

"Since All Remain Subject to Chance." Poor Relief in Seventeenth-Century Wilno

by

David Frick

On 23 August 1636, King Władysław IV of Poland-Lithuania gave a privilege to the beggars of Wilno allowing them – apparently for the first time – to organize themselves into a corporation following the model of the guilds and laying down rules for the inclusion and exclusion of members and a few guidelines for their social discipline. In fact, the document to which the king gave his signature originated from the Wilno Magistracy and perhaps also, in part, from the incorporated beggars themselves. It was a response to “the great disorder here in the city among the poor and the great disgust that arises from it.”¹ This charter, along with much of the city archive, was lost in the fires that accompanied the Muscovite invasion and occupation of the city (1655-1661), and we owe our knowledge of it to the great flurry of re-enacting of documents such as deeds, wills, and guild charters in the years after 1662. Whoever had a copy of a pre-war act came forward with it in those days to have it once again entered as an official part of the municipal record. The Beggars’ Corporation was no different, and on 12 July 1663, officers of that group appeared before the Magistracy presenting a copy of the privilege of 1636 and asking that it be recorded in the official record, since “the original had been lost through the difficulty of circumstances during the raging of hostilities.”² Similar documents were re-enacted on 6 August 1729, 14 November 1744, and 11 March 1745.³

Wilno was not alone, of course, among early modern cities in its attempts to aid and to discipline the poor. My topic here – public and private strategies for providing care for the poor, sick, elderly, and otherwise weak – has been investigated for many early modern societies, and Poland-Lithuania is among

¹ The document – summarized below – is found at Lietuvos valstybės istorijos archyvas [Lithuanian State Historical Archive, Vilnius, LVIA], SA 5102, 169r-172r. It bears the general title “*Roboratio ordinationis pauperum*” or “Confirmation of the Paupers’ Regulation.” The text is printed in: Akty, izdavaemye Vilenskoju Komissieju dlja Razbora Drevnich Aktov [AVAK] 10 (1879), pp. 160-166.

² LVIA, SA 5102, 169r.

³ See Akty cechów wileńskich [The Acts of the Wilno Guilds, ACW]. Vol. 1: Vilnius, ed. by HENRYK ŁOWMIANŃSKI and MARJA ŁOWMIANŃSKA, Wilno 1939, p. 206. The version from 1745 is to be found at LVIA, SA 5128, 1397r-1399r.

them.⁴ Wilno, however – the capital city of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and as such the second capital of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth – has not received much scrutiny in this regard.⁵ What lends additional interest in this case is the unusually diverse nature of Wilno society.

⁴ General introductions to problems and methods and to the current state of scholarship on early modern poor relief are available in WOLFGANG VON HIPPEL: *Armut, Unterschichten, Randgruppen in der frühen Neuzeit*, München 1995 (*Enzyklopädie deutscher Geschichte*, 34), and ROBERT JÜTTE: *Poverty and Deviance in Early Modern Europe*, Cambridge 1994 (*New Approaches to European History*, 4), which offer help in navigating through the extensive literature. For local studies of the Polish-Lithuanian situation, see, for example, ANDRZEJ KAPIŃSKI: *Pauperes. O mieszkańcach Warszawy XVI i XVII wieku* [*Pauperes. On the Residents of Warsaw in the XVI and XVII Centuries*], Warszawa 1983, and ZDZISŁAW KROPIDŁOWSKI: *Formy opieki nad ubogimi w Gdańsku od XVI do XVIII wieku* [*Forms of Care for the Poor in Gdańsk from the XVI to the XVIII Century*], Gdańsk 1992 (*Gdańskie Towarzystwo Naukowe, Wydział I: Nauk Społecznych i Humanistycznych, Seria monografii*, 90). See also the new collections of essays on hospitals, poor houses, charity, and social welfare in *Charitas. Miłosierdzie i opieka społeczna w ideologii, normach postępowania i praktyce społeczności wyznaniowych w Rzeczypospolitej XVI-XVIII wieku* [*Charitas. Charity and Social Welfare in the Ideology, Behavioral Norms, and the Practice of the Confessional Communities of the Commonwealth of the XVI-XVIII Centuries*], ed. by URSZULA AUGUSTYNIAK and ANDRZEJ KAPIŃSKI, Warszawa 1999, and *Szpitalnictwo w dawnej Polsce* [*Hospitals in Old Poland*], ed. by MARIA DĄBROWSKA and JERZY KRUPPÉ, Wrocław 1998 (*Studia i materiały z historii kultury materialnej*, 66). Among the classics on poor relief in Western Europe, I found especially suggestive BRIAN TIERNEY: *Medieval Poor Law. A Sketch of Canonical Theory and Its Application in England*, Berkeley 1959; BRIAN PULLAN: *Rich and Poor in Renaissance Venice. The Social Institutions of a Catholic State, to 1620*, Cambridge/MA 1971; IDEM: *Catholics and the Poor in Early Modern Europe*, in: *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Fifth series, 26 (1976), pp. 15-34; and NATALIE ZEMON DAVIS: *Poor Relief, Humanism, and Heresy*, in: IDEM: *Society and Culture in Early Modern France. 8 Essays*, Stanford/CA 1975, pp. 17-64. On early modern Russia, see works by DANIEL H. KAISER: *Urban Household Composition in Early Modern Russia*, in: *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 23 (1992/1993), pp. 39-71; IDEM: *Urban Identities in Sixteenth-Century Muscovy. The Case of Tula*, in: *Culture and Identity in Muscovy, 1359-1584*, ed. by ANN M. KLEIMOLA and GAIL LENHOFF, Moscow 1997 (*UCLA Slavic Studies, New Series*, 3), pp. 203-226; IDEM: *The Poor and Disabled in Early Eighteenth-Century Russian Towns*, in: *Journal of Social History* 32 (1998/1999), pp. 125-155.

⁵ The exceptions are the pages devoted to the hospitals of Wilno in AIVAS RAGAUSKAS: *Vilniaus miesto valdantysis elitas XVII a. antrojoje pusėje (1662-1702 m.)* [*The Ruling Elite of the City of Vilnius in the Second Half of the XVII Century (1662-1702)*], Vilnius 2002, pp. 332-337; JAN KURCZEWSKI: *Biskupstwo wileńskie od jego założenia aż do dni obecnych, zawierające dzieje i prace biskupów i duchowieństwa diecezji wileńskiej, oraz wykaz kościołów, klasztorów, szkół i zakładów dobroczynnych i społecznych* [*The Bishopric of Wilno, from Its Establishment to the Present Days, Containing the Deeds and Works of the Bishops and Clergy of the Wilno Diocese, As Well As a Register of Churches, Cloisters, Schools, and Charitable and Social Institutions*], Wilno 1912, pp. 352-368; and MARJA ŁOWMIŃSKA: *Wilno przed*

By the end of the sixteenth century Wilno was home to five Christian confessions – Roman Catholics, Lutherans, Calvinists, Greek Orthodox, and Uniates – in addition to the Jewish community within the walls and the Tatar settlement in the Łukiszki suburb. The Christians rubbed shoulders in a variety of secular corporations, from the Magistracy to the guilds, where systems of power sharing across the confessions had been developed. All of them were loosely modelled on a royal decree of 1536 that established parity between “Greeks” and “Romans” in the Wilno Magistracy.⁶ At that time the terms were unambiguous: Greeks were Ruthenian Orthodox, Romans were Catholic, usually Lithuanian, Polish, or German, although there would be some Italians and other Westerners later on. By the beginning of the seventeenth century, Catholics, Lutherans, and Calvinists competed for “Roman” seats, Orthodox and Uniates for “Greek.” This was the case until 1666, when a new royal decree limited participation in the Magistracy to Uniates and Roman Catholics, maintaining parity among Greeks and Romans in this more limited form.⁷ The royal decree had no direct bearing on other secular corporations, beginning with the influential *Communitas mercatoria*, and from this grouping just below the Magistracy down to the guilds of the lowliest of trades all five confessions continued to coexist and to vie for power.⁸

najazdem moskiewskim 1655 roku [Wilno before the Muscovite Invasion of 1655], Wilno 1929 (Biblioteczka wileńska, 3), pp. 56-60.

⁶ See WŁADYSŁAW KOWALENKO: *Geneza udziału stołecznego miasta Wilna w sejmach Rzeczypospolitej* [The Genesis of the Participation of the Capital City of Wilno in the Sejms of the Commonwealth], in: *Ateneum Wileńskie* 2 (1925/1926), pp. 327-373, and 3 (1927), pp. 79-137, here: 2, p. 369; GOTTFRIED SCHRAMM: *Protestantismus und städtische Gesellschaft in Wilna (16.-17. Jahrhundert)*, in: *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 17 (1969), pp. 187-214, here: pp. 202-204. The decree is printed in: *Zbiór dawnych dyplomatów i aktów miast: Wilna, Kowna, Trok, prawosławnych monasterów, cerkwi i w różnych sprawach* [A Collection of Ancient Privileges and Acts of the Cities of Wilno, Kowno, Troki, Orthodox Monasteries, Churches, and in Various Matters], Part 1, Wilno 1843, p. 53; PIOTR DUBIŃSKI: *Zbiór Praw i Przywilejów Miastu Stołecznemu W.X.L. Wilnowi nadanych. Na żądaniu wielu Miast Koronnych, jako też Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego ułożony i wydany 1788* [A Collection of Rights and Privileges Granted to the Capital City of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, Wilno. Composed and Published in 1788 at the Request of Many Crown Cities, As Well As of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania], Wilno 1788, p. 54.

⁷ See the royal decree at LVIA, SA 5104, 304v-310r, printed in AVAK 10 (1879), pp. 299-310.

⁸ For an introduction to these matters in English, see DAVID FRICK: *The Bells of Vilnius. Keeping Time in a City of Many Calendars*, in: *Making Contact. Maps, Identity, and Travel*, ed. by LESLEY CORMACK et al., Edmonton/AL 2003, pp. 23-59, here: pp. 23-29, which cites the pertinent literature. On the *Communitas*, see MARJA ŁOWMIANŚKA: *Udział Communitatis mercatoriae w samorządzie wileńskim* [The Participation of the *Communitas Mercatoria* in the Wilno Municipal Government], in: *Lituano-Slavica Posnaniensia. Studia Historica* 9 (2003), pp. 75-108.

One of the underlying concerns here will be to assess to what extent the strategies for the organization and delivery of poor relief, broadly construed, were limited by confessional, linguistic, and ethnic boundaries, and to what extent they crossed those boundaries. Who gave aid to whom? And how was it delivered? What were the expectations of the giver and the recipient? I will focus my attention on the larger Christian community, as this is where the main sources lie, although I will refer to some aspects of Jewish and Tatar strategies by way of comparison at certain points.⁹ My discussion will move across a continuum from the public to the more private, from centralized to decentralized approaches to the problem of bringing relief to poor people. Decentralized poor relief may have affected the greatest number of people, but by its very nature it remains elusive in the extant sources. To show a range of such possible responses to the threat of poverty, I will recount at the end of my discussion a few stories of "self-help," of the improvised attempts of the potentially poor – and that was almost everybody at certain points in their lives – to provide a personalized safety net. I conclude with some remarks about the topography of poverty and poor relief in seventeenth-century Wilno and its relation to the question of confessionalization and religious toleration.

Questions of interconfessionality have not arisen on the whole in studies of early modern poor relief. They are a guiding thread here for several reasons. Above all, the encounter of the various confessions was a central fact of life in seventeenth-century Wilno and what made it an unusual place, even in the Polish-Lithuanian context. It is impossible to understand the nature of poor relief in this city without addressing the question of how the confessions interacted. Conversely, the stories that emerge from an examination of how Vilnans of various confessions and social contexts strove to avoid and to relieve need will provide key pieces to the puzzle of the special sort of *convivencia* that ruled life in the Lithuanian capital for much of its history.

I. Bringing Order to the Poor

By granting official status to a Beggars' Corporation,¹⁰ the king, the Magistracy and the incorporated beggars were attempting to accomplish

⁹ For some information on Jewish poor relief in other Polish-Lithuanian cities, see SHMUEL A. ARTHUR CYGIELMAN: *Jewish Autonomy in Poland and Lithuania until 1648* (5408), Jerusalem 1997, especially pp. 74-76 and 227-257, and MAURYCY HORN: *Szpitalnictwo żydowskie w dawnej Rzeczypospolitej* [Jewish Hospitals in the Old Commonwealth], in: *Szpitalnictwo w dawnej Polsce* (cf. footnote 4), pp. 47-54. For what little we know about Tatar poor relief in the old Commonwealth, see ANDRZEJ B. ZAKRZEWSKI: *Charitas džemiatu, czyli miłosierdzie muzułmanów w dawnej Rzeczypospolitej* [The Charitas of the Jemiat ('Congregation')]; Or, the Charity of the Muslims in the Old Commonwealth], in: *Charitas* (cf. footnote 4), pp. 99-105.

¹⁰ The re-enactment of 1663 called the organization a *contubernium* (originally a military term referring to the dwellers of a common tent), which, along with *fraternitas*

several things at once: to care for a certain number of deserving poor, to limit the numbers of the poor inscribed in the corporation, and to provide rules for their behavior. The program, and the statute itself, was a variant of the highly centralized system of poor relief often associated with Reformation cities (although by no means limited to them). The central feature was a "common box" (*gemeiner Kasten*), part or all of the resources of which was designated for support of the "deserving poor," i.e., those unable to work due to age or infirmity, and who otherwise might be permitted under certain circumstances to beg on the streets.¹¹

In the royal privilege the king decreed that the beggars were to have an established gathering place, something akin to a guild house, "for their meetings, for the keeping of the dues box," which house was to be "freed from the obligation of housing guests in it at all times." This last clause referred to the duty of owners of houses within the walls of Wilno to provide housing for the entourages of the royal family as well as state and Church dignitaries and functionaries at various times, ranging from the presence of the king in the city to sessions of the Lithuanian Tribunal. The king granted the Beggars' House a blanket liberation from all such obligations, which was a privilege much coveted by the residents of Wilno.¹²

The organizational details were provided in the letter from the Magistracy to which the king gave his approval, and which formed the body of the royal privilege. This document was modelled on guild statutes, which also had to be submitted for the king's approval. The Corporation was to elect four elders each year (*roczeni starsi*). Unlike many of the guilds of Wilno, the Beggars' statutes made no specifications concerning the confession of the elders. In those other sodalities, peace was maintained by distribution and/or alternation of confession among a limited number of "annual elders" who wielded power and controlled finances. The landlord or owner (*gospodarz*) of the guild house was to occupy "the first place, like a judge, at all the meetings." The four elected annual elders, together with the landlord, were to choose as executors of their decisions "four beaters [*biczownicy*], or more, if necessary, who would drive healthy beggars out of town, report on licentious [*swawolni*] beggars to the elders and punish them, and execute the other below-described articles." Further, the beaters were instructed

"to make a survey [*rewizyja*] of all the street beggars, invalids visited by God, and to inscribe them in a register. They should admonish the healthy to look for a job

("brotherhood") and *societas* ("society"), were the most common Latin terms for the artisans' guilds of early modern Poland-Lithuania.

¹¹ See JÜTTE (cf. footnote 4), pp. 105-125, for an introduction to the history of centralized poor relief in early modern Western Europe. On the Venetian poor law of 1529 and possible Lutheran influences upon it, see PULLAN: Rich and Poor (cf. footnote 4), pp. 253-257.

¹² On the obligations of burghers to the city of Wilno, see ŁOWMIAŃSKA: Wilno przed najazdem moskiewskim (cf. footnote 5), pp. 143-146.

[*szuźba*], and that they not make excesses around town under the pretext of poverty and invented defects. And whoever, once admonished, should not refrain from begging – such a one should be driven out of town by the beaters.”

The genuine beggars – those inscribed in the Corporation’s roll book – were to receive a certain kind of care. If a beggar should become ill, he was to inform one of the elders, whose responsibility it would be to bring a priest to hear confession; the deceased was to be buried, “according to his means,” either near the church or in the open field. If “one of the brothers or sisters” should not have anyone to see to him during his illness, the elders were to find someone “using common brotherhood funds.” Brothers and sisters of the Corporation were required to attend the funerals of fellow beggars; this included the obligation to be present at religious services and to carry the body to the grave, under the penalty of half a pound of wax (to be paid to the guild altar at the Jesuits’ St. John).

Pilgrims and anyone who should arrive from outside Wilno claiming to represent prisoners and asking for alms for their ransom were not to be recommended for charity from the pulpits in sermons until they presented themselves at the Beggars’ Corporation House; here they were to render an account of themselves, whereupon they might be recommended by the elders. Beggars were to refrain from “drunkenness, licentiousness, lewd behavior in the pubs, shouting in the streets, singing in the wee hours of the morning or bawdy songs.” Amputated and rotting limbs were to be covered with a clean white cloth, because it is painful for passers-by to look at this. Mothers should not lie around the streets with their babies, because this is disgusting. Peasants from the village must not be allowed to beg, rather they must get a job. They should not hire themselves out to lead the blind beggars; rather, the blind should be led by the sighted lame (“*chromy a widzący niech ślepego prowadzić*”).

The Beggars Corporation was required to maintain a book with the names of the inscribed members. The book should be kept in Polish, so that simple people might be able to understand. Therefore, one of the members had to be literate in Polish. He also had to be literate in Latin for the translation of letters of introduction when new beggars came to the city from elsewhere. New arrivals among the beggar population who claimed to be members of the gentry (*szlachta*), or soldiers, or in the service of some gentleman were nonetheless required to be “inscribed into the Brotherhood without any excuse.”

The Corporation was to meet once every four weeks. Each beggar was to contribute to the common box one Polish *grosz* (abbreviation: gr) per meeting, or 13 gr per annum (30 gr = 1 *złoty*; abbreviation: zł). The box was to have two keys, one of which was to be entrusted to the care of a “Church elder” or a bell ringer (i.e., a non-beggar, who served as an officer of the Corporation), the other was to be in the hands of one of the annually elected elders of the “street beggars.” Two Masses were to be said annually (and funded by the Corporation treasury), one for the living benefactors of the poor

and one for the dead. All inscribed beggars were required to attend the Mass, which would be at the Catholic parish church (i.e., again at the Jesuits' St. John, where the Beggars' Corporation had its altar); whoever did not attend was required to pay a fine to the Corporation box of one *grosz*.

During periods of plague and famine, when "there are great intrusions from all lands," the elders were to take special care to distinguish the invalid from the healthy; the latter were to be driven from the city, "since from that sort there usually arises the greatest larceny, theft and every sort of license during those times." Throughout the document, the concern was to make certain that everyone – even those on the margins – was enrolled in some clearly defined corporation with lists of members' names and guidelines for behavior. The category (or anti-category) of "*luźni ludzie*" ("loose people") was among the most feared, and these were the people regularly blamed for urban unrest and the spread of contagion.¹³

Poor people living in hospitals who were able to leave their beds were given dispensation to sit about the streets and beg during Lent and up to the octave after Easter, also one week before All Saints and three days at Christmas, during which periods they were "to be left alone by the beaters and all the others." On the other hand, if some sick beggar should not have a place to stay and the beaters should find him lying at the base of the wall, he should be brought by cart (*kolasa*) "according to custom" to the elders of the hospital of SS. Joseph and Nicodemus.

Finally – and here is the only direct reference to the multi-confessional nature of the city, and thus of its beggar population – "from each Catholic church, Orthodox/Uniate church, and Lutheran/Calvinist church"¹⁴ that is

¹³ The Magistracy likely saw as part of its duties the maintenance of order during times of plague and famine. Evidence for this is a set of "instructions" to the temporary burgo-master, Józef Kojrelewicz, during the Muscovite occupation (dated 30 May 1657) giving him special police powers during the "pestilential air now engulfing the city of Wilno" (LVIA, SA 5099, 132r-v). Wilno Jesuit WALENTY BARTOSZEWSKI appended to a collection of Polish hymns on the time of the plague that he had dedicated to the Wilno Magistracy a "Science against Pestilential Air" (Bezoar z łez ludzkich, czasu powietrza morowego w Roku Pańskim 1624 utworzony i zacnemu Magistratowi miasta wileńskiego ... ofiarowany [An Antidote Created from Human Tears during the Pestilential Air in the Year of Our Lord 1624 and Offered to the Magistracy of the City of Wilno], Wilno 1630, E2r-E4v). Among calls for general cleanliness, use of incense to fumigate rooms and clothing, methods for safe recycling of the clothes of plague victims, and "other prescriptions for subtle people" ("drink a spoonful of lemon or musk syrup every morning") and "medicines for simple people" ("a largish piece of toasted bread with butter, drinking one's own urine in the morning also helps"), he offered one startling piece of general advice: "Buy up a bunch of old goats, and have them walk around your dwelling, because the stench drives away the [pestilential] air."

¹⁴ Since the end of the sixteenth century, Polish usage has allowed the making of strict distinctions between the terms "*kościół*" (Roman Catholic church), "*cerkiew*" (Orthodox or Uniate church), and "*zbór*" (Protestant church, usually Calvinist, but also sometimes – at least in Catholic usage – Lutheran); in some contexts, however, "*kościół*" can

within the city walls, one bell ringer is to sit with the annual elders.”¹⁵ This provision, as we will soon see, was modelled on the various guild charters that provided for confessional/ethnic parity in the elections of annual elders.

The text entered into the acts in 1663 was brought before the Magistracy by six named beggars: Petrus Rotkiewicz, Bartholomaeus Słowiński, and Joannes Windziul, who were identified as *pauperum seniores*, or seniors of the Beggars’ Corporation; Helias Męczyński, the *notarius* or secretary; and Josephus Andruszkiewicz and Gregorius Wołynkiewicz, identified as *commensales* (perhaps they were treasurers). Beyond this passage, I have found only one reference that may reflect the presence of the Corporation in the city during the seventeenth century. In the record of offerings to the Wilno Lutheran church for 1640-1642, we find a certain “Heinrich Juchsche, Bettlersche,” in other words – in the German usage of this particular document – “the widow of Heinrich Juch, Beggar” (apparently this identifies his profession, although it may have been a family business), who gave 1 zł and 6 gr (or a total of 36 gr) to the church’s coffers.¹⁶ For the sake of comparison, in that particular two-year cycle, the most generous supporter of the church was a certain “Johanes Maius, Medicinae Doctor,” who gave 48 zł (which equalled 1,440 gr, or exactly 40 times the contribution of Frau Juch).¹⁷ To give a rough idea of the value – an inventory of 1644 listed plums at 2 gr per pound, which would work out to 18 lbs. of plums for the Lutheran Church from Frau Juch and 720 lbs. from Doctor Maius¹⁸; a testament of 1652 included among the deceased’s possessions shoes worth 2 zł, which would put Frau Juch’s contribution for the year at a little more than one used shoe and Doctor Maius’s at 24 pairs.¹⁹

I have found no other independent evidence that the Wilno Beggars’ Corporation played a role in the life of the city. Still, we know that its charter

be used in a general, unmarked sense for any Christian church. The Lutherans themselves, who used the term “priest” (*ksiądz*) to refer to their pastors, regularly termed their own Church and the building in which it gathered a *kościół*, to the great dissatisfaction of Catholic clergy.

¹⁵ LVIA, SA 5102, 171v.

¹⁶ LVIA, 1008.1.42, 9v. The term “*Bettler(sche)*” seems to identify a recognized profession here. Other entries took parallel forms: *Andrieß Hoffmann*, *Balbier* (“barber-surgeon”); *Jackob Giebelsche*, *Burgemeistersche* (“burgomaster’s widow”). See LVIA, 1008.1.42, 8r, 10r.

¹⁷ LVIA, 1008.1.42, 10v.

¹⁸ Inventory of Aleksander Juszkiewicz, registered 31 January 1658, see LVIA, SA 5099, 158v.

¹⁹ Testament of Bartłomiej Jacewicz, registered 31 May 1652. Lietuvos mokslų akademijos biblioteka [Library of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences, LMAB], F43-221, 6r. It is worth noting that this beggar’s wife (and/or female beggar) had enough money to be in a position to lend some, assuming that Heinrich Juchsche is identical with a certain Pani Hendrychowa Juchowa (“the lady widow of Hendrych Juch”), to whom Matys Lipiński acknowledged a debt of 95 zł as he drew up his last will and testament (in Polish) on 25 November 1639. See LVIA, SA 5361, 131r.

was entered into the *acta* of the Magistracy at least five times. This fact alone would suggest that this kind of centralized poor relief was of some importance to early modern Vilnans.

Let us assume for the moment – a reasonable assumption, I will argue – that, in addition to Herr (and perhaps Frau) Juch, the Beggars' Corporation of Wilno also included members of Greek Orthodox, Uniate, Roman Catholic, and Calvinist Churches. This, after all, is what was implied by the provision for including bell ringers from all these confessions in the administration of the Beggars' Corporation. It was an arrangement typical for public life in early modern Wilno. On the one hand, it took into account the presence of the five legally recognized Christian confessions, and it allowed for a certain kind of representation and power-sharing across that spectrum. But at the same time, it clearly recognized the dominant position of Roman Catholicism, and it sought to bring these various confessions together – under the Corporation banner – at a Catholic altar. The model here was the guilds of Wilno, and I turn my attention to them now.

II. The Working Poor

Centralized providers of poor relief like the Wilno Beggars' Corporation typically excluded able bodied citizens from their rolls – what we would call the “working poor.” And yet, almost all inhabitants of early modern cities faced the possibility of slipping into poverty at certain times in their lives. Orphans, widows, and the aged were particularly vulnerable. But even healthy working men were not free from this concern, and the guilds sought to provide a sort of safety net to its members and, to a certain extent, to their families. This was modelled in some ways on the centralized system of the “common box,” although it was administered at the level of the individual guild.

Many of the guilds of Wilno shared power across the confessions in explicitly regulated ways. To cite only a few examples, the capmakers, in articles of 3 December 1636, called for the election of four annual elders, “two from the Roman and another two from the Greek religion” (and remember that by the late sixteenth century these two terms covered five confessions and a range of ethnicities).²⁰ The barber-surgeons determined on 23 January 1641 that they would elect two annual elders, one a Roman Catholic, the other a “dissident.”²¹ Or the iron smiths, according to a statute from before 1663, elected annually “two [elders] from Lithuania and the third

²⁰ ACW, p. 209.

²¹ Ibidem, p. 221. “Dissident” in the context of this particular guild meant primarily Lutheran, although in other contexts the term might take in Calvinists and Greek Orthodox as well.

a German.”²² Many different types of power sharing appear, all of them in some way a reflection of the royal decree of 1536 that had called for Roman-Greek parity in the Magistracy. The specifications about the way in which power was to be shared say something about the ethnic, social, and confessional makeup of the individual guilds, but they do not say anything about relative numbers. Recognized subgroups were to be represented, but there was no thought for proportionality.

Care for sick guild members and, for a circumscribed period of time, for their eventual widows was often a specific part of guild charters (and was probably a part of the informal practice of guilds that did not include this aspect of their activities in formal statutes). The presence of mixed guilds – and practically all were in some way multi-confessional and multi-ethnic – implied that people of the different communities were bound to aid their guild brethren and their families.²³ The Cobblers’ Guild, for example, which shared power equally among “Romans, Ruthenians, and Saxons” (i.e., in this context, Catholics, Uniates/Orthodox, and Lutherans), declared in articles confirmed on 9 July 1689 that:

“Love of one’s neighbor, especially Christian love, demands of everyone that there be respect for the sick, and especially for those who have come here from elsewhere [*przybyłce*], who do not have either parents, or relatives, or masters with whom they served. Therefore, if it should happen to any journeyman that he should take sick with some long illness, the master is not to remove him from the shop immediately; rather he is to remain by him for around two weeks. And after the expiration of these two weeks, he is to be given over to the *infirmarium* of the monastery of the Bonifratelli fathers. And since all remain subject to chance, there is to be a special box, into which during every meeting at least one schilling is to be placed, and that money is always to be kept for the assistance of the sick. But if

²² Ibidem, p. 277. These passages provide good examples of the confessional component of “ethnic” definitions: the point in this last instance was to elect two Roman Catholics (“from Lithuania”) and one Lutheran. Although there were some tendencies that linked certain ethnicities and confessions, this was never a complete match.

²³ Some guilds were, however, dominated by one group or another. The Barber-Surgeons’ Guild, for instance, was heavily Lutheran, so much so that in 1641 a kind of compromise was worked out between Catholic authorities and the guild that would encourage Catholics to take up the profession “so that the Catholic clergy might have have their trusted surgeons for their defects” (see *ibidem*, p. 221). (And yet, many non-Lutherans – including the Catholic king, Władysław IV, and the Calvinist palatine of Wilno and grand field hetman of Lithuania, Krzysztof Radziwiłł II – preferred the services of Lutheran doctors.) Goldsmiths were mostly Lutheran, furriers heavily Ruthenian, etc. Even so, all these guilds were mixed and envisaged a sharing of power. As far as I know, only the Book-Binders’ Guild limited its membership to “those who are in the Roman Catholic faith, good people, and no dissidents” (see *ibidem*, p. 301; AVAK 10 [1879], p. 84). This restriction was no doubt a part of the attempt of the Catholic hierarchy to control the dissemination of books; indeed, the Greek Orthodox and the Lutherans and Calvinists of Wilno often used printing houses in nearby private towns. Still, here too we find the trade “*Buchbinder*” among the contributors to Wilno’s Lutheran church. See LVIA, 1008.1.42, 9v, 10v.

that sick journeyman should return to health, he is to work off the expense that had been expended for him by the master through those two weeks during his illness.”²⁴

In this case, the centralized poor relief of the guild box was seen in part as a supplement to aid those who lacked the social networks that typically provided improvised, decentralized aid (“especially for those who have come here from elsewhere”).

The statute of the Masons’ Guild (dated 1 May 1595) accepted into the ranks of the masters “foreigners, Poles, Italians, Germans, as also from this nation of the state of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.”²⁵ Its provisions for poor relief were again quite specific:

“If anyone from the brethren should fall into a severe illness or poverty, he is to be provided with the appropriate assistance from the Brotherhood’s box – but in this manner: that he establish two trustworthy men who would vouch for him, that as soon as he should return to health, and acquire money, he would return to the box the assistance that was paid out for him. But if (God forbid) anyone should die in this illness or poverty, then all that was paid out for him should be remitted.”²⁶

A century later, in a re-registration of the masons’ articles (dated 3 December 1687; they too had been destroyed during the Muscovite invasion of 1655), the guild made the following new provisions:

“Every healthy person must expect illness, and the ill death, and all remain under the control of chance. Therefore, if it should happen that any journeyman of the Congregation of Masons should take sick, and could no longer have a livelihood and assistance from work, then the elders are to make good for him with a journeyman who, remaining at work, is to give the fourth *grosz* of his daily or weekly pay. But the master is not supposed to take from the journeyman’s weekly quota, which he usually takes from him every week, in view of the fact that the journeyman works for himself and for another who is sick. The same is to be understood about the widow of a journeyman mason, however only for a year and six weeks.”²⁷

And the examples could be multiplied.

Care organized by the guilds also included funeral ceremonies. Guilds were required to worship at – and to support, with money and gifts of wax for candles – particular altars in particular churches, almost always Roman

²⁴ ACW, pp. 456-457. The Bonifratelli were also known as the Brothers Hospitallers. Founded by St. John of God (d. 1550), they were recognized as an order of the Catholic Church in 1572.

²⁵ Ibidem, p. 111.

²⁶ Ibidem, pp. 114-115.

²⁷ Ibidem, p. 436. The period of “a year and six weeks” was a conventional one frequently encountered in wills as the period a widow was allowed to remain in control of her husband’s estate before the provisions of the testament would take full effect. See ANDRZEJ KARPINSKI: *Kobieta w mieście polskim w drugiej połowie XVI i w XVII wieku* [Women in Polish Cities in the Second Half of the XVI and the XVII Centuries], Warszawa 1995, p. 39.

Catholic, although there were some provisions for guild altars at Uniate churches. This meant, of course, that non-Catholics (primarily Lutherans and Greek Orthodox, but also some Calvinists) were required to support and to worship in Catholic churches.²⁸ In the course of the seventeenth century a system of “buying out” developed, by which non-Catholics could make an extra contribution to the guild box in exchange for the freedom to absent themselves from worship at the guild altar. This sort of mechanism did not apply, however, to funeral services for the brethren, and guild statutes sometimes made specific demands upon members to participate in the religious solemnities connected with the interment of their brethren, regardless of confession. One example: the Capmakers’ Guild – which shared power between two “Roman” and two “Greek” elders – declared in articles confirmed on 3 December 1636:

“When any of the masters of the capmaker trade dies, the younger brethren will be required to dig the hole and to place the body in the hole and to bring it on the bier, and the others are to accompany the body honorably, all together, both the Greeks are to accompany a Roman to the *kościół*, and, from the Roman side, to the *cerkiew*, and to bury the body as befits.”²⁹

It is clearly necessary to exercise caution in interpreting such programmatic statements. We have some evidence for periodic conflicts along confessional and ethnic lines within the guilds. Still, the principles of coexistence were stated over and over in the charters, and our evidence for the conflicts stems from scattered court cases, the purpose of which was to return order – following the principles of the statutes – to troubled and fractious guilds.

III. Hospitals

Early modern hospitals were not, of course, places where people chose to go for medical care: if you were sick, had a place to live, and could afford to pay a doctor and an apothecary, you endured your sickness at home. Wilno hospitals were originally foundations of specific churches and religious orders

²⁸ The Uniates, as usual, were in an ambiguous situation here. On the one hand, since they were in communion with the Roman Church, worship at these altars may not have been entirely distasteful to them, although we should not underestimate the attachment of Uniate Ruthenians to the Greek rite. On the other hand, they were still being asked to support from their guild dues the altar of a rite quite different from their own (and one that functioned on a different calendar!).

²⁹ ACW, p. 212; AVAK 10 [1879], p. 29. Again, “*cerkiew*” signifies a Uniate or an Orthodox church; “*kościół*” can be limited to a Roman Catholic church, but it can also be used in an unmarked way, and it may well also include the Lutherans here. The passage continues: “And if he should be absent a second time, he must give 8 gr, and on the third occasion he must give 16 gr, and if he should not be present a fourth time, he is to be punished officially [i.e., by the Magistracy] through incarceration, at the request of the elders, until he renders satisfaction.”

which took in, and sent aid out to, the poor and infirm of the community. As such, hospitals had a natural connection with confessions and with neighborhoods, even though some of the hospitals associated with particular churches were administered by members of the Magistracy.³⁰ Lutheran pastor Jędrzej Schönflissius (who cultivated a sort of specialty in the area of burgher funeral sermons) wrote in his 1638 encomium for his former parishioner Jakub Gibel that, as city councilor and burgomaster for over 38 years, “he gladly served the churches and hospitals, *even though they were of another religion* [emphasis added], on account of the office and his obligations.”³¹

The location of some hospitals changed somewhat over time, with the destruction of the city through fire and war (the city burned in 1610 and 1655), and through the simple fact that specific churches purchased or received as a bequest new buildings for the use of their hospitals, at which point either the network grew or the location of the hospital changed address. Further, it is not entirely clear whether all buildings described in the various surveys and deeds as “hospital houses” (*kamienice szpitalne*) were used only, or even primarily, as hospitals. Clearly some of those who are described in our sources as “living in the X hospital” were not necessarily recipients of care. Consider, for example, the case of the 1690 survey of Wilno properties, which noted that on Sawicz Street there was: “one little hospital house of the Holy Redeemer [at this point a Uniate institution], in which [reside] four neighbors [*sąsiedzi*, i.e., renters of chambers]; a second little hospital house of the Holy Redeemer, in which [resides] one neighbor.”³² The “neighbors” were hardly residents of the hospital, and they probably contributed to support of the institution through their rents. A few locations described in our surveys as “hospital houses of X church” were partly or wholly profit-earning properties for actual poor houses located elsewhere.

And yet, in spite of these caveats, a picture emerges of a considerable network of hospitals (and hospital-owned properties) in seventeenth-century

³⁰ In general on the conflict between Church and Magistracy in the administration of hospitals, see STANISŁAW LITAK: Szpitale w Polsce przedrozbiorowej. Rozwój i problematyka [Hospitals in Pre-Partition Poland. Development and Problems], in: Szpitalnictwo w dawnej Polsce (cf. footnote 4), pp. 13-31, here: pp. 15-16. On the hybrid nature of hospitals in sixteenth-century Venice – part ecclesiastic, part civic foundations – see PULLAN: Rich and Poor (cf. footnote 4), pp. 331-371.

³¹ JĘDRZEJ SCHÖNFLISSIUS: Antidotum spirituale. To iest, Lekarstwo Duchowne Na Truciznę Srogiey śmierci Przy obchodzie pogrzebu niegdy pobożnego i Szlachetnego Męża Iego Mści Pana Iakuba Gibla Burmistrza Wileńskiego [Antidotum Spirituale. That Is, Spiritual Medicine for the Poison of Cruel Death at the Ceremony of the Funeral of the Once Pious and Noble Man, His Grace, Lord Jakub Gibel, Burgomaster of Wilno], Königsberg 1638, E2v.

³² Metryka Litewska. Part 2: Rejestry podymnego Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego. Województwo wileńskie 1690 r. [Lithuanian “Metryka.” Part 2: Registers of Hearth Taxes for the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. The Wilno Palatinate], ed. by ANDRZEJ RACHUBA, Warszawa 1989, p. 36.

Wilno. Let us begin with the Roman Catholic institutions. These were first established in connection with specific churches and their immediate parishes, and usually adjacent to the church. In the middle of the seventeenth century, there were seven such Roman Catholic hospitals: at St. Mary Magdalene (established 1514), at Holy Trinity (Dominicans, established 1535), at SS. Joseph and Nicodemus (Jesuits, established 1625), at St. Stephen (established ca. 1600), at Holy Cross (Bonifratres, established 1635), at St. Peter in the Antokol suburb (established before 1630), and at St. Anne (Bernardine, established 1640). The hospitals were frequently connected with religious brotherhoods, one of whose purposes was to provide care for the poor and infirm. This was true of SS. Joseph and Nicodemus (and the Brotherhood under the same patronage), of St. Stephen (Brotherhood of St. Lazarus), and of St. Anne, where German and other “foreign” Catholics gathered in the Brotherhood of St. Martin.³³ The Beggars’ Corporation had its seat at the Jesuits’ St. John, although there does not seem to have been a hospital building at that location.

In the seventeenth century three of these institutions – the hospitals at the Churches of the Holy Trinity, St. Stephen, and SS. Joseph and Nicodemus – were under at least partial supervision of secular stewards chosen by the Roman half of the Magistracy. The hospital at Holy Trinity drew some of its income from the much traversed “Green Bridge” that crossed the River Wilia to the northwest of the city and led to the Snipiszki suburb; it had a correspondingly large budget.³⁴ Presumably, it was oversight of institutions like this one that Schönflissius had in mind when he wrote of Burgomaster Jakub Gibel’s service to non-Lutheran hospitals. The Magistracy seems to have farmed these duties out to Wilno merchants at times. The presence of “M. Fonderflot” – likely Lutheran merchant Matiasz Fonderflot – as steward in 1671 suggests that the ban on non-Catholic and non-Uniate participation in the Magistracy after 1666 did not put absolute limits on the participation of the “others” in positions important to municipal governance.³⁵

The many Orthodox churches established throughout the eastern half of Wilno (along and to the right of the main axis leading from the Sharp Gate to the Castle) were taken over by the Uniates after 1596, along with schools, brotherhoods, and charitable institutions such as hospitals. Records from the

³³ On Catholic and Uniate hospitals and poor houses in Wilno, see KURCZEWSKI: *Biskupstwo wileńskie* (cf. footnote 5), pp. 352-368. See also ŁOWMIANŚKA: *Wilno przed najazdem moskiewskim* (cf. footnote 5), pp. 56-60, for information on such institutions of all confessions.

³⁴ RAGAUSKAS: *Vilniaus miesto valdantysis elitas* (cf. footnote 5), p. 333, has calculated that it “sometimes equalled or even exceeded the budget of the city!”

³⁵ See *ibidem*, pp. 332-336. Fonderflot is on p. 333. A record of his offerings to the Lutheran church in the years 1667-1691 can be found at LVIA, 1008.1.42, 96v, 116v, 126v, 141v, 158v, 173v, 194r, 213v, 234v, 250v, 265v, 285r, 305v; and of his widow in 1701 at LVIA, 1008.1.19, 8v.

middle of the seventeenth century tell of numerous Ruthenian (by now Uniate) hospitals and hospital houses. Notably, the cathedral Church of the Saviour (*Spas*) had two hospital houses and a bath near the cathedral church and the Saviour Gate, as well as several "places" (squares, open places of land) in the city.³⁶ Further, there were Uniate hospitals at St. Parascovia, Holy Trinity, and the Church of the Resurrection. Holy Trinity was the largest Uniate complex, and it also possessed a Brotherhood of the Immaculate Conception, one of whose purposes was the provision of poor relief.³⁷

After 1596, the Orthodox of Wilno built a new church across the street from Holy Trinity, dedicated to the Descent of the Holy Spirit, and on which lands were gathered a brotherhood, school, *bursa* for poor students, and a hospital.³⁸

The Calvinists had a hospital complex (surveys conducted in 1636 and 1639 note three houses³⁹) near their church within the city walls, but only until 1640, when, after a year of unrest in the city, they were removed by royal edict. They soon rebuilt their church on land just outside of the old city walls, where they had previously established a cemetery, and here the school and hospital also reappeared. The institution was founded in 1598 and survived until the end of the eighteenth century.⁴⁰

In the middle of the seventeenth century, the Lutherans had a hospital near the Lutheran church on German Street. They also owned two hospital houses on Rudniki Street and one on upper Great Castle Street. The surviving register of offerings to the Lutheran church of Wilno includes a set of rules that were to govern the actions of the lay overseers of the Lutheran hospitals.⁴¹

The Jews of Wilno governed themselves through the *kahal*, under whose aegis a Hospital Brotherhood supervised a Jewish hospital. In 1795 we read

³⁶ Biblioteka Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego [Library of the Jagiellonian University, Cracow, BUJ], B [Manuscripts of the Berlin State Library – Prussian Cultural Heritage (now kept in Cracow)], Slav. F. 17, 8r, 10v, 18r-v, 28v-29r, 81r-v.

³⁷ RAGAUSKAS: Vilniaus miesto valdantysis elitas (cf. footnote 5), pp. 336-337.

³⁸ On Orthodox charity in the Commonwealth in general, with some comments on Wilno, see ANTONI MIRONOWICZ: Działalność charytatywna w kościele prawosławnym na terenie Rzeczypospolitej w XVI–XVIII wieku [Charitable Activities in the Orthodox Church on the Territory of the Commonwealth in the XVI–XVIII Centuries], in: *Charitas* (cf. footnote 4), pp. 79-86.

³⁹ BUJ B, Slav. F. 17, 78v, 79r-v; BUJ B, Slav. F. 15, 44v-45r.

⁴⁰ See WOJCIECH KRIEGSEISEN: Miłosierdzie czy opieka społeczna? Działalność opiekuńcza w Jednocie ewangelicko-reformowanej Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego w XVIII wieku [Charity or Social Welfare? Care-Giving Activities in the Evangelical-Reformed Church of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the XVIII Century], in: *Charitas* (cf. footnote 4), p. 118. More generally on Calvinist attitudes toward charity, see JEANNINE E. OLSON: Calvin and Social Welfare. Deacons and the *Bourse française*, London 1989.

⁴¹ LVIA, 1008.1.42, 186r-189v, 300r-301v.

that the Jews had had “*from time immemorial* [emphasis added] a hospital for the poor and infirm on Meat Shop Street.”⁴² It would seem likely that this institution was functioning by the middle of the seventeenth century. It is noted in a survey of the houses in Wilno belonging to the synagogue that was enacted 31 July 1690: “the little house of Rybnicki, divided into two parts, which is a hospital house, in both of which two parts of this hospital house [reside] the landlord and twelve neighbors.”⁴³ Surveys of the city done in 1636 and 1639 indicate that there was also a Jewish hospital next to the main synagogue on Jewish Street.⁴⁴

Tatar poor relief in Poland-Lithuania, as far as we know, was thoroughly decentralized and did not make use of *imarets* (inns or hostels for pilgrims). It was based on informal, private care for relatives and friends of the sort provided in wills and other improvised self-help methods.⁴⁵

Although the hospitals were clearly seen as a part of the mission of specific churches and parishes, or of the Jewish *kahal*, and were thus tied in some manner to religion, confession, and neighborhood, there is a certain amount of evidence pointing to a mixing of Christian confessions among the recipients of this kind of poor relief. And, by contrast, no indication of any crossing of the Christian-Jewish divide in this aspect of daily life, except in the sense that Jewish renters may have occupied some houses owned by Christian hospitals.⁴⁶ And – a much more important and elusive phenomenon to which I will return briefly – in the sense that Jewish money lending may have been in competition with the Christian *Montes Pietatis* in providing individual poor relief.

First, let us note the crossing of confessional boundaries in the giving of alms to hospitals, our most direct evidence for which are the last wills and testaments of Vilnans of various confessions. In many cases, the testator specified that money was to be given to a list of hospitals throughout Wilno. These lists are not entirely random, although we do find some who direct that money be given to all hospital institutions;⁴⁷ certain types of multi-confessional constellations were formed more easily than others. For instance,

⁴² AVAK 29 [1902], p. 500.

⁴³ Metryka Litewska (cf. footnote 32), p. 61.

⁴⁴ BUJ B, Slav. F. 17, 53v, Slav. F. 15, 31r.

⁴⁵ See ZAKRZEWSKI (cf. footnote 9).

⁴⁶ For example, the survey of 1636 (BUJ B, Slav. F. 17, 58v) tells us that Jews were living in the Lutheran hospital house on the side street around the corner from the Lutheran church. Similarly, it is entirely possible that Christians were among the “neighbors” renting dwellings in the “hospital houses” belonging to the *kahal*. On Jewish and Christian co-habitation of neighborhoods, houses, and chambers in seventeenth-century Wilno, see DAVID FRICK: Jews and Others in Seventeenth-Century Wilno. Life in the Neighborhood, in: Jewish Studies Quarterly 12 (2005), pp. 8-42.

⁴⁷ See, for example the testament of Lutheran swordsmith Melchior Ilis (enacted 18 May 1663, LVIA, SA 5333, 319r-322v), whose will it was that 10 zł be given to every hospital within the walls of Wilno and in the suburbs.

Lutherans often included Roman Catholics, but rarely, if ever, thought of the “Greeks,” whether Orthodox or Uniate.⁴⁸ Still, there are some surprises – especially the frequent evidence for a kind of Ruthenian solidarity across the Uniate-Orthodox boundary that is usually thought to have been one of the deepest divides in the confessional landscape among Christians in early modern Poland-Lithuania.⁴⁹

There are certain difficulties in interpreting the general phenomenon. Clearly part of the motivation for giving to hospitals and to the poor was one of salvation – for the almsgiver, and also perhaps for the recipient. The poor were to pray for the soul of the deceased; if you gave to more hospitals, more poor would pray for your soul. Conversely, by giving beyond your own confession you were “improving the morals” of the greater Wilno population. We should note the “ecumenical” aspect of this part of piety in early modern Wilno: the result would be that poor people of the Orthodox Church – to choose one constellation – would pray that their benefactors would get into Uniate heaven, and Uniates would care for the morals of the Orthodox poor; and many other combinations arise from a reading of the testaments. The occasionally encountered stipulation that after a testator’s death the poor on the streets of Wilno were to receive some alm never limited that charity to beggars of a specific confession.⁵⁰

These deathbed bequests may also reflect a mixing of confessions within the poor houses themselves. Here, too, a funeral sermon by Lutheran pastor Jędrzej Schönflissius sheds some light upon motivations. In an oration of 1628, the pastor praised the recently deceased merchant of Wilno, Andrzej von Embden (an immigrant from Antwerp via Cracow), because

“he did good for God’s servants, helped people in need. He gave a generous alm to poor little Lazarusses. Witness to his generosity is the hospital at St. Peter’s outside the city [a Catholic church located in the Antokol suburb to the north, between the Upper Castle and the Wilia River], which he built and founded at his own expense, and with this intent: that in that place also poor people of our [Lutheran] confession might find refuge.”⁵¹

⁴⁸ See, for example, the testament of Lutheran wine-merchant Hanus Magdeburger (enacted 3 July 1665, LVIA, SA 5334, 662r-663v), who made bequests to the Lutheran hospital, the Catholic Holy Trinity hospital, and the Catholic Joseph and Nicodemus hospital.

⁴⁹ See, for example, the testament of the Uniate merchant and town councilor Samuel Filipowicz (enacted 10 April 1663, LVIA, SA 5334, 58v-62r; second copy at LVIA, SA 5099, 459r-462v; printed in AVAK 9 [1878], pp. 492-496), who made bequests to both the Uniate Holy Trinity and the Orthodox Holy Spirit Churches and monasteries.

⁵⁰ See, for example, the testament of royal secretary Józef Antoniewicz Proniewski (a Catholic), who, in 1680, bequeathed 30 zł to each of five Roman Catholic hospitals but 100 zł in general to “the poor who lie about the streets and beg for money” (LVIA, SA 5337, 420r-425r).

⁵¹ JĘDRZEJ SCHÖNFLISSIUS: *Colloquium iucundum, Albo Kazanie pogrzebne nad zacnym ciałem niegdy sławnego Pana Andrzeja von Embden, kupca wileńskiego, człowieka*

The Cobblers' Guild, which shared power among Romans, Ruthenians, and Saxons, specified in its statutes that sick and impoverished journeymen were all to find refuge in the hospital of the Catholic Holy Cross Church of the Bonifratelli.

On the other hand, there is also a certain amount of evidence that institutions like hospitals were part of the arsenal of weapons in the inter-confessional battles of the Age of Reform; and that the receipt of aid came with a certain amount of persuasion to join the confession of the aid-givers. For example, in the trying period after 1640, when the Calvinists were forced to remove their church, hospital, and school from the city (as mentioned above, they were allowed to rebuild just outside the city walls and were thus still present in the life of the city⁵²), a kind of purge of the Calvinist hospital along confessional lines was proposed at an annual synod. In Article 5 of the acts of the synod of 1642 ("On the Invalid Poor of the Wilno Calvinist Church") we discover that there were in the Wilno Calvinist poor house "some persons among the widows" of questionable faith:

"We establish that [...] they be examined, and the pious be left in peace and the scandalous [zgorszliwe] be sent on their way; and if any of our confession should be found and, on account of the meagerness of income, could not be accommodated here, we allow that they be sent to Śluck to the Superintendent of the Nowogródek District [of the Lithuanian Calvinist Church]."

alias godnego i pobożnego, który w Roku Pańskim 1628 1 dnia Septembra spokojnie Bogu swemu oddał ducha [Colloquium Jucundum; Or, A Funeral Sermon over the Noble Body of the Once Glorious Lord Andrzej von Embden, Merchant of Wilno, a Man Once Worthy and Pious, Who, in the Year of Our Lord 1628, the First Day of September, Peacefully Gave Up His Soul to His God], Lubecz 1628, f. D2r. See also Schönlissius' sermon for Lutheran Royal Engineer (*budowniczy*) and Master of the Wilno Castle (*horodniczy*) Piotr Nunhart, whom he also praised for his generosity to the Lutheran hospital and to the hospital at St. Peter in the Antokol suburb – "although this was not of his religion." IDEM: Obchód pogrzebu Jego Mści Pana Piotra Nunharta, niegdy Horodniczego wileńskiego, ... który roku 1633, 18 lutego spokojnie w Panu zasnął i Jemu w ręce ducha swego oddał [The Ceremony of the Funeral of His Grace, Lord Piotr Nunhart, Once the Master of the Wilno Castle ... Who, on 18 February 1633, Peacefully Fell Asleep in the Lord and Gave Up His Soul Unto His Hands], Lubecz 1633, F2r.

⁵² On the unrest of 1640-1641, see BOGUMIŁ ZWOLSKI: Sprawa Zboru ewangelicko-reformowanego w Wilnie w latach 1639-41 [The Matter of the Evangelical-Reformed Church in Wilno in the Years 1639-1641], Wilno 1936 (Biblioteczka wileńska, 7); HENRYK WISNER: Likwidacja zboru ewangelickiego w Wilnie (1639-1646). Z dziejów walki z inaczej wierzącymi [The Liquidation of the Evangelical Church in Wilno (1640-1646). Aspects of the History of the Struggle with the Heterodox], in: Odrodzenie i Reformacja w Polsce 37 (1993), pp. 89-102; BOGUMIŁA KOSMANOWA: Sprawa wileńskiego kościoła św. Michała (wizja J.I. Kraszewskiego a rzeczywistość historyczna) [The Case of the Wilno Church of St. Michael (The Vision of J.I. Kraszewski and Historical Reality)], in: Odrodzenie i Reformacja w Polsce 40 (1996), pp. 53-68.

The article went on to state that widows (apparently, here, widows of genuine Calvinist faith) who were able to find maintenance with children or relatives should go there to live, "so that they not be a burden to the Church of God."⁵³ This article points to several things: first to the more limited financial means of the Wilno Calvinist congregation after the persecutions of 1640-1641; but also to the presence of people of other religions in the Calvinist hospital before that time, to an attempt to limit the Calvinist hospital to the confessional community, and perhaps also to the use of the hospital as a confessionalizing tool.

IV. Pro Dotandis Pauperibus Virginibus

Other charitable organizations quite clearly limited their ministries to one narrowly defined group; any crossing of confessional bounds was based on the assumption that the recipient of aid would convert. Such was a program administered by the Roman Catholic Chapter, whose canons also meted out justice to a "jurisdiction" (*jurydyka, juryzdyka*) within the city of Wilno. The system of *jurydyki* meant that certain houses were not ruled by Magdeburg law from the Town Hall (*ratusz*), as were the majority of houses within the walls. Rather, they came under some other jurisdiction. Some of them were subject to the nobles' Land and Castle Courts, others to the Wilno Roman Catholic Chapter or also to an altar of the Cathedral Church. Inhabitants of those houses went to their respective courts for all legal matters: protestations against and litigation with neighbors, registry of sales of houses, wills and testaments, etc.⁵⁴ The houses of the Chapter jurisdiction were grouped for the most part in the streets just below the Castle and the Cathedral church, on both sides of Castle Street, around Skop and Bernardine Streets; this was one of the poorer neighborhoods in the city. A sort of subset of these houses was formed by those addresses subject to the foundation of one particular altar at the Cathedral, the so-called Moniwid Altar, established by Palatine of Wilno Wojciech Moniwid (Albertas Monvydas) in 1420.⁵⁵ This jurisdiction took in

⁵³ LMAb, F40-1136, pp. 60-61; Biblioteka Narodowa [National Library, Warsaw, BN], Biblioteka Ordynacji Zamojskiej [Library of the Zamojski Estate in the BN, BOZ], pp. 803, 292-293. According to KRIEGEISEN (cf. footnote 40), p. 121, "the overwhelming majority of inmates of Lithuanian Evangelical-Reformed hospitals in the eighteenth century were women, above all widows."

⁵⁴ To the extent that there were some complaints against the patchwork of jurisdictions: "there is not one municipal jurisdiction," spokesmen for the Wilno Magistracy alleged to the king in 1644, "rather there are as many jurisdictions as there are monasteries, which is the number of havens for crafty people." See ACW, p. 233.

⁵⁵ See JAN KURCZEWSKI: Kościół zamkowy, czyli Katedra wileńska w jej dziejowym, liturgicznym, architektonicznym i ekonomicznym rozwoju [The Castle Church; Or, the Wilno Cathedral in Its Historical, Liturgical, Architectural, and Economical Development], Part 1, pp. 14, 276; Part 2, p. 267, Wilno 1910. Kurczewski erred in identifying Moniwid as the "Lithuanian hetman" (Part 1, p. 276; Part 2, p. 267). That office was established only at the end of the fifteenth century. See Urzędnicy centralni i dostojnicy

most of the houses on Skop Street and a side street leading to the little branch of the Wilenka that separated the city proper in the north from the Castles and the Cathedral church. There are some indications that the program I wish to discuss here was administered within the jurisdiction of the Moniwid Altar, although it reached out to poor people beyond that street.

My knowledge of the program is limited to a record book bearing the title "Income and Expenditure of Funds for the Endowing of Poor Maidens" (*Przychód i rozchód pieniędzy pro dotandis pauperibus virginibus*).⁵⁶ The entries begin in 1620 and break off in 1654, shortly before the Muscovite occupation of the city. Entries typically contain a date, the name of the couple intending to marry, and the amount of money to be given in Lithuanian *kopy* or *schocks* (1 Lithuanian *kopa* [abbr. *k*] = 60 Lithuanian gr or about 2 Polish zł). Many entries contain additional information, such as the name of a parent of the bride, the husband's occupation, where the couple came from (if he or she was not a Vilnan), the circumstances of the recipient's poverty, any deviations from the normal use of the funds (money given simply to help out a poor person, not necessarily as a dowry; or the fact that one recipient was allowed to keep the money, even though she apparently got cold feet about the marriage⁵⁷), or an attestation by a neighbor or a priest. These attestations served to corroborate both genuine need and good faith. A few entries tell us that the recipient was a convert to Catholicism and imply either that the grant was a reward for conversion, or that conversion was the condition for the grant.

This little ledger offers some insight into the delivery of a kind of poor relief as a confessionalizing tool and a few details about the nature and causes of poverty in this community. Much of the book points simply to a program to help out poor women (who happen, we must assume, to be Catholic, and who, in many cases, live in the poor neighborhoods of the Chapter jurisdictions). A typical entry took this form: "11 January 1625, to Miss Dorota Mileńska and Symon Makoliński, birdcatcher, at the recommendation of His Grace, Father Zyganty, 6 k."⁵⁸ This sort, and others only slightly more informative form the majority of entries.

Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego XIV-XVIII wieku [Central Officials and Dignitaries of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the XIV-XVIII Centuries], ed. by HENRYK LULEWICZ and ANDRZEJ RACHUBA, Kórnik 1994 (Urzędnicy dawnej Rzeczypospolitej XII-XVIII wieku, 11), p. 40.

⁵⁶ LMAB, F43-527.

⁵⁷ LMAB, F43-527, 34v. "20 October 1646, to Miss Anna Markiewiczówna, of significant parents, father deceased, living in great poverty with her mother, marrying merchant's servant [a blank space instead of the name], so that she can redeem pawned articles, and for the dowry, and for the wedding party, was given 12 k." The entry was crossed out and annotated in the margin: "She didn't marry at this time; nonetheless, the money was given."

⁵⁸ LMAB, F43-527, 17v.

Other entries give us a little more insight into the nature and causes of the poverty that was to be addressed.

"17 November 1640, to Barbara Kuźmichówna, living beyond the Wilia River, a poor maiden, whose mother sits on the steps of the Castle church [i.e., begging for alms], marrying Stanisław Urbanowicz, *locularius*, at the attestation of the Father Vice-Custodian, 6 k."⁵⁹

"22 October 1641, to Anna, daughter of Mikołaj Chomętowski, cobbler living on Glass Street, who, bedridden with illness, has come to poverty, was given, as she enters into matrimony, as poor relief, 8 k."⁶⁰

"16 November 1641, to Halszka, daughter of Dzienicki the tailor, who lives on Jop Street, and who is in great poverty due to illness and the many children, eight of them, poor relief so that she may enter into matrimony, 6 k."⁶¹

In some of the entries, the Catholic aspects of this particular program for poor relief were made more explicit. In a few cases (7 of 327, or 2%), the marriage vows in question were those taken upon entering into a spiritual order.⁶² In a few more instances, the motivation for the grant explicitly included information about the conversion of the recipient (17 of 327, or 5%):

"5 August 1622, to Anna, a baptised Tatar woman, marrying [blank space], carpenter, at the recommendation of Father Boksza and Father Tomasz Jurgiewicz, 3 k."⁶³

"3 October 1641, to Zofia Frezówna, who has poor parents, entering into matrimony with Jan the tailor, at the recommendation and attestation of His Grace Father Białowski, since the parents are very poor, and especially since they have converted from Calvinism, was given 8 k."⁶⁴

"3 January 1642, to Katarzyna Wejmarin, converted from the Lutheran heresy, marrying Samuel Cybulski, tailor, also converted from Arianism, both poor, at the commendation of Father Nicholas Hecker, of the Society of Jesus, was given 6 k."⁶⁵

"4 November 1645, to Barbara Piotrowska, maiden, converted from Arianism, and thus abandoned by her Arian parents, marrying Kazimierz Michałowski, at the testimony and recommendation of Father Koczanowski, vicar at St. John, 3 k."⁶⁶

"10 February 1646, to Anna Eymanówna, a poor maiden converted from heresy, and entering into matrimony with Andrzej Łatecki, 3 k."⁶⁷

⁵⁹ LMAB, F43–527, 23v. The job of the *locularius* or *łózewnik/łóżownik* was to set firearms in their gunstocks.

⁶⁰ LMAB, F43–527, 29r.

⁶¹ Ibidem.

⁶² For example, the grant to "Miss Cecylia Sikutowiczówna from Wilno, who is entering the convent of St. Michael in Wilno, at the recommendation of His Grace, the Father Deacon, and of Mr. Jan Orłowski, an alm of 2 k" (LMAB, F43–527, 8v).

⁶³ LMAB, F43–527, 11r.

⁶⁴ LMAB, F43–527, 29r.

⁶⁵ LMAB, F43–527, 30r.

⁶⁶ LMAB, F43–527, 33v.

The confessional aspect of the program is emphasized by the fact that not all of such grants were predicated on marriage:

"23 October 1627, to Elżbieta, a baptised Jewish woman, an alm of 2 k."⁶⁸

"24 April, to Efrosyna, a poor maiden, noble woman from Pogorzal (?), converted from heresy, and abandoned by her kin, and searching about town for alms for her subsistence, at the commendation of Father Paszkiewicz, her confessor, a subsidy of 2 k."⁶⁹

"9 September 1644, to the converted and baptised Tatar woman Anna, at the recommendation and commendation of her poverty by Father Giedroyc of the Society of Jesus, was given an alm of 2 k."⁷⁰

And, indeed, by the fact that not all recipients were maidens:

"28 June 1641, to Zachariusz Krasnowicki, who, being a Calvinist minister, has left Kiejdany [a private town in Lithuania owned by the Calvinist branch of the Radziwiłł family], and has converted to the Catholic faith, at the recommendation of His Grace the Most Reverend Lord Bishop of Wilno, are given 10 k."⁷¹

A part of the program, and especially early on, seems to have been quite local, focused on the inhabitants of the poorest streets in the Chapter jurisdiction. Here I find names I can trace, through other documents, to Skop Street. It sometimes turns out that neighbors were recommending neighbors. Consider the following case: "9 September 1622, to Miss Krystyna Chrzanowska and Balcer Kupicki, carpenter, both from Wilno, at the recommendation of Paweł the wheelwright and Bazyly the weaver, a dowry of 2 k."⁷² Others sources help identify the two recommenders more precisely. These were Paweł Kotlik and Bazyly Budziewicz, both of whom owned and inhabited houses on Skop Street (Kotlik at 49.05 and Budziewicz at 45.12⁷³), and both of whom made other appearances in this little ledger. We know further that Paweł died a Catholic and asked to be buried at the Holy Trinity Catholic church.⁷⁴ We will look at his story in more detail in a moment. Bazyly the weaver was sacristan at St. Mary Magdalene, the small church (and hospital) in the neighborhood at the end of Skop Street, and across from

⁶⁷ LMAB, F43-527, 34r.

⁶⁸ LMAB, F43-527, 19v.

⁶⁹ LMAB, F43-527, 31v. There seems to have been a shift over time toward grants to "poor noble girls." In 1652, for example, eight of twenty-three entries (or 35%) were of this sort, compared with 17 of 327 over the course of the program (or 5%).

⁷⁰ LMAB, F43-527, 32r.

⁷¹ LMAB, F43-527, 29r.

⁷² LMAB, F43-527, 11v.

⁷³ I have assigned addresses to the houses of Wilno based on detailed surveys of the city conducted in 1636 and 1639. They are to be found at BUJ B, Slav. F. 17 (74r-v and 73r) and F. 15 (42r and 41r).

⁷⁴ See his will, enacted 13 February 1632, in LMAB, F43-26642, 1r-2r.

which he owned a house.⁷⁵ The suspicion then arises that Chrzanowska and Kupicki may have been renters on Skop Street; renters are harder to locate and identify than property owners like Kotlik and Budziewicz, however modest the last two were.

In another case – one involving neighbors of Kotlik and Budziewicz – we again find a local, indeed, a family network: “8 November 1622, to Miss Maryna Arcimowiczówna from Wilno and Jan Kostrząbski, tailor, at the recommendation of Mr. Jakub Szczygielski, 2 k.”⁷⁶ Other sources tell us that Szczygielski was the step-father of Arcimowiczówna, and they indicate that parents and children were renters of chambers in properties on Skop Street. By 1623, Kostrząbski (he appears in other sources as Kostrompski and, most frequently, Kostromski) and Arcimowiczówna were renting quarters in the house of lutanist Andrys Elmer at 49.07. We know this thanks to mutual allegations of name-calling and slapping between Mr. and Mrs. Elmer, on the one hand, and Mr. and Mrs. Szczygielski and her daughter Anna Arcimowiczówna Kostromska, on the other.⁷⁷ Kostromski would go on to purchase two houses in the neighborhood, by 1636 the one next door at 49.08 and subsequently, in 1640, one down the street at 49.05 (purchased from Kotlik’s widow).⁷⁸ His story will also draw our attention in the next section.

All three of the recommenders (Kotlik, Budziewicz, and Szczygielski) spoke in support of other poor couples’ petitions for aid.⁷⁹ And Bazyly Budziewicz had gotten his own start in married life thanks to the program: “17 February 1626, to Miss Anna Łomciewiczówna and Bazyly Budziewicz, weaver, at the recommendation of His Grace, Father Żabiński, 4 k.”⁸⁰

There were, in all likelihood, other such programs of poor relief targeted at communities limited by confession, and loosely coinciding with parish and neighborhood. Parish churches typically saw forms of material care for members of the community as part of their mission, and these sorts of aid programs were probably in some ways parallel to the hospitals maintained at the parish level. The same names appear in this particular ledger repeatedly – as recipients of aid and as sponsors of requests for aid – and the names are those of close neighbors. This points us in the direction of the neighborhoods and networks within which the inhabitants of Wilno of all confessions and estates conducted life’s business and to which they turned in times of need.

⁷⁵ LMAB, F43–527, 15v.

⁷⁶ LMAB, F43–527, 11v.

⁷⁷ All three of whom, the Elmers alleged, were “people given to drink” (*człowiek opity, białe głowy opile*). See the protocols of the Chapter Court for the Skop and Bernardine Street jurisdictions in LMAB, F17–280, 4r–5r.

⁷⁸ For 49.08, see BUJ B, Slav. F. 17, 74v; for 49.10, see the legal transaction recording the sale before the Chapter Court in LMAB, F43–218, 379r–381v.

⁷⁹ LMAB, F43–527, 6v, 15v, 9v. The family names appear in all these entries.

⁸⁰ LMAB, F43–527, 18v.

V. Self-Help

Anyone could quickly end up in need. This applied especially to those whose ability to provide for themselves and others was structurally limited: widows, orphans, unmarried women, and the elderly and infirm. Testaments and other provisions often reflected an attempt by departing husbands and wives to care for those remaining, and by the elderly to care for themselves. The presence of “Mrs. Abłamowiczowa, burgomaster’s widow” in a list of “out-patients” of the Catholic Holy Trinity hospital bears witness to the fact that even members of the elite could quickly find themselves on the dole.⁸¹ Perhaps she belonged to Wilno’s equivalent of the “shamefaced poor” (*poveri vergognosi*), those whose sense of honor did not allow them to beg with uncovered faces or to seek “indoor relief” in hospitals.

The concentration of Skop Street names in the ledger of dowries granted to poor maidens that I examined in the preceding section suggests that neighbors and families drew on that program as a part of their own “self-help” strategies. Access to the court seems to have been freer – and no doubt cheaper – in the Chapter than in the Magistracy, and it is here that we can observe relatively modest individuals attempting to find makeshift solutions to impending poverty. We are also able to observe the priestly judges’ attempts to aid the citizens of their jurisdiction (not all of whom were Roman Catholic) in achieving their goals. What follows are five stories from the lives of citizens of the Wilno Chapter, plus one of a young pauper of no fixed residence. They tell not only of the plights of orphans, widows and abandoned wives, the elderly and infirm, but also of improvised solutions to those challenges. In societies like this one, all economic behavior might be seen as part of individual attempts to stave off need; I have selected those stories in which participants or observers commented specifically on the nature and goals of their activities.

1. A Child Yet in Diapers

At the top of Castle Street (1.03), on the corner of an alley described in 1636 only as “the street that goes to His Royal Majesty’s Mill,” lived a haberdasher named Piotr Kwaśnicki (a.k.a. Kwasiela, Kwaśniewski). This house, together with the houses at 1.01 and 1.02 and the first four houses directly across the street (Castle Street 2.01-2.04), was under the jurisdiction of the Wilno Chapter. It was partially bricked and considerably larger than the single-chamber wooden houses at 1.01 and 1.02. Still, with its six chambers

⁸¹ See the “Register of *Dziadowie* (‘Poor Old Men’) and *Baby* (‘Poor Old Women’) in the Hospital of the Roman Holy Trinity Church” for 1674-1675 at LVIA, SA 5097, 360r. Łukasz Abłamowicz was annual councilor in 1636 and 1642 and burgomaster only once, in 1647 (LVIA, SA 5324, 15v, 16v, 17r), all of which indicates that “Mrs. Abłamowicz” might have been a widow for two decades or more by 1674-1675.

(some large, some small, some wooden, some bricked), three alcoves, and four vestibules, it was considerably more modest than the town houses of the elite further down both sides of Castle Street. Perhaps haberdasher Kwaśnicki helped make ends meet by drawing on the bricked "tavern chamber" that was a fixture in so many houses and provided extra income through *szynk*, the sale of alcohol on the premises. The surveys of 1636 and 1639 suggest that Kwaśnicki did not own the property but rented it from the Chapter.⁸²

We know a little about Kwaśnicki because he and his wife, Krystyna Wolska, married their daughter Regina to a tailor named Andrzej Kosmowski. This happened a few years before 1635. But to tell the story we must back up a bit further. Kosmowski himself owned a small bricked house at St. John Street 44.04 (two chambers, an alcove, a brewery, a stable for a couple horses, a basement). His first wife, Barbara Skrodzka, had been the proverbial girl next door. Her father, Wincenty Skrodzki, owned the slightly larger bricked house at St. John Street 44.03 (five chambers, a basement, a brewery, a bakery, a shed for two horses).⁸³ Both houses were also under the jurisdiction of the Wilno Chapter, and neighboring houses were either "on the ground of the vicar of St. John" (44.05) or were houses "on city ground," but occupied by Jesuit fathers (44.01 and 44.02).

Barbara Skrodzka had borne Kosmowski two sons, Jan and Jakub. She died – I am not certain exactly when – and Kosmowski remarried, soon, it would seem. He had to search a bit further afield for his second wife, although he found her too in a house subject to the Chapter. That second wife, Regina Kwaśnicka, had died by 1634, but not before she had borne Kosmowski a third son named Stanisław. At this point the judges of the Wilno Chapter became involved in negotiations between Kosmowski and his former father-in-law over care for the half-orphan Stanisław and over Barbara's dowry.

On 1 October 1635, Piotr Kwaśnicki came before the court of the Wilno Chapter to enter into the acts a "letter of conciliation" between himself and his wife, as the first party, and his former son-in-law, Andrzej Kosmowski, as the second.⁸⁴ The document had been drawn up and signed almost a year earlier, on 11 November 1634, by "Father Kasper Jasiński, preacher of the Wilno cathedral church, vicar of Świr," to whom the Kwaśnickis and Kosmowski had gone for adjudication. The parties had informed Jasiński that the Lord God had "gathered from this world the aforementioned Mrs. Regina Kwaśnicka Kosmowska, leaving in diapers one descendent, a son named Stanisław, begotten with him, Kosmowski." The two parties had chosen the route of mediation "since they did not wish for themselves legal disputes

⁸² BUJ B, Slav. F. 17, 2r.

⁸³ The descriptions are found at BUJ B, Slav. F. 17, 71r-v, BUJ B, Slav. F. 15, 42v and LMAB, F43–218, 375r-376r locate Skrodzki next door to Kosmowski at St. John Street 44.03.

⁸⁴ It is recorded at LMAB, F43–218, 193r-195r.

from either side, either concerning the costs of the 'upbringing'⁸⁵ of the aforementioned child or the dowry of the deceased." They thus submitted everything to the judge's "decision and amicable resolution, promising from both sides to be content with whatever should be decided in their case."

Father Jasiński's ruling formed the main section of the letter of 11 November 1634. First,

"since Mr. Kosmowski is a widower and has the children of his first wife, Skrodzka, he would not be able to give appropriate upbringing to the aforementioned child yet in diapers, wherefore I determined that it should be kept not with Mr. Kosmowski, but with its grandmother, until the child comes of age."

Second, Jasiński dealt with the matter of Kwaśnicka's dowry and the money already spent by the widower on his son's upbringing. Since "in accordance with natural law, the dowry of the mother passes to her offspring, therefore all the things belonging to the deceased [...] belong to this same child." So that these possessions "not be subject to decay," Jasiński ordered Kosmowski to have them appraised, sell them, and keep the money until the child should come of age.

The "letter of conciliation" contained the inventory of Kwaśnicka's dowry: a small golden chain weighing 15 red złotych, worth 83½ zł; two silver mugs and two silver belts, the first formed of plates, the second a chain of white silver, all of which weighs 3½ *grzywna*; two summer gowns, one azure damask, the other brick-red "Chinese silk"; both well worn, appraised at 100 zł; a cherry-red velvet coat; a violet satin gown; a "Chinese silk" coverlet; a long gown of Venetian mohair, already well worn, appraised at 20 zł.

"And after the conclusion of this compact of mine," wrote judge Jasiński,

"they are not to trouble [*turbować*] or to summon each other to court from either side concerning the aforementioned things under penalties described in the law, after payment of which this letter is nonetheless to remain in force in every court, and the aforementioned goods that are with the parents are not to be dispersed until the child should come of age, who will have access together with the other [children] to the goods of Mr. Kosmowski, as his father."

But the peace held for less than two years before Kosmowski "troubled" his former father-in-law before the same court in the same matter. On 8 August 1636 the "canon prelates and the entire Chapter in the Cathedral Church of St. Stanisław at the Wilno Castle" heard the case "between Andrzej Kosmowski, plaintiff, and Piotr Kwaśnicki, accused, our Wilno burghers belonging to the jurisdiction of the Witold foundation in our cathedral church."⁸⁶ The case had been referred to the court of the highest instance in the Chapter jurisdiction by His Grace, Father Wojciech Żabiński, dean and procurator of the Wilno Chapter. The matter concerned

⁸⁵ *Wychowanie*: the term now means 'education,' but then it also meant something like 'room, board, clothing, and instruction.'

⁸⁶ Their ruling is recorded at LMAB, F43-218, 274r-275r.

“guardianship of a child of the male sex, Stanisław by name, begotten with him, the plaintiff Kosmowski, as the father, by the deceased, Mrs. Regina Kwaśnicka, his spouse and the daughter of the accused, as well as the things inherited from the aforementioned mother belonging to this child.”

The problem was this: Kosmowski, “stubbornly wishing to break the compact,” had called his former father-in-law into court on 1 August 1636, alleging “illegality or forgery [of the first contract],” and Żabiński, not rendering a decision in the matter, had referred it to a full session of the Chapter.

The Chapter first rejected the notion that Father Jasiński had drawn up a contract that was “not in accordance with the Statute of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.” As we see here, the court of the Wilno Catholic Chapter, which in fact behaved entirely like a secular court as it administered justice to its “citizens,” both Catholic and Protestant, saw the Lithuanian Statute as binding, even though those subject to the Chapter were rarely members of the gentry. The fact of the matter was that,

“in view of the person of the reverend Father Jasiński, who had long been *in integra fide* [in blameless credibility] in the preacher’s office and the courts of his burghers, he, Mr. Kosmowski, had received certain things from Mr. Kwaśnicki following [the judge’s ruling] *ad rationem* [according to] the compact expressed in that letter, which in itself would seem to affirm the compact.”

In other words, Kosmowski had at first recognized Jasiński’s authority, and at least part of the exchange of property required by the first “letter of conciliation” had in fact occurred.

Although the judges might have required from Kosmowski the payment of the penalty stipulated in the original contract for “alleging doubt concerning the letter,” they chose to keep the peace by simply reaffirming the contract’s legality, “leaving it in force for all time” and adding to it a “declaration” concerning the care of the infant Stanisław:

“First, since he, Kosmowski, also has other small children begotten with his other wife, the child Stanisław is to remain with Mr. Kwaśnicki, or with Mrs. Kwaśnicka, his grandmother, until ten years, and this to include the time he has lived with them since his birth. And after the passage of ten years, he is to be apprenticed, with the knowledge of his father.”

The court gave both parties two weeks in which to bring the goods and money stipulated in the original contract to the court for registration, “so that, since this is a case involving an orphan, the least thing mentioned in the letter of conciliation not be lost [...] and the child enjoy in the future the things or money left him by his mother.”

Kosmowski would marry again, a certain Agata Tomaszewska, who bore him a daughter Zofia. He had died by 1647, and Agata married one Aleksander Charytonowicz. The judges of the Chapter now assigned legal guardianship of Kosmowski’s eldest sons Jan and Jakub to their maternal grandfather, Wincenty Skrodzki, and of Stanisław to his maternal grand-

father, Piotr Kwaśnicki. Presumably, the child Zofia remained with her mother and stepfather.⁸⁷

The judges may well have acted in accordance with the Lithuanian Statute. They did not appoint legal guardians, in the strict sense of the term, for Kosmowski's children until he died. They simply stepped in to make sure that Stanisław received his mother's "portion," as the law required. But in what was perhaps an unusual move – I have not encountered any others like it – they removed Stanisław from his father's home to the care of his maternal grandparents, and perhaps specifically of the grandmother. This was not guardianship. Children received guardians upon their fathers' death, not their mothers'. The judges may have improvised a little in this case. I do not know why it came to their attention. The jurisdiction was rather small, so perhaps the canons knew something of the private lives of the citizens living under their jurisdiction. Or perhaps Kosmowski and Kwaśnicki took the initiative, coming to Jasiński with a proposed solution to their problem.

Although the details differed slightly across the four main jurisdictions encountered in the streets of Wilno, the concepts of legal age and guardianship played prominent roles in all of them. The Third Lithuanian Statute defined age of majority for boys as 18 and for girls as 13, so it is likely that Kwaśnicki was to remain in control of Stanisław's inheritance for some years after his apprenticeship, and the "ten years" was either a mistake (the scribe wrote "*do lat dziesiętka*" ["until ten years"], when he should have written "*do lat dzieciątka*" ["until the child come of age"]), or it referred only to the age at which Stanisław was to be apprenticed. Assuming Stanisław was born the year of his mother's death (1634), he would now have been about 13 years old and still in need of a guardian according to Lithuanian law.⁸⁸ The fact that his older step-brothers Jan and Jakub still required guardianship suggests that the births of the sons (and the deaths of the mothers) had come in relatively quick succession: three children born to Kosmowski between 1629 at the earliest (18 years before the date of this final decree) and 1634 at the latest (the year of Kwaśnicka's death).

This was a case of pre-emptive intervention. Regina Kwaśnicka's dowry, though modest, suggests that she was not of the poorest: after all, in addition to her clothing, she did possess some articles of value – a little gold, and a little silver. The judges had stepped in to make certain that Stanisław, no

⁸⁷ The court's determination is recorded at LMAB, F43–220, pp. 333–337. It is here we learn the name of Kosmowski's first wife, that of her father, and of Stanisław's older step-brothers.

⁸⁸ See Chapter 6, Article 1 of the Third Lithuanian Statute in: Statut Vjalikaha knjastva Litoŭskaha 1588. Teksty, davednik, komentaryi [The Statue of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, 1588. Texts, Glossary, Commentaries], ed. by IVAN P. ŠAMJAKIN, Minsk 1989, pp. 224–225, and JAN LOHO-SOBOLEWSKI: Prawo opiekuńcze w dawnej Litwie [Guardianship Law in Old Lithuania], Lwów 1937, on the general problem of guardianship in Lithuanian law, p. 21 on this particular issue.

doubt a future tailor or haberdasher, retain his mother's portion as his modest start in life. Kosmowski's objections likely had to do with the legalities of specific aspects of the apportionment, and not with basic principles or with the solution of leaving Stanisław in the care of his maternal grandparents. Hard nosed materialism could certainly coexist with sentimental concerns for a "child yet in diapers." It is interesting to note that the canons thought the infant needed a woman relative to see to his "upbringing," and that they intervened, somewhat paternalistically, to order the domestic affairs of their subjects. Or perhaps they were simply giving the stamp of legality to a solution improvised by the baby's father and grandparents that aimed at making the best private use of what those paternalistic structures had to offer.

2. That I Might Have Provisions in My Old Age

A Wilno "general" (i.e., a "general bailiff" for the nobles' Land and Castle Courts) named Jan Dziblewski owned two houses across the street from each other on "the little side street off Skop Street" (that was how it was described in the sources), at numbers 47.03 and 48.06. Dziblewski had two daughters, both of whom lived in the Skop Street neighborhood together with their husbands. One of them seems to have had a problem marriage. On 20 April 1649 a certain "Mr. Jan Mikołajewicz Szkill, a cobbler," came before the lower instantiation of the Wilno Chapter and "told his tale and plaintively protested" against his wife, "Mrs. Ewa Dziblewszczanka Szkillowa, a cobbler's wife," that she, "the aforementioned Mrs. Szkill, living in discord with her husband, made declarations of vengeance and boasts upon the health of him, her spouse, at various times in the past and at present and has not ceased making them." The main reason for the marital trouble, according to Szkill, was the fact that "he refuses to allow his wife to lead a dissolute life and to maintain debauchery in his dwelling." As a result of his resolute defense of moral values "he has suffered harm to his health at the hands of dissolute loose people known and familiar to her." The last straw for this long-suffering husband had come about a week earlier, on the night of 11 April 1649:

"when people were already quieted in sleep, wishing now to bring to final effect and to execute that evil undertaking and those impious plans of hers, the aforementioned spouse of his, with conscious intent, at her instigation and permission, several people, having broken into his dwelling unexpectedly, wished to slash him, and perhaps even to kill him, such that he was barely able to flee and take refuge."

As is often the case in this forensic genre, syntactic misdirections reflect miscues between a no doubt emotional oral presentation and an overly taxed court notary. Szkill, like so many other plaintiffs, registered his complaint as a first step in potential further litigation.⁸⁹

⁸⁹ His protestation is recorded at LMAB, F43-590, 9r.

Three and a half months later, on 2 August 1649, the frustrated profligate, Mrs. Szkill, appeared before the same capitular canon with her own complaint against her misused husband. The charge was wife-beating:

"The aforementioned Szkill, today, at a morning hour, it could have been 11 by the clock, having come drunk to the house of his aforementioned wife and there in her house, the property of Mrs. Dziblewszczanka, belonging to the jurisdiction of the Wilno Chapter on Skop Street, without any fault on her part, not saying anything to her, just as soon as he had broken in, with conscious intent, did beat her with a staff cruelly and mercilessly about the ears, the head, the shoulders, such that at that very time, in that very hour, the aforementioned plaintiff came [to show] in the Office [i.e., the Chapter Court] the great bruises heavily engorged with blood, and among other signs she showed her left arm, on which arm [she showed] also a wound swollen and flowing all around it with blood and her shoulders and sides all cruelly and mercilessly beaten."

Premeditation – "with conscious intent" – was a familiar legal concept. The phrases "without any fault on her part" and "not saying anything" were also a part of the legal rhetoric of the time. They and variants such as "expecting nothing bad" and "without giving any cause" asserted the innocence of the plaintiff and the unprovoked nature of the crime in question.⁹⁰

By 28 May 1654 (about five years after the mutual protestations discussed above) Ewa Dziblewska seems to have been a single woman, either a widow or an abandoned wife. On that day she returned to the court to register a complaint against sister Dorota and brother-in-law Matiasz Sawaniewski, who, like their father, was a "general of His Royal Majesty."⁹¹ Thirteen days earlier, on 15 May 1654, the Sawaniewskis had entered Jan Dziblewski's will into the *acta* of the Wilno Chapter. Dziblewski had provided for himself a sort of old-age pension and healthcare plan – "so that I might [have] in my old age both provision in viands, as well as clothing and the upkeep of my garments" was how he put it. He did this by willing to Dorota and Matiasz one of his two houses on the little street off Skop Street (the one at 47.03 on the more pungent side of the street nearer the river) and by allowing the couple to live in it while he was still alive in exchange for their continued care of his person. He would be living, after all, right across the street from them at 48.06.⁹²

The will was dated 6 November 1652, about a year and a half before it was entered into the acts. Ewa Dziblewska complained that her sister and brother-in-law had perpetrated a fraud. She may have had a point. It is, in fact, a little

⁹⁰ Her protestation is recorded at LMAB, F43–590, 12v. On the rhetoric of the protestation, see DAVID FRICK: *Słowa uszczypliwe, słowa nieuczciwe. The Language of Litigation and the Ruthenian Polemic*, in: Chrysai pylai, złataja vrata. Essays Presented to Ihor Ševčenko on His Eightieth Birthday by His Colleagues and Students, ed. by PETER SCHREINER and OLGA STRAKHOV (Palaeoslavica, 10/1-2), vol. 1, pp. 122-138.

⁹¹ The document is to be found at LMAB, F43–590, 53v-54r.

⁹² See the will at LMAB, F43–221, 134r-135r.

odd that the will was entered into the acts so long after it was written and witnessed. Jan Dziblewski had died – without a will, in Ewa’s argument – in Wilno “during the pestilential air” at which time Ewa, “fleeing the Lord’s scourge and punishment,” had left the city. From other sources we know that Wilno was “visited” by plague in the fall of 1653.⁹³ Sawaniewski had remained with his father-in-law and – this was the crux of the allegation – used the opportunity to lay claim to his possessions.

The Chapter seems not to have favored Ewa’s claim. She was, however, in possession of a small house in the neighborhood, around the corner from her father’s house on Skop Street proper (49.03).⁹⁴ In fact, their properties likely backed onto each other. Perhaps she had received it from him as a part of her dowry when she married. Her husband Szkill had attributed his wife’s churlishness to the fact that he would not allow any dissolute living in “*his* [emphasis added] residence,” but her subsequent complaint was more forceful on that issue: the event had taken place “in *her* [emphasis added] house, the property of Mrs. Dziblewszczanka.” Part of Dziblewski’s motivation in making Sawaniewski the beneficiary of his will was that “I had promised and bound myself to give 200 Lithuanian k in ready dowry money, which dowry I have not surrendered until this day.” Testators often used deathbed reckonings to set right precisely these sorts of debts. Ewa, so it would seem, had been given a proper dowry when she married; Dorota had to wait until the final dispositions. Perhaps Ewa was the older daughter.

In any event, thirteen days before she made her allegations, on 15 May 1654, the same day Sawaniewski had registered Dziblewski’s will with the higher instantiation of the Wilno Chapter, Ewa Dziblewska also made an appearance before that body to register the sale of her “half a little wooden house” on Skop Street to His Grace, Mr. Jakub Migliński Michalewicz, lieutenant of the Castle of His Majesty the King, and his wife, Mrs. Halszka Tołkaczówna. (The *acta* suggest that Ewa was heard just ahead of her brother-in-law.) The reason she sold the house was certainly lack of funds, but it also had to do with the fact that she had left Wilno the year before to avoid the plague, “wherefore that building had to succumb to ruin and plunder, as it now stands.”⁹⁵

These were not exactly impoverished people. After all, Dziblewski owned two houses and had perhaps settled a third upon his older daughter at the time of her wedding. But the neighborhoods at the foot of the Castles were poor, and the houses in question were quite modest. The building on the river bank at 47.03 in which the Sawaniewskis were to set up house was wooden and

⁹³ LVIA, SA 5099, 246r-247r.

⁹⁴ Ewa’s deed of sale from 1654 (LMAB, F43–221, 132r-133r), which forms the basis of the last part of the story, tells us that her property was previously the property of Ambroży Jankowski, weaver, who in 1636 owned the house at Skop Street 49.03 (BUJ B, Slav. F. 17, 74r).

⁹⁵ LMAB, F43–221, 132r-133r.

contained nothing but “chambers two.” The one across the street at 48.06 where the “general” had expected to spend his last days before the plague took him away was likewise a wooden house of only two chambers, but with a stable for 20 horses (perhaps a requirement for the job). Ewa Szkillowa’s house at Skop Street 49.03 was also wooden, with four chambers, a stable for four horses, and a basement.⁹⁶

“Generals,” although by definition members of the gentry, occupied the lowest reaches of the *szlachta*, and sometimes entered that society only thanks to their office.⁹⁷ They were among the early modern forerunners of the intelligentsia and made their modest livings only thanks to the fact that they were minimally literate. Dziblewski put his care in the hands of his married daughter and her husband (also a “general”), not necessarily because of doubts about Ewa’s reliability, but because he owed a dowry to Dorota. And also because Ewa was now a single woman.

3. So That There Not Be Further Suspicion about Us

At issue finally in Ewa Dziblewska’s case, the reason she was forced to sell her house, was the difficulty single women faced in their attempts to function as heads of households. Society and the courts viewed the situation as unnatural. Single women were not supposed to be heads of households, and even widows faced distinct (if surmountable) challenges. As they made their preparations for the journey to the next world, husbands sought to make provisions for their widows and orphans that would offer them some protection before the law and in society. Such provisions took the form of property and money, as well as guardians and curators to help manage them.

One such case had occurred two houses down from the “half a little wooden house” Ewa Dziblewska sold to Jakub Migliński in 1654. The address was Skop Street 49.05. Twenty-two years earlier, on 12 February 1632, Paweł Kotlik, “wheelwright, burgher of the Moniwid Altar,” had put his name to his last will and testament.⁹⁸ He was in fact literate, at least literate enough to write his own name, if somewhat clumsily, and he had acquired some modest wealth – above all, three little houses, all of them in the poorer neighborhoods of the Chapter and related ecclesiastical jurisdictions clustered around the little branch of the Wilenka at the foot of the Castles. Modest, but still – he had three of them! The purpose of his will was to prevent the occurrence of “all conflicts, disagreements, and discords after my death between my wife, Mrs. Ewa Żórawska, and our children,

⁹⁶ BUJ B, Slav. F. 17, 73v, 74r.

⁹⁷ On the office of the bailiff, see Chapter IV, articles 8-11 of the Third Lithuanian Statute: Statut (cf. footnote 88), pp. 146-149, and ZBIGNIEW GÓRALSKI: *Urzędy i godności w dawnej Polsce* [Offices and Dignities in Old Poland], Warszawa 1988, pp. 224-230.

⁹⁸ The original, with Kotlik’s signature, is to be found at LMAB, F43-26642, 1r-2r.

Adam Kotlik, and other of my friends, kin, neighbors, and relatives, over my poor belongings.” Seeing that “none of my neighbors, kin, or relatives aided or offered succor to me in my needs and afflictions, except for my dear spouse, Mrs. Ewa Żórawska, and having experienced very great respect from her, both during my happy life with her, my spouse, for no little time, as well as great solicitude, labors, and many other acts of kindness during this my present severe illness,” he decided to leave all three houses to her as well as all his moveable property – “that is, silver, pewter, copper, brass, and every sort of domestic implement” – barring from claims upon his property all kin and in-laws.

Unlike Magdeburg law, which allowed spouses to inherit a certain portion of each other’s estates, the Lithuanian Statute that was binding for the nobles’ Land and Castle Courts – and apparently also for the Chapter – made it difficult for husbands and wives to bequeath to each other property in perpetuity. In fact, it was forbidden. Still, couples sometimes sought ways to circumvent the ban. Spouses often left their goods to each other for lifetime use (including usufruct), often with the stipulation that the “lifetime use” (*dożywocie*) would cease if the spouse remarried. Upon the death (or remarriage) of the remaining spouse, the estate would revert to the original property owner’s heirs, frequently to be settled upon a son or some other close male relative.⁹⁹ As we have seen, the Chapter court adhered to the provisions of the Lithuanian Statute, and Kotlik adopted the strategies employed by the nobles. Żórawska was to have the use of her husband’s houses and moveable goods for the duration of her life. During her lifetime their son Adam would have the free right of residence with her, “but only if he were to hold his mother and my spouse in all honor and respect.” Upon her death, the real estate would fall to the son “by natural law.” From this eventual inheritance Adam was to give his sister 200 Lithuanian k, “and she is not to trouble him for a greater sum from this house.” In this case it would seem likely that the father had already provided a dowry for his daughter and did not feel a need to consider her further in his will.

After Żórawska’s death the moveable property was to be “divided evenly” – presumably this meant between the two children – with the exception of “the kettle and the alembic, which are to remain with the houses.” Kettles and alembics were used to produce the beer that the household drank as its normal daily beverage and the vodka, the sale of which in part maintained the household. Such equipment was thus frequently seen as an integral part of the

⁹⁹ On the Polish-Lithuanian practice of *dożywocie*, see *Historia państwa i prawa Polski* [The History of the Polish State and Law]. Vol. I: Do połowy XV wieku [To the Middle of the XV Century], ed. by JULIUSZ BARDACH, Warszawa, 1964, pp. 495-496, and Vol. II: Od połowy XV wieku do r. 1795 [From the Middle of the XV Century to 1795], ed. by ZDZISŁAW KACZMARCZYK and BOGUSŁAW LEŚNODORSKI, Warszawa 1966, p. 282. On inheritance between spouses in Magdeburg law in Poland-Lithuania, see *ibidem*, p. 309.

real estate. Further, upon Żórawska's death two silver belts were to fall to the daughter Anna.

If the son, Adam Kotlik, "should marry and depart this world without heirs," the executors were to sell the houses and to return to his wife – "should he have one" – her dowry. The rest of the money was to go to the Bernardine Fathers, to the Roman Catholic Holy Trinity Church (an important local hospital institution), and to the hospital at the Catholic St. Mary Magdalene, "so that they pray to the Lord God for my soul, that of my wife, and my son." Son-in-law Bartosz Zaręba, it would seem, was to take responsibility for providing for the soul of his own wife, Kotlik's daughter Anna. At the very end of this disposition of goods we learn that son Adam was to receive – apparently immediately upon his father's death – "the workshop of the wheelwright's trade, and also all my gowns and clothes." Kotlik chose two Skop Street neighbors – tailor Jan Kostromski (whose first wife had been one of the "poor maidens" encountered above in section IV) and weaver Ambroży Marcinowicz (in 1636 the owner of the Skop Street house at 49.03 that eventually became the property of Ewa Dziblewska), both also Roman Catholics – to be the executors of his will and guardians of his minor son.

Kotlik's testament offers a few glimpses into the life of what seems to be a caring and well functioning family of some modest means. He thanked his wife for their life together (while making a few complaints by way of comparison about the behavior of the more extended family), and he sought ways to care for her after his death. He made certain that his hard earned, though modest wealth would ultimately pass to his lone male heir, making provisions for that son's professional future in the assumption that he too would become a master of the wheelwright's trade. And he admonished him to "honor and respect" his mother, making a veiled threat that he could be thrown out of the house, should he do otherwise.

Some things went right, others not quite. As we learn from a deed of sale that Kotlik's widow registered in the *acta* of the Wilno Chapter on 11 May 1640 (eight years after her husband's death), Adam Kotlik had indeed become a wheelwright and was in fact married. But he and his brother-in-law, ironsmith Bartosz Zaręba, had abandoned their wives and mother:

"Having deserted me their mother, who is an invalid and has no deliverance from any source, since for several years now I do not leave my chamber, likewise also having abandoned their wives, they have departed the city of Wilno without notice. Being admonished for such a long time by me, and even by Their Graces themselves, the Fathers of the Wilno Chapter, and being soundly showered with letters at no little cost, wandering from place to place around various villages and towns, it is not known where they live, they do not return to us and to the aforementioned house contrary to the will and commandment of Their Graces, and

they do not give and do not wish to give any sign of life to me their mother and wives, or to the Brother officials.”¹⁰⁰

The “Office,” that is to say, the canons of the Wilno Chapter, again took a paternalistic interest in the case, no doubt partially seeing their role as falling somewhere between those of marriage counselors and the marriage police. But they were also functioning as landlords. Żórawska “owned” (i.e., had the right of usufruct of) the house on Skop Street for the duration of her lifetime. But she also paid a kind of rent/tax to the jurisdiction to which the house belonged, in this case to the Wilno Chapter and its Moniwiid Altar. In 1636 the house at Skop Street 49.05 was a wooden structure with “six chambers, a forge, a shed, a basement full of water, a brewery.”¹⁰¹ The house, “especially because it was without a master of the house, [had] quite declined in its structure and fallen into ruin; moreover, it was encumbered with debts by my son, Adam Kotlik.” This situation gave rise to problems for the abandoned women, because “both the Office [i.e., the Chapter] as well as the ‘neighbors’ [i.e., the renters of chambers in the house in question] have great suspicion concerning us, the ‘white sex’ [i.e., women] living in the house without a man and without a master of the house.” And in fact, “we were commanded to sell the house without fail by an official admonition [of the Chapter].” The two women heeded the admonition:

“And thus, seeing to it that there not be further suspicion about us, and that the house not rot to the bitter end and succumb to ruin, whereby the rent would decline for His Grace the Father Priest of the Moniwiid Altar, as well as for Their Graces the Fathers of the Chapter, and we would have lost our source of nourishment, wherefore, unable to maintain this house on our own, to provide for it and to pay the rents, and having such a consent and permission, both from His Grace the Father Priest of the Moniwiid Altar, as well as from Their Graces the Fathers of the Wilno Chapter, we sold this abovementioned house irrevocably and in perpetuity for the removal of debts and for our source of nourishment [...].”

If Lithuanian law made it impossible for husbands to bequeath property to wives in perpetuity, then how – the question naturally arises – were Kotlik’s widow and daughter in a position to sell the house? The deed of sale from which I have been drawing the second part of this narration provides some clues. The two women guaranteed the buyers that

“both we ourselves, in our own names and in those of the aforementioned Adam Kotlik, wheelwright, and Bartosz Zaręba, ironsmith, [who have been] cut off from this house by a decree of Their Graces [the Canons of the Wilno Chapter] on account of their dissolute life, as well as [in the names of] all our neighbors, kin, and relatives, and especially of strangers, are not to, and will not be able to make any hindrance or obstacle in the tenancy of this house.”

¹⁰⁰ The document is recorded at LMAB, F43–218, 380r–381v.

¹⁰¹ BUJ B, Slav. F. 17, 74r.

In other words, the Chapter, as the holder of jurisdiction over this house, saw itself in a position to take title away from the eventual owner, Adam Kotlik, and to give it to his mother, at least to the extent that she now had clear title to transfer ownership to the buyers.

The remainder of the contract contained detailed language about how and in what legal *fora* the sellers undertook to guarantee the clear title of the buyers, Jan Kostromski (one of the witnesses of Kotlik's will) and his second wife, Cecylia Szymakowska, as well as their heirs, to the possession of the house should anyone from the seller's side challenge it. This was the standard legalese of the time, and all wills and deeds of property specifically removed any future claims from "neighbors, kin, relatives, and strangers." But the boilerplate took on more urgency in this case in view of the sellers' somewhat tenuous claim to ownership.

In fact, the sale was never successfully challenged. Tailor Jan Kostromski first appeared in the record as the husband of one of the Skop Street "poor maidens," who, in 1622, received a dowry from a Church sponsored charity. The two first rented a room at Skop Street 49.07. By 1636 Kostromski owned the house at Skop Street 49.08. He and second wife Cecylia Szymakowska moved down the street to the Kotlik house at 49.05 in 1640. Szymakowska would bury Kostromski in 1648 and a second husband, Kazimierz Wiński, by 1652. She spent the years before the Muscovite invasion in August 1655 litigating with tenants and with neighbor Jakub Migliński (the same one who bought Ewa Dziblewska's house in 1654). One plaintiff would accuse Szymakowska of horse thievery. Szymakowska herself would claim noble birth in her litigation with Migliński. In any event, this was apparently a woman to be reckoned with.¹⁰²

Szymakowska bequeathed the Kotlik house to her daughter Justyna Kostromska, who was to marry up and out of the neighborhood. Her husband was a certain Jan Baranowski, a musician in the employ of Palatine of Wilno Jerzy Karol Hlebowicz (d. 1669), and the couple lived among the nobles on Troki Street. Although she seems not to have been a particularly wealthy woman, she was in a position as she drew up her own will in 1696 to name Lord High Steward and Vice Palatine of Wilno Michał Szumski as the guardian for her son Wincenty Baranowski.¹⁰³ It is not clear to me how the Kotlik family story played out, whether the strategy employed by them allowed the widow, daughter, and daughter-in-law to stave off poverty. The Kostromski family story, however, would seem to have been one of modest success for Wilno poor relief.

¹⁰² For some of Szymakowska's litigation, see LMAB, F43-590, 4v, 13v, 27v, 32v, 33v-34r, 36r, 57r, 58v-59r, 59v-60r, 61r, 62v-63v.

¹⁰³ Baranowski's will, which tells us that Justyna had inherited the family house on Skop Street, is found at LVIA, SA 5113, 598r-599r (first version) and LVIA, SA 5339, 273r-275v (second version). For Justyna's will, see LVIA, SA 5342, pp. 1337-1340.

4. Wishing to Have a Place to Nestle My Head in My Old Age

Across Castle Street, more or less at the latitude of Skop Street, was Bernardine Street, which was also under the Chapter jurisdiction. Here, at 53.04 Bernardine Street, lived boilermaker Adam Mikołajewicz. On 17 April 1639 he put his name to a last will and testament, which his widow Zofia Gałuszcanka would bring to be written into the Chapter *acta* on 10 May.¹⁰⁴ He decided to draw up his testament, knowing that

“all things created by God on Earth and man himself [...] are subject to decay, [...] taking care lest wary death catch me unawares, though I am at the moment, by God’s visitation, in weak health, nonetheless with good memory and a sound mind.”

The purpose was the usual one:

“so that after my departure from this world no squabbles and disturbances over my property, both immoveable and moveable, arise between my dearest spouse and my in-laws and kin, as well as my sister Zofia, who is in the state of matrimony with Mikołaj the white-leather tanner.”

He left clear title to – not just lifetime use of – his house on Bernardine Street, together with the household brewery and his boilermaking shop, as well as “pewter, copper, silver, gold, my gowns,” to his “dearest spouse, Zofia Gałuszcanka Adamowa Mikołajewiczowa, for her kind and faithful living with me and her sincere and courteous service, both in health and in my sickness.” He removed his sister as well as all kin and in-laws from any claim, settling his remaining wealth upon Wilno Catholic churches and hospitals, and asking to be buried across the street with the Bernardines. He named two neighbors as executors of his will and as the guardians of his widow: Krzysztof Zyburtowski (Skop Street 49.11) and Stanisław Żurowicz (Mill Street 50.08). Two other neighbors acted as witnesses: organ maker Korneliusz Krapoliusz (just across the street at Bernardine Street 52.03) and tailor Józef Nacewicz (next door at Bernardine Street 53.05).¹⁰⁵

But Zofia Gałuszcanka seems to have been able to look after herself. In fact, the reason Mikołajewicz left the house to her in perpetuity was likely because it was hers in the first place. As we learn from another document of almost ten years later (18 May 1648), Gałuszcanka had been married before.¹⁰⁶ First husband Jan Stefanowicz had also been a boilermaker. Together they had purchased the Bernardine Street house already in 1610. It burned twice – in fact, most of the city burned in 1610, so probably it was destroyed the first time immediately after they bought it – and twice she

¹⁰⁴ Enacted at LMAB, F43–218, 357r–359v.

¹⁰⁵ BUJ B, Slav. F. 17, 74v, 75v, 76r, 77r.

¹⁰⁶ This document, also a deed of property by what turns out to be a single woman, will be the basis of the rest of the story. It is to be found at LMAB, F43–220, pp. 489–493.

would rebuild “at her own no little expense.” After Stefanowicz’s death, together with second boilermaker husband Adam Mikołajewicz, she “annulled the not insignificant debts of my first spouse.” In 1636 her Bernardine Street house was a wooden structure containing “two chambers, one of which with an alcove, a shop, a boilermaker’s forge, brewery, bath, shed for a few horses.”¹⁰⁷

After Mikołajewicz’s death in 1639, Gałuszczanka had the misfortune, or bad judgment, to marry one Waclaw Ambrożejewicz, occupation unknown (at least to me). In any event, by 1648 she was – as her complaint had it –

“in my dotage and already in an advanced age, abandoned by my spouse, Waclaw Ambrożejewicz, who has been living in Mińsk for a few years, and bereft on account of him in all of my poverty, and not having any source of maintenance and succor in my old age.”

Thus, being yet in good health, she began to look for a road to survival for a single woman of some years – for, as she put it, “a place to nestle my head in my old age.”

She did this first by proving clear title to the Bernardine Street house and, second, by removing all claims to it by

“my spouse, Waclaw Ambrożejewicz, his children and kin, who, in my old age, having deprived me of my entire poor pittance, has abandoned me for some years now and does not wish to and does not take any pains for me.”

Her solution was to transfer ownership of the house to a younger couple,

“who throughout all the years nourished me, as a reward for their services and no small expense, which they did for me and do not cease to do, encouraging them to further effort and care for me in my dotage and advanced age, so that, until my death, I might have provision and a place to nestle my head with them, and after my death also the burial of my body with the Bernardine fathers in Wilno next to my dear first husbands.”

The couple and their heirs were to receive clear title and the ability to do with the house what they would – as the boilerplate of the time had it, “to rule and dispose of it as their property and to give, bequeath, sell, exchange it with whom they will, to build, brick, and enjoy all fruits of commerce.” With, of course, the stipulation that the obligatory rents of four k were to be paid to the Chapter “every year, on St. Michael’s, together with the other burghers [of the Chapter].”

The recipients of this largesse – though it was largesse not without conditions: the goal after all, was “to encourage them to further effort and solicitude” – were “noble Mr. Stanisław Pisanka and his lady spouse, Mrs. Anna Ambrożejewiczówna, my niece [on the sister’s side].” Gałuszczanka appeared before the court in 1648 as “Mrs. Zofia Gałustówna Adamowa Mikołajewiczowa, a boilermaker’s wife,” as if denying legal status to that third marriage. She was illiterate. Her witnesses were again her close

¹⁰⁷ BUJ B, Slav. F. 17, 76v.

neighbors, some of them signatories to her second husband's will: Korneliusz Krapoliusz, organmaker from across the street; neighbor from the other side, Józef Nacewicz; and another who signed his name in German and in a German hand as "Ludewichtt Fakinetth," a painter, who owned a house on the other side of Gałuszcanka.¹⁰⁸

5. Upon Whom the Lord God Visited Incomplete Health and Reason

Just across the street from Zofia Gałuszcanka, at Bernardine Street 52.03, lived one Gertruda Szulcówna. She was the wife of our organ maker, Korneliusz Krapoliusz, and mother to four daughters. Although apparently German, the couple was Roman Catholic. Korneliusz, so it would seem, had died either in exile or sometime before the family fled Wilno. In any case, she – "*Orgelbauerin Gertrud Cornelschin*" – figured alone as head of the household among the Vilnans of all confessions who had sought asylum in Lutheran Königsberg during the Muscovite occupation of the city that began in 1655.¹⁰⁹ Szulcówna rebuilt their bricked house on Bernardine Street,

"already being in the widowed state, after the death of my lord spouse, Krapoliusz Korneliusz, after the ruination and burning [of our house] by the enemy Muscovite, at no small cost and with great expense by my own labor."¹¹⁰

Perhaps she was the first to have the house bricked. In 1636 it was still a wooden structure, containing "two chambers, a workshop, a basement, a brewery, a stable for one horse, a second for hay, a shed for six horses."¹¹¹

Szulcówna was a determined woman. She did not remarry, and she would live and conduct her own affairs as a single woman at least until January 1671, when she put her name to her last will and testament. Or rather, she had her legal guardian put his name to it, as she was illiterate. Her entire estate – all that "the Lord God has deigned to give me upon this miserable vale of the world, from the labor of my hands and bloody sweat" – was the "little bricked house" on Bernardine Street, together with a few household furnishings, including the beer kettle in the brewery, some linens, and some clothing. It was difficult – as we know from the cases of Ewa Dziblewska, Ewa Kotlikowa, and Zofia Mikołajewiczowa – for a single woman to manage a household. And yet, many widows did just that, surviving, some indeed prospering, for many years. Szulcówna was one of them.

¹⁰⁸ LMAB, F43–220, 249–250.

¹⁰⁹ Geheimes Staatsarchiv, Preußischer Kulturbesitz [Berlin-Dahlem, GStA PK] XX HA EM 111k., Nr. 104, 87v; PAUL KARGE: Zur Geschichte des Deutschtums in Wilna und Kauen, in: Das Litauen-Buch. Eine Auslese aus der Zeitung der 10. Armee, 1918, pp. 94–105, here: p. 101.

¹¹⁰ See her last will and testament at LMAB, F43–223, 118r–119r.

¹¹¹ BUJ B, Slav. F. 17, 76r.

As was customary and foreseen by the Lithuanian Statute, Szulcówna named guardians for her daughters. Three of them had been married, and two of them were still in the company of their husbands. Perhaps the third had been widowed or abandoned by 1671. Szulcówna left her entire estate

“to my dearest four daughters, by name, Mrs. Anna Gramel, Miss Elżbieta, Mrs. Katarzyna wife of Tusyn, Mrs. Zuzanna wife of Antoni, on account of their well-disposed and faithful attendance, for their exertions and diligent care during my illness.”

In fact, the married daughters would not have had to receive legal guardians other than their husbands, the “natural guardians” of married women.¹¹² Szulcówna saw her married daughters and their husbands as informal guardians of the unmarried daughter. Her intent was that the legal guardians exercise a kind of check on the behavior of her daughters and sons-in-law.

The beer kettle formed an integral part of the real estate and was to be sold with the house, which Szulcówna thought might fetch in the neighborhood of 2,000 zł. The three married daughters had all received dowries and were thus to be contented each with one fifth of the proceeds. Not only had “Miss Elżbieta” not married, but “the Lord God had visited upon [her] incomplete health and reason.” Still, she too seems to have ministered, as she was able, to her mother’s needs in her final illness. In any event, her mother included her along with the other daughters in her words of gratitude. Many of the provisions of the will were crafted to provide care for Elżbieta for the rest of her life.

Szulcówna entrusted her daughter “to the guardianship above all of the Lord God, and then of her other sisters and Their Lords, the guardians.” In lieu of a dowry, “Miss Halszka” – from this point forward Szulcówna used the diminutive form of Elżbieta in referring to her daughter – was to receive 300 zł, plus the 50 zł given her by her godmother (and apparently held in trust by her mother up to that point). In addition, she was to receive two fifths of the proceeds from the sale of the house, “so that she might be able to have her subsistence from this.” The linens and clothing, “all of this of my own good will, remembering her infirmity [*niedoleżność*], I grant and bequeath to my daughter Halszka.” The inventory was short but specific:

¹¹² On the guardianship of married women, see LOHO-SOBOLEWSKI (cf. footnote 88), pp. 143-144. He wrote, somewhat contradictorily: “Married women were not subject to guardianship in the strict sense; for them guardianship was the power of their husbands. We were unable to find in Lithuanian legislation and practice that a husband would act as a *tutor coniugalis* in relation to his wife, which was the case in Crown law.” I do find, at least in the *acta* of the Wilno Magistracy, that a husband was often seen as the “natural guardian” (*opiekun przyrodzony*) of his wife and would take on the role of her legal “curator.” See, for example the 1663 letter of *arenda* for the Wilno Lesser Exchange (*Mała Gielda*) in which one of the owners, Regina Migurzanka, wife of Bazyli Fiedorowicz, appeared before the court “with the presence of that same husband as her natural guardian” (LVIA, SA 5102, 134r).

"old bedclothes, namely ten pillows, two old featherbeds, with covers and coverlets, twenty skeins of yarn, four sashes, four hand towels, four sheets, three of them with lace and one without lace, four shirts and all the other white linens, an old turquoise dress, a cherry-red woolen undercoat lined with old fox fur, an old black camlet petticoat and an old, unlined camlet undercoat, an old, black, half-velvet cap with marten-fur edgings."

"Miss Halszka, the poor orphan," was "to be done no harm." The guardians were to see to it that "every year Miss Halszka was to receive 'provision' [food] and clothing from these several hundred zlotys." When the linens and clothing bequeathed to her by her mother "should become tattered," then the older son-in-law, Mr. Gramel, was to provide new garments out of the principal sum.

Szulcówna's circle of "friends" included one influential German Catholic: burgomaster Mikołaj Rychter, who would appear in German circles, both Catholic and Protestant.¹¹³ He signed the testament in her stead (since she was illiterate), and he was one of the witnesses of the document. Probably, he was also one of the guardians, although the promised list of those individuals does not appear in the acts. Szulcówna would ask to be buried in the Bernardine cemetery on which her property abutted. Perhaps her family, like the "Ludewichtt Fakineth," who had placed his German signature next to that of Krapoliusz in witnessing Gałuszczanka's deed, was drawn by the congregation of German Catholics at the Bernardines' nearby church of Saint Anne.¹¹⁴

6. Together with Pauperibusses

The truly impoverished do not frequently appear in our sources, even if the strategies for addressing poverty that we can identify may have given us some insight into their lives. I offer one last story of one poor fellow fending for himself. This part of his career strikes me as evocative of the fluidity – within certain well limited bounds – in confessional identities in Wilno, of the tensions that arose in such a mixed place, and of the pressures exerted, here at the lowest level of society, to conform to what was becoming the Catholic norm.

During the confessional unrest in 1640-1641, students of the Jesuit Academy rioted against the Calvinist church, and a certain Fiedorek Andrzejewicz ("Little Theodore, son of Andrew") was taken into custody and interrogated. The name points to "Greek" (Uniate or Orthodox, probably the

¹¹³ He seems not to have been a convert: his name is missing from the rolls of Lutheran offering givers. And yet, in 1647, we find his name next to Lutherans and Calvinists as witness of the testament of a Lutheran woman, Anna Jodkiewiczówna, wife of Hanus Meler, white-leather tanner (a Lutheran specialty in Wilno), who lived just across the little branch of the Wilenka from Szulcówna (LVIA, SA 5361, 234r).

¹¹⁴ A later (probably nineteenth-century) copy of a funeral record for German Catholics at St. Anne's beginning in 1668 is to be found at LVIA, 604.10.2.

latter) origins, but this is nowhere made an explicit part of the record. Fiedorek told his interrogators:

"I hail from Słowieńsk, born of father Andrzej Stefanowicz and mother Elżbieta Stefanowiczowa, and I am 15 years of age. I have been here in Wilno for four years, during which time I have been going to school, partly in the parish school [i.e., the Jesuit Academy], partly in the dis-Uniate [i.e., Greek Orthodox] Holy Spirit school, and for the last four weeks now in the Castle school [the bishop's Catholic school]. And when the *bursa pauperibusses*¹¹⁵ [i.e., the poor pupils living in church-sponsored dormitories, on Skop Street, 45.06 and 45.07] from the Castle school and from the parish school of St. John [the Jesuit Academy] went to tear down the Calvinist church, I was there with them, but I do not know how any of them are called by given and family names, and I am unable to name them, although I would recognize them."

A certain Nikifor (probably also, judging by his name, a Ruthenian), who was the gatekeeper at the Rudniki Gate (the main entrance to the city from the south, and the mouth of the "Royal Way" from outside the city to the Castle hill), was then summoned to give testimony concerning Fiedorek:

"The aforementioned Fiedorek Andrzejewicz came to the gate for several nights and there, together with *pauperibusses*, would pass the night by himself in the gate; but for several weeks now, since he began to go to the Castle school, he hasn't come back anymore."¹¹⁶

And if he had not been caught up in the events of 1640-1641, we would know nothing of his strategies for survival, which seem to have included – from age 11! – sleeping in one of the city gates and trying out the *bursae* of the schools of Wilno's various confessions.

VI. Topographies of Poverty and Poor Relief

Brian Pullan has offered one formulation of the "standard questions" that invite answers in "any analysis of poor relief in any early modern European society." They include:

- the motives for providing poor relief
- the means by which poor relief was to effect social improvement
- the extent to which it was to bring spiritual benefits to the giver and to the recipient of alms
- the extent to which poor relief was administered discriminately
- the extent to which poor relief was the concern of churchmen versus laymen
- the relationship between state action and private initiative.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ In this source the word "*pauperibus*" (the Latin ablative of "pauper") was treated as a Polish nominative, to which normal Polish inflections were added: "*z pauperibusami*."

¹¹⁶ LNMB, F93-1701, 1r.

¹¹⁷ PULLAN: *Rich and Poor* (cf. footnote 4), pp. 630-631.

The consensus of the last decades of research has been that the expected differences along confessional lines do not appear in practice. We do not find, to use extreme formulations, indiscriminate, individual alms giving in Catholic societies, more for the salvation of the almsgiver than for the good of the poor, "organized" (however loosely) by Church institutions; nor do we find that rationalized, centralized poor relief, organized by the state or municipality for the good of the poor and of society was a monopoly of Protestant communities. As Pullan put it, generalizing upon his conclusions on Venetian poor relief:

"General attitudes to the poor were often determined by a rather similar mixture of pity and fear, of genuine humanity and brutal paternalism, and by a similar determination to eliminate criminals and social parasites – whether a given society had remained Catholic, or whether it had severed its allegiance to Rome."¹¹⁸

Still, one senses already in Pullan's discussion of Venice a reluctance to abandon all notion of confessional particularity, and five years later, in a short study devoted to Catholic poor relief, he was phrasing the same idea more cautiously: "the conclusions of every local study are *clouded by the suspicion* [emphasis added] that its people were acting, not as Catholics, but as Parisians, or Lyonnais, or Venetians."¹¹⁹ Here he noted some important differences (Protestant societies did not include pilgrims among recipients of alms, for instance), and, in a cautious revision of the currently accepted revisionism, he returned to the traditional "hoary question," rephrasing it, more provocatively than hitherto, as a strong suspicion about Catholic particularity:

"Can we find in Protestant Europe – and before the days of General Booth – a situation in which the practice of mercy becomes a tactic at once in a personal quest for Christ and a war against sin, a campaign for the conquest of souls conducted by lay brotherhoods and sisterhoods, clerically inspired and bent on self-sanctification through the salvation of others in the greatest possible numbers?"

As Pullan has suggested: Protestant cities sometimes transformed monasteries into hospitals and redirected their budgets for charitable uses, whereas Catholic cities "extended monasticism and imposed it upon the poor."¹²⁰ Catholic attitudes toward good works could easily be incorporated into "rationalized" systems for the delivery of poor relief: giving to the *Monti di Pietà* of Renaissance Venice not only made for more effective care of the impoverished; it also maximized the "store of merit" accumulated by the almsgiver.¹²¹

¹¹⁸ Ibidem, p. 638.

¹¹⁹ PULLAN: Catholics and the Poor (cf. footnote 4), p. 26.

¹²⁰ Ibidem, pp. 26, 34, 32.

¹²¹ PULLAN: Rich and Poor (cf. footnote 4), p. 460.

To what extent can we answer questions like these for early modern Wilno? Our assessment will be linked in intricate ways with the still open question of the nature of seventeenth-century Wilno society (or societies). The materials gathered here offer some pieces of the puzzle, and a consideration of poor relief may help us come closer to a picture of how this multi-confessional city functioned. I have organized my final comments around topics associated with topographies of poverty and poor relief.

1. Marginalization of poverty

Early modern cities did not have the sorts of social zoning that characterize their modern counterparts.¹²² Nonetheless, a German visitor to Wilno in 1585 noted that in this city, then still largely wooden, two “more fashionable streets or ways” formed a notable exception: the houses there were mostly bricked, and prosperous German Lutheran merchants inhabited them.¹²³ The streets in question were likely Castle Street and German Street. Fifty years later the city was largely bricked, but those two centrally located streets, both leading to the Town Hall, remained the location of some of the largest and most opulent townhouses.

Conversely, poor people tended to crowd the smaller, usually wooden structures just inside the city walls and in the suburbs. In Wilno, as elsewhere, we find these poorer settlements clustered under the Royal Castles, in Skop and Bernardine Streets under the jurisdiction of the Roman Catholic Chapter, but also across the little branch of the Wilenka from them. And not only here in the Antokol and Szerejkiszki suburbs. Occasional stories in the Magistracy court documents give the impression of similar penury and squalor in *Zarzecz* (“Transfluvia”) and in the suburbs outside the other town gates where some of the lowlier and dirtier trades had concentrated. Indeed, in some instances practitioners of those trades (e.g. butchers) had been banned to those locations from within the city walls.¹²⁴ In other cases, some of the dirtier trades gravitated naturally to the banks of the Wilenka on the northern edge of the city and the Wilia to the north and west, the waters of which they

¹²² In general on the topography of poverty, see JÜTTE (cf. footnote 4), pp. 58–67.

¹²³ See the travelogue of Samuel Kiechel, citizen of Ulm, who stopped in Wilno for eleven days at the beginning of a four-year journey to the Holy Lands. Published in: *Die Reisen des Samuel Kiechel. Aus drei Handschriften*, ed. by K.D. HARSZLER, Stuttgart 1866 (Bibliothek des Litterarischen Vereins in Stuttgart, 86). The quote is to be found in EDMUND KLINKOWSKI: *Grodno, Wilna und das Posener Land in einem Reisebericht vom Jahre 1586*, in: *Deutsche wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift für Polen* 30 (1936), pp. 133–138, here: p. 135.

¹²⁴ In 1667 as a result of litigation between Christian and Jewish butchers, the Lithuanian Tribunal banned all slaughtering of animals from within the walls to a place beyond the Troki Gate. See AVAK [1901] 28, p. 412.

dirtied through their work (furriers, tanners, paper makers).¹²⁵ These areas were still mostly wooden at the end of the seventeenth century.

2. Verticalization of poverty

But in addition to finding a home on the margins, in early modern cities poverty often lived side by side with wealth. Or rather above and below wealth, in attics and in basements, perhaps also in courtyard outbuildings and in little rooms off gates to houses. This was likely the case in Wilno as well, although this aspect is difficult to document. We frequently know the names of individual house owners, and we can put together minimal genealogies and sometimes follow the succession of ownership in given neighborhoods, forming impressions of social status and wealth. But we seldom meet the “neighbors” (*sąsiedzi*), the largely anonymous renters of lodgings in a given house.

One rare, practically unique document allows me to inhabit a house with those “neighbors.” The *Revision* of 1636 had given only a physical description. This was the large house of Jarosz Jabłko, apothecary, at Castle Street 1.37, in other words, an address on one of Wilno’s “more fashionable streets or ways.” Jabłko’s neighbors at Castle Street 1.38 were the sons of Mikołaj Krzysztof Radziwiłł (“the Orphan”): in 1636 castellan of Wilno, Prince Albrycht Władysław Radziwiłł (d. 1636), and in 1639 his brother, grand marshal of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, Prince Aleksander Ludwik Radziwiłł (d. 1654). After Jarosz’s death, the house became the property of his daughter Cecylia and her husband, cannon founder Joannes Brentell. A survey of the property done on 9 March 1652 and entered into the acts of the Wilno Magistracy tells us something about the “neighbors”:

“First, facing the street, an apothecary’s shop with a little chamber, from which the yearly rent brings 80 florins. The payment year begins from the Ruthenian Shrovetide.

Facing the street, a vaulted tavern chamber with a brewery, an apartment, and a basement, from which dwellings there comes 100 Polish zł in rent. The payment year begins on the Roman Candlemas.

A basement from the street side, for rent, from which 50 zł.

A vaulted chamber, in which a tailor lives, gives in rent 30 złotych. The year begins on the Roman Shrove Tuesday.

An empty shop for rent.

An empty second-story dwelling for guests, 10 florins per week.

¹²⁵ For a topography of the Wilno professions and guilds, see JÓZEF MORZY: *Geneza i rozwój cechów wileńskich do końca XVII w.* [Genesis and Development of the Wilno Guilds to the End of the XVII Century], in: *Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu im. Adama Mickiewicza w Poznaniu*. Historia 4 (1959), pp. 3-93, here: pp. 47-48.

A little chamber in front of the kitchen, where the gate-keeper lives; gives 12½ zł. The year begins with Christmas.

A chamber with an apartment on the second floor, where a furrier lives, pays 30 zł in rent. The year begins a week after the feast of SS. Simon and Jude.

A chamber with an apartment, where a baker lives, likewise pays 30 zł. The year begins in Advent in December, three weeks before Christmas.

A chamber with a recess, where an embroiderer lives, pays 30 zł. The year for the payment of rent begins with the feast of SS. Simon and Jude.

A little chamber in the back is vacant.

A chamber in which a cobbler lives, from which he pays rent of 30 zł. The year begins with the feast of St. Mary Magdalene.

A chamber where a tailor's widow lives, pays 17½ Polish zł. The rental year begins with the feast of St. Mary Magdalene.

In the back a chamber for rent, from which 30 zł in rent is to come.

In the back, a ruined chamber."¹²⁶

This survey tells us three important things. First, the chamber, sometimes with an adjacent alcove (*komora*), vestibule (*sień*), perhaps a kitchen, functioned as the core dwelling space for a family unit, and each might be occupied by a different family. Second, the professions of the neighbors – and thus also their wealth and social status – might cover a wide range. Third, the renters might be of various confessions: how else are we to interpret the fact that as late as 1652 rents in this particular house came due on two different calendars?

Another document makes this last phenomenon absolutely clear. In response to allegations in 1646 that – in spite of the ban placed upon them in 1641 – the Calvinists were continuing to meet and to hold religious services and synods at their old seat within in the city walls, officials canvassed the neighbors to discover what they had seen and heard:

"And first of all, when Mr. Daniel Hanke, a citizen and merchant of Wilno, was questioned, he testified *sub conscientia* [by his faith] that here, where we have been living for several years, there have never been any church services or congresses or commotions. Then we went to a weaver by the name of Jan Tum, a German, and we asked him about the above mentioned things. And he also testified by his word that he and his journeymen had neither seen nor heard any of those things. Then we went to a tailor by the name of Hendrych Heyn, asking him whether any congresses or church services of the Evangelical religion had taken place since the above mentioned time. He too testified by his word that there had never been any of the aforementioned things. Then we went to a second weaver by the name of Piotr Kant. He too witnessed by his word the same as the others. Finally we went to Iwan Bielski, tailor, also living there in the very gate to the

¹²⁶ "Description of the house of the now deceased Jarosz Jabłko, apothecary, 9 March 1652, currently owned by daughter Cecylia Jabłkówna and husband Joannes Brentell, cannon founder to His Royal Majesty," LVIA, SA 5096, 590v-591r.

estate, and he testified to the same thing by his word – that there had been neither commotions, nor any sort of congresses, nor Evangelical church services. All the above-mentioned artisans are citizens of Wilno and guild members, some of the Catholic religion, some of the Saxon, others of the Ruthenian Uniate religion.”¹²⁷

This is a unique document, in that it identifies the citizens of Wilno by their confession; it is obvious to what end the investigators made an exception to the rule in this instance. The document suggests that other dwellings may have been similarly mixed.

But even when we do encounter the “neighbors” in the extant sources, it is difficult to form an impression of their wealth. Still, protestations involving owners and “neighbors,” some of them containing quite drastic descriptions of violent acts and allegations of witchcraft and other deviant behavior, may lend some credence to the suspicion that relatively affluent owners of buildings lived cheek by jowl with poorer renters, whom they occasionally sought to remove from their buildings by going to court. After all, an apothecary, a tailor, a tailor’s widow, a baker, a cobbler, an embroiderer, and a furrier were all living in rented chambers next to a house owned by Radziwiłł princes, both important dignitaries of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, and – most importantly – in which they both resided while in Wilno.¹²⁸

3. “Pillarization” of poor relief

In examining poor relief, among other issues, Joke Spaans has argued that the “pillarization” (*verzuiling*) that occurred in Holland in the nineteenth century – the division of society into separate, self-governing communities peacefully co-existing side by side – offers clues to understanding Dutch religious toleration in the seventeenth century.¹²⁹ She points to two main facets of life in the Republic. First, the highly decentralized nature of that state: “Arrangements were concluded at a local, rather than a central, level.” Second, the fact that the Dutch Reformed Church “probably never encompassed a clear majority of the population,” which made it “an ambiguous partner of the political power in the construction of a confessional state.” The result, she argues, was “a society that was free and ordered.” Spaans comes to the conclusion “that it was not Erasmian tolerance or magisterial laxity” – the two parameters that had shaped the discussion in the past – “that produced public recognition and relative freedom for dissident groups”; rather, the main cause was “a rather strict disciplinarian regime and a considerable amount of

¹²⁷ From the “Official Report” (*Kwit relacyjny*) of “generals” Stefan Gromacki and Krzysztof Towżyn, found in LNMB, F93–1714, 3r-v.

¹²⁸ BUJ B, Slav. F. 17, 10r; BUJ B, Slav. F. 15, 6r.

¹²⁹ JOKE SPAANS: Religious Policies in the Seventeenth-Century Dutch Republic, in: Calvinism and Religious Toleration in the Dutch Golden Age, ed. by RONNIE PO-CHIA HSIA and HENK VAN NIEROP, Cambridge 2002, pp. 72-86, here: pp. 85-86.

social engineering.” As Ronnie Hsia notes in his appreciation of Spaan’s essay:

“This genius in mapping social topography ensured that religious and civil identities were anchored in separate spaces, which allowed for a nuanced articulation of the individual, the communal, and the civil in different representations.”¹³⁰

To what extent does this model fit conditions in the multi-confessional Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth – a state characterized by multiple nodes of authority, and late and incomplete confessionalization? Was the coexistence of the religions in seventeenth-century Wilno founded upon similar principles? How much of their poor relief did Vilnans build upon confessionally delimited pillars?

Centralized forms of poor relief in seventeenth-century Wilno, such as those delivered by the Beggars’ Corporation and by the guilds, were not founded on such notions. These sodalities brought together all of Christian Wilno, or at least that is what their statute indicates. In all other regards, the statute of the Beggars’ Corporation resembles other “Catholic” plans for centralized, rationalized poor relief: begging, and individual alms giving, were limited, but not entirely banned; pilgrims might be included as recipients of aid; able-bodied men were excluded and put to work; a beggars’ altar was established in a Catholic church.

Church-related poor relief would naturally tend toward parallel structures separated by confession, and there are many indications that priests and pastors sought to use hospitals and other eleemosynary programs as confessionalizing tools. But there are also indications that these goals were difficult to achieve and that they were not necessarily the goals of all involved (perhaps not even of all the clergy involved) with these institutions. The Calvinist synod of 1642 had to call for a purge of non-Calvinist residents of their newly relocated Wilno hospital. This was just two years after the Wilno Calvinists had been banned from within the walls and forced to reestablish their church, school, and hospital just outside the walls. We may wonder how successful the clergy was in its attempts to distinguish the sheep from the goats among the poor “Calvinist” widows. Catholic and Uniate hospitals were at least partially administered by the Magistracy, and we know of at least one instance when a Lutheran merchant was overseeing one of the more important Catholic poor houses. Lutheran merchants gave to Catholic hospitals not only out of charity and the desire that the poor pray for their souls, but also so that “the poor people of [the Lutheran] confession might find refuge [there].”¹³¹

¹³⁰ RONNIE PO-CHIA HSIA: Introduction, in: *Calvinism and Religious Toleration* (cf. footnote 129), pp. 1-7, here: pp. 3-4.

¹³¹ Uniate metropolitan of Kiev Antoni Sielawa conducted a similar purge of the hospital at the Uniate cathedral Church of the Most Pure [Virgin] in 1652, although its goal was to weed out able-bodied malingerers, and not, for instance, the crypto-Orthodox. See AVAK 20 [1893], pp. 358-359.

All the confessions also organized *bursae* for poor students, although the Catholic institutions were likely the most numerous and best endowed. Catholics and Lutherans established, under the rubric of the *Mons Pietatis*, banks to lend at modest interest to poor parishioners,¹³² and the other confessions provided similar services, if under different names, through their confraternities. Presumably, most borrowers were expected to be parishioners of the church administering the loan, but there may have been exceptions here.

The attitudes of Orthodox and Uniate Vilnans toward poverty and charity remain especially elusive. According to tradition, the Orthodox of Muscovy did not stigmatize the poor, and they viewed charity as a purely voluntary and private matter, with time in overt opposition to Western – Protestant, but also Catholic – approaches.¹³³ It is unclear to what extent this opposition functioned in the minds of Ruthenian Vilnans. But even if such attitudes were a part of local Ruthenian identity, and this cannot be ruled out at present, we may certainly suspect that in this matter, as in so many others, the Uniates at Holy Trinity and the Orthodox at Holy Spirit were busy emulating and competing with each other and with their Catholic and Protestant neighbors.

Jewish institutions largely paralleled the Christian ones. The hospital or *hekdesch* was similarly both a poor house and a place to care for the sick. Like their Christian counterparts, they were part religious institutions, part secular, administered by overseers called *gabbaim* appointed by the *kahal*. Polish-Lithuanian Jews formed funeral brotherhoods (*chevrot kadisha*) and charitable brotherhoods (*chevrot tsedaka*). They laid down rules for the behavior of Jewish beggars, and they established societies for endowing impoverished Jewish brides.¹³⁴ In addition to reflecting the attitudes of the Jewish community toward poverty and charity, these institutions also served to deter, for example, poor Jewish girls from converting to Roman Catholicism in exchange for an alm or a “dowry” (with or without a Gentile husband).

¹³² Jesuit Piotr Skarga, a chief architect of the Union of Brest and the Polish-Lithuanian Counter-Reformation, had founded the Wilno *Mons Pietatis* in 1579. See KURCZEWSKI: Biskupstwo wileńskie (cf. footnote 5), p. 367. Maciej Vorbek Lettow (father of Lutheran memoirist and doctor to King Władysław IV) had founded in the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century a *Mons Pietatis* at the local Lutheran church. See MACIEJ VORBEB LETTOW: Skarbnica pamięci. Pamiętnik lekarza króla Władysława IV [Treasure House of Memory. The Memoir of a Doctor of King Władysław IV], ed. by EWA GALOS et al., Wrocław 1968, pp. 91-94.

¹³³ See especially the first two chapters of ADELE LINDENMEYR: Poverty Is Not a Vice. Charity, Society, and the State in Imperial Russia, Princeton 1996, pp. 7-47.

¹³⁴ HORN (cf. footnote 9), pp. 48-52; CYGIELMAN (cf. footnote 9), pp. 74-76, 252-257. On the larger issue of parallels in the structures of charitable institutions across the Christian confessions and between Christian and Jewish societies, see CHRISTOPHE VON WERDT: Religion und Armenfürsorge. Gemeinsamkeiten jüdischer, katholischer und orthodoxer Bruderschaften im Polen-Litauen der Frühen Neuzeit, in: Juden und Armut in Mittel- und Osteuropa, ed. by STEFI JERSCH-WENZEL, Köln u.a. 2000, pp. 91-107.

The *Mons Pietatis* first grew up as a reaction to, and in competition with, Jewish bankers to whom poor Christians sometimes turned in need.¹³⁵ I have found no contemporary Wilno voices on this question. Still, it is possible that the various Christian loan funds we encounter in seventeenth-century Wilno arose in similar circumstances. In any event, Christian wills and testaments indicate that Jews and Christians held goods in pawn for each other (in both directions!), and they suggest that this kind of Jewish-Christian lending may have played some role in individual attempts to provide for economic survival, perhaps in both communities.¹³⁶

In all communities – including here the Tatars¹³⁷ – it is likely that the most important type of poor relief, at least at the practical level, was of the thoroughly decentralized self-help sort. Most studies of poor relief have not included “improvised poor relief” in their analyses. (Jütte’s *Poverty and Deviance* [cf. footnote 4] remains an important exception here.) I see no reason to exclude these sorts of personal retirement accounts and private health care funds from the context of the *Montes Pietatis*, guild boxes, and other more institutionalized delivery systems. I would guess that many Vilnans sought to make use of as many sources as possible in time of need. A larger assessment of self-help stories may lead us to hints about different attitudes toward the giving and receiving of alms across the confessions and cultures. These stories become all the more valuable given the paucity of sources revealing debates on these issues in early modern Wilno.

Improvised poor relief is one context in which to assess to what extent the relatively peaceful coexistence among the confessions and religions in Wilno was founded upon something like pillarization. The first five stories about self-help I chose to recount here came from two related neighborhoods under one jurisdiction. More importantly they played themselves out in a set of interrelated human networks, all of which seem to have been nearly exclusively Roman Catholic. Other such stories could be situated in nearly exclusively Lutheran, Calvinist, Orthodox, and Uniate networks. This might suggest a pillarized society, and there are good reasons to suspect that this aspect was one important facilitator of religious toleration in Wilno.

But there were also many networks (and neighborhoods) built across confessional lines. Uniates and Orthodox shared a neighborhood around

¹³⁵ On Jewish money lending in competition with the *Monti di Pietà* in Venice, see PULLAN: Catholics and the Poor (cf. footnote 4), pp. 431–621.

¹³⁶ Christian-Jewish pawning and borrowing, judging by testaments and inventories, seems to have been most intense among the middle-tier Lutherans of Glass Street who shared the neighborhood with the Jews. Perhaps this fact played a role in the establishment of what was originally a Franciscan institution, the *Mons Pietatis*, under that name in the local Lutheran church.

¹³⁷ ZAKRZEWSKI (cf. footnote 9), pp. 102–105. The Tatar testaments printed in AVAK 31 (1906) give a sense of the extent to which Lithuanian Tatars had adapted to Polish-Lithuanian legal rhetoric, and of their strategies for caring for the living at the time of death.

Subocz Street and elsewhere, and they frequently intermarried and looked to each other for guardians and executors of wills. Lutherans and Calvinists lived across from each other on upper Castle Street, intermarried, and choose each other as godparents and guardians. And other even less expected coalitions (e.g., Orthodox-Lutheran) are to be found. Surprisingly frequent – and here is where we may eventually be able to do some quantifying – were the appearances of non-Catholic godparents at the baptisms at Wilno's Roman Catholic parish Church of St. John (and the parents of the babies in question were both Catholic in most cases). Even Jews may have been tempted to look across boundaries of religion in their attempts to help themselves. At least that is the inference I draw from a decree of the Holy Community of Cracow (Kazimierz) that “if a person desire to appoint gentile guardians [*apotropsim*], he must be opposed and all possible punishments applied [...]”¹³⁸

So yes, Vilnans congregated and organized their self-help around pillars. But they also formed constellations of pillars, some more frequently and easily than others, but all combinations were possible. Godparenthood – and here we reach another topic – was not only, perhaps not primarily, about religious upbringing: it was also about forming networks of people in a “relation of formal amity” who could be called upon in time of need.¹³⁹ Wilno's religious toleration depended upon the willingness of confession-specific communities and networks to live peaceful lives in parallel; but it also stemmed from the willingness of families and individuals to look beyond confessional limits for aid to material and physical well-being, and from the willingness of those asked for help by people of another confession to provide it. Quantification will never be possible and is not really the point. Decisive for the establishment of the rules of the game was the very fact that some significant number of Vilnans crossed confessional boundaries in conducting such varied aspects of life's business, and that this behavior, noted by others without comment, was accepted as something normal.

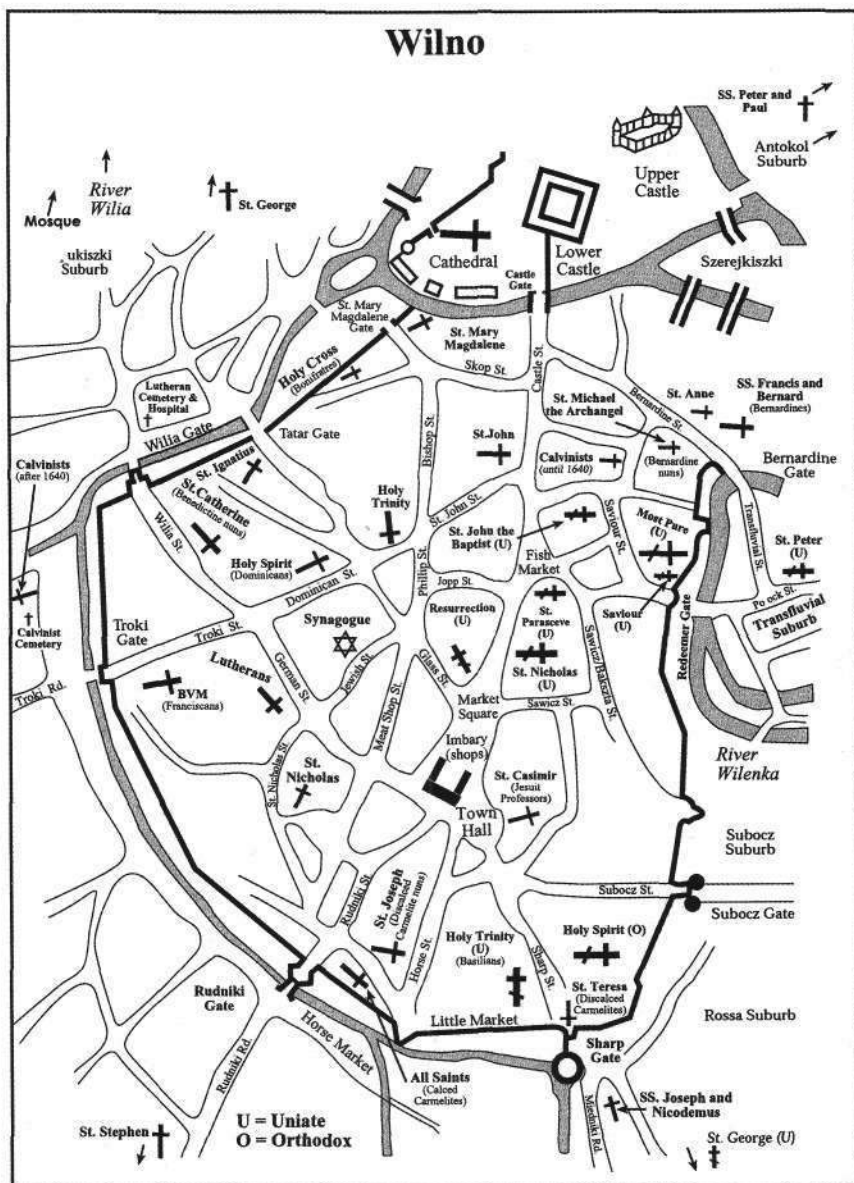
This should not cause us to be blind – to return now to Pullan's “cloud of suspicions” – to possible differences, subtle or not, in the expectations of individuals and confessional communities about the social and spiritual goals of poor relief, even if all made use of the same institutions and strategies. A more systematic evaluation of last wills and testaments may shed further light on this issue. Is it only coincidence that the two cases of “indiscriminate almsgiving” I have come upon – to all “the poor who lie about the streets and beg for money”¹⁴⁰ – are found in the wills of Roman Catholic Vilnans? Still,

¹³⁸ CYGIELMAN (cf. footnote 9), p. 69.

¹³⁹ JOHN BOSSY: Godparenthood. The Fortunes of a Social Institution in Early Modern Christianity, in: Religion and Society in Early Modern Europe, 1500-1800, ed. by KASPAR VON GREYERZ, London 1984, pp. 194-201, here: p. 197.

¹⁴⁰ See above, footnote 50. Also the will of Catholic burgomaster and royal secretary Stefan Karaś at LVIA, SA 5339, 17r-21r.

when Lutheran Andrzej von Embden gave to the Catholic hospital in Antokol, we have to ask whether he was only acting as a patron of Lutheran paupers. Or was he building a better civil society? Or did he harbor some expectation of salvation, his own and that of the recipients of his largesse? In spite of the opposing Catholic and Protestant teachings on good works (and no doubt the development of Orthodox and Uniate positions on these questions from the Protestant-Catholic debate), it is hard to rule out any of these motivations in individual Vilnans of all confessions.





Zusammenfassung

„Da alle dem Schicksal unterworfen sind.“
Armenfürsorge im Wilna des 17. Jahrhunderts

Das frühneuzeitliche Wilna, Hauptstadt des Großherzogtums Litauen und damit zweite Hauptstadt der polnisch-litauischen Adelsrepublik, beherbergte Anhänger fünf christlicher Konfessionen sowie Juden und – in den Vororten lebende – muslimische Tataren. Beginnend mit dem Jahr 1536 wurde die Macht im gewählten Magistrat gleichmäßig zwischen „Griechen“ (Ruthenisch-Orthodoxen) und „Römern“ (Römisch-Katholiken) aufgeteilt. Ende des 16. Jahrhunderts konkurrierten dann Unierte mit den Orthodoxen um „griechische“, Lutheraner und Calvinisten mit den Katholiken um „römische“ Sitze, ehe 1666 ein königliches Dekret die Wählbarkeit zum Magistrat auf Katholiken und Unierte beschränkte. Dennoch blieb Wilna die einzige königliche Stadt auf dem Gebiet der Adelsrepublik, in der Nicht-Katholiken am Stadtreghiment beteiligt waren. Dieses für den Magistrat entwickelte System der Parität kam auch in allen weltlichen Vereinigungen, von der einflussreichen *Communitas mercatoria* bis zur niedersten Gilde, in denen Angehörige aller fünf christlichen Konfessionen um Beteiligung an den Machtstrukturen rangen, zur Anwendung.

In welchem Maße verlief die Organisation und die Verteilung von im weiteren Sinne Armenfürsorge entlang konfessioneller, sprachlicher oder ethnischer Grenzen, bzw. inwieweit wurden diese überschritten? Wer half wem? Und wie wurde die Hilfe zuteil? Welche Erwartungen wurden daran von seiten des Hilfeleistenden wie des Empfangenden geknüpft? Die Behandlung dieser Fragen umfaßt sowohl öffentliche als auch eher private, zentralisierte wie dezentrale Bemühungen der Armenfürsorge. Ein Teil des Beitrags ist zudem Beispielen für improvisierte Versuche von einzelnen Personen und ihren Familien gewidmet, der Verarmung zu entgehen.

Fragen der Interkonfessionalität, denen in Studien zur frühneuzeitlichen Armenfürsorge bislang praktisch nicht nachgegangen wurde, stellen im vorliegenden Beitrag aus mehreren Gründen einen Leitfaden dar. Sie drängen sich vor allem deshalb auf, weil das Neben- und Miteinander der verschiedenen Konfessionen ein wesentlicher Bestandteil des Lebens im Wilna des 17. Jahrhunderts war und die Stadt selbst innerhalb der polnisch-litauischen Adelsrepublik zu einer Besonderheit machte. Es ist unmöglich, das Wesen der Armenfürsorge in Wilna zu verstehen, ohne die Frage zu stellen, welche wechselseitigen Beziehungen zwischen den Angehörigen der verschiedenen Konfessionen bestanden. Umgekehrt läßt die Untersuchung der Fälle, in denen Bewohner Wilnas verschiedenen Glaubens und unterschiedlicher sozialer Herkunft versuchten, Not abzuwenden oder zu lindern, Aspekte der besonderen *convivencia* erkennen, die das Leben in der Stadt über weite Teile ihrer Geschichte bestimmte. Im ganzen betrachtet, ergibt sich aus der Vielzahl der Strategien, die von den zentralisierten „Armenkästen“ bis zu individueller Selbsthilfe reichten, das Bild einer äußerst gemischten Stadt, in welcher eine beträchtliche Anzahl von Einwohnern bei der Verrichtung ihrer täglichen Geschäfte verschiedentlich die konfessionellen Grenzen überschritten und in welcher dieses Verhalten keinen Anstoß erregte, sondern als normal akzeptiert wurde.