

**Regarding the Pain of Others?  
Bystanders as Photographers of the Majdanek Death Camp in 1944**  
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**Abstract**

Three collections of such photographs will be the subject of visual analysis, the key assumption being that they mediate distinctive experience of Polish bystanders and can thus provide new information about their perception of both the liberation and the Shoah itself. Firstly, the thesis discusses historical-cultural context in which the photographers operated and addresses the problems of: Polish-Jewish relations during and after the war; emerging memory narratives in the Soviet-controlled state; and visual experience of the local people as well as imagery to which they were exposed at the time. In the second part of the thesis, selected photographs are analyzed as unique documents of rarely ever captured scenes or distinctive means of documentation. Focusing on different representational strategies of the authors, the thesis presents bystanders as active agents who developed autonomous positions vis-à-vis the Holocaust, rather than passively adapted to the externally imposed reality. A closer look at respective collections will be a basis for broader conclusions on elision of Jewish victimhood, lack of discursive frame for the interpretation of the Holocaust and the ways in which the genocide might have been inscribed into individual and collective narratives of the liberation in postwar Poland.