearly allows them to assert strong masculine identities and the existence of numerous women in the organisation, as with the ghetto resistance, does not seem to have diminish the gendered impact of these actions.

Finally we can see leadership and power as relevant to the masculinities of individuals not involved in any organisation or group, but simply asserting themselves within the community. This is particularly the case in times of danger or stress, as seen in Adler’s account of his experiences whilst leading a group of Jews to safety: “[i]n my left hand I grab some warm clothes that I have not had time to put on and rush into the kitchen. I grab the butcher’s chopper (an axe), placed there some time ago for such an emergency as this, and, leading the group, consisting of Lola, Dr. Lewinson, his mother, Giterman’s wife and son, and also M., who has just arrived. I escape down the staircase in total silence. I look around attentively. I am now calm, controlled, resolved to rush upon the enemy and split his head.”⁴¹¹ Adler goes on to recount other similar stories of his assumed leadership whilst hiding in a bunker⁴¹² ending by recording the words of a respected colleague concerning their own work, “[t]he captains are the last to leave the sinking ship”. Clearly Adler sees himself as a captain and draws a good deal of self-respect and masculine pride from that role. This language of captaincy and sacrifice is directly mirrored in that of Czerniakow, who in 1942 speaks of his resolve to emulate the captain of a ship⁴¹³ and Lambert who, in very different circumstances in France, writes that “duty compels me to be the last to leave the ship”.⁴¹⁴ Also similar to this is Frank’s pride in being appointed to run a large tailor’s workshop and the pride in status when he specifically notes the German in

⁴⁰⁹ CDJC – Survivors of the Shoah Series – Climaud.

⁴¹⁰ “We became very powerful”. CDJC - DLXI – 6 Maurice Bernsohn.

⁴¹¹ Adler, *In the Warsaw Ghetto*, p.297.

⁴¹² Adler, *In the Warsaw Ghetto*, p.328.

⁴¹³ Czerniakow, *The Warsaw diary of Adam Czerniakow*, p.376.

⁴¹⁴ Lambert, *Diary of a Witness*, p.153.

charge telling him, "You will be the leader".⁴¹⁵

Once inside the ghetto it seems, however, that the three main masculine norms towards which men oriented themselves became less clearly delineated and of less significance. Whilst the masculinism of provision, protection and status thrived for many men, direct ties to the masculine identities of assimilation, self-hatred and cultural Judaism were only of significance in the reformation of gender identities for a small number of men. Of course conditions varied between ghettos and some record a strong tendency towards support for more traditional Jews whilst others, particularly Łódź, clearly favoured those men with an assimilated identity, but still it is hard to find a close association between these identities and masculine practice in this period.

The only exception to this is in the case of men who oriented themselves towards a specifically Jewish masculinity and whose relationships with descent and heritage seen in the deconstruction became, in the ghettos, a positive association which provided strength and reinforcement to masculine identities. The most obvious example of this phenomenon is the case of Werner who, coming from a strictly Orthodox family in which women wore wigs, boys wore locks and the family kept strictly kosher, seemed to be comparing himself to Moses when he wrote, "I told them we should not delay our mission because of Passover. Just the opposite. Helping the Jews escape from the Wlodawa ghetto was like taking the Jews out of Egypt."⁴¹⁶ Werner also writes of persuading the Wlodawa ghetto Jews to go with him, describing how he told them the stories from the Haggadah and "they understood my message".⁴¹⁷ That this entire process is not only affirming of Werner's relationship to his heritage, but that it directly links to his masculine identity, is seen in comments he makes when meeting Jews who had just escaped from the ghettos: "[t]hey told us that the concept of Jewish partisans had only been a fantasy to them, and here they were looking at us, heroes with guns and grenades – real soldiers."⁴¹⁸

With similar references to masculine tradition built into the Jewish religion Zuckerman wrote, "I must say that never, in any incident, not even in most difficult moments, in the most difficult emotional

⁴¹⁵ Lewis and Frank, *Himmler's Jewish Tailor*, p.33.

⁴¹⁶ Werner, *Fighting Back*, p.119.

⁴¹⁷ Werner, *Fighting Back*, p.121.

⁴¹⁸ Werner, *Fighting Back*, p.119.

distress, not only did I not regret but I blessed the day I came to Warsaw, even in the days of Treblinka. I didn't regret being where I was because I knew I had to be there. I thought: how could I have lived if I had been in some quiet place?! That is, to this very day, I have never blamed or accused anyone. And I don't blame myself either; no, I wasn't led like Isaac to the sacrifice – absolutely not! Not even at moments when I faced death, I had no regrets or complaints.”⁴¹⁹ Finally, drawing on the strength of their forebears, Zylberberg records that in the ghetto a poem was performed entitled 'Masada', the story of a Jewish enclave which resisted the Romans until, ultimately, they committed suicide. The poem included a song which became popular in the ghetto about the link between generations and the line, “[t]he chain has not been broken; the chain continues, from parents to children, from father to son. This is how our parents danced... So we, too, will keep on dancing...”⁴²⁰

This focus on descent and heritage can also specifically be found amongst the Hasidic community and is recorded in Eliach's book, *Hasidic Tales of the Holocaust*, the first chapter of which is entitled "Ancestors and Faith".⁴²¹ This chapter most significantly begins by referring to the suffering of the Holocaust, and the testimonies of that suffering, as "a song, a hymn of praise, a testimony to the eternity of the Jewish people and the greatness of their spirit" and includes a story told in the Sosnowiec ghetto which began, "My dear son Mendel, for fifteen generations in an unbroken chain from father to son, the Halberstam family have...[been] scholars, rabbis and Hasidic zaddikim".⁴²² The book also tells the story of Rabbi Israel Spira of Bluzhov who was strangled by a German in the Bochnia ghetto using the silk halat that he had been given by his grandfather and had belonged to many generations of his family. That he does not die in this attempt on his life the Rabbi later attributes entirely to the halat and its importance to his family.⁴²³

Individual elements of gender identity

Whilst the ghettos and the relative stability they offered allowed for the successful practice of normative masculine identities, many individual elements of masculinity in the same period, in particular contrast to their relative resilience during the deconstruction, became almost immediately

⁴¹⁹ Zuckerman, *A Surplus of Memory*, pp.119-120.

⁴²⁰ Zylberberg, *A Warsaw Diary*, p.34.

⁴²¹ Yaffa Eliach, *Hasidic Tales of the Holocaust* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982).

⁴²² Eliach, *Hasidic Tales of the Holocaust*, p.72.

⁴²³ Eliach, *Hasidic Tales of the Holocaust*, p.11.

unsustainable for all but the most affluent ghetto inhabitants. Chief amongst these individual elements was the body. Here the clearest impact was, for many men, a more overt embodiment – where men had previously been aware of their bodies, but only overtly in particular prescribed circumstances, for example in athletics clubs – the destruction and enclosure forced men into constant and open engagement with their bodies. Brought about, in part, by the emphasis that the ghetto placed on the body through masculinities tied to physicality, something I shall go on to discuss, this increased embodiment was more importantly, however, a natural product of the shrinking of lives which took place during the Holocaust. If all that remains is the self then one's relationship with the body becomes paramount. The extent to which individuals were able to control, protect or use their bodies became not only significant to physical survival but to mental survival and identity, gendered or otherwise. In contrast to this common experience of increased embodiment, David Kahane describes an almost total alienation from his body whilst in the ghetto; specifically, he recorded being made to wear an armband denoting his place of work, and therefore his right to remain in the ghetto, as a “calamity” which made him “no longer the master of his body, but a property of the Arbeitsamt”.⁴²⁴ However, I can find few other examples of this physical distancing and most men express quite the reverse, leading me to assume that Kahane is an exception.

For a select few in the West this overt embodiment was positive and added to the reassertion of masculinity during this period. Some young Jewish men involved with underground organisations in the West were able to use their situations to assert their physicality, a key individual element of masculinities which elsewhere suffered greatly during this period of destruction. This assertion of physicality was particularly the case for those Jews who were members of organisations based in rural locations on farms and which required their members to labour on the farms. Maintaining a strong body – or even developing a strength and physique that you had not previously had – was made possible due to a sufficient supply of food which, although it remained scarce during the war and the question of ration coupons appears frequently in the sources, almost never reached the starvation rations and less that those in the East survived on. Freddie Knoller working with the French Resistance as a courier speaks of doing physical work in order to keep himself strong⁴²⁵ whilst Jacques Breitberg, fresh from the Harvest in French farms and placed by the Resistance with a group

⁴²⁴ Kahane, *Lvov Ghetto Diary*, p.48.

⁴²⁵ IWM - Freddie Knoller (9092/13).

of antisemitic young men unaware of his Judaism, challenges the group to arm-wrestle and in his testimony comments, "I was strong, my muscles... I was strong. Nobody was as strong as me".⁴²⁶ Similarly Joseph Brenig comments proudly of his time working on farms in France, "Hard physical labour – I became extremely good at this."⁴²⁷

However, whilst bodies could occasionally be a positive element of masculinity in the period of the destruction and were, during this period of enclosure, used to reinforce masculinities through asserting or diminishing the masculinity of others – something I have considered already – in the ghettos, and despite a more overt sense of embodiment, it is clear that, for most men, their own body became an insurmountable obstacle to the sustaining of the individual elements of gender identity. Perhaps the clearest example of this can be found in the diary of Rosenfeld who describes himself thus: "A slight uneasiness seizes the body. The abdomen gets loose and eventually sags. Hesitant, almost fearful, the hand feels the restless body, finds bones, ribs, finds limbs, and discovers the self, suddenly becoming aware that not so long ago one was fatter, meatier, and one is surprised how quickly the body decays...The abdomen has been sagging, giving the feeling of directly encountering the bowels."⁴²⁸ Rosenfeld goes on to talk about his physical condition as a pain which starts in the back of the head and spreads over the forehead and eyes. Significantly, he notes that whilst this pain is initially comforting as it "gave the illusion of eventual redemption", it soon changed and became "something bad for which there was no remedy".⁴²⁹ Similar language of the body can be found in numerous testimonies including that of Janine David which records her father trying on his suit in the ghetto for one final time before selling it and commenting, "[y]et I was never a fat man, my shoulders were all muscle. Where has it gone to? Can a body melt like this?"⁴³⁰ Similarly embodied, the fictional stories written by Zerkowicz whilst in the ghetto include the line, "[t]hese hands used to be real hands! The heavy loads they lifted. And when my arms were arms and my shoulders were shoulders, I could lift two-meter loads on each, and on top a man could sit and I could dance to a Cossack's tune. And now? You call these arms? Rags, sticks, willow branches like they wave on the Feast of Tabernacles,

⁴²⁶ Shoah Foundation Interview with Jacques Breitberg (found at sf.usc.edu and viewed repeatedly between 01/01/2013 and 20/12/13).

⁴²⁷ Shoah Foundation Interview with Joseph Brenig.

⁴²⁸ Oskar Rosenfeld, *In the Beginning was the Ghetto* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2002), p.16.

⁴²⁹ Rosenfeld, *In the Beginning was the Ghetto*, p.16.

⁴³⁰ David, *Square of Sky, A Touch of Earth*, p.140.

after being pounded on the floor – but I mustn't sin with my words."⁴³¹ In writing this, Zelkowicz most clearly links the body to masculinity in relating his physical collapse to his ability to work and to how other people view him and his role in society. Yet, in all of these quotations we see male bodies, an element of every masculinity regardless of its orientation, collapsing and the struggle that men had with that change.

That the damage caused to the body was reflected in a loss of interest in one's physical appearance, hygiene and dress is unsurprising, particularly given the conditions of the ghettos and many hiding spaces, and yet it is noticeable that women in this period are overtly critical of this failing amongst men. Wallach, in hiding in Poland with her husband and brothers, repeatedly noted her horror at their failure to attempt to keep themselves clean or preserve their clothes, contrasting this with her own decision to use a small amount of her drinking water each day to clean herself and to save a dress so she would have something to wear when they left hiding.⁴³² This condemnation from women would likely, although we have limited sources to prove this impact, have further damaged this element of masculine identity. Janine David's father tried on his suit before it was sold at his wife's request – she wanted to see him as he used to be – an act which one might imagine would only underline his gendered limitations to her husband.

Importantly, however, this condemnation of Jewish men's appearances that we find amongst their wives and families has been repeated by historians in the judgements they have made about Jewish men, something which is most clearly seen in the repeated use of the story from Birkenau concerning women adapting their camp uniforms which I detailed in the introduction. As historians relate this story, women are seen to be proud and successful for the alterations they make whilst the men who continue to wear ill fitting clothes are clearly condemned for their failure to find clothes which afforded them any benefits, aesthetical or practical.⁴³³ Regardless of whether it is tied to increased embodiment or a negative judgement from others, it is clear, however, that Jewish men were unable to maintain a strong relationship with their bodies during the period of ghettoisation.

⁴³¹ Josef Zelkowicz, *In Those Terrible Days: Notes from the Lodz Ghetto* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2002), p.48.

⁴³² Wallach, *Bitter Freedom*, *passim*.

⁴³³ Bondy, 'Women in Theresienstadt and the Family Camp in Birkenau', p.323.

Finally in writing about the body one should consider the question of sex and how it was managed during ghettoisation and enclosure. However, much as historians would wish it otherwise, the sources I have consulted, almost without exception, make no reference to sex. Perhaps it is simply the case that as Rosenfeld notes, no “dirty” words are used, “[s]ex and sensuality have dropped into oblivion...”⁴³⁴ or simply that all diaries and accounts have chosen not to mention this subject. Whatever the reason, without any sources, speculation is unproductive.

* * *

Beyond such universal elements as the body, some particular elements of individual gender identity suffered overtly in this period from distinct changes in society which saw the elimination or diminution of certain masculine identities and the assertion of new ones. As discussed in chapter three, with the notion of shifting subject positions, whilst some gender identities thrived in the ghettos, others could not be sustained in the conditions they faced and as new social structures emerged with them came new elements of masculinities.

Numerous historians have written about identities, foremost class, religious and racial, in the ghettos of the Holocaust. Amongst them Philip Friedman, in *Roads to Extinction: Essays on the Holocaust*, writes, “[c]lass distinctions in the ghetto were based less on the prewar criteria of monetary wealth and professional or intellectual achievement than on factors related directly to survival under the new conditions: shrewdness, audacity, indifference to the plight of others, physical strength, manual dexterity, and the external factors such as access to the German authorities.”⁴³⁵ Whilst Friedman is not writing about gender it is my contention that, although previously largely ignored, his conclusions might equally be applied to masculinities: that although masculinities were reasserted, those best suited to the conditions and opportunities offered by ghetto life came to the fore, whilst those less able to adapt often continued to struggle.

As Jewish society in Poland entered the ghetto most men lost their social status and playing fields

⁴³⁴ Rosenfeld cited in Adelson and Lapedes, *Lodz Ghetto*, p.187.

⁴³⁵ Friedman, *Roads to Extinction*, p.150.

were levelled as they became disconnected from the possessions, finances, employment and connections which had previously defined them. Emerging from this struggle came a new elite, *di voyle* in Warsaw and *di shtarke* in Vilnius, according to Friedman a *lumpenbourgeoisie* interested only in amassing money and power.⁴³⁶ Although Friedman does not necessarily associate this group directly with the Judenrat and OS, he argues that profiteering on the part of the *lumpenbourgeoisie* was often associated with, or assisted by, those groups, tying them all together in a rejection of prewar social and ethical standards. Friedman concedes that not all historians agree with him that the structure of society and elites changed so significantly in this period, stressing instead continuities with prewar Kehillot and their social classes and codes. However, my analysis of masculinity during ghettoisation tends to bear out Friedman's conclusions: moving away from masculinities reliant upon subtle distinctions of position and class and often favouring those with intellectual strength, the ghetto seemed instead to favour those men whose masculinities relied upon physical prowess, cunning or bald financial achievement. Often, moreover, these identities relied on overtly negative character traits which were nevertheless understood to be masculine. In 'When a horse runs wild...' Zelkowicz writes about queuing in the ghetto noting, "[o]ne may literally push one's way into a queue by wielding one's fists like machetes. Those who lack the strength to do this, or who still think in pre-war terms and cannot bring themselves to beat up old people, women and children, are in a bad way indeed. Their reluctance indicates that they have not adapted to the conditions and must depart from the world."⁴³⁷ It is clear that whilst this behaviour is both necessary and a sign of strength, it may not be morally positive in any sense.

Two individual elements of masculinities that particularly suffered in this transition were intellect and religious piety. The Jewish intelligentsia, which had thrived in prewar Polish society and been comparatively well treated by the deconstruction, struggled to assert itself once inside the ghetto. A few men were able to move into positions of power in the ghetto administration, but the existence of a dedicated soup kitchen for the intelligentsia hints at the struggle that most encountered in the ghetto, despite the emergence of intellectual groups, reading circles, libraries and lectures.⁴³⁸ The provision of such a soup kitchen also indicates a sustained respect for the intelligentsia. Nonetheless it seems

⁴³⁶ Friedman, *Roads to Extinction*, p.138. The men who filled this role varied between ghettos, depending on several factors including the position of assimilated men in the ghetto administration. Nonetheless, even if the men change, the phenomenon remains very similar across the ghettos.

⁴³⁷ Zelkowicz, *In Those Terrible Days*, p.198.

⁴³⁸ Dobroszycki, *The Chronicle of the Łódź Ghetto*, p.28.

to have been a respect based on past glory rather than on contemporary standing, something which can be seen in the rather wistful respect Zuckerman affords his subjects when writing about those members of the intelligentsia whom he knew in the ghetto including Katznelson, Czudner and Danieliwicz. Whilst keen to acknowledge their intellects and his relationship with them, he seems to question their relevance in ghetto society and points out their tendency to die of starvation.⁴³⁹

Formerly employed in work including journalism and academia, the intelligentsia were removed from the roles and structures which had afforded them their position in prewar society and found themselves unable to thrive in ghetto employment which often required practical skills they lacked, whether physical or commercial. As Corni explains it, “ghettoisation meant the collapse of the many social ties on which the Jewish elites had traditionally built their hegemonic role”.⁴⁴⁰ Corni goes on to suggest, through a study of “the outcomes of various confiscations carried out during the initial phase [of ghettoisation]”, that some members of the intelligentsia must have succeeded in entering the ghetto with a significant portion of their wealth and property intact (something which further explains their relative strength during the deconstruction). Whilst this may be correct, there is no evidence that such constantly dwindling fortunes, unless the means could be found to replenish them, were able to sustain the masculinity of the men who had earned them. Moreover, the early confiscations that took place in the ghetto, combined with high inflation, meant that wealth alone was rarely sufficient to sustain a family for long. Combined with these problems came some degree of humiliation, as Rosenfeld records, “[c]ome here and look at this wonder. University professors, who held forth in the lecture hall, running around with a pot looking for soup, famous singers pushing coal carts, lawyers standing guard in a carnival uniform (armband and colourful cap), renowned chemists and actors waiting in front of decaying barracks for a call to be placed with some resort (straw, junk...)...” Ultimately, as Friedman notes, “their [the intelligentsia’s] outlook for the future was hopeless”, a position sustained by the statistically higher number of suicides among the intelligentsia than other groups.⁴⁴¹ In the world of the ghetto it seems that members of the intelligentsia were unable to make themselves relevant.⁴⁴²

⁴³⁹ Zuckerman, *A Surplus of Memory*, p.117.

⁴⁴⁰ Corni, *Hitler’s Ghettos*, p.170. Whilst a few men were able to make the transition - Mary Berg’s father goes from being an art dealer to a house janitor and earns people’s respect (Berg, *The Diary of Mary Berg*, p.74) - it was relatively rare.

⁴⁴¹ Friedman, *Roads to Extinction*, p.133.

⁴⁴² Perechodnik, *Am I a Murderer?*, p.95. Perechodnik records an example of a male visitor attempting to discuss literature. Perechodnik become annoyed since, in the circumstances, he sees intellectualism as trivial.

In the same vein, religious elites, in spite of receiving sustained respect from within the community, seem not to have managed to reassert their masculinities or indeed their identities more generally once inside the ghettos. Limited examples exist to the contrary and include the example of Lancman who recounts an occasion on which his grandfather and others were praying and passing around the scrolls:⁴⁴³ “[m]y grandfather, Hanoch Hejnoch, a septuagenarian, embraced one of the heavy Scrolls and danced with it as lightly and as enthusiastically as a boy, refusing to part with it to anyone...He danced and danced, throwing off the blanket of gloom shrouding this Simhat Torah, and went on dancing with total abandon...Like me, they [the others who watched] have engraved upon their minds the image of the heroic old man, crowned with a halo of piety, radiating joy as he whirled around the room. In spite of our terror, no-one tried to stop him, out of courtesy to this revered and devout Hasid, for whom all thoughts of martyrdom were as nothing compared to his love for the Torah, the code and centrepiece of his life, to be honoured above all else.” The use of the word “heroic” in this case confirms the clear respect that the ensemble had for the old man and his religious identity, which would also have been central to his masculinity. In a very different situation Pivnik notes the resilience of religious identities and their positive impact when he records a group of men being deported from the ghetto, noting, “I looked at the men praying, their faces grey and frightened under their hats. But their eyes were bright with optimism as they took comfort from the words they were reciting. They *knew* that God would help us. Hadn’t that been His promise all along? He would find a way, give us a sign.”⁴⁴⁴ Whilst Pivnik goes on to write “[b]ut he didn’t”, clearly himself lacking any faith in religious salvation, this does not diminish the importance of faith to those he is describing nor the role it seems to have played in their understanding of the ghetto and the Holocaust.

Moreover, comments are recorded by Ringelblum and others, which note a degree of respect accorded to Jews who continued to wear long beards and coats, since in openly defining themselves as religious they made themselves vulnerable to persecution.⁴⁴⁵ Nonetheless, the overwhelming experience was that survival in the ghetto necessitated the rejection of religious strictures and practice, which were often outlawed in the ghettos either by the Jewish authorities or the Germans,

⁴⁴³ It is clear that whatever prohibitions were in place, religion continued to be practised.

⁴⁴⁴ Pivnik, *Survivor*, p.81.

⁴⁴⁵ Ringelblum, *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto*, p.82. Although some Rabbis in the ghettos did lift the laws of Kashrut to enable people to eat whatever food was available to them, this does not diminish the struggle that many endured to remain kosher during this period, a struggle to which Pivnik clearly alludes.

and provoked conflict damaging to one's masculine identity. In this way Pivnik describes his parents fighting a particular battle when his mother is able to obtain some pork. His father refuses to eat it and attempts to throw it away, however he is overridden by his wife who insists that it be fed to the children, thereby undermining both his religious and paternal identities. For many religious Jewish men, therefore, whilst others may have respected them, the ghetto presented a particular struggle often leading them to depression and shame directly linked to the attacks which Ringelblum references.⁴⁴⁶

In contrast to these experiences, one element of masculine identities continued to dominate as much in the ghetto as before; although not available to all, a military identity, which thrived both due to the special conditions accorded in the ghettos to veterans and an ongoing respect and reverence for military behaviour and dress, and the masculinity of uniform, order and hierarchy, remained strong in the ghettos. Particularly amongst Jews from the old Reich, and despite laws forbidding it, the retention of documentation and decorations pertaining to past wars was common. Proclamation no. 380⁴⁴⁷ from the occupying authorities in the Łódź ghetto, stating that Jews from the old Reich were to be resettled unless they were employed or decorated, either with iron crosses or for sustaining wounds in battle, seemed to affirm that this masculinity was equally respected by the Germans as by the men themselves. However, when faced with exemption from resettlement, and the belief that they were favoured by this exemption, many still chose to conceal their documentation.⁴⁴⁸ There are several reasons why they might have done this, and we cannot ignore the implications of such a proclamation on families, as well as the general belief that refugees were not welcome in the ghetto, nonetheless to smuggle such documents into the ghetto at great personal risk and then refuse to benefit from their use, does suggest that the documents themselves had some value to these men as signifiers of their masculine prowess.

⁴⁴⁶ For example Plotkin, 'Smuggling in the Ghettos', p.105, which records Leo Laufner describing his father having his beard cut and his subsequent collapse. "He felt so badly because it was so undignified for him. I remember when they actually pulled his beard out. He was almost crying, as old a man as he was. And he put his handkerchief around the part of the beard that was still left across his face, tied in a knot at the top. He wore it like when you have a toothache. It was degrading, and this kept on for a long time. It was tragic; it was very, very bad."

⁴⁴⁷ Dobroszycki, *The Chronicle of the Łódź Ghetto*, p.153.

⁴⁴⁸ Dobroszycki, *The Chronicle of the Łódź Ghetto*, p.156.

Similarly inexplicable, except by acknowledging a reverence for veterans and their achievements, is the gift of a dead man's medals, including an Iron Cross, made to Czerniakow and noted in his diary. That Czerniakow chooses to note this, despite very rarely referencing such specific or personal details, leads us to assume that the medals were something Czerniakow held in high esteem.⁴⁴⁹ This respect for the trappings of military life extended beyond veterans to a sustained high opinion of the masculinity of those involved in other militaristic groups. Adler notes a particular importance placed on discipline, marching and military protocols in the training of the OS,⁴⁵⁰ whilst Lancman suggests that it was impossible to believe that men in uniform could commit such atrocious acts as Germans in the ghettos did⁴⁵¹ - despite the military men in question being their captors, Lancman is still unable to grasp that they might behave incorrectly, so strong is the pull of their uniform for him. With the same respect for the trappings of the military, and in spite of the realities of occupation, Zuckerman records a Dror colleague Gershuni whose "eyes bulged out of their sockets when he saw the SS marching in procession" and Pivnik comments on being "mesmerised" by the *Wehrmacht*.⁴⁵²

Beyond the changing status of the elements of masculinity mentioned above, the ghettos also provided the potential for Jewish men to redefine themselves, incorporating new elements of identity into their masculinities - "In what terms, in what context, with what possibilities should Jews think about themselves as Jews? How could they redefine this identity after the rise of Nazism? This was the first great problem to be resolved, which is clear in every story told by survivors of the resistance organisations."⁴⁵³ This potential remodelling, linked to the questions of self-hatred and Jewish normative identity discussed above, was not only available to the resistance, however. To Judaism in general, as seen before the war with the establishment of Jewish settlements in Palestine, the possibility of a new identity and a new masculinity was open.

Linked to an atmosphere of action discussed above, came an active masculinity, focused less on the traditional questions of who one knew, where one lived and who one was and instead looking more centrally at what one did. The action in question was often work, although not necessarily, but need

⁴⁴⁹ Czerniakow, *The Warsaw diary of Adam Czerniakow*, p.271 – that he also chooses to show them to others, and records doing so, enhances this impression.

⁴⁵⁰ Adler, *In the Warsaw Ghetto*, p.50.

⁴⁵¹ Lancman, *Youth in the Time of the Holocaust*, p.60.

⁴⁵² Pivnik, *Survivor*, p.35.

⁴⁵³ Feierstein, 'The Jewish Resistance Movements in the Ghettos of Eastern Europe', p.232.

not have been manual labour, although I shall argue that this too became more prized in the ghetto than before. As *Oneg Shabbat* recorded, “[t]he only element which is not rotten is the working man; the only hope rests with him.”⁴⁵⁴ *Oneg Shabbat* also records an obituary to Diamant describing him as “an elderly worker, educated by the workshop and the Party”.⁴⁵⁵ Again here the stress, and the respect, is placed on his role as a worker and his roots. In line with this respect for men of work and action an obituary in the *Chronicles of Łódź Ghetto* for Jakob Szulman, who ran a hospital, noted “[g]hetto society has lost an extremely useful, righteous, and noble man of great merit”. In an obituary which clearly respects Szulman, the word “useful” is notable, and perhaps nods at a changing notion of action as relevant to how one is seen by society. The work of Shavit, who wrote about reading habits in the ghettos, seems to support this argument for a changed masculinity as it suggests that, although a wide range of books were read during ghettoisation, trends show a leaning towards books which involved strong, mainly lower class, physically masculine heroes including factual studies of coal miners, like that by Cronin, or peasants, including works written by Silone. Where fiction was read it was often war-based with soldiers for heroes in works including those by Remarque, Zola and Tolstoy.⁴⁵⁶

One specific example of the particular masculine respect accorded to men of action can be seen in various discussions concerning the porters of Warsaw. Kaplan writes of three porters condemned to die, describing them as “virile men with strength in their loins”, and details their physical fight for survival. Kaplan’s respect for their masculinity, contingent on their physical and active self defence, is clear despite their ultimately desperate situation.⁴⁵⁷ Lancman also writes about the Warsaw porters conceding that they no longer had the strength or “swagger” of their prewar selves but suggesting that this had anyway been vulgar and uncouth. Once in the ghetto they succeed in retaining their “honour”, demanding the right to continue working as porters and earning their living, again therefore citing their masculinity in their roots and their work.⁴⁵⁸ *Oneg Shabbat* accords a similar respect to rickshaw drivers when reporting discussions concerning taxation on the basis that they “work hard

⁴⁵⁴ Kermish, *To Live with Honor*, p.755.

⁴⁵⁵ Kermish, *To Live with Honor*, p.605.

⁴⁵⁶ David Shavit, *Hunger for the Printed Word: Books and Libraries in the Jewish Ghettos of Nazi-Occupied Europe* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1997), p.135.

⁴⁵⁷ Kaplan, *The Scroll of Agony*, p.288.

⁴⁵⁸ Lancman, *Youth in the Time of Holocaust*, p.83.

substituting for horses” with “toil and sweat”.⁴⁵⁹ Lancman goes on from writing about Warsaw porters, however, to define another new masculinity forged in the ghetto: “a new strong man was born, the wheeler-dealer, who looked out only for himself and to blazes with the rest”.⁴⁶⁰

This masculinity, closely linked to *die voyle* and *die shtarke* mentioned above, whilst not relying on physicality, was nonetheless a masculinity of action since it required men to do as much as possible for the benefit of themselves and their families and rewarded them for doing so. In Łódź particularly this shift was underscored by the speech that Rumkowski gave to all newcomers to the ghetto in which he commented, “I understand the bitterness of people with higher education who are forced to push wagons through the streets. It cannot be helped. The Łódź worker long ago accepted the fact that the ghetto places all kinds of obligations on its inhabitants, without regard for their former social positions. After all, everything is not done for me but for the good of the whole community.”⁴⁶¹

Linked to these new identities was the key element of knowledge, not an intellectual knowledge of literature or science but knowledge concerning survival. During this period men were extremely keen to prove their masculinity through the display of information pertaining to the functioning of the ghetto and the war effort and, through that, to how best to survive the war. In a few cases masculinity was linked to the danger men placed themselves in whilst gaining such knowledge, whether by reading illegal newspapers and pamphlets or listening to the radio,⁴⁶² and particularly for many in hiding in the West, the possession of radios, and the relaying of their news, was a role played entirely by men who received some clear respect for the transmission. In the case of Johanna Dobschiner who is in hiding with another young woman and several men, the radio lives in the men's room and it is only they who listen to it.⁴⁶³ Kampelmacher writes about reading the paper and listening to the radio and proudly recounts how, on arriving at a new farm, his opinions on the war effort were sought and respected.⁴⁶⁴ Similarly, Wallach in hiding in Poland, records that, as the front approached, the gentile Pole hiding them brought them a map and “...the boys dug in and became experts in the strategy of the fighting

⁴⁵⁹ Kermish, *To Live with Honor*, p.300.

⁴⁶⁰ Lancman, *Youth in the Time of Holocaust*, p.83.

⁴⁶¹ Rumkowski cited in Adelson and Lapidés, *Lodz Ghetto*, p.211.

⁴⁶² On the gaining of knowledge Kaplan recorded “[w]e listen to Reuters with great respect. Every word gives us courage; every small detail that points to any military weakness is carried through the length and breadth of the ghetto as though on eagles' wings...” (Kaplan, *The Scroll of Agony*, p.266) whilst great respect was also accorded to those involved in writing underground publications, of which there were more than 30 in the Warsaw ghetto alone between 1940 and 1942, (Poterski, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, p.33).

⁴⁶³ Dobschiner, *Selected to Live*, p.136.

⁴⁶⁴ Kampelmacher, *Fighting for Survival*, p.111.

forces".⁴⁶⁵ Similarly Boronowski, in hiding in a village in 1944 wrote, "[o]n Sundays the villagers came to them [his hosts] to talk, and I joined in. They listened intently to every word I said about Poland under occupation and the rebellion in Warsaw."⁴⁶⁶

For many men, however, the importance of knowledge was manifested in a more patriarchal role of counsellor to friends and family or leader in plans to escape or hide. *Oneg Shabbat* recorded, "[w]e would be the fathers, the teachers and educators of the future. We would be the grandfathers of the bards who tell to the grandsons, to the young the story of victories and defeats, of keeping alive and of perishing."⁴⁶⁷ Speaking of a wiser, patriarchal knowledge Kaplan notes being sought out by his friends for advice concerning how to get out of the ghetto.⁴⁶⁸ Finally, in contrast to this, usually, but not always, younger men closely relate masculinity to the danger and pressure of possessing knowledge, rather than its transmission. In her diary Mary Berg writes of a boyfriend Romek who comments, "Little girl, it is good that you don't understand too much. I am happy that you don't suffer as I do."⁴⁶⁹ Here Romek equates his knowledge with suffering, but at the same time displays his masculinity over Berg, his adult to her child, his man to her woman. Almost identical are the reported words of Rumkowski that, "If I were to tell you everything I know, you would not sleep. So I *alone* am the one who does not sleep,"⁴⁷⁰ and Zylberberg's decision not to tell his wife that he has risked his life to save another woman so as to protect her from the resulting fear.⁴⁷¹ Similarly Adler when writing about hiding in the ghetto is keen to note his knowledge of the shelter, in this case the locations of some vents as the shelter is running low on oxygen: something of which he seems clearly proud.⁴⁷² Even for those in hiding who had limited opportunities either to acquire or disseminate knowledge, where possible it became a significant element of male gender identity.

Life in the ghettos and in hiding presented quite different problems to older and younger men due to their circumstances, responsibilities and opportunities; nevertheless, whilst this led to a diverse range of experiences, I would argue that for most men, regardless of age, the gendered impact of this

⁴⁶⁵ Wallach, *Bitter Freedom*, p.93.

⁴⁶⁶ Bronowski, *They Were Few*, p.40.

⁴⁶⁷ Kermish, *To Live with Honor*, p.66.

⁴⁶⁸ Kaplan, *The Scroll of Agony*, p.280.

⁴⁶⁹ Berg, *The Diary of Mary Berg*, p.85.

⁴⁷⁰ Rumkowski cited in Adelson and Lapidés, *Lodz Ghetto*, p.212.

⁴⁷¹ Zylberberg, *A Warsaw Diary*, p.71 and p.90.

⁴⁷² Adler, *In the Warsaw Ghetto*, p.309.

period was similar. The only exception to this, I would suggest, is much older men with grown children who, if they reached the ghettos at all (I can find few accounts of such men entering hiding) struggled to find work, particularly given its more physically demanding nature, and, reliant upon their children, often failed to reassert their masculinities. For young men without ties and middle aged men with dependants and greater responsibilities, the ghettos offered a range of ways for masculinities to reassert themselves – for younger men this reassertion often came in the guise of status through youthful action in organisations, resistance or political groups or through work, whilst for older men more commonly employment and provision for family provided the means by which they were able to re-establish the patriarchal *status quo ante*.

Many, particularly young, men, in this period, with limited responsibilities beyond contributing to a family run by one or both parents, seem to have found strength and masculinity through the social activities of the ghetto, and in many cases through resistance, or resistance-style organisations. This is not to say that they were free to do as they please; many of these young men had, by necessity, to find work both to contribute financially and to ensure their legitimate existence in the ghetto, but evidence suggests that they had enough freedom to involve themselves in ghetto life as well. Sierakowiak is one good example of this and the combination of his involvement in politics and education clearly contributes to his having a strong, young masculine identity for some part of his time in the Łódź ghetto.⁴⁷³ In a different way the young leader of a group of escapees in the Sutzkever poem, *The House on the Vingri*, who ultimately leaves to join the Polish partisans, built his masculine identity around respect for his youth, vigour and his physical strength.

In a few cases the ghettos were even entered with some anticipation by young men to whom they offered new, but not better, opportunities.⁴⁷⁴ The emigration of many of the higher echelons of Jewish society, particularly Jewish men, before, or at the beginning of, the war presented new opportunities for a generation eager to test itself away from the antisemitic strictures it had known, and created space for the development of their burgeoning masculinities. Further, statistics concerning the social makeup of ghetto leadership in various cities suggest that whilst the Judenräte were peopled by men of experience and standing in the community, the OS tended to be younger men with fewer ties and

⁴⁷³ Sierakowiak, *The Diary of Dawid Sierakowiak*, *passim*.

⁴⁷⁴ Corni, *Hitler's Ghetto*, p.56.

no social standing of which to speak: a situation which provided an opportunity for young men to cut their teeth and assert themselves.⁴⁷⁵ Sources would suggest that although life was hard for young people there was still a good degree of optimism concerning their chances of survival; *Oneg Shabbat* recorded a eulogy given in the ghetto which included the words “Hear O Jewish Youth! Maybe among you, here in this hall, there is, there are potential Weissenbergs. Do not lose courage! Keep strong and gather power...”⁴⁷⁶

For those young men with premature responsibilities or older men with families to support, the manner of remasculination was often different to that described above, but the outcome quite similar. As I will go on to consider in more detail in my chapter on fatherhood, older men seem to have reasserted their masculinities through more traditional avenues: through work and provision, and through knowledge and advice giving. Specifically, however, entering the ghetto seems to have rejuvenated many Jewish men who had become depressed by the deconstruction. Roman Halter clearly described his father before the ghetto as severely depressed and making a limited contribution to the family, however, upon entering the ghetto he seems to have been significantly revived, finding work, arranging housing, and, even after being admitted to hospital where he ultimately died, remaining the keeper of the family valuables, and the man to whom they all turned when they needed support. For Wells it was the very act of premature ageing and assumption of responsibility that solidified his masculine reassertion. Writing after he entered the Lvov ghetto and found his two brothers, aged 13 and 15, waiting to be deported in the next *Aktion*, Wells writes, “[t]his was enough. I knew now where my duty lay, what I had to do. First I gave them a proper scolding. Then I looked round the room in dismay.”⁴⁷⁷ He goes on from here to write about applying for jobs to provide protection to his family, exactly the reassertion we see in numerous other cases. Interestingly, it is at this point, where he assumes responsibility for his brothers, that Wells stops making his regular references to older men including his father and uncles and the advice they gave him. Effectively Wells becomes a man when he takes charge.

One significant difference between men of different ages in the reassertion of masculinity however, can be found in the way in which conflicts of masculinity are described in the sources. Particularly

⁴⁷⁵ Trunk, *Jewish Responses to Nazi Persecution*, p.32.

⁴⁷⁶ Kermish, *To Live with Honor*, p.451.

⁴⁷⁷ Wells, *The Death Brigade*, p.120.

those young men seeking to establish, rather than re-establish, their masculinity, appear to have used altered notions of masculinity to promote themselves over their fathers – we can only assume that this meant diminishing their fathers' masculinity in the process, although most sources come from younger men, which makes this hard to prove. William Schiff in the Krakow ghetto provided for both his own family and that of his girlfriend and says of his father “[n]ow it seemed like my daddy was my child, and I was the father. He just cried all day.”⁴⁷⁸ As well as assuming responsibilities Schiff seems clear of his right to assume commensurate powers, particularly concerning decision making in the family. However, the domination of one masculinity by another, whilst damaging to the father, in the case of the son reaffirms my argument that the ghetto was able to provide the required conditions for the practice of masculinity.

Also asserting masculinity through a comparison based upon age, Zelkowicz describes Rumkowski preparing to give his “give me your children” speech, noting, “[i]t is immediately, startlingly evident that this man has undergone a transformation in the past few days or hours. His head is stooped, as if he can hardly hold it atop his shoulders; his gaze is lifeless and opaque. We behold a frail old man who can barely put one foot in front of the other – an old man, like the old men who have gathered in this square.”⁴⁷⁹ Finally, Szpilman shows the competition of age in masculinity, when he comments of traders in the Warsaw ghetto, “[o]ld Jews, emaciated beyond recognition, tried to draw your attention to some sort of rags from which they hoped to make money. Young men traded in gold and notes, fighting bitter and rancorous battles over battered watch-cases, the ends of chains, or worn and dirty dollar bills ...”⁴⁸⁰ That such a comparative approach to gender strengthened the identity of its author is unsurprising if we consider the question of comparative masculinities discussed above, however we have no proof of this having adversely affected the masculinity of older men who, on the contrary, seem, in different ways, to assert their own masculine identities through masculinism as successfully as their detractors.

Conclusion

Writing about life in the ghettos Lancman noted that, “[d]uring this time the will to live was extremely

⁴⁷⁸ Plotkin, ‘Smuggling in the Ghettos’, p.114.

⁴⁷⁹ Zelkowicz, *In Those Terrible Days*, p.276.

⁴⁸⁰ Szpilman, *The Pianist*, p.67.

strong and far more intense than normal. While physical strength ebbed, the mind daily conquered death. Hope overcame despair. Illusion blotted out the bitter truth.”⁴⁸¹ Exactly as this comment suggests, something to do with the circumstances of the ghettos allowed some Jewish men to reassert their masculinities, even if only in part or for periods of time. Clearly this reassertion was not universal, moreover, it is more likely to have occurred for Jews in certain circumstances than others. Nevertheless, in cases where men were able to find stability, even in the extreme conditions of the ghettos, this stability enabled them more closely to conform to the normative identities towards which they had previously oriented themselves, and, in doing so, successfully to practise their masculinity. Through access to provision, protection and status, even with limitations and restrictions unimaginable before the war, men were able to ignore their individual and bodily decline and, relying on an environment gendered masculine, assert strong male gender identities.

Where I have argued that the deconstruction damaged masculinities, regardless of the extremity of circumstances, simply on the basis of the persistent nature of deconstruction, I would equally argue that confinement enabled Jewish men to reassert strong masculinities, largely regardless of the severity of conditions, based simply on the fact of stability. For most men this stability came in the form of ghetto life, still largely lived within family units, in a daily pattern which partially reflected ‘normal’ life, and within a Jewish community. However, I have also provided evidence to suggest that where a similar stability could be found in the West, either in hiding or through involvement in certain resistance groups, a similar resurgence of masculine identities was possible through an identification with elements of normative masculinities, notably providing and protecting.

Of course many of these reasserted masculinities were not gender identities which would bear much comparison to that which had come before, which is to say, they should not be understood as objectively strong or consistent gender identities. The strength of masculine identity found in this period was extremely transitory, and a man who felt some sense of masculine pride in earning enough money to buy bread, and then actually finding that bread to buy could still be crushed to return home and find it was still nowhere near enough to feed his family. This should not, however, undermine the fact that, for whatever period of time, the circumstances of the ghetto enabled him to successfully perform his masculinity. Moreover, the extent to which this masculinity was a product of

⁴⁸¹ Lancman, *Youth in the Time of the Holocaust*, p.61.

complete despair must remain an outstanding question. Whilst we might imagine that the two were linked, very few men write about the connection, and certainly for many men survival was an active effort linked, they believed, to personal “initiative, courage, taking risks, and disbelief in German promises”,⁴⁸² something for which Bronowski at least showed a clear masculine pride.

Ultimately, although the Jews were starved, used for forced labour and killed during the period of ghettoisation, something which I in no sense attempt to underplay, to fixate on the ultimately hopeless nature of their circumstances would be to overlook the quotidian lives that many lived in the ghetto for months and years, the society they established, the confidence and strength that provided and the gender identities it supported.

⁴⁸² Bronowski, *They Were Few*, p.41.

Chapter 5 – Fatherhood: filial respect and parenting as a sustaining force in gender identity

In her memoirs Miriam Don explains her survival thus: “[t]he fact that we succeeded in our great escape at all is solely due to the initiative, enterprise, optimism, fighting spirit and determination to succeed against all odds, of just one man: Benjamin Wolf Frankel; Wilek, my father.”⁴⁸³ Henry Wermuth highlights the “phenomenal willpower and physical durability of this extraordinary man - my father”⁴⁸⁴ and Ben Helfgott repeatedly stresses his great respect for his father’s courage “...and the way he simply did not accept defeatism at any time and was always a man of hope and a man of action”.⁴⁸⁵ Orenstein describes his father as “unusually courageous”⁴⁸⁶ and Liebman, on leaving Belgium for France on one of the last trains before the German invasion, notes, “[t]he fact that we owed it to our father further reinforced the admiring trust which we placed in him at that time. For my part, I maintained this trust throughout the whole course of the war. Thus in my eyes my father embodied strength and wisdom; I never doubted the rightness of the decisions which he took upon himself without ever consulting any of us – my mother least of all.”⁴⁸⁷

None of these descriptions of fathers, depicting them as strong, proactive, positive actors in the Holocaust, however, tallies with the negative representation of Jewish fathers supplied by historians or even with the conclusions of this thesis which show patterns of masculine collapse and reassertion. It is to this contradiction that my thesis will, therefore, finally turn, attempting to understand what the available representations of fathers, largely written by children, are able to tell us about the impact of fatherhood on the masculine identities both of fathers and their children. The image offered to us by historians is one which, at its most positive, can be summarised by Langer’s comment that, “I have found no evidence to suggest that mothers behaved or survived better than fathers”,⁴⁸⁸ but is rarely so generous. Instead, in line with conclusions concerning the behaviour of Jewish men in the Holocaust more broadly, discussed throughout this thesis, historians are more likely to follow Waxman, who tells us of Birenbaum’s “disillusionment” with her father and relates the

⁴⁸³ Perla Frankel-Shalev and Miriam Don, *Memoir: A True Story of a Family's Escape* (Israel: Karen Dondushansky, 2006), p.97.

⁴⁸⁴ Henry Wermuth, *Breathe Deeply My Son* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1993), p.182.

⁴⁸⁵ IWM - Ben Helfgott – 9165/20. Notably Helfgott specifically refers to his father as a ‘hero’, as does Marylou Ruhe – 17753/4 – IWM, something I have never found in relation to mothers.

⁴⁸⁶ Henry Orenstein, *I Shall Live: Surviving the Holocaust 1939-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p.14.

⁴⁸⁷ Liebman, *Born Jewish*, p.13. Some time after the Holocaust he comes to realise that this was extremely naive and that his father was not what he had thought. This does not, however, change how he felt at the time or the impact this might have had on his own and his father’s masculinity.

⁴⁸⁸ Lawrence Langer, *Preempting the Holocaust* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), p.57.

story of Vladka Meed's father's "collapse" in the Warsaw ghetto,⁴⁸⁹ or Nechama Tec who tells us the sensationalised and notorious story of David Sierakowiak's father stealing food from David and his sister.⁴⁹⁰ In stark contrast to these positions, mothers even more than other women have been praised for their attempts to protect their children during this period, with Ofer and Weitzman referring to "the ingenuity and adaptability of women to get food for children in Warsaw", as if fathers played no part in the sourcing of food for their families, or at least were not adaptable or ingenious in doing so.⁴⁹¹

David Sierakowiak's case has been used as a particular example of paternal or masculine behaviour during the Holocaust and is worth, therefore, considering in some detail in order to understand the exact nature of the historical problem which this chapter attempts to tackle. Whilst living in the Łódź ghetto David Sierakowiak recorded that his father was becoming "...greedier and more rapacious for every morsel, he cheats in a stupid, intricate way everywhere he can". Specifically, David accuses his father of stealing food from him and his sister and causing the premature death of their mother from starvation.⁴⁹² Foremost amongst historians who have used this example to support their representation of Jewish fathers and men in the Holocaust is Nechama Tec, who references the Sierakowiak case repeatedly and includes in her index an entry of "fathers stealing food from children", as if it were a regular occurrence (which it may have been, but for which she provides no other evidence).⁴⁹³

In spite of some clearly reprehensible behaviour on the part of Sierakowiak Sr., however, I strongly contest any reading of this diary which uses it to reinforce the notion that Jewish fathers behaved in a weak or emasculated way during the Holocaust. Not only would I argue that where he does behave in this manner Sierakowiak Sr. is an exception, but also I would suggest that Sierakowiak Sr. is a perfect example of a father who, whilst experiencing moments of depression and poor parenting, also had periods of rejuvenation when he provided for and protected his children, acts for which he clearly

⁴⁸⁹ Zoë V. Waxman, 'Towards an Integrated History of the Holocaust: Masculinity, Femininity, and Genocide' in Wiese, and Betts, eds., *Years of Persecution, Years of Extermination*, p.316.

⁴⁹⁰ Tec, *Resilience and Courage*, p.62.

⁴⁹¹ Ofer and Weitzman, 'Introduction', p.9.

⁴⁹² Sierakowiak, *The Diary of David Sierakowiak*, p.196.

⁴⁹³ Tec, *Resilience and Courage*, pp.62-63. Perhaps the only other example of this I can find is Donat, who tells the story of a man who steals bread and soup from his son in the camp. The son later dies as the camp is evacuated but we do not know exactly why (Donat, *Holocaust Kingdom*, p.278).

received his son's rather grudging respect. Whilst David Sierakowiak certainly had many problems with his father's behaviour during their time in the ghetto, the bulk of his diary nonetheless catalogues his father's relatively successful attempts to find work and money to keep the family alive both in and out of the ghetto.⁴⁹⁴ According to his son, when Sierakowiak Sr. was out of work, despite being "suffocated" at home, he either spent time petitioning the council to allow him to sell family furniture to make money for food, or was out looking for food and work for himself and his family. On 15 July 1941 David comments, "Say what you will, you can't reproach him for laziness. He would be happy to do anything to provide bread for us."⁴⁹⁵ After the food stealing episode David admitted that, "Neither his [his father's] willingness to wash my shirts nor his speed in buying all kinds of food rations and allocations are able to mollify me",⁴⁹⁶ suggesting that David's problems with his father exist somewhat separately from his daily performance as a father. For the most part, therefore, and in contrast to the historical record, David Sierakowiak seems to have acknowledged his father's role as patriarch of the family and his continued ability to provide for his family and fulfill his role as father and protector in extremely difficult circumstances.

Finally, problematically, the approach to fatherhood and masculinity which condemns Sierakowiak Sr., rests on the notion, discussed already, that only positive and unselfish behaviour can be understood as an assertion of masculine or paternal identity. Whilst stealing food surreptitiously is unlikely to make one feel masculine, the exercise of paternal power might – and those men who are given a larger share of rations than their wives or children, based either on their size, workload or simply upon their role within the family (and such men are much more commonly referenced in diaries than the stealing variety), might well have used this confirmation of their patriarchal status to reinforce their masculine identity, abhorrent as the unfairness of the act might have been to their offspring. Outrageous as his son may have found it, Sierakowiak Sr. may, we do not know, have considered it his right either as the head of the house, as the breadwinner or simply as a man, to receive larger rations than his wife and children.

⁴⁹⁴ 'Successful' here is a relative term since the whole family die, nonetheless for a period of time Sierakowiak Sr. found work and provided food for his family.

⁴⁹⁵ Sierakowiak, *The Diary of David Sierakowiak*, p.111.

⁴⁹⁶ Sierakowiak, *The Diary of David Sierakowiak*, p.231.

However, even my own more positive conclusions concerning masculine identity in particular periods of the Holocaust do not do justice to the extracts with which I began this chapter. Therefore, having accepted that current approaches to fatherhood and gender identity are, at best, lacking nuance, this chapter will consider whether, leaving these quotations aside, the masculinities of fathers and fatherhood responded to the horrors of the Holocaust in the same way as broader male gender identities or whether an alternative trajectory for both behaviour and gender identity can be traced. In doing this, the chapter will follow much the same structure as the previous two, looking first at normative masculinities before going on to consider individual elements of gender identities. However, since it covers the same time periods and events as the previous two chapters, I will not consider here the question of a gendered environment, relying instead on the basic premise, already established, that the feminine environment of the deconstruction and the masculine environment of the ghettos and confinement were as much a reality for fathers as for men more generally. Finally, this chapter will consider the various testimonies of Roman Halter, a detailed case study which highlights many of the issues that I shall touch upon.

* * *

Due to the nature of the available sources and some theoretical questions concerning the historicisation of fatherhood, before approaching the substantive research concerning fatherhood, I must begin this chapter by briefly considering a number of methodological problems. Inherent to understanding the impact of the Holocaust on the masculine identity of fathers is an understanding of how fatherhood was practised in the period in question. Traditionally the early- to mid-twentieth century has been discussed as belonging to a pre-contemporary time when fathers were emotionally distant from their children and the sphere in which they resided, the home, and instead functioned largely in the public/work sphere, completing their duties as fathers through a relatively detached approach to provision and protection.

Recent discussion by historians and sociologists, writing both about this period and earlier, however, suggests that fathers might better be understood, allowing for large differences based on location, circumstances and employment, as being more closely involved in child-rearing and domestic life

than previously thought.⁴⁹⁷ To add complexity, Lewis has argued that a lack of longitudinal studies of fatherhood makes it hard to draw any firm conclusions about gendered parental behaviour,⁴⁹⁸ whilst some sociologists have argued for a distinction to be made between different acts performed by fathers. Significantly, such an approach argues that whilst fathers may have been involved in the home for several decades, for example playing with children and helping with housework, these men were viewed as doing women's work.⁴⁹⁹ If this is indeed the case, and tasks themselves are gendered, then we must consider whether those men who were involved in the home might still have understood their gender identities as men and fathers to be entirely based around providing and protecting, even if the actuality of their fathering was much greater. Mirroring comments I made in earlier chapters, therefore, in discussing the masculinity of fathers I shall consider all spheres of private and public life but will focus on understanding whether all actions performed by men in this period directly impacted upon their gender identities.

Foremost amongst the issues of source availability in relation to this subject is the fact that, since employment, sustenance and shelter were of central importance to survival in the ghetto, and therefore to delaying deportation and possibly thus surviving the camps, those fathers who were able to provide shelter and food for themselves and their children are necessarily more likely to have survived to record their stories than those fathers who were unable to provide such basic provisions. Similarly, Western European fathers who were unable either to organise successful hiding places or emigration opportunities are unlikely to have surviving children in a position to document their experiences. It is therefore unsurprising that a large number of the sources I have seen involve men who continued to successfully perform elements of their roles as fathers during periods of the Holocaust. These sources, however, present another problem, clearest in Poland where survival rates were highest amongst young men who were able to work for longest in the ghettos and camps. The age of these men means that their fathers were likely to have been relatively old during the Holocaust. In order therefore, to have relevant testimonies relating to paternal behaviour it is necessary not only that the father was young enough to work during the Holocaust, and thereby to survive for any period, but that his child was also old enough to survive. This issue is further

⁴⁹⁷ Charlie Lewis, *Becoming a Father* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1986), Introduction.

⁴⁹⁸ Lewis, *Becoming a Father*, p.4.

⁴⁹⁹ Lewis, *Becoming a Father*, p.7 – Although this is certainly not a universally accepted position amongst historical sociologists.

complicated by the fact that sources show that, once men became fathers themselves, they were very unlikely to write about or reference their own fathers, either positively or negatively. The older generations tend either not to be mentioned or to be viewed as irrelevant: depicted as slightly doddering or as a liability by their adult children and more positively, but equally unimportant, by their grandchildren.⁵⁰⁰ The bulk of the sources used, therefore, are from men who were fathers of young children or from teenage children of fathers in their fifties, a limited sample which necessarily restricts the findings of this chapter.

Perhaps even more problematic is the nature of representations of the father by children and wives and the impact of these relationships upon masculine identities. On this question McKee and O'Brien stress the "dialectical influence of parent on child and child on parent",⁵⁰¹ particularly in the maintenance of patriarchal roles in changing economic and cultural conditions, a matter which this thesis must take seriously in attempting to understand the behaviour and gendered identities of fathers. On this subject then, the first question to consider is the way in which children represent their fathers and the extent to which this brings into question their reliability as sources. The respect so obvious from children for their fathers during the Holocaust begins in most testimonies in the preceding period with children keen to stress their father's status within society during peace time. References relate to intelligence, as in the case of Marylou Ruhe who describes her father as "very, very smart, he was my hero... he was a genius"; to community standing, as with Orenstein who notes that his father "... was smart and energetic, and soon people began to take notice of the hard-driving young newcomer who often beat his competitors to the punch. It was not long before he won their respect and even admiration",⁵⁰² or, uncommonly, to physicality, as in Zuckerman's description of his father as "a tall man with a small beard, and he held himself erect. I think it was Mordechai Tennenbaum who told me that if you had put a bucket of water on his head, not a single drop would have fallen to the ground."⁵⁰³ Many also reference the skill and intelligence of their fathers with particular reference to World War I, most likely due to its significance to the circumstances in which

⁵⁰⁰ This is certainly different for grandfathers who are often discussed with great pride and respect by grandchildren. However I would argue that the expectations of a grandfather are so different to those placed on a father that the two cannot be usefully discussed in the same chapter. What is interesting in this case is the father-child relationship of support and dependence, rather than the grandfather-grandchild relationship of wisdom and care.

⁵⁰¹ Lorna McKee and Margaret O'Brien, *The Father Figure* (London: Tavistock, 1982), p.21.

⁵⁰² Orenstein, *I Shall Live*, p.6.

⁵⁰³ Abraham Zuckerman, *A Voice in the Chorus: Life as a Teenager in the Holocaust* (Hoboken, NJ: KTAV Publishing House, 1991), p.12.

they again found themselves. One example of this is Liebman who wrote of his father's incarceration in a German camp in World War I: "[w]ith his perfect knowledge of German, his considerable ingenuity, and a flair for organisation matched by a highly energetic sense of duty, he had become one of the camp leaders."⁵⁰⁴ Even amongst descriptions of fathers which are less than positive, many clearly stressing a strong patriarchal or even dictatorial streak in fathers, the masculinity of their fathers does not seem to be in question.⁵⁰⁵

These largely positive descriptions of fathers and their masculinities, continue once the Holocaust itself is being described and most are keen to stress that, even where their fathers lost their factories or employment, they were able to make the most of the situation to provide financial support for the family; where firms were Aryanised this tended to have been negotiated for the benefit of the family and many retained at home the means to continue making a living after they could no longer work officially.⁵⁰⁶ Wermuth references his "heroic father"⁵⁰⁷, Zar writes, "[a]s for my father he was bold, resourceful, daring, and already familiar with the intricacies of life as a fugitive",⁵⁰⁸ and Helfgott describes in detail, and with great pride, his father smuggling flour into the ghetto, making money and protecting his family from the realities of ghetto life.⁵⁰⁹

The question which presents itself then is whether such praise can be accepted at face value, when many historians consider it to be biased material based upon a natural tendency to lionise a dead parent.⁵¹⁰ Significantly, however, whilst individual examples exist, I can find no matching degree of lionisation in writing about mothers who died during the Holocaust, a fact which must lead us to conclude that, even if exaggerated, there is some truth in the picture painted by these sources. To do otherwise, and dismiss widespread appreciation of men as unwarranted hero-worship, whilst using identical comments concerning women to prove their resilience and gendered strength during the Holocaust would be to apply an extremely problematic double standard.

⁵⁰⁴ Liebman, *Born Jewish*, p.6.

⁵⁰⁵ The most obvious cases of this are Elie Wiesel (Wiesel, *Night*, p.21) and Roman Halter (IWM - Roman Halter – 17183/17).

⁵⁰⁶ As discussed previously in detail.

⁵⁰⁷ Wermuth, *Breathe Deeply*, p.135.

⁵⁰⁸ Ruzka Zar, *In the Mouth of the Wolf* (New York: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1983), p.11.

⁵⁰⁹ IWM - Ben Helfgott – 9165/20.

⁵¹⁰ This problem is compounded by the accepted bias that sources contain towards presenting an idealised version of life before the Holocaust. Corni, *Hitler's Ghettos*, p.5.

Far from dismissing such statements, one might even argue that they are particularly relevant since they seem to contradict the descriptions one could expect. Wardi, in her work *Memorial Candles*, argues, when looking at the psychological effects of the Holocaust on those who survived as children or young adults, that many survivors “lost all faith in their parents” since children were often forced to abandon their parents in order to ensure their own survival.⁵¹¹ Whilst this fits the example of Elie Wiesel and his father once they reached the camps, but certainly not before, for the most part I cannot find examples of this abandonment, or the distancing which Wardi notes, amongst the testimonies I have read. This contrast may be a facet of the testimony and the diary as opposed to Wardi’s work which is largely psychoanalytical and based on personal interviews, nonetheless my sources seem to suggest quite the opposite conclusion to that which Wardi draws. The emphasis from those who survive the Holocaust as children and young adults is on the importance of their fathers in continuing to act as fathers, providing advice, support, food, work and shelter until the point of deportation if and when it came. This is evidence which, particularly in light of the contrast this presents to Wardi’s research, should be considered as of some value.

Questions of source reliability are further complicated by the interplay between mothers and fathers, both in their own sources and in those written by children. One example of this is the tendency amongst fathers to minimise the actions of their wives in the care of their children and, although our capacity to corroborate these sources is very limited, in the case of Martin Parker, already mentioned briefly, we can do exactly that. Throughout his lengthy testimony, Parker stresses his wife’s weakness and his own action in supporting the family during this time,⁵¹² recounting one particular occasion on which the entire family was called to the *Umschlagplatz*. Whilst Halina particularly relates her mother’s role in keeping her alive, Parker hardly mentions his wife, stressing instead his own role in saving Halina and in threatening a man who endangered her life. In her own testimony Halina also noted another occasion on which, during a period in hiding, her father requested that her mother buy him a German newspaper every day, something which she did daily, thereby risking her life. Halina goes on to note that she does not even think that her father considered the risk to his wife’s life, which suggests a lack of connection between the parents as joint providers or protectors. In a similar way Leon Greenman, who was held for some time in Westerbork with his wife, child and father,

⁵¹¹ Dina Wardi, *Memorial Candles: Children of the Holocaust* (London: Routledge, 1992), *passim*.

⁵¹² IWM - Martin Parker – 12597/9.

before being deported, hardly mentions his wife or her role in their lives at this time. We have no other source with which to corroborate or question Leon Greenman's testimony, and certainly the loss of his wife and child in Auschwitz should be factored into his reasons for not discussing them in detail, nonetheless we might consider how this account might look had anyone else lived to tell the story.⁵¹³

Also significant to understanding the representation of parents, we see in sources written by children a tendency to elevate the importance of one parent over the other, almost as if in recording their testimonies they feel forced to choose a dominant parent in the fact of their survival. Ben Helfgott talks at such length about his father that at the end of his interview he feels the need to comment that his mother was wonderful too, it was just that his father's struggle was more a "part of the whole struggle and survival". Helfgott clearly feels bad about his dismissal of his mother, but does not feel he can do justice to both parents.⁵¹⁴ Likewise, Nicole David makes a direct comparison between her feelings about her mother's disappearance – she just didn't think about it – and her occasional visits to see her father to whom she was particularly attached and who meant much more to her.⁵¹⁵ Lea Goodman reacts similarly, talking at length about the effects on her of a lack of a father – how she missed him and envied other girls who had fathers. In contrast she speaks very little of her mother who was with her in hiding but who suffered a mental breakdown during the period. Finally, Marcel Hipzman records surprise that although until her deportation in the Vel d'Hiv roundup he spend most of his life with his mother in Paris – his father being away for many months at a time working as a logger to avoid detection by the French or German governments – he has almost no memories of her, but retains strong memories of his father from various stages of his childhood.⁵¹⁶ Of course there is no answer to this different presentation of fathers and mothers, and no source is entirely unbiased, but these are clearly issues to be aware of in the handling of sources relating to fatherhood and the practice of masculinity.

Finally there is the question of the dialectic relationships between children, particularly sons, and their fathers in the forming and sustaining of male gender identities. Many of the sources which this

⁵¹³ IWM - Leon Greenman – 9274/23.

⁵¹⁴ IWM - Ben Helfgott – 9165/20.

⁵¹⁵ IWM - Nicole David - 15323/5.

⁵¹⁶ Hipzman, *Souvenirs d'enfance de Marcel*, p.8.

chapter relies on are written by children and predominantly, therefore, tell us about the way in which they perceive their fathers' masculinity, rather than the direct impact of events on the masculinity of fathers. However, if we agree with McKee and O'Brien above, then we might argue that the very fact of a son's clear respect for his father's masculine performance in the Holocaust would have strengthened the masculinity of his father by providing him with status and respect, and in itself tells us something about the gender identity of his father. It is on this basis that I shall use such sources, carefully, as a way of understanding the impact of the Holocaust on the masculine identities of fathers. I shall, however, wish to ascertain whether the impact of the dialectic relationship is the same for all elements of masculinity, normative or individual, or whether the respect of a child is only significant where it is matched by some other influence contributing to paternal, masculine, self-respect.

* * *

Ultimately it is the loss of fathers which engenders some of the most keenly felt emotional responses in diaries from the wartime and hints at the ongoing importance of such masculine figures in the lives of children and young men. Rudashevski, talking of his friend Gabik's loss of his father, a respected and learned man, commented, "Gabik no longer has a father. I sensed how much misfortune inheres in this world. How will Gabik see it through, he who is so gay, so frivolous?"⁵¹⁷ Gabik is of a sensible age and employed and yet Rudashevski seems to question his capacity to function without a father, such was his father's importance. In another case Rubinowicz refers to children of a neighbouring family as orphans and questions their ability to survive, although they still have a mother, such is the importance he places on the role played by fathers in the ghetto in the protection and survival of children.⁵¹⁸ Julius Feldman's final words in his diary before being deported are representative of this strong emotional connection between sons and fathers. Although he has lost many other family members his diary reads, "[h]ow terribly I feel the lack of my beloved father, whom everyone knew..."⁵¹⁹ This line is interrupted and it seems highly unlikely that he knew he was to be deported and meant it as his final words, nonetheless it highlights the importance of his father in his life over

⁵¹⁷ Yitzchak Rudashevski, *The Diary of the Vilna Ghetto* (Tel Aviv: Ghetto Fighters' House/Beit Lohamei Haghetot, 1973), p.80.

⁵¹⁸ David Rubinowicz, *The Diary of Dawid Rubinowicz* (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1982), p.60. However, the reverse cases also exist where children whose mother dies are called orphans (Kaplan, *The Scroll of Agony*, p.307).

⁵¹⁹ Feldman, *The Krakow Diary*, p.80.

other figures. In very similar circumstances, the final line of Vladka Meed's diary has the same focus and, despite hardly mentioning her father throughout the diary, since he had died of pneumonia soon after entering the ghetto, she writes, "[n]othing. Nothing was left me of my past, of my life in the ghetto – not even the grave of my father..."⁵²⁰ This chapter seeks to understand whether this pride, love and respect for fathers and for their masculinity that we see in the testimonies and diaries of so many children can be found reflected in the masculinities of their fathers during the Holocaust. Ultimately I shall argue that where the respect of children was associated with key elements of masculinity and normative identities it seems to have contributed to the reinforcing of paternal masculinity, however, where children, and particularly sons, found paternal masculinity in more complex and individual behaviours this rarely translated into an increased sense of masculinity for the father, instead perhaps having more impact on the burgeoning gender identity of the son himself.

Normative masculinity

One of the clearest examples of protecting which took place in the Holocaust was the life-saving advice given by fathers to their children and to which those children directly attributed their survival. Whilst I can find not a single such example for mothers, diaries and testimonies from the Holocaust are littered with pieces of advice offered by fathers that children used to protect themselves. Jan Hartman remembers, "[m]y father, who was a hunter, told me, '[y]ou remember how a hare can survive when the chain of hunters comes. If the hare jumps and runs zigzag they will get him; but if the hare stays in his little hole, it will survive. You remember that.'"⁵²¹ Hartman later comments, "[t]hat was the rule that helped my brother and me survive: never volunteer for anything."⁵²² Similarly Moshe Checinski, following a fight, relates how his father suggested he avoid antisemitism, "[y]our best protection is never to show the slightest weakness, either physical or spiritual". Showing the ongoing significance of this lesson Moshe goes on to comment, "[m]aybe, this is why I managed to survive the darkest days in the history of mankind".⁵²³ Again in almost identical circumstances, Ruzka Zar recounts how, whilst posing as a gentile, several people guessed that she was a Jew. After one such encounter she noted "...I laughed and thought of my father's words: '[n]ever show fear to your

⁵²⁰ Meed, *On Both Sides of the Wall*, p.335.

⁵²¹ Smith, *Forgotten Voices of the Holocaust*, p.150.

⁵²² Smith, *Forgotten Voices of the Holocaust*, p.150.

⁵²³ Checinski, *My Father's Watch*, p.59.

enemies, because if they think you are afraid of them, they are absolutely merciless. Instead, attack your attacker. Always do the unexpected.' Once again he was right. For the second time I owed him my life."⁵²⁴ The first time is recorded in the title and frontispiece of Zar's book and reads, "*If you're ever on the run and have to hide, the best place is right in the mouth of the wolf.* Herman Guterman's advice to his daughter Ruzska."

One further example of this phenomenon is the title of Henry Wermuth's book *Breathe Deeply My Son*, a title which Wermuth later explains when writing about his arrival in Auschwitz, "[i]nto this onslaught of unstoppable, alternating interplay of visions and fear I heard my father's voice. He sounded so dispassionate, so naturally cool as if he were offering me advice on how to behave at a dinner table. He then uttered the unforgettable words which I have chosen as the title to this book: '[s]hould we be gassed, breathe deeply, my son, breathe deeply, to get it over with quickly.'"⁵²⁵ Unlike the other examples, Wermuth Sr. is not attempting here to save his son's life and yet he is very clearly still trying to protect him, even if the only remaining way to do that is to afford him a better death. Finally is the case of Benno Benima, where the exact words of advice are not recorded, and yet their impact is much the same as if they were. In his testimony Benima repeatedly describes a single occasion in Amsterdam, some time after the German invasion, when he wished to go out in the evening with friends. Without clearly explaining why Benima's father refused to let him go out, keeping him in the house for the entire evening. They found out the next day that on the evening before 200 young men had been rounded up in the streets and deported to labour camps. None of them were ever to return. In his recounting Benima makes it very clear that he believes had he gone out that night he would also now be dead, and very clearly attributes his survival to his father's wisdom.⁵²⁶

Each of the cases described is recounted by a child who clearly values rather than questions their father's role in their protection and survival. As is the ongoing challenge of this chapter, it is harder, however, to be clear about the extent to which this attribution of survival to paternal advice was

⁵²⁴ Zar, *In the Mouth of the Wolf*, p.27.

⁵²⁵ Wermuth, *Breathe Deeply*, p.133. On a lighter note, Wermuth also notes carrying a spare pair of socks in his pockets to use as gloves on his father's advice. They came in handy, he notes, when he was made to dig in the snow by the Germans, again something for which he credits his father, (p.31).

⁵²⁶ Shoah Foundation Interview with Benno Benima (found at sf.ushah.org and viewed repeatedly between 01/01/2013 and 20/12/13).

significant to the masculinity of fathers, but it is worth noting that in most cases such advice was clearly delivered with the intention of offering protection. For some, we can speculate, therefore, that simply the act of offering protective advice would have reinforced their normative masculine identity, whilst for those who were able to see their children apply such advice, or use it to survive, this might have been far stronger.

For many, although advice was not so clearly imparted to protect, it remained, nevertheless, a key element of the mental, if not physical, survival of, overwhelmingly, male children in the Holocaust. Stanley Faull attributes his survival to his father's decision not to emigrate before the war but to stay and survive commenting, "...'look we are going through a difficult period but that is going to end and there is going to be normality,' my father said. And he was the only person I looked up to and what my father said this must be right, this is the way I was brought up. So therefore it was an inbuilt thing, well I've got to survive because dad said so."⁵²⁷ Also stressing the importance of the advice of a father Rosenfeld relates the story of an intellectual commenting, "[o]ne tells the story: When my father appears in my dream, it means something good is going to happen. Therefore, the danger of being deported now has passed. I can feel it, I know it..."⁵²⁸ whilst Frank quotes his father from early in the Holocaust when the family is lined up for deportation: "[m]y son, I'm sure you'll be the one that'll survive and you'll tell the world what really happened with us. I don't know what will happen with us, if we are going to live or we're going to die, but I can tell you, I had the feeling that you will be there, you will survive, and you will tell the world what really happened to us, to the Jews."⁵²⁹ In contrast to these cases David Rubinowicz makes the importance of fatherly advice clear when he mourns the absence of his own father on going to pray at Whitsun.⁵³⁰ Noting that most young men were there with their fathers and so could ask if they forgot the words to the prayer, he asks "...who is there to tell me?"⁵³¹ Less than in the case of the clearly articulated advice above, these comments cannot be directly related to the masculinities of the fathers to whom they refer, since in many cases the father could not even have known the transmission of advice had occurred, and yet they are relevant in relation to the father-son dialectic I have already discussed. The appreciation and respect these men,

⁵²⁷ IWM - Stanley Faull - 18272/7.

⁵²⁸ Rosenfeld, *In the Beginning was the Ghetto*, p.55.

⁵²⁹ Lewis and Frank, *Himmler's Jewish Tailor*, p.6.

⁵³⁰ The reference is to Whitsun although this is not a Jewish festival, and we must assume that the author or his editor has christianised the reference for the reader's ease. It is likely that he referring to Shavuot.

⁵³¹ Rubinowicz, *The Diary*, p. 82.

then boys, would have shown for their fathers and their advice would likely have had an impact upon the masculinities of their fathers – although again, problematically, there is little way that this assertion can be proven.

For the most part, however, paternal protection and provision, particularly, but not exclusively, in the ghettos, were achievable and achieved through traditional methods. Fathers organised housing, found hiding places for children and family members and provided food and protection for their families through working, smuggling and sustained negotiation and effort. One of very few such examples Otto Berets records his own experiences in Holland during the Holocaust hiding and supporting his wife and two children. In his interview, when speaking of his struggle to educate his daughter satisfactorily at home, Berets is asked in what ways he could be a father during the period. Without hesitating Berets responds, “I was not a father, I was a protector”. He then expands on this, explaining that his fathering was almost entirely channeled into protection, something at which, as I have discussed above, he considered himself extremely successful.⁵³² As is more often the case, George Weiss’s testimony concerns his wartime experiences as a child, largely spent in Belgium often without his father who was interned as a German national. At one point Weiss describes his flight to Abbeville with his mother who was subsequently badly wounded in a bombing raid and hospitalised. These events left Weiss alone and homeless until his father came and found him, something which Weiss describes with some awe as “a miracle”, and returned the family to Belgium. Weiss’s father later found hiding for the whole family and Weiss notes of the period in general, “people didn’t have food, but with my father there was always food to eat”.⁵³³

Similarly, writing of the period before the ghettos were established, Wermuth describes his father being unemployed, having recently been released from jail, and his mother losing her bread round. Money was extremely tight and so Henry stole some food from their hosts in order to help his family. He then comments: “I had not, however, reckoned with the resilience of my dear father. Somehow, for the next few months, we ate; not opulently, hardly ever a piece of meat, but we did not starve.”⁵³⁴ Despite his father’s provision of food, however, Henry is clear to note that this did not mean his father

⁵³² Shoah Foundation Interview with Otto Berets (found at sf.usc.edu and viewed repeatedly between 01/01/2013 and 20/12/13).

⁵³³ Shoah Foundation Interview with George Weiss (found at sf.usc.edu and viewed repeatedly between 01/01/2013 and 20/12/13).

⁵³⁴ Wermuth, *Breathe Deeply*, p.42.

did not experience pain and upset commenting that, “[f]ear of penury, hunger, homelessness was gnawing at every parent’s heart”.⁵³⁵ Similarly Marylou Ruhe acknowledged the damage their situation was causing her father: [p]hysically, he was going down somewhat. Mentally, of course he wasn’t quite the same as he had been before...” whilst lauding his masculinism commenting, “but he kept up his spirits, he was very protective of me, very, very protective. We were very close together. Father had a watch and sold bits of it to make money.” Even fathers who were not necessarily expected to perform well in such conditions are praised for their efforts – Bakalchuk in the Dereczin Memorial book records how his father saved the town priest from the Communists noting, “I knew my father as a scholar, who always had learning on his mind. I never saw a hero in him. Every disturbance filled him with fear. It was therefore a wonderment to me, as to where he got so much courage in those difficult months of the Dereczin community.”⁵³⁶

For many fathers, as with all men, simply going to work, a clear act of provision, seems to have been key to paternal masculine assertion. Lambert discussed his own work, reinforcing his career choices by asserting that his ultimate aim was protection of, and provision for, his family, commenting, “[b]efore all this happened I had the greatest reward of my social work career, which allows me to envisage a future of maximum security for my wife, my children, and myself”,⁵³⁷ linking career advancement to his role in the family. Even in cases where fathers did not need to work, work seems to have been a positive option. Flinker’s father returned to work ultimately because it was agreed that the activity would be positive for the whole family, even though it was in no way a financial requirement.⁵³⁸ Finally, in considering attempts to provide and protect we must include efforts which, although potentially damaging in hindsight, would, at the time, have fed into the masculinity of the man involved through his ability to perform his normative identity. One example of this is Kaplan’s recording of a man who removed his son’s name from a list of Jews designated for emigration, believing that the biggest danger was for his son’s name to be on any list in the hands of the Nazis.⁵³⁹ We do not know the outcome of this choice but I believe we can consider it irrelevant to the masculine reinforcement which the act may have conferred. Similarly, Lambert made a very clear, active decision that his children would not be separated from him. In describing this choice he noted,

⁵³⁵ Wermuth, *Breathe Deeply*, p.36.

⁵³⁶ Meir Bakalchuk, ‘Uprooted with the Maelstrom’ in Berger, ed., *The Dereczin Memorial Book*, p.325.

⁵³⁷ Lambert, *Diary of a Witness*, p.153.

⁵³⁸ Flinker, *Young Moshe’s Diary*, p.54.

⁵³⁹ Kaplan, *The Scroll of Agony*, p.281.

"[m]y instinct is to have absolute faith in the future, and duty compels me to be the last to leave the ship. My wife and children are not to be separated from me",⁵⁴⁰ clearly associating the decision with his role as a patriarch and thereby showing the connection between the protective decision and his gender identity.

One example both of protecting and providing in the ghettos, particular to fathers, can be seen in those who needed their children to work, either to help support the family or because they felt that being a worker would better protect their child. In such cases it was not uncommon for men to find work placements for their sons in their own organisations, something which links to the ideas of inheritance and descent which I shall discuss later in this chapter, but also placed fathers in a position to continue protecting their sons. Yitskhok Rudashevski noted that his friend Gabik, whose father had recently died, inherited his father's job in the library⁵⁴¹ – something which Gabik's father had established for him by employing him in a lower job in the library during his life. Julius Feldman's father organised work for his son in the municipal garden in the ghetto, an achievement which would have reinforced his masculinity not only by finding work for his son but in the protection he afforded his son by finding him a relatively untaxing, safe and pleasant job.⁵⁴² Henry Wermuth's father found them both work in a sign painting workshop (although this was later, once they were in the camp Klaj)⁵⁴³ and Ben Helfgott's father, at his son's request, used his influence to find his son work in a glass factory despite his own misgivings and the fact that he had already made other plans for the family to leave the ghetto.⁵⁴⁴ As Helfgott tells the story, someone suggested that the factory was no longer recruiting so he demanded that his father get him the work in order to "prove to them what a marvellous man my father is". His father initially refused but Helfgott replied, "I have already told my friends that you can fix it and you are not going to let me down" and so the work was found. Later when the work proved too hard and Helfgott was beaten his father arranged a bribe to ensure him an easier position in the same factory.⁵⁴⁵

⁵⁴⁰ Lambert, *Diary of a Witness*, p.153.

⁵⁴¹ Rudashevski, *The Diary of the Vilna Ghetto*, p.87.

⁵⁴² Feldman, *The Krakow Diary*, p.23.

⁵⁴³ Wermuth, *Breathe Deeply*, p.63.

⁵⁴⁴ IWM – Ben Helfgott - 9165/20.

⁵⁴⁵ IWM - Ben Helfgott – 9165/20.

In many of these examples, but particularly the work that Helfgott Sr. found for his son, we see protection and provision overlapping with the third element of masculinity, status, the loss of which through humiliation was as common to fathers as to other men, particularly for those humiliated in front of their children, as in the case of Barbara Stimler's father who was made to dance and then beaten.⁵⁴⁶ Stimler notes the humiliation of this event not only for her father but for herself and her mother, as if an assault on her father was in fact an assault on the pride of the entire family. In the case of Helfgott particularly we see the capacity of fathers to reassert their status through reference to their children. Not only is Ben Helfgott's boast about his father's ability to get him work in the glass factory beneficial to his own masculinity but it also reinforces that of his father.⁵⁴⁷ That his father had already made other plans for the whole family which he put on hold to fulfill his son's request, and thereby prove his own power, shows the importance of such reassurance for his own identity.

Not always clear from the father, we can also see the importance of children in the establishment of male status through the way in which children write about their fathers. In this way, we can repeatedly see children noting the power and status of their fathers, particularly within the ghetto, as a source of pride. Rena Zabiela describes how, in collaboration with the Order Service, her father opened a sweet shop in the ghetto. Through this shop he was able to earn enough money to keep the family in some luxury during the war. In recording this story however, Zabiela is keen to note how her father's wealth enabled him to support others in their building and to hand out sweets to starving children on his way home from work, thus asserting his status and his position within the community.⁵⁴⁸ Zyskind also writes proudly of her father's status within the ghetto as she was saved from deportation by the chief of police who knew her father.⁵⁴⁹ For Elie Wiesel, whose relationship with his father was more strained than most, his father's status, not only in the wider family, but more broadly in the community and later in the ghetto, was a key point of pride. Wiesel bore a grudging respect for this side of his father, and those aspects of his father's character which he considered problematic do more to assert his father's strong masculinity than to question it.⁵⁵⁰

⁵⁴⁶ IWM - Barbara Stimler – 17475/5.

⁵⁴⁷ IWM - Ben Helfgott – 9165/20.

⁵⁴⁸ IWM - Rena Zabiela – 17369/4.

⁵⁴⁹ Zyskind, *Stolen Years*, p.82.

⁵⁵⁰ Wiesel, *Night*, p.14, p.21 and p.24 amongst others – this links to my earlier discussion about the amoral nature of masculinity. In the case of Wiesel, his objections to his father hinge on his being too powerful within the family and perhaps implacable. Whilst this is something Wiesel objects to it is clear that he regards it as masculine.

For a few like Wiesel and Efrat-Feldman, writing in the Dereczin Memorial book, even before the ghettos significant pride seems to have come from fathers who were able to assert their status in the community, and Efrat-Feldman notes, “[d]uring the first days of the Nazi occupation, my father once again proved adept at protecting the interests of the Jewish community”.⁵⁵¹ Nevertheless, these assertions were more common once inside the ghettos. For some, a previously absent masculinity of status seems even to have been created in the ghetto. Lancman writes of his father’s plan in the ghetto to march typhoid sufferers towards the main gate, writing “[w]hatever we may think of his plan today, the seed of rebellion was planted and the idea itself was something new and heartening”.⁵⁵² This was not something that Lancman had necessarily expected of his father and his role in providing an idea of resistance to the community seems to have mattered a great deal to his son.

I have written in other chapters about the importance of descent, particularly to those men with culturally Jewish normative masculinities, however, in relation to fathers there is a notable shift in emphasis from descent as a historical phenomenon (i.e. the focus on one’s forebears) to a focus on the future and the extent to which, through having children, one has become part of history. Not only is this stress clear in the examples of life-saving advice discussed above, where the advice and guidance offered by fathers become an integral part of the survival and future of their families, effectively securing for them a place in posterity, but also through parting words, comforting ideas and discussion that appear repeatedly in the sources. Several parents, when they believe they may be parted from their children, offer words of advice, not about life but words of religious heritage. David Kahane records passing advice to his three-year-old daughter, although unlikely to be of significance to her at that age, it matters to Kahane that he is able to give his heritage to his daughter, particularly since he is a Rabbi and she is going into hiding with a Christian family, writing, “[l]ook well, my little girl, let this sight be etched deeply into your memory. Do not forget you are a daughter of Israel, the daughter of Holy people.”⁵⁵³ Similarly in a poem addressed to a daughter, Simcha Bunim Shayevitsh wrote,

The evil day has arrived.

The evil hour has arrived,

⁵⁵¹ Rachel Efrat-Feldman, ‘The Fate of the Feldman Family’ in Berger, ed., *The Dereczin Memorial Book*, p.203.

⁵⁵² Lancman, *Youth in the Time of the Holocaust*, p.63.

⁵⁵³ Kahane, *Lvov Ghetto Diary*, p.31 and p.63.

When I must teach you, a little girl,
The terrible *parshe* of *Lekh Lekho*.

The poem goes on,

And not understand that in our blood
Flows the power of our forefathers
Who in all generations
Performed all kinds of sacrifices.⁵⁵⁴

There are even a few cases of particularly practical ideas of descent where a father passes to his son responsibility for the family. In the case of Michael Diment this was decision-making responsibility whilst his father was in jail,⁵⁵⁵ whilst for Liebman it involved assuming a protective role over his brothers whilst continuing to report to his father in the form of letters.⁵⁵⁶

Whilst this sense of establishing the past in the future amongst fathers, a continuity relevant to their own masculine identities and that of their sons, is particularly clear amongst those men likely to have oriented themselves strongly, if not uniquely, towards a Jewish normative masculinity, it is also apparent to a lesser degree amongst those with more assimilated lives. Notable amongst these is Rosenfeld, who, whilst involved in the Jewish community before the war, lived a relatively assimilated life in Austria and only began to practise Judaism after entering the ghetto, drew on discussions of generations, descent and children in writing, “[s]hould we want to be smarter than our ancestors? They went into the fire. For us, for us who are alive today. And our children here won't want to be smarter than us, their fathers... This is how it will go generation to generation...”⁵⁵⁷ Equally Perechodnik, a secular Jew from Otwock whose disdain for religious Judaism makes it likely that he oriented himself at least in part towards an assimilated or self-hating normative masculinity, stressed the importance of descent and heritage, this time particularly of a male child, when his brother-in-law

⁵⁵⁴ Simcha Bunim Shayevitsh cited in Adelson and Lapides, *Lodz Ghetto*, p.216.

⁵⁵⁵ Diment, *The Lone Survivor*, p.18.

⁵⁵⁶ Liebman, *Born Jewish*, p.126.

⁵⁵⁷ Rosenfeld, *In the Beginning was the Ghetto*, p.42.

died and Perechodnik noted his own envy that the he died with a son since “he does not wholly die”.⁵⁵⁸

This infiltration of other normative masculinities by the particularly Jewish emphasis on heritage and descent may indicate simply that all three key normative masculine identities contained elements of descent when practised by fathers, however, I would instead argue that it is more likely to reflect the existence of a fourth normative masculine identity – the father. This idea is reinforced by the work of John Tosh who, supported by Lupton and Barclay, has clearly argued for understanding the relevance of personal, non-financial inheritance in the masculine identities of both fathers and their sons. Specifically, Tosh argues, the passing on of a heritage of family achievement, in whatsoever form, acts to establish a son’s masculinity whilst the act of establishing a son’s masculinity both reinforces that of the father, as a creator of men, in the present and establishes it for the future, as a patriarch.⁵⁵⁹ In this way descent and heritage become not only relevant but central to the masculinities of all fathers in a way that is not significant to childless men, suggesting the existence of a separate normative identity.

This argument is perhaps further reinforced by the behaviour of fathers who found themselves, for many reasons, without their children during the Holocaust. Sources suggest that many such men, in spite of the absence of their own children, found themselves continuing to perform as fathers, since that role was an ingrained part of their identities and, I would argue, represented the primary normative identity to which they had become used to conforming. Describing this phenomenon Ringelblum cites the example of Gepner, who was highly placed in the Warsaw ghetto administration, and who behaved in a fatherly way to many children in the ghetto, although his own had escaped, noting, “[t]he policies of Gepner’s Food Supply Agency are scandalous and deserve special treatment. But Gepner, who is now childless (his children have left the country), pours out all his fatherly feelings on other children. He has become the great patron of children in the ghetto...”⁵⁶⁰ Ringelblum also writes of the “tragedy of families: thousands of men without wives, men who have

⁵⁵⁸ Perechodnik, *Am I a Murderer?*, p.7 – this is originally written in Latin by Perechodnik who uses the phrase, “non omnis moriar”.

⁵⁵⁹ John Tosh, ‘Authority and Nurture in Middle-Class Fatherhood’, *Gender & History* 8, 1996, p.50. Tosh’s work is based on nineteenth century Britain, however many of his ideas and the theoretical discussions of fatherhood can be readily transferred to other periods.

⁵⁶⁰ Ringelblum, *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto*, p.286.

remained alive and don't know what they are living for",⁵⁶¹ hinting at the idea that once one has become a parent one's identity changes and cannot be reversed. Moreover, numerous sources speak of men who when no longer able to protect their own children risk their lives to save those of family or friends. Throughout the sources I have used there remains a sense that once a man has children that fact becomes key to his identity, and such men are rarely described without a reference to the number of children they have as in Ringelblum's note, "...three Jews were killed...one of them a refugee who was the father of eight children".⁵⁶² Martin Parker offers another clear example of the permanent impact of being a parent and in his IWM interview makes it clear that the existence of his daughter, i.e. his role as a father, was significant in increasing his desire to struggle and survive.⁵⁶³

If having children changes the masculine identity toward which a man orients himself then it is reasonable to assume, in line with the evidence above, that it would also change his practised masculinity. For some fathers protection and provision seem to have been a reflex rather than a choice and once a man had become a parent such behaviour was instinctive. Corni translated the anonymous diary of a young girl in the Łódź ghetto which describes a father sharing his rations with his child; she notes: "[d]espite everything a father is a father. He...gets two soups there and he gives one to me".⁵⁶⁴ Similarly Zyskind, who lives alone with her father for some time after her mother's death records numerous examples of her father's instinctive parenting and the pride she feels in it. Not only does her father give her most of his own food, telling her that it only makes him more hungry, but when she goes to him, very ill in hospital, to explain that she is being deported, he demands his clothes, dresses and leaves with her for deportation. It is not clear that there is anything that he can do but his need to protect nonetheless compels him to accompany her.⁵⁶⁵

Individual elements of gender identity

⁵⁶¹ Ringelblum, *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto*, p.321.

⁵⁶² Ringelblum, *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto*, p.246.

⁵⁶³ It should be noted here that this answer is given as a response to a repeated direct question and as such should be treated with caution, (IWM - Martin Parker – 12597/9).

⁵⁶⁴ Corni, *Hitler's Ghettos*, p.136.

⁵⁶⁵ Zyskind, *Stolen Years*, p.82 and p.117.

Leaving aside the more public displays of masculinity outlined in the last section, it is perhaps the individual elements of masculine identity which offer the most interesting insight into the masculinity of both fathers and their sons during the Holocaust. Discussed in detail over the last two chapters, these individual elements are those which do not form part of normative masculine identities but instead are formed by the individual's early experiences, strengths and weaknesses (both physical and intellectual) and personality. Significantly the sources suggest that whilst these individual elements seem to be of as limited relevance to the masculinities of fathers as to the masculinities of all Jewish men in this period, they are of some relevance to children and, particularly in those cases where fathers became less able to perform the normative elements of their masculinities during the Holocaust, allowed children to sustain respect for their fathers and their gender identities. Chief amongst these individual elements, general advice, knowledge and support were used by children to reinforce their belief in, adherence to, and respect for their fathers.

This chapter has already considered the role of life-saving advice in the sustaining of gender identities, however separate attention must be paid to the display of knowledge, whether in the form of facts or advice and about almost any subject, through which sons displayed their respect and appreciation for their fathers. Wells records his father's words early on in the deconstruction when he asks for advice: "[h]e did not wish to advise me. 'Whatever I suggest may bring about your misfortune. I should reproach myself bitterly all my life were I to give you some advice that would prove to your disadvantage. In such times as ours one cannot listen to anyone's advice; not even to one's own father or mother. Rely on your own sense as up to now. Trust in God as you have done so far, and all will end well.'"⁵⁶⁶ Although it does not show any particular masculine display on the part of his father, on the contrary the refusal to engage with his son's request for clear parenting might be considered a failure of a fatherly masculinity, Wells himself is pleased with this response, endowing it in some way with the making of his own masculinity and crediting his father with wisdom. Likewise, Zar records much of what her father says in direct quotation marks, in contrast to the lack of comments she notes from her mother, clearly viewing his words with particular significance, even if she gives no suggestion that they were equally beneficial to her father.

⁵⁶⁶ Wells, *The Death Brigade*, p.105.

Another example of the passing on of wisdom or knowledge as reinforcing the esteem in which children held their fathers is the case of Alex Meijer, already discussed earlier in the thesis, who spent much of his time, whilst hiding on a Dutch farm, bonding with his father by learning skills including how to milk a cow. In this sustained practice and the way in which he speaks about this time spent with his father Meijer offers a clear example of the transmission of knowledge benefiting the developing masculinity of a son and in his appreciation of his father.⁵⁶⁷ The frequency with which these exchanges are mentioned in Alex's diaries is of particular significance and underlines both their importance to Alex and the power of his father's patriarchal presence in his development. In a similar fashion, Otto Frank acted as a point of wisdom and knowledge for his children once in hiding, assuming a patriarchal role, organising rotas and choosing study topics for the children in the annex to increase learning and avoid boredom. Significantly, in the case of Frank, however, we can see that such a transfer of knowledge directly impacted on the masculinity of the father as hiding seemed to offer Otto Frank a strength, calm and purpose that he had lacked before the family went into hiding, something I have written about in more detail in the previous chapter.⁵⁶⁸ The fact that the knowledge transmitted is not advice pertaining to the Holocaust, in contrast to most cases in the ghettos where children tend to cite the passing on of relevant wisdom or information, is perhaps explained in these cases since the families, both in hiding in the West, whilst being in constant danger, do not seem to have felt the same imminent threat that was clear to those in the ghettos. This limited security then perhaps provided the time and space available for a broader education and development of masculinity than was possible for those in the ghetto.

The notion of fathers as being respected for their wisdom extends beyond this life advice, to include more factual ideas of knowledge. Respect for paternal opinion can be found particularly in relation to the war effort, on which subject sons often cite their fathers in a display of clearly gendered respect and pride. This is of significance since, in many cases, knowledge would have been gathered from illegal radios to which the whole family were listening; its attribution almost uniquely to fathers, therefore, is indicative of the power with which the father remains imbued in the eyes of his children. Alex Meijer is again a clear example of this phenomenon as, throughout his years in hiding, he listens to the radio in the cupboard, as do other members of the family, however he cites only, and regularly,

⁵⁶⁷ Meijer, *Alex's Diary*, *passim*.

⁵⁶⁸ Lee, *The Hidden Life of Otto Frank*, p.86.

his father's opinion regarding the progress of the war.⁵⁶⁹ Where knowledge about the war effort is attributed to fathers its impact is, moreover, twofold since not only is the father's masculinity confirmed by his knowledge and intellect but he is the bearer of news which, at several points, had the effect of lightening the mood for Jewish families.⁵⁷⁰ As bearers of such "truth", fathers, far from being figures of depression, were given the power of supplying optimism and positivity. When asked if his father had lost hope during their time in the ghetto, Ben Helfgott said that his father and his father's friends were, on the contrary, armchair politicians convinced that the Germans would lose the war.⁵⁷¹ What is notable here is, once again, not only the knowledge attached to his father but the positive connotations that his father's opinions therefore carried. Another example of this can be seen in the case of Diment, who keenly notes that it is his father's knowledge which allows them to build a mill to grind wheat in the ghetto and thereby make flour.⁵⁷² This development is significant not only for the survival of his family but of many others and Diment notes the rage of the Germans on finding the mill as a matter of pride. However, as in other cases of advice and knowledge, other than Ben Helfgott, much as we might speculate, we have little evidence to suggest that fathers benefited from this respect and pride felt by their children.

Even in the case of sons who question their father's authority and character, a respect for power and knowledge can be found. Moshe Flinker shows his respect for his father by speaking through his father when he wishes to assert something, as if his father having said it gave it added validity. In this way when he disagrees with his mother Flinker notes, "[m]y father gave her a similar answer whenever she broached the subject to him".⁵⁷³ Julius Feldman quotes his father even when the subject of the quotation is distasteful to him, showing the power of his father's words, regardless of content. In attempting to understand his own descent and patriarchal heritage he comments, "Why? Because I was a Jew. 'Because', as my father put it, 'a Jewish mother gave birth to me.'"⁵⁷⁴ Whilst his father seems almost to have been negating his own role in his son's descent and current

⁵⁶⁹ Whilst this is certainly a product of life before the war when fathers would have had more access to knowledge concerning international situations and politics, nonetheless its continuity through wartime shows a continuity of this masculinity role of 'sage' and there is little evidence of this being limited in any way by the war, (Meijer, *Alex's Diary*, p.43 and p.91 amongst others).

⁵⁷⁰ Most notably Mihail Sebastian (Sebastian, *Journal*, p.150), but seen elsewhere.

⁵⁷¹ IWM - Ben Helfgott - 9165/20.

⁵⁷² Diment, *The Lone Survivor*, p.58.

⁵⁷³ Flinker, *Young Moshe's Diary*, p.36.

⁵⁷⁴ Feldman, *The Krakow Diary*, p.12.

predicament, it is notable that his son still chooses to impart this “wisdom” through his father and does not do so with any bitterness or anger.

Such identification with the words of their fathers can also be seen in the writing of female children in this period. Notable in this regard is the diary of Ety Hillesum, which seems to show an increasing respect for her father as the Holocaust progresses and he responds to it. Prior to the outbreak of war Hillesum admitted finding both her parents extremely trying, however once it began she saw a change in her father which she acknowledged when she reported him as saying, “[o]ne should be thankful, nowadays, each day the sun shines and one is still at large. At least that’s what I tell other people all the time.”⁵⁷⁵ Whilst she prefaces this by referring to him as “my poor father” the “poor” is not pity that he has misunderstood something, but more pity that he has understood it so well. This is, after all, quite akin to her own philosophy for managing events. Hillesum’s respect for her father seems to grow in light of the way in which he managed his experiences in the Holocaust, and this wry but honest quotation can be seen as proof of a respect for him and, like in other cases, a note of her father as a source of wisdom or truth. This is reinforced by a later account of a conversation with her father in which she relates that, “[l]ast time I saw my father, we went for a walk in the dusty, sandy wasteland: he is so sweet and wonderfully resigned... We may suffer, but we must not succumb.”⁵⁷⁶ Although she sees him as resigned this is not a negative quality for Hillesum. Rather the comment, “We may suffer, but we must not succumb” can almost be seen as a homily that she has learned from her father.⁵⁷⁷

In a very different way, children and family seem also to have found respect for fathers and their masculinity through paternal displays of love and devotion, although for the fathers in question these can be damaging as much as they are positive and there is no clear link between them and paternal masculine identities. Writing in the Dereczin Memorial Book Liebreider notes that, “[t]he Germans killed my brother-in-law Jonathan in Slonim. He possibly could have saved himself, since the partisans proposed to him that he go with them, but without the children. He did not want to leave the

⁵⁷⁵ Ety Hillesum, *Ety: A Diary 1941-1943* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1983), p.96.

⁵⁷⁶ Hillesum, *Ety: A Diary*, p.198.

⁵⁷⁷ As has been discussed elsewhere, in this period notions of masculinity changed and were even reversed. Here Hillesum shows clear respect for her father’s acknowledgment of the truth of their situation whilst remaining strong, whilst in different circumstances such resignation would not be seen as masculine or positive in any way.

children alone.”⁵⁷⁸ However it remains unclear how this impacted upon his brother-in-law and we have no evidence to suggest that such an act of self sacrifice was masculinising for the actor. Similarly Lewin documents the case of a father who hands himself over to the Germans because his family has been taken. “I feel a great compassion and admiration for this straightforward person. Strong in mind as well as strong in body.”⁵⁷⁹ Clearly in Lewin’s eyes this man’s actions confirmed his masculinity as a father in stark contrast to Lewin’s feelings about his own failure to do likewise when his wife is taken, but again we do not know the impact of this action on the masculinity of the man in question. Also writing in the Dereczin Memorial Book Kaminetsky-Friedman’s final paragraph describes her leave-taking from her father noting his paternal devotion and the “blessings he bestowed upon us in connection with our flight into the forest, and the tears with which he bestowed those blessings”.⁵⁸⁰ Similarly lauding paternal love as masculinising, Ringelblum makes a point of noting that men as well as women wrapped up their children in an attempt to smuggle them out of the ghettos in the hope of finding them some means of surviving. Each of these cases is a display of sacrifice and pain for reasons of love, which are accompanied by a strong degree of respect toward the father in question, and whilst we have no evidence to suggest that it is equally sustaining for the men involved, the fact that in several cases they are recounted by men who are themselves fathers (Ringelblum, Lewin and Liebreider) indicates the potential of such acts to strengthen paternal masculinity.

The questions of depression and power within the home are also significant elements of individual masculinities which show diverse and complex responses to the same events for fathers and their children. First, I would argue that the depression and apathy of Jewish fathers, just like those of Jewish men, both during the deconstruction and ghettoisation, have been overstated.⁵⁸¹ Numerous sources from this period point to fathers, in spite of emotional turmoil, using their connections to exploit Aryanisation to their own benefits - Martin Parker received no financial remuneration for his business, but credited the Aryan family who took it over with later saving his family’s lives⁵⁸² and

⁵⁷⁸ Liebreider, M., ‘The End of Halinka’ in Berger, ed., *The Dereczin Memorial Book*, p.247.

⁵⁷⁹ Abraham Lewin, *A Cup of Tears: A Diary of the Warsaw Ghetto* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988), p.179.

⁵⁸⁰ Kaminetsky-Friedman, T., ‘The Bloody Tenth Day of Ab’, in Berger, ed., *The Dereczin Memorial Book*, p.235.

⁵⁸¹ The case of Lili Pohlmann is interesting here. Although she described her father as “completely lost” and is often quoted as discussing her father’s collapse, her testimony goes on to recount her father’s rejuvenation, his employment as a carpenter which provided the work card which saved the whole family for some time, and his later decision to put Lili and her mother into hiding, an act which ultimately saved their lives, (IWM - Lili Pohlmann – 17340/18).

⁵⁸² IWM - Martin Parker – 12597/9.

Michael Etkind's father stalled Aryanisation long enough to take home fabric from his factory so that he might continue to work and earn money.⁵⁸³ Equally decision making remained clearly within the domain of fathers – Moshe Flinker's father made decisions for the entire family and was instrumental in moving the family within Holland before ultimately finding them a hiding place.⁵⁸⁴ Flinker does regularly note his father and mother arguing about the family's movements; however in every case it is his father who prevails.⁵⁸⁵ Similarly, Alex Meijer's family went into hiding organised entirely by his father and Alex was, he noted, "spurred on by papa" – returning to education at the behest of his father – a man who was not only the decision maker, but actively sought solutions and behaved very much as a strong patriarch throughout the war.⁵⁸⁶ Equally Freddie Knoller's father makes the decision that his son should leave Austria and arranges his passage to Belgium, even though he and wife were not able or willing to go with him.⁵⁸⁷

The sources even provide examples of paternal dominance and power where fathers who were imprisoned or absent for a period of time are documented, by both fathers and sons, as maintaining their role as decision makers and actors in the family. Rubinowicz's father notably continued to send instructions concerning how the family should act even after he had been arrested and put in a nearby work camp and despite having little knowledge of the circumstances of the family since he was not receiving their mail. Nevertheless, he wrote often with detailed requests and instructions.⁵⁸⁸ Of course, that he wrote with instructions is not evidence of his position or power, but Rubinowicz clearly notes that the family obeyed these instructions where at all possible and David still clearly counts his father as the patriarch of the family, despite his prolonged absence. In one letter David's father writes "Dear children, obey your mother",⁵⁸⁹ a command which, although it represents a transfer of authority, was still a clear display of patriarchal power since, in insisting that his children obey their mother, Rubinowicz's father shows first that he holds power which might be transferred

⁵⁸³ IWM - Michael Etkind – 10406/24.

⁵⁸⁴ Flinker, *Young Moshe's Diary*, *passim*.

⁵⁸⁵ If this was indeed the case, it shows his father's power within the family, however, even if it is not the case that his father always won such arguments, the fact that the son only notes those where his father does win also says something about his representations of, and belief in, his father.

⁵⁸⁶ Meijer, *Alex's Diary*, p.8.

⁵⁸⁷ Shoah Foundation Interview with Freddie Knoller (found at sfi.usc.edu and viewed repeatedly between 01/01/2013 and 20/12/13).

⁵⁸⁸ Rubinowicz, *The Diary of Dawid Rubinowicz*, p.70.

⁵⁸⁹ Rubinowicz, *The Diary of Dawid Rubinowicz*, p.74.

and, second, suggests that he believed such a command would be obeyed by his family – which it indeed was.

Interestingly, however, the respect that children and sons had for their fathers does not seem to have diminished, even amongst those who did become depressed and apathetic, for example Liebman's father, of whom he wrote, "[t]his feeling of disquiet insinuated itself into each one of us. My father lost his self-confidence. Until the day he died, thirty years later, he would never really recover it."⁵⁹⁰ Instead, emotional outpourings seem to have had little impact on the way in which children perceived the masculinity of their fathers. Where fathers cried it was very rarely accompanied by any other physical signs of distress or loss of control, something which made it easier to sustain respect for the masculine identity of those who succumbed and children regularly justify such actions. One example of this is Halina Sands, who noted her father returning from a day at the *Umschlagplatz* and weeping, but clearly continued to see him as a figure of power and protection,⁵⁹¹ whilst Elie Wiesel reported his father's tears but continued to acknowledge his father's role as family patriarch, noting his plans for moving the family into hiding (although this did not ultimately come to pass) and later as a community leader in the ghetto.⁵⁹² Later in the Holocaust, as they arrive in the camp, Wiesel Sr. takes Elie's hand to protect him; a protection he is only still able to offer because, for Elie, his masculinity and patriarchal role are still intact. Similarly, Rudashevski details his father being beaten, but the way in which he writes about his father's behaviour or his role within the family does not change at all. Rather it is Rudashevski himself who seems to suffer from his father's beating.⁵⁹³

Even when a father's depression led indirectly to his own death, as in the case of Wachler-Ogulnick who jumps from a deportation train to save her own life but whose father would not follow, there is little sign of decreased respect or adherence to her patriarch. On the contrary, in response to this Wachler-Ogulnick notes, "[m]y father (ל"ט) never even gave thought to running from the Germans and death. He was certain that all was lost. The Germans had reached the gates of Moscow, all the Jews will be slaughtered, and therefore it was appropriate to go with the community and share in the fate of

⁵⁹⁰ Liebman, *Born Jewish*, p.93.

⁵⁹¹ Smith, *Forgotten Voices of the Holocaust*, p.127.

⁵⁹² Wiesel, *Night*, p.23.

⁵⁹³ Rubinowicz, *The Diary of Dawid Rubinowicz*, p.16.

the entirety of our people.”⁵⁹⁴ In writing thus she certainly has no reproach for her father and seems instead to praise him for his behaviour towards his community and his people as a display of patriarchal responsibility. The majority of such sources, however, also suggest that neither sustained action and productivity amongst fathers nor the clear respect of their children, even towards men in deep depression, was able to draw those fathers out of such depressions.

Finally, whilst I would like this chapter to speak to the question of age that I have so far been unable to answer, sadly it does not. For the reasons discussed already, it is hard to find sources from fathers of a wide range of ages, and little can be drawn from them concerning the importance of age in gender identity. Anecdotally the sources seem to suggest that the passage to becoming a grandfather tends to absolve men of the demands of masculinism from their dependants (i.e. there is a limited expectation of protection or provision), however we have very few sources with which to confirm the impact of this upon grandfathers and can therefore only speculate as to whether this tells us something about the masculinity of older men and fathers or not.

Case study of Roman Halter⁵⁹⁵

Roman Halter has written a book, recorded a long interview with the Imperial War Museum and I have interviewed him myself. Between these different media it has been possible to piece together a quite developed understanding of his history and, particularly, that of his father, Mordechai, and what emerges is a case which successfully illustrates many of the dominant questions of fatherhood discussed throughout this chapter, and indeed in the last two. The key to much of this is, as considered above, the ages of Halter and his father during the Holocaust: at its end Roman was 17 and had strong memories of his father both before and during the Holocaust. Moreover, Roman and his father had spent all of deconstruction and their time in the Łódź ghetto together, until his father's untimely death, and he was therefore able to comment on the ways in which his father reacted and behaved with more clarity and detail than many.

⁵⁹⁴ Wachler-Ogulnick, S., 'This is how I was Saved on the Day of Slaughter' in Berger, ed., *The Dereczin Memorial Book*, p.245.

⁵⁹⁵ All references are taken either from Halter, *Roman's Journey*, from Roman Halter's interview with the Imperial War Museum, IWM – Roman Halter - 17183/17 or from a private interview with Roman Halter conducted by the author Anna-Madeleine Carey on 25 October 2010 at Roman's home.

It is noteworthy that Halter's discussion of the pre-war period is very detailed and includes a long explanation of his father's youth and early experiences. Clearly a point of significant pride for his family in general and Roman in particular, Mordechai survived being called for service in the Russian army – generally considered a death sentence – and returned to his family significantly wealthier than he left. Mordechai was then sent to England where he was in a financial position to assist one brother in setting up a business and another in emigrating to Canada. Roman relates these stories deliberately and repeatedly in an attempt to show his father's strength and the respect felt for him in the family. As a father Mordechai is seen by Roman as having been somewhat limited. Roman was his seventh child and "not a novelty" to his father, however, he nonetheless recounts a particular moment of tenderness when he sat on his father's knee reading the Hag gadah – again showing the paternal relevance of transmission of history and tradition. Despite this, the principal description of Mordechai as a father is of a strong patriarch in control of his family; it is Mordechai who made the decisions and when he could not - two of his sons marry unsuitable women - he reacted badly, refusing to attend the weddings. Just as in my earlier comments it is very clear from Roman's accounts that much as his father might have failed to be a 'modern' father and may in many ways have been extremely authoritarian, he was highly respected within the family and his masculinity was not in doubt.

When the war began Mordechai, as a respected elder, made decisions for various members of the family, including sending Roman's sister to Warsaw, where she remained until her death during the war, and taking the decision that the family not try to leave Poland – although his wife did briefly look into obtaining exit visas. This decision was largely based, according to Roman, on his father's age; 62 at the time of the German invasion, Mordechai felt he was too old to attempt to start again. However, if we look closely at his refusal to emigrate it does not seem to be as negative as Roman initially suggests – rather Mordechai knew of family members who had moved to Palestine and found the life there extremely hard. Moreover, a well connected *volksdeutsch* friend in the town had told him that there was no need to leave, that he would protect them. Perhaps he should not have believed this but the decision to stay in a place where he had friends, status and connections, rather than move to Palestine where his brother-in-law had died, seemed like a sensible, logical defence of the

family. That it did not turn out to be such should not change the nature of the decision – a proactive one made by a family patriarch.⁵⁹⁶

Later, whilst still in their home town of Chodecz, but after the German invasion, and having lost their house and Mordechai's factory, one of Roman's elder brothers was executed by the SS. This led to Mordechai falling into a deep depression. When questioned on this Roman believes that Mordechai realised that he had failed his family, that he should have been more proactive in organising emigration and marshaling various family members to organise the escape of the others. Roman also notes that until his own death Mordechai talked about the death of this son, clearly a loss which affected him deeply. Exactly as I have discussed throughout, whilst Mordechai, despite the loss of his business and home, had been continuing to provide for and protect his family this had been enough to sustain him and his masculine identity. It was only on the murder of his son that his inability to protect was so clearly demonstrated and he became depressed. Several elements of this depression are important however, and reflect ideas of masculinity in fatherhood found throughout this chapter: according to Roman, Mordechai's mood improved greatly in two circumstances, the first whenever Roman shaved his father and the second when they entered the Łódź ghetto.

In the first case, when Roman shaved his father he would ask his father for advice about such things as how to feed geese – whilst imparting such knowledge Mordechai would come back to life for a few minutes seeming to completely regain his former vigour and showing the masculine impact of transmission of knowledge and advice. The second time Mordechai came out of his depression it was permanent and was a product of reaching the ghetto – part of a convoy of 360 from Chodecz with only 120 places available in the Łódź ghetto, it was not clear what would happen to those who did not get in (they were in fact murdered nearby), and, according to Roman, Mordechai realised that he had to do everything in his power to gain entry for his family. By bribing various people and selling valuables he had brought with him Mordechai was able to gain entry for all six members of his family, a clear act of both providing and protecting which was enough to bring him out of his depression. Once in the ghetto it was agreed that Mordechai and his wife's father should enter an old people's

⁵⁹⁶ Roman later comments that his family were immediately starving upon entering the Łódź ghetto when others were not because they came from Chodecz rather than Łódź. This emphasis on location and being local would seem, at least partially, to confirm the importance of local knowledge in survival during this period and perhaps go further therefore to explain the actions of men like his father, Mordechai, IWM - Roman Halter – 17183/17.

home since there they would receive extra rations, some of which they might then be able to save for Roman and his mother. This they did for some time with Roman and his mother visiting his father often and sharing potatoes from his rations. When asked if he took over as the 'man of the house' at this point, Roman is clear that he did not. Although he worked at various stages in the ghetto, so too did his mother and Roman did not assume his father's role in caring for her. Rather, his father continued to make decisions for the family where necessary and to hold what remained of the family valuables. Notably, when another sister reached Łódź and needed help to gain entry into the ghetto for herself and her children, Roman went to his father for advice and, ultimately, was given items to sell in an attempt to save them.

Although the situation in the ghetto deteriorated rapidly and there was little that anyone could do to help the family, Mordechai did make a series of final gestures which seem both to reaffirm his role as a father and his strong masculine identity. The day before his death Mordechai visited Roman and his mother and explained several things to Roman: he passed on the address of an aunt in Switzerland who might help him after the war; he told Roman the location of a buried chest of tea and soap in Chodecz which he might retrieve after the war and use to make money; and he told Roman that when he, Mordechai, died, Roman should take his coat to a specific tailor and have it altered to make a winter coat for himself. These pieces of information were Roman's examples of the life-saving advice that many fathers gave their children. Roman used all three to protect himself in the ghetto and to thrive once the war ended; their passing on had great significance for his father in a final display of masculine provision and protection. In explaining the location of items buried some years earlier, Mordechai also shows that he had been involved in proactive fathering even at a time when he appeared to be in a deep depression. Further, it later transpires that Mordechai had left furs and clothing with two different sets of family friends in Chodecz which Roman was able to claim after the war.

Mordechai Halter's story reinforces many of the discourses of fatherhood that have been discussed in this chapter. Although he did sink into depression, he came out of it in the ghetto when he was better able to perform as a father again, even if only in limited circumstances. Passing on advice and items to help Roman survive is important not only on his deathbed but also during his depression when the act of giving advice seems to temporarily revive him. Finally throughout the account we can see

Roman's deep respect for his father and particularly a respect for his father's masculinity and a wish not to attempt to take his father's place in the family even as he grows into manhood working in the ghetto and his father weakens. There is nonetheless also a defensive tone in Roman's account of his father's masculinity which does not seem to denote his own questions concerning his fathering, but may represent those of others in the family or of his father himself. Notably, after the war in a discussion with old family friends concerning his family a friend comments that his grandfather was a wise and good man. Halter comments, to himself, but considers it important enough to note in his book *Roman's Journey*, "Father was clever too".⁵⁹⁷ Roman's account of his grandfather is also representative of ideas discussed earlier concerning the very different requirements for older men. Roman's grandfather is never called upon to behave in a masculine manner and is never judged for his failure to do so. Instead, by being a grandfather, as is true in many cases, he seems to have raised himself to a different level where masculine and patriarchal actions are no longer required.

Roman Halter's case study amply illustrates many of the themes of paternal masculinity and action outlined in this chapter, from active decision making concerning emigration to advice-giving later in the Holocaust. However, more than this it illustrates the broader themes of paternal masculinity discussed both in this chapter and throughout the thesis. Mordechai's depression and subsequent rejuvenation reflect a revival that I have repeatedly found in Jewish men in this period, both fathers and others. Most importantly for this chapter, however, those areas of paternal masculinity that seem significant to Mordechai are the same as those we see in fatherhood in general during the Holocaust.

Conclusion

The research for this chapter makes it clear that fathers, like Jewish men more generally, were only able to sustain their masculinities at those times in the Holocaust when they were able to practise elements of their normative identities, but that they were unable to rely upon the successful practise of individual elements of their masculinities to reinforce their gender identities. That this was the case even when their children clearly found those same individual elements to be definitively masculine, shows the strength and primacy of normative gender identities amongst Jewish men in this period. One particular difference between broader male gender identities and the identities of fathers,

⁵⁹⁷ Halter, *Roman's Journey*, p.225.

however, became clear from this research: Jewish fathers from a range of backgrounds relied heavily on descent and the transmission of heritage in the practice of their normative identities, so much so that one might argue that it became an element of all normative identities – effectively, that fathers all practised the normative identity of fathers (rather than the three previously discussed), with providing, protecting and status often channeled through their children. It is also clear that, perhaps because of the centrality of this new element of masculinity, through the parent-child dialectic, children were able to respond to the masculinity they saw in their fathers and, in doing so, perhaps assist in turning what they understood to be masculine behaviour into masculine identity.

The unexpected conclusion of this chapter however lies in what it seems to tell us about the burgeoning masculinity of young men and even boys. Whilst Holocaust testimonies which reference the author's mother in the title are extremely rare, instances of books dedicated to fathers are high. Amongst them Gastfried entitled his work *My Father's Testament*, Checinski allows his father to narrate several chapters of *My Father's Watch* (although the watch in question is more of a bad omen than a positive association) Wermuth directly quotes his father in his title *Breathe Deeply My Son* and Singer wrote *My Father's Blessing*.⁵⁹⁸ In strong contrast to current trends in historiography, these dedications, and the conclusions of this chapter, point towards the great respect in which many children in this period, particularly sons, held their fathers. In line with this, my research suggests that, in the eyes of a significant number of young men, the Holocaust did little or nothing to diminish the masculinities of their fathers. This is not to say that sons always found the behaviour of their fathers to be positive or fair, but even where it very overtly was not, we see children question the morality but not the masculinity of their fathers. On the contrary, examples show sons clearly celebrating the masculinity of their fathers, their behaviour and their choices. That instances of role reversal between fathers and sons are so limited, something that Roman Halter asserts very clearly, further reinforces the respect which sons had for their fathers.

Perhaps even more interestingly, for these children and sons not only were their fathers very clearly capable of performing acts key to their normative masculinities but they were also lauded for their acts of individual masculinity which seem as relevant to their children as the normative elements.

⁵⁹⁸ Edward Gastfried, *My Father's Testament: Memoirs of a Jewish Teenager 1938-1945* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2000), Checinski, *My Father's Watch*, Ivan Singer, *My Father's Blessing: My Salvation* (Sydney: Singer, 2004) and Wermuth, *Breathe Deeply*.

Such evidence leads me to suggest, although much more research is needed to form any solid conclusions, that young men had a more flexible approach to masculinity and male gender identities than the older generations, with less reliance upon socially imposed normative gender identities and a greater capacity to acknowledge and respect individual, often less conformist, elements of those identities.

All of the conclusions drawn in this chapter are ultimately contrary to those drawn by historians of gender and the Holocaust who have tended to represent Jewish fathers in this period as lacking in agency due to depression, and Jewish mothers as having assumed the mantle of family provider. Moreover, since those conclusions have also tended to rest upon sources written by children rather than fathers, that my conclusions in this chapter alone do likewise does not undermine my position but rather reaffirms it. This chapter does not aim to suggest that the Holocaust did not present major obstacles to the act of fathering, and that this was not often extremely depressing for the men involved; however, what evidence there is must lead us to reject the clarity and universality of the conclusion that “despite their best efforts, men had to face the hard fact that they could no longer protect their families”.⁵⁹⁹

⁵⁹⁹ Waxman, ‘Towards an Integrated History of the Holocaust’, p.316.

Conclusion

On the subject of establishing, and working for, a printers' trust in the Warsaw ghetto, Alexander Donat wrote the following: "[t]hough mine was only a tiny share in the business, with my earnings added to my wife's we were able to live better than we had since the outbreak of the war. Once again I was head of the family. I threw myself into my work, getting up at seven and coming home just before curfew; and since the job had nothing to do with either the Germans or the *Judenrat*, I enjoyed it. We all felt we were contributing to the economic survival of the ghetto."⁶⁰⁰ In these two sentences Donat neatly summarises the central argument of this thesis, and the evidence of the numerous sources I have consulted: that whilst the antisemitic persecution which began the Holocaust was damaging in the extreme to the masculinities of the Jewish men who experienced it, the period of the Holocaust in which Jews were enclosed, the possibility of finding employment and the provision, protection and status which became accessible for many men who were enclosed, made it possible again for many Jewish men to practise strong masculine identities.

* * *

Whilst the initial stimuli for this thesis were the existing conclusions that historians had drawn on the subject, limited in number, scope and research, my aim was both to question the veracity of existing claims concerning the damage to masculinity caused by the Holocaust, and to begin the empirical research needed to clearly understand the complex and diverse ways in which the persecution of the Holocaust impacted on the masculinities of Jewish men. This impact was not, however, universal. Men in different countries from a variety of religious and assimilated backgrounds and living in a range of economic and social circumstances experienced the persecution, assault, humiliation and confinement of the Holocaust in myriad ways. Moreover, confusing any attempt to understand the impact of persecution upon gender identities, these men were never all aiming to perform the same masculinity, instead the masculine identities upon which the Holocaust impacted, themselves varied. Added to these complexities are a range of problems and problematic realities relating to source availability and bias. And yet in spite of all of these caveats, laid out and detailed in my introduction

⁶⁰⁰ Donat, *Holocaust Kingdom*, p.49.

and methodology, it has been possible to draw clear, ground-breaking conclusions concerning the impact of the Holocaust on Jewish masculine identities.

Working from a theory of masculinity that acknowledges the relevance and impact of multiple, socially imposed, normative gender identities, whilst also allowing for the experiences and background of the individual to equally weigh upon his masculinity, very clear patterns in the experiences of, and responses to persecution amongst Jewish men become clear. Sources written by Jewish men and women who lived in Poland, Belgium, Holland and France between invasion and the end of enclosure, whether this came through death, liberation or deportation to the camps (not covered by this thesis), overwhelmingly show clear trends in the way in which Jewish masculinities were affected by the Holocaust. Whilst the period of instability and persecution which immediately followed invasion, and which for some did not end until the war also ended, was one in which Jewish men largely failed to practise strong masculine identities, where this was later followed by a period of ghettoisation, many men were able to re-form or reassert strong masculinities. Moreover, limited sources suggest that where Jews in Western Europe were able to find conditions that mimicked the security that the ghettos appeared to offer, notably those who belonged to structured resistance organisations or who found stable hiding places, they were likewise often able to reestablish strong gender identities.

The differences between these two periods are threefold, and between them explain not only the gendered reassertion that came about during the Holocaust, but also speak to the nature and form of Jewish masculinity in the period. First, whilst the early period was characterised by a constant and incremental degradation in living standards and freedoms, dismantling piece by piece the private and public lives of Jewish men, from unemployment to social exclusion – leading me to refer to this period as the deconstruction – enclosure in the form of ghettoisation offered many men the possibility or restructuring these elements of their lives, through employment, socialisation and leadership. The stability that this latter situation provided, not only in terms of opportunities but also the security of what many understood to be a unified, autonomous, Jewish society, in contrast to the constant shifting and erosion of the deconstruction, very clearly had a positive impact on male gender identities. The second difference between the two periods was in the gendered nature of the environment and social expectations. Where during the deconstruction men were encouraged not to

act and to behave in a passive manner by hiding or fleeing, ghettoisation forced men to act, to work and to struggle. Whilst the early, passive environment effectively forced men into behaving in ways they understood to be feminine, and thereby into self-emasculatation, the latter, by encouraging action, tacitly, and in strong contrast to the deconstruction, supported masculine behaviours and, in doing so, allowed men to perform elements of their masculine identities.

Finally, and perhaps most significantly, the two periods are distinguished from one another by the possibilities that men found for performing elements of the normative identities towards which they oriented themselves. The deconstruction left many Jewish men capable of practising the individual elements of their masculinities but largely robbed them of access to the key tenets of their normative identities. In stark contrast, ghettoisation and enclosure often returned to men these normative identities through a reestablishment of employment, provision and status, but diminished and eventually removed altogether any semblance of the ability to practise individual elements of masculinity, most clearly and starkly in relation to the body. What this reversal seems then to suggest, when related to the practice of masculinities during the Holocaust, is that whilst individual elements do form a part of broader masculine identities they alone are not sufficient to sustain a strong masculinity when not matched by normative practice. Significantly, therefore, the practice of masculinities in this period seems to have been closely aligned to normative identities, whilst more individual elements played only a secondary role in gender formation.

My final chapter, in considering to what extent these conclusions could be applied specifically to the masculinities associated with fathers and fatherhood, makes two further assertions. First, that whilst the masculinity of fathers was equally reliant upon an ability to perform the normative masculinity towards which they oriented themselves, these norms stretched to encompass, regardless of the background of the fathers, questions of inheritance, heritage and ancestry, which are not apparent in other Jewish men except those who oriented themselves towards a specifically Jewish normative masculinity. My final conclusion, which is regrettably limited by the available sources, concerns the impact of age upon masculinity in this period. Using sources written by young men about their fathers, and considering the ways in which they show respect for, or pride in, the masculinities of their fathers, it becomes clear that whilst fathers may heavily rely upon elements of normative masculinities in the reinforcement of their gender identities, children are less selective. For young

men, both writing about the masculinities of their fathers and equally forming their own gender identities, individual elements of their masculinity can also be central to showing a strong masculine identity. On this basis, sources show young men discussing the actions of their fathers as being overtly masculine through a discussion of individual elements of masculinity, even when the masculinities of their fathers are clearly diminished in relation to the key elements of normative identity I have considered here. The broader conclusion this provokes is the suggestion that younger men, with less rigid notions of masculinity, are less dependent upon socially imposed markers of identity and instead are more open to individual signifiers of gender.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, all of my research comprehensively contradicts the conclusions drawn by historians to date on the subject. None of my findings matches the blanket emasculation and role reversal which have thus far represented the historical conclusions concerning masculinity in the Holocaust. Moreover, where depression and the undermining of male gender identities have occurred it has been more nuanced than has previously been suggested and only occasionally significantly impacted upon a man's attempts to continue protecting and providing for his family. Instead, I have offered a set of conclusions which establish for the first time a systematic approach to understanding Jewish male gender responses to the Holocaust and which begin to show the impact of different periods and types of persecution upon a range of elements of masculine identity. Ultimately, these conclusions not only tell us something important about the response of male gender identities to emotionally, mentally and physically scarring situations but they offer a methodological and research basis upon which other historians can build micro-histories of Jewish masculinities in different countries, communities and contexts, beginning to write the story of what has been, until now, the second sex of Holocaust gender history.

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