

Title: The Secret Life of a Script – On the Production of *Border Street* as a Site of Jewish-Polish Memory Negotiation

Author: Ofer Dynes, Harvard University

This paper, which is a part of my larger research project on the politics of memory in post-WWII Poland, explores a unique collaborative effort of Jewish and Polish intellectuals to reconcile competing memories and historical claims on Polish-Jewish relations in wartime Warsaw into a shared, “workable” narrative.

Border Street [Ulica Graniczna], a 1946 film, was part of the mobilization of the nationalized Polish film industry to provide an official, politically legitimate account of Poland’s recent traumatic past. A rare collaboration of Jewish holocaust survivors, Yiddish authors, and Polish screenplay writers, the film focuses on Jewish-Polish wartime coexistence. The result was considered so scandalous by the censorship it was first suggested the film be banned from broadcasting for fifteen years.

The first part of the paper explores the film’s script and reactions to it. Examining dialogue scene drafts, censorship accounts, letters and memoirs, I reflect on the film’s production as a site of negotiating competing narratives, memories, and personal experiences. I pay specific attention to the constraints imposed by the censorship, considering the voice of the censor as a coauthor of the script. The second part of this paper touches on the film’s positioning of Jewish history as a displaced site of narrating Polish secret history and illegitimate memories, particularly on the film’s secreted account of the Warsaw 1944 uprising told through the Ghetto 1943 uprising narrative.

dynes@fas.harvard.edu