

Júlia Vajda and Éva Kovács

Jews and Non-Jews Living Together After the Transition in Hungary

The abolition of the single-party system in 1989 enabled Hungarians to experience individual identities in everyday life. Identities banned during the reign of socialism were reborn, and it became possible to form plural or multicultural identities based on them. At the same time, members of the society were faced with the task of making their new identities “usable” in the framework of parliamentary democracy. The political changes of the last decade have not only made it possible to consider questions of identity formation, but also for a short while put such questions, and a discourse on identity, in the spotlight. Furthermore, new and rediscovered identities were beneficial for the development of new images and the orientation to change. This change, however, only appeared to be unambiguously liberating immediately after the collapse of communism.

As identities that had been suppressed during the previous decades re-emerged, numerous problems of Hungarian society that had not been dealt with over the same period became unavoidable and had to be faced.

One of the gravest and hardest periods of the “forgotten” collective history is the Holocaust. The ideology of collective guilt allowed the individual to avoid facing the problem, thus blocking the formation of collective memory. Due to this conflict between social and political needs, it was impossible to perceive the trauma caused by the Holocaust. Furthermore, since the past was not dealt with constructively, the hidden prejudices and sense of guilt of the perpetrator generation were passed on to the next generation. This phenomenon is not specific to Hungary, of course: we can observe similar defense mechanisms at work until the late 1970s in Western societies and even in Israel.

In Hungary, the Holocaust was perpetrated on a Jewish community living under particular conditions. Hungary had long been exceptionally tolerant toward its Jewish inhabitants and as a result had the largest Jewish community in Europe. As a probable consequence, Jews in Hungary at the beginning of the twentieth century did not experience the dilemma of assimilation with the same intensity that was felt by Jews in other European countries. For a long time they considered their Jewishness to be purely a religious issue. Closely related to this attitude is the fact that urban Jews were in a continuous process of secularization, and did not think of themselves as second-class citizens. Given such circumstances the anti-Jewish laws of the thirties and the Holocaust were perceived as a ‘surprise’ by the Jewish community, and concentra-

tion camps seemed unreal: this can't be happening to us, they thought. On the other hand, the radical shift in attitude toward Jews did not appear to be a logical consequence of preceding history for non-Jews either. It was all the more incomprehensible in view of the fact that, even though aversion and rejection had appeared on the political scene as early as the 1880s, anti-Semitism was not decisive in everyday life or at the level of small communities, and was never as strong as in many neighboring countries, such as Poland. Hence the Holocaust casts an ineradicable doubt upon the previous long decades of peaceful coexistence between Jews and non-Jews. The Holocaust destroyed the earlier social basis of coexistence, and earlier experiences came to appear unreal in retrospect. This then is the decisive starting point for Hungarian social history after 1945.

After World War II, the Communist regime made the Holocaust a taboo topic. In this way it banned not only anti-Semitism and Zionism as political movements and ideologies, but also any open discussion of the tragedy of the recent past, or of Jewishness as the experience not only of religious but also of ethnic identity. The taboo was accepted by both the perpetrators and the victims after 1945, and it became the new foundation for coexistence. While it did ease everyday contacts, the taboo only deepened the trauma for one side and the feelings of guilt (which remained unanalyzed) and the prejudices of the other. The next generation had to struggle with this inheritance (Erős, Vajda and Kovács 1998: 315–326). A discourse on Jewish identity, the Shoah, and anti-Semitism first appeared in the 1980s, within the 'second public sphere'.¹ With the change of regime, this discourse not only moved into the primary public sphere, but it also reached a wider range of social groups. For a short time it went from being a "problem" of closed intellectual circles to being a topic for society as a whole.

In our research project, we set out to examine the Jewish identity of the members of a smaller community, that of a Jewish school that considered itself a community school, who had chosen to face all the possible consequences of joining such a community very soon after the change of the political system. This school emphasized both Jewish community values and a commitment to liberal education. The Javne Lauder school was established at the same time as another private school which was more strictly religious (Amerikai Alapítványi Iskola, American Foundation School), and was therefore attractive to those who felt distant from strict religious education and

1 As the communist system banned or sanctioned certain thoughts and topics, the loosening of the regime from the 1960s brought with it the establishment of the so-called second public sphere. This was a dissident intellectual 'forum' which was banned and persecuted, but tolerated to a degree by the regime. At first it was confined to private talks, but later (in the 1970s) it incorporated illegal seminars and lectures in flats, *samizdat* books, periodicals and newspapers.

denominational segregation, yet still felt cultural ties to Judaism² (cf. Kovács and Vajda 1993). While these interviews were being conducted, it became clear that, after the political changes in Hungary, a significant number of people chose to belong to such a community despite the fact that they did not share Jewish roots. Moreover, some of them did not even live in mixed marriages. It also became apparent that for these people, belonging to the community entailed facing a unique problem of Jewish identity. It not only meant acknowledgment and acceptance of the community's values and attributes (and the acceptance of a possible stigma), but also some degree of identification with the Jewishness of the community. The presence of non-Jews in this environment is in fact closely related to the emergence of the Holocaust trauma and the attempt to deal with it after a delay of fifty years. The non-Jews are trying to rub out a blot on their family histories. For Jews, on the other hand, the integration of non-Jews means that the Holocaust did not create insurmountable barriers between the descendants of the survivors and the descendants of the perpetrators. The underlying motives are on the one hand the desire to forgive, and on the other the desire to take on the sin. The fact that anti-Semitism emerged overtly (although it was not widely supported) after the political transition makes these decisions all the more momentous.

In the following, we will investigate some possible forms of Jewish identity in such circumstances. We will explore the potential routes offered by the political changes for the coexistence of Jews and non-Jews; how non-Jewish or mixed couples belonging to a Jewish community refer to Jewish culture and to Jewishness; what kind of Jewish identities they create for themselves; how these are embedded in their individual life stories; and what this means for the Jewish members of the community.

All our interviewees were born after the Holocaust, and therefore did not experience its persecution themselves. They are confronted with it only through their parents or grandparents, or through history lessons at school.

2 The majority of Budapest Jews who survived the Holocaust 'broke' with religion and belief in God, claiming 'we don't need a God who would allow these atrocities'. At the same time common culture, values, norms and habits, as well as the ties of common persecution, served as the foundation of a kind of togetherness, which manifested itself mainly in the relation-systems of the private sphere, and in its 'dual-level communication' (see Kovács and Vajda 1996). Dual communication served to 'test' others to see which side the other was on, whether they were Jewish or anti-Semitic (allowing for no other alternative). At the same time the system of liberal values, which developed on the basis of a common culture, was a sharp contrast to the national value system of the majority non-Jewish intelligentsia, in which members were split into nationals and urbanists. This classification was not always based on political standpoints: two opposed, almost enemy camps were established, and the members of the urbanist group were considered Jews, regardless of their background. In this way they became targets of anti-Semitism, and it was difficult to establish whether conflicts were based on 'racial differences' or real differences in opinion (see Kovács 1994).

Thus, they constitute the first generation able to raise the possibility of co-existence without being compelled to perceive the other as a victim or a perpetrator. At the same time, their attempt can be a step toward coming to terms with their parents' trauma.

On the basis of our research, we can assume that not only Jews, but also non-Jews living in this environment are faced with the task of dealing with a Jewish identity problem. In this paper, however, we will not focus on individual solutions, but rather on strategies which couples have worked out for themselves, whereby each spouse's individual identity gains its real meaning in the structure of the relationship they have composed. Furthermore, in the case of non-mixed marriages (in this context, those couples in which neither partner is of Jewish origin), we will examine the meaning or relevance of belonging to a Jewish community.

Interchanged Identities

János was born in 1950 as the son of a Jewish family (cf. Kovács and Vajda 2000). His parents are Holocaust survivors, both of whom had lost their previous spouses and children in the Holocaust. János first studied economics, then wanted to become an actor. Finally he became the manager of a theater troupe in Budapest. He met his wife at the age of 26. At that time she was still in high school and lived in the house of her anti-Semitic father, who was outraged by the fact that his daughter was dating a Jewish man. Her parents' rejection was so strong that she eloped with János immediately after graduation, and they have been living together since. They have two children.

János's attitude toward the interview was ambivalent. Although they volunteered to participate in a conversation with us, it turned out to be very difficult to make an appointment with him, and he would only accept one of the busiest squares in Budapest as the location for the interview. He hardly talked about himself, but rather about what a "stupid", "pointless" thing we were doing. His attitude toward the school is partly determined by the fact that they are ready to accept his troublesome child. Nonetheless, he only sees negative aspects of the school, stressing his aversion to its Jewishness. He agrees with his parents that Jews should assimilate rather than gathering in ghettos. At the same time, he stands by his marriage, which is charged with serious conflicts, partly due to his father-in-law's "persecutor" attitude toward him and their children.

Although the conditions set by János prevented a complete transcription of the interview, we can infer that in his case the anxiety originating from the Holocaust trauma of the parents, and from the situation in which his task was to replace his parents' lost children, hindered him in the development of his

identity and rendered him unable to accept his origins. The result of this anxiety is a sort of Jewish self-hatred.

His wife, Kati, is nine years younger than he. Her love for a Jewish man came in handy in her relationship with her father, since it embodied all their conflicts and gave her an opportunity to condemn her father morally. Nonetheless, she has shaped her relationship with her husband in keeping with the pattern of her parents' marriage. Essentially, she expects her husband to be despotic and to dominate her and her children. She cannot defend her children or herself (even when she agrees with them); moreover, her attitude to the children is also ambivalent. In her eyes, her husband's and children's main virtue is their Jewishness. On the one hand, this serves as a weapon against her father. On the other hand, she sees her children as gifts to the Jewish grandparents: the grandchildren are to serve as replacements for the children lost in the Shoah. In addition, her children's freedom to choose their own identities arouses her envy. She herself would like to become a Jew through them.

For her, the Jewish school represents an environment willing to educate her "difficult" child, permitting him to become a "good Jew".

"I have talked to Abel about this a couple of times. He asked me whether or not he was a Jew, and I said that your father is Jewish, your mother is not. So you are half Jewish, and in fact, you are whatever you want to be. But how do you know if someone is Jewish? And then I told him that it shows. Does it show on him? I said it does, I think it shows very strongly on Abel. First he wanted to know if he could deny it or get rid of it. It exists if I so choose, and it does not if I do not. And I told him this was not possible. In a way I believe that if your environment regards you as a Jew to some extent, then you are in a way a Jew, even if you are not Jewish. Considering the fact that half of their family is Jewish and the other, less important half is not Jewish, and he might have problems because of his origins, he will have children, I thought that this should be taken care of and accommodated anyway. Since his father is not a good Jew, I expect the school to help Abel with this, that is, to give him an identity. There are children whose fathers and mothers are Jewish, they trace their families back to Abraham, and today even they are not entirely conscious of their Jewishness. This doesn't occur only in mixed marriages. So the school is very important for me for this reason, too." (Kati I, 1993: 132)

Thus the relationship of János and Kati gives them both a chance to free themselves of their origins. János can be freed of his mainly frightening Jewishness, which represents for him the ghetto with all its dangers, even as it attracts him by its culture and by the fact that it represents his own roots. For Kati, the relationship offers absolution from her father's and her grandfather's real or presumed sins. In addition, the fact that his non-Jewish wife has such a strong desire to become a Jew provides János with the benefit of living with someone who takes on his rejected Jewishness. The invisible but constant presence of the anti-Semitic father-in-law as persecutor means that they also share in the fate of the persecuted and exterminated Jews. Due to her sense of guilt, Kati would like to share the fate of the victims. Besides, integration into

a Jewish community has two more benefits for Kati: it indicates personal absolution and an acceptance she did not experience before.

At the same time, János's and Kati's relationship appears to be a rather extreme example. Other mixed marriages we encountered, while based on similar principles, were able to handle this problem with far less grave marital conflicts. It seems that when the Jewish spouse's identity problem is less severe and the non-Jewish partner's sense of guilt is not so strong, the situation can be coped with through the non-Jewish partner's acceptance of the spouse's Jewishness. Kati and János are unable to do so: they are unable to enter into an encounter which entails accepting the total personality of the other, and thus his or her otherness as well.

Social Jews

Anna was born in 1953. Both of her parents survived the Holocaust as young adults. Her father is descended from several generations of Jewish intellectuals. He was imprisoned because of his participation in the uprising of 1956, and immigrated to the USA immediately after his release in 1964. Anna was not able to meet him for many years. They were forbidden to contact one another during his imprisonment, and their relationship was limited to letters and infrequent telephone conversations afterwards. Her father had become a doctor and then a professor of neuropsychiatry. He had married and had children and grandchildren in the United States. The mother remained alone with Anna and her sister, who was two years younger. As an adolescent, Anna joined a group of dissident writers. Among them, at the age of 17, she met her first husband, a Jew, with whom she lived for 15 years. After the birth of a son, she went to college and enrolled in a program in remedial teaching. She has worked in this area ever since. After a divorce she married András, who comes from a rural Catholic middle-class family. András, their child, now attends a Jewish school.

During the analysis of the interview it became clear that, for Anna, her first marriage meant a replacement of her lost father by her Jewish intellectual husband. She could not really become an adult in this marriage. By contrast, the second marriage is the result of an adult choice, following a pattern fundamentally different from that of her parents. In András she saw a supportive partner in whom she could place a lifelong trust, as well as one who accepted the role of father to the children of her first marriage, while at the same time expecting her to take the part of an adult woman and mother in the relationship.

András was born in 1954 in a rural town. His parents are Catholic. His mother's side of the family consists of social democrats, while his paternal

grandfather participated actively in the persecution of Jews. András came to Budapest to study at the university after graduating in his hometown. Now he works as marketing manager of a small company.

He was confronted with issues related to the Holocaust and attitudes toward Jews as a child, when his parents forbade him to recite a poem he had learned which was insulting to Jews. In connection with this episode he learned about his Nazi grandfather, whom he had never met. The issue was forgotten, but was raised again when his first wife, the daughter of a mixed marriage, was struggling with her problem of Jewish identity. Together they read several books on Jewish topics—books that were still banned at the time.

András has achieved financial security and is able to distance himself from his parents (with the help of geographic distance) while remaining on good terms with them. He married Anna with the secure self-image of a “liberal free thinker” with nothing bad to say about Jews. He still finds it hard to integrate himself into Anna’s family, however.

The following interview excerpt concerns Anna’s recollection of an event related to this topic:

“Poor András, once ... we were celebrating the birthday of my first son, the whole family got together. Andris had just been born, he was crying all evening, but screaming, he was screaming all evening, and then he calmed down around midnight and fell asleep, and he was really a baby. We did not smoke in the two rooms, we went to the kitchen, and God knows why but Mom started recalling some ghetto experiences. And she was talking about them until 4 a.m. And about her aunt, who fainted, when her husband put out his cigarette in the ashtray. When she recovered, she was able to tell them that there was a hair in the ashtray. And it was the smell of it burning ... Otherwise it was not really talked about.” (Anna I, 1993: 44)

The scene is like an initiation ceremony. If he wants himself and his son to be accepted in the family, András has to listen to the story of their sufferings. He will be accepted only if he can stand it. And he passed the test. In his interview András himself also spoke about that night as an event of crucial importance. When choosing a school for their child, however, Anna tested her husband’s tolerance again:

“András’s family would have liked to baptize Andris. Since my mother died I have not cared about it. I would have fought against it before then to spare my mother a breakdown. They talked about this when I got pregnant, neither circumcision, nor baptism. Well, now we have had him circumcised with this move. And I consider that a gesture.” (Anna I, 1993: 79)

Why does Anna need to set András these trials? And why does András play along? In choosing a non-Jewish husband Anna also punishes herself for longing to identify with her father so strongly in the beginning. In marrying András she breaks with her father, and in choosing the school she creates her own independent Jewish identity in which she can accord a place to a husband who, even though he is the descendant of persecutors, has testified that he

himself has nothing to do with this past. Thus she can create her Jewish identity only in a mixed marriage after leaving a Jewish husband.

At the same time, András can identify with Jewish culture without being forced to give up his otherness. Though considered different within the family, he is thought of by the outside world as belonging to Jewish culture. And this is important for him. He has not merely chosen exoneration from his ancestors' sin, but has also internalized the values and roles offered by the Jewish community.

“Pseudo-Jews”

Our next example is a family which sends its children to a Jewish school as non-Jews, and whose Jewish identity and attitude toward Jewishness are essentially different from those of the non-Jews in the two examples above (Kovács and Vajda 1998).

Attila was born in 1947 in a small town in eastern Hungary. His father, who was born in 1915, served as a lieutenant in a forced-labor company from 1941 to 1944, and was therefore unable to obtain a job befitting his qualifications after 1945. Later, however, he was assimilated into the new regime to such an extent that he retired as the manager of a co-operative. The family is Catholic on both sides. Attila left home while still a high school student, graduated in another rural town, and attended college in a third. At the moment he lives in Budapest with his wife and two children. His wife, Margit, comes from a Catholic peasant family. Her biography is characterized by a series of illnesses from early childhood on. Both their children attend a Jewish school.

Attila's desire to demonstrate his good relations with Jews plays a central role in his life story. Its main goal is to create a quasi-Jewish biography for himself in which personal experiences with Jews are connected as significant life-history events. The underlying theme is his sense of guilt, which is caused by his father's anti-Semitic opinions and actions. All this is bound up with his social ambitions. For Attila, Jews represent the environment in which he can become part of an intellectual elite.

There are no signs of the same phenomenon in Margit's narrative. She has no aversions to the anti-Semitic environment in which she was raised, and emphasizes her husband's role in choosing the school for their children.

At the same time, analysis revealed anti-Semitic tendencies in both of their texts. These are completely unconscious in Attila's case, and he struggles with them consciously. No signs of any such effort can be found in Margit's case.

Thus, the fight against the sense of guilt and the need to live down the legacy of anti-Semitism within their marriage remains Attila's ambition only, and Margit is merely obliged to consent to their children's attendance at a Jewish school because of her role in the traditional patriarchal family. But the children are enjoying their school environment. From time to time they return home with happy experiences related to Jewish culture. Their parents, however, do not welcome such stories. In connection with a particular story, the elder child even expressed his bad feelings about his parents' rejecting behavior verbally.

"There is a very good atmosphere in the school, and I was under the influence of this whole Hanukkah thing too, and I was fascinated too, so I tried to recreate it at home, but I could not. Because my parents tolerated my excitement a little bit, but they did not know that I—in the school we observed all the eight days of Hanukkah, and every day there was a lesson when they came in and lit the candles. First there was a prayer, then we sang some Hanukkah song, and then we let the candles burn and they handed out—because the school gave a small gift to everybody every day—they had surprises for us and they handed them out and we were really excited. And then they all said the candle-lighting prayer for Hanukkah and more or less the entire story, so we were excited, and what is usually done at this time. And then I tried to light candles at home, because I had been given one of these candlesticks, but I couldn't—we had been given a box of candles, and I lit them without any special ceremony, and I told my father that we were celebrating Hanukkah at the school, and I showed him how to play with the dreidel [top]. I mean he knew what it was, but I summarized it a bit more exactly (he sighs), and he was trying to smile too, and said it was OK. But somehow he did not manage to hide, and I could feel this, that he could not really appreciate it, that is, he could not really be happy about it, I mean he could, because he pretended to be happy, he did it very well, so a—few minutes later I realized, but I was not hurt, because (he laughs), I either stopped the whole thing, I did not blow the candles out, I let them burn, and we finished the game with my brother, but then it was only sort of fun, spinning the dreidel." (Erika, I, 1992: 56)

Thus Attila and Margit cannot really free themselves of their anti-Semitic prejudices. Attila's desire to belong to the Jewish community is outweighed by his wish to integrate into a given intellectual subculture. Accordingly, his "Jewish identity" is restricted to the world outside his marriage and family: he seeks friends with whom he can talk about his sense of guilt, and who accept his friendship (probably in order to see themselves as being free of prejudice).

This couple is essentially different from the non-Jews in our two earlier examples: Attila and Margit do not really want to identify with Jewish culture. Moreover, although Attila tries to present a philo-Semitic image of himself to the outside world, through his anti-Semitic wife he is able to preserve his own unconscious, though consciously refuted, anti-Semitism at home. The quasi-Jewish life story he represents can only be interpreted as evidence of a pseudo-Jewish identity.

A Hide-and-Seek of Identities

Our fourth and last example concerns an extreme case of coping with the difficulties of Jewishness and forming a Jewish identity (Kovács and Vajda 1999). Due to its extreme character, this case highlights a more general strategy of dealing with identity.

Emma was born in 1956 as the third child of Jewish cadre parents. Her father had been a student during the time of the *numerus clausus*. Unable to study in Budapest, he went to university in Vienna.³ He hid in Hungary during the German invasion and was active in the resistance movement, producing forged documents for the party. At that time he met his wife-to-be, who as a young girl was attracted to the communist movement. Thus both parents survived the Holocaust with the help of forged papers and their Slavic appearance—so goes the family legend. During Emma's childhood, an aunt who had returned from Auschwitz lived with them. She kept a separate kosher household for herself, and followed the prescriptions of the Halakhah. At the same time, Emma was brought up by her parents according to communist principles; and it was due to their position in the party that she was admitted to university in spite of her only average qualifications. She first learned that she is Jewish from her aunt when she was 17, in connection with the emigration of her first lover to Israel.

She met her husband José in 1976. José is a Bolivian of Native American descent, then a student at medical school in Moscow. With great difficulty José transferred to the medical school in Budapest, and they got married.

After graduating they went to Bolivia. A year later Emma returned, alone and pregnant, and from then on, apart from a short visit after the child's birth, her relationship with José was almost completely cut off. Her son only met his father once, when, at the age of 8, he and his mother visited José briefly in Bolivia.

Why does Emma send her child to a Jewish school? The analysis of the narrative and the life history reveals that for Emma, the meaning of choosing a stranger from a different culture as a marriage partner was to get rid of her stigma. The presence of a child of color born from the relationship comforts her: if she manages to conceal the child's Jewishness, she covers up her own Jewishness as well. By the same token she seems to be trying to protect her son from her own identity problem. The color of his skin gives clear evidence of who he is and where he comes from. Her partner only "adds the color"; there is no partner identity or partner role, since the partner was only present until the child was conceived.

3 Though the first Anti-Jewish law in Hungary was passed in 1938, illegal *numerus clausus* had been in place in education since 1920.

Thus, although she belongs to the generation in which many were brought up unaware of their Jewish origins, she differs from them in that she does not try at first to trace her lost roots. She shoulders her parents' fears, and strives to hide the stigma whose consequences they managed to avoid due to the fact that it was not visible on them.

At the same time she rebels against her father. Her marriage is an attempt to break free of her despotic father's oppression and his rejection of the potential Jewish son-in-law. However, the attempt fails and Emma runs back home. A decade later, she changes her strategy. Now she wants the hidden stigma to be disclosed and visible. And once more she uses her son as a means to this end. If her son attends a Jewish school, he is Jewish. And if he is Jewish, then she is Jewish, too.

Emma's narrative shows that, from the perspective of her adopted Jewish identity in the present, past attempts to hide her Jewish identity are difficult to integrate into her life history. Though Emma is an outgoing and enthusiastic interview partner, parts of her life history can only be recounted as encapsulated stories. She speaks of José and her time in Bolivia only at the end of the interview, and even then only as tourism. She never brings up her son's "otherness". The reason for this may be that her relationship to Jewishness changed significantly when she adopted the identity. She now wants to see her ancestry, which was formerly seen as a stigma, as a positive identification. It is little wonder that she has difficulty in describing her former self.

However, her game with the visibility of the stigma fits well with the original trauma of her parents. In her game, one typical for those who survived by masking their identity, she identifies with the thought of being persecuted and being able to survive through hiding her origins under a disguise.

Afterword

After World War II, partly due to the communist regime's somewhat mendacious ideology of equality and increasing secularization, partly due to the imposition of the atheist ideology of communism, the interaction among diverse denominations, including Jews, has become more and more frequent. As a result, encounters with otherness can occur more often, and prejudices and aversions can frequently be expressed and experienced. Thus in Hungary, with the highest number of survivors in Europe (compared with the remaining Jewish populations of other European countries), it is not a rare event for the members of the Hungarian Jewish population to be among other Jews.⁴ They do not have to belong to a religious community to have this experience; it is

4 This is because the Budapest ghetto was not evacuated until after 1944 (Braham 1981).

part of everyday life for secularized Jews as well. This means that, even before the transition of 1989, non-religious aspects of Jewish identity were not restricted to the context of family life. Jewish identity was an element of a wider private sphere; that is, it could be discussed among friends as well, not just at home. However, before 1989, with the exception of actual religious life, Jewish identity was confined to the private sphere. Only “informal” communities could exist, based on experienced similarities in identity and subculture, in which all identified themselves as Jews. Later, however, it became possible, on the basis of this “private” Jewish identity, to *belong* to a Jewish community in a formal way as well. It was possible not just to experience a private belonging to an informal community, but also to exhibit the fact of belonging to a community to the world at large. Thus, the situation of a relatively numerous Diaspora collectivity provided Jews with opportunities for a broader variability in individual social identity and collective identities. This makes it possible for them to cope with the problems of encounters with “others” (those who are not members of the community in question), with the experience of discrimination, or simply the anti-Semitic prejudices of everyday life.

On the other hand, it also is commonplace for non-Jewish Hungarians to meet Jews and encounter mutual prejudices. Opportunities for real encounters that could naturally lead to mixed marriages are becoming more and more frequent. These cases therefore represent a trend that can be observed for the first time since World War II. It is becoming common for this generation to live in mixed marriages. But, as our examples above show, dealing with such a situation is not easy. Still, we have seen how such marriages can differ in their capability of building a harmonious life—some more or less succeed, while others live in permanent conflict, so that one might suppose that the problems arising according to different “origins” may not be purely coincidental.

To explain this difference, we have to depart from traditional identity theory based on psychological ego and drive concepts and differentiate between two levels of identity (Jádi and Vajda 2000).⁵ Primary identity evolves in the first relationship(s), i.e. in the encounters with the mothering person. The nature of her care creates flexibility or rigidity, and as a consequence,

5 The traditional identity concept of psychoanalysis is based on the mainly Freudian view of ego psychology, which does not incorporate the concept of self. Modern experimental research on child and personality development has shown that this basis is not tenable. The baby is born with certain abilities and has not only bodily demands originating from drives, but also a decisive need for contact with the mothering person and to be looked at as a person. If we understand the baby and its development into an adult person in this way, which is reconcilable with a phenomenological view fundamental in modern theory rather than traditional drive theory, we arrive at an interpretation of identity based primarily on the self rather than the ego. In light of this concept, the earlier concept of identity can be regarded as ego-identity.

affects the possibility of a secondary identity. It is the secondary identity that is able or unable to accept otherness. This concept of a two-level identity is based on a phenomenological view of the self, and is supported by experimental findings and concepts in modern psychology of the self. It can serve as a basis for understanding how the members of different ethnic, national, and denominational groups understand or misunderstand themselves and others.

In the above terms, in those cases where the construction of the secondary self is successful, one or both members of the couple have a solid primary identity which allows them to relate to others as separate entities. On the other hand, in cases where the development of the self was not successful, where its integration is not complete, there is a danger that the other may be taken merely as a self-object, i.e. simply "used" for one function or another. These persons are unable to deal with a primary identity that includes certain orientations of their own culture, be it Jewish or non-Jewish. The identity conflicts we found in these interviews are manifested on the level of the secondary identity: these persons try to correct the failures of their self and primary identity on this level. They *try to be* Jews, Judeophiles or non-Jews. They *wear* these identities, but they do not really *live* them. They cannot succeed in doing so, regardless of their origins. What makes them incapable is their unsuccessful development of self, the fact that they had problems in building up a stable, genuine, coherent self.⁶ Those of our subjects who were successful in finding a common solution and in functioning as a harmonious family, with a common family identity, apparently have a primary identity that is elastic enough to allow them to accept their partners' otherness, to accept them as they are regardless of their different origins and identity.

One might raise the question why there are so many individuals and couples who are in such a deep struggle for a harmonious individual identity and for an identity as a couple? And why is it that, as our research has shown, most of them belong to the second generation of survivors? As mentioned above, the political transition in 1989 has confronted the Hungarian population with the necessity of reshaping their individual (secondary) identities. They were brought up during the years of communism, when the theme of the Holocaust was taboo, when parents traumatized by the Holocaust, burdened with anxieties that originated from the persecution, and aggravated by the taboo against discussing them, hoped that under a communist regime such a catastrophe could never happen again. They grew up in a situation in which many of them were not told about their Jewish origins, and many of them spent their childhood with a skeleton in the closet.

The parents' trauma itself is the experience of a situation in which their own right to live and their right to have ancestors was denied, and in which

6 Space does not permit a more thorough illustration of how these failures of self-development are present in other spheres of their lives, such as the deep conflicts they have in their children and at work.

their human dignity and their right to individuality and intimacy was lost. Such a narcissistic wound, of course, has caused a disintegration that made most of them incapable of turning to their children, born after the Shoah, for the coherence, autonomy, and stability of their primary identity, and for security and stability, without emotional reference to their earlier selves. On the other hand, in many cases they kept their children, in Wardi's terms, as memorial candles, and demanded that they replace earlier children killed in the Holocaust (Wardi 1992).

Living under these conditions—surrounded by the shadows of the parents' lost spouses and children but not knowing of their existence, and brought up by parents with problems of their own—necessarily posed serious difficulties for the development of a stable primary identity. In addition, as the above analysis has shown, some of the younger generation identify with their parents and regard themselves as victims on this unstable basis for identity development. From this perspective they also look upon the descendants of the perpetrators as if they were the perpetrators themselves.

However, as our examples show, there are also families in which the first generation succeeded in bringing up children without serious psychological handicaps. There are members of the second generation whose primary identity is stable enough to cope with the situation of the transition, who are able to form a secondary identity that allows them to remain Jewish while living together with non-Jewish spouses, although there are evident difficulties in completely accepting their otherness. We should not forget the fact that the surviving Jewish community is not free of prejudices against others, and these emerge even in these encounters. These prejudices are often even more difficult to cope with because of the preconceived notion of victims (and by extension their descendants) as innocent.

As for the non-Jewish Hungarians, the second generation was brought up under similarly confusing circumstances. Their parents, whether persecutors themselves or passive witnesses of the murders, suffer from the weight of their impotence and silence, and from the burden of the Holocaust taboo that prevented them from understanding and accepting themselves together with this past. This is just as much a disintegrating factor as the burden of the survivors. Furthermore, the hatred against any "otherness" in themselves is itself a serious sign of a primary deficiency. Thus their children could not experience conflict-free parenting. This is aggravated by the internalization of the parents' hatred of difference as well as by a feeling of guilt because of it, causing confusion similar to that of their Jewish contemporaries. They do not have sufficiently stable borders of self, and in many cases they actually confuse themselves with their parents, considering themselves as persecutors, deepening their aversion against the victims (and their descendants, also envisioned as victims), whom they hold responsible for their guilt feelings. Hence the non-Jewish group's hostility toward the other, which is closely bound to

the unconscious self-hatred originating from it, cannot be resolved without the conciliatory encounter of victims and perpetrators.

Viewing our cases from this perspective, we can see an unfortunate “private” attempt at such an encounter in the mixed marriages described above. Kati and János represent a type in which the developmental shortcomings of both spouses are so serious that we could say they fail in their attempt. They attach themselves to the other as a self-object. Kati reduces János to the function of his Jewishness, while János uses Kati’s non-Jewish origin to “mask” his Jewish identity. Anna and András, on the other hand, have a stable enough primary identity to be able to enter fully into such an encounter, and to face and accept each other’s “otherness”. On the basis of this mutual acceptance they can deal with the conflicts concerning their different origins with humor and self-irony. In many ways, Emma is even less successful in coping with her own past and with that of her family than Kati and János. She is unable to have genuine encounters with the people around her, whether with her partner or her son. She functionalizes them according to her continuously changing needs, first to cloak her stigma, then to unveil it.

Our fourth case is an unusual one. Attila and Margit form a non-mixed marriage that functions like a mixed one. Neither of the spouses is Jewish in origin, but the husband acts Jewish. He has built up a pseudo-Jewish identity and biography for himself as a solution to his identity problems originating from the burden of his father’s real or fantasized acts during the Holocaust. In the attempt to free himself from guilt by taking up a secondary, non-genuine Jewish identity, he leaves the role of the anti-Semite to his wife (who readily accepts it), and this division of labor causes an inner conflict in the marriage. He is getting rid of his anti-Semitic feelings—and at the same time conserving them—by hating them in Margit, all the while still accepting them by maintaining their marriage. This means of becoming Jewish, however, does not provide him with the desired integration into the Jewish milieu or community. Margit’s role as anti-Semite is an aid once again in coping with this frustration, allowing him to make a scapegoat of her.

In the personal struggle of these individuals and couples, we face the common problem of our contemporaries. There are no more patterns inherited from our ancestors that can be used in the place of individual solutions. Mixed marriages are just one of many areas where this is apparent.⁷ Our problems of identity can only be solved on the basis of real encounters, and to do so is everyone’s individual task.

7 Before World War II, living in mixed marriages was already common between other denominational groups, and they had elaborated schemes regarding how to deal with this situation. At that time, Jews did not usually mix, so this generation is the first to “try” it.

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