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From the Other Shore: Transnational Jewish Journeys Along Africa's Shores

edited by *Marie-Pierre Ulloa*

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Cover image credit: Jean-Louis Cohen, photo of an house in the Jewish Lusitania quarter of Casablanca, January 2021.

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From the Other Shore: Transnational Jewish Journeys Along Africa's Shores

Introduction

by *Marie-Pierre Ulloa*

I'd like to acknowledge that the writing of the various articles of this issue was undertaken before the eruption of the COVID 19 global health crisis, subsequently interrupted by it, and then resumed during the slow recovery. I would like to thank all the contributors for their commitment, their generous efforts and collective spirit in staying the course despite it all. I'd like to gratefully acknowledge the generous support of the Taube Center for Jewish Studies at Stanford University for the publication of these essays. Last but not least, I'd like to thank the editorial team of Quest for their great dedication, patience and expertise, and the anonymous referees for their constructive comments and recommendations.

In his famous poem, "Lovers on Aran," Irish Nobel Laureate Seamus Heaney writes in the last strophe:

> Did sea define the land or land the sea?
> Each drew new meaning from the waves' collision.
> Sea broke on land to full identity[1]

This collection of essays entitled "From the Other Shore: Transnational Jewish Journeys Along Africa's Shores" aims at interrogating the encounter between the land and the sea, in a metaphorical attempt to equal the sea with Jewish journeys and the land with the African shores. This ensemble investigates Jewish trajectories in their anthropological, architectural, historical, literary, and sociological dimensions and gathers anthropologists, historians, literary scholars, and sociologists of culture. Bringing together a diverse range of scholars in the humanities who think about the historical and geographical specificities of Jewish presence on Africa's shores, our volume explores the complexities of the peripheries of a continent in which the

[1] Seamus Heaney, "Lovers on Aran," in *Death of a Naturalist* (London: Faber and Faber, 1966).

framing of memory, imperial urban architecture, inter-religious tensions, identity negotiations, including the Jewish multi-secular presence in North Africa, were all carefully constructed.

The texts address the themes of Jewish transnational migration and transoceanic journeys along African shores, via the voluntary and/or forced circulation of persons, cultural practices, and ideas. They explore the themes of imperial rule by the British, French and Italian empires, in the context of the development of these empires and also in the context of the very end of these empires.

Included in this collection are explorations of North, South and Eastern African migration narratives and the narrative of the absence of migration, the disruptions caused by exile, and the distortions caused by replacement. Our contributors, hailing from different disciplines in the humanities and social sciences, use a wide array of sources: archives from different institutions, both public and private, maps, statistics, literary texts, works of fiction and nonfiction, diaries, family letters, correspondence, photographs, oral and video interviews, etc. Letters, in particular, serve as an unbroken thread that traverse the seas and the continents (Robins, Trevisan Semi), an intercultural fabric that thrives long after the departure from those places.

The volume covers a vast range of literary and historical research—architecture, autobiographical discoveries, diaspora and migration studies, political history, multicultural imperial policies, human rights, anti-Semitism, gender, colonizer and colonized dynamics, generational shifts, and transnational identities—which showcase how the relationship between the citizen, the stateless, the refugee, the nazi, the fascist, the colonial subject, the representative of the British, Italian and French Empires, and the national and imperial collective are reconfigured, in relation to transnational structures and in the different temporalities of wartime and peacetime.

The articles outline the case of African Jews moving to Europe (Cohen, Trevisan Semi) and the case of European Jews moving to Africa (Robins, Sides). They also shed light on both the immediate and the gradual impact of Fascism and Nazism, and on how the internal imperial structures reverberated far away from the European continent. This collection zooms in and out temporally to deal with the significance

of transnational Jewish trajectories along African outlines and evaluates the political cultures that permitted or prevented these journeys. They investigate the urban space, the questions of displacement and exile, ethnicity, gender and religion in a comparative perspective, as well as the interplay of insularity, refugees, return, and "undesirables."

Typically, migration studies have concentrated on the over-used dichotomy between the national and the transnational. On the contrary, this issue attempts to offer a different viewpoint. First, it goes beyond the one-dimensional vision that often delineates the transnational as "the West" when dealing with Jewish diasporas. Second, it does not apprehend the national and the transnational as opposing spheres of influence and infusion but rather emphasizes the intertwined cross-pollination between the two.[2] Mapping Jewish presence along the shores of Africa means mapping multi-vocal micro-histories in plural historical temporalities. This is the *raison d'être* of this volume, relying on the existing scholarship in Jewish Studies in particular, but also in Migration Studies, Diaspora Studies, African Studies, and Postcolonial Studies. It explores through a multiplicity of points of view—political, literary, linguistic, historical, geographical—the ideas of Jewish journeys along Africa's shores.

If some contributions touch upon the centuries-long Jewish presence on the shores of Africa (Cohen, Trevisan Semi) others deal specifically with the unfolding and tragic consequences for Jews of the Second World War (Robins, Sides), or with both (Cohen), but all articles are rooted in the twentieth century. They explore when and where the Jewish presence was attached to European colonialism (British, Italian, French) but also when it preceded it, and when it outlived it.

There are myriad ways to define a journey and a shore. "From the other shore" first takes on a geographical meaning: from the Atlantic shore of Morocco to the Pacific shore of California (Cohen), from the shores of the horn of Africa to Italy (Trevisan Semi), from Germany to the South African shores (Robins), along African Shores

[2] In the same vein, regarding the transnational investigation but concentrating on another geographical map, see the volume edited by Yasemin Nuhoğlu Soysal, *Transnational Trajectories in East Asia, Nation, Citizenship, and Region* (Abingdon-New York: Routledge, 2015).

that had been weaved in a vertical migratory way from Eritrea to Palestine (Trevisan Semi), from the shores of Europe to the shores of the Indian Ocean, and ultimately to South Africa (Sides), from the Moroccan shores of Casablanca to the French shores of Marseille and back (Cohen).

There is also a mental geography to take into account in this multi-layered investigation. There is an alternate, metaphorical meaning of "from the other shore." It can also be understood as "from the shore of the Other," the Jew being historically the paradigmatic figure of the Other, "the Original 'Other' ."[3] Finally, the journey itself embraces the dual notion, on one hand, of the physicality of a journey, by crossing oceans, seas and lands as in a journey in motion by boat, plane, road, train; and, on the other, a non-physical notion as in "old age is a journey" or "childhood is a journey," in an effort to understand "journey" both as a *voyage* and a process.

This issue traces the place and role of Jewish individual itineraries and collective history in architectural, cultural, literary and political history beyond the autobiographical, biographical and historical representation of the where and when of Jewish presence around the African continent, the "Other" in a social fabric that exacerbates divisions. Among the recurring themes in these articles are a reevaluation of the legacies of the Jewish presence at the edge of Africa (Cohen, Trevisan Semi), the long-lasting shadow of the Holocaust in colonial and postcolonial societies (Robins, Sides), and in the racist white South African society (Robins). These essays provide nuanced answers to complex questions about history, memory, urban development, race, gender and ethnicity on the shores of Jewish Africa from the nineteenth to the twenty-first century, and frame a new understanding of *Transnational Jewish Journeys Along Africa's Shores* in becoming "African Journeys along Jewish Shores."

[3] Aron Rodrigue, "The Jew as the Original 'Other.' Difference, Antisemitism, and Race," in *Doing Race: 21 Essays for the 21st Century*, eds. Hazel Rose Markus and Paula Moya (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2010), 187-198.

It is our hope and ambition that our issue offers new insights into the "bricolage" of the Jewish migration narrative, by investigating the meanings of Jewish journeys along Africa's shores through multiple lenses.

In "Casablanca *la juive*: Public and Private Architecture 1912-60," historian of modern architecture Jean-Louis Cohen investigates the city of Casablanca as a decisive anchoring territory for Moroccan Jews, and for those originating from Europe and the Maghreb, who took part in the modernization of the city under French rules. He strengthens his essay with both well-known and rare new images of the city and grounds his reflections on the path-breaking book he co-authored with the sociologist Monique Eleb in 1998, *Casablanca, mythes et figures d'une aventure urbaine*.[4] European Jews started to settle in Casablanca after the 1864 journey undertaken by Moses Montefiore, a British philanthropist who negotiated a *protégé* status for Moroccan Jews in specific cities. Around 1900, a plan shows three specific areas: the Muslim city itself, the Mellah for the Jewish districts in Moroccan cities, and the Tnaker, a place made up of straw huts for the poorest residents. Jews were subject to the *dhimma*, the Islamic law protecting them as well as Christians. One of its requirements was that they might not build houses, nor synagogues higher than Muslim mosques and buildings. The French landing of 1907 affected Moroccan Jews in at least two ways: the bombing destroyed part of the Mellah and new rules on real estate were also passed, authorizing Jews to fully own their land. Jews started to leave the Mellah to settle in the town and they actively took part in transforming Casablanca into the first ground-breaking "French" city in which the nascent discipline of city-planning was launched, under the guidance of French General Resident Hubert Lyautey, at once a champion of safeguarding old cities, and of innovative new urban planning. He was assisted by the architect Henri Prost, who reconfigured the Lusitania Quarter in the southwest of the precolonial city.

Cohen outlines the role of prominent Jewish traders and financiers, such as Haim Bendahan, in the reshaping of the city. In the 1920s, the port of Casablanca grew at a fast pace and so did its demographics, including its Jewish component, who

[4] Jean-Louis Cohen and Monique Eleb, *Casablanca, mythes et figures d'une aventure urbaine* (Paris: Hazan, 1998, new edition 2019). In English: *Casablanca, Colonial Myths and Architectural Ventures* (New York, The Monacelli Press, 2002).

continued to take a decisive role in the urban expansion in their three distinctive roles of architects, builders, and landowners. They patronized architects of diverse origins, including the Suraqui brothers, Jews from Algeria, who had come to Morocco by way of Gibraltar. The Suraqui notably built the heterotopic space[5] of the Narcisse Leven school of the Alliance Israélite Universelle on boulevard Moulay Youssef. During the interwar period, the highest buildings were erected for Jewish clients, such as the ten-floor Moses Asayag building by architect Marius Boyer. Cohen interprets this as *"nothing less than a revenge over the dhimma."*

During the Second World War, Charles Noguès, the Resident General of France, was a Vichy supporter and applied the metropolitan racial laws in the Protectorate. In 1941, Jews were prohibited from residing in the new town—with the exception of those in the suburban villas—and had to face more harassment. Jewish architects were detained—including the Suraqui brothers.

Cohen also sheds light on the era between 1945 and the end of the Protectorate in 1956, when Casablanca enjoyed a new golden age, under the influence of American "soft power." One of the most innovative architects of the time was Élie Azagury, hailing from a Jewish family from Tangiers. Trained at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, he spent the war years in Marseille with another fellow countryman and architect, Jean-François Zevaco. After his voyage to California, Azagury brought back to Casablanca the architectural language of Los Angeles-based architect Richard Neutra. Some Jewish architects never left Morocco, even after 1967. Such was the case of Azagury, who not only stayed in the country, but was even a key player in postcolonial urban policies and became the first president of the Moroccan Order of Architects in 1956. The remaining Jews in Casablanca number only a few hundreds in the twenty-first century, but their buildings are still dominant features of the city. Architect Aimé Kakon transformed a former orphanage to host the Musée du judaïsme marocain, which was opened in 1997 by Simon Lévy. Jean-Louis Cohen ends his article by highlighting the ambitious plan launched in 2017 to preserve the

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[5] Michel Foucault, " 'Des espaces autres.' Conférence au Cercle d'études architecturales, Paris, 14 mars 1967," in *Architecture, Mouvement, Continuité* 5 (1984): 46-49, translated by Jay Miskowiec "Of Other Spaces," *Diacritics* 16, no. 1 (1986): 22-27.

architectural heritage of the central city, including its Jewish dimensions such as the Lusitania neighborhood, the buildings by Azagury, Suraqui and Boyer, under the leadership of a team of Moroccan and French architects and scholars, himself included. This plan should be implemented in 2021, hence strengthening the Moroccan attempt to put Casablanca on the Unesco World Heritage list.

In his essay, "In the Shadows of the Shoah and Apartheid: Recovering traces of 'difficult pasts' of German-Jewish refugees in South Africa," anthropologist Steven Robins investigates the life trajectories of Jewish refugees in South Africa using the notions of "usable pasts" and "chosen amnesia" to question the relevance of such concepts in light of murderous anti-Semitism during the Nazi era (1933-1945) and to understand why they almost disappear from the agora after the war, when an *entente* between South African Jews and the ruling National Party took place. Robins's article concentrates on an account of the passage of South African Jews from being a racialized Other in the early half of the twentieth century to "becoming white" after the Second World War, on the basis of his book *Letters of Stone: From Nazi Germany to South Africa* (2016). This essay examines the socioeconomic and political circumstances that enabled this unsettled "transition to whiteness" amid South African Jews, referring to previous studies of the experiences of German-Jewish refugees in South Africa (Hellig, Schwab, Sichel, Schain).

Robins also broadens the scope of his research by rooting it in his personal archives, exploring the divergent itineraries of his late father Herbert Leopold Robinski, and his brother Artur, who both fled to South Africa in the mid-1930s, and of their parents and siblings who stayed in Germany and were deported to Auschwitz and Riga. He also investigates the integration of South African Jews into Apartheid's societal fabric and "whether Jews' incorporation into the white social order of the apartheid system required 'strategic forgetting' about the history of the National Party's support for Nazi Germany, its use of anti-Semitic rhetoric in the 1930s, and its advocacy for the 1938 Aliens Act that effectively ended Jewish immigration."

His contribution finds inspiration in Karen Brodkin's groundbreaking ethnography, *How Jews Became White Folks & What That Says About Race in America*,[6] which explores the relationship between Jews and whiteness, analyzing how East European Jews were racially Othered upon arriving in the United States, and how to grasp this Otherness. Robins's essay also echoes Sides's investigation of another "Jewish Otherness" in the context of British-controlled Mauritius.

Lastly, Robins deals with the apartheid era by challenging the idea of the "unusable past" of such a charged legacy, expanding on Claudia Braude's analysis that dwelling on this distraught history of Jewish racial complexities can advance our comprehension of South Africa's racist heritage.

In her essay, "Between Italy and Ethiopia, Western and African Judaism: the life of Taamrat Emmanuel, an Ethiopian Jewish Intellectual," Emanuela Trevisan Semi innovatively examines the life journey of Emmanuel Taamrat (1888-1963), one of the first men from the Beta Israel (Falashas), to be brought from Ethiopia to Europe by Jacques Faitlovitch in order to be "regenerated by Western Judaism." The movement of Beta Israel between Italy and Ethiopia, should be read in the contextual ideological dimension of the "regeneration" narrative of the Alliance Israélite Universelle (AIU), promoted in Ethiopia by Joseph Halévy, and his student Jacques Faitlovitch, a Jew from Poland. This dimension shows a stimulating parallel with Cohen's mention of the building of the Narcisse Leven school of the Alliance Israélite Universelle by the Suraqui brothers in Casablanca, and the role played by Jewish architects in the spatial visibility of the Alliance Israélite Universelle.

During his first mission to Ethiopia in 1904, Faitlovitch discovered Taamrat in a Swedish mission in Asmara, the capital city of Italian Eritrea located on the Red Sea. Taamrat was a smart young man who, according to Faitlovitch, was capable of becoming the "regenerator" of his own group, the Beta Israel of Ethiopia. A school for the Beta Israel was created in Addis Abeba in 1923—and not in Eritrea because of opposition by the Italian government—as a result of Faitlovitch's strong relationship

[6] Karen Brodkin, *How Jews Became White Folks & What That Says About Race in America* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1998).

with Ras Tafari Makonnen, the future Hailé Selassie, the emperor of Ethiopia, and despite the fact that the AIU was set against mingling with black people of debatable Jewish origins.

After a couple of years stationed in Paris, Emmanuel Taamrat was put under the guidance of rabbi Margulies at the Collegio Rabbinico in Florence in 1906. He stayed in Italy for thirteen years and this period would turn out to be instrumental on Taamrat's intellectual, political, and personal development. Personalities such as the socialist lawyer and scholar of Judaism Raffaele Ottolenghi had a tremendous influence on Taamrat.

He also met Leda Rafanelli (1880-1971) an Italian anarchist and feminist who converted to Islam, and Emanuela Semi Trevisan explores their relationship in new archival materials she discovered in the anarchist's family archives in Reggio Emilia.

Taamrat went to Palestine in 1919 and later to Ethiopia. In 1931, he left Ethiopia for a trip to the United States to meet with black leaders in Harlem interested in Judaism. As the director of the Falasha school in Addis Abeba for many years, he was then forced to leave for Egypt in 1937. In 1940, while he was in Egypt, Taamrat decided not to join Faitlovitch in Palestine, instead opting to help the Resistance reconquer Ethiopia, and he indeed returned to Ethiopia in 1941 with the Allies and Hailé Selassie's son and royal heir of, Asfa Wossen. He was then named by Hailé Selassie President of the Committee of Public Education. In 1948 he was sent to Paris again, but this time as the cultural attaché at the Ethiopian embassy. In his last years, he was exiled to Asmara and then to Jerusalem, where he died.

As an individual Taamrat suffered from his condition of being doubly colonized, by western Judaism and by Italian occupation. He was subject to Faitlovitch's assertive persona, who forbade him from voicing his political views against Fascism. Moreover, as Trevisan Semi writes, "as a native Jew, he also felt pressured by the colonial vision of the official representatives of Italian Jewry who subscribed to Italy's so-called civilizing mission in Ethiopia and thought that colonization might allow them to impose the values of Italian and western Judaism upon the indigenous Jews of Ethiopia." He was deeply engrossed in and attached to European Jewish culture,

western thought and Italian culture and language. His trajectory could be apprehended as yet another iteration of Albert Memmi's notion of the colonized and colonizing Jew. Trevisan Semi aptly refers to sociologist Dominique Schnapper's notion of the "*minorité redoublée*,"[7] the "double minority": a political minority within the colonized under the colonial power, but also a minority among Italian Jewry. Trevisan Semi even argues that Taamrat was three times a minority: minority as an Ethiopian, minority as a Jew, and minority as a Beta Israel.

In his article, "Holocaust and the Indian Ocean: Jewish Detention in Mauritius, 1940-1945," Kirk Sides starts his essay with a quote by Kenyan-born, Somali-British poet Warsan Shire:

> you have to understand,
> that no one puts their children in a boat
> unless the water is safer than the land

We want to add the following lines of the poem, "and no one would leave home /unless home chased you to the shore," which forcefully illustrate Sides's piece. Based on extensive archival research on several continents, and literary interpretations of Indo-Mauritian writer Nathacha Appanah's novel, *Le dernier frère*, Sides's essay explores transnational exodus, immigration policies, the possibilities of escape from Europe in 1940, and Jewish detention in the Indian Ocean island nation of Mauritius, a British colony on the shores of Southeast Africa and Madagascar. His piece offers a compelling analysis of the dynamics between colonial and Jewish identities during the Second World War. On September 4, 1940 four steamships left Bratislava and travelled down the Danube to the Black Sea, *en route* to Palestine. Aboard, there were nearly 2000 Jews from across Eastern Europe rounded up by German authorities. Their journey down the Danube would end not in Haifa but on the island of Mauritius, because British colonial authorities had enforced the *White Paper* of 1939, which restricted Jewish immigration to British Mandatory Palestine, consequently denying entry to this group. On December 9, these 1580 travelers were put aboard

[7] Dominique Schnapper, *La citoyenneté à l'épreuve, la democratie et les juifs* (Paris: Gallimard, 2018), 208.

two Dutch ocean liners that navigated through the Suez Canal and along the East Coast of Africa until the ships arrived in the harbor of Port Louis, Mauritius, on December 26. 1940. These now stateless people would spend the duration of the war detained in the Beau Bassin Prison, which had been converted into an internment camp.

Their presence there would leave a long-lasting mark on the island and its inhabitants, as well as the South African Jewish community. However, this is a mark that has remained mostly un-mapped. Sides investigates precisely the scarce archival materials pertaining to this transcontinental exodus and the subsequent internment in Beau Bassin: artistic creations produced by two of the detainees, Czech-born artists Peretz Beda Mayer and Fritz Haendel, as well as a novel by Nathacha Appanah, *Le dernier frère* (2007), translated by Geoffrey Strachan under the title *The Last Brother: A Novel* (2011). Sides argues that her novel stands in sharp contrast to the previous exoticizing renderings of Mauritius, presenting the island territory as intertwined with the Jewish plight and insular exile:

> Mauritius gives space for thinking about the role of imperial and colonial geo-politics in the making of what would become perhaps the defining political subjectivity of the twentieth century, the stateless refugee. In thinking about Mauritius as host to a Southern Hemisphere experience of the Holocaust, perhaps it is possible to see the ways in which not only the rise of Nazi Europe, but also the geo-political tectonics of the dissolution of European empires and the creation of postcolonial nations across the globe were entangled in a related set of motions surrounding Europe's expulsion of its Jewish population. As such, the political subjectivities that arose from them and out of their aftermaths—the postcolonial subject, the stateless refugee—must be thought about in relation to one another.

This paper showcases the willpower of the colonial networks to rally other areas under the same imperial juridiction to "solve" situations unfolding several seas away, the question of Jewish immigration to Palestine echoing all over the British Empire.

To conclude, this collection of essays tries to illuminate the circulation of Jewish trajectories in their relationship to African histories (Maghrebi, Eastern African, South African, Islander), and the ways they may be read to re-imagine the role of Jewish diasporas in the world. If we can observe an inclination towards androcentrism in these articles, however, the collection offers original and heuristic proposals to think of Jewish journeys after the Second World War outside the binarism of Europe/Northern America and capitalism/communism by looking at elements of reality that empires are often unwilling to acknowledge. The volume also investigates the generational dimensions of Jewish-African journeys under a diverse light: the brotherly relationship (Robins), the mentorship one (Semi Trevisan), the professional networks (Cohen), and the connections forged by Jewish strangers thrown together on Ocean liners for a trip from continental Europe to their Mauritius prison camp by way of the Suez Canal, with the prison site re-imagined through fiction by the female author Nathacha Appanah (Sides).

Mapping new ways of envisaging Jewishness, both in reality and in fiction, highlighting innovative routes of cultural exchange and translating the growing polysemic dimensions of a Jewish journey bonded to African shores is the ultimate goal of this collective reflection. These essays bring new perspectives on and interpretations of transnational narratives. The narrative backbones of these stories offer a new understanding to the expansion and retraction of empires, nation-state and citizenship, before and after decolonization, along Africa's shores. We believe it will be of keen interest to scholars of/in Jewish studies, diaspora and migration studies, Mediterranean studies, Indian Ocean studies, Caribbean studies, comparative citizenship studies, transnational studies, decolonization studies, war studies, and urban studies.

Marie-Pierre Ulloa is a Lecturer is the Division of Literatures, Cultures, and Languages at Stanford University, teaching French and Francophone cultural and intellectual history, with a focus on North Africa, the Caribbean and the American West. She is also the Senior Research Scholar for the Amos Gitaï Archive at the Stanford Libraries. Author of *Francis Jeanson, a Dissident Intellectual from the French Resistance to the Algerian War* (Stanford:

Stanford University Press, 2008), also published in French and Arabic, and of *Le Nouveau Rêve Américain: Du Maghreb à la Californie* (*The New American Dream: From North Africa to California*) (Paris: CNRS éditions, 2019).

Keywords: Casablanca, Mauritius, South Africa, Taamrat Emmanuel, Tunis

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Casablanca la juive*: Public and Private Architecture 1912-1960*

by *Jean-Louis Cohen*

Abstract

During the French Protectorate in Morocco, the Jewish presence in the country's economic capital Casablanca was massive, as migrants coming from the coastal cities and the interior regions, or from Algeria and Tunisia, joined the already significant population present in the city's Mellah when Hubert Lyautey's administration was put into place in 1912. Once the law made it legal for them to build on the land they owned, Jewish developers embarked on the creation of the highest structures of the city, with bold forms then unknown in France. Among the architects who designed numerous apartment houses and villas, from the most modest to the more sumptuous, were Jews such as the Suraqui brothers. After having contributed in the 1930s to the emergence of local modernism, in the 1950s the Jewish bourgeoise emulated Californian stereotypes in its residences, while innovative social housing cared for the poorest component of the community.

On the Atlantic shore of Morocco, Casablanca has been since the beginning of the nineteenth century an important point of settlement for the country's Jews, and for those who came from the rest of North Africa or Europe to participate in the vertiginous modernization of the city that coincided with the French colonization. The Jewish presence was not at the center of the research I started around 1986, which led to the publication of a rather thick book that came out in France in 1998, and three years later in the United States, but could be felt throughout its pages.[1] Nicknamed "the Bible" by its Casablancan readers, the volume analyzed the major urban spaces and buildings of the city and discussed their genesis. It gave back to its residents a certain pride against the dismissive attitude of Moroccans from historical cities like Fez, Meknès, Marrakesh and Rabat, since the inhabitants of this largely modern city had been long considered by their fellow countrymen

[1] Jean-Louis Cohen and Monique Eleb, *Casablanca, mythes et figures d'une aventure urbaine* (Paris: Hazan, 1998), new edition 2019. In English: *Casablanca, Colonial Myths and Architectural Ventures* (New York: The Monacelli Press, 2002).

exceedingly secular, business-oriented and alienated from traditional culture. They were in short, looked upon as Angelenos are seen by Bostonians, to use an American cliché. The book has contributed to strengthening the identity of all the groups that identify with Casablanca, from its Moroccan residents—Muslim and Jewish alike—to its former inhabitants living in France or scattered across all continents.

In her introduction to the lecture on which the present essay is based, Marie-Pierre Ulloa has mentioned my grandfather Marcel Cohen's important role in the study of Semitic languages and the doctoral thesis he wrote in 1911 on the *Arabic Parlance of Algiers Jews*.[2] However, I have not been drawn to Casablanca by a genetic attraction. Whereas at least two of my ancestors had left Tetuan for Marseille in the late eighteenth century, all my grandparents were born in Paris, the city where I sprung to life. Likewise, the origin of my scholarly interest for the city doesn't derive from the aura it has acquired through Michael Curtiz' homonymous picture of 1942, but rather from its discussion in the historical literature on urban planning, which has commented on Casablanca as an experimental territory, where modern strategies first emerged under French colonial rule, far from Paris—the center of the Empire.

The book was researched and written together with an ex-colonized Moroccan my then wife and colleague Monique Eleb, whose parents were from Safi and Mogador—the Portuguese name of Essaouira. She had left Morocco in the early 1960s but had a fond memory of the city and her recollections of its neighborhoods and the local mores were invaluable. Among the triggers that prompted us to engage in some twelve years of field work and writing were our reactions to the work of many of our Moroccan students in Paris. On the one hand we were fed up with the compassionate yet obsessive focus of most of them on the city's shantytowns, but on the other we were attracted to the remarkable buildings a few others were discussing. Driven by curiosity, we started looking at the city with an attention which soon became systematic. The book had started us. And we tried to go beyond our fascination in order to decipher a city which was extremely seductive, but at the same time rather obscure in the absence of any serious literature about its genesis, development, morphology, or the typology of its buildings. In a way, we ended up writing the book we would have desired to find.[3]

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[2] Marcel Cohen, *Le parler arabe des Juifs d'Alger* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1912).

[3] Among the very few theoretically grounded analyses of the Protectorate's planning policies was Paul Rabinow's *French Modern: Norms and Forms of the Social Environment* (Cambridge, MA:

The present essay dwells on the research made during the preparation of this volume, in which we deliberately focused on the Protectorate and its immediate aftermath, referring mostly to the five decades of the twentieth century and therefore leaving aside the most recent developments.

Fig. 1. Jean-Louis Cohen and Monique Eleb, *Casablanca: Colonial Myths and Architectural Ventures* (New York: The Monacelli Press, 2002), cover. Collection of the author.

One of my favorite representations of the city is a 1920s poster meant to draw tourists to North Africa, which shows Casablanca as a gateway to Morocco. But this stylized opening is in fact a Janus gate with twin faces: one threshold which leads from the external world to a white city open to thousands of investors and migrants, who aspire to a better life in North Africa, as well as one leading rural Moroccans toward urbanization and industrial labor, and toward a certain freedom with respect to the constraints of village life. The poster indexes a process which started even before the creation of the French Protectorate in 1912, when Muslim and Jewish Moroccans flocked in large masses into Casablanca without being initially expected. The latter, who were already numerous in the precolonial city, became a driving force in the creation of the new town.

MIT Press, 1989). Particularly the chapter "Techno-Cosmopolitanism: Governing Morocco," 277-318.

Fig. 1. Xima, *Casablanca, Gateway to Morocco*, poster, c. 1930. Collection of the author.

For several decades, Casablanca was advertised as a mushrooming city, as can be seen from the cover of a brochure from the early 1920s titled *Les Villes qui poussent* (Cities that Grow), which also uses the image of the gate, this time with a more sophisticated pattern inspired by Fez. The city did indeed grow.

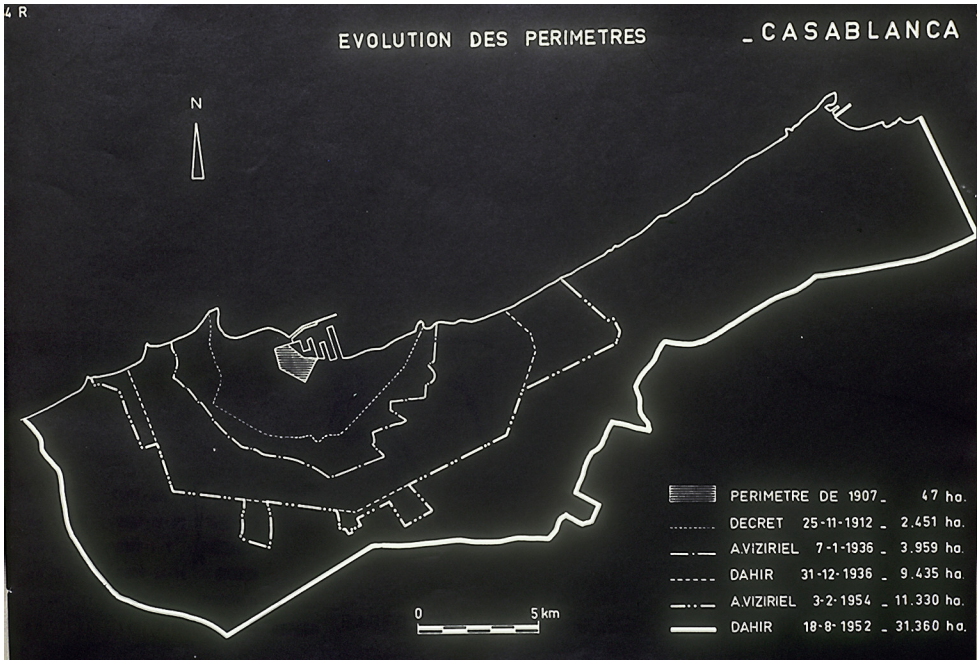

Fig. 2. Casablanca: urban expansion from 1907 to 1952. Collection of the author.

The small walled medina as it existed in 1907, when the French troops landed, occupying 47 hectares, expanded into an urban area of more than 31,000 hectares in 1954. The history of the vertiginous development which took place between the institution of the Protectorate and Morocco's regaining of independence in 1956 had been in many ways simplified, as we realized while doing our research and writing our book. It had been often reduced to an exclusive confrontation between the French and the Muslim population, leaving aside the Jewish component, which had remained marginal in most narratives, until the most recent contributions.[4] Even reliable, engaged scholars such as André Adam, who in 1968 had published a fundamental study on the population of Casablanca and its evolution during the colonial period,[5] quite explicitly left aside the question of the Jews, a rather strange move for someone who had scientific scruples and no nostalgia for the colonization period.

Often put forward by the French as a completely new town, Casablanca was in fact an urban recreation that had taken place in the eighteenth century, on the spot where an ancient city called Anfa had stood until an earthquake wiped it out at

[4] Jonathan Wyrtzen, *Making Morocco: Colonial Intervention and the Politics of Identity* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018).

[5] André Adam, *Casablanca, essai sur la transformation de la société marocaine au contact de l'Occident* (Paris: Éditions du CNRS, 1968).

the end of the fifteenth century. The city was left in ruins, as shown by a beautiful engraving published in 1572 by Georg Braun and Franz Hogenberg in their *Civitates orbis terrarum*.[6]

Fig. 3. The ruins of Anfa, in Georg Braun and Franz Hogenberg, *Civitates orbis terrarium* (1572). In Cohen and Eleb, *Casablanca*.

It shows a landscape of devastation, with a minuscule bay—the port which was still there when King Sidi Mohammed Ben Abdallah revived the city in the first third of the eighteenth century. It grew quickly, essentially as a place of trade, largely populated by foreigners. Around 1900, shortly before colonization, a map drawn by the French physician Félix Weisgerber indicates three distinct areas: the Muslim city itself, an area called the Mellah—a historical term denoting Jewish quarters in Moroccan cities, but here rather porous and less segregated than in other cities—and the area known as the Tnaker, made up of straw huts for the poorest inhabitants.[7] A large area had been set aside for a future European population, in the tradition of Moroccan cities where growth used to be accomplished by discrete increments, as in the case of Fez.[8] Postcards for the European market provide a clear view of the different areas of the city, with the skyline punctuated by the minarets of the mosques.

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[6] Georg Braun and Franz Hogenberg, *Civitates orbis terrarium* (Cologne: Bertram Buchholtz, 1572), vol. 1.

[7] On other Moroccan cities, see the fundamental contributions of Susan Gilson Miller: Susan Gilson Miller, Mauro Bertagnin, and Attilio Petruccioli, "Inscribing Minority Space in the Islamic City: The Jewish Quarter of Fez (1438-1912)," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 60, no. 3 (September 2001): 310-327. Susan Gilson Miller, "Apportioning Sacred Space in a Moroccan City: The Case of Tangier, 1860-1912," *City & Society* (June 2001): 57-83.

[8] Map inserted in Dr. Félix Weisgerber, *Trois mois de campagne au Maroc, étude géographique de la région parcourue* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1904).

In this extremely dense walled city, Europeans and Moroccan Jews outnumbered Muslims. Jews had already started settling in Casablanca in the second part of the nineteenth century, after the memorable trip made in 1864 by the British philanthropist Moses Montefiore, who obtained and negotiated *protégé* status for Moroccan Jews in certain cities.[9] Accordingly, European powers became the guarantors of the Jews who established businesses in Casablanca. At the same time, Jews remained subject to the *dhimma*, the Islamic law protecting them as well as Christians. One of its provision was that they might not build houses higher than the Muslim houses, and that the synagogues might not be higher than the mosques. They might not own more land than their own residence.[10] This condition determined the development of Casablanca, because the Jewish financiers who lent money to Muslim merchants or aristocrats used as collateral pieces of land they could not occupy, much less build upon. They had immense wealth frozen in virtual real estate they could not really use.

Fig. 4. The Mellah, general view, c. 1914. Collection of the author.

[9] Leland Louis Bowie and Gifford B. Doxsee, *The Impact of the Protégé System in Morocco, 1880-1912* (Athens, OH: Centre for International Studies, 1970).

[10] André Chouraqui, *La condition juridique de l'Israélite marocain* (Paris: Presse du livre français, 1950). Doris Bensimon-Donath, *Évolution du judaïsme marocain sous le Protectorat français, 1912-1956* (Paris/The Hague: Mouton et Cie, 1968).

Fig. 5. "Jewish Interior," postcard. Collection of the author.

After the French navy landed in 1907, the city was surveyed and new rules on real estate were introduced, allowing Jews to become full owners of the land to which they had hitherto useless titles. The residences of the wealthiest families of the Mellah contained European interiors, as the correspondent of *The London Times* noted: "Several Jews have built huge apartment blocks which would not be out of place in Tübingen or in the suburbs of Cologne. They contain a number of fine apartments furnished in the Stuttgart and Bremen style, with sweeping views of the port."[11] This German imprint in these houses could not be grasped from the postcards, which insisted on the more miserable component of the Jewish population, sometimes in an ironic and dismissive way. This reference to Germany is of particular interest, because at the time France and Germany were still fighting over Morocco and did so until 1911 when the former's hegemony over Morocco was acknowledged, in exchange for concessions to the latter in Equatorial Africa. After the outbreak of World War One, the competition with the Germans was finally solved by the expulsion of several merchants and the execution of the most conspicuous of them.[12] Among the effects of the French landing of 1907 and the bombing of the city were the destruction of part of the Mellah and significant

[11] Reginald Rankin, *In Morocco with General d'Amade* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1908), 225.

[12] On the ordeal of Casablanca's Germans, see: Gustav Fock, *Wir Marokko-Deutschen in der Gewalt der Franzosen* (Berlin and Vienna: Ullstein, 1916). Edmund Nehrkorn, *Die Hölle von Casablanca: Erlebnisse eines Marokkodeutschen* (Bern: Ferd. Wyss Verlag, 1918).

casualties among the Jews. Nonetheless, the French racist and anti-Semitic right was very quick to publish pamphlets against the "unfair" part Jews were taking in the colonization and development of Morocco. Jean Hess' book *Israël au Maroc* was among the most vibrant of these publications in claiming that France was unfairly privileging Jewish investors and landowners.[13]

The first measures the French took in Casablanca were highly symbolic. Major Dessigny created a public garden and built a clock tower on the model of the one he had erected in the Algerian town of Aïn Sefra. Many patterns in the development of the city were introduced by civil servants and officers who had been active in Algeria. The new clock brought to Casablanca a unified time. Prior to that, the city was living according to British time, the Spanish navy time, and Moroccan time, measured from dawn to sunset. In 1915, Albert Laprade used an Andalusian-themed decoration for the lighthouse that had been erected on the shore. If one adds to these the tower of the railway station, the city entered the modern age with a series of high-rise structures, new minarets which quickly became part of its image. A poster designed by Édouard Brindeau around 1925 shows the clock tower standing against the old city, which no longer appears as a nebulous white mass, but as a lively urban landscape, under the gaze of a Moroccan woman who is located in an imaginary terrace suspended in the air.

[13] Jean Hess, *Israël au Maroc* (Paris: J. Bosc & Cie, 1907). On Casablanca's Jews, see David Cohen, "Le processus d'occidentalisation de la communauté juive de Casablanca (1890-1940)," in *Les relations intercommunautaires juives en méditerranée occidentale. XIIIe-XXe siècles*, ed. Institut d'études africaines (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 1984), 141-153. Yaron Tsur, Hagar Hillel. *Yehude Kazablankah: 'iyunim be-modernizatsyah shel hanhagah Yehudit bi-tefutsah kolonyalit* (Ramat Aviv, Tel Aviv: ha-Universitah ha-Petuhah, 1995).

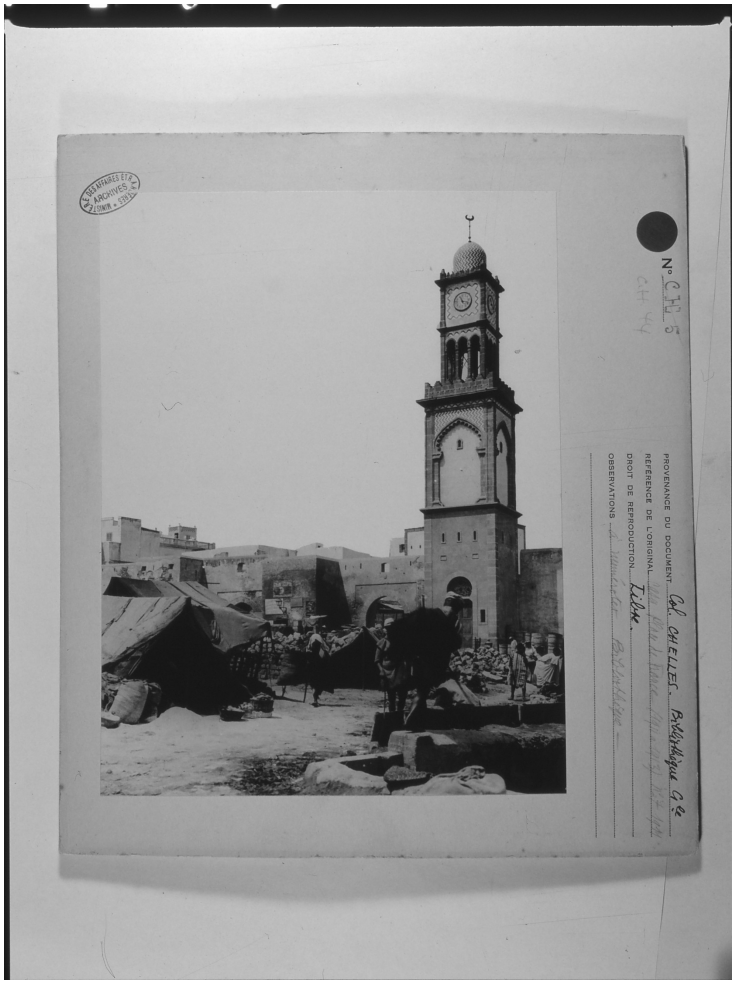

Fig. 6. Major Dessigny, Clock tower, 1910. Ministère des Affaires étrangères, Nantes.

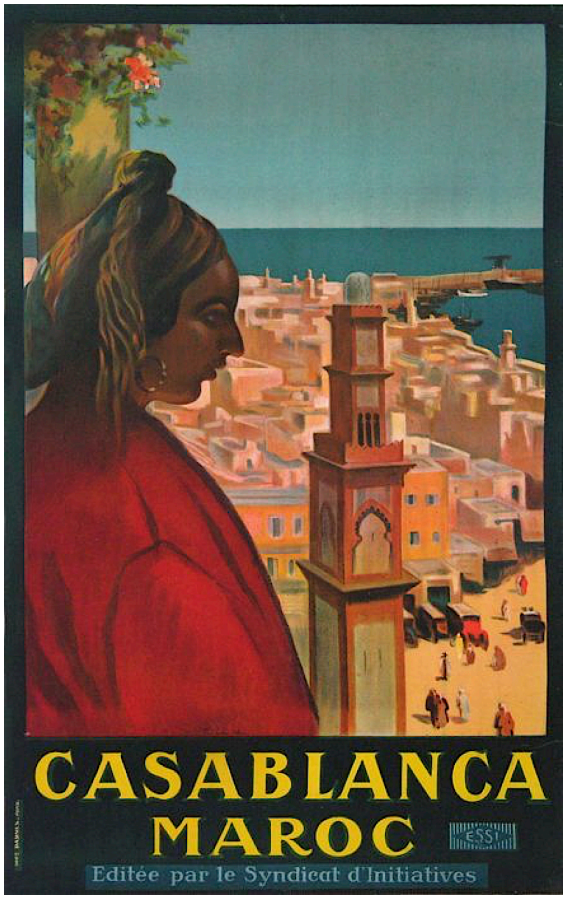

Fig. 7. Édouard Brindeau, poster with the clocktower, c. 1925. Private collection.

After an intense press campaign orchestrated in Europe by the French conquerors put it on the map, investors and developers lost no time in trying to secure land for real estate ventures. A first expansion plan was drafted in 1912 by the surveyor Albert Tardif, who proposed a garden suburb in the South. At the same time, the Jews started leaving the Mellah to settle in the new town, building their homes alongside the former rural paths. Clusters of new houses occupied entire blocks outside the walls, without any comprehensive planning, using ground pieces which had been acquired previously as collateral for loans given to Muslim borrowers.

Fig. 8. Banon and Ifergan houses, rue Moulay Hassan 1er (du Général Moinier), c. 1914. Author's photograph.

Moroccan and newly settled Jews became rapidly the main, if not the dominant landowners in the developing city. A map published around 1915 by the Comptoir Lorrain du Maroc owned by the Nathan brothers, who had arrived not long before from France, reveals the distribution of the properties they had acquired from previous Jewish owners.

Fig. 9. Property owned by the Comptoir lorrain du Maroc (Nathan Brothers), c. 1920. Auguste Perret archive, Cité de l'architecture et du patrimoine.

Besides the already mentioned minarets and the military barracks, the first buildings of the new town were the large Paris-Maroc department store, meant to ensure the presence of European trade, and a massive hotel, both erected in 1914 on the edge of the former Grand Socco market, which was transformed into a square. These two structures used the then experimental technology of reinforced concrete that had been pioneered, among others, by Auguste Perret, who designed the store.

Fig. 10. Dr. Félix Weisgerber, plan of Casablanca, 1900. Collection of the author.

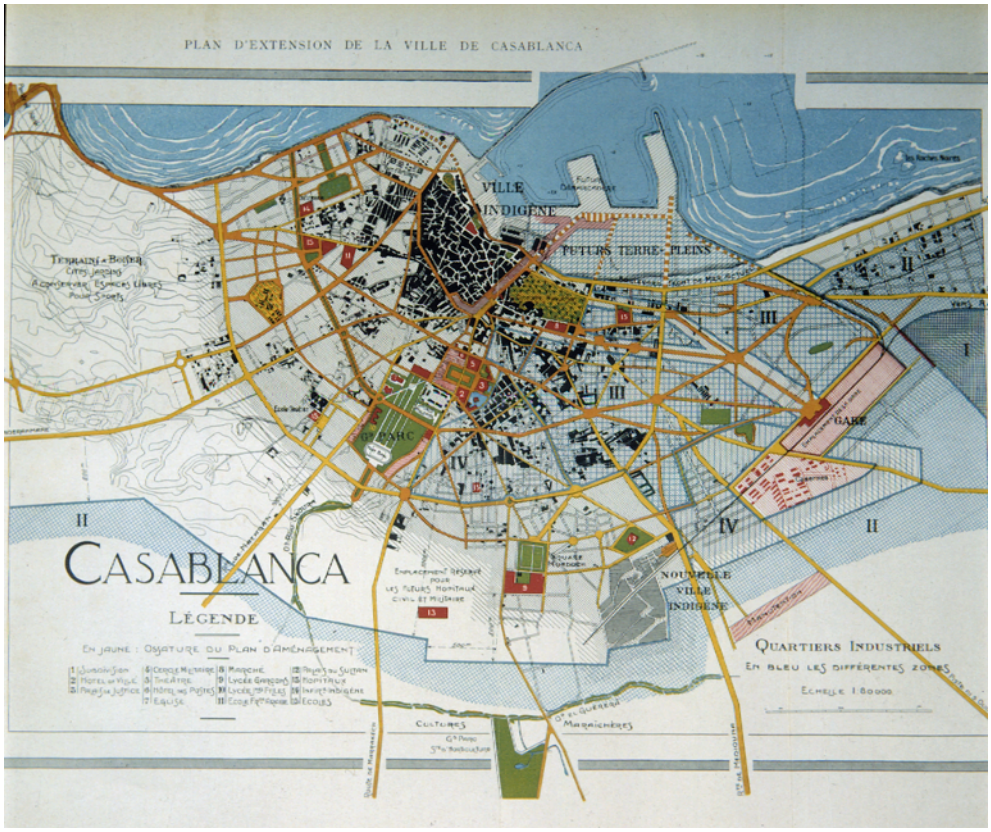

Fig. 11. Henri Prost, expansion and zoning plan, 1917. Collection of the author.

Fig. 12. Hippolyte Delaporte, Magasins Paris-Maroc, Place de France, 1914, with the Perret brothers. Auguste Perret archive, Cité de l'architecture et du patrimoine.

A locus of invention in building technology, Casablanca became the first city in the context of France and its empire in which the emerging discipline of city-planning was deployed, as a means of ensuring the long-term development of the city and curbing the selfish interests of private developers. Two figures joined their efforts in this attempt. The first was France's Resident general in Morocco, General Lyautey, a forward-thinking officer, who was especially opposed to the brutal policies the French had implemented in Algeria with respect to existing cities. He was in favor of preserving historical Moroccan cities, and of implementing the latest planning techniques.[14] To this end, he recruited Henri Prost, a young architect who had spent four years in Istanbul and had a feeling for the "Orient." Prost was also an extremely able planner who knew German city planning well. Paradoxically, whereas the Germans had been expelled from Morocco, Prost conceived for Lyautey a functional zoning plan that divided Casablanca into different areas devoted to specialized functions, and defined the morphology of buildings, which was entirely based on the norms of *Städtebau*—the city planning discipline that had been conceptualized in Germany since the

[14] Gwendolyn Wright, *The Politics of Design in French Colonial Urbanism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991).

1870s.[15] Prost was also active in defining new urban spaces such as the large administrative square, which was an echo of the eighteenth century Place Stanislas in Nancy, dear to both Lyautey and Prost, who were from Lorraine. The translation of this model is an excellent example of what I call inter-urbanity—a term modeled on inter-textuality—by which I describe the borrowing of urban elements by one city from another one.[16] The features of the public buildings lining the square echoed Moroccan historical architecture, combining traditional patterns of decoration with modern programs.

Approved in 1917, Prost's plan was not implemented by breaking through the previous layers of the urban fabric with large thoroughfares like those of Haussmann in Paris, but by negotiating with the existing owners the creation of the new streets. Specific areas were delineated for the negotiation with the owners, probably half of whom were Jews. If for instance the Nathan brothers owned initially 20% of the land, after giving to the city the space necessary for the opening of the street they ended up with the same percentage of buildable lots. This process was efficient in creating a new city on a territory that had already been developed according to a messy, unplanned, pattern. In the end, Prost engineered a pragmatic new town by introducing a new structure which rearticulated existing urban developments. According to this method, the Lusitania Quarter in the southwest of the precolonial city, dotted haphazardly with new houses built by Jews who had left the Mellah, was reshaped with broadened streets, which created a pleasant atmosphere. Its plan was advertised as a model example in Edmond Joyant's city-planning handbook of 1923.[17]

[15] Jean-Louis Cohen, "Le plan d'Henri Prost, ou quand l'art urbain devient urbanisme," in *100 ans d'urbanisme à Casablanca 1914-2014*, ed. Abderrafih Lahbabi (Casablanca: École d'architecture de Casablanca, 2015), 30-43.

[16] See my exploration of this issue in Jean-Louis Cohen, "Frottage City," *Matières* no. 16 (2020): 60-79.

[17] Edmond Joyant, *Traité d'urbanisme* (Paris: Eyrolles, 1923), fig. 311 and 312.

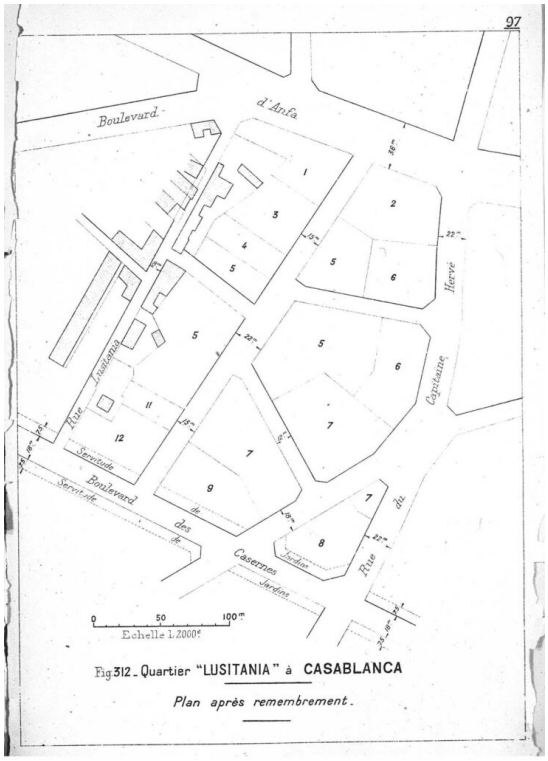

Fig. 13. Land redistribution for the Lusitania quarter, 1917, as published in Edmond Joyant, *Traité d'urbanisme* (1923). Collection of the author.

Conflicts between the Protectorate and the Jewish community also broke out, most notably in what was left of the Mellah, on the edge of the place de France, which had replaced the Grand Socco. Earmarked for demolition in the early 1920s, the surviving blocks were meant to be replaced by massive commercial and residential buildings. The authorities declared that this area was made up of filthy, insalubrious houses, dismissed in racist terms as being the "infect corner of the Mellah," a sore spot in the middle of the gleaming new colonial city. Jewish families and religious authorities protested vehemently against the demolition of old synagogues and existing residences.[18] In the end, demolition took place, but nothing got built, and the emptied land, which was only partially developed in the 1950s, has remained to this day a problematic entity in the city's center.

[18] Petition of some one thousand families to General Lyautey, December 26, 1921. National Archives of Morocco, Rabat, SGP, Études législatives, Plans de ville, Casablanca, 1926-1927.

Fig. 14. Area of the Mellah to be expropriated, 1922. Archives nationales du Maroc, Rabat.

At the same time, Jews were excluded from the major developments undertaken by the Protectorate for Moroccans. Prost's 1917 plan envisaged the creation of a "new indigenous town," combined with a palace for the Sultan. Jews were initially supposed to be included in this new medina, but they eventually ignored it. Nonetheless, the project was made possible thanks to the prominent Jewish trader and financier Haim Bendahan, who gave the land to the Sultan. As this gift could not be accepted, the administration of religious foundations—the *Habous*—was put in charge of developing the land, which it still owns today. The streets, the squares, the markets and the houses were exquisitely designed between 1918 and 1922 by Albert Laprade, Edmond Brion and Auguste Cadet, who had studied in great detail the architecture of Andalusia and coastal Morocco.[19]

[19] Gislhaine Meffre and Bernard Delgado, *Quartier Habous à Casablanca, une nouvelle médina dans la métropole* (Casablanca: La Croisée des Chemins, 2018).

Fig. 15. Albert Laprade, Auguste Cadet, Edmond Brion, the Habous quarter, c. 1922. Albert Laprade archive, Cité de l'architecture et du patrimoine.

In the 1920s, Casablanca's harbor expanded rapidly, after the diminutive facilities inherited from ancient Anfa had been discarded, becoming one of the most important of the continent. The city's airfield quickly rose to be a hub in the new air connections with Africa and South America organized by the legendary Aéropostale and its pilots Antoine de Saint-Exupéry and Jean Mermoz. Correspondingly, the population grew exponentially, including its numerous Jewish contingent, who participated significantly to the building of the new town in their three roles of owners, builders and architects. Among these, the designers who came to Casablanca belonged to various groups. Many of them were war veterans, often without family connections or social capital in France, where they would not have made a big career. They found exceptional opportunities in Morocco, where the Jewish landowners were eager to commission significant programs for their businesses and residences.

They patronized architects of all origins, including Jewish professionals such as the Suraqui brothers, who belonged to a Gibraltar family which had moved to Algeria, where they had been trained not as architects but as surveyors—at that time no specific degree was required to practice in France and its Protectorates. Joseph was

well—traveled and the frequent trips he made to Berlin in the 1920s explain the angular expressionist features of some of his buildings.

Fig. 16. Joseph and Élias Suraqui, Suraqui apartment house, rue Chevandier de Valdrôme. Author's photograph.

With his younger brother Elias, he built houses for Moroccan Jewish families such as the Benzaken, Coriat, Ettedgui or Tolédano, as well as for French Ashkenazi migrants who had arrived to develop industries and real estate deals, like the Braunschwig (1927). The clienteles were not rigidly segregated in the city, and the Suraquis also built apartment houses for contractors such as Gallinari and Meffre (1924 and 1929). Other programs were developed jointly by investors of different communities, as in the case of the Hassan and de la Salle building overlooking the square Louis Gentil, near the Paris-Maroc store (1928). Their architectural language covered a wide spectrum, from the eclectic use of historicist elements to the deployment of Art Deco ornaments, without any apparent correlation between the origin of the clients and the lexical elements used.

The new town was characterized by the cohabitation of diverse owners. The large block built by the Pertuzio brothers for the Great Vizir El Hadj Omar Tazi (1929), with its rather heavy Deco friezes, faced Brion's sleek block for Haim Bendahan,

one of the first examples of streamlined modern architecture, which resembles the upper decks of an ocean liner (1935). The nearby street rapidly took his name. During the interwar period, the tallest buildings of the new town were built by Jewish patrons, with few exceptions. I see in this skyward thrust nothing less than a revenge over the *dhimma*. Being able to build the highest structures reflected the new condition of a fully emancipated Jewish bourgeoisie. The main works of Marius Boyer, certainly the most original and prolific of all the architects active in Casablanca, bear witness to this policy. After having built a remarkable block with a shopping arcade for El Glaoui, the pasha of Marrakesh (1922), he planted a striking beacon on the boulevard de Marseille for Lévy and Bendayan, who had come to the city from Tangiers (1928). Operating like a gateway on one of the main arteries, the building has many hygienic features such as open courtyards, and extremely beautiful cylindrical staircases inside.

Fig. 17. Marius Boyer, Lévy and Bendayan building, boulevard Lalla Yacout (de Marseille), 1928. Collection of the author.

Even more daring is the Moses Asayag building, sponsored by another Jew from northern Morocco (1930-1932). With its ten floors, it would not have been tolerated in Paris at the time. The zoning provisions of Casablanca were way more permissive than in France. Its three imbricated towers carry superimposed set-back balconies, which could also be compared to those Henri Sauvage had been unable to build in Paris or those prescribed by the 1916 zoning ordinance in New York City. Around 1930, Boyer imagined a rather extravagant project for the vertical development of the city, with giant porticos which echoed Le Corbusier's 1925 Voisin plan for Paris.[20] This was exceedingly optimistic, even if Morocco, unlike France, escaped the Depression and saw construction continuing throughout the 1930s.

[20] The only monograph on this prolific designer is Marius Boyer, *Casablanca, travaux d'architecture* (Strasbourg: Edari, 1933).

Fig. 18. Marius Boyer, Asayag building, boulevard Hassan Seghir (de la Marine) 1930, postcard. Collection of the author.

In the residential areas of the city, the single-family houses of the wealthier Jews were often deceptively simple on the outside and extravagantly over-decorated inside. Such was the case of the Assaban villa on boulevard de Bordeaux, whose architect we have been unable to identify, the municipal archive of building permits remaining of extremely difficult access.

Fig. 19. Unknown architect, Assaban villa, boulevard de Bordeaux. Photograph by Roland Beaufre.

It is an eloquent example of the dual culture of its owners, with its gilded Louis XVI decorations adjacent to a Moroccan lounge combining Arab-Andalusian decoration and Viennese Sezession seats. On boulevard Moulay-Youssef the Suraquis built the more rigorous but no less luxurious villa Violetta, still standing with its remarkable ironwork and tilework, while the interior has been gutted nightly before demolition was interrupted. In these houses, refined construction techniques were used to build exquisite details, associating Moroccan *maâlmin*—master artisans—with Italian stonemasons and joiners. As for Boyer, he built for Asayag a rather conservative villa with a neo-Moroccan patio, apparently sticking for his own use to a tamer language than the one he accepted for his tenants. His villa for Raphaël Bénazéraf, sadly lost, which had nothing historicist or neo-Moroccan on the exterior, used abstract decoration inside, with a magnificent staircase lined with black marble and little golden tiles and a remarkable bedroom with Deco lights, and an adjacent bathroom clad in white marble.

Fig. 20 Marius Boyer, Bénazéraf villa, rue d'Alger, 1928. Author's photograph.

The Jewish community also had its own buildings. In the medina, the surveyor Georges Buan built an elegant synagogue. A more monumental structure was built by the Suraqui brothers for the school of the Alliance Israélite Universelle, which was active in Morocco, including Casablanca, since the 1860s and was supported by the Protectorate as a means of French penetration.[21] Built on the beautiful palm-tree lined boulevard Moulay Youssef, the school used neo-Moroccan decorative elements and took the name of the former president of the Alliance Narcisse Leven, an active fighter against French anti-Semitism.

[21] Michael M. Laskier, *The Alliance Israélite Universelle and the Jewish Communities of Morocco: 1862-1962* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983).

Fig. 21 Joseph and Élias Suraqui, Narcisse Leven school, boulevard Moulay-Youssef, 1927. Author's photograph.

The demographic expansion of Casablanca continued throughout the 1920s, its population growing from 30,000 in 1907 to 160,000 in 1931, including 20,000 Moroccan Jews—the only ones identified as such. Jews of French—including Algerian—or other origins, were not counted in this figure. The growth was substantial also in the following years. In 1936, Casablanca reached 260,000 inhabitants, the population of Algiers or Bordeaux at the same time. The Moroccan Jewish population doubled during that period, under the eye of foreign observers. The contemporary reception of Casablanca's urban development in the press of Mandate Palestine is eloquent:

Out of all the cities of the East, Casablanca is most modern. In the beauty and rapidity of its construction it resembles our Tel Aviv, its streets are wide and with avenues of trees and flowers. Its buildings are large and lavish with all the modern comforts. The city has grown thanks to the large modern seashore which was built after the war.[22]

[22] Ezra Shmualy, "The Jews in the French Colonies of North Africa," *HaOlam* [Tel Aviv] (April 1936), 31.

The success of a city which was based on its gateway status, also meant that poor Muslims came in mass to the city from the Moroccan hinterland and started living in newly created shanties, which became proverbial in all the French empire under the name of *bidonville*. This "drum city" made of flattened metal oil containers, which occupied a territory located South of the Habous quarter, became the generic term for shanty towns in the French empire—Paris included—for decades to come.

During the Second World War, the Resident General of France Charles Noguès sided with Vichy and the Moroccan Protectorate implemented the racial laws passed by Pétain's government. In 1941, Jews were prohibited from residing in the new town—with the exception of those inhabiting suburban villas—and had to resettle in the old medina in exceedingly insalubrious conditions. They were fired from civil service jobs and a numerus clausus was implemented in all the professions. I have not done the research needed to see how it applied to the architects who were Jewish, and if the limit of 2% of the "aryan" professionals was enforced, but since they were marginal in the architectural profession, it might not have been applied. Some Jews were detained by the Protectorate—this was the case of the Suraqui brothers—and the deportation of the Jews was prepared before the Allied landing of November 8, 1942. Legend has it that the Sultan of Morocco Mohammed V enacted measures to protect the Jews from increased prosecution. Historical evidence now seems to show that this was far from the truth and that the Sultan was not as protective as generally remembered.[23] In any case, the Allies arrived at the right moment, just before brutal actions were going to be taken. Yet the Moroccan Jews' loyalty to the country went very far in terms of celebrating both Mohammed V and his son Hassan II, who made money in the 1960s by selling them the passports they needed to emigrate to Israel.

The name of the city became familiar to the entire world, on the occasion of the conference the Allies organized in January 1943 in Anfa, the high-end residential area of the city resembling Beverly Hills. The meeting, during which the war goals of the Western powers were discussed , was marked by the rivalry between generals Henri Giraud and Charles de Gaulle. In parallel to the summit, Roosevelt had a conversation with Mohammed V, in which he promised Americans' help in the

[23] On this controversial issue, see Michel Abitbol, *Les Juifs d'Afrique du Nord sous Vichy* (Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 1983); Georges Bensoussan, *Juifs en pays arabes : Le grand déracinement 1850-1975* (Paris: Tallandier, 2012); Aomar Boum and Sarah Abrevaya Stein, eds., *The Holocaust and North Africa* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2018).

Moroccans' drive toward independence.[24] Simultaneously, "Casablanca" became a worldwide brand thanks to the film shot in Hollywood by Michael Curtiz, which cast the city as a place of transit and intrigue between Europe and America, not paying much attention to the physical identity of the eponymous city. In fact, as I have found out in the Warner Brothers archives, envoys were sent to Casablanca to take photographs of the actual city. In preparing the production of the film, a scrapbook was compiled by the studios, documenting with press clippings and maps city streets, French uniforms, cafés, and vernacular costumes. Yet in the end, the film is essentially about love and only marginally about the city. Its success led to a series of imitations such as the Marx Brothers' *A Night in Casablanca*, Gille Grangier's modest *Casablanca nid d'espions*, or Bernard Borderie's captivating movie *La Môme vert-de-gris*, with Eddie Constantine—released in the United States as *Poison Ivy*—all shot in Casablanca in the 1950s. The city's celluloid fortune found echoes in literature and music throughout the 1940s and 1950s. In recent years, Moroccan filmmakers have put the city at the center of significant movies, such as Nabil Ayouch's *Ali Zaoua, enfant des rues* (2000), Laïla Marrakchi's *Marock* (2005) and Nour-Eddine Lakhmari's *Casanegra* (2008).[25]

Between 1945 and the end of the Protectorate in 1956, Casablanca went through a new golden age, since it had suffered no destruction during the war. Capitals which had left France during and after the war fueled a renewed public and private building activity, in which Jews were heavily engaged, in particular in areas where villas were dominant. The most spectacular among these is the house of the ambitious, narcissistic developer Sami Suissa, built in 1947 by the extravagant architect Jean-François Zevaco, born in Casablanca in 1916. At the time nothing of that kind was happening in France, where reconstruction did not start until the early 1950s. Not far from the Suissa villa, the Schulmann villa was built in 1952 by Élie Azagury. A Jew from a Tangiers family, he was born in Casablanca two years after Zevaco, and in the same building—the Paris-Maroc department store and apartment house. Close friends, both Zevaco and Azagury were trained at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, since there was no school of architecture in Casablanca, which was then considered a city of business, sports and leisure, but not an intellectual capital like Algiers, where architecture was taught at the École des Beaux-Arts. The two young students spent the war years in Marseille, where an atelier had been opened for the refugees from Paris, and returned to Morocco

[24] William A. Hoisington, *The Casablanca Connection, French Colonial Policy, 1936-1943* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1984).

[25] On the visual production relative to the city, see Susan Ossman, *Picturing Casablanca: Portraits of Power in a Modern City* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

after graduation, Azagury being the second Moroccan to get an architect's degree. After working in Sweden and traveling to California, he brought back to Casablanca the architectural language Richard Neutra had explored in Los Angeles. The cantilevered sun-breakers of the Schulmann villa allude to the contemporary houses of Los Angeles, which found their best interpretation in the sumptuous villa built by Wolfgang Ewerth for the prominent Jewish cereal trader Maurice Varsano (1954).

Fig. 22. Jean-François Zevaco, Suissa villa, boulevard Abdelkrim al Khattabi (Alexandre 1er), 1947. Author's photograph.

Fig. 23 Élie Azagury, Schulman villa, Lice d'Anfa, 1951. Marc Lacroix. . In Cohen and Eleb, *Casablanca*.

Critics had written that Casablanca, the "New York of a French California," needed skyscrapers to enhance its flat terrain. This connection to California can also be perceived in the manner in which the most innovative villas of the late years of the Protectorate were advertised. The young photographer Marc Lacroix, who was briefed by Azagury to shoot villas in the style of the Los Angeles photographer Julius Shulman, the author of the iconic views of Richard Neutra's houses, shaped the perception of the new villas.

Fig. 24. Wolfgang Ewerth, Varsano villa, Sidi Maârouf, 1954, Marc Lacroix. In Cohen and Eleb, *Casablanca*.

The context was favorable as, a few years after their landing in 1942, the Americans had returned when the Strategic Air Command created bases all over the country at the beginning of the Cold War. Casablanca was home to American airmen and their families, PX stores and other facilities. The streets were filled with American cars, and the homes with refrigerators larger than the French ones. Coca Cola was produced locally, whilst it was banned from French stores, after the sale of this "American poison" had been prohibited by parliament.[26] Radio stations beamed out rock and roll music, an American atmosphere pervading a city where the everyday life had been until then infused by Spanish mores.[27]

At the same time, the Jewish presence had never been more massive, reaching 75,000 residents, that is one tenth of the total, around 1952. In 1960, 45 % of the entire Jewish population of Morocco lived in Casablanca. Modest single-family houses were built by the hundreds in the periphery, including many by the Suraqui brothers, who had resumed their production and also designed modern

[26] Richard F. Kuysel, *Seducing the French: The Dilemma of Americanization* (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993), 52-69.

[27] On the Spanish legacy and presence, see Eric Calderwood, *Colonial Al-Andalus: Spain and the Making of Modern Moroccan Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018).

apartment houses. Jewish Moroccan professionals were able to patronize conspicuous programs, such as the sculptural building of the physician Gaston Brami (1952). Designed by Gaston Jaubert, a close friend of Azagury, its Brazilian allure was caught in Lacroix' photographs.

Fig. 25. Gaston Jaubert, Brami building, rue de Mareuil, 1951, Marc Lacroix. In Cohen and Eleb, *Casablanca*.

Brami was active as a doctor among the poor of the former Mellah, which had become an extremely dense and insalubrious area following the rules enacted by the Vichy Regime to eliminate the Jewish presence in the European town.[28] After

[28] Gaston Brami, *Les Contes de mon Mellah, ou les tribulations d'un médecin débutant à travers un ghetto insolite* (Place of publication unknown, 2002).

1945, Jews resumed their immigration from the coastal cities and the interior of the country into Casablanca. In the late 1950s, before the decisive wave of emigration to Israel, the city housed half the Jewish population of entire Morocco.

For the first time, the expiring Protectorate tackled this pressing demographic challenge, thanks to the new plan for the expansion of the city drawn up in 1952 by Michel Écochard, previously active in Beirut, and a staunch supporter of Le Corbusier's functional city. While the area of the municipality of Casablanca was tripled with respect to its prewar size, massive manufacturing facilities were planned along the coastline, in response to the resident general Eirik Labonne's program for the industrialization of Morocco. Provisions were made for the accommodation of Muslim factory workers, a new fabric of low-rise courtyard houses replacing the expansive shanties, within which former assistants of Le Corbusier, such as Georges Candilis, erected acclaimed multi-family structures.

A parallel attempt was made by the administration and Écochard's team to house the Jewish poor who continued to gather in the old town, with the creation of the *Habitat israélite*. Symmetrically to the Muslim housing schemes in the East, vast areas were earmarked on the Western part of the seashore. Damp and vulnerable to cold winds in the winter, these empty lots were deemed unfit for middle-class residences. Various attempts were made to imagine relevant housing types, beginning with slab buildings comparable to those used then in France. The first of these, built in 1950 by Louis Zéligson, a Jewish architect born in Baku, was rather close to European standards. It has stood alone to this day. A more ambitions scheme was built the following year by Zéligson together with Léon Aroutcheff, Raymond Lucaud, Léonard Morandi and Marcel Rousseau, its eight slabs distributed by open-air corridors functioning as windbreakers to protect from the ocean's spray the areas in back, where Joseph Suraqui built a school run by the Alliance Israélite (1955). In the same neighborhood, designed for all the classes of the Jewish population, the veteran architect also completed on rue La Bruyère a long slab combining autonomous buildings ventilated by concrete screens, which are part of the dominant idiom in Casablanca, and two blocks for wealthier families (1954).

Fig. 26. Joseph Suraqui, Jewish housing, rue La Bruyère, 1954. Author's photograph.

Fig. 27. Louis Zéligson, Jewish housing slab, El Hank, 1950. In Cohen and Eleb, *Casablanca*.

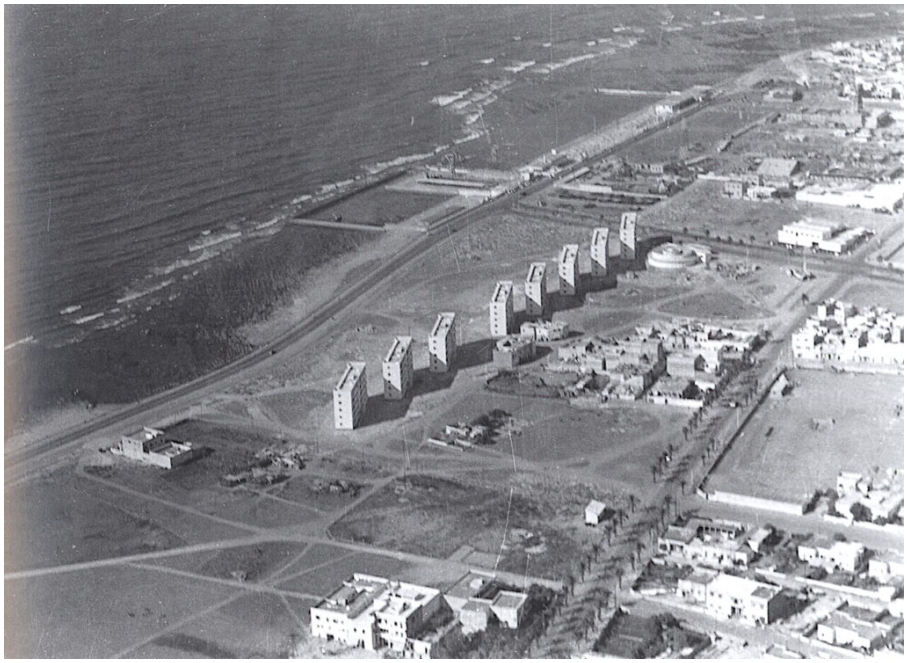

Fig. 28. Léon Aroutcheff, Raymond Lucaud, Léonard Morandi, Marcel Rousseau, Louis Zéligson, Jewish housing scheme, 1951-52. Ministère de l'Habitat, Rabat.

These programs did not exhaust the reflection on what Jewish housing was specifically meant to be. It had to be more open than the tightly enclosed Moslem dwellings, a requirement which found a remarkable interpretation in the brightly colored scheme of Candilis—a tridimensional interpretation of Piet Mondrian's paintings. Jews did not require such a protection from the external gaze. According to the literature of the time, much attention was given to the issue of keeping menstruating women in seclusion, and to the provision of minimal versions of ritual baths. The ATBAT-Afrique team led by Candilis and Shadrach Woods designed specific apartments for Jews, which were more open, had no patios, and were more comfortable than the Muslim ones. In contrast to the zoning policy of the Protectorate, which segregated the housing estates meant for low-income Europeans, Muslims and Jews from each other and from the residential areas of the ruling class, ATBAT-Afrique went as far as combining in ethnically mixed buildings dwellings for each group. In this unbuilt project, the glazed façades of the European flats would have contrasted with the enclosed patios meant for Muslims and the intermediate volumes intended for Jews.[29]

[29] Monique Eleb, "An Alternative to Functionalist Universalism: Ecochard, Candilis and ATBAT-Afrique," in *Anxious Modernisms, Experimentation in Postwar Architectural Culture*, eds. Sarah Williams Goldhagen and Réjean Legault (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2000), 55-73.

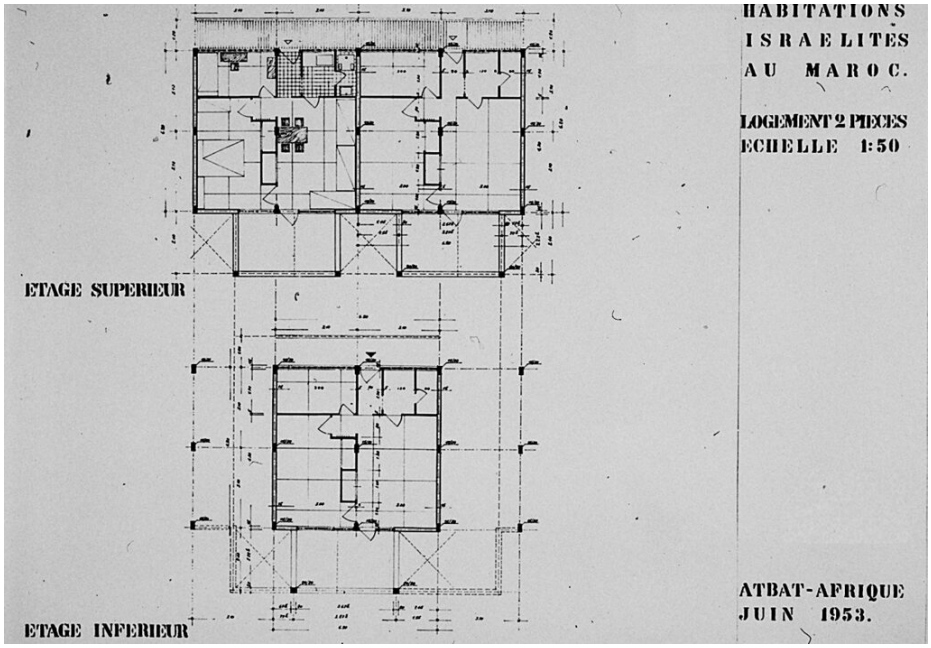

Fig. 29. ATBAT-Afrique (Georges Candilis, Shadrach Woods, Vladimir Bodiansky), Jewish housing prototype, 1953, plans. Candilis archive, Cité de l'architecture et du patrimoine.

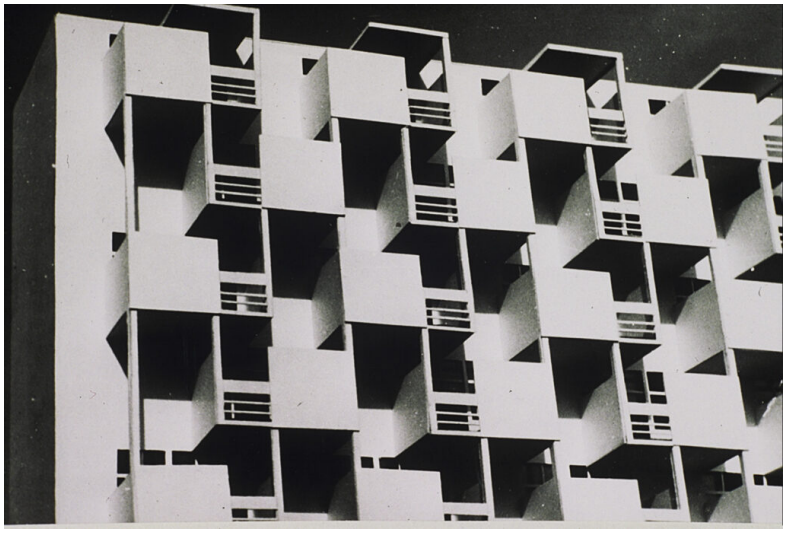

Fig. 30. ATBAT-Afrique (Georges Candilis, Shadrach Woods, Vladimir Bodiansky), Jewish housing prototype, 1953, view of the study model. Candilis archive, Cité de l'architecture et du patrimoine.

Zionist organizations started to promote/arrange emigration to Israel among the poorest Jews who had settled in Casablanca already in the late 1940s, but a significant proportion of the population remained until the aftermath of

Tom Avermaete, *Another Modern: The Post-War Architecture of Candilis-Josic-Woods* (Rotterdam: NAi Publishers, 2005).

Independence, regained in 1956, and in some cases until 1967. Some Jewish professionals such as Azagury, a leftist who was viscerally attached to his country, not only remained, but also played an important role in postcolonial policies. He became the first president of the Moroccan Order of Architects after Independence and for more than fifteen years.

Fig. 31. Élie Azagury, house of the architect, 1962. Author's photograph.

He was the main designer of the first housing scheme built by the new Morocco, in order to replace the Derb Jdid shanty. Now called Hay Hassani, and meant for low-income residents, the neighborhood recycled many of Écochard's ideas, with an increased density. Azagury also built a large tea packing factory in the East of Casablanca (1958), two schools for the French missions (1963) and a gave a skillful interpretation of Le Corbusier's brutalism with his own house (1962). After the 1960 earthquake, he took part in the reconstruction of Agadir, a collective effort which defined the country's architecture for two decades.

Fig. 32. Élie Azagury, Popular housing, Derb Jdid, 1956-60. Ministère de l'Habitat, Rabat.

At a distance of more than fifty years, Casablanca's Jewish population has shrunk to a few hundred families, but its properties still dot the city. The greatest number left for good and never looked back.[30] But the wealthiest Jews, those who had mines and industries, kept most of their land, even if they had to "Moroccanize" part of it. Along the streets, abandoned enclaves are easy to locate thanks to the green mass of their overgrown vegetation, untrimmed since the 1960s.

[30] One exception is André Lévy, *Return to Casablanca: Jews, Muslims, and an Israeli Anthropologist* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015).

Fig. 33. Abandoned property, rue Ilya Abou Madi (Buffon), 2018. Author's photograph.

Among restored buildings, one finds the Ettedgui synagogue in the old town, and the Suraquis' former Tolédano house, transformed into the Villa des Arts, an exhibition center operated by the ONA, the company that manages the assets of the king of Morocco. More significantly, the architect Aimé Kakon has reconfigured a former orphanage in order to house the Musée du judaïsme marocain created in 1997 by Simon Lévy. Its collections document Jewish everyday life and religious practice in precolonial and colonial times.

Fig. 34 Courtyard of an apartment house, rue El Karouarizmi (Lacépède), Lusitania, photograph JLC 2021.

Fig. 35. The Benaroch synagogue, rue Bnou Rochd (Lusitania), Lusitania, photograph JLC 2021.

More than fifteen years after the publication of the book mentioned above, I have been drafted in 2017 into a deliberate endeavor to preserve the city's heritage at large, including its Jewish component. A team of Moroccan and French architects and historians has established a plan for the conservation of the central city. When implemented in 2021, it will lead to the preservation of one fifth of the ten thousand buildings existing within the circular boulevard, focusing not only on the most spectacular ones, but including also vernacular enclaves, such as for instance the Lusitania quarter. Entire areas will be shielded from excessive and mutilating development, interior features such as the staircases or the lobbies being protected as well of course as the façades. In addition to this plan, which includes major structures related to Jewish patronage, such as the main buildings by Boyer, and others designed by the Suraquis, Azagury and others, objects scattered over the larger area of metropolitan Casablanca have been earmarked for preservation, including housing estates, villas and public buildings. In a city where half of Morocco's gross national product is generated, the temptation to get rid of embarrassing historical evidence is always intense, but could be countered by the new rules.

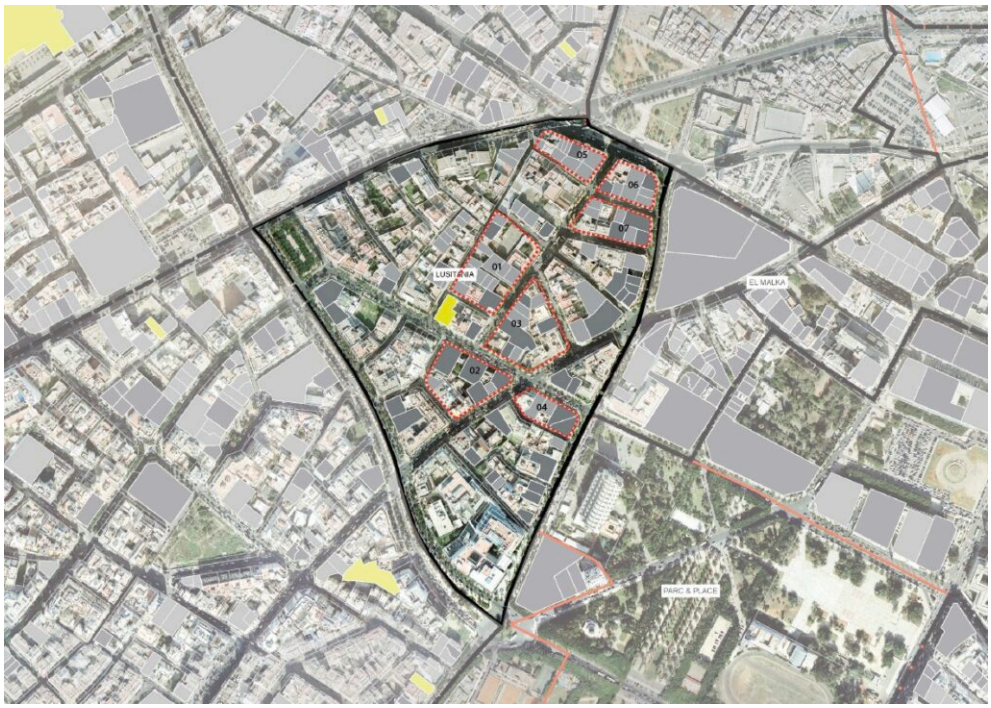

Fig. 36. Tarik Oualalou, Preservation plan: buildings protected in the Lusitania quarter, 2019. Oualalou-Choi studio.

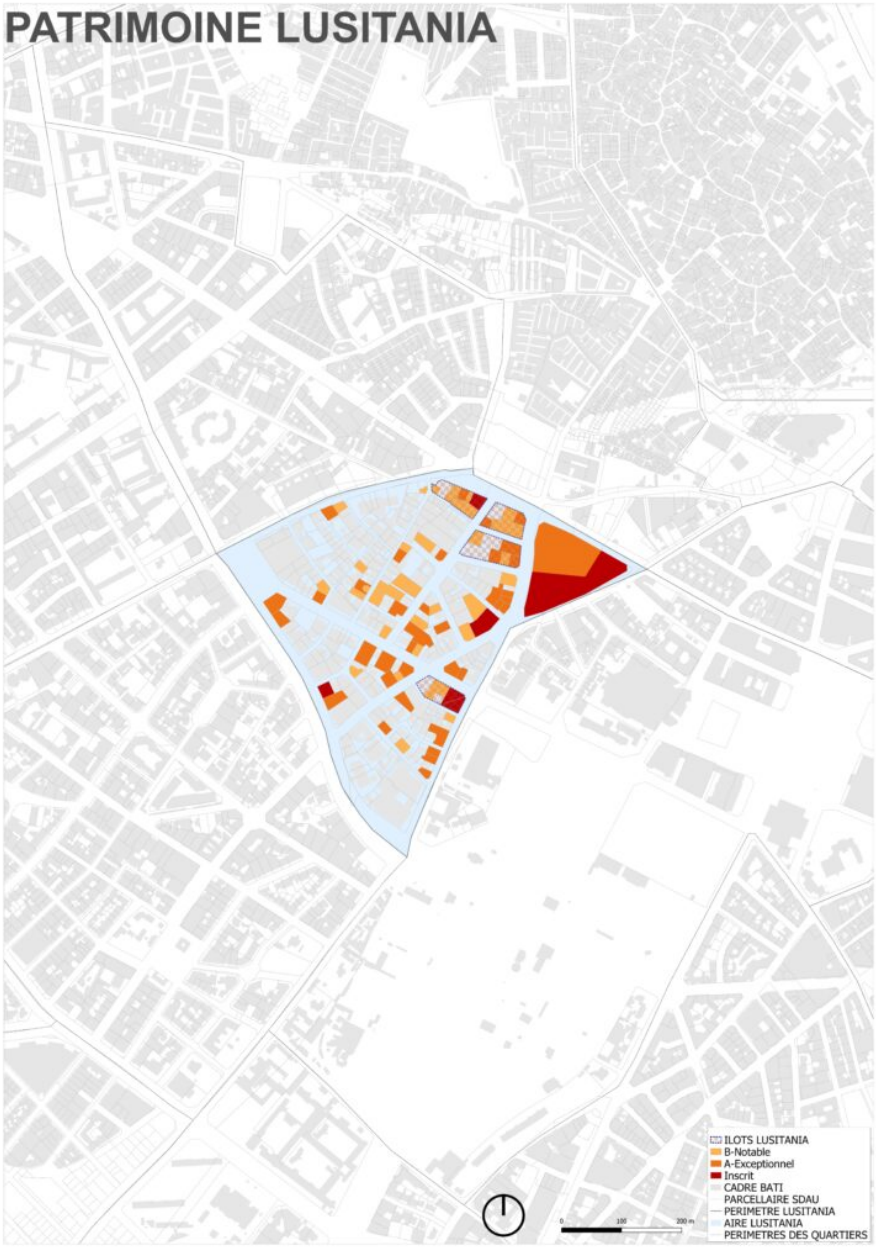

Fig. 37. Tarik Oualalou, Buildings of historical significance in the Lusitania quarter, 2019, Oualalou-Choi

These recent developments have been made possible by the encounter of scholarly research such as mine and civil society, mobilized by non-governmental organizations such as Casamémoire, created in 1995 in response to the destruction

of significant modern structures.[31] They provide a sound foundation for a possible application by the Moroccan government to put Casablanca on the UNESCO World Heritage list. The declaration that a city born out of colonization and built by the combined genius of Muslims, Jews, and many others, has, according to UNESCO's criteria, an "exceptional universal cultural value" would be a most significant move, and would respond to the immense love today's inhabitants of Casablanca and all members of its diaspora, beginning with Jews, feel for the white city.

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Keywords: Colonialism, Casablanca, Architecture, City-planning, Jews

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[31] Raffaele Cattedra, "La 'fabrication' du patrimoine comme construction de l'identité urbaine : L'exemple de Casablanca," in *Patrimoines en situation. Constructions et usages en différents contextes urbains: exemples marocains, libanais, égyptien et suisse*, eds. Raffaele Cattedra, Pascal Garret, Catherine Miller and Mercedes Volait (Beirut, Rabat: Presses de l'Ifpo, 2010), accessed June 30, 2021, http://books.openedition.org/ifpo/893.

In the Shadows of the Shoah and Apartheid: Recovering Traces of "Difficult Pasts" of German-Jewish Refugees in South Africa

by *Steven Robins*

Abstract

This paper investigates traces of German-Jewish refugee experiences in South Africa in the 1930s and the war years that have typically been left out of mainstream historical narratives and public discourses. It will draw on refugee life histories to investigate whether the concepts of "usable pasts" and "chosen amnesia" can help explain how and why references to widespread and virulent anti-Semitism and Nazism during the 1930s and 1940s receded from public discourse in the postwar era, a period characterized by rapprochement between South African Jews and the ruling National Party that came to power in 1948. The paper will also examine whether Jews' incorporation into the white social order of the apartheid system required "strategic forgetting" about the history of the National Party's support for Nazi Germany, its use of anti-Semitic rhetoric in the 1930s, and its advocacy for the 1938 Aliens Act that effectively ended Jewish immigration. Finally, the paper examines whether, during the apartheid years, this history became an "unusable past." The motivation for seeking to "recover" this unsettling past draws on Claudia Braude's observation that recollections of these "difficult pasts" of Jewish racial ambiguity can help deepen our understandings of the history of South African racism.

Introduction

"Celebratory" Meta-Narratives and Shadow Histories

Narrations of Refugee Experiences and National Integration

Searching for Traces of "Difficult" Refugee Pasts

Separation

Twixt and Between

Incorporation and Amnesia

Silence in my Father's House

Concluding Thoughts on Refugee Lives in the Shadow of the Shoah and Apartheid

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Introduction[1]

> An overall sketch of world historical production through time suggests that professional historians alone do not set the narrative framework in which their stories fit. Most often, someone else has already entered the scene and set the cycle of silences [...]. Silences enter the process of historical production at four crucial moments: the moment of fact creation (the making of *sources*); the moment of fact assembly (the making of *archives*); the moment of fact retrieval (the making of *narratives*); and the moment of retrospective significance (the making of *history* in the final instance).[2]

Scholarly studies of the experiences of German-Jewish refugees to South Africa have, since the 1950s, stressed a seemingly smooth and successful integration of these refugees into life in their host country.[3] While acknowledging encounters

[1] Acknowledgment: I would especially like to thank Marie-Pierre Ulloa, Deborah Posel and Sean Field for their helpful comments on earlier drafts of the paper as well as for their intellectual generosity, insights, and friendship. I would also like to thank the journal's anonymous reviewers for their constructive engagement with the paper.

[2] Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 26.

[3] Sarah Schwab, " 'No Single Loyalty': Processes of Identification amongst German-Jewish Refugees from Nazi Germany in South Africa," in *Refugees from Nazi-occupied Europe in British Overseas Territories*, eds. Swen Steinberg and Anthony Grenville, Series Yearbook of the Research

with pro-Nazi support and anti-Semitism in the 1930s, as well as initial financial and language difficulties, these historical narratives suggest that, during the postwar apartheid period, this group of over 6000 refugees was swiftly and seamlessly assimilated into white South African society. In the 1990s, historians began to systematically document the history of anti-Semitism in South Africa in the 1930s [4], but not much attention was given to the socio-psychological dimensions of the unsettling experiences of these refugees during this period. For instance, it is likely that these refugees would have experienced extreme forms of racialized exclusion from public life in Germany, followed by disorientating displacement and exile in South Africa, where pro-Nazi anti-Semitism was rife in the 1930s. They would also have discovered, after the war, the devastating losses of family members in Nazi-occupied Europe. Moreover, it was also only after the war that Jews were fully incorporated into white South African society. Yet, as we will see, these socially and psychically unmooring aspects of the German-Jewish refugee experience were typically excluded from the "celebratory" narratives of successful integration.[5]

This paper is concerned with the task of searching for traces of German-Jewish refugee experiences in South Africa in the 1930s and the war years that have typically been left out of mainstream historical narratives and public discourses. The paper will draw on refugee life histories to investigate whether the concepts

Centre for German and Austrian Exile Studies, Vol. 20 (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2020); Frieda Sichel, *From Refugee to Citizen: A Sociological Study of the Immigrants from Hitler's Europe who Settled in South Africa* (Cape Town-Amsterdam: A.A. Balkema, 1966); Jocelyn Hellig, "German Jewish Immigration to South Africa during the 1930s: Revisiting the Charter of the SS Stuttgart," *Jewish Culture and History* 11, no. 1-2 (2009): 124-138.

[4] Milton Shain, *The Roots of Antisemitism in South Africa* (Johannesburg: University of Witwatersrand Press, 1994); Id., *A Perfect Storm: Antisemitism in South Africa, 1930–1948* (Johannesburg-Cape Town: Jonathan Ball, 2015); Patrick J. Furlong, *Between Crown and Swastika: The Impact of the Radical Right on the Afrikaner Nationalist Movement in the Fascist Era* (Hanover-London: Wesleyan University Press, 1991), 41-43.

[5] Shula Marks, "Review: Apartheid and the Jewish Question. Reviewed Works: *Memories, Realities and Dreams. Aspects of the South African Jewish Experience* by Milton Shain and Richard Mendelsohn; *Community and Conscience: The Jews in Apartheid South Africa* by Gideon Shimoni," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 30, no. 4 (2004), Special Issue: *Writing in Transition in South Africa: Fiction, History, Biography* (2004): 889.

of "usable pasts"[6] and "chosen amnesia"[7] can help explain how and why references to anti-Semitism and Nazism during the 1930s and 1940s receded from public discourse in the postwar era, a period characterized by rapprochement between South African Jews and the ruling National Party that came to power in 1948. The paper will also examine whether Jews' incorporation into the white social order of the apartheid system required "strategic forgetting" about the history of the National Party's support for Nazi Germany, its use of anti-Semitic rhetoric in the 1930s, and its advocacy for the 1938 Aliens Act that effectively ended Jewish immigration. In other words, the paper will explore whether, during the apartheid years, this history became an "unusable past," one that had to be erased from collective memory and dominant historical narratives?[8] The motivation for seeking to "recover" this unsettling past draws on Claudia Braude's observation that recollections of the "difficult pasts" of Jewish racial ambiguity "can contribute towards deepening understanding of the history of South African racism."[9]

I have often wondered what German Jewish refugees such as my late father Herbert Leopold Robinski and his younger brother Artur experienced when they arrived in South Africa in 1936 and 1938 respectively, and immediately encountered widespread anti-Semitism and overt support for Germany and Nazism amongst National Party leaders and radical right-wing Afrikaner nationalist groups. I have also tried to imagine what my father must have felt about living in a country where the leadership of the National Party leadership that came to power in 1948 had not only supported Nazi Germany during the war, but was also responsible for pressuring the United Party Government to introduce restrictive immigration legislation in the 1930s that prevented him and his brother from rescuing their parents and siblings trapped in Berlin. I have also wondered how my father coped

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[6] Richard Mendelsohn and Milton Shain, "Constructing a Usable Past: History, Memory and South African Jewry in an Age of Anxiety," *Jewish Culture and History* 9, no. 2-3 (2007): 49-59.

[7] Susanne Buckley-Zistel, "Remembering to Forget: Chosen Amnesia as a Strategy for Local Coexistence in Post-Genocide Rwanda," *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 76, no. 2 (2006): 131-150. I am grateful to Sean Field for alerting me to this study.

[8] For an insightful account of the concept of "usable pasts" in histories of South African Jewry see Mendelsohn and Shain, "Constructing a Usable Past."

[9] Claudia Bathsheba Braude, *Contemporary Jewish Writing in South Africa: An Anthology* (Cape Town: David Philip, 2001), xii.

with the psychological consequences of his arrest and imprisonment by the Gestapo in Erfurt in 1933, followed by his discovery after the war of the tragic fate of his parents and siblings who were deported to Auschwitz and Riga. How did he come to terms with all of this, and why did he choose not to speak to me or my brother about it? Did he talk about this with his fellow German Jewish refugees in Port Elizabeth, and how did they live with the losses of family members? What I do know is that my father was confined for two years to a Tuberculosis sanitorium in the Northern Cape during the war years. As we will see, according to the medical reports summited to the Holocaust Restitution Office in Berlin after the war, this illness was a result of extreme psychological stress and anxiety my father experienced during the 1930s and the war years.

Fig. 1. Photo of my father in his later years, with his signature beret, Private Collection.

This study will seek to understand the refugee experiences of my father and his younger brother by drawing on material in the Robinski Archive, which consists of letters, photographs and documents deposited in the archives of the South African Holocaust & Genocide Centre (SAHGC) in Cape Town and the Jewish Museum in Berlin. The paper will investigate what these sources, and my own memories of my father and my uncle, can tell us about the complexities of

"successful integration" of German-Jewish refugees in a country undergoing its own racialized political transformations in the 1930s. I will analyze these refugee experiences in relation to dominant postwar narratives of integration that stressed the entrepreneurial and professional abilities, education, loyalty, civic-mindedness, and respectability of these mostly middle class German-Jewish refugees. This narrative, much like the historical accounts of the earlier arrival of East European Jews in South Africa, draws on fragments of the past to conjure up a useable narrative of a respectable and hardworking community. Although the paper focuses specifically on the role of historians, Michel-Rolph Trouillot reminds us that professional historians are by no means the sole participants in the production of narratives.[10] The following section briefly discusses the broader contours of the dominant narrative of Jewish immigration to South Africa from the 1880s onwards.

"Celebratory" Meta-Narratives and Shadow Histories

In a 2004 review of two seminal histories of Jews in South Africa,[11] the South African historian Shula Marks identified three "triumphalist meta-narratives" present in much of this literature: "The familiar 'from rags to riches' story, based on Jewish entrepreneurial drive and their respect for learning; their seamless sense of community and closely knit family life; and the myth of South Africa as the '*goldene medina*'—the gold state or utopia in which Jews experienced no antisemitism."[12] While Marks acknowledges that there is indeed some element of

[10] Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, 25. As Trouillot notes, "We cannot exclude in advance any of the actors who participate in the production of history or any of the sites where that production may occur. Next to professional historians we discover artisans of different kinds, unpaid or unrecognized field laborers who augment, deflect, or reorganize the work of the professionals as politicians, students, fiction writers, filmmakers, and participating members of the public."

[11] The two texts reviewed by Shula Marks are the following: Milton Shain and Richard Mendelsohn, *Memories, Realities and Dreams. Aspects of the South African Jewish Experience* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2002) and Gideon Shimoni, *Community and Conscience: The Jews in Apartheid South Africa* (New England: Brandeis University Press, 2003).

[12] Marks, "Review: Apartheid and the Jewish Question," 889. Marks identifies an additional post-apartheid celebratory narrative focused on "the role of specifically Jewish values in generating disproportionately large number of Jewish liberals and radicals in South Africa."

truth in all three narratives, she also notes that these narratives were thoroughly undermined, if not "demolished," by two South African historians in the 1980s: Charles Van Onselen and Riva Krut. These historians drew attention to aspects of the history of Jewish immigration to South Africa that had been excised from dominant narratives.

Marks notes that Van Onselen's seminal *Studies in the Social and Economic History of the Witwatersrand* [13] provided insights into Jewish involvement in the illicit economies of the booming mining city of Johannesburg in the late nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries, and drew attention to "the heterogenous origins, fractious class character and turbulence of the Jewish community of the Rand [Johannesburg]."[14] Similarly, Van Onselen's later book on the notorious Jewish criminal figure, Joseph Silver (1868-1918),[15] focuses on this outlaw's involvement in transnational organized crime, including prostitution rings and illegal liquor trade on the Rand mines. As Sally Swartz notes in a review of the book, its account of vulnerable Jewish women trapped and exploited in Silver's prostitution networks provides "*a little known shadow history of displaced Jews*, surviving on the edges of society, on the wrong side of the law" (emphasis added). While critical of certain aspects of the book, Swartz suggests that it could contribute towards correcting the sanitized narratives produced in response to "centuries of anti-Semitic prejudice."[16] In fact, Swartz's recent work has drawn attention to another "unusable past," the relatively unknown history of Jewish mental illness in the Cape Colony in the nineteenth century.[17]

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[13] Charles Van Onselen's three essays, "Randlords and Rotgut," "Prostitutes and Proletarians" and "Johannesburg's Jehus," in Id., *Studies in the Social and Economic History of the Witwatersrand, 1886-1914* (two volumes) *I. New Babylon* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1982). Van Onselen's later essay is "Jewish Marginality in the Atlantic World: Organised Crime in the Era of the Great Migrations, 1880-1914," *South African Historical Journal* 43 (November 2000): 96-137.

[14] Marks, "Review: Apartheid and the Jewish Question," 890.

[15] Charles Van Onselen, *The Fox and the Flies: The World of Joseph Silver, Racketeer and Psychopath* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2007).

[16] Sally Swartz, "Review: The Fox and the Flies: The World of Joseph Silver, Racketeer and Psychopath by Charles Van Onselen," *Kronos* 33 (2007): 269-274.

[17] Sally Swartz, *Homeless Wanderers: Movement and Mental Illness in the Cape Colony in the Nineteenth Century* (Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 2015).

Riva Krut's ground-breaking work in the mid-1980s also goes against the grain of triumphalist meta-narratives by questioning accounts of a homogenous Jewish community characterized by closely-knit family life. Instead, she draws attention to deep class and socio-cultural fractures within the Jewish community of Johannesburg between 1886-1914.[18] Krut also provides insights into the ways in which middle-class German, British and Cape Jews at the helm of the newly formed Jewish Board of Deputies in the early 1900s used communal institutions to systematically remove "any taint of the 'Peruvian' [Yiddish-speaking East European] from the South African Jew," who now became defined as white, urban, English-speaking, middle-class.[19] As Krut notes, the Board monitored anti-Semitism, directed East European Zionist socialism into a more acceptable politics and developed welfare and educational programs aimed at promoting Jewish "respectability."[20]

The historical writings of Van Onselen, Krut and Swartz question the dominant celebratory narrative by throwing light on excluded, shadow histories. Similarly, Milton Shain and Richard Mendelsohn's 2007 review of three seminal historical studies of Jews in South Africa published between 1930 and 1955,[21] notes that these influential texts conform to a meta-narrative of a "respectable past in an age of anxiety and vulnerability."[22] According to Shain and Mendelsohn, these texts mirror the desire of the communal leadership and the wider Jewish community for a certain type of "usable past"—one that recorded and celebrated Jews' respectability, industriousness, upward mobility, civic mindedness, loyalty and Zionist commitment. This meta-narrative of respectability was used as a "weapon in the arsenal of the community's self-defence against burgeoning antisemitism

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[18] Riva Krut, "Building a Home and a Community: Jews in Johannesburg, 1886-1914" (PhD thesis, University of London, 1986).

[19] Marks, "Review: Apartheid and the Jewish Question," 890.

[20] Ibid.

[21] The three texts that Mendelsohn and Shain refer to are: Louis Herman, *A History of the Jews in South Africa from Earliest Times to 1895* (London: Victor Gollanz, 1930); Israel Abrahams, *The Birth of a Community: A History of Western Province Jewry from Earliest Times to the End of the South African War, 1902* (Cape Town: Cape Town Hebrew Congregation, 1955); Gustav Saron and Louis Holz, eds., *The Jews in South Africa: A History* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1955).

[22] Mendelsohn and Shain, "Constructing a Usable Past."

that included the emergence of far-right radical organizations, inspired by Nazi forms and rhetoric."[23] However, the authors also note that such "usable pasts," crafted in the name of a safe and secure future, came at the cost of distortions and silences about a range of issues, including anti-Semitism, class struggle within the Jewish community, non and anti-Zionism, the struggle between Yiddishists and Hebraists, and Jewish criminality. Shain and Mendelsohn observe that the 1990s witnessed the forging of a new "usable past" for a post-apartheid future—one that celebrates the role of Jewish values that seemingly influenced the liberal and radical activism of Jews, including those Jewish communists who were once *persona non grata* within the Jewish establishment because of fear of reprisals by the apartheid state.[24] The notion of "usable pasts" is clearly helpful for identifying what gets included and excluded in historical accounts and public discourses. This paper will now turn to a discussion of the dominant narrative of the German-Jewish refugee experience in the 1930s, before turning to a discussion of searching for traces of its shadow history.

Narrations of Refugee Experiences and National Integration

In their studies of German Jewish immigration to South Africa during the 1930s, Frieda Sichel, Jocelyn Hellig and Sarah Schwab refer to accounts of the successful integration of refugees that conform in many respects to the kind of celebratory narratives of Jewish immigration to South Africa identified by Shula Marks.[25] For instance, Frieda Sichel's 1966 research on Johannesburg's refugees, entitled *From Refugee to Citizen*,[26] is a systematic sociological study on how their integration was facilitated by the establishment of "a close-knit community with its own German language synagogues and newspapers as well as various self-help organizations that provided important assistance for the immigrants who arrived with little to no financial means."[27] In the book, Sichel, who was herself a

[23] Ibid., 51.
[24] Ibid., 56.
[25] Sichel, *From Refugee to Citizen*; Jocelyn Hellig, "German Jewish Immigration to South Africa during the 1930s," 126; Schwab, " 'No Single Loyalty.' "
[26] Sichel, *From Refugee to Citizen.*
[27] Ibid., 68.

German-Jewish refugee, draws on detailed empirical data to substantiate her study's findings:

> This book deals with the problems involved in their migration: pulling up roots in their former homelands; retraining for life in the new country; adjusting to new economic, social and cultural conditions; taking root as citizens and finding a niche of their own in national life [...]. By and large, they were an educated and resourceful group of people, and they settled into diverse avenues of the South African economy. Some brought talents which were new to South Africa and pioneered branches of trade and industry which had not been effectively worked before. Some joined the learned professions and achieved eminence in medicine, law and academic life. Some went farming and brought Continental ingenuity to the problems of South Africa agriculture. Some were trained in the social sciences and brought improved concepts of welfare to South Africa [...]. They exhibited qualities which made for good citizenship: they were hard-working, conscientious, reliable. Accustomed in their countries of origin to cultured living, they helped to swell the audiences so necessary for the growth of music and theatre [...].[28]

Sichel's work was very influential in establishing the dominant narrative of successful integration. For instance, in her study of the circumstances surrounding the arrival in Cape Town in 1936 of over 500 German-Jewish refugees on board the SS Stuttgart, Joslyn Hellig cites the findings of Lawrence Schlemmer, one of the researchers involved in Sichel's 1966 study:

> The German Jewish refugees, according to Lawrence Schlemmer, integrated extremely well, largely because they were economically flexible and arrived at a fortunate time for the South African economy. Protests against the entry of Jewish immigrants belied the fact that the economy was ready to take off into self-sustained growth, and was ripe for large-scale entrepreneurial success. This group of immigrants, contrary to the

[28] Ibid., 68.

> popular view, was an asset to its country of adoption. Among the refugees were gifted intellectuals who contributed substantially to the arts, and a substantial number of them were successful in business, making a considerable contribution to the economy. They provided employment for 15,000 non-whites and 8,000 whites. Of male refugees, 46 per cent participated in the Second World War, either in the forces or in the Civic Guard. No less important, however, according to Schlemmer, were the everyday skills of good citizenship brought by the refugees. Among the reasons given by Schlemmer for the refugees' successful adaptation were their high educational achievements [and] Judaism's heavy emphasis on learning, and certain patterns of mother dominance, which are an important determinant of children's occupational achievement.[29]

Although Sichel's study emphasizes refugees' smooth integration into South African society, L. Hotz, another one of the contributors to the book, mentions in a single sentence that "the psychological climate in which the German-Jewish refugees found themselves on their arrival and in their years in South Africa was one of storm and stress."[30] Yet, as I will suggest below, the dominant narrative of integration screens out any references to anxiety and other psychological conditions and experiences of extreme stress. Neither does this narrative, and its endorsement in Sichel's study, engage with the many complexities, obstacles and ambiguities of these refugees' passages to whiteness and full citizenship in their host country.

Sarah Schwab observes that, from the end of the 1950s onwards, this sociologically-grounded narrative became a source of pride for Johannesburg's refugee community.[31] Schwab also notes that "although the immigrants' attitude towards South Africa initially oscillated between integration and alienation, in later years a narrative of integration and success became the dominant form of self-description, [and] this simplistic and indeed simplifying narrative of successful integration tended to downplay the ruptures, difficulties, failures and conflicts that formed

[29] Hellig, "German Jewish Immigration to South Africa during the 1930s," 126.
[30] Sichel, *From Refugee to Citizen,* 13.
[31] Schwab, " 'No Single Loyalty,' " 84.

part of the history of the refugees in South Africa."[32] As I will suggest later, when I discuss the refugee experiences of my father and his brother, this narrative of successful adaptation and integration also obscures the extent of the anxieties and psychological stress experienced during the 1930s and 1940s.

The narrative discussed above implies a smooth transition to civic citizenship and national belonging for the 6,500 German Jewish refugees who came to South Africa between 1933 and 1942. In certain respects, it shares some resemblance with the many studies of whiteness in North America, where it is often assumed that, following initial experiences of discrimination against working class European immigrants, the latter swiftly learned the racial codes required to "become white," and were subsequently seamlessly incorporated into white, middle-class society in their host countries.[33] Yet, as Riva Krut, Milton Shain, Sally Swartz and many others have demonstrated, this narrative does not accurately reflect the more complicated and ambiguous character of the integration of Jewish immigrants who came to South Africa during the first half of the twentieth century.

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[32] Ibid., 82.

[33] Since the 1990s, whiteness studies as a field has exploded all over the world, especially in North America. Karen Brodkin's *How Jews Became White Folks & What That Says About Race in America* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1998) and Noel Ignatiev's *How the Irish Became White* (New York-London: Routledge, 1995) are part of burgeoning body of literature on the making of whiteness in the context of European immigration to North America. See David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (London: Versa, 1991); Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998); Eric Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness: Jews, Race, and American Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); Marc Dollinger, *Black Power, Jewish Politics: Reinventing the Alliance in the 1960s* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2018); Cheryl Lynn Greenberg, *Troubling the Waters: Black-Jewish Relations in the American Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); Eric J. Sundquist, *Strangers in the Land: Blacks, Jews, Post-Holocaust America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008); Thomas Guglielmo, *White on Arrival: Italians, Race, Color and Power in Chicago, 1890-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Russell A. Kazal, *Becoming Old Stock: The Paradox of German-American Identity* (Princeton-Oxford: University of Princeton Press, 2004); Hasia R. Diner, "The World of Whiteness," *Historically Speaking* 9, no.1 (September-October 2007): 20-22.

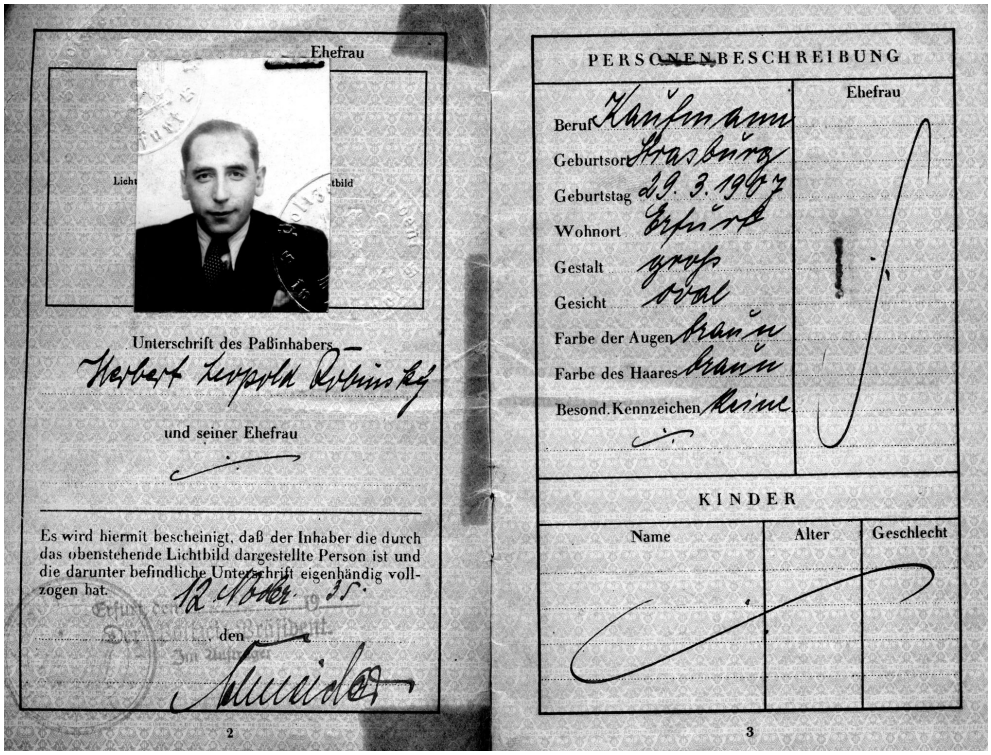

Fig. 2. My father's German passport that he used to leave Germany in 1936, Private Collection.

Following the broad contours of a whiteness studies approach, a recent study by Mitchell Joffe Hunter (2020) suggests that, despite initial discrimination and anti-Semitism directed against East European Jews who arrived in South Africa in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, by the 1920s Jews' racial status as "whites" was secure.[34] Hunter's Masters' dissertation, which draws on the earlier work of Riva Krut,[35] focuses on how, in the early 1900s, working-class Yiddish-speaking East European immigrants to South Africa came to embrace a political subjectivity, identity and ideology that endorsed, and was complicit with, the ideas and practices of white colonial identity and political subjectivity.[36] Like Krut's

[34] Mitchel Joffe Hunter, "Colonisers to Colonialists: European Jews and the Workings of Race as a Political Identity in the Settler Colony of South Africa" (Master diss., Department of Sociology, University of the Western Cape, 2020).

[35] Krut, "Building a Home and a Community."

[36] Like Krut, Hunter argues that this process of assimilation and incorporation into the white colonial social order was facilitated by the Anglo-German Jewish middle-class establishment and its communal institutions. For instance, in response to the 1902 Immigration Act, which required that immigrants had to be able to write in a European language, the leadership of the Jewish Board of Deputies and the South African Zionist Federation lobbied the colonial government for the

own work, Hunter shows how Jewish communal institutions such as the SAJBD sought to transform "unruly" East European Jews ("Peruvians") into "proper" white colonial subjects by inculcating the middle-class attitudes, appearance, habits, comportment and behaviors of bourgeois respectability. These interventions sought to challenge popular stereotypes and caricatures of "Peruvians" as dirty, unhygienic, sexually promiscuous, barbaric, racially degraded and unscrupulous traders involved in illicit alcohol and sex work industries.[37] By contrast to these accounts of East European immigration to South Africa, the celebratory histories of German-Jewish refugees tend to highlight their entrepreneurial, educated, cultured, middle-class and professional backgrounds—which is seen to account for why they came to be recognized as "assets," and were successfully integrated into white South African society. Clearly, historical narratives of East European and German Jewish immigration have taken very different directions and discursive forms, even though the narrative of successful integration characterizes both.

While these narratives of successful integration could be interpreted as assimilation into whiteness, Hasia R. Diner cautions against decontextualized and essentialist approaches that she finds in much of whiteness studies. [38] Diner does,

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recognition of Yiddish as a European language, thereby contributing towards securing the white racial status and citizen rights of East European Jewish immigrants. Yiddish, which was initially seen as a language of Asiatic origin, would now officially be recognized as "properly European."

[37] Hunter notes that the Jewish communal leadership also lobbied for the naturalization and citizenship of these immigrant Jews in ways that ended up colluding with colonial racial ideology. For instance, in the early 1900s "the Anglo-Jewish press argued that the otherwise barbaric Yidn was superior to the civilized Indian due to white skin and assimilability into settler colonialism" (Hunter, "Colonisers to Colonialists," 154). Immigrants were also exposed to the "pedagogy of racial capitalism" and learnt the colonial habitus and justificatory discourse for the exploitation of the labor and usurpation of the land of the indigenous Black population. It was through this refashioning of political subjectivity and identity, Hunter argues, that the transition from "colonizers to colonialists" took place.

[38] One of the influential texts in this genre is Brodkin's ethnography entitled, *How Jews Became White Folks & What That Says About Race in America*. Brodkin's ethnography, which draws on her own experiences and perceptions as an American Jew, questions what she calls the "model minority myth," arguing that the GI Bill and loans for houses from the Federal Housing Administration ensured the upward mobility and subsequent whitening" of American Jews. Brodkin also draws on W.E.B. Du Bois' (1903) concept of "double consciousness" to reflect on the persistent anxieties of Jews about "not being white enough." Salomon Gruenwald writes in a

however, acknowledge the contribution of whiteness studies in showing how European immigrants to the United States had to "earn and learn their whiteness":

> Scholars used whiteness as a way to explain a vast and complicated phenomenon, which involved simultaneously how European immigrants suffered the stigma of being considered by the large American public as somehow akin to or like black people, and how those immigrants came to learn America's racial rules and donned the trappings of whiteness by participating actively in anti-black behaviour and rhetoric.[39]

Diner concludes that the whiteness studies literature all too often resorts to sweeping generalizations, jargon and buzzwords, without adequate empirical grounding or recognition of the specificities of historical contexts and contingencies, agency and internal divisions within immigrant communities. She also suggests that much more attention needs to be paid to the fact that although immigrants "learned American truths about color and race, they learned those lessons as they dealt with, and struggled over, a series of other issues, most having nothing to do with the color." It is with this cautionary note in mind, that I will proceed to examine specific historical experiences of the Robinski brothers in South Africa.

These accounts of flight from Germany will also be analyzed in relation to the silences, excisions, elisions, and exclusions of the postwar narratives of successful integration. It will be suggested that the shadow histories of these immigration experiences—of anxiety, uncertainty and psychological trauma—have been systematically screened out of these postwar narratives through processes similar

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review that Brodkin's ethnography provides important insights into how "Jews' movement from racial other, to not-quite-white, to white, reveals how race in America is constructed in the discursive space opened by the binary between whiteness and blackness." Gruenwald enthusiastically endorses Brodkin's conclusion that "Jews did not become white because they succeeded in spite of racism, rather they succeeded because of white racism." See review by Salomon Gruenwald on http://afa.americananthro.org/book-review/how-jews-became-white-folks-what-that-says-about-race-in-america/. The review was posted by American Anthropology Association (AAA) Web Admin on Wednesday, August 8, 2011.

[39] Diner, "The World of Whiteness."

in certain respects to the "chosen amnesia" that Susanna Buckley-Zistel writes about in her account of how Rwandan local communities sought to forget the causes of the social cleavages that contributed to the genocidal violence of 1994.[40] It will be suggested that, similar to these Rwandan villagers, German-Jewish refugees, the Jewish communal leadership and South African Jews more generally, chose to forget this difficult past of the 1930s and 1940s in the name of national integration, cohesion and to cement Afrikaner-Jewish rapprochement.

Searching for Traces of "Difficult" Refugee Pasts

In 1998, I wrote an essay entitled, "Silence in My Father's House,"[41] in which I addressed silences about the Shoah in my family home in Port Elizabeth as well as issues relating to the silenced pasts that surfaced in the course of post-apartheid indigenous land restitution struggles and the Truth & Reconciliation Commission (TRC), which was underway in South Africa in the mid-1990s. At the time, I was writing op. ed newspaper articles on the TRC and I attended numerous hearings where I heard the anguished testimonies of family members of anti-apartheid activists who were murdered by security forces and who now demanded to know how their loved ones had been killed and where their bodies were. These testimonies on "gross human rights violations," which were legally defined as murder, abductions and torture, were spliced onto nation-building narratives of truth-telling, forgiveness and national reconciliation and healing after apartheid that at times obscured aspects of the personal testimonies. This appropriation and reframing of the testimonies was done in the name of the "New South Africa." Moreover, the exclusive focus on extreme forms of political violence against anti-apartheid activists also side-lined and obscured the "ordinary," everyday suffering that millions of black South Africans endured during apartheid—experiences of bureaucratic violence, racial discrimination, land dispossession, forced removals and racialized poverty—what I referred to,

[40] Buckley-Zistel, "Remembering to Forget."

[41] Steven Robins, "Silence in My Father's House: Memory, Nationalism and Narratives of the Body," in *Negotiating the Past: The Making of Memory in South Africa*, eds. Carli Coetzee and Sarah Nuttal (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1998), 120-142.

following Hannah Arendt, as the "banality of apartheid." In other words, in the name of national integration and reconciliation, the TRC unwittingly rendered mute the voices of millions of black South Africans who were exposed to these mundane, daily realities of apartheid.

Writing about the TRC had sensitized me to my father's own silences about his family's fate in Nazi Germany and, almost two decades later, I wrote about that silenced past in *Letters of Stone: From Nazi Germany to South Africa*.[42] In the book, I wrote about how, soon after my father's arrival in Cape Town in 1936, my father set about trying to rescue his younger brother, Artur, from Berlin. This proved to be extremely difficult as many countries, including South Africa, had already shut their doors to German Jews. Immigrating to the United States was almost impossible due to the 1924 Immigration Restriction Act, and in 1937 the Aliens Act effectively shut South Africa's doors to Jewish immigration.[43] However, my father did manage to facilitate his brother Artur's passage to South Africa in 1938. Artur spent a few weeks in South Africa before he had to leave for Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), where he was once again denied permanent residence, and he eventually ended up in Ndola in Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia). The two brothers did everything possible to try to rescue their younger sister Edith, but they were unsuccessful due to restrictive immigration laws.

[42] Steven Robins, *Letters of Stone: From Nazi Germany to South Africa* (Cape Town: Penguin Random House Publishers South Africa, 2016).

[43] For a detailed and systematic account of the response of the Jewish Board of Deputies to rising anti-Semitism within the Afrikaner National Party from the 1930s to the late 1970s see Atalia Ben-Meir, "The South African Jewish Board of Deputies and Politics, 1930-1978" (PhD diss., University of Natal, 1995).

Fig. 3. My Uncle Artur and Aunt Edith in Berlin in the mid-1930s, Private Collection.

As I will discuss later, this failure to rescue Edith and the rest of the family in Berlin must surely have triggered debilitating feelings of guilt, grief and despair. I have speculated that this contributed towards my father's retreat into silence as well as the dramatic deterioration of his health, which confined him to a TB sanitorium for two years during the war. As we will also see, in correspondence with family members during the war years, he writes about losing his hair and having psychological difficulties. Were there any possibilities of speaking about these kinds of refugee experiences and emotional and psychological difficulties during this pre-trauma counselling era? It was only much later, from the 1970s onwards,

that Holocaust survivor testimony and trauma counselling became more mainstream. However, by reading between and beyond the lines of the letters from my grandmother to my father and his younger brother, I have been able to glimpse traces of these experiences of refugees who lived in the shadow of the Shoah. Before turning to a discussion of my father's silences, the following section will focus on the three stages of the refugee experience of refugees such as Artur Robinski, namely, separation from German society; liminal status as a stateless refugee betwixt and between home and exile; and finally, incorporation as a white settler in the host country.

Separation

From 1933 onwards, the Robinski family, like all German Jews, were exposed to a relentless stream of racial ordinances that impacted upon the minutiae of their daily lives. These laws contributed towards the slow and systematic stripping down of Berlin's Jews of their property, professions, livelihoods, dignity and citizenship. This also resulted in a radical rupture from intimate and convivial relations with non-Jewish friends, work colleagues, as well as exclusion from familiar social, recreational and public spaces in the city. The home, the Jewish community center, and the synagogue became some of the only sanctuaries from the open hostility and dangers of the streets and public spaces. It was this radical expulsion from public life that characterized the experiences of German-Jewish refugees prior to their departure to a life in exile.

Drawing on the diaries of Victor Klemperer and Willy Cohn, the Israeli scholar Guy Miron provides important insights into the spatial and temporal dimensions and consequences of the increasing confinement of middle class, professional German Jews to the private, domestic space of the home during the Nazi period.[44] The diary writers reflect upon the debilitating psychological effects of many years of waiting, seclusion and exclusion from public spaces and sociality, and how this

[44] See Guy Miron, " 'The Politics of Catastrophe Races On. I Wait.' Waiting Time in the World of German Jews Under Nazi Rule," *Yad Vashem Studies* 43, no. 1 (2015): 45-76. Id., " 'Lately, Almost Constantly, Everything Seems Small to Me': The Lived Space of German Jews under the Nazi Regime," *Jewish Social Studies: History, Culture, Society* 20, no. 1 (Fall 2013): 121-149.

contributed to terrible feelings of loneliness, mood swings, a sense of "time standing still," and paralyzing feelings of being totally cut-off from what was happening in the world. This enforced withdrawal into private, domestic space was also experienced as an unnerving exclusion from participation in ordinary civic life. Frieda Sichel provides similar accounts of these processes of separation in her opening chapter on "The Nazi Terror" in her book, *From Refugee to Citizen*.

It was within this context of systematic Nazi terror in Berlin's streets and public spaces that Cecilie Robinski's role as homemaker and convenor of the daily rituals of domestic life became so important. Her letters, which I write about in great detail in *Letters of Stone*, reveal her stoic efforts to stitch together the social fabric of a working-class family torn apart by the fragmenting force of racial laws that impinged on every aspect of their lives, confining them to the ever-constricting space of the home. Cecilie writes extensively about the family's desperate efforts to emigrate as well as reporting on shopping for clothes, birthdays, Jewish festivals, card games and family gatherings for coffee and cake.[45] These mundane rituals and domestic routines of daily existence provide a portal into Cecilie Robinski's resilient attempts to repair, maintain and anchor the family, and thereby provide them with a semblance of security and familial sociality within the home. These rituals of daily life sought to counter the daily terror taking place outside the home. This was the terrifying world that my father escaped in 1936 and Artur fled in 1938. The traumatic memories of this world would later be screened out of the sanitized accounts of how these refugees became "assets" to their host countries and successfully integrated as respectable citizens in their new societies.

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[45] See Robins, *Letters of Stone* for detailed accounts of these daily rituals of domesticity. In her letters to her sons, Cecilie Robinski's descriptions of quotidian domesticity would often suddenly be punctuated by a single, short, chilling sentence alluding to the latest disastrous development, for instance, the deportation of a family member. On November 31, 1938, two weeks after Kristallnacht, she writes: "Horst is in Dachau and Hermann in Sachsenhausen." A day earlier, her daughter, Edith had written to my father, Herbert, about the impact of the Kindertransports after Kristallnacht: "The community is dissolving, and one does not know how long the school will continue to function [...]. The size of my class shrinks continuously because many children leave for Holland or other countries. Actually, one can only be happy for them, although for us this marks the beginning of the end." In a later letter she states in a single sentence, "Norbert, Uncle Hermann and Horst are still sick," a reference to their internment in concentration camps following Kristallnacht, when Jewish men were arrested in their thousands.

Twixt and Between

When Artur set sail from Hamburg in 1938, he had already experienced five years of racialized exclusion and separation in Berlin. Leaving Germany was both promising and full of uncertainty and trepidation. He had no way of knowing whether he would ever be able to return to Germany or see his friends and family again. His mother had hoped that he would be able to stay with his older brother Herbert in Port Elizabeth once he landed there. Cecilie Robinski's letters to Artur reveal a deep anxiety about what will await him in the unknown continent of Africa. He had left all that was familiar and had no certainty that he would be allowed to stay with his brother in Port Elizabeth.

Artur was given a temporary residence permit to stay in Port Elizabeth for two months. Despite his concerns about where he would be allowed to settle, in his October 30, 1938 letter to his former Berlin colleagues, he conveyed exuberance and hope about his newfound freedom. He describes in some detail his two days in Cape Town, which he calls "the second most beautiful city after Rio." He writes about the signs of wealth and the modern urban character of his next port of call, his brother's city of Port Elizabeth, which he describes as "a little New York."

In his letters to his former Berlin colleagues sent from Cape Town, Artur comes across as a fine observer of white South African life. He describes in detail, and with a certain degree of parody, the 1938 centenary celebrations of the Voortrekkers' Great Trek, an important ritual spectacle of the emerging Afrikaner Nationalist movement.

> In the coming weeks, a huge celebration will take place, to commemorate the great journey which the Boers undertook with their ox wagons in 1838 in search of new land and to establish farms. So ox-wagons will be driven along the same roads as part of the centenary celebrations. Because these people, called Voortrekkers, once had long beards, in commemoration the Dutch [Afrikaners] will also grow beards, which looks ludicrous. The English people seem quite tolerant of this [...].

Artur seems to find these commemorative rituals eccentric and quaint. But he also perceives worrying resonances between these exuberant displays of Afrikaner nationalism and other forms of ominous flag-waving back home in Germany—a similarity that increased his fears that the Nazi threat was not confined to Europe. In 1938 he writes to his former colleagues in Berlin: "After the political experiences lately in this regard only bad things are to be expected. Why not here? The soil for this is fertile." Artur had arrived in South Africa during the run-up to the 1938 national elections, and right-wing Afrikaner nationalists were busy targeting Jews for being pro-English liberals, harbingers of international Jewish communism, and economic parasites who sucked the blood out of poor white Afrikaners.[46]

The year of Artur's arrival also witnessed the emergence of a new paramilitary fascist movement, the Ossewabrandwag (Oxwagon Sentinel). This organization, founded by Oswald Pirow, identified Jewish money and Jews' supposed allegiances with the British, Freemasons, imperialists and capitalists, as some of the biggest threats facing Afrikaners at the time. By 1941, the Ossewabrandwag would claim a membership of 300,000, which included its paramilitary elite unit, the Stormjaers. Pirow had also founded the pro-Nazi Nuwe Orde (New Order), and, two weeks after Kristallnacht in Berlin in November 1938, he visited Hitler at his Berghof in Berchtesgaden. Given all these dangers looming on the horizon, Artur's relief is palpable when he writes to his former Berlin colleagues that he feels fortunate to be leaving for Southern Rhodesia.

Shirli Gilbert has noted that throughout the 1930s and during the war years, Jewish activists, rabbis, journalists and members of communal organizations such as the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) had made impassioned public statements against the rise of Nazism, with some drawing parallels between what was happening to Jews in Nazi Germany and forms of anti-Semitism and racism in South Africa at the time.[47] They spoke out especially strongly against the support for Nazi Germany amongst far-right Afrikaner nationalist groups such as

[46] Milton Shain, *The Roots of Antisemitism in South Africa;* Id., *A Perfect Storm.*

[47] Shirli Gilbert, "Jews and the Racial State: Legacies of the Holocaust in Apartheid South Africa, 1945-60," *Jewish Social Studies* 16, no. 3 (2010): 32-64.

the Greyshirts, the Blackshirts, the South African Fascists, [48] the Ossewabrandwag and the Nuwe Orde, as well as amongst leaders of the then political opposition, D.F. Malan's Purified National Party. [49] Yet, as Gilbert observes, "despite the pervasiveness of Nazism in South African public discourse, there has been little scholarly discussion of Holocaust memory as it has developed there over the course of more than five decades."[50] It was only in the 1990s, that historians such as Milton Shain and Patrick J. Furlong began to systematically research this turbulent period in the 1930s, which Shain and Mendelsohn have described as an "age of anxiety" for South African Jews.[51] Yet, as Gilbert noted, throughout most of the apartheid period, the SAJBD and most Jewish studies scholars turned away from engaging with this "difficult past" and focused instead on increasingly narrow Jewish concerns.

The striking resonances between Nazism in Germany and right-wing Afrikaner nationalism was no doubt a frightening reminder to Artur that he had not entirely escaped the dangers he fled. As he writes in a letter sent from Port Elizabeth to his former Berlin colleagues on October 30, 1938:

> Everything that was before lies far behind and I do not know whether others feel the same way as I do. But today I am unable to understand how people can still live in G[ermany]. And when someone asks me here, how the Jews actually live in G? then I do not know what to reply. I feel great

[48] In 1934, Reverend Abraham Levy of the Western Road Synagogue in Port Elizabeth brought a libel suit against the South African Fascists leader, Johannes Strauss von Moltke. Von Moltke had used a variant of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion conspiracy theory to allege that Jews were conspiring against white, Christian South Africans. Rev. Levy ultimate won the case. For a detailed account of the court case, and the politics of Afrikaner nationalism in the 1930s, see Furlong, *Between Crown and Swastika*, 41-43.

[49] Ibid., 33.

[50] Gilbert, "Jews and the Racial State," 32.

[51] Mendelsohn and Shain, "Constructing a Usable Past." Since the 1990s, historians such as Shain and Furlong have written extensively about anti-Semitism and far-right Afrikaner nationalism in South Africa in the 1930s and 1940s, but during the apartheid period this past was largely forgotten, partly due to the rapprochement between the National Party and South African Jews that began in 1948. See Milton Shain, *The Roots of Antisemitism in South Africa*; Id., *A Perfect Storm*. For a detailed account of the impact of the far-right, pro-Nazi, Afrikaner nationalist movement see Furlong, *Between Crown and Swastika.*

> sympathy for all those who still have to live there, submitted to all the pressures, afraid, after [reading] each sentence in a newspaper and listening to each speech and figure of speech, to hear whether this will bring new punishments. I am asked of the state of mind of the people who have to endure such a nerve-wracking atmosphere and I do not know what to say to that. It just is to no avail [...].

Artur's letter, written two weeks after Kristallnacht, conveys a palpable sense of dread about the fate of his family trapped in Berlin. He had possibly also experienced similar displays of anti-Semitism in South Africa during his brief stay there in 1938.[52] The following lengthy excerpt from Furlong's 1991 book *Between the Crown and Swastika* vividly conveys the virulence of anti-Semitism that German-Jews like Artur probably witnessed in South Africa in the 1930s:

> On 15 November 1934 yet another leading moderate in the Purified [National] Party, A.L. Geyer, editor of *Die Burgher*, launched an outspoken attack on "Hoggenheimer," a mythical ludicrously fat and cigar-smoking stereotype of Jewish capitalism long popular among Afrikaner nationalists [...]. Under the title "The Chief Enemy in the National Struggle," Geyer contrasted "Hoggenheimer" to the Imperialist, who was obsessed with the love of another country, Britain: "But Hoggenheimer has no patriotism and no National feeling at all. Not the interests of the volk nor even of humanity, but self-seeking and own interests pure and simple control his actions. The Dark Money-Power is a tumour in the body of the capitalist system." [...]. By late 1934, the [Black and Grey] shirt movements had created an atmosphere of hysteria against Jews that could not be ignored by the Nationalists, and which explains

[52] For a detailed account of Jewish immigration policies and nationalist politics in South Africa in the 1930s, see Chapter 2 in Furlong's, *Between Crown and Swastika*. Furlong observes that during this period, D.F Malan's Purified National Party, the official opposition at the time, was following closely on the heels of the far-right Greyshirts in intensifying its anti-Semitic populist rhetoric. In 1937, following a marked increase in German Jewish immigration in 1936 after the passing of the 1935 Nuremberg Laws, the United Party under Jan Smuts responded to the groundswell of anti-Jewish popular sentiment by introducing immigration legislation that effectively prevented German Jews from entering the country.

> Geyer's attack. In Johannesburg the streets were filled with anti-Semitic posters in Afrikaans bearing the swastika. Jewish refugees from Germany were horrified to find the streets of Cape Town similarly littered with Greyshirt newspaper posters adorned with the headline posters adorned with the headline: "[...] Jews indecently assault white girls."[53]

Given these developments, it is perhaps hardly surprising that Artur was relieved to depart from South Africa in late 1938. While Artur had expected to find a better reception in Southern Rhodesia, this was not to be—he was not allowed to stay there, and had to move to Northern Rhodesia, where he finally settled. But even there, he encountered wartime anti-Semitism. Although he now had refuge, his identity as a German Jewish refugee in Northern Rhodesia soon came under intense scrutiny. On August 7, 1940, Artur wrote a letter to the editor of *The Northern Rhodesia Advertiser* responding to the newspaper's questioning of German Jews' loyalty to Northern Rhodesia, and to the war against Germany:

> Sir—Since a few months your paper has questioned the loyalty of the German Jewish Refugees to this country. A few days ago some local groups have adopted the same outlook, and I would appreciate the courtesy of giving some space in your paper for removing some misapprehension likely to confuse and distort the facts. Your paper calls us "Germans" and "enemies," implying that we are the same brand of Germans who are out to destroy the British Empire. This is the first fallacy. We have been the first and foremost enemies of Nazi-Germany, fighting for the principles of democracy and liberalism, with the result that we became the first refugees from that country. How can a sensible man believe us to be all of a sudden enemies of a British country? [...]. No—the refugees do not belong to the fifth column. They do not throw [bombs] into crowded buildings and streets, they do not attack the British Empire in newspapers and meetings, they do not clamour for peace with the Nazis and Fascists. They are those who know best what Fascism means. They

[53] Ibid., 36-37.

> have been at war with Hitler since 10 years, and must necessarily be friends with everybody who fights against the same enemies [...].

The suspicion of German Jews in Northern Rhodesia echoed events in Britain, where fears of a "fifth column" led to the indiscriminate internment and deportation of European Jews from both Britain and the British Protectorate of Palestine. During the late 1930s and into the war years, Artur Robinski may have experienced a sense of racial ambiguity as a result of his precarious national belonging. This was a time when notions of British racial purity and superiority were taken-for-granted, and European Jewish immigrants were not seen to be "white enough" by the colonial authorities and the white establishment. In 1939, a year after his arrival in South Africa, and in the aftermath of the November 1938 Kristallnacht pogrom, 300 German Jews and 100 Jews from the Baltic states arrived in Northern Rhodesia.[54] This doubling of the country's Jewish population triggered anti-Semitic sentiments, and the question of Jewish immigration was hotly debated in the Legislative Council. As Hugh Macmillan writes on this period:

> The question of Jewish immigration was debated in the Legislative Council and the country was compelled by the Colonial Office to consider the possibility of a large-scale German Jewish agricultural settlement scheme. Many of the refugees who reached Northern Rhodesia at this time were people with relatives in South Africa and Southern Rhodesia who could not get permits to stay in those countries. Although Northern Rhodesia provided a refuge of last resort to these people, anti-Semitic feeling was widespread within the settler population. When the British government was faced with the problem in June 1941 of evacuating about 600 Jews, 500 Poles and 400 British citizens from the Mediterranean island of Cyprus that was threatened by German invasion, all the east African territories were asked to help out. Northern Rhodesia's acting Governor offered to take 500 people in the first instance. His telegram,

[54] Hugh Macmillan, "From Race to Ethnic Identity: South Central Africa, Social Anthropology and the Shadow of the Holocaust," *Social Dynamics* 26, no. 2 (2000): 87-115; 99.

> however, contained one significant reservation: "Owing to strong local antipathy to Jewish refugees I should be glad if Poles and Britishers only were allowed here."[55]

Like German Jewish refugees settling in South Africa during the 1930s, Artur probably counted himself fortunate to be allowed to stay in Northern Rhodesia. But it was only in the postwar period that he, like so many other German-Jews, would have experienced a sense of full incorporation into white colonial society.

Incorporation and Amnesia

As we have seen, numerous scholars have documented how Eastern European Jewish immigrants arriving in Cape Town were initially seen by the white colonial establishment as undesirable foreigners. This was still an age of imperialism in which Social Darwinist ideas about the superiority of the Anglo-Saxon, British "race" flourished. Although many of the more established, middle class Anglo-Jews had managed to insert themselves into the colonial social order some time earlier, it took longer for East European immigrants to be incorporated into English-speaking, middle-class white society. We have also seen how the rapid upward mobility of Jewish immigrants triggered deep resentment and anti-Semitism among poor white Afrikaners who had lost land and livelihoods during the economic crises of the 1920s. The resentment of Jewish control over commerce in the small rural towns and cities was mobilized in the 1930s and 1940s by the Nazi-supporting Afrikaner leadership, including National Party leaders such as D. F. Malan, H. F. Verwoerd, and B. J. Vorster, all of whom were to become prime ministers after the National Party came to power in 1948.[56]

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[55] Ibid.

[56] These National Party leaders were also successful in lobbying for the 1937 Aliens Act that ultimately prevented German Jewish refugees from entering South Africa in the late 1930s and early 1940s. In 1936, a group of Professors at my university had organized large protests when *The Stuttgart*, a ship with more than 500 German Jewish refugees, tried to dock in Cape Town harbor. It was only after the National Party came to power in 1948 that Prime Minister D. F. Malan reaffirmed Jews' status as "proper whites."

Germany's defeat in 1945 changed everything. The exposure of the death camps, and international condemnation of what had happened to European Jews, convinced Malan's National Party to bury its earlier flirtations with Nazism and invite Jews into the white laager; the National Party now saw its task as enlisting all whites into a singular racial bloc in order to face the challenge of the "Native Question."[57] With this secure status came a sense amongst individual Jews and the leadership of communal institutions that memories of National Party anti-Semitism, anti-Jewish immigration laws, and pro-Nazi support during the 1930s and 1940s were no longer a "'usable past." Incorporation for the German-Jewish refugees entailed amnesia and a wholesale embrace of the postwar narrative of "successful integration." It was only in the 1990s, at the start of the post-apartheid period, that German-Jewish refugee experiences from the 1930s and 1940s began to be foregrounded in public exhibitions and documentary films. In fact, it was during my visit to Myra Osrin, then director of the South African Holocaust & Genocide Centre, that it was proposed to have the first SAHGC exhibition on German-Jewish refugees entitled, *Seeking Refuge*. Yet, despite the post-apartheid attention to German-Jewish refugee experience in the scholarly literature and exhibitions, not much has been written about the psychological consequences of the emotional turmoil, trauma and anxieties of these refugees. The following account, based on my father's experiences during the 1930s and war years, is a very provisional attempt to engage with this shadow side of the "triumphalist" narratives of successful integration that have dominated accounts of German-Jewish refugees in South Africa.[58]

Silence in my Father's House

Fragmentary anecdotal accounts of the experiences of my father, Herbert Robinski, in Port Elizabeth during the war years provide glimpses into what this

[57] This change in the National Party's approach facilitated Jews' stronger sense of citizenship and national belonging even though "complications" arose as a result of the disproportionate presence of radical Jews in the South African Communist Party (SACP) and the national liberation struggle. By the early late 1950s and 1960s, however, most Jewish communists were either in prison or in exile, and mainstream Jewry enjoyed their full membership within white fold.

[58] This section draws explicitly from my book *Letters of Stone*.

period of extreme crises must have been like for German-Jewish refugees in Southern Africa and elsewhere in the world. In 2013, a relative of my father, the late Judge Harold Levy, recalled to me how as a twelve-year-old he spent time in the company of bridge-playing German Jewish refugees in his mother's Port Elizabeth home. Harold told me that my father and his refugee friends would huddle around the radio to get news from the front. Harold mentioned that my father would become extremely agitated whenever one of Hitler's speeches was broadcast or a German military advance was reported. Harold also recalled that Ewald Nagel, a pessimistic man who was a relative of my father's and part of this small group of bridge-playing refugees, believed that Germany's military superiority would lead to their victory in the war; but my father still had hope that the Allies could win. I can only imagine how he must have felt each time he heard of the seemingly invincible German army's victories. It is hardly surprising that his health took a turn for the worse in 1940.

Harold's mother Hetty had worked tirelessly alongside my father to get his sister Edith out of Germany, and Harold vividly recalled the day my father told her that their efforts had been in vain and that Edith had been deported to Auschwitz. My father must have been devastated, but he probably felt he could not afford to dwell for too long on what had happened to his sister. On June 29, 1943, one month before Edith's deportation, Herbert had received a letter from Rudi Robinski, his cousin in Stockholm, in which Rudi described in an almost matter of fact manner that his family had been deported to the death camps. He then proceeded to propose a joint business venture:

Stockholm, 29.6.43
Bergsgatan 9 Stockholm

Dear Herbert,

You will perhaps be surprised to receive this letter from me. First of all, I can inform you that my sister Edith and my brother-in-law have also been deported a while ago, so I no longer correspond with Berlin. My parents have, as you perhaps already know, suffered the same fate. Should I, against all expectations, hear something about your relatives, I will inform you immediately.

> The actual reason for this letter is of a business nature. I wished to request you to investigate, whether there are pelt firms (en gros or detail) over there who would wish to have a connection with Stockholm [...].

Rudi Robinski's letter to my father in 1943 offers a glimpse into the inner worlds of many German-Jews who escaped Nazi Europe but were unable to recue family members. It hints at a sense of fatalism amongst those refugees who felt that they could not afford to dwell on their unspeakable losses and grief. I think my father probably responded in a similar way.

To the children and grandchildren of survivors who are seen to be part of the "postmemory generation" that Marianne Hirsch writes about,[59] or those Eva Hoffman calls the "hinge generation,"[60] positioned between experience and memory of the Holocaust, it may seem strange that survivors would "choose to forget" or remain silent about their traumatic experiences. From the perspective of survivors, however, strategic forgetting and silence were probably seen to be vital for repairing and rebuilding their lives from the ruins of the catastrophe. I have none of the letters my father sent to his family in Berlin, and he never spoke to me about psychic suffering during the 1930s and the postwar years—so, I have no direct access to his state of mind at the time. Neither do I know whether he chose to forget and retreated into silence as a defense mechanism or coping strategy. But there is a medical history, recorded in correspondence and documentation that my father submitted to Berlin's United Restitution Organization office at Helmstedter Strasse 5 in the 1960s, that testifies to the bodily consequences of the extreme pressure and anxiety he endured.

In an enclosure attached to a letter to a Mr H. Bergheim in Port Elizabeth on 24 February 1967, my father provides details about his medical history. This information was probably needed to complete the forms that Bergheim submitted

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[59] Marianne Hirsch, *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative and Postmemory* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012); Id., *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).

[60] Eva Hoffman, *After Such Knowledge: Memory, History, and the Legacy of the Holocaust* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004).

to Berlin's restitution office on his behalf. It summarizes a number of medical conditions that are to be listed in the form:

> Catarrhal bronchitis in 1934 after release from prison in Erfurt; Tuberculosis in 1939 by extreme cough and haemorrhage; Hypertension in 1939 extreme nervousness & irritability; and Diabetes in 1942 [with] fainting spells.

This is followed by a short sentence: "The fear for life and the spell in prison." The document then provides a brief history of treatment: the bronchitis was treated in Erfurt in 1934 until he emigrated in 1936; TB treatment began in Port Elizabeth with a Dr Robertson, and in September 1944 my father was admitted to the TB sanatorium in Nelspoort in the Northern Cape. He spent the rest of the war years there and was eventually discharged in January 1947. Thereafter he was treated at the Donkin Hospital in Port Elizabeth until May 1950. In 1967, when this restitution documentation was being prepared, his general practitioner, Dr Aaron Gordon, was taking care of his health. In an undated letter, Dr Gordon testifies to my father's poor health in the 1940s:

> Mr H.L. Robins has been a patient of mine for the past fifteen years. He was treated for pulmonary tuberculosis in Port Elizabeth and at Nelspoort Sanatorium from 1940 onwards. At first he was hospitalized and had complete bed-rest. He also had streptomycin paz and I.N.H. Tablets. He still has a great deal of catarrhal bronchitis. Mr. Robins also suffers from diabetes and hypertension. As a result of all these conditions Mr. Robins health and normal expectancy of life have in my opinion been considerably diminished. I estimated that impairment of his working capacity to be more than 50%.

In 2019, I was given access to my father's reparations files which are lodged in the Restitution Office in Berlin. I was able to read how in the 1960s German medical and legal officials had scrutinized and thrown doubt upon his claim that he had first acquired TB while in prison in Erfurt in 1933. Submitting the documentation for reparations meant that he had to provide exhaustive personal information on

his parents, David and Cecilie Robinski, and their children, Siegfried, Edith and Hildegard. Surely my father and his brother must have suffered psychologically by having to relive the trauma of their loss throughout this lengthy bureaucratic procedure of filling in forms about the minutiae of the lives of their deceased parents and siblings.


Kontroll- Nº 408

Jüdischer Kulturbund Erfurt

Geschäftsstelle Karthäuserring 14

Fernsprecher 22259

Mitgliedskarte

für das Bundesjahr 1935/36

Eigenhändige Unterschrift des Inhabers:

Herbert Robinski

Name:

Ort: Erfurt

Straße: Schmidtstedter Ufer

Fig. 4. My father's 1935/36 membership of the Jewish Cultural Organization in Erfurt, Private Collection.

My grandmother never mentions my father's illnesses or state of mind in her letters, so I assume he never told her about it at the time. Given the profound concern and protectiveness she always displayed in her letters to her sons in Africa, I presume she would have been very worried about Herbert's health had she known. Herbert may have felt he had no grounds for complaint since he was safe in South Africa, and probably didn't want his family to worry about him. Like his mother, he too had to be silent and stoic. However, he did mention to his aunt Frieda Finkelstein, who had escaped to Bolivia in 1939, that his hair was falling out, to which she responded in a letter to him in early 1943: "Do not worry if you lose your hair; most importantly one should be in good health." My assumption is that his hair was falling out because of extreme stress. My father's poor health in the 1940s suggests to me that the relentless pressure he faced trying to get his family out of Germany was too great for his body to bear. When he was admitted to the

sanatorium in September 1944, less than two years after his family's deportation, he must have felt even more helpless and distressed. It would take him time to recover from these ordeals, and marriage and starting a family had to wait until a decade after the war ended.

Fig. 5. My father and mother on their wedding day in 1955, Private Collection.

Letters sent to my father from friends and relatives after the war suggest that what happened to him and his family in Berlin had left him shattered. The South African researcher on Lithuanian Jewry, Claudia Braude, found Jewish Board of Deputies documents and letters from 1944 and 1945 that reveal that South African Jews were crushed when they received the Red Cross telegrams informing them what happened to their relatives. Suicides and depression were commonplace. Most South African Jews had their roots in Lithuania, where 90 per cent of the country's Jews perished during the war. South African Jews also feared for their own future in a country where so many Afrikaner nationalists had supported Germany's wartime campaigns, before Prime Minister Malan began his friendly overtures to South African Jews.

In 1957, a Mr T. Schraml, a former work colleague of my father's from Erfurt, wrote to Herbert: "I want to ask you not to hate the Germans. You get the good and the bad, and he who hates is not a good person. And I know you as a good person who has been, however, a little unstable." I am not sure what Mr Schraml means by the word "unstable." But who would not have been deeply disturbed by what had happened to my father? Yet, he was also being called upon to forgive, forget and reconcile with Germans—a mere dozen years after the liberation of the camps. In another letter, a relative advises him that it would be good for his health if he were to start a family of his own; this would distract him from thinking about the past. It is perhaps not surprising then, that many German Jewish refugees like Rudi Robinski and my father felt that they had to put the past behind them, and rebuild their lives. What is perhaps more surprising, however, is that South African scholars and writers seem to have been relatively silent about the psychological impact of these traumatic and unsettling experiences. These silences have also been reproduced in Jewish public discourse, including in the German-Jewish refugees' own self-descriptions and narratives discussed by Sarah Schwab and others.[61]

Concluding Thoughts on Refugee Lives in the Shadow of the Shoah and Apartheid

In a chapter of Frieda Sichel's *From Refugee to Citizen* entitled "Final Reflections," the author discusses the "challenges" that German-Jewish refugees like herself had to confront, and how they managed to overcome these difficulties:

> The elderly, particularly, find that they often wonder about the fate of other members of their former communities. One strange manner of re-discovering former friends and acquaintances in their dispersion all over the globe is revealed in the death notices of the American-German Newspaper *Der Aufbau* [...]. Another sad reflection on the fate which overtook German Jewry is the fact that the old Jewish cemeteries in

[61] Schwab, " 'No Single Loyalty.' "

> Germany today form a link between the scattered people all over the world. In the true sense of the word the cemetery has once more become the Beth Ha-Chayim—The House of Life, as the cemetery assistants have a wealth of information about immigrants in distant lands, who—true to Jewish tradition—still seek to tend the graves of their beloved ones in the far away homeland [...].[62]

This brief account of death, displacement and loss is followed by Sachel's sociologically-grounded findings that most refugees adapted well to their new country despite initial financial difficulties, social dislocation and isolation, and lack of confidence in speaking a "strange language." Like my father and Artur, it seems that most German-Jewish refugees tried not to dwell on the psychological effects of devastating loss, alienation, and the anti-Semitism they encountered when they arrived in their new country. Like so many other South African Jews, they seemed to have "chosen amnesia" in the name of rapprochement and full integration into white South African society. As Frieda Sichel wrote in her book , refugees like herself were driven by the need for peace and security and a strong desire to become "integrated into the new country as inconspicuously and as quickly as possible." The painful memories of the 1930s and 1940s was part of an "unusable past"—one they chose to forget in order to move towards establishing a firm foothold and future in their new country:

> Trials challenge and strengthen the power of resistance. The relentless pressure to become integrated into the new country as inconspicuously and as quickly as possible, is in fact a creative act, an organic growth into the new soil. It is a deep inner necessity, this longing for a permanent home, for peace and quiet, for security. It is inherent in each human being and it makes the acceptance of the culture of new surroundings more than an outward, protective gesture [...].[63]

[62] Ibid., 69.
[63] Ibid., 69.

It would seem that the National Party's acceptance of South African Jews, and strong support for Israel following Prime Minister Malan's visit to Israel in 1951, facilitated this integration; but it also contributed towards amnesia about the complicity of right-wing Afrikaner nationalism in supporting Nazi Germany. This "difficult past" was replaced by a more "usable past," one that dovetailed more neatly with this urgent need for integration. As we have seen, it is only relatively recently that South African scholars such as Sally Swartz have begun to explore the shadow histories of this positive integration narrative.

Claudia Braude has suggested that the restoration of memory of the unsettling time when Jews did not fit seamlessly into white South African society has the potential to interrogate taken-for-granted racial categories and binaries of whiteness and blackness and provide insights into the complicated workings of "race."[64] In other words, recollections of these "difficult pasts" of Jewish racial ambiguity "could also contribute towards deepening understanding of the history of South African racism."[65]

In *The End of Jewish Modernity* (2016), Enzo Traverso writes that by the late 1950s Jews had acquired a strong militarized nation-state (Israel) that was strongly supported by the United States, and were able to create for themselves a secure position in both Israel and the diaspora.[66] Traverso also notes that the virtual destruction by the Nazis of European Jewry, including a sizable left-leaning and progressive intelligentsia, was followed by a shift whereby mainstream diasporic Jews became increasingly more politically and economically secure, as well as more conservative and Zionist. It was into this world that I grew up in the 1960s and 1970s in the affluent white middle-class suburb of Mill Park in Port Elizabeth.

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[64] Bathsheba Braude, *Contemporary Jewish Writing in South Africa.*

[65] Ibid., xii.

[66] Enzo Traverso, *The End of Jewish Modernity* (London: Pluto Press, 2016).

Fig. 6. On the left is my mother and next to her is my father; on the far right is Elsa with her husband Artur sitting next to her. This photograph in a restaurant was probably taken in Port Elizabeth in the 1970s, Private Collection.

As a child and teenager, I was entirely unaware that Jews had not always been so secure in their white skins. Neither, I did not know about how Eastern European Jewish immigrants, including my mother's family from Lithuania, had once been regarded as unassimilable by the dominant English colonial establishment, and that they had to learn to "become white." Neither did I know much about the mobilization against German-Jewish immigration when my father had arrived in South Africa in 1936, a time when Jews were unwanted and deemed responsible by Afrikaner nationalists for the economic hardships of poor whites. Because of the loud silences in my father's house about the Shoah, I was also completely unaware of the quiet and invisible workings of a traumatic past on the inner life of my father. It was only by reading between the lines of family letters written to my father and his brother from Berlin between 1936 and 1942, and by reading between and beyond the lines of the dominant historical narratives and "usable pasts" of the successful integration of German-Jewish refugees in South Africa, that it became possible to see the faint contours of silenced stories of refugees living in the shadow of the Shoah and apartheid.

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Steven Robins is professor in the Department of Sociology & Social Anthropology at the University of Stellenbosch, South Africa. He has published on a wide range of topics including the politics of land, memory and identity; the Truth & Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and urban citizenship and governance. His monographs include *From Revolution to Rights in South Africa: Social Movements, NGO's and Popular Politics After Apartheid* (Woodbridge-Rochester, NY: Suffolk-Boydell & Brewer, 2008) and *Letters of Stone: From Nazi Germany to South Africa* (Cape Town: Penguin, 2016). He also edited *Limits to Liberation After Apartheid: Citizenship, Governance and Culture* (Oxford-Athens-Cape Town: James Currwy-Ohio University Press-David Philip, 2005) and co-edited (with Nick Shepherd), *New South African Keywords* (Johannesburg-Athens-Jacana: Ohio University Press, 2008).

Keywords: German-Jews, Refugees, Silences, Shoah, Apartheid

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Between Italy and Ethiopia, Western and African Judaism: The Story of Taamrat Emmanuel, a Jewish Intellectual from Ethiopia

by *Emanuela Trevisan Semi*

Abstract

Emmanuel Taamrat (1888-1963) is one of the first young men belonging to the Beta Israel (Falashas), brought from Ethiopia to Europe by Jacques Faitlovitch in order to be "regenerated by Western Judaism." After two years spent in Paris, he was sent to Florence in 1906 where he studied with rabbi Margulies at Collegio Rabbinico in Florence. He remained in Italy for thirteen years because of the First World War and in 1919 he went to Palestine and after to Ethiopia. He spent most of his life as director of the Falasha school in Addis Abeba but in 1937 he was obliged to flee to Egypt after the attempt to assassinate General Graziani because of his well-known opposition to the fascist regime. He helped the Ethiopian resistance and was appointed by Hailé Selassie on his coming back to Ethiopia as President of the Committee of Public Education. In 1948 he was sent to Paris as cultural attaché at the Ethiopian embassy. He was influenced by Italian socialist and anarchist important figures and ideas before the rise of Fascism. As a very free and independent individual he suffered from his condition of being double colonized, by western Judaism and by Italian occupation. He was colonized by Italian Jews and western Jews and subject to the strong authority of Faitlovitch and by the Italians during the Italian occupation. But he was also profoundly fascinated by European Jewish culture and by Western thought and Italy's language and customs. His own life could be another representation of the idea proposed by Albert Memmi of a colonized and colonizing Jew. He died in Israel.

Jacques Faitlovitch and Paris Circles

Correspondence as Source

Emmanuel Taamrat from Asmara to Paris

From Paris to Italy

The beginning of the movement of Beta Israel people, known at that time as Falashas, between Italy and Ethiopia may be considered in an overall context characterized by the ideology of "regeneration" advanced by the Alliance Israélite Universelle (AIU),[1] the arrival in Ethiopia of missionaries of the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews[2] and the presence of Italian colonialism in Eritrea. The ideology of "regeneration," which played an important role in the founding of the Alliance, envisaged the need for a rebirth of the Jewish communities in the East and in North Africa to be achieved, in part, by setting up a network of schools. This ideology was extended to Ethiopia by Joseph Halévy[3] and Jacques Faitlovitch, even though this went against the expressed desires of the

[1] Emanuela Trevisan Semi, "The Ideology of 'Regeneration' and the Beta Israel at the Beginning of the XXth Century," *Revue Européenne des Etudes Hébraiques* 2 (1997): 69-82.

[2] James Quirin, *The Evolution of the Ethiopian Jews. A History of the Beta Israel (Falasha) to 1920* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992); Steven Kaplan, *The Beta Israel (Falasha) in Ethiopia, from Earliest Times to the Twentieth Century* (New York-London: New York University Press, 1992); Don Seeman, *One people, one blood. Ethiopian Israelis and the return to Judaism* (New Brunswick-London: Rutgers University Press, 2009).

[3] Joseph Halévy, a Jew from Adrianople, traveled among the Beta Israel in 1867-1868 on behalf of the AIU, see Joseph Halévy, "Travels in Abissina," in *Miscellany of Hebrew Literature*, ed. Albert L. Loewi (London: 1877), vol. 2, 175-256. On Halévy see Monica Miniati, "Joesph Halévy un outsider dans la ville," in *Les Juifs d'Ethiopie, de Joseph Halévy à nos jours, un siècle de rencontres, 25 ans d'immigration massive*, ed. Daniel Friedmann (Paris: Les éditions du Nadir, 2007), 23-44.

Alliance.[4] According to the ideology of the time, not only should schools be opened in areas that lacked them, but the most talented young people living in the areas that needed "regeneration" should be sent away to be educated in a western Jewish context.[5] The first young man from the Beta Israel to be brought to France was Daniel (we know him only by his first name). He was accompanied by Halévy, who was returning from his journey to Abyssinia in 1868. The purpose of Daniel's journey was "in order for him to be regenerated by Western Judaism."[6] In the nineteenth century Daniel was the only Beta Israel youth to be sent away to study. He died in Egypt (he was not accepted in France by the Alliance, which claimed that he was a slave bought in a slave market in Africa and not a Jew). However, in the following century 25 Beta Israel boys[7] were sent from Ethiopia to Europe, specifically to Italy, France, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Great Britain, Serbia, Rhodes, Palestine and Egypt.[8] The arrival in 1859 in Ethiopia of missionaries

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4 See Emanuela Trevisan Semi, *Jacques Faitlovitch and the Jews of Ethiopia* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2007), 14-37.

5 Aron Rodrigue, *De l'instruction à l'emancipation. Les enseignants de l'Alliance Israélite Universelle et les Juifs d'Orient 1860-1939* (Paris: Calman-Levy, 1989); Aron Rodrigue, *Images of Sephardi and Eastern Jewries in Transition. The Teachers of the Alliance Israélite Universelle, 1860-1939* (Seattle-London: University of Washington Press, 1993); Michael Laskier, *The Alliance Israélite Universelle and the Jewish Communities of Morocco 1862-1962* (Albany: Suny Press, 1984).

6 Trevisan Semi, *Jacques Faitlovitch*, 15.

7 Shalva Weil writes that she drew up the list with the help of Tadesse Yaacov (one of Faitlovitch's pupils). See Shalva Weil, "The Life and Death of Salomon Isaac" in *The Beta Israel in Ethiopia and Israel, Studies on the Ethiopian Jews*, eds. Tudor Parfitt and Emanuela Trevisan Semi (Surrey: Curzon Press, 1999), 47.

8 For a general overview on Faitlovitch's pupils see Shalva Weil, "Beta Israel Students Who Studied Abroad 1905-1935," in *Research in Ethiopian Studies: Selected Papers of the 16th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, Trondheim, July 2007,* eds. Harald Aspen, Birhanu Teferra, Shiferaw Bekele and Svein Ege, Äthiopistiche Forschungen Vol. 72 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2010), 84-92. For Taamrat Emmanuel and Makonnen Levi see Emanuela Trevisan Semi, "Ethiopian Jews in Europe: Taamrat Emmanuel in Italy and Makonnen Levi in England," in *Jews of Ethiopia. The Birth of an Elite*, eds. Tudor Parfitt and Emanuela Trevisan Semi (London-New York: Routledge, 2005), 74-100; for Taamrat Emmanuel see Itzhak Grinfeld, "Taamrat Emmanuel Forerunner of the Revival of Ethiopian Jewry," *Pe'amim* 22 (1985): 70-71 (in Hebrew); Emanuela Trevisan Semi, *L'epistolario di Taamrat Emmanuel: un intellettuale ebreo d'Etiopia nella prima metà del XX secolo/ La correspondance de Taamrat Emmanuel: intellectuel juif d'Ethiopie dans la première moitié du XXème siècle* (Torino: L'Harmattan Italia, 2000); Emanuela Trevisan Semi, *Taamrat Emmanuel, an Ethiopian Jewish Intellectual between Colonized and Colonizers* (New York: CPL editions, Primo Levi Center, 2018); Shalva Weil, "Taamrat Emmanuel," in *Encyclopedia Aethiopic*a, ed. Siegbert Uhlig (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag 2010) Vol. 4, 1082-

under the auspices of the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews marked the first time European Jews really paid attention to the Beta Israel of Ethiopia, an initiative provoked largely by a desire to counteract the missionary intervention. This contributed to the process that brought the Beta Israel to the attention of European and, later on, American Jews.

Jacques Faitlovitch and Paris Circles

It was Jacques Faitlovitch, a Jew from Poland, and a pupil of Joseph Halévy in Paris, who organized the missions to Ethiopia to oppose the missionaries' activity. Paris at the beginning of the twentieth century was going through exciting times. It was the post-Dreyfus period when the values of freedom and tolerance seemed to have been established once and for all, and the French Jewish community was trying to spread modernization, a process which had begun in the previous century. Paris attracted Jews from Eastern Europe who came to study—often Semitic languages. Paris became a rallying point for Jews looking for freedom and national redemption. Nahum Slouschz, born in a little town near Vilnius, became professor of Hebrew language and literature at the Sorbonne after studying at the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes and he preceded Faitlovitch in his studies in

1083. On Hizkiahu Finkas see Emanuela Trevisan Semi, "From Wolleqa to Florence: The Tragic Story of Faitlovitch's Pupil Hizkiahu Finkas," in *The Beta Israel*, 15-39. For Tadesse Yacob see Shalva Weil, "Tadesse Yacob of Cairo and Addis Abeba," *International Journal of Ethiopian Studies* 2, no. 1-2 (2006): 233-243, Shalva Weil, "Tadesse Yaqob," in *Encyclopedia* (2010) Vol. 4, 1196-1197. For Abraham Adgheh see Shalva Weil, "Abraham Adgeh: The Perfect English Gentleman," in *Jews of Ethiopia,* 101-111, Shalva Weil, "Abraham Adgeh," in *Encyclopedia* (2003) 1, 48; For Yona Bogale, Shalva Weil, "In Memoriam: Yona Bogale," *Pe'amim* 33 (1987): 140-144 (in Hebrew), Shalva Weil, "Yona Boggala", in *Encyclopedia* (2013) 5, 90. For Salomon Isaac, see Shalva Weil, "The Life and Death of Solomon Isaac," in *The Beta Israel*, 40-49; Shalva Weil, "Salomon Yeshaq," in *Encyclopedia* (2010) Vol. 4, 499-500; Sigrid Sohn, "S. Schachnowitz's Novel Salomo der Falascha (1923)," in *Jews of Ethiopia*, 53-64. On Ermias Essayas see Shalva Weil, "Ermias Essayas: A 'Forgotten' Ethiopian Jew in Jerusalem," in *Homelands and Diasporas: Perspectives on Jewish Culture in the Mediterranean and Beyond. Festschrift for Emanuela Trevisan Semi*, eds. Dario Miccoli, Marcella Simoni and Giorgia Foscarini (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2018), 14-26. For Gete Yirmiahu see Carlo Guandalini, "Gete Yirmiahu and Beta Israel's Regeneration: A Difficult Path," in *Jews of Ethiopia*, 112-121. For Setotow, Mekuria, Abel and Menguistu see Benjamin Mekuria, "The Long Journey of the Beta Yisrael from Lasta," in *The Beta Israel*, 296-300.

Paris by a few years. Faitlovitch studied Amharic and Ge'ez with Joseph Halévy, Assyrian philology with Jules Julius Oppert and Arabic with Hartwig Derenbourg. At that time, the teaching of Semitic languages was carried out primarily by Jewish scholars, most of whom were of Ashkenazi origin.

The story of Faitlovitch and later on of Taamrat Emmanuel (1888-1963) began in these Parisian circles, which served as incubators of ideas for many Jews who had come from the East, full of dreams of personal and national redemption. It was in these circles that the idea was born of the first mission to Ethiopia to "regenerate" its Jews.

Correspondence as Source

We do not have any real memoirs by the young Beta Israel who arrived in Europe at the beginning of the twentieth century. Hence, we lack an important type of source that has been fruitfully used in research on Jews from Arab-Muslim countries, such as Morocco or Iraq.[9] What we do have are some notebooks and a number of letters (some in diary form) sent from the youths to their mentor, Faitlovitch, generally conveying strong feelings of nostalgia and loneliness, and the painful process of adapting to such a different context. Indeed, it was so harsh an experience that there were cases of suicide.[10] In the case of Taamrat, we have 108 letters to Faitlovitch but we have only three letters by Faitlovitch to his pupil.[11] In

[9] See Nadia Malinovich, "Growing up in interwar Iraq: the Memoirs of Naim Kattan and Heskel Haddad," *Journal of Jewish Identities* 12, no. 1 (2019): 19-36; Lital Levy, "Self and the City: Literary Representations of Jewish Baghdad," *Prooftexts* 26 (2006): 163-211; Emanuela Trevisan Semi "Lifewriting between Israel, the Diaspora and Morocco: Revisiting the Homeland through Locations and Objects of Identity," in *Contemporary Sephardic and Mizrahi Literature*, ed. Dario Miccoli (London-New York: Routledge 2017), 68-84; Emanuela Trevisan Semi, "Rethinking Morocco. Life-writing of Jews from Morocco," *Hespéris-Tamuda* 51, no. 3 (partie 2) (2016): 141-164.

[10] There were also cases of boys who died of tuberculosis, like Yizkiahu Finkas (who died in Egypt) and Abraham Baroch (who died in Switzerland), or committed suicide like Abraham Meir (who died in Paris). See biographical notes in Trevisan Semi, *L'epistolario*, 369-376.

[11] All the letters in the Sourasky archives in Tel Aviv Central Library which are written in Italian have been published in Trevisan Semi, *L'epistolario.*

fact, when Taamrat fled Ethiopia following the massacre of Ethiopian elites in the aftermath of the attack on General Graziani in 1937, he burned all of Faitlovitch's letters. This happened when he was in Egypt, engaged in the resistance against the Italian occupation. Consequently, we can read his letters and try to guess what his "master," as he called him, wrote back to him, rather like a novel where one of the protagonists is missing. In order to understand the complex context of these movements between Ethiopia and Europe, I have used Faitlovitch's diary, carefully written down, year by year, in which he recorded all the people he met, his journeys, his impressions, his correspondence with many Jewish associations and political leaders.[12] I have also used Carlo Alberto Viterbo's letters to Taamrat and Faitlovitch,[13] the diary of the anarchist Leda Rafanelli (1880-1971), who fell in love with Taamrat,[14] and the Alliance archives. There are also Taamrat's writings, mostly in Amharic, that are still awaiting study.[15]

Emmanuel Taamrat from Asmara to Paris

During his first mission to Ethiopia in 1904, called the "counter mission" by the missionaries of the London Society, Faitlovitch found Taamrat in a Christian Swedish mission in Asmara. Taamrat was a brilliant and gifted young man who, according to Faitlovitch, had the potential to become the educator and "regenerator" of his own group, the Beta Israel of Ethiopia.

The Italian colony of Eritrea (and in particular its capital Asmara) was considered the best place to build a school for the Beta Israel at the beginning of the twentieth century. Faitlovitch decided to set up the first Pro-Falasha committee in 1907 in Florence because of the role played by Italy in the colonization of Eritrea, hoping to win the support of the Italian government for his project of founding the first Jewish school in the colony. The project failed because of the Alliance's

[12] Sourasky Archives, Tel Aviv Central Library, file 137.
[13] Private Archive of Carlo Alberto Viterbo's family, Florence.
[14] Reggio Emilia, Biblioteca Panizzi, the Bernini-Aurelio Chessa Family Archives.
[15] An Ethiopian scholar now settled in the USA, Brook Abdu, is working on Taamrat's writings in Amharic.

opposition, which did not wish to engage with black people of dubious Jewish origin. The Alliance, during Faitlovitch's second mission (1908), financed a separate mission headed by Turkey's chief Rabbi Haim Nahum, who returned with a negative report, stating that the Falashas were few and scattered and that building a school was not recommended.[16] The project failed also because of a lack of real interest on the part of the Italian colonial authorities and their ambiguous positions concerning the educational projects of a Polish Jew whose actions were viewed with skepticism and suspicion. Nonetheless, in 1923 a school for the Beta Israel was founded in Addis Abeba, thanks to Faitlovitch's good relations with Ras Tafari Makonnen, the future Haile Selassie, emperor of Ethiopia. Taamrat Emmanuel's real name was Taamrat Dawit. He became Taamrat Emmanuel when Faitlovitch changed his name, as he did with the other boys he took with him to Europe. In 1905 Taamrat was sent together with another boy, Gete Yirmiahu, to Paris, where he spent almost two years and where he was expected to adopt the western version of Judaism and abandon the old traditions of the Beta Israel.

We are informed of the boys' arrival in Paris by the Bulletin of the Alliance*:* "the two young men are about twenty, they speak only Ethiopian and Amharic: we didn't know what to do with them when they arrived in Paris. Although they are black-skinned, they do not have the flattened mask of the African Negro."

The Alliance's committee felt that a period at the Ecole Préparatoire with young people of their age would quickly knock the rough edges off them. And this indeed is what happened.[17] Another version of their arrival—in which the Alliance was forced to accept them at the school in Auteil, where they lost their "ignorant ways"—was provided two years after their stay in Paris, and after Taamrat had already been removed from the Alliance school and sent to Florence.

> To everyone's great surprise [Faitlovitch] returned with two Falashas who wandered around the streets of Paris for a few weeks. The Alliance was

[16] Haim Nahoum, "The Mission to the Falashas (interview)," *Jewish Chronicle,* August 7, 1908: 14.

[17] *AIU bulletin* 33 (1905): 206-207.

> forced, in some way, to accept them at the Ecole Normale d'Auteil. These young men had barely begun to lose some of their ignorant ways when Faitlovitch sent them away from the Ecole Normale—without informing the Alliance—to Florence, where a pro-Falasha Committee had been formed.[18]

We are surprised to read that the Alliance was "forced," because it is well known that the Alliance was not easily swayed and once taken, it was generally impossible to change its decisions. It is interesting to recall in this context that the young Taamrat, defined as "ignorant" by the Alliance, bought books by Voltaire in Paris,[19] knew Ge'ez, spoke Amharic, Tigrinya, and a little Italian. We do not know much about Taamrat's time in Paris, except that he must have learned French well, as Faitlovitch always corresponded with him in French.

From Paris to Italy

The official reason why Faitlovitch moved Taamrat to Florence was the relatively poor Jewish and Hebrew language education available at the Alliance school and his preference for the Rabbinical College in Florence, led at the time by Rabbi Shemuel Hirsch Margulies (1858-1822), and as well as Italian Colonial interests in Eritrea.[20] The decision would have a huge impact on Taamrat's intellectual, political, and emotional development. He flourished in the climate of cultivated Judaism and Zionism advanced by Rabbi Shemuel Hirsch Margulies and especially Zwi Perez Chajes, who was active in Florence, Turin and Vienna. Not only did Chajes teach Taamrat Hebrew, but instilled in him a love of literature. This is what Taamrat wrote when he was informed of Chajes's death: "If I went to him for Hebrew study, he always drew me in with unusual, original, and amusing discussions of Italian philology, literature, history, and culture. I owe to

[18] *AIU bulletin* 37 (1909): 65.

[19] I wish to thank Brook Abdu, who has worked with sources in Amharic written by Taamrat, for this information.

[20] Trevisan Semi, *Jacques Faitlovich*, 40-42.

him and only to him a love of Zion."[21] Florence and Italy exposed him to assimilated Italian Judaism and to the particularly lively cultural and political debates of that period. These were the years before World War I, when principles of democracy and liberalism proclaimed by great personalities like Giuseppe Mazzini and Carlo Cattaneo were considered commonly shared values. These were also the years of socialism. Figures like the socialist Raffaele Ottolenghi, the treasurer of the pro-Falasha Committee and a scholar of Jewish thought and biblical prophets,[22] had a considerable influence on Taamrat. Taamrat remained in Italy for a long time because of World War I, which made it impossible for him to go back to Ethiopia. During the period of the war Faitlovitch went to Switzerland.

The Influence of Raffaele Ottolenghi and Leda Rafanelli

During the thirteen years he spent in Italy, Taamrat met important figures who influenced him considerably. Through Raffaele Ottolenghi he met Leda Rafanelli (1880-1971), an Italian anarchist, novelist, feminist and anti-conformist with whom he had an affair which lasted two years, a closely-guarded secret at the time. However, I have found hitherto unknown documents, in particular Rafanelli's personal journal, in the anarchist's archive in Reggio Emilia, Italy,[23] which reveal details of the affair. Ottolenghi also helped Taamrat survive economically during the war in Italy.[24] Ottolenghi was a lawyer, philanthropist and a scholar of Judaism, with a particular interest in the biblical prophets, that he studied from a socialist and libertarian perspective, stressing their desire for social justice. It was at

[21] Taamrat's letter to Faitlovich, Addis Abeba, January15, 1928.

[22] He was close to Filippo Turati, one of the most important leaders of Italian socialism, who wrote about Ottolenghi that "He had principles of absolute idealism, which he saw eternally incarnate in the words of Isaiah [...] combative, pugnacious, bizarre, often hard to understand, socialist, one of a kind. Naturally he was the lawyer and the patron of the dispersed sons of Israel," *Critica sociale*, June 16-30, 1917: 62.

[23] The story was buried for many years in the small archive of the Berneri-Aurelio Chessa family in Reggio Emilia. I thank Fiamma Chessa for sharing information on Leda Rafanelli and providing archive material.

[24] Taamrat's letter to Faitlovitch January 15, 1918. In it Taamrat mentions a small inheritance left to him by Ottolenghi.

his house that Taamrat met the remarkable Leda Rafanelli. She spent several months in Alexandria in Egypt and was so fascinated with Islam that she become a Muslim.[25] It was Leda Rafanelli who wrote Ottolenghi's obituary in the Italian newspaper *Avanti*, in which she quoted Taamrat. She wrote of Ottolenghi that he was "a brilliant scholar of the Hebrew language [...]. I had the honor of helping him research some Arab works, and the Falasha Taamrat did the same with the Talmud, both of us devoted disciples." [26] Ottolenghi influenced Emmanuel Taamrat's ideas, as Rafanelli explains: "By talking to him, having him [Taamrat] read his articles, he [Ottolenghi] prepared him for his ongoing social battles. In his [Taamrat's] healthy, innocent, and lively mind, the seeds of socialist ideas put down roots, grew strong, emerged more beautiful."[27] In a very interesting part of her diary, Rafanelli describes the differences of opinion between Ottolenghi and Faitlovitch over Taamrat's future. According to Rafanelli, their opposing visions tormented Taamrat, who was torn between obedience to his mentor and his new passions and interests, including politics, which had blossomed during his stay in Italy, along with a desire for greater independence:

> The Maestro [Ottolenghi] disagreed with the Englishman [sic] [Faitlovitch],[28] who wanted Emmanuel to become a religious leader, a rabbi, and kept him far from all worldly temptations, jealously guarding this exceptional person, while our Great Host [Ottolenghi] hoped for more, for other projects in Emmanuel's future.[29]

Their affair ended at the end of the war, when Faitlovitch returned to Italy and obliged Taamrat to accompany him back to Ethiopia in order for him to become the future director of the school for the Falashas. From an entry in Faitlovitch's

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[25] In Alessandria she was fascinated by a variety of mystical Islam, and she learned a little Arabic that she used, for instance, to sign her name. She used a pseudonym, Sahra/Sahara that Taamrat used to call her. She had a romantic vision of the East tinged by "Orientalism."

[26] *Avanti*, June 2, 1917.

[27] From the manuscript of Leda Rafanelli, *A Woman and Four Men from the East*. The Bernini-Aurelio Chessa Family Archives.

[28] Faitlovitch had relatives in England, maybe this confused Leda Rafanelli.

[29] For a more detailed story see Trevisan Semi, *Taamrat Emmanuel*, 57-81.

diary,[30] dated January 19, 1920, we realize that Taamrat's destiny had been sealed: "I [Faitlovitch] was alone all day [...]. Emmanuel finally appeared in the evening. We made peace and he submitted completely."[31] Taamrat's capitulation illustrated the complex and ambiguous relationship between Faitlovitch and Taamrat, the colonizer and the colonized. It was the total submission that Faitlovitch demanded of all his students, not only of Taamrat. Yet within that state of oppression, Taamrat tried to carve out a space for independent thought that sometimes enabled him to escape the yoke of expectations, but at other times he suffered the lack of any margin for independence or freedom. In 1923 the school would finally be opened, but because of the Italians' opposition, as we have seen, not in Eritrea but in Addis Abeba. The "regeneration" project that began with Taamrat's departure for France would now become a reality, and the director of the school would be Taamrat.

The influence of Ottolenghi, Leda Rafanelli, and socialist and anarchist ideas can be found throughout the life of Taamrat. In particular in 1927 Taamrat, by then the director of the school, translated from French into Amharic an article against Mussolini that had been published in France in the anarchist journal *Revolution prolétarienne*.[32] He published it in *Berhanenna Selam*,[33] adding a comment of his own: "The Italian people value and respect liberty. So those of us who feel they know this nation [Italy] are astonished to see a dictator reign tranquilly over its people."[34] Faitlovitch was furious with Taamrat for translating this article, because he always forbade him to engage in politics. Faitlovitch's harsh response is contained in those few letters to Taamrat that have come down to us, the only ones that possibly Taamrat did not dare to destroy, as they defined his fate. In them Faitlovitch treats him like a rebellious child, threatens to punish or abandon him, and tries to make him feel guilty by playing on his feelings, using phrases like

[30] Faitlovitch's diary is written in French and is kept in the Sourasky Archives, Tel Aviv University.
[31] Faitlovitch's diary, January 17, 1920.
[32] See also Itzhak Grinfeld, "Jews in Addis Abeba: Beginnings of the Jewish Community until the Italian Occupation," in *Ethiopian Studies: Proceedings of the Sixth International Conference*, ed. Gideon Goldberg (Tel Aviv:1980), 251-259.
[33] See Bahru Zewde, "The Ethiopian Intelligentsia and the Italo-Ethiopian war, 1935-1941," *The international Journal of African Historical Studies* 26, no. 2 (1993): 271-295.
[34] Letter to Faitlovitch, Addis Ababa, April 9, 1927.

"Your imprudence caused me to become so ill I stayed in bed for several days. Despite your error I won't dismiss you at present [...]. I don't want to abandon you."[35] The rules he set for his disciple were clear:

> I insist and require that you instantly abstain completely from political affairs, for or against, it doesn't matter. Don't involve yourself in the business of others [...]. Your name must never be publicly associated with anything that doesn't pertain to our work. Think every day about your task, which is already difficult enough without any more complications, and don't let yourself be distracted from your work and your obligations. At present you have a double responsibility and, beyond that, there's a very serious question of honor for you and for me in that affair. The renown and prestige of our work are naturally strongly compromised at present.[36]

Taamrat was forced to suppress a part of himself that identified with his own people, then threatened by a colonial power. One feels, reading what Taamrat wrote, that he expected just such a reaction from his master and that in some way even hoped that the incident might bring an end to their work together, as if he hoped to break a chain that had bound him for so long. He wrote: "If this episode has made me a hindrance to your work, I would sincerely prefer you to save your sacred project at my expense. I would support that strongly [...] because despite my prudence I may find myself overtaken by similar situations."[37] However, Faitlovitch did not give him the freedom he hoped for and Taamrat remained as the director of the school in Addis Abeba.[38]

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[35] Letter by Faitlovitch, New York, May 31, 1927.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Ibid.

[38] On Taamrat see also Itzhak Grinfeld, "Tamrat Emmanuel-Forerunner of the Revival of Ethiopian Jewry," *Pe'amim* 22 (1985): 59-74 (Hebrew).

Between Submission and Independence

In 1931 Taamrat left Ethiopia for the United States, where he met leaders of black Harlem communities interested in Judaism, like Rabbi W.A. Matthew, the future leader of the Commandment Keepers[39] and Rabbi Josiah Ford of Bet Bnai Avraham,[40] and he maintained his relationship with different Black Jews' movements throughout his life.

The 1933 Plan to Resettle German Jews in Ethiopia

While Mussolini's plan to resettle Italian Jews to Ethiopia in 1938-1939[41] is well-known, it is not known that Taamrat not only completely rejected it but also warned about the enormous risks for Italian Jews because he knew that the resistance to the Italians was very strong in Ethiopia and Jews could be at risk. Little is known also about Haile Selassie's plan to welcome Jews from Germany in 1933.[42]

Faitlovitch and Taamrat themselves had been appointed by the Negus to carry out this plan. Yet Taamrat seemed to be very critical, pointing out its flaws, voicing the doubts expressed by the Ethiopian intelligentsia, noting above all the

[39] The Commandment Keepers is a congregation of Black Hebrews founded by Rav Matthew in 1919 in New York. They are Afro-Americans (mostly of Caribbean origin) who claim to be of Falasha origins.

[40] Josiah Ford, a Barbadian by birth, was a musician, the choirmaster of the Universal Negro Improvement Association. He became a central figure in the movement which theorized Blacks' identification with Ethiopians and with Ethiopian Jews. He was so invested in the creation of a new Ethiopian Jewish identity for himself and for American Blacks that he actually moved to Ethiopia on the crest of 'the Back to Africa' movement created by Marcus Garvey. See Emanuela Trevisan Semi, "The 'Falashisation' of the Blacks of Harlem, a Judaising Movement in 20th Century Usa," in *Judaising Movements, Studies in the Margins of Judaism*, eds. Tudor Parfitt and Emanuela Trevisan Semi (London: Routledge Curzon, 2002), 87-110.

[41] Sergio Minerbi, "Il progetto di un insediamento ebraico in Etiopia (1936-1943)," in *Storia contemporanea* 17 (1986): 1083-1137; Angelo Del Boca, *Gli italiani in Africa orientale, la caduta dell'impero* (Bari: Laterza, 1982), 269-275; Richard Pankhurst, "Plans for Mass Jewish Settlement in Ethiopia (1936-1943)," https://tezetaethiopia.wordpress.com/2005/04/20/plans-for-mass-jewish-settlement-in-ethiopia-1936-1943br-smallby-richarch-pankhurst/. Accessed May 17, 2021.

[42] Letter to Faitlovitch, Cairo, October 22, 1939.

economic constraints that represented the daily reality in Ethiopia and that he knew all too well. According to him, the project could not provide resources in keeping with the expectations and qualifications of German Jews. Taamrat thought that the project did not have adequate political or economic backing and that the reality of Ethiopia at that moment would not provide the immigrants with a decent living. The few who had already emigrated to Ethiopia and with whom Taamrat was in daily contact had encountered extreme difficulties.

In any case, the operation remained only an idea, probably due to the economic difficulties that Taamrat noted, and in the end only a small number of German Jews came to Addis Abeba.

In a letter addressed to Faitlovitch he quoted exactly what he told the Emperor:

> Just think, Your Majesty, that among the great minds of Germany, there are chemists that the Germans themselves, even given these times, agree have contributed to the war effort. Your majesty will easily understand that those kinds of people, chased out of Germany, will find positions wherever they go. If Your Majesty desires the greatest among the Jews, I am sure that you'll understand the need to offer appropriate conditions. Hitler may claim that every ministry that Jews were part of collapsed and failed. But history refutes that: I repeat the words of the Sultan of Turkey, who said recently that the expulsions of Jews turned out to be the decline of Spain and the prosperity of Turkey. Who knows, maybe your Majesty will end up saying the same about Germany today.[43]

Taamrat was a realist and tried to convince the Negus to put forward a serious financial plan, failing which he thought that it would be better to give the plan up. In any case, in 1933 Taamrat could not have imagined what the conditions of the German Jews would become in the space of a few years.

[43] Letter to Faitlovitch, Addis Abeba, June 29, 1933.

When at the end of October 1939, the news arrived of a plan by Mussolini to install thirty thousand Italian Jews in Ethiopia, right to the south of Tana Lake, Taamrat, who was in Egypt at the time, was seriously worried because he knew that there was strong resistance to the Italian occupation and that the Jews would be perceived just as "Italians." As such they would face Ethiopian resistance and all the dangers that entailed. He immediately warned Faitlovitch of the danger:

> To install thirty thousand Jewish settlers in Ethiopia [and precisely south of Lake Tana, where an industrial center for the canned fish factory would be developed], the organizers would need fifty million dollars. While I know that Jews generally know where to throw themselves and where to throw their money, I also hope that their attempts don't start soon. Unless Italy, maintaining its neutrality in the current conflict in Europe, makes a second invasion of Ethiopia, currently its forces are too weak compared with the rebels of that region. I tell you to relieve my conscience.[44]

In reality a close reading of documents from the period suggests that the idea of a Jewish settlement in Ethiopia was only a trial balloon by Mussolini, a strategy he used to maintain the illusion that the Jews had a future.

Taamrat and the Italian Occupation

In 1936, while he was the director of the Falasha school in Addis, Taamrat saw the arrival of the Italians as conquerors of Ethiopia. In February 1937, at the time of the attack on General Graziani, the Governor of Ethiopia, he was not in Addis but in the north of Ethiopia, in Gondar, where most of the Beta Israel lived. He was there to accompany Giuseppe Viterbo, the Jewish Italian lawyer sent from the Union of the Israelite Italian Communities to investigate the Falashas, immediately after the birth of the Italian Colonial Empire.[45] In fact, after the

[44] Letter to Faitlovitch, Cairo, October 22, 1939.

[45] Carlo Alberto Viterbo, an Italian Jewish lawyer, was sent by the Union of the Israelite Italian Communities to Ethiopia in order to organize the Jews who had settled there and to get in touch with the Beta Israel population and investigate them. He stayed in Ethiopia from July 1936 to

attempt to assassinate General Graziani, the Italians decided to kill the Ethiopian elites who were in Addis and got after Taamrat too. By chance he was in Djibouti, seriously ill with malaria, but when he understood the risks, he escaped first to Aden and then to Egypt. He wrote that when he was still in Djibouti, thinking of returning to Addis, he received alarming letters from the city.

> They begged and begged me not to return [...] they told me that agents often came to the school to find out where I was, and my friends from Addis saw clearly that I was a candidate for death in Italian eyes: those who did higher studies and the people of a certain importance were singled out for shooting or deportation to Ogaden or Sardinia. But if the hand of God had not sent me that fever, I, ignorant of the reason, was determined to go back to Addis.[46]

While he was in Aden in 1937 he met the Italian consul, and told him what he thought about Fascism and Mussolini.

During this meeting Taamrat gave a speech, full of passion and vehemence, using arguments that could have come right from Raffaele Ottolenghi or Leda Rafanelli, saying:

> I told him that I am Abyssinian and that [...] until May 5, 1936 [the day of the arrival of the Italians in Addis] I was against the Italian occupation but [...] [that] afterwards, given the situation, I became resigned and, however difficult it is to work under a dictatorship, since collaborating with it was out of the question, I decided to patiently return to my job as a teacher, which I still do, under Italian domination.[47]

February 1937. In 1940 he was arrested as a "Zionist" and sent to the concentration camp of Sforzacosta (Macerata) in Italy. He wrote a "Relazione al Ministero dell'Africa Italiana dell'opera svolta in A.O.I in rappresentanza dell'Unione delle comunità israelitiche italiane," which was published in *Israel, "un decennio" 1974-1984, Saggi sull'ebraismo italiano*, ed. Francesco Del Canuto (Roma: Carucci, 1984), 47-113; for the journal about his trip, see Carlo Alberto Viterbo, Aharon Cohen, *Ebrei d'Etiopia, due diari (1936 e 1976)* (Firenze: Giuntina, 1993).

[46] Letter to Faitlovitch, Alexandria, September 19, 1937.

[47] Ibid.

He continued:

> Because I opposed the Italian occupation. Because I am an Abyssinian. Because I opposed the dictatorship. 'Opposed the dictatorship?' Yes! Of course! And it's all your fault—or your merit. I was young when I went to Italy, where you taught me democratic values and made me hate Caesar and Napoleon. I am a reader and admirer of your Mazzini [...]. How many Italians do you find who conduct themselves in a noble manner with us? We natives have been left in the hands of much wickedness and treated like dogs. And then tell me, why did you come to Abyssinia? To make us happy? If you're not [happy] either? And what are you doing in Spain? You massacre us because we are barbarians, but who are the barbarians in Spain? The French-English-Russians, or you and Hitler with your regimes? So, I don't know what else to say except this world is still barbaric. And there's not much choice between barbarians and barbarians. For me, a civilization is barbaric when, to teach civilization, it can't find any other way but to spill innocent blood. And I repeat again that those are ideas that were taught to me by no other teacher but Italy. Now at age fifty, I am not able to relinquish these ideas even if you, my teachers, change flags and shirts every day.[48]

He did not share the feelings of the majority of Italian Jews, who were in favor of Mussolini. He warned them not to trust Mussolini, and after the publication of the Racial Laws he wrote to some representatives in Italy to remind them of his warnings.

His judgment of what was happening in Italy was critical and fierce. He noted that most Italian Jews wasted time accommodating to the new regime, unable to predict or understand what was going to happen, leaving themselves open to being blindsided. Of this he must have spoken at length with Giuseppe Viterbo during their trip to Gondar, and they had disagreed. In particular Taamrat, as he explained later, did not share the optimism of the Italian lawyer and never believed

[48] Ibid.

the reassurances that the Regime was well intentioned towards the Beta Israel people. When he fled to Egypt, afraid of compromising his friends in Italy and his students in Addis, he preferred not to write or to respond to any letters he received. After the publication of the Racial Laws, he justified his decision to Faitlovitch in a parody of the biblical verse: "I said I didn't write and it was so. And it was evening, and it was morning, and evening, and then night, and Taamrat saw that all, especially the night, was good."[49] In the same letter he explained that Viterbo's and other Italian Jewish leaders' optimism about Fascism was wrong and facts were proving this.

In 1940, while he was in Egypt, Taamrat chose not to follow Faitlovitch, who had settled in Palestine, but preferred to help the Ethiopian opposition to reconquer Ethiopia. In 1941, Allied troops and resistance fighter entered the country triumphantly with the son and royal heir of Haile Selassie, Asfa Wossen.

> The prince [wrote Taamrat] honored me with his company and we were companions. He allowed me to take the most lovely villa of Azazo but I did not want to abuse his generosity. The return trip [Gondar-Debre Tabor-Addis] was, I think, more interesting. Separated from the huge army, we proceeded all the way to Addis [three days] alone with three cars and a group of machine gunners and riflemen. During the trip, we were feted by triumphant patriots, by caroling priests and women shouting for joy. The prince, courteous, jovial and serious at the same time, spoke to the soldiers and the poor. One car was full of *talleri* when we left, but I don't think even one *tallero* remained when we arrived at Dessie. It had all been distributed to the population of Amhara, which had demonstrated its loyalty and sympathy. The Falasha had also showed loyalty and affection. They—according to [the Prince's] wish—had a separate audience at the Palace of Fasil. The Prince now has to be in Gondar while, tied down by work, I am here, far from the Falasha and the Prince, whom I had helped in some of his legislative work.[50]

[49] Letter to Faitlovitch, Cairo, October 6, 1938.

[50] Letter to Faitlovitch, Addis Abeba, March 6, 1942.

Taamrat was appointed by Haile Selassie President of the Committee of Public Education and in 1948 sent to Paris as cultural attaché to the Ethiopian delegation in Paris. But he was too free and independent and could not refrain from expressing his political thoughts to the Emperor, so after criticizing Haile Sellasie he was exiled to Asmara and then went to Jerusalem, where he died.

Conclusion: Colonized and Colonizer

To conclude, Taamrat was subject to the authority of Faitlovitch, who forced him to be simply the director of the school for the Falashas in Addis Abeba, preventing him from expressing political ideas and his feelings against Fascism and the Italian occupation. On the contrary, Taamrat was expected to accept the Italian occupation and colonization of Ethiopia. As a native Jew, he also felt pressured by the colonial vision of the official representatives of Italian Jewry who subscribed to Italy's so-called civilizing mission in Ethiopia and thought that colonization might allow them to impose the values of Italian and western Judaism upon the indigenous Jews of Ethiopia. This gives an image of Taamrat as doubly colonized by the Italians and by Italian Jews, and it confirms the picture of the colonized native, marginalized and forced into a passive role.

But another image of Taamrat shows him to be fascinated by European Jewish culture, by western thought, and by Italy's language and customs. These were an integral part of his personality, as he said throughout his life. He was always attired in a Western-style suit, with a shirt and tie or bow tie, like his friends during his stay in Italy. The photos taken by Viterbo during the trip to Gondar show Viterbo wearing a sweater, whereas Taamrat is wearing a jacket and a tie. His free spirit, his independence and critical thinking, his suspicion of power, his sarcasm, and his irony flowered and were nurtured during his years in Italy as a young man.

To return to the idea proposed by Albert Memmi of the colonized Jew and the colonizing Jew, it seems to me that Taamrat is a good example of the shadow and light that characterize those who belong to this group, intriguing and complex, and so skillfully described by the Jewish-Tunisian writer.

Taamrat found himself in the condition that Dominique Schnapper[51] defined as a "minorité redouble," a double minority, part of a minority among the colonized, who had become a political minority submitted to the colonial power, but also a minority among western Italian Jewry. He was even three times part of a minority, as an Ethiopian, a Jew and a Beta Israel and his personality reflected this complicated identity, as can be seen through his rich correspondence with Faitlovitch and others, mostly written in Italian, which I published in 2000.[52]

In conclusion, he is a key figure in the history of Ethiopian Jewry but one who still remains almost completely unknown, even to the Jews of Ethiopia who migrated to Israel, the country where he is buried but where no tribute to him can be found.

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Keywords: Taamrat Emmanuel, Ethiopia, Beta Israel (Falasha), Italian Colonialism, Italian Jews

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[51] Dominique Schnapper, *La citoyenneté à l'épreuve, la démocratie et les juifs* (Paris: Gallimard, 2018), 208.

[52] Trevisan Semi, *L'epistolario.*

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Holocaust and the Indian Ocean: Jewish Detention in Mauritius (1940-1945)

by *Kirk B. Sides*

Abstract

In September of 1940, a group of nearly 2000 Jews from across Eastern Europe were rounded up by German authorities, put aboard ship transports, one from Bratislava, the other Vienna, and began a journey down the Danube that would end up taking them across the Indian Ocean. After much diplomatic scrambling the British Government arranged to have the group detained on the island of Mauritius, then still a British colony. This group of now-stateless refugees would be detained for the entire duration of WWII, leaving an impact on the island and its people, as well as the South African Jewish community; however, it is an impact that has remained largely unexplored. In this article, I want to look at a few of the sparse sources relating this history: some artworks produced by two of the detainees, as well as a contemporary novel written by Indo-Mauritian author Nathacha Appanah, entitled Le dernier frère *or* The Last Brother*. I want to suggest that in Appanah's 2007 novel, the author imagines the space of the island as intricately entangled with the narrative of Jewish displacement there. In* The Last Brother*, the island itself and its geographies are places of entanglement, and articulate a version of Michael Rothberg's "multi-directional memory." In doing do, Mauritius gives space for thinking about the role of imperial and colonial geo-politics in the making of a what would become perhaps the defining political subjectivity of the twentieth century, the stateless refugee. Reading Mauritius as host to a Southern Hemisphere experience of the Holocaust, offers possible ways to see how both the rise of Nazi Europe, but also the geo-political tectonics of the dissolution of European empires and the creation of postcolonial nations across the globe were entangled in a related set of motions surrounding Europe's expulsion of its Jewish population.*

"Illegal Immigration" and Carceral Empire

Detainees, or Prisoners?

Looking at and Looking from the Indian Ocean

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no one leaves home unless
home is the mouth of a shark.
(Warsan Shire, *Home*)

"Illegal Immigration" and Carceral Empire

On September 4, 1940 four steamers left Bratislava and sailed down the Danube towards the Black Sea, bound for Palestine. On board were some 2000 Jews from across Eastern Europe who had been rounded up by German and Austrian authorities. Nearly 1600 of these now stateless people would spend the next four months at sea on a journey that took them across the Indian Ocean and to the island of Mauritius, where they would spend the duration of WWII detained in a prison camp. Many of these passengers had paid exorbitant fees to be part of this exodus, as they were under the impression that the transport was to terminate in Palestine, some believing they would be reunited with their families who had already immigrated there. There was of course the added incentive of being given an opportunity to leave an increasingly Nazi-occupied Europe.

On the banks of the Danube between Bulgaria and Romania, two groups in particular, one aboard the steamer *Helios*, the other the *Schoenbrunn*, were transferred to a Greek freighter named the *Atlantic*. Sailing under the (neutral) Panamanian flag, the *Atlantic* began to make its way towards the Straight of Istanbul, and from there on to Cyprus where it was met by British ships who were to escort it to Haifa. After quarantine, disembarking, and a brief internment in a camp at Atlit, British colonial authorities enforced the recently passed *White Paper*

of 1939, which limited Jewish immigration to British Mandate Palestine, and consequently denied this group entry. On December 9, these 1580 passengers were subsequently taken aboard two Dutch ocean liners and proceeded through the Suez Canal and along the East Coast of Africa for another 17 days until the two ships arrived in the harbor of Port Louis, Mauritius on December 26, 1940. The detainees were then transferred to Beau Bassin Prison which had been converted to an internment camp for the purposes of housing this group. This would be their home until the cessation of the War in 1945.[1]

The original policy laid out in the 1939 *White Paper* is at pains to orchestrate a balance between immigration—Jewish immigration, specifically—and maintaining the sovereignty and national integrity, both demographically, but also economically, of the Arab and other already existing populations of Palestine. However, much of the machinations around the creation of the paper also have to do with maintaining sufficient Arab loyalty during the interwar years and in the lead up to WWII. Moreover, as is seen specifically with this story, where British authorities escorted the group to Haifa only to remove them almost immediately, the enforcement of the *Paper* was often equivocal at best. Some of the language of the *Paper* itself is perhaps the source of that equivocation in policy:

> it is necessary that the Jewish community in Palestine should be able to increase its numbers by immigration. This immigration cannot be so great in volume as to exceed whatever may be the economic capacity of the country at the time to absorb new arrivals. It is essential to ensure that the immigrants should not be a burden upon the people of Palestine as a whole, and that they should not deprive any section of the present population of their employment.[2]

[1] For more detailed descriptions of this voyage see Aaron Zwergbaum, " 'Exile in Mauritius,' " *Yad Vashem Studies* 4 (1960): 191-257, as well as Dalia Ofer, *Escaping the Holocaust: Illegal Immigration to the Land of Israel, 1939-1944* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

[2] British White Paper of 1939, Section II, The Avalon Project, Yale Law School, accessed June 30, 2020, https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/brwh1939.asp.

Not based solely on economic and employment indexes, the *Paper* also highlights the symbolic importance of immigration to the "Arab peoples" of Palestine, a goal laid out in the earlier and infamous Balfour Declaration in which immigration was capped at 450,000 as it was believed that this would suffice to achieve a "national home for the Jewish people." The *Paper* continues to say that:

> His Majesty's Government believe that the framers of the Mandate in which the Balfour Declaration was embodied could not have intended that Palestine should be converted into a Jewish State against the will of the Arab population of the country. [...] His Majesty's Government therefore now declare unequivocally that it is not part of their policy that Palestine should become a Jewish State. They would indeed regard it as contrary to their obligations to the Arabs under the Mandate, as well as to the assurances which have been given to the Arab people in the past, that the Arab population of Palestine should be made the subjects of a Jewish State against their will.[3]

Given the proximity to the passing of this legislation, the group, numbering just under 1600 peoples, were promptly and perhaps predictably refused entry into Haifa, declared "illegal immigrants," and just as suddenly became stateless refugees and wards of the British Empire.

It is revealing to look at the British government's reactions to its own uneven success in actually enforcing the stipulations of the *White Paper* as it related to curtailing Jewish immigration into Palestine. This is seen in a series of amendments, in 1939 and 1940. Note the increasingly hostile language of the legislation, from the *Immigration (Amendment) Ordinance* of August 22, 1939 to its evolution into the *Defence* [sic] *(Immigration) Regulations* in March of 1940. Despite much equivocation around enforcement by the British, as Dalia Ofer writes, in fact the British "persistently maintained [a] strict distinction between refugee policy and immigration policy" when it came to Jewish groups leaving

[3] Ibid.

Europe and attempting to enter Palestine.[4] Ofer notes how this distinction is encoded in the *White Paper* itself, arguing that "Embodied in the White Paper restrictions were several assumptions, first and foremost that immigration to Palestine (and the creation of a Jewish national home) was to be considered a separate issue, unrelated to the plight of Jewish refugees seeking to leave Europe."[5] The problem the British Colonial Office faced was that subsequent to monetary penalty and internment the most expedient recourse seemed to be to eventually release these immigrants into Palestine, an option the colonial authorities were at pains to avoid. As Lauren Elise Apter has shown, the White Paper is the source of what she calls a "disorderly decolonization," which she claims is the result of attempts by the British to "assure stability throughout the Middle East" by legislative endeavors in the *Paper* itself to "keep the world Jewish problem separate from Britain's Palestine problem."[6] It was the intention of the *Paper* that the plight of European Jews was not to be a colonial issue for the British Empire, at least not one that would affect this Middle Eastern holding of the Crown. The "problem" as we will see, in this instance at least, was to be outsourced to other theaters of the British Empire.

The evolving and equivocal policy towards Jewish immigration to Palestine, and by extension towards refugeeism more broadly at this time, highlights the ways in which the Empire practiced both direct and exacting forms of carceral violence, witnessed in the increasing scrutiny towards migration and the meting out of incarceration, while also showing how incoherent and even contradictory colonial violence could be. This specific story of detainment also points towards the synaptic ability of imperial networks to mobilize, calling on various parts of the empire to address situations unfolding in another, and specifically around issues of carceral control of its populations. While largely outside the scope of this article, the detainment of this group of Jewish immigrants in Mauritius does demonstrate some of the deeply ingrained penal infrastructures which allowed for the colonial space to act as a prison of/for empire. This story finds itself at the crucible of

[4] Ofer, *Escaping the Holocaust*, 129.

[5] Ibid., 128.

[6] Lauren Elise Apter, "Disorderly Decolonization: The White Paper of 1939 and the End of British Rule in Palestine" (PhD diss., The University of Texas, 2008), vii.

colonial detainment practices and an unfolding crisis of statelessness, while also gesturing towards how the issue of Jewish immigration to Palestine just before the mid-twentieth century sent reverberations nearly around the whole of the British Empire.

Hannah Arendt describes this process in *Origins of Totalitarianism,* which locates the creation of minority and refugee populations during the first half of the twentieth century within a trajectory of a persistent reliance on the nation-state "solution." Arendt, writing in prescient historical proximity to the end of World War II, describes the European geo-political dynamics of the interwar years:

> [...] out of the liquidation of the two multinational states of pre-war Europe, Russia and Austria-Hungary, two victim groups emerged whose sufferings were different from those of all others in the era between the wars [...] they had lost those rights which had been thought of and even defined as inalienable, namely the Rights of Man. The stateless and the minorities [...] had no governments to represent and to protect them and therefore were forced to live either under the law of exceptions of the Minority Treaties [...] or under conditions of absolute lawlessness.[7]

The passage resonates with the story of these refugees mentioned above by drawing attention to the immense upheaval of people during the pre-war years and throughout WWII. Arendt also describes how "With the emergence of the minorities in Eastern and Southern Europe and with the stateless people driven into Central and Western Europe, a completely new element of disintegration was introduced into postwar Europe. Denationalization became a powerful weapon of totalitarian politics."[8] At a time when the Western European state was failing, unable to encompass the proliferating needs of its "citizens," the "nation" was staking a violent claim in the geo-political realities of both the European and international communities, from at least the inter-war period and for the rest of the twentieth century. No longer a structure of political redress for its citizens, the

[7] Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, 1985), 268-269.
[8] Ibid., 269.

state had ossified into a receptacle of identitarian and cultural essentialisms. As Arendt claims, "the transformation of the state from an instrument of the law into an instrument of the nation had been completed; the nation had conquered the state."[9] Both symbolically and literally, Nazi Europe saw this movement of peoples as a cleansing, or purification, but also an asymmetrical or unbalanced substitution which revealed to the world the crisis over national identities which would dominate the geo-political theater of the second half of the twentieth century, and right up until today.

Moreover, this story of refugeeism, of exile, and of an Indian Ocean island being written into and out of the geo-political tectonics of WWII and the Holocaust, offers possibilities for seeing various other forms of citizenship and belonging being negotiated at this historical moment, and from regional perspectives further afield than the dominant Euro-Imperial ones. Often, the events of Europe from 1939-1947 are divorced from their larger geo-political resonances across the colonial and decolonizing world.[10] As Michael Rothberg notes, "the Holocaust has come to be understood in the popular imagination, especially in Europe, Israel, and North America, as a unique, sui generis event."[11] Nor does Arendt, for all her comparative insight, manage to fully map the global reverberations of the Holocaust. Rothberg explains how,

> As Arendt moves in *The Origins* from anti-Semitism, through the colonial encounter in Africa and the European refugee crisis after World War I, to the totalitarian camp system, she follows a trajectory that shuttles between European and non-European worlds. Yet she never quite achieves the

[9] Ibid., 275.

[10] Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009). Rothberg's is a very notable recent exception here and will be discussed below. But even Rothberg's commendable work to think the Holocaust and decolonization together does not take account of the Indian Ocean, much less this otherwise overlooked story of Jewish exile and its relationship to colonial history on the island of Mauritius.

[11] Ibid., 8.

> "planetary" or transnational account of the "tensions of empire" in modernity called for by recent critics of postcolonial and global culture.[12]

As will become clear with my reading of Natacha Appanah's *The Last Brother* below, I am following Rothberg's own "comparative" approach to thinking about the Holocaust and the moment of global decolonization. Appanah's text allows for what Rothberg's notes are the "possibilities for solidarity as well as distinction" between "Jews [and] postcolonial subjects" who are often otherwise distinguished by "minority and postcolonial critique."[13] Indeed, by looking at Appanah's Mauritius, as well as the nexuses of circulation mapped through Indian Ocean histories more broadly, I argue that we can see an example of the "Shared histories of racism, spatial segregation, genocide, diasporic displacement, cultural destruction—and [...] savvy and creative resistance to hegemonic demands provid[ing] the grounds for new forms of collectivity."[14] These solidarities, Rothberg suggests, are opened by thinking about the multi-directional vectors of memory diverging from the Holocaust and postcolonial identity.[15] In thinking about Mauritius as host to a Southern Hemisphere experience of the Holocaust, perhaps it is possible to see the ways in which not only the rise of Nazi Europe, but also the decolonizing and dissolution of European Empires and the creation of postcolonial nations across the globe were entangled in a related set of motions surrounding Europe's expulsion of its Jewish population.

If, as we see, Jewish immigration to Palestine is met at this time with the mobilization of vast imperial networks of incarceration, then reading this moment of empire from the perspective of Mauritius goes some way towards imagining what Aamir Mufti suggests would be "a specifically internationalist and postcolonial understanding of the scenarios of Jewish minoritization and exile, and an acknowledgment of affiliation with the modes of critique produced out of them."[16] This would also work to reposition *to* the Global South, and the Indian

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[12] Ibid., 39.
[13] Ibid., 23.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Aamir Mufti, *Enlightenment in the Colony: The Jewish Question and the Crisis of Postcolonial Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 4.

Ocean specifically, "the conceptual and historical basis for a critique of the Zionist 'solution' and its consequences for the Palestinians, for Arabs more generally, and for *the global culture of decolonization as a whole*."[17] In this way, a history of the Holocaust in the Indian Ocean offers a different view of the development of political and nation-state citizenship from the mid-twentieth century until the present. As Mufti demonstrates, a part of the intellectual and ideological project of the Enlightenment and its dissemination to the colonial world was a crisis of modernity inimical to the project itself. Much of the crisis manifested itself as the anxiety of the formation of the modern liberal (nation) state and entangled with this was the so-called "Jewish question." For Mufti and others before him, Edward Said perhaps most notably, the

> aim [...] is to understand the manner in which the Jews of Europe became a *question*, both for themselves and for others, and the implications this being put into question has for elaborating responses—literary, philosophical, popular-cultural, and political—to the crisis and conflicts of the projects of modernity in European and non-European, specifically colonial and postcolonial, settings.[18]

Mufti analyzes the centrifugal reverberations of this crisis outwards towards the contexts of Palestine/Israel and India/Pakistan, and I would like to take a similar approach here with respect to Mauritius specifically and the Indian Ocean more broadly. What might the kinds of belongings and displacements we see enacted across Indian Ocean worlds offer us by way of conceptual apparatuses for thinking about minor forms of decolonization? In other words, could this story of Jewish refugees interned in Mauritius offer yet another trajectory—that of the European Holocaust—to the transnational and archipelagic frameworks already in place for thinking about the Indian Ocean? The Mauritian experience of Jewish internment might also, as Michael Rothberg suggests, offer contexts in which both the Holocaust and decolonization are seen through "multi-directional" forms of memory. How, we might ask, does the Holocaust play out across the Global South

[17] Ibid., emphasis mine.
[18] Ibid., 10.

and in the Indian Ocean specifically, and how does the island of Mauritius figure in the story of the expulsion of Jews from Eastern Europe and the colonial handover of the British Mandate of Palestine in the middle of the twentieth century?

Detainees, or Prisoners?

It is important to look more closely at the moments preceding the arrival of the group in Mauritius, especially for the ways in which the relationship between imperial legal networks and carceral control is highlighted. In the days before these immigrants arrived in Port Louis, the Governor of Mauritius was forced to construct a legal framework making it "legal" to keep these people detained on the island. In what is perhaps the only full-length scholarly study of this story, *The Mauritian Shekel*, native Mauritian Geneviève Pitot details how, in order to effect the detention of this group in Mauritius, "Special legislation was needed to authorize the Governor to detain a group of people in prison who had not been convicted of any offence. Thus the *European Detainees (Control) Ordinance* was promulgated in Port Louis on 23 December 1940", just 3 days ahead of the arrival of the ships to Mauritius.[19] The *Ordinance* stated that, "It shall be lawful for the Governor to order the detention during His Majesty's pleasure, at any place within the limits of the Colony, of any person who has been deported from Palestine on the ground that such person has entered, or attempted to enter Palestine, without being authorized to do so."[20]

The creation and implementation of the *Detainees Ordinance* in this instance suggests, at least, two things. The first is to gesture towards the imperial networks of carceral control that could be exercised across a broad swath of colonial geographies on relatively short notice. If this does not immediately shock us today given what we know of the insidious reach of colonial empires, then perhaps it is somewhat more alarming to think that a colonial power could chose to first create

[19] Geneviève Pitot, *The Mauritian Shekel: The Story of The Jewish Detainees in Mauritius 1940-1945* (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2000), 127.
[20] Quoted in Pitot, *The Mauritian Shekel*, 127.

and then exercise a law on a group of people in one place for a "crime" that was perceived to have been perpetrated in an entirely other place. The uniqueness of the case precluded extradition to either Palestine or the respective home countries of Central/Eastern Europe and thus, according to this logic of colonial justice, the punishment for an indictment in Palestine was detention in Mauritius. The point here is to suggest that some of what the Mauritius case demonstrates is the unfortunately violent and politically consequential synaptic responsiveness of the British Empire; retribution for laws broken in and pertaining to one part of the Empire could be exacted in an entirely different one. While the actual geographical reach of British colonization around the globe was immense, the legal infrastructure of empire, especially pertaining to the rights of citizenship and subjectivity, reduced the distance under the umbrella of corporeal control.

The second thing to point out about this passage from the *Ordinance* is the way in which it mobilizes Palestine specifically as a touchstone for issues of colonial control. The lives of the detainees now held in a prison camp in Beau Bassin on the island of Mauritius became legally circumscribed at this point. While colonial officials argued over the nuances of how to classify this group, whether as "prisoners" or "detainees," and whether their placement in Beau Bassin was to be an "internment" or a "detention," the *Ordinance* itself makes clear that the group were to be "denied the right to challenge the legality of their detention by judicial or other means," the consequence for what was perceived as their "illegal immigration" attempt into Palestine.[21] This characterization as "illegal immigrants" would perennially resurface at various moments in the story of the Beau Bassin group. Despite the occasional relaxing of distancing measures that were meant to keep the detainees away from Mauritians, when Colonial or local authorities desired them to be restricted again it would suffice for officials to remind the Mauritian public that "These Jews are, after all, under detention for an offense against the law of Palestine."[22] Not only was this meant to serve as warning from the British Colonial Office "to other Jews in Eastern Europe who may be considering following their example," but the message is a direct response

[21] Ibid., 127.

[22] Legislation quoted in Pitot, *The Mauritian Shekel*, 129.

by the Office to the expressed desires of the South African Jewish community to send material aid to the detainees.[23] The message is clear: that not only would the Colonial Office not tolerate the direct infringement of its colonial legal infrastructure around Palestine, but it would also try to obfuscate any kinds of horizontal demonstrations of Jewish solidarity that were attempted in this Southern Hemispheric theater of the War.[24]

The detainees' relationship to Palestine would continue to define them legally[25] and materially throughout the five years of this ordeal. As Aaron Zwergbaum, one of the former detainees and writer of one of the earliest studies of this story writes, shortly after the departure of the group from Haifa in November of 1940, "The [British] Government of Palestine published a statement on the deportation of illegal immigrants."[26] In the statement, the government makes clear that its sympathies (at least outwardly expressed) notwithstanding "they are responsible for the administration of Palestine and are bound to see to it that the laws of the country are not openly flouted."[27] Furthermore, the British government "can only regard a revival of illegal Jewish immigration at the present juncture as likely to affect the local situation most adversely and to pose a serious menace to British interests in the Middle East."[28] Both Zwergbaum and Pitot note how the inherent contradictions within documents such as the *Balfour Declaration* allowed the British to hold a host of equivocal positions, straddling between a growing refugee crisis in Europe and maintaining their own delicate colonial balance in the Middle East.

The British government's response to immigrations infractions in Palestine was that such "illegal immigrants" "shall be deported to *a British colony* and shall be

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[23] Ibid.

[24] I'll say more below about this relationship between the detainees and the South African Jewish community. But eventually a steady supply of support and supplies were allowed to pass between the two countries and forged a horizontal solidarity that persists to this day.

[25] For a much fuller exploration of the nuances of language surrounding the detainees' legal categorization, especially for the Colonial Office's employment of naming/classification as a putative measure, see Pitot, *The Mauritian Shekel*, 126-132.

[26] Aaron Zwergbaum, " 'Exile in Mauritius,' " 218.

[27] Quoted in Zwergbaum, " 'Exile in Mauritius,' " 218.

[28] Quoted in Zwergbaum, " 'Exile in Mauritius,' " 218.

detained there for the duration of the war."[29] The implication was that Palestine, as a British colony, would not become the de facto safe haven for refugees fleeing Nazi Europe on the eve of WWII. This is also important because it relates to a clause in the statement which not only stipulated the colonial incarceration of the Jewish emigres, but effectively forbade in perpetuity their ability to enter Palestine at any future date. This prohibition was only later changed in 1944, allowing for a case by case application process for the right to enter Palestine upon the end of the War. However, the bureaucratic language around categorizing members of the group presented great difficulty in effecting this process. As Zwergbuam notes, this was because "the refugees were officially called 'detainees' and it was sometimes stressed that were not 'internees.' "[30] Not only were the members of the Mauritius detention continually marked by the Palestine infraction, but it is also an instance of a dissemination of carceralization across the networks of empire. Of course, there are other instances of the networks of empire being mobilized for the incarceration of bodies, and often its own subjects; Australia being perhaps the most obvious. But this is a somewhat more nuanced example for the ways in which the British Empire is seen to flounder around these questions of citizenship and refugeeism. There is something of a litmus test at the end of empire which indeed may have much to do with its dissolution.

Looking at and looking from the Indian Ocean

In what follows, I want to look at a few of the sparse sources relating this history, and especially creative responses to it, including artworks produced by two of the detainees, Peretz Beda Mayer and Fritz Haendel, as well as a more recent novel written in 2007 by Indo-Mauritian author Nathacha Appanah, entitled *Le dernier frère*.[31] I want to suggest that Appanah's novel, translated in 2010 as *The Last Brother*,[32] imagines the space of the island as allowing for an intricately entangled

[29] *Palestine Post* November 21, 1940, quoted in Zwergbaum, " 'Exile in Mauritius,' " 218; emphasis added.

[30] Zwergbaum, " 'Exile in Mauritius,' " 219.

[31] Nathacha Appanah, *Le dernier frère* (Paris: Editions de l'Olivier, 2007).

[32] Nathacha Appanah, *The Last Brother* (Minneapolis: Graywolf Press, 2010).

and multi-directional narrative of both Jewish and colonial displacements on the island. Mauritius, in Appanah's novel, creates space for multiple voices, multiple memories, and multiple histories, existing in what Françoise Lionnet calls a "creolized totality."[33] In other words, the Mauritius of Appanah's imagining is a narrative totality which does not subsume its different elements into a unified whole. In *The Last Brother*, the island itself and its geographies are the representational holders of multiple senses of difference, giving weight to the myriad problems of representation in colonial contexts, and especially to moments of exchange such as this which gesture to a multiplicity of relations. Nor can these stories of mutual displacement as well as solidarities be easily placed within global (and global north) narratives of the Holocaust. Rather, as Lionnet claims, "The novel provides a unique opportunity to engage in a creative dialogue with the long history of Mauritian literature *as well as* with the Jewish memoirists [...]"[34] A place of entanglement in the novel, Mauritius gives space for thinking about the role of imperial and colonial geo-politics in the making of what would become two of the defining political subjectivities of the twentieth century, the stateless refugee and the postcolonial subject.

One of the ways in which we might better understand some of the horizontal and "minor transnational"[35] connections captured in this story is by thinking through some of the currents of Indian Ocean Studies. Thinking *from* the Indian Ocean shifts some of our focus away from the more spectacularized and received narratives of the Cold War, Non-Alignment, and the Holocaust, and might instead ask us to think about sedimented layers of migrations and displacements across the region, as well as connections that extend horizontally towards a proliferation of stories that cannot be easily collated under grand, sweeping headers such as "decolonization," or "diaspora," etc. To try and capture this sense of multi-directionality, Isabel Hofmeyr proposes what she calls the "Indian Ocean

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[33] Françoise Lionnet, "Continents and Archipelagos: From *E Pluribus Unum* to Creolized Solidarities," *PMLA* 123, no. 5 (October 2008): 1503-1515; 1509.

[34] Françoise Lionnet, " 'Dire Exactament': Remembering the Interwoven Lives of Jewish Deportees and Coolie Descendants in 1940s Mauritius," *Yale French Studies* 118/119 (2010): 111-135; 115.

[35] Françoise Lionnet and Shu-mei Shih, eds., *Minor Transnationalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005).

as Method" where, "as transnational and oceanic forms of analysis become more prominent, the Indian Ocean attracts attention, especially as a domain that offers rich possibilities for working beyond the templates of the nation-state and area studies."[36] The point here being that as both material archive and conceptual space the Indian Ocean is "complicating," not only presenting entangled archives of displacements, movements and meetings, but likewise suggesting trans-disciplinary modes of approaching those multiplicities. As Hofmeyr elsewhere writes, "At every turn the Indian Ocean complicates binaries, moving us away from the simplicities of the resistant local and the dominating global and towards a historically deep archive of competing universalisms."[37] Lionnet complicates what she sees as Hofmeyr's representative approach, which traces the trajectories of cosmopolitan mobilities across the Indian Ocean. Lionnet wishes to retain the productive complexities of both the "the notion of creolization and of the producers of Creole cultures," so that they not be subsumed by the totalizing universalisms attendants on histories of cosmopolitan movement across the Indian Ocean.[38] In what follows, I want to retain Lionnet's sense of various Indian Ocean life-worlds as productive of creolized totalities as she calls them; spaces that rather than being subsumed by universalism can retain the tensions of local, horizontal entanglements while at the same time being part of histories of global movement.

Mauritius: European Expulsion and Exotic "Relief"

I first want to look briefly at the lives of two Czech-born artists aboard the transport that landed in Mauritius, Peretz Beda Mayer and Fritz Haendel. The two were prolific in their renderings of conditions aboard the ship during its nearly four-month journey, as well as having produced a sizable amount of work during the 4 ½ years spent in Mauritius, from sketches, to paintings, to woodcut prints

[36] Isabel Hofmeyr, "The Complicating Sea: The Indian Ocean as Method," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 32, no. 3 (2012): 584-590; 584.

[37] Isabel Hofmeyr, "Universalizing the Indian Ocean," *PMLA* 125, no. 3 (2010): 721-29; 722.

[38] Françoise Lionnet, "Cosmopolitan or Creole Lives? Globalized Ocean and Insular Identities," *Profession* (2011): 23-43; 26.

and carved figurines. In many of these works, as well as in the writings from the time of their detainment, there is a consistent figuring of the island as a space of extreme remoteness and exceeding exoticism in similar ways to Arendt's using Africa and colonial space as representational relief. The same can be said in many of these sources for the figure of the Mauritian in these representations. One of the artists, Beda Mayer, relates his impression of the group's arrival to the island:

> Mauritius, rising in the distance out of the calm Indian Ocean, appeared more and more enchanting the closer we approached. The island, surrounded by lagoons of a blue I had never seen before, was fringed with thick green vegetation and tall exotic coconut palms behind which rose hazy purple hills. Here was something new, something totally different from anything I'd ever known, so exciting I felt my pulse race; my eyes welled up with tears [...] The island has 2500 mm of rain a year. Rain from heaven! You could see three or four rainbows at a time on that island! It's a true paradise: the sky, the greenery, the birds, the monkeys, the covered market at nearby Beau Bassin, with its Chinese, Creoles, Indians, Africans, milling around, buying, selling, bargaining, all seen under the shimmering sunlight filtering through slits in the roof—a feast for all the senses.[39]

Beda Mayer's description rests heavy on stock tropes of tropical paradises: a land of such over-abundance as to spill over the diegetic and ontological bounds of description, with "blues [...] never seen before" and such a "thick green vegetation" being the product of celestial waters. Indeed, one seems to be overwhelmed by the visual field presented by the sight of this earthly paradise: with its "three or four rainbows at a time."[40]

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[39] Quoted in Elena Makarova, *Boarding Pass to Paradise: Peretz Beda Mayer and Fritz Haendel* (Jerusalem: Verba Publishers, 2005), 70.

[40] See Françoise Lionnet's work here on the long history of Mauritius in the Western, and especially French, literary imagination, from Baudelaire to St. Pierre, especially "Shipwrecks, Slavery, and the Challenge of Global Comparison: From Fiction to Archive in the Colonial Indian Ocean," *Comparative Literature* 64, no. 4 (2012): 446-461.

Studies in "Native" Ethnography: The Creole and the Cosmopolitan

Later, when it was discovered that Haendel and Mayer were both quite artistically talented, as well as each having had some printing experience, Mr. Armitage, the Prison Commander, enlisted the two to make public notice posters for the colonial administration. Beda Mayer relates that,

> when Mr. Armitage learned that I had some printing experience, Fritz and I were given a workshop and commissioned to make wooden printing blocks for all the island's public notices. Among the many projects we were given, was a campaign to encourage the locals to work a five-day week. Our posters showed a smiling Creole man who gained the benefits of work, compared with his lazy, slouching brother who didn't [...] I don't know if the campaign helped at all—three days' pay sufficed to buy dried fish, rice and peppers; they'd pick some fruit in the garden, and what more could a man want?[41]

These kinds of portrayals still persist. As Lionnet notes that, "The common perception of Creole peoples and languages is still shrouded in ignorance and mired in exotic clichés, in racial mythologies of degeneracy and the deficiencies associated with insularity and slavery, orality, indenture, forcible transplantation, or imposed immobility."[42] Ultimately, Beda Mayer seems conflicted about what he calls his "workshop for propaganda," lamenting that "here we were, designing posters to encourage Mauritian productivity, while who knew what was happening to our people at the other end of the world?"[43] Though Mayer expresses a reluctance to be involved in the administration's project, it is because of the apparent absurdity of the distance to which he finds himself removed, here "at the other end of the world." Offering a series of woodcuts and posters that tap into a capitalist ethic of productivity and utilitarianism so foundational to the colonialist spirit, Mayer and Haendel produce a series of images which feature slouching, smoking, and seemingly "unproductive" Creole figures and reflect

[41] Quoted in Makarova, *Boarding Pass,* 92.
[42] Lionnet, "Cosmopolitan or Creole Lives," 28.
[43] Quoted in Makarova, *Boarding Pass,* 92.

many of the stereotypes for representing the Creole figure within the colonial imaginary.

Lionnet makes an interesting comparison between what she sees ultimately as a false distinction between the cosmopolitan and the Creole figure, noting that,

> the cosmopolitan subject tends to represent a dubious ontological excess [...] personified, by means of clichés, some of them racialized: the rootless intellectual, the wandering jew [...] The Creole subject, by contrast, continues to index a racial, cultural, economic, linguistic deficit embodied by the manual or indentured laborer, slave, or economic migrant whose position is ipso facto that of a subject devoid of civilizational quotient and depth. Both the cosmopolitan and the Creole thus appear situated at a similar distance from the national norm but on the plus and minus sides of it, respectively.[44]

Ultimately, according to Lionnet, the "Mascarene Experience" offers the materialities of the Indian Ocean as ways out of this essentializing cul-de-sac; that because of the particularities of commercial histories, movements and exchanges in the "insular regions of the Indian Ocean," there emerges a "Creole cosmopolitan who participates actively in the construction of cultural meanings through technologies of oral, print, visual, and virtual communication."[45] The Creole cosmopolitan is a useful formation in thinking about this narrative between a group of detained Jewish immigrants and how they are remembered in the imaginary of Mauritius.

Writing Mauritius

In *The Last Brother*, Appanah attempts to do just this, to give voice to *both* the Mauritian and Jewish actors in this history. However, as the novel is structured as a series of flashbacks, memories and dreams which border on hallucination,

[44] Lionnet, "Cosmopolitan or Creole Lives," 29.
[45] Ibid.

Appanah also foregrounds the instability of these voices, as well as some of the problems of representation surrounding memory and history. The novel is told from the perspective of Raj, a now elderly Indo-Mauritian man, who nearly sixty years before befriended a young boy named David, one of the Jewish detainees at the Beau Bassin prison. The novel is a series of Raj's memories, recalling how, after a cyclone hit the island and two of his brothers died, Raj's father moved him and his mother from their home in Mapou to another part of the island in Beau Bassin.

The connection between the two boys, Raj and David, begins after Raj's father takes a job as a security officer at the Beau Bassin prison camp. Left alone after the death of his two brothers, Raj starts to follow his father to the prison each day, hiding in the forest just outside the surrounding barbed wire fence. The prison in Appanah's telling becomes a site of entanglement of different forms of belonging and un-belonging, as well as different narrative imaginings of this history. Day after day, through the mediating lines of the barbed wire, Raj's obsession with the prison and with David grows until one day, in a desperate rage at the thought that David might have disappeared, Raj enacts a moment of physical and narrative entanglement with the fence and with the world of the prison on the other side. Raj remembers that:

> I struck the ground with both my fists and grabbed hold of the barbed wire in a rage I had hitherto rarely known. My eyes were flooded with tears and the prison was no longer more than a blurred picture [...] I plunged the palms of my hands into the metal coils, pain mingling with my anger, I shook the barrier with all my strength and with a dull sound something was suddenly uprooted like a rotten plant. A part of the barbed wire fence came out of the ground. It vibrated [...] Today, just as I remember David's golden curls, I can also remember the smell of rust and blood on my hands. In the forest on the way home I would sniff at my palms, as if they were a drug, and at each intake of breath I was infused with a surge of serenity and hope.[46]

[46] Appanah, *The Last Brother,* 74.

As Raj remembers this moment it is the prison fence specifically—the line of mediation between what he sees as two different worlds—that is both the source of physical pain in the story itself, but also the cathartic object around which the memory is viscerally located. The pain Raj registers is both for the imagined loss of his new would-be confidant David, but also for his actual loss of his two brothers in the typhoon, a trauma Raj has translated into his obsession with David.

While the prison fence is an obvious marker of separation—both symbolic and real—between the detainees and the local population, for Raj it becomes a site of mediation and entanglement between the histories and memories of the Jews brought to Mauritius and a Mauritian voice, here in the figure of Raj. Two stories, of diaspora, and of displacement, told at and through the line drawn by the barbed wire fence as Raj becomes part of the story of Jewish detainment and, reciprocally, this story of the Holocaust has become a part of Raj. In this moment, we see how Raj's own story of displacements, though writ small in the novel as an intra-island relocation, is actually part of a much broader, global history of colonial trafficking of people from one part of the Empire to another in the service of colonial labor practices. We see in Raj's telling of his encounter with David the attempt of one diasporic figure to narrate ("tell precisely") not only the story of another displaced figure, but to make sense of his own place within the imperial histories of Mauritius.

To return for a moment to Rothberg's reading of Arendt, he makes clear that the ability to frame the otherness and the persecution of European Jews is made by Arendt at the rhetorical expense of the colonial body. Rothberg locates an irony of occlusion and insight in Arendt's (mis-)apprehension of the colonial world, and Africa specifically, as a relief, or metaphorical backdrop, for what is ultimately for Arendt a narrative about the failure of *European* modernity. An ahistorical Africa, and by extension colonial world, are the representational dividend paid for an investment in a critique of the colonial and totalitarian foundations of European culture. Rothberg writes that,

> Arendt's *inability* to comprehend the subjects at Europe's periphery as bearers of history, memory, and culture is intrinsically related to—and even provides the conditions for—her *ability* to recognize Europe's internal others. The imagined savage without culture—the imagined barbarian—provides the metaphorical grounding for two of the central "characters" of Arendt's analysis: the naked human being deprived of culture, and the stateless concentration camp inmate stripped of the right to have rights.[47]

However, in this moment at the prison fence, Raj, the Mauritian boy displaced on his own island by colonial economics as well as a natural disaster, becomes an agential part of his own narrative, but also a part of this narrative of persecution of Europe's Jewish peoples. Appanah goes a long way to giving voice to the colonial subjectivity missing in Arendt's formulation and thereby offers a reframing of the Holocaust via histories of the lives of colonized peoples and their movements that stretch across the Indian Ocean.

Appanah not only gives dimension to the colonial subjects of this story, but also fills out the colonial space, moving beyond some of the exoticizing tropes used to represent it. In the novel, the forest outside Beau-Bassin functions as a space where the two narratives can bear on one another; both the troubled and pathological weaving together of Raj's memories and the largely erased narrative of David, representative of a whole group of detainees. Both unstable and displaced in their own ways, Appanah's novel is able, in some quite touching moments, to give a polyphonic articulation both to these two minor and thus kindred subjectivities, as well as to a minor landscape which is witness to this bond. As the novel comes to a moment of heart wrenching climax, where Raj recounts his journey with an ailing David, and as David gets progressively weaker from malaria, Raj remembers that

> David's little voice arose beside the camphor tree, his Yiddish words filled that tropical night, his Jewish song enfolded the forest and enfolded me,

[47] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*, 40.

> little Raj. His voice was so serene, the words flowed naturally, and this recital entered into me and reached my heart, *making me at one with the world around me, as if, until then, I had been a stranger to it.* (p. 140; emphasis added)

Through a focus on voice and especially in relation to space, and specifically to the landscape, Appanah offers us a unique moment of textual and historical entanglement, where Raj's world comes to make sense to him in the Yiddish words of a dying David. As Lionnet writes,

> By focusing on the unusual plights of the Central European Jews, she [Appanah] breaks open the common binaries along which Mauritian literature and culture traditionally tend to be defined: white/black, Hindu/Muslim, Indian/Creole, British/French, perpetrator/victim. *The Jewish presence puts into perspective all local histories of conflict; those histories, in turn, create new ground from which to understand both the specificity of Jewish victimization and what it shares with other forms of discrimination.*[48]

This is critical, in other words, because it realizes the ways in which the expulsion of European Jews—in many ways instantiating a political category characteristic of much of twentieth century geo-politics, the stateless refugee—as well as the daily lives of those who lived under multiple and various forms of colonialism—come to bear on one another. Mauritius in Appanah's telling provides a narrative space open to holding both of these minoritized and displaced voices alongside one another. We might think of the island here as Lionnet's "creolized totality," productive of narratives of entanglements rather than of occlusion. Or we might also see how the island has been the sight of a very particular instance of Rothberg's "multidirectional" forms of memory, allowing for a whole series of horizontal trajectories of remembering and un/belonging.

[48] Lionnet, "Dire Exactement," 118; emphasis added.

I argue that the novel is an exploration of how these two narratives of subjectivity might be told in relation to one another, and on and through the island of Mauritius. Appanah's text suggests that when the exoticizing tropes of Edenic otherness are removed, Mauritius becomes less a backdrop or narrative relief and more the place upon which two forms of subjectivity—the stateless refugee and the colonial subject—find some common ground for articulation. As Raj remembers his journey with David through the woods beyond the prison, he wonders whether:

> In the forest did I forget why we were there, David and I? Did I forget the policemen, his gleaming nightstick, his voice when he came looking for David, did I forget my father's sweating face infused with rage when he looked at us, my mother and me? [...] For suddenly the forest stopped, its dense green protection came to an end and we found ourselves on the verge of a neat, smoothly pack dirt road, incongruous after that cyclone [...] and this terrible road was as smooth as one imagines the roads in paradise to be, but it led straight up to a locked gate with padlocks and chains, surmounted by a sign [...] *Welcome to the State Prison of Beau-Bassin*.[49]

Think here of the earlier depictions of Mauritius as Edenic paradise, and how it is the space of the prison specifically that is able to complicate this vision. Think too of the earlier examples of Mauritius exceeding representational boundaries as compared to the prison fence as a boundary which in itself provides the space for mediation. Rather than a space of excess or over-abundance, the forest is mapped through David and Raj's movements together through it, and is shown to have very real borders and boundaries which tend to end in figurations of power: the policeman, Raj's father, and the prison itself. But the forest also protects these two young boys, both from discovery initially as well as from the storm that rages on the island (a protection not earlier afforded to Raj's brothers). In this way the forest is also a space of escape and *marronage*.[50]

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[49] Appanah, *The Last Brother,* 115-116.

[50] I would like to thank Bruno Jean-François for this insight.

In Raj's memory/narration, the tale of his own deprivation, displacement and loss is intermingled with that of the story of Jewish refugees. Like the blood and rust at the prison fence, this memory becomes a transhistorical re-telling of both stories, one a palimpsest inscribed over the other. The detainees become a constitutive element of Raj's own life and life-story. His memory of the detainees is tangled up with and written into the larger narrative of Jewish Diaspora. Raj also tells a narrative of displacement, on a personal level of his alienating migration across the island and the loss of filial bonds. But also, Raj's loss signals a larger colonial subjectivity, one based on forced movement, indenturing labor policies of the British Empire, as well as the historical practices of slavery brought to the island by each of the various colonial powers that have ruled over it. Raj's narrative is an attempt to make sense of his own story within the larger vectors of an imperial nexus of global movements, displacements, and exploitational labor practices stretching across the Indian Ocean.

It is, of course, significant that Appanah chooses the Jewish Cemetery at Saint Martin as a space of narrative analepsis from which Raj begins to tell his childhood story of meeting and escaping with David. The Cemetery is a real place about a mile from the prison camp at Beau Bassin and contains the graves of 127 of the former detainees. The novel opens as Raj awakens to a vision of a now-grown David standing in front of him, prompting him to call his son to take him to Saint Martin to visit David's grave. As Raj walks through the cemetery, where those who died during detainment are buried, he seems to embody its history, feeling the memory of it inhabit him: "I am reading the names on the graves, images jostle one another in my head, memories come back so strongly that I am aware of their weight on my chest, I see their color in my eyes, feel the taste of them in my mouth and I have to slow down, inhale deeply, and swallow to calm them."[51]

It is at this moment in the novel that Raj finds the gravestone of his childhood friend, David. He kneels down to clean the stone, and places "a little red box upon it that contains his [David's] Star of David" that the young boy had given Raj some sixty years earlier. The flooding of memory into Raj's body is the moment at

[51] Appanah, *The Last Brother*, 7.

which the novel begins to tell the history of what happened. Kneeling before the grave, Raj says "I reach out my hand to David, close my eyes, and remember," and thus opens the story of the two young boys brought together through the violences of both Nazi Europe as well as imperial economies.[52] The cemetery functions both in the novel and historically as a site of multi-directional memory, crisscrossed with the stories of those who were detained, the lives of Mauritians who were witness to these histories, as well as the larger political machinations of an empire. The cemetery is a somewhat unique site of Indian Ocean remembering/memory of the Holocaust.

The St. Martin remains an instance of the kinds of multi-directional histories which make up this story of detainment on the island. The small Jewish section of the cemetery, containing the graves of detainees who died during their time in the camp, was granted by the Colonial Government in 1946 to the South African Jewish Board of Deputies who were then charged with its care. Government documents show that on November 20, 1946:

> The Honourable Raymond Bérenger, Esq., Director of Public Works and Surveys acting for and on behalf of the Mauritius Colonial Government [...] doth make a free grant to the South African Jewish Board of Deputies [...] all that portion of land containing twenty-two square perches or hundredths of an Arpent, Colonial Measure, forming part of the St. Martin Cemetery Grounds.[53]

The pronouncement is an interesting act of horizontal granting of sovereignty across colonial spaces to a non-colonial, non-governmental body. The Jewish section of the St. Martin Cemetery was initially held by the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, a lay organization, and has more recently been placed in the charge of the Island Hebrew Congregation, who continue its upkeep.

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[52] Ibid., 8.

[53] Quoted in Rabbi Moshe Silberhaft, *African Jewish Congress: Mauritius Report* (Johannesburg, s.n., 1998).

The initial decision to grant this land to a South African group was no accident, and was based on the continued lines of communication and support demonstrated between the detainees and the South African Jewish community during the majority of the time spent in the camp. Records of communication reveal a history of robust dialogue between both individuals and governments, including letters from detainees in search of relatives living in South Africa, and requests for material support and especially with regards to kosher items for Holy celebrations. Nor did this connection cease once the War had ended and the detainees were released. Initially, Isiah Berger, who had immigrated to Mauritius in the 1930s, and Jacques Desmarais a native to the island, did much on the ground to ensure the upkeep of the Jewish section of the St. Martin Cemetery. While officially administered by the SAJBD and the United Jewish Appeal, Pitot notes that Desmarais "Until his death, maintained the cemetery at his own expense out of a sense of idealism."[54] More recently, after Desmarais's death, and the cemetery having falling into disrepair from repeated damaged due to cyclones, Johannesburg-based Rabbi Moshe Silberhaft has continued to care for the space. As Spiritual Leader and CEO of the African Jewish Congress, Rabbi Silberhaft, also known as "The Traveling Rabbi", is responsible for serving much of southern and some of central Africa, as well as Madagascar and Mauritius. Since the 1980's he has fundraised and personally overseen multiple restorations as well as the general upkeep of the cemetery.

The network of support for these restorations points again to some of the multi-directional trajectories of this story. The Mauritius-based Medine Sugar Estate, a corporation involved in the cultivation and production of sugar, as well as the real estate and hospitality industries, has consistently shown great interest in this history through its continued monetary support in maintaining the cemetery. Rabbi Silberhaft has also staged multiple ceremonies at the cemetery and organized a reunion of former detainees in Mauritius. In 1999, eight different Chevra Kadisa societies, from all of the major cities in South Africa, contributed to the renovation of the cemetery. Even more recently a ceremony was held in November of 2014 to commemorate the opening of a small museum adjacent to

[54] Pitot, *The Mauritian Shekel*, 228.

the cemetery which tells the story of the voyage to Haifa, and the detainment in Mauritius. The communication and support between the detainees and the South African community during WWII points towards histories of transnational solidarity that connect communities across the Global South to the very real and tangible effects of the Holocaust that played out in their own hemisphere. And the more recent act of memorialization, especially around the cemetery, demonstrates how these same communities continue to participate in the multi-directional memory that this history maps. However, these networks also raise the question about participation, as it is also the case that this history has very little footprint on the popular Mauritian imaginary.

I want to conclude by returning to a moment in Appanah's novel, which both gives a voice to the otherwise silent/silenced David, but which also reimagines the figure of the Mauritian, colonial subject in this story. This moment goes some way towards framing how this story might complicate some of the geographical coordinates and directions of the multi-directionality caught up in the histories of the Holocaust, especially as they reverberated around the Indian Ocean. At the end of the novel, Raj tries to imagine from David's perspective what he himself might have looked like to the young detainee. He ends up articulating a Mauritian subjectivity, one entangled with and articulated through David's voice that Raj ventriloquizes. As a now elderly Raj tries to remember his earlier time with David, he slips into the consciousness of the young detainee, looking out from the vantage point of the prison. Raj muses that:

> He might be saying things like: *On the other side of the barbed wire I saw a dark boy with black hair. He was weeping like me and he had leaves stuck to his face and you could have taken him for an animal. He was half buried in the earth, this boy with dusky skin. I could only see his head, his eyes as black as billiard balls, and if he'd not been weeping he would have frightened me with his face like a savage's.*
> Perhaps he might also say: *Raj taught me how to climb trees, how to run so that my feet don't touch the ground (or hardly), he told me to run for the sake of running, to forget your body and your head and just feel the*

> *air against your face, feel the speed you can reach the more you forget your legs and look straight ahead and laugh.*[55]

Ultimately, the prison is a space of difference for both children: that is, of the exile of David to the island, as well as Raj's father's displacement of the family across the island for a new occupation away from the hardships of the cane cutters' camp. However, it is the site of the prison that also allows for a "minor transnational" connection between the two boys. A relationship whose contours are both precipitated by and yet not over-determined by the structural relationship of a colonial metropole to its peripheral colonies; two minoritized figures finding relation to one another, and in this relation, give specific form to sweeping global trajectories of displacement across the Indian Ocean.

The Jewish detainment to Mauritius is both symptomatic of British imperialism—as discussed above—and yet Raj and David's relationship mediates this structure through a connection that finds both boys as part of minor populations of occupied and displaced, and even imprisoned, peoples. Thinking about a history of the Holocaust in the Indian Ocean, we come to read in this story, and through the figuration of the island of Mauritius and its inhabitants, what Aimé Césaire long ago pointed out: that the rise of Nazism, both its politics and its ethno-cultural nationalism, are part of the same entangled genealogy as the colonial imaginary and its practices. As such the political subjectivities that arose from them and out of their aftermaths, the postcolonial subject, the stateless refugee—both in the post-WWII moment of decolonization and today—must be thought about in relation to one another.

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[55] Appanah, *The Last Brother,* 126; italics in original.

Imaginary in African Literatures, explores the relationship between ecological and decolonial thinking in African literary and cultural production across the twentieth century. *African Anthropocene* argues that "the speculative turn" is African literatures is a current mode of thinking about climate change and planetary futures that can be traced back to at least the start of the twentieth century, where decolonial thinking is linked to environmental awareness and ecological forms of writing.

Keywords: Holocaust, Indian Ocean, Mauritius, Nathacha Appanah, Multidirectional Memory

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"My Arabic Is Mute": The Demise of Arabic Literature by Iraqi Jews and Their Shift to Writing in Hebrew

By Reuven Snir

Abstract

We are currently witnessing the demise of Arab-Jewish culture - a tradition that started more than fifteen hundred years ago is vanishing before our eyes. Until the twentieth century, the great majority of the Jews under the rule of Islam used Arabic as their language but after the establishment of the State of Israel, Arabic has been gradually disappearing as a language mastered by Jews. They have been deliberately excluded from Arabism to the point that we can now assume an unspoken agreement between Zionism and Arab nationalism to carry out a total cleansing of Arab-Jewish culture. The present article focuses on Iraqi-Jewish authors who immigrated to Israel during the 1950s and examines their insistence on continuing their Arabic literary tradition, despite the reluctance of the two clashing national movements to keep Arab-Jewish culture and identity alive. These attempts failed and gradually most of them stopped writing in Arabic—only few of them successfully shifted to writing in Hebrew, generally adopting the Zionist master narrative.

Immigration and Adaptation

Clash of Narratives

The Shift to Hebrew

Shimon Ballas: "I am an Arab Jew"

Sammy Michael: "I Activated a Forgetting Mechanism"

Elī 'Amīr: "To Speak the Other's Language Without Renouncing his Own"

*Almog Behar: "*Anā min al-Yahūd*"*

Conclusion

Arabic literature has included Jewish authors, mainly poets, since the pre-Islamic period. From the 11th to the 13th century in Muslim Spain (Al-Andalus), for instance, we find many Jewish poets fluent in *fuṣḥā* (standard literary Arabic), who achieved wide recognition for their literary works.[1] After the mid-13th century, Jews were nowhere as open to participation in the wider Arabic culture, and at home in *fuṣḥā*, as during the 1920s and 30s in Iraq.[2] This cultural involvement was encouraged by the process of modernization and secularization of Iraqi Jews since the second half of the nineteenth century. However, because of the escalation of the Arab-Jewish conflict over Palestine during the late 1940s, the Arab identity of the Jews, which had been firmly consolidated during the 1920s and 1930s, underwent a speedy fragmentation in a way that left Jews no alternative but to immigrate to Israel.

Since the 1950s Arab-Jews have been gradually but deliberately excluded from Arabness to the point that we can now speak of an unspoken agreement between Zionism and Arab nationalism to carry out a total cleansing of Arab-Jewish culture. The national struggle over Palestine has by no means prevented the two movements from seeing eye to eye in this respect, despite the difference between them—the one inspired by European colonialism and the other, an anti-colonial venture. Both movements have excluded the hybrid Arab-Jewish identity and highlighted instead a "pure" Jewish-Zionist identity against a "pure" Muslim-Arab one. We are in fact witnessing the demise of Arab-Jewish culture—a tradition that started more than fifteen hundred years ago is vanishing before our own eyes. Until the twentieth century, the great majority of the Jews under the

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[1] See Samuel Miklos Stern, "Arabic Poems by Spanish-Hebrew Poets," in *Romanica et Occidentalia Etudes dédiées à la mémoire de Hiram Peri*, ed. Moshé Lazar (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1963), 254-263.

[2] On the historical background of the Jews in Iraq, see Nissim Rejwan, *The Jews of Iraq, 3000 Years of History and Culture* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1985).

rule of Islam used Arabic as their language; now Arabic is gradually disappearing as a language mastered by Jews.[3]

The present article examines the persistent attempts by Iraqi-Jews who migrated to Israel during the 1950s to continue their Arabic literary activities despite the reluctance of the two clashing national movements to keep Arab-Jewish culture and identity alive. These attempts failed and gradually most of them stopped writing in Arabic—only few of them successfully shifted to writing in Hebrew, mainly in the field of fiction.

Immigration and Adaptation

Toward the end of the 1940s and the early 1950s, largely in the framework of the mass immigration of Iraqi Jews, many talented writers and poets emigrated from Iraq to Israel: Murād Mīkhā'īl (1906-1986), Shalom Darwīsh (1913-1997), Ya'qūb Balbūl (1920-2003), Nuriel Zilkha (1924-2015), Ibrāhīm Obadyā (1924-2006), Sammy Michael (b. 1926), Aharon Zakkai (1927-2021), Isḥāq Bār-Moshe (1927-2003), Nīr Shoḥet (1928-2011), Shlomo Zamir (1929-2017), Shimon Ballas (1930-2019), Salīm Sha'shū'a (1930-2013), Sālim al-Kātib (b. 1931), Najīb Kaḥīla (b. 1931), Shmuel Moreh (1932-2017), David Semah (1933-1997), Sasson Somekh (1933-2019), and Samīr Naqqāsh (1938-2004). The harsh living conditions in the new Jewish state, the difficulties of adapting to a new society and culture and the lack of knowledge of Hebrew took their toll on most of them. They underwent an "experience of shock and uprooting," as the aforementioned poet and scholar Sasson Somekh says, and under these conditions "it became difficult to think about literature."[4] Nevertheless, the fact that they arrived in a state where Arabic was considered at the time an official language next to Hebrew, gave them, at least at the beginning, the hope that they would be able to continue their literary careers in Arabic.

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[3] On the demise of Arab-Jewish culture, see Reuven Snir, *Arab-Jewish Literature: The Birth and Demise of the Arabic Short Story* (Leiden: Brill, 2019).

[4] *'Iton 77*, January-February 1988, 32.

Following the Palestinian *Nakba* (literally "disaster," or "catastrophe") during the 1948 war, more than 700,000 Palestinian Arabs—about half of prewar Palestine's Arab population—fled or were expelled from their homes. The greater part of the Palestinian Arab urban intelligentsia abandoned the territories of Palestine, while those who remained inside the boundaries of the State of Israel were generally from the poorer or the uneducated village population. This cultural vacuum was partially filled by the immigrating Jewish poets and writers, especially those from Iraq. And indeed, not a few of these authors continued to write and publish in Arabic, while adhering to the poetics they had grown accustomed to in Iraq, which was suffused with English and French influences.[5] A significant thematic change appeared in their literary work: alongside the conventional subjects which had preoccupied them in Iraq – love, social and ethical problems, the status of women, fate and its illusions, death and thoughts on life – topics touching on the pressing social and political circumstances of the new society became frequent in their work. It was precisely its preoccupation with urgent socio-political issues and questions related to the tense relationship between the Jewish majority and the Arab-Palestinian minority which gave importance, however limited, to Jewish writing in Arabic during these years.

Although Israeli patriotism quickly permeated the writing of most immigrant authors, emigration to a new society did not bring a change in their fundamental world view. Characterizing the writings of the authors who immigrated to Israel as opposed to those who remained in Iraq, the aforementioned poet and scholar Shmuel Moreh argues that the Iraqi-Jewish immigrants wrote poems full of national pride for Israel and her achievements. Whereas in Iraq their poetry was "marked by melancholy, in Israel it became optimistic and throbbing with the emotion of being a part of the people and state." In contrast, according to Moreh, the poetry of those who remained in Iraq "became more melancholic and pessimistic, and contained complaints on the vicissitudes of the time, on the dispersion of friends and on their fears and suspicions."[6] This generalization,

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[5] See Reuven Snir, '*Arviyyūt, Yahadūt, Tsiyonūt: Ma'avak Zehūyot ba-Yetsira shel Yehūde 'Iraq* (Arabness, Jewishness, Zionism: A Clash of Identities in the Literature of Iraqi Jews) (Jerusalem: The Ben-Zvi Institute, 2005), 247-308.

[6] Shmuel Moreh, *al-Qiṣṣa al-Qaṣīra 'Inda Yahūd al-'Irāq* (Short Stories by Jewish Writers from

however, is misleading and seems to be only derive from the wretched ends in the 1970s of the authors who had not immigrated to Israel during the 1950s.

Following the efforts of the ruling Israeli Ashkenazi establishment to paint Jewish immigration from the Arab world in Zionist colors,[7] Arab-Jewish intellectuals had to cope with the new situation with split personalities. Many hastened to present themselves as Zionists while referring to their Arab identity as a mark of disgrace. They underwent a process of growing identification with the Zionist state, largely a result of the change in their status as a Jewish majority in Israeli-Hebrew society, the reverse of their status in Iraq as a minority within an Arab-Muslim majority. Having internalized the negative attitude of the canonical cultural center toward Arab culture, the immigrating authors learned to reject their own roots in order to get closer to the heart of the Israeli Zionist collective. The negative impact of all this on the youth growing up in Arab-Jewish families immigrating to Israel from various Arab countries was very apparent. Trying to conform to the Sabra (a native-born Israeli Jew) norm, children were made to feel ashamed of their parents' Arabness. In his autobiographical story, "Pictures from the Elementary School,"[8] the Syrian born writer Amnon Shamosh (b. 1929) confesses that as a child he forbade his mother to speak Arabic in public. "For our parents," the Moroccan born poet Sami Shalom Chetrit (b. 1960) says, "all of us were agents of repression."[9] Iraqi born Yehuda Shenhav (b. 1952), a Tel Aviv University professor and one of the prominent activists of *Ha-Keshet Ha-Demokratit Ha-Mizrahit* (The Oriental Democratic Spectrum),[10] described his own experience in this role:

Iraq) (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1981), 23.

[7] An example is the Babylonian Jewry Heritage Center in Or-Yehuda (BJHC) founded in 1972; its museum opened 16 years later and has adopted the memorialization practices used in Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority, Israel's national Holocaust memorial; see Esther Meir-Glitzenstein, "Our Dowry: Identity and Memory Among Iraqi Immigrants in Israel," *Middle Eastern Studies* 38, no. 2 (2002): 165-186.

[8] Amnon Shamosh, *Kane ve-Kinnamon* (Calamus and Cinnamon) (Ramat-Gan: Massada, 1979), 79-87.

[9] *Yediot Ahronoth, 7 Days*, 8 August 2003, 54.

[10] On this movement, see Sami Shalom Chetrit, *Ha-Ma'avak ha-Mizraḥī be-Yisra'el: Bein Dikuy le-Shiḥrūr, Bein Hizdahūt le-Alternativa, 1948-2003* (The Mizrahi Struggle in Israel: Between Oppression and Liberation, and Between Identification and Alternative, 1948-2003) (Tel-Aviv:

> On the first Thursday of every month, the Egyptian singer Um Kulthum (1903-1975) would begin to sing and I would begin to tense up. As the Oriental tones filled the house my mother would gradually make the radio louder and louder and I would not know where to bury myself. I would try to turn the radio off and she would turn it back on and make it even louder. I had become a foreign agent in my own house.[11]

In the documentary film *Forget Baghdad: Jews and Arabs: The Iraqi Connection*,[12] the Iraqi-Jewish scholar Ella Shohat (b. 1959) describes how "when I went to kindergarten in Israel, I was aware that Arabic words sometimes slipped in when I spoke. I was ashamed." Among the immigrants who continued to write in Arabic, it was soon possible to discern two groups, generally operating in parallel with the dominant cultural trends among the local Arab-Palestinian minority at the time: on the one side, we can find the authors who preferred to be active under the aegis of the Ashkenazi establishment and, on the other side, the writers who joined the Communist Party or expressed sympathy for it.

The Histadrūt, the Israeli General Workers' Federation, played an important role in encouraging and cultivating what was called "positive" culture within the Arab-Palestinian minority through literary prizes and competitions, as well as the founding of the Arab Book Fund.[13] Those literary and cultural activities satisfied the yearning for peace and "Arab-Jewish brotherhood,"[14] but avoided dealing

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Am Oved, 2004), 290-295.

[11] From a lecture at the School for Peace Neve Shalom / Wāḥat al-Salām, Israel, March 2000; *School for Peace Annual Review 1999 — 2001*, January, 2001. For Shenhav's views, see Yehuda Shenhav, *The Arab Jews: A Postcolonial Reading of Nationalism, Religion, and Ethnicity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006).

[12] A film directed by an Iraqi Shiite exile filmmaker, Samir Jamāl al-Dīn (b. 1955), and produced by Dschoint Ventschr (Zurich, 2002).

[13] See, for example, Eliyahu Agassi, ed., *Fī Mahrajān al-Adab* (In the Festival of Literature) (Tel-Aviv: Maṭba'at Davar, 1959). The book was published by the Arab Book Fund and contained works that had earned prizes in a literary competition by the Histadrūt in 1958. The introduction to the book by its editor, Eliyahu Aggassi (Iliyāhū Aghāsī, 1909-1991), is a good illustration of the efforts to produce "positive" culture.

[14] While in Iraq Arab cultural and national identity encompassed Jews side by side with Muslims and Christians; in Israel, since the 1950s, Jewish identity has become in itself a cultural and national

with controversial problems such as the government's policy toward the Arab-Palestinian minority and the way immigrating Jews from Arab lands were absorbed into Israeli society. Consequently, the works produced by these immigrants tended to emphasize more traditional themes such as male-female relations, social and ethical problems, the status of women, fate and its illusions, and universal questions of existence.

In the opposing camp stood the leftist Jewish writers who joined the local Communist party, which included Palestinian intellectuals who had not abandoned Israel following its establishment in 1948. The ban on Communist writers, Jews and Arabs, led the government-sponsored "Association of Arabic Language Poets" to refuse to collaborate with them.[15] The journals of both camps were fiercely competitive, but the Communist journals stood out, particularly *al-Ittiḥād* (The Union), established in 1944, and *al-Jadīd* (The New), founded in 1953, for their quality and wide circulation. They did not hesitate to deal with topics considered taboo by the governmental press, which the Arab public perceived as the trumpet of the ruling party, and an outlet of hatred against Arabs. In contrast to those writers who were supported by the establishment, a preoccupation with political and social problems was dominant in the writing of Communist authors. Besides this thematic difference, it was possible to discern, in their writing, also a significant poetic difference: while those writers close to the establishment in general clung closely to traditional Arabic poetics, in the early 1950s the Communists poets were already looking toward the modernism of *al-shi'r al-ḥurr* (free verse), despite the fact that this new poetics had hardly been used by the Palestinian Arab poets in Israel. The Jewish poets had already absorbed this new form of poetry in Iraq, where it had first flourished and was identified with Communist writers.[16]

identity. Thus, because of the political conflict, the natural Iraqi hybrid Arab-Jewish identity turned into a sharp dichotomy of Jewish versus Arab.

[15] See *al-Jadīd*, December 1955, 40-43.

[16] On this modernist poetics, see Reuven Snir, *Modern Arabic Literature: A Theoretical Framework* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), 199-205.

All the Jewish writers in Arabic in the 1950s preached coexistence, peace, and brotherhood out of a belief that these ideals would soon be made real in the developing young state. But while this belief arose among the writers sponsored by the governmental establishment in the wake of the Jews' decisive victory in the struggle for control of the land, among Jewish leftist writers it emerged out of a sense of sympathy with the defeated side. The Palestinian leaders of the Communist party preferred to emphasize the obligations of Arabic literature in Israel to "carry the banner of Jewish-Arab brotherhood," in the words of Palestinian author Emil Ḥabībī (1921-1996). They stressed Jewish-Arab cooperation in times past, in the present and in the future, and they also praised the contribution of Jewish writers to this enterprise. This contribution, and especially that of the Communists among them, was however very important because it stimulated Arab literary culture in Israel thematically and poetically, and because it was a cry for a just co-existence which sprang from the throats of only a few among the Jewish majority. It also signaled to the Arab-Palestinian minority, and in its own language, that not all the Jews were at peace with the injustice caused to the Palestinians.

On both sides, the sharp, black-versus-white dichotomy was striking. For those who were sponsored by the governmental Ashkenazi establishment, this dichotomy had a nationalist character; it contrasted the dark past of a minority degraded in exile with the joyous present of Jewish independence in the new homeland. For the Communists authors, the dichotomy was social and universal, between a dark present filled with oppression and a utopian future ruled by justice. The difference between these world-views may be seen in the concept of "spring" so frequently used by both camps. According to the writers supported by the Ashkenazi establishment, their hopes had been realized in the Jewish, independent Israel of the 1950s, as we see in the first two words of Salīm Shaʿshūʿa's first poem in his collection *Fī ʿĀlam al-Nūr* (In the World of Light, 1959), "The spring has arrived."[17] In contrast, for the Communist writers the struggle was still in full force, and their eyes gazed toward the future, "Till Spring Comes," as in the

[17] Salīm Shaʿshūʿa, *Fī ʿĀlam al-Nūr* (In the World of Light) (Nazareth: Maṭbaʿat al-Ḥakīm, 1959), 9.

title of David Semah's poetry collection *Ḥattā Yajī' al-Rabī'* (Till Spring Comes, 1959).[18]

Clash of Narratives

The works of the writers and poets sponsored by the Ashkenazi establishment was steeped in national pride and permeated with Zionist patriotism and the desire for peace, while avoiding any critique of the governments' social and political ideologies. One prominent figure among them was the aforementioned poet and jurist Salīm Sha'shū'a, whose previously mentioned volume of poetry *Fī 'Ālam al-Nūr* (In the World of Light, 1959) well represents these writers. The book's title reflects the ideological orientation of the poems, which praise the exodus from the darkness of Iraqi exile to the light of redemption in Israel while underscoring the dichotomy between the wretchedness of the past and the joyous life of the present. The author provides no critique, not even allusive, or any protest against the social, economic or political conditions in the new State of Israel. Despite the tormented absorption of the new Jewish immigrants and the severe problems of the local Palestinian minority, the poet depicts an idyllic picture of a paradise on earth. This gave the book's critics their pretext for a scathing critique.[19] The poet's national patriotism is expressed also in the dedication of the volume to the then President of the State of Israel, Yitzḥak Ben Zvi (1884-1963), whose picture appears above the following verses:

من لآلي الشّعر يا مولاي قد صنعت عقودا
وبها رصّعت تأريخا طريفا وتليدا
فإذا قدّمتها اليوم لمولاي نشيدا
فهي فيض من شعوري خطّه الحبّ قصيدا

> From the pearls of my poetry, your exalted glory, I made these verses,
> And interwove them with stories of the heritage of fathers and sons.
> Now I present them to you today as a hymn to your honor,

[18] David Semah, *Ḥattā Yajī' al-Rabī'* (Till Spring Comes) (Tel Aviv: al-Maṭba'a al-Ḥadītha, 1959).
[19] See, for example, *al-Jadīd*, July 1958, 23-24.

Behold the bounty of my feeling, transformed to poetry by love.

In this, Sha'shū'a conforms to the customs of the medieval Arab court poets, who glorified and praised their patrons. The poet also wrote a high-flown, cliche-filled introduction to the volume in which he conveys how he felt the rush of History's wings above his head. As there is no better way to characterize this type of contemporary writing sponsored by the Ashkenazi establishment, it is important to quote it in full in the original:

أخي القارئ الكريم!
في هذه البلاد حيث تكّد الأيدي، وتجّد العقول، وتتفتّق الأذهان، في هذه البلاد حيث تنبثق الفكر كالأشّعة، فتتألّق الخواطر كالأهّلة، وتسمق شجرة المعرفة، وتعبق الحكمة، وتنطلق الرّوحانيّة. يلتقي الشّرق بالغرب، فتتجسّم الفكرة بالصّورة، ويخترع الغرب ويبتدع الشّرق، دنيا جديدة شيّقة. ويطلع فجر وتشرق شمس وتتدفّق أضواء في عالم النّور. في هذه الدّنيا حيث ترتفع المصانع، وتصطخبا لمعامل، ويتصاعد الدّخان وتفوح البخور. في هذه الدّنيا الجديدة، والحدائق الغنّ الّتي كانت قبل عقد من الزّمن، صحارى قاحلة، يقف الإنسان اليوم معجبا بأخيه الإنسان. الإنسان الّذي حيث الجنائن الغلب يزرع. الإنسان الّذي يبني. الإنسان الّذي يفّكر. هذا الإنسان الّذي لم تعقه الطّبيعة دون الّذي يريده، تجده هنا في إسرائيل يعمل وينتج، حيث يخلق القلم وتتفنّن الرّيشة ويبدع الإزميل! وقفت أنصت وملء عينيّ هذا الجمال، في البطاح، في الرّوابي وفي الوديان. جمال الأرض الطّيبة! وجمال الأيدي المنتجة! وجمال العقول المبدعة! هذا الجمال أحسّه كلّما تأّمّلت وحيثما تملّيت، فلا عجب إذا أستلهمه قصائدي مختارا أو غير مختار، قصائد كتبتها في عالم النّور، وأنا أسير في قافلة الأخوّة العربيّة اليهوديّة المناضلة من أجل السّلام والمحّبة بين شعبينا العربيّ والعبريّ السّاميين. هذه القصائد بين يديك، لعلّك أن تجد فيها ما تقرأه وما تعجبه وما يحبّب لك هذه الأخوّة الّتي تنبثق من ربوع إسرائيل. وغايتي — كّل غايتي — أن نكتسح — أنا وأنت — الأشواك الّتي قد تقف في طريق أخوّتنا المسالمة، لنعيش معا في عالم النّور.

My brother the Reader!
In this land in which hands labor, brains strive and thoughts grow weary. In this land, in which ideas are distinguished like rays of the sun and thoughts sparkle like moons, the tree of Knowledge blooms, Wisdom spreads her pleasant scents and spirituality bursts forth, East meets West and the Idea crystallizes in Form. The West discovers and the East invents a new and astounding world. The dawn rises, the sun shines and its rays break forth in a world of light. In this new world, in which gardens are

> overgrown and orchards bloom, where ten years ago was arid desert, Man stands today and reveres his fellow Man. Man who sows, Man who builds, Man who thinks, this Man before whom Nature is no obstacle to the realization of his desires. Here you will find us working and creating in Israel, where the Pen creates, the paintbrush is productive and the scalpel (of the sculptor) makes wonders! I stood and hearkened, my eyes full of this beauty, the plains, the hills and the valleys. The beauty of the good earth! The beauty of hands which create! The beauty of brains which invent! I sense this beauty at every moment and in every place I look and in it I take pleasure. It is no wonder, then, that here, willingly or unwillingly, I have sought my inspiration for my poems—these very poems which I have written in the world of light, while I walk in the columns of that Arab-Jewish brotherhood which strives for peace and love between our two peoples under Hebrew and Arab skies. Perhaps you will find something pleasing among these poems placed before you to endear to you that noble brotherhood which spreads across Israel. I hopefully await the day when you and I shall triumph over the thorns which may perhaps stand in the path of our brotherhood and pursuit of peace, so that we may live together in a world of light.[20]

Beautiful words on the meeting of East and West, the flowering of the desert, the blossoming of the new state, Jewish-Arab brotherhood and the yearning for peace, all the while absolutely ignoring the severe problems of contemporary Israeli society. Shaʿshūʿa is happy with just a vague reference to the thorns which "may perhaps [*sic!*] stand in the path of our brotherhood and pursuit of peace."

The emigrating leftist poets and writers did not agree with the position that Israeli patriotism implied absolute support for the Israeli authorities even if they were aware that their views might harm their chances of integration into Israeli society as well as their livelihoods.[21] The Jewish Communist writers arrived in Israel with an ideology already formed—in Iraq, as in other Middle Eastern states, Jewish

[20] Shaʿshūʿa, *Fī ʿĀlam al-Nūr*, 7-8.

[21] See *al-Jadīd*, December 1955, 26-34.

intellectuals after the Second World War inclined to either Communism or Zionism. With the outbreak of the war, the Communist underground in Iraq grew stronger, and Jews joined it "out of feelings of Iraqi patriotism"[22] and the belief that Communism was the only force capable of withstanding Nazism. "From a small, childish, one-dimensional framework," as described by Sammy Michael, this movement grew in strength to "a tidal wave."[23] The underground fought for equal rights for all minorities and against the corrupt, dictatorial Iraqi regime, but also against Zionism. In 1946 several of its Jewish members founded the magazine *al-ʿUṣba* (The League), based in Baghdad, the official bulletin of the Iraqi ʿUṣbat Mukāfaḥat al-Ṣihyūniyya (The League for the Struggle against Zionism). Opposition to Zionism was by no means exclusive to Communist Jews, on the contrary, it included the Jewish community institutions and their leaders, as shown by an anti-Zionist telegram to the League of Nations sent by the general council of the Iraqi Jewish community.[24] It is nonetheless possible that there were also some, particularly among the youth, who saw no real contradiction between Zionism and Communism as liberation movements fighting against British occupation.[25]

Their immigration to Israel did not chill Iraqi-Jewish Communist writers' enthusiasm for this ideology. They were inspired by the deeds and words of the Jewish leaders of the Iraqi Communist party, such as Sasson Dallal (1929-1949),

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[22] See David Semah's letter in *Maariv*, 26 January 1989.

[23] *Ba-Maḥane*, March 22, 1989, 23. According to Iraqi criminal files, 245 Jews joined the Communist Party in the 1940s. Most of them were from Baghdad, and the great majority joined the party in 1946. Quite a few were still students, some of whom were female; see Fāḍil al-Barāk, *al-Madāris al-Yahūdiyya wa-l-Īrāniyya fī al-ʿIrāq* (Jewish and Iranian Schools in Iraq) (Baghdad: al-Dār al-ʿArabiyya, 1985), 245-252. On Jewish Communist activity in Iraq, see Hanna Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 650-651, 699-701, 1190-1192; Abbas Shiblak, *The Lure of Zion*: *The Case of the Iraqi Jews* (London: Al Saqi Books, 1986), 59; Abbas Shiblak, *Iraqi Jews*: *A History of Mass Exodus* (London: Saqi, 2005), 80; Orit Bashkin, *New Babylonians: A History of Jews in Modern Iraq* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 141-182; and Aline Schlaepfer, *Les intellectuels juifs de Bagdad (1908-1951)* (Leiden: Brill, 2016).

[24] According to Shalom Darwīsh, who composed the telegram see Zvi Yehuda, ed., *Mi-Bavel li-Yrushalayim* (From Babylon to Jerusalem) (Tel-Aviv: Iraqi Jews' Traditional Cultural Center, 1980), 82-85.

[25] Conversations with David Semah, Haifa, May 2, 6 and June 14, 1989.

who wrote the following passage in a letter to his brother David, the night before his execution in an Iraqi prison, together with ten others of his comrades:

> A wave of terror has taken the country; thousands of people are being arrested, tortured and executed. I am not the only one to die tomorrow. There are ten others with me. The people as a whole are persecuted. Life in our country recalls the days when the forces of fascism were marching on murdering thousands of innocent people. [...] The forces of reaction cannot rule forever. They have been defeated before by the will of the people and by the same will, they will be defeated in the near future. I am dying tomorrow because I have faith in mankind to master their destiny, which is democracy, peace, and the perfect life. The forces of reaction that are still murdering people to lengthen the time of their criminal rule are afraid of the future. [...] They can rob me of my life, but they cannot change my thinking, which is that of all Mankind. I am free because I know the truth and neither prison nor execution can take away that freedom from me. Tomorrow at dawn I shall die. Yes, they can end my life and stop me from exposing and fighting them, but with my death, thousands of others will rise against them. We are many, they are the few. Do not grieve for me, dear brother, instead carry my memory with you and perpetuate the fight, which will glorify the future of all humanity.[26]

In contrast to the ones supported by the Ashkenazi establishment, these writers and poets devoted all their literary energies to an intellectual public struggle, focusing their attention on three central concerns: the manner in which new Jewish immigrants were absorbed; the inequality between Oriental Jews and Ashkenazi residents; and the fate of the Arab-Palestinian minority. Their work was a highly sensitive seismic sensor of the Arab minority's sentiment, and occasionally an expression of its collective conscience in the shadow of the military administration's restrictions and political censorship. Thus, for instance, David Semah's poem "Sawfa Ya'ūdu" ("He Shall Return") was one of the first to be written about the massacre of scores of innocent men and women at Kafr Qasim

[26] See http://www.dangoor.com/71page39.html (accessed on February 22, 2021).

on October 29, 1956.[27] As in the famous Hebrew poem by Saul Tchernichovsky (1898-1943), "The Rabbi's Daughter and Her Mother,"[28] the poet chose to represent the tragic events in the form of a dialogue between a mother and her daughter about the killing of their husband and father. The girl does not understand why her father has not returned:

لقد كدت أنساه! ما لونه
أتلمع من لهفة عينه؟
أراح يحلّق فوق الغيوم
ويبحث عن ساطعات النّجوم
لينظم عقدا يطوّق جيدي
ويهديه لي يوم عيدي!

I have nearly forgotten him! What is the color of his face?
Are his eyes sparkling with longing?
Has he gone to fly above the clouds,
Seeking sparkling stars,
To string around my neck like a necklace of pearls
A birthday gift?

The mother calms the daughter with the promise of the father's return, rose bouquet in hand, forever. Not only shall he return, but he will also bring a bit of money to rescue the wretched family. The poet ties the national woes of the Palestinian minority to its social and economic woes, as the death of the family patriarch, caused only by his being a Palestinian, has brought the family to the threshold of hunger and caused a deterioration in the health of the ailing daughter. Slowly, the mother's display of certainty of the father's return, for the benefit of her daughter, is undermined. It becomes clear that he was killed after leaving for

[27] The poem was completed, according to Semah, approximately two weeks after the massacre. The poem was published for the first time in *al-Ittiḥād*, December 31, 1956 and was later included with slight revisions in Semah's collection (41-45). In January 1957, *al-Jadīd* published several literary reactions to the massacre, among them a poem by the Palestinian poet Tawfīq Zayyād (1932-1994), which he claimed to have written on November 3, 1956.

[28] Saul Tchernichovski, *Shīrīm* (Poems) (Jerusalem: Schocken, 1950), 736-737. Semah was then very fond of his poetry, much more than he was of Hayyim Nahman Bialik's (1873-1934) (conversations with Semah, May 2, and June 6 and 14, 1989).

work without a permit, an allusion to the restrictions endured by the Palestinian population in Israel during the 1950s. The daughter herself, who becomes aware of the circumstances of his death from the whispers of the neighbors' children, is stunned by the knowledge that her father "will never return." To calm her, the mother confronts her with the certainty of future redemption, and the vision of a sweeping revolution:

تقرّب يوم الصّراع
فقد هبّت العاصفة
على الكون حانقة جارفة
تطوّح بالظّلم والظّالمين
وبالسّارقين طعام الجياع
وبالسّجن تذهب والسّاجن
وبالسّالبين حليب الرّضاع
وبالسّافكين الدّماء
لتنقذ أطماعهم من ضياع
فشدّوا القوى أيّها الكادحون
فليس لكم ما تخسرون

The day of the final struggle is near
The storm already blows
Over the world, raging and sweeping
Striking oppression and oppressors
Those who steal the bread of the hungry
The prison and the prisoners
Those who steal milk from babies
Those who spill blood
To save their lust from oblivion
Gather courage! O you are the workers
You have nothing to lose.

The revolution seen by the mother in her vision will bring a total change of the existing order, and is described in standard Communist terminology: the masses, the workers, the red flag, the struggle against social oppression, the crushing of oppressors and shedders of blood, and the call to the proletariat, who "have

nothing to lose," to storm the old regime. The allusion is to the concluding words of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels's *Communist Manifesto*: "The proletariat has nothing to lose but its chains."[29] A new era will follow the removal of oppression and injustice:

وإذ ذاك سوف يعود
أب وصديق ودود
وحتّى أبوك، عساه يعود
وفي كفّه باقة من ورود
تضمّخ أنفاسنا بالعطور

And then they will return again,
Father and beloved friend
Even your father might return
A bouquet of roses in his hand
To anoint our souls with fragrance.

The worldview presented in this poem is based on a clear dualism between the oppressive rulers and the oppressed masses, the belief that social justice is a necessary condition for peace among peoples, and the hope in a better tomorrow. This is also expressed in a poem that Semah dedicated to the Palestinian Communist poet and political leader Tawfīq Zayyād (1932-1994), which is addressed to "my brother, Tawfīq":[30]

لنـــا وطـن لشعبينـا سمـاه وأرضه والنّسائم والزّهور
إذا حصدوا جماجم في ثراه فإنّ حصـــادنا أمـل ونـور

We have a homeland—its skies and earth
And winds and flowers belong to both our peoples,

[29] Somekh concluded one of his poems in memory of the October Revolution with similar words (*al-Jadīd*, November, 1959, 48-49).

[30] Semah recited this poem in the festival of poetry held in Acre on 11 July 1958, when Zayyād was in prison. It was later published in *al-Jadīd*, July 1958, 39-40, and portions of it were incorporated in Semah's above-mentioned collection (55-57).

If they reap skulls in its dust,[31]
Then our harvest is hope and light.

Semah's poem about the massacre at Kafr Qasim, no lesser in poetic and tragic affect than those written by the best Palestinian poets,[32] represents one facet of the literary activism of the leftist Jewish writers: an immediate reaction of protest, chiefly in poetry, to what struck them as injustice toward the Arab-Palestinian minority.

Even the passage of time would not let the Communist Jewish authors forget how a new culture and new values were imposed on them while their pasts were derided,[33] and in this context their Communist Party activities were a way to change their condition. Later, this sense of insult was expressed even by those who did not hold leftist views—social protest about relations within Jewish society, would come to more prominent expression in the Hebrew works, especially novels, of writers of a later period, both Arab Jews and others. Against such a background the issue of the written language used by Iraqi-Jewish authors—their mother tongue, Arabic, or the language of the new Israeli society, Hebrew—became a cardinal cultural dilemma.

The Shift to Hebrew

Unlike local Palestinian poets and writers, most of the Iraqi-Jewish writers who immigrated to Israel became familiar with Hebrew literature without relinquishing their attachment to Arabic culture. Sooner or later, they were confronted with the stark choice of which language to write in, that is, whether to adapt to their new cultural surroundings and make the required and conscious shift in their aesthetic preferences in the hope of finding a new audience, or

[31] An allusion to Zayyād's poem "The Harvest of Skulls," about the massacre at Kafr Qasim (*al-Jadīd*, January 1957, 25-30).

[32] Cf. for example, the poems of the Palestinian poet Maḥmūd Darwīsh (1941-2008) on this event *Dīwān* (Acre: Dār al-Aswār, 1988), 207-220.

[33] See *Maariv*, April 25, 1989, B9.

whether to continue to write in Arabic, their beloved mother tongue. Unlike traditional Hebrew literary writing by Arab Jews such as Sulaymān Menaḥem Mānī (1850-1924), who published a story on Sephardic life in Palestine,[34] such literary writing based on the new poetics of Hebrew literature emerged only in Israel. During the 1950s Nīr Shohet (1928-2011) started publishing short stories in Hebrew; Aharon Zakkai (1927-2021) published his first poetry collection *El Ḥofo shel Ra'ayon* (To the Edge of an Idea, 1957); and Shelomo Zamīr (1929-2017) published *Ha-Kol mi-Ba'ad la-'Anaf* (The Voice through the Branch, 1960), which earned him the Shlonsky Prize along with 'Amīr Gilboa (1917-1984) and Abba Kovner (1918-1987). In the following I will concentrate on three of the major fiction writers among the Iraqi-Jewish immigrants who shifted to writing in Hebrew, in addition to another young writer of Iraqi-Jewish origin born in Israel.[35]

Shimon Ballas: "I am an Arab Jew"

Shimon Ballas (1930-2019) is perhaps the only Arab-Jewish writer who has successfully shifted to writing in Hebrew while still trying (not always successfully) to adhere to Arabic cultural preferences: "I am an Arab Jew," said Ballas, "I write in Hebrew, and I belong here. This does not mean, however, that I have given up my cultural origins, and my cultural origins are Arab."[36] Born as "a Jew by chance," in his words, in al-Dahhāna, the Christian quarter of Baghdad, Ballas grew to adopt a secular cosmopolitan worldview. He was educated at the school of the Alliance Israélite Universelle (AIU), where he mastered Arabic and French, the latter serving as his window to world literature. He joined the Communist party as an Iraqi patriot when he was still a student and followed conditions in Israel by reading the European and American press, while serving as aide to Iraqi-

[34] See *Ha-Tsvi* I (1885), 31-34. Most Hebrew literature written in Iraq focused on religious matters (as did liturgical poetry). On the emergence of modern Hebrew literature in Iraq from 1735 to 1950, see Lev Hakak, *Nitsane ha-Yetsira ha-'Ivrīt be-Bavel* (The Budding of Modern Hebrew Creation in Babylon) (Or-Yehuda: The Babylonian Jewry Heritage Center, 2003).

[35] On Mizrahi fiction in general, with a detailed bibliography, see Yochai Oppenheimer, *Mi-Rḥov Ben-Gurion to Shāri' al-Rashīd: 'Al Sipporet Mizraḥīt* (From Ben-Girion to Shāri' al-Rashīd: On Mizrahi Prose) (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 2014).

[36] *New Outlook*, November-December, 1991, 30-32.

Jewish senator Ezra Ben Menaḥem Daniel (1874-1952). He attributes his membership in the Iraqi Communist Party, which he got when he was only sixteen,[37] to reading in French *The Iron Heel* (1907) by Jack London (1876-1916). Arabic literature, especially by Jubrān Khalīl Jubrān (1883-1931) and Ṭāhā Ḥusayn (1889-1973), proved to be his major inspiration. Besides publishing essays on movies and translating literary texts, he wrote short stories and even a detective novel—*al-Jarīma al-Ghāmiḍa* (The Mysterious Crime)—all of which he burned before immigrating to Israel in 1951, something he would later deeply regret.[38] His immigration was by no means motivated by any form of Zionist tendencies; it was "of necessity, not ideology," as until his death he was never a Zionist.[39] He had been selected for a scholarship to study at the Sorbonne, but this dream would materialize only twenty years later when Paris would become a second home for him.

In Israel, Ballas's experience in an immigrant transit camp (*ma'abara*), where he lived after his immigration, as well as his activities in the Communist Party, would inspire his literary production. He served for six years as editor of Arab Affairs for the party's Hebrew organ, *Kol ha-'Am* (The Voice of the People) and published Arabic short stories and essays under the pen name of Adīb al-Qāṣṣ (literally, "Adīb [Man of Letters] the storyteller").[40] In one of his early stories written in Israel, "Aḥabba al-Ḥayāt" (He Loved Life),[41] the protagonist faces a real danger of being deprived of his livelihood, but nevertheless does not surrender his ideological principles. In 1961, Ballas decided to leave the party and has since devoted himself to literary writing, academic research, and translation. His major scholarly study, on the Arab-Israeli conflict as reflected in Arabic literature, was based on his Ph.D. thesis written at the Sorbonne. It was published in French and later translated into Hebrew and Arabic. He also published an anthology of Palestinian stories (1970) in Hebrew translation, served as the Chair of the

[37] Ballas joined the party on December 6, 1946; see al-Barāk, *al-Madāris al-Yahūdiyya wa-l-Īrāniyya fī al-'Irāq*, 249.

[38] Personal conversation with Ballas (Haifa, April 4, 2001).

[39] *Maariv*, April 25, 1989, B9.

[40] Personal conversation with Ballas (Haifa, June 14, 1989). His novel *Ḥeder Na'ūl* (A Locked Room) (1980) describes the way of life among members of the Communist press in Israel.

[41] *Al-Jadīd*, December 1955, 26-34.

Department of Arabic Language and Literature at the University of Haifa, and edited the academic Arabic-language journal *al-Karmil*: *Studies in Arabic Language and Literature*.

Returning to Ballas's literary work, in 1964 he published *Ha-Ma'abara* (The Immigrant Transit Camp), the first Hebrew novel to be written by an Iraqi émigré. The book was originally written in Arabic with the title *Mudhakkirāt Khādima* (Memories of a Maid) but Ballas decided not to publish it and to switch to writing in Hebrew.[42] Thus, he devoted himself to a thorough reading of the Bible and the Mishnah, the post-biblical collection and codification of Jewish oral laws, and later he concentrated on reading the writings of Shmuel Yosef Agnon (1888-1970), Nobel Prize laureate and one of the central figures of modern Hebrew fiction, in addition to other prominent Hebrew literary works. At the same time, by moving from Arabic to Hebrew he felt forced to "unlearn" his Arabic and refashion his identity. Explaining his shift to Hebrew, he felt that by writing in Arabic he was facing a contradiction and was isolating himself from the society in which he was living and from his original beloved culture.

In fact, this is the main topic of his first novel, *Ha-Ma'abara*, which depicts the tragedy of the Arab-Jewish immigrants who were uprooted from their homes in the Arab world and reduced to poverty and living on insufficient resources. Ballas's approach was however to skirt the material deprivation and focus on the cultural impoverishment of those Arabized Jews, whose most esteemed moral and cultural values were rejected. Thrown into a hostile environment which felt contempt for their original culture, these Arabized Jews were labeled as exceptional, thus becoming victims of an organized and institutionalized process of adaptation to a culture in which their mother tongue, Arabic, was considered the language of the enemy and their original cultural assets were deemed inferior.[43] Surprisingly, the novel was very well received by literary critics, some of whom even praised the author as representing those Arabized Jews who had preserved Hebrew through the generations, even though Ballas, like most Iraqi immigrants,

[42] Personal conversation with Ballas (Haifa, June 14, 1989).

[43] *Ma'ariv*, April 25, 1989, B9.

had arrived in Israel knowing no Hebrew at all. It seems that the positive responses to the novel were, for the ruling Ashkenazi establishment, nothing more than a way out of a cognitive dissonance—a tool to preserve the cozy reassurance of its liberal and tolerant attitude toward the cultures of those on the margins.[44] Shortly after the publication of *Ha-Ma'abara* Ballas completed its sequel, *Tel-Aviv Mizraḥ* (Tel-Aviv East) but due to the patronizing and dismissive attitude of the literary Ashkenazi circles, its publication was delayed by some thirty years and was first published only in 1998. In 2003, Ballas published the trilogy *Tel-Aviv Mizraḥ* (Tel-Aviv East), which consisted of *Ha-Ma'abara* and *Tel-Aviv Mizraḥ*, in addition to the new installment, *Yalde Ḥuts* (The Outsiders), which describes the lives of the main characters until the murder of Prime Minister Yitzḥak Rabin in 1995.

Other works by Ballas also testify to his Arab cultural preferences despite his shift to writing in Hebrew. In *Ve-Hu Akher* (And He Is Other, 1991), he presents his views on the fate of Iraqi Jews who did not immigrate to Israel via the story of several non-Zionist intellectuals. One of them, to whom the title of the novel alludes, is Aḥmad Hārūn Sawsan, whose character is based on the figure of Aḥmad Nissīm Sūsa (1900-1982), an Iraqi Jewish intellectual who converted to Islam. The novel fictionalizes the life of Sūsa, who ended up writing works used in anti-Jewish propaganda by the regime of the late Iraqi president Ṣaddām Ḥusayn (1937-2006). It begins during the Iran-Iraq War of the mid-1980s, with the protagonist writing a memoir in which he tries to explain why he wrote his enormous work on the history of the Jews. What unfolds then is Sūsa's life story, the climatic event being his marriage to a non-Jewish American woman, Jane, while living in the United States during the 1930s as a visiting graduate student of engineering. The marriage results in Sawsan's elder brother and acting family patriarch, Daniel, disowning him and having him excommunicated from his hometown Jewish enclave at al-Ḥilla. That trauma sets off a chain of events that ruins Sawsan's marriage and makes for a too-pat justification for all of his subsequent actions. The title of the novel is based on a conversation between Sawsan and his friend, the poet As'ad

[44] Leon Festinger, *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1957), 1-31. On such cognitive dissonance, see Reuven Snir, "'Postcards in the Morning': Palestinians Writing in Hebrew," *Hebrew Studies* 42 (2001): 220-222. See also below.

Nissīm, a character reminiscent of the Iraqi-Jewish poet Anwar Shā'ul (1904-1984). Nissīm is critical of Sawsan and the radical positions he takes against the Jewish religion. To illustrate his point, he quotes from the Talmud, a collection of Rabbinic notes on the Mishnah,[45] the story of Elisha ben Avuya (first half of the second century A.D.)—a great sage who achieved a unique level of Torah knowledge but eventually became a heretic who studied Greek and wished to transcend the traditional parameters set by the Torah. This "crime" was considered so terrible that his colleagues no longer referred to him by name but called him "Akher" (Other), as in the title of the novel. According to Nissīm, Sawsan, like Elisha ben Avuya, went too far in his efforts to assimilate into Arab-Muslim society. However, it seems that Ballas considered the solution Sawsan found to his identity crisis in Iraq as inevitable: "Islam was not only the religion of the majority [in Iraq], but it was also the foundation of Arab civilization. Therefore, if you belong to the [Iraqi] homeland and [Arab] nation you must reject the dual identity."[46] A number of critics commented that this novel could have been written in Arabic by a Muslim Iraqi author and the fact that it was written in Hebrew was marginal.

Although it concentrates on the role of Arab culture in mainstream Israeli society, Ballas' literary project is much more comprehensive, accompanying readers into fresh fictional realms with contemporary implications: *Ash'ab mi-Baghdad* (Ash'ab from Baghdad, 1970) centers on the historical and legendary figure of Ash'ab, a versatile musician of medieval Arab cultural heritage who caught the imagination of the Arabs.[47] In *Hitbaharūt* (Clarification, 1972), the protagonist is an Iraqi-Jewish Israeli citizen who does not participate in the 1973 War. Iraqi characters also appear in his short stories, including those in the collection *Mūl ha-Ḥoma* (In Front of the Wall, 1969). In the novel *Ḥoref Aḥaron* (Last Winter, 1984), the focus is on Middle Eastern exiles in Europe, especially Henri Curiel (1914-1978), a Jewish Communist of Egyptian origin assassinated in Paris. *Solo*

[45] Ḥagigah 15a-b.

[46] According to www.elaph.com, accessed April 17, 2004.

[47] On Ash'ab in classical Arabic literature, see Hilary Kilpatrick, "The 'Genuine' Ash'ab: The Relativity of Fact and Fiction in Early *Adab* Texts," in *Story-Telling in the Framework of Non-Fictional Arabic Literature,* ed. Stefan Leder (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1998), 94-117.

(Solo, 1998) is also based on the life of an Egyptian Jew—the dramatist and journalist Yaʿqūb Ṣanūʿ (James Sanua) (1839-1912)—who is considered the father of Egyptian theater and Arabic journalistic humor. *Ḥeder Naʿūl* (A Locked Room, 1980) describes life among members of the Communist Party in Israel. Among his other works, we can mention the self-referential novel *Ha-Yoresh* (The Heir, 1987) as well as *Lo bi-Mkoma* (Not in Her Place, 1994), which has some feminist implications—it deals only indirectly with the issue of Arab immigrants involved with the Communist Party by alluding in general to the question of identity. Ballas's last novels are *Tom ha-Bikkūr* (The End of the Visit, 2008) and *Be-Gūf Rishon* (First Person Singular, 2009), that focuses on Ballas's life story.[48]Experiencing alienation and estrangement, most of Ballas's protagonists—or rather, anti-heroes—are outsiders living on the margins of society and unwilling to compromise on their principles. Preaching a new connection between identity, language, and territory, Ballas demystifies the Hebrew language, attempting to "un-Jew" it—that is, to divorce it from Jewishness in a process of what the French theorists Gilles Deleuze (1925-1995) and Pierre-Félix Guattari (1930-1992) call "deterritorialization" and "reterritorialization."[49] The Zionist master narrative, in his view, is an Ashkenazi ideology that developed in a Western cultural milieu and came to stake its claim in the Middle East without embracing the Middle Eastern Arab cultural environment.[50] Zionism, according to Ballas, is based on the European colonialist conception of the Arab East, and so its "attitude toward the Jews from Arab countries was no different from the attitude toward the

[48] On Ballas and his works, see Gila Ramras-Rauch, *The Arab in Israeli Literature* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), 184-187; Jayana Clerk and Ruth Siegel, eds., *Modern Literature of the Non-Western World: Where the Waters Are Born* (New York: HarperCollins College Publishers, 1995), 459-466; Nancy E. Berg, *Exile from Exile: Israeli Writers from Iraq* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 391-394; Muḥammad Jalāʾ Idrīs, *Muʾaththirāt ʿArabiyya wa-Islāmiyya fī al-Adab al-Isrāʾīlī al-Muʿāṣir* (Arabic and Islamic Influence on Contemporary Israeli Literature) (Cairo: Dār al-Thaqāfa al-ʿArabiyya, 2003); Sorrel Kerbel, ed., *Jewish Writers of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2003), 65-66; Snir, *Arab-Jewish Literature*, 130-137, 174-175, 188-189, 266-293. See also the aforementioned documentary film, *Forget Baghdad: Jews and Arabs: The Iraqi Connection*.

[49] Gilles Deleuze, and Félix Guattari, "What Is a Minor Literature?" in *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures*, eds. Russell Ferguson et al. (New York and Cambridge, MA: New Museum of Contemporary Art and MIT Press, 1990), 59-69.

[50] *The Literary Review* 37, no.2 (1994): 67-68.

Arabs."[51] Ballas is now considered by a new generation of critics and scholars to be a prophetic voice who, ever since the mid-1960s, has boldly challenged the Israeli Ashkenazi and Western-oriented reluctance to accept the legitimacy of Arab culture in the Hebrew literary canon. According to these intellectuals, only after drawing new boundaries for Hebrew literature so as to encompass not only cosmopolitan and humanistic values but Arab values as well, will Israeli society be able to boast an original culture in which the aspirations of all its citizens are expressed—Jewish, Muslim, and Christian.

More than any other work, Ballas's *Otot Stav* (Signs of Autumn, 1992) presents his comprehensive world-view. It consists of three novellas, each symbolizing a necessary component in the longed-for Ballasian utopia. Based on autobiographical material, the first novella, "Iyya" (Iyya [the name of the heroine])[52] depicts Iraqi Jews in the late 1940s, before their departure from their homeland, as viewed by a Muslim maid named Zakiyya, nicknamed Iyya within a Jewish family which she "adopted" as her own during the flight of the Iraqi Jews to Israel. The second novella, "Signs of Autumn," centers on the cosmopolitan Egyptian intellectual Ḥusnī Manṣūr, whose character is based on the Egyptian writer Ḥusayn Fawzī (1900-1988), well-known for his books with the mythical figure of al-Sindibād (Sinbad) from *Alf Layla wa-Layla* (A Thousand and One Nights). The third novella, "In the Gates of Kandinski," is about Ya'qov Reshef, an immigrant Jewish painter from Russia, who is torn between the values of the new society and his idealistic aspirations. Failing to pass through "the Gates of Kandinski," he dies two days before the beginning of the new year. The three protagonists of *Otot Stav* illustrate three components of Israeli culture, each of them related to the town where the events of each novella take place: Baghdad, Paris, and Tel-Aviv. For lack of space I will concentrate here only on the first novella.

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[51] *Ha'aretz Magazine*, July 4, 2003, 50.

[52] The novella was originally published in Hebrew in Shimon Ballas, *Otot Stav* (Signs of Autumn) (Tel-Aviv: Zmora-Bitan, 1992), 7-50. For an English translation, see Snir, *Arab-Jewish Literature*, 266-294 (trans. Susan Einbinder).

"Iyya" starts right in the middle of the story, *in medias res* as it were, and unfolds through a circular plot with flashbacks to Iyya's marriage and previous life experiences. An important feature of the novella's narrative that has implications for the topic of identity is that the nature of the characters and their relationships are not made clear, something that is only further obscured by the complex web of interactions between the characters. The novella is also punctuated by dialogues in which there are frequent changes in the identity of the speaker, with the result that it is sometimes difficult to trace the relevant personal pronoun to its antecedent—thus, identity issues are interwoven throughout the text. This style of narration, especially the frequent dialogue interruptions, adds a sense of immediacy to the text. The events are generally told from Iyya's point of view in a stream-of-consciousness-style narrative of remembrances (such as her miserable life before joining the Jewish family and her abusive husband) and interior monologues (such as her bargaining with God or her acceptance of the fate of never having another husband). Often, her present thoughts interrupt the narration of past events: for example, as the Jewish family is preparing to leave the country, the reader has the privilege of being aware of Iyya's inner thoughts about one of the members of the family: "There [in Israel] he won't have to burn papers and hide them from his pursuers. Let them go, let them go!"—Iyya struggles to reconcile her desire to remain with the Jewish family with her understanding that the family will be safer abroad. The mixed feelings about the departure of the family are well-represented in the character of the maid, who will remain in Baghdad—paradoxically, she is a Muslim but will remain the link, the very preserver of the Jewish connection to Baghdad, even after the Jews are gone. There can be nothing worse, in Iyya's view, than leaving one's homeland, and she cannot understand the decision to "abandon everything and go." Moreover, she views Israel as backward, and assumes that everyone there is a poor farmer or a menial laborer: "A beautiful and educated girl, splendid and upright, how would she [Sophie] do farm work? Like those sunburned barefooted girls?"—Iyya is clearly not able to fathom an identity or any real belonging for the members of the Jewish family in Israel, away from the relative luxury and refinement of Baghdad, compared to what was expected for them in the new Jewish state. Furthermore, she asks: "How would Baghdad look without Jews?"

The text gives the reader a sense of the cultural cohesiveness of Baghdad as a place of diversity and cooperation, each group being a necessary part of the whole, with the Jews being an integral part of the local Baghdadi and even national Iraqi-Arab identity. She cannot imagine one of the characters, Sarah, carrying out the chores that she normally does, such as washing clothes: "How will they manage there? Sarah doing laundry? In a tent?" As the kitchen is Iyya's own private space, her refuge and, at the same time, her source of strength, we do not see any other characters inside it, thus reinforcing her role as the glue that keeps the family together—"On leaving the kitchen, she suddenly felt weak." Musings over her identity frequently strike Iyya: she may even be considered to be an allegory for Baghdad itself—she is "more Jewish than Muslim and a Muslim among Jews." She remains silent over others' accusations that the Jews are a cursed race condemned to be degraded, and she does not feel the Jewish identity enough to take sides, but she sees her relationship with the Jewish family as that with her own family, and not as that with an employer. Although she admits that she is essentially a servant, Iyya does not feel comfortable working for someone else—it seems that the idea of family is more important for her than earning money and being a part of her actual family, that has failed her, namely her mother, father, and husband: "She realized that all she had to say was now meaningless to them." The Jewish family is leaving Baghdad, and she has difficulties in letting go of them, identifying more strongly with the Jewish family than with her own sister's household.

Ballas uses a very disjointed stream-of-consciousness method to write the novella, which takes place over a short time span, even though it recounts events occurring throughout the maid's life. The use of this very fluid, uncensored method helps the reader see the richness of her life and gives profound meaning (rooted in the "everydayness" of the prose) to the relationships between the characters. Iyya feels that she is incapable of protecting the Jewish family—"I, a panic-stricken, miserable woman?" Even though she is a Muslim from the local Iraqi majority, her identification as a woman clearly ascribes to her a marginalized otherness, perhaps as a result of her history of domestic abuse. She compares her own personal plight with the that of the children of the Jewish family and with her "beast" of a husband. Iyya goes out often, always saying "defensively" that she needs fresh air, walking the streets independently, running errands and meeting people. It is

understood that in Arab traditional society women should stay inside, and thus Iyya feels that she needs to defend her decision to go out. She is possibly motivated by her traditional upbringing and her mother telling her to obey her husband as if he were her master—and he forbid her to go outside. The freedom of the outdoors versus the horrible conditions inside the closed doors is a contrast that is frequently deployed by the author to illustrate Iyya's past, as can be seen when she returns to the "wretched room" with her mother. The closing of the novella seems to be deliberately ambiguous, but is undoubtedly symbolic, with Iyya receiving a Qur'ān as a present from one of the sons of the Jewish family before their departure, echoing ancient verses by the Andalusian Ṣūfī Muḥyī al-Dīn ibn al-'Arabī (1164-1240) in *Tarjūmān al-Ashwāq* (The Translator of Desires), that had been so relevant for the coexistence of Jews and Muslims in Baghdad but would suddenly never be so again:

لقد صار قلبي قابلا كلّ صورة فمرعى لغزلان ودير لرهبان
وبيت لأوثـــان وكعبة طائـــف وألواح توراة ومصحف قرآن
أدين بدين الحبّ أنّى توجّـــهت ركائبه فالحـبّ ديني وإيمـاني

My heart is capable of every form,
A pasture for gazelles, and a cloister for monks,
A place for idols, and the pilgrim's *Ka'ba*,
The Tables of the Torah, and the Koran.
Love is the faith I hold wherever turn its
Camels, love is my belief and faith.[53]

Sammy Michael: "I Activated a Forgetting Mechanism"

Unlike Shimon Ballas, most of the immigrating Arab-Jewish writers who succeeded in adapting to writing in Hebrew adopted the Zionist master narrative in their literary work, with the most prominent among them being the aforementioned Sammy Michael (b. 1926). Born in Baghdad to a traditional

[53] Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn al-'Arabī, *Turjumān al-Ashwāq* (The Interpreter of the Desires) (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1966), 43-44.

family, at the outbreak of the Second World War Michael became involved in a leftist underground group fighting against the Iraqi regime and then joined the Iraqi Communist Party.[54] Sentenced to death in 1948, he fled to Iran and from there to Israel, with no Zionist motives whatsoever.[55] His world view found expression in his participation in the editorial board of the Israeli Communist journal, *al-Ittiḥād* as well as in his literary work published under the pen name "Samīr Mārid" (literally, "Samīr [is] a rebel"), that emphasized social and national injustice and supported the battle against the bourgeoisie.[56] During the first three years of the magazine *al-Jadīd*, between 1953-1955, he published in it ten stories, the greatest number of stories published in that journal by a single writer. In the same time span, the next highest number of published stories was attributed to the Palestinian poet and writer Ḥannā Ibrāhīm (1927-2020), who contributed only five stories. Michael's stories evinced a strong social awareness of the gap between the various classes in Israeli society and emphasized the necessity to improve the conditions of the proletarian masses. For example, his story "'Abbās" ('Abbās [the name of the hero])[57] describes the role of the Communist Party in society and the suffering of its members as they sacrifice themselves for the collective welfare.

Michael was one of the first Arab-Jewish writers to understand the delicate position of the Arab-Jewish author in a Hebrew-speaking society, against the background of the clashing national narratives. In the early 1950s, he even tried his hand at writing in Hebrew—he started a novel that took place in a *ma'abara*, that is, an immigrant transit camp. In 1954, he published a chapter of the novel, entitled "Ḥarīq" (Fire), but only in Arabic translation.[58] He was unable to find a publisher for the novel and continued to write and publish in Arabic. This is why I consider his story "al-Fannān wa-l-Falāfil" (The Artist and the Falafel)[59] as one of the most

[54] According to al-Barāk, *al-Madāris al-Yahūdiyya*, 249, Michael – at the time called Ṣāliḥ Menasheh – joined the party on August 17, 1946.

[55] *Ba-Maḥane*, March 22, 1989, 23. See also *Moznaim*, July-August 1986, 16. On the way of life in the underground in Iraq, see his novel *Ḥofen shel 'Arafel* (A Handful of Fog) (1979).

[56] See, for example, his story "Muḥarrir Aūrūba" (The Liberator of Europe) in *al-Ittiḥād* (monthly supplement) 9, no. 1: 17-27. See also his story "Fī Ziḥām al-Madīna" (In the Tumult of the City) (*al-Jadīd*, November 1955, 26-29).

[57] *Al-Jadīd*, February 1955, 24-29; and Moreh, *al-Qiṣṣa al-Qaṣīra*, 225-232.

[58] *Al-Jadīd*, December 1954, 39-43.

[59] The story was first published in *al-Jadīd*, December 1955, 30-36. For an English translation, see

significant and insightful literary contributions by any Arab-Jewish writer in the last stage of Arabic literature by Jews before its total demise. The author chose as the stage of his story the city of Haifa in northern Israel, where he had been living since his emigration from Iraq, a city that still boasts a mixed population of different religions—Jews, Muslims, Christians, Druzes, Bahais, and others—despite the collapse of the urban life that the city had developed in mandatory Palestine.

The story is about a hungry deaf-mute child who begs passerby for money by drawing American cowboys on the sidewalks of the streets of Haifa. This boy-artist "did not blame 'bad luck' as most mature people do when they stumble on hard times, but rather he would try to find the cause that deprived him." The story illustrates the complicated picture of the new Arab-Jewish experience in Israel after its establishment, where society was torn between Jews and Palestinians, Ashkenazim and Mizrahim, and rich and poor, in addition to the other sections of Israeli society included in the author's panoramic view . For example, Michael, as an Arab-Jewish author, did not ignore the misery of Holocaust survivors one of the characters is a survivor who sells thermometers and can barely function because of his uncontrollable trembling; he is like a ghost as he does not engage with others around him and other people pay very little attention to him.

The starving boy-artist wanders the streets of Haifa in order to display his artistic creativity. He paints on the asphalt images of the unarmed American cowboy—a romantic, heroic symbol, independent and strong, that seems to fly above the ground. His paintings are surrealistic, just as the term "artist" that is used to describe him is unrealistic. Separating his cowboy from the mundane, the boy-artist makes it his own special possession that the curious stares of the crowd cannot harm. He is very hungry, but at the same time finds it difficult to believe that he cannot assign responsibility for his miserable situation. He looks for some sort of causation, an explanation for his hunger, but he seems to discover that there is no true explanation to be found. The core of the story is that the crowd enjoys

Snir, *Arab-Jewish Literature*, 232-237. For a Hebrew translation, see Snir, '*Arvijyūt, Yahadūt, Tsiyonūt*, 544-548.

seeing this deaf-mute boy wrapped in rags engaged in the process of his artistic creation. While casting his art under their feet, a few people would say in a knowing tone: "He's an orphan and his aunt is disabled." In spite of this, no one finds even some measure or other of gallantry in the child's art, the gallantry of a person bent over the sidewalk for the sake of his aunt. Furthermore, they throw coins on the ground not out of compassion for the disabled aunt, nor for the hungry child, nor even out of a desire to reward the artist for his art, but as a little reward to the *clown* who provided them with entertainment on one of their cold winter evenings. The boy-artist is aware that the crowd sees him as akin to a clown, and the narrator takes care to provide readers with a great deal of sympathy for him, turning their attention to the gap between society and the individual. Nature is also portrayed as sympathetic with the boy and, at the same time, antagonistic to the people around him, as illustrated by a strong gust of cruel wind that is received "with great displeasure, for it took the street away from them." Because of the reality of destitution, food must come before artistry or self-expression, and this is undoubtedly the reason why the boy is willing to put up with being on display to passersby as little more than a charming freak show: "The crowd enjoys seeing this ragamuffin deaf-mute creating art under their feet."

As Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980) pointed out in his one-act play *Huis Clos* (No Exit) (1944), "hell is other people"—the Other, that by which we define ourselves and that which is not ourselves is, or can be, a source of distress. We construct a hell for ourselves, Sartre says, if we refuse to take responsibility for our own actions, leaving us at the mercy of others. Constantly worried about where the next meal will come from and obsessed with the smell of the falafel before him, the creativity of the boy-artist is contrasted with his own survival. He goes "wild with rage" because he cannot eat his wares, the drawings, like the boy who sells chocolate or the woman selling falafel, who is presented by the author in a sensual way ("the face of the woman with the very red fingernails"), thus mixing food preparation and sexual desire. On the other hand, the girl selling flowers and her mother, like the Holocaust survivor, are sad and neglected and in danger of being toppled ("He saw someone walk backward and almost fall on the vessel with the flowers"). In this story, that examines what is traditionally seen as mundane, Michael's marked pessimism is mixed with an insight that although the world is often arbitrary and

unkind, and although we cannot always find reasons for what happens to us, we cannot accept this reality. The kindness of others is one way in which we can overcome our situation, and Michael ruminates on why people are not generous toward those less fortunate than them, describing the cynical people who throw coins to the artist because they view him as a clown designed for their entertainment. While Michael is certainly condemning the reductionist viewpoint that turns human beings into tools for one's satisfaction, his message is far more complicated: the movie-goers' feet trampling the horse and rider, the unarmed cowboy, that is, the indifference of the middle class, do not upset the artist. Art and its inspiration can overcome physical harm to the art itself, and its ultimate value is a way for the artist to express himself rather than as a means for getting money. The kindness of strangers and the solidarity among the oppressed and marginalized are what is really important, and this can be seen when the artist tries to help the mother and daughter who sell flowers. Although the artist has no "friends" on the street, they all seem to have a kind of symbiotic and supportive relationship, and this insight would serve Michael's next literary contributions in Hebrew, as we will see below. Michael's Arabic story "The Artist and the Falafel" might however be read now as referring to the author's own contemporary role in Israeli society: a clown who provides the canonical local Ashkenazi elite with entertainment and amusement, but who has never been considered a true part of it.

In the late 1950s, after six years of devoted adherence to Communism, Michael ceased publishing in Arabic. At about the same time, he left the Communist Party—he could no longer face, he says, the constant self-justification involved in his Communist activities. It was the first step in a long process of adapting himself to mainstream Israeli society. Then came the issue of language: as a Jew writing in Arabic, he was confronted with the need for self-justification: "I continued to read the world's literature in English, spoke a broken Hebrew on the street, and bemoaned my fate, silently, in Arabic." After he had consolidated his position as a writer of short stories in Arabic, the question was whether he should adapt to the new cultural surroundings and make the required shift in his aesthetic "preference" in the hope of finding a new audience, or to continue writing in Arabic in a country where Arabic was now the language of the enemy. In the

process of adopting the Hebrew language, he says, the fluency of his Arabic writing was impaired: "I activated a forgetting mechanism."[60] Michael entered a period of silence during which he joined the Israel Hydrological Service in the Ministry of Agriculture, where he worked for twenty-five years surveying water sources located mainly on the Syrian border. He also studied Arabic literature and psychology at the University of Haifa. Ending his literary silence, his first published novel was a Hebrew one, *Shavīm ve-Shavīm Yoter* (Equal and More Equal, 1974). The book, whose nucleus is the aforementioned "Ḥarīq" (Fire) written in the 1950s, exposed the humiliating attitude of the authorities to immigrants from Arab countries. It raised a storm of protests, bringing to the fore the ethnic question and stirring public controversy through its representation of the oppression of Oriental immigrants. For the first time, the novel brought to Hebrew literature the motif of the DDT spray with which these immigrants were disinfected, a motif immediately adopted as a symbol of the humiliation of those immigrants in Israeli society. Mainstream literary critics, however, referred to the novel, as to other Hebrew works by writers from Arab countries, as inferior protest literature with no real literary value.

In his later novels, Michael continued to focus on the margins of Israeli society. In *Ḥasūt* (Refuge, 1977), he deals with Jewish-Christian-Muslim relationships against the background of the 1973 Arab-Israeli War (also known as the Yom Kippur War). The story takes place in Haifa and in Jenīn in the West Bank, and all the major figures are members of the Israeli Communist Party. *Ḥofen shel 'Arafel* (A Handful of Fog, 1979) is about the pluralistic Iraqi society of the 1940s prior to the mass emigration of the Jews. *Ḥatsotsra ba-Wadī* (A Trumpet in the Wadi, 1987) depicts relationships between Jews and Arabs in Haifa in light of the Lebanon war of the 1980s. The novel was adapted for the stage at the Haifa Municipal Theater, and a film based upon the novel won the first prize at Haifa Festival. Some of Michael's works were adapted to the theater, and he also wrote original plays, among them *Shedīm ba-Martef* (Demons in the Basement, 1983) and *Te'omīm* (Twins, 1988), both of which were performed at the Haifa Municipal Theater. Apart from his original writings, Michael translated into Hebrew the Cairene

[60] See www.haaretz.com, accessed July 30, 2006.

trilogy of the Egyptian Nobel laureate Najīb Maḥfūẓ (1911-2006).[61] Michael wrote for children and youth as well, and among his books targeted at this audience are *Sūfa Bein ha-Dekalīm* (Storm Among the Palms, 1975), *Paḥonīm ve-Ḥalomot* (Tin Shacks and Dreams, 1997), *Ahava Bein ha-Dekalīm* (Love Among the Palms, 1990), *Shedīm Ḥumīm* (Brown Devils, 1993), *Otiyot Holchot La-Yam* (The ABC Go to the Sea, 2009), *Tzartzaron Shar Gam Ba-Ḥoref* (Little Cricket Also Singing in the Winter, 2012), and *Tippa ve-Tipponet* (A Drop and a Little Drop, 2015). His writing for children was inspired, according to his testimony, by the contradictions he experienced when it came to child-adult relationships: while in Iraq a child's opinions were ignored, the child in Israel is the all-important center of the family. Much more than in his writings for adults, in his books for children Michael showed a strong tendency to adapt himself to mainstream Israeli society.[62] It was, however, the publication of his best-selling novel *Victoria* (Victoria [the name of the heroine], 1993), more than any other of his works, that established Michael as a well-known mainstream writer. The novel soared to the top of the Israeli best-seller list, selling more than one hundred thousand copies; for fifty weeks, it stayed at the top of the list of the newspaper *Ha'aretz*'s weekly books supplement. It was translated into many languages, including English, Dutch, German, Greek, Arabic, and French. Named for its female heroine who, as her name suggests, succeeds in gaining a victory over the challenges of her life, the novel describes the life of Iraqi Jews before and after their emigration. It has been argued that the cultural accent with which Michael wrote was that of the margins, a minority accent, even while entering the mainstream. Because the novel challenged traditional values of the Jewish family in Iraq, and because it was

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[61] On Michael and his work, see Ramras-Rauch, *The Arab in Israel*, 179-183; Doli Benhabib, *Sami Michael - Be'yot shel Beniyat Subyektivyut Mizraḥīt* (Sammy Michael - Problems of Constructing Mizrahi Subjectivity), PhD thesis, Tel Aviv University, 2002; Kerbel, *Jewish Writers of the Twentieth Century*, 373-374; Nancy Berg, *More and More Equal: The Literary Works of Sami Michael* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2004); Adia Mendelson-Maoz, *Multiculturalism in Israel: Literary Perspectives* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2014), 47-53, 80-84; Yigal Schwartz, ed., *A Prince and a Revolutionary: Studies of the Fiction of Sami Sammy Michael* (Hebrew) (Beer Sheva and Or Yehuda: Gamma, Heksherim, Dvir, 2016); and Snir, *Arab-Jewish Literature*, 99-102, 124-127, 175-176, 186-188, 232-237.

[62] On Michael's books for children, see Yaffah Berlovitz, "The Place of Children's Literature in the Work of Sami Michael: A Poetical Discourse" (Hebrew), in *A Prince and a Revolutionary*, ed. Schwartz , 32-74.

permeated by a sensual atmosphere steeped in sexual encounters, including episodes of incest and pedophilia, it raised a great deal of protest and ire among Iraqi-Jewish intellectuals, who accused the author of serving the interests of the Ashkenazi establishment. They protested especially against the sexual descriptions that provided an unflattering picture of Jewish family life in Iraq. The author, for example, describes mattresses spread out on the roofs where "recalcitrant women were raped night after night, despite their curses," and "tigresses won tigers; together they shook the roof and its tens of inhabitants", while others heard everything and saw most of it. Some critics, however, described the novel as exotic, fantastic, and sensational with a plot flavored with elements of *A Thousand and One Nights*, and an attempt was even made to classify it together with Gustave Flaubert's (1821-1880) *Madame Bovary* (1856) and Leo Tolstoy's (1828-1910) *Anna Karenina* (1877).

Here, some explanation is needed in order to clarify the attitude of some mainstream critics toward literary works such as *Victoria*, especially when exaggerated praises are showered on them. In various publications, I have referred to such praises for Palestinian and Mizrahi authors in Israeli-Jewish society as politically correct gestures, in fact nothing more than a way out of the aforementioned Israeli-Jewish-Ashkenazi mainstream's cognitive dissonance, and as a tool to preserve the cozy reassurance of the canonical center's liberal and tolerant attitude toward the culture of the margins.[63] This is doubly evident in the Western orientation of Israeli culture and its repugnance for Arabic and Mizrahi culture, although the cultural Hebrew establishment cannot publicly express this, owing to its general views concerning the need for a proper liberal and pluralistic attitude toward the cultures of others. To solve this cognitive dissonance, the establishment "assigns" to apparent "chosen" representatives of the Palestinian and Mizrahi voices "seats" in the local cultural arena. A survey of Israeli media in general and cultural magazines, printed and electronic in particular, would show that interest in Arabic and Mizrahi literature and culture

[63] The fact that the novel was translated into Arabic by Samīr Naqqāsh, the greatest of the modern Jewish writers in Arabic, illustrates the gap between Michael as a mainstream writer in Israel and the marginalized status of Naqqāsh, who had to find his livelihood in translating a novel, which he rejected because of its Zionist message.

is generally not a truly aesthetic preference but a politically correct enterprise. When the Israeli media needs to present the view of the "Other," it usually turns to the same writers and intellectuals, who seem to be on call to play the role of decorative tokens in Israeli culture. Whenever an academic, cultural, social, or political activity requires an "authentic Oriental speaker," their names emerge and are "forever 'burdened' with the glorious weight of that representation."[64] Nevertheless, according to Michael himself, like his heroine Victoria, he has had the upper hand, as he claimed in the aforementioned documentary film *Forget Baghdad* (2002): "When I first arrived here in Israel, I decided to found a state called "Sami Michael." [There has been] an ongoing fight between [the State of] Israel and [the state of] myself. Of course, both the state and myself wanted to be [victorious]. But today I can say that I have won."[65]

After the publication of *Victoria*, Michael published other novels—*Mayim Noshkīm le-Mayim* (Water Kissing Water, 2001), *Yonīm be-Trafalgar* (Doves in Trafalgar, 2005), *'Ayida* (English title: *Aida* [the name of the heroine], 2008), *Ma'of Ha-Barboorim* (The Flight of the Swans, 2011), *Yahlom min ha-Yeshimon* (A Diamond from the Desert, 2015)—all of them have consolidated Michael's mainstream status as a Hebrew writer who abandoned his Arab literary preferences. Moreover, *Mayim Noshkīm le-Mayim* deals with the topic not only directly but in a meta-fictional way as well.[66]

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[64] Following Ella Shohat's words referring to Edward W. Said (1935-2003) as a "Palestinian speaker" in the United States; see Ella Shohat, "Antinomies of Exile: Said and the Frontiers of National Narrations," in *Edward Said: A Critical Reader,* ed. Michael Sprinker (Oxford and Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1992), 121.

[65] This is the written translation of his Arabic original text, which appears in the subtitles of the film, with necessary modifications. The exact wording of the original Arabic spoken text was slightly different.

[66] See Snir, '*Arviyyūt, Yahadūt, Tsiyonūt*, 322-325. In his critical comments to my article, one of the anonymous reviewers illustrates the elitist arrogant tendency of the literary canonical center of Israeli culture toward Arabic literary writing by Jews. For example, not being aware of Michael's extensive Arabic literary writing, he argues that "the claim that Sami Michael adopts the Zionist narrative in his works [...] is a familiar position, but newer studies present a more complex position." He mentions Yigal Schwartz's article "Sami Michael: a Prince, a Revolutionary and a Realist - The Social Novels of Sammy Michael and Israeli Fiction" (in Hebrew), Schwartz (ed.), *A Prince and a Revolutionary*, 7-31. However, nowhere in Schwartz's article, neither in any other article in the same collection, one can find any hint to the change in Michael's attitude towards Zionism, as reflected in his shift from Arabic to Hebrew. Furthermore, all the contributors to the

Elī ʻAmīr: "To Speak the Other's Language Without Renouncing his Own"

Unlike Ballas and Michael, Elī ʻAmīr (b. 1937)[67] has never published in Arabic and his literary output is only in Hebrew, though he has occasionally displayed his talent as a traditional *ḥakawātī* (storyteller) on televised Arabic-language programs. After emigrating from Iraq to Israel in 1950, ʻAmīr was sent with his family—his parents and six siblings—to live in a cloth tent in a *maʻabara*. Although he had finished eighth grade in Baghdad, he was accepted only in the fourth grade: "The Ashkenazim thought that we had just come down from the trees," he complained.[68] Eventually, he was sent to receive his education in the kibbutz Mishmar ha-ʻEmek, which he would later describe as "the most important and decisive" experience of his life.[69] After holding positions in the Ministry of Integration and serving as an emissary of the Sephardi Federation in the United States, he was appointed Director-General of *ʻAliyyat ha-Noʻar* (Youth Immigration) in the Jewish Agency, which would later become part of the Ministry of Education. This Zionist path, in which ʻAmīr, starting out as a young ʻ*oleh ḥadash* (new immigrant) comes to be in charge of the fate of young immigrants, would induce him to adopt enthusiastically the Zionist master narrative, which considers the Jewish exodus from Iraq as the new exodus of the Children of Israel.

Arab-Muslim culture has been an integral part of ʻAmīr's background; he also majored in Arabic language and literature at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. He made his literary debut in the mid-1970s with a part of his memoirs, a sort of short story titled "Tarnegol Kappara" (Rooster of Atonement), which was included in a reader for students (1978) edited by Abraham Stahl (1933-2000).

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collection overlook not only Michael's many works in Arabic published during the 1950s, but the whole extensive Arabic literature written by Jews, with the exception of only minor references (91, where Orit Bashkin was only satisfied with mentioning two of my studies!). It is ironical that Doli Benhabib, one of the few scholars who investigated Michael's Arabic literary works in her aforementioned PhD thesis, contributed an article to the collection but this article *does not refer at all* to Michael's Arabic works!

[67] His original name in Iraq was Fu'ād Ilyās Nāṣiḥ Khalaschī.

[68] *The Jerusalem Post Magazine*, March 18, 1988, 4.

[69] *Ha'aretz*, February 8, 1985,16.

Eight years later, with a slightly different title, this text would serve as the nucleus for his first quasi-autobiographical novel, *Tarnegol Kapparot* (Rooster of Atonements, 1983), on the dwarfing of the image of the father figure in the eyes of his children, which "brings you to want revenge."[70] Described as "casually turning a flashlight into a dark corner of a field and catching the eyes of a ferocious beast,"[71] the novel immediately proved to be a best-seller: it was published in eighteen editions (about seventy-thousand copies) and was successfully adapted to the small screen by the veteran Israeli filmmaker Dan Wolman (b. 1941). The protagonist Nūrī, a young boy of Iraqi origin, is sent from the *ma'abara* to receive his education in the fictional Kiryat Oranīm, a kibbutz in the Yizrael Valley established by Polish pioneers. Nūrī's struggle to become one of "them"—the arrogant and aristocratic *Sabra* youth (native-born Israeli Jews) —epitomizes the conflict between East and West, and between the original values of the Oriental immigrants and the Ashkenazi values enforced upon them. When he came to the kibbutz accompanied by "the whole of Jewish Baghdad," Nūrī attempted to reassure himself that the painful process through which he would acquire his new identity would not come at the expense of his original one. 'Amīr considers the novel a way of "settling accounts with myself and with Zionism,"[72] but the Zionist narrative dominates it and the fate of Nūrī is dictated by Ashkenazi (Western) values. The Polish-born Israeli-Hebrew writer Aharon Megged (1920-2016) referred to the novel as "one of the significant treasures of Jewish culture, like the stories of the Jewish villages in Poland and Russia."[73]Heavily colored by "invented tradition"[74] —mainly, as regards creating a national identity and promoting national unity, and legitimizing certain institutions and cultural practices—'Amīr's second novel, *Mafriyaḥ ha-Yonīm* (The Pigeoneer, 1993), has at its core the desire of Arabized Jews to return to their ancient homeland. Referring to the relationship of the past to the present, 'Amīr says that "it is a mixture that can hardly be reduced to its original components [...] I told my story

[70] *Ha'aretz*, February 8, 1985, 16; and *Maariv*, April 25, 1989,B9.

[71] *The Jerusalem Post*, March 11, 1988, 15.

[72] *Ba-Ma'rakha*, 281, March 1984, 12-13.

[73] *Yedi'ot Aḥronot*, March 19, 1993, 27.

[74] See Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

through my anxiety about the fate of Israeli society."[75] This panoramic novel, a kind of *Bildungsroman* based on the author's childhood in Iraq, is told through the eyes of the protagonist Kabī when he is attaining the age of puberty. Highlighting the historical events on the eve of the mass emigration, it depicts the Jews' complicated relationship with their Muslim neighbors and is steeped in sensual descriptions touching on almost every aspect of Jewish life in the colorful exotic streets and alleys of Baghdad. Described as "one of the most important achievements of Hebrew literature in recent years,"[76] the novel is populated by dynamic figures that reflect the diversity of characters in a kind of Baghdad found in the *Thousand and One Nights*. The events of the plot are flavored with the music of the Egyptian singer and composer Muḥammad 'Abd al-Wahhāb (1901-1991) and the Jewish singer Salīma Murād Bāsha (1905-1974), erotic belly-dancing with the dancer Bahiyya, seductive prostitutes, adventurous sailing on the Tigris, summer nights on rooftops, rich cousins, smells of spices, and the sexual dreams of the adolescent narrator whose fantasies include Rachelle, his uncle's wife, the teacher Sylvia, and Amīra, Abū Edwar's daughter, who will end up, like him, in a kibbutz. Within the rich and varied social mosaic of the novel, each character represents a particular way of approaching the national and existential issues faced by Iraqi Jews. However, one may raise doubts concerning the author's implied tendency to depict the figure of the teacher Salīm Afandī as a typical Communist—he is presented as a *carpe diem* hedonist—while all evidence shows that Salīm Afandī by no means reflects the nature of contemporary Iraqi-Jewish Communist activists. It should also be noted that the Communist option in Iraq was even more popular among Jews at the time than was the Zionist underground. The novel conveys the tragedy of the first generation of Iraqi immigrants. In Iraq, Kabī's father Salmān dreamed of growing rice in the Ḥula Valley of northern Israel, but soon after he kissed the sacred soil of the "Promised Land" his dreams were shattered by reality. Likewise, 'Amīr's own father collapsed after immigration—this is the reason, says the author, why it was only in his second autobiographical novel that he returned to his childhood: "The confrontation with the figure of the father for me was difficult"[77] and "when writing this

[75] *Ba-Ma'rakha*, 281, March 1984, 12.

[76] *Moznayim*, February-March 1993, 70.

[77] *Yedi'ot Aḥronot*, March 19, 1993, 27.

Hebrew novel, I imagined myself listening in one ear to my father telling it to me in Arabic."[78] Unlike the father, the mother in the novel, Umm Kabī, who initially opposed emigration, shows a marvelous ability to adjust. Still, the father's disappointment is mingled with a glimmer of hope—the birth of his first *Sabra* son signifies, in its own way, a new beginning.

Six years later, ʻAmīr surprised his readers with a third novel, *Ahavat Shaʼūl* (Shaʼul's Love, 1998), which departed from his own fictionalized experiences and the autobiographical alter egos of Nūrī and Kabī. Appealing to mainstream Israeli readers, it touches on Ashkenazim, Sephardim of the Old Yishuv, Oriental Jews, the Israeli army, and the Holocaust, and its plot verges on the melodramatic. One critic wrote that "ʻAmīr compensates his heroes and readers with plenty of tasty food, sexual encounters serenaded by joyous Hebrew songs, journeys which are full of love for the land and tributes to the gathering of Jewish immigrants."[79] Also noteworthy in the novel is the author's implied view regarding the territorial price Israel should pay for peace in the Middle East.

Seven years later, ʻAmīr returned to telling his own life story and published *Yasmīn* (Yasmin [the name of the heroine], 2005), a sequel to his previous two autobiographical novels. The protagonist is Nūrī, the young boy from *Mafriyaḥ ha-Yonīm*, who is now serving as a governmental adviser on Arab affairs. With the publication of this new novel, ʻAmīr fulfilled his dream of composing a trilogy similar to that of Najīb Maḥfūẓ, whom he highly admires, having said as much in his essay about their meeting in Cairo.[80] This trilogy covers what ʻAmīr once described as "the via dolorosa of being an Israeli and devoting myself to this society."[81] However, *Yasmīn*—a love story between a Jewish man and an Arab-Christian woman—seems to be much closer to *Ahavat Shaʼūl* than to the other two parts of ʻAmīr's trilogy, especially in his strong desire to appeal to mainstream readers, even if the novel is critical of the Israeli establishment, especially regarding

[78] Personal communication with ʻAmīr, May 23, 2000.
[79] *Yediʻot Aḥronot*, February 20, 1998, 28.
[80] *Yediʻot Aḥronot*, December 3, 1999, 26.
[81] Israeli Radio, February 16, 1991.

the events following the 1967 War.[82] In a review of the novel, the poet and scholar Yochai Oppenheimer (b. 1958) shows how "the author even tends to make the reader forget about the trauma of the banishment from Iraq and about the difficult experience of adjusting to a new country." The emotional tension that was characteristic of his previous autobiographical works is "given no expression in this novel, which has no characters that inspire any rage or genuine pity in the reader's heart." He further claims that in *Yasmīn* 'Amīr graphically illustrates what the critic Fredric Jameson (b. 1934), following Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche (1844-1900), terms the "prison-house of language."[83] Oppenheimer argues that the enlightened occupier, who proclaims words of "heresy" against the consensus, "is no different, in this respect, from the benighted occupier who proclaims messianic visions." The "prison-house" also relates to the selection of a shop-worn format that "turns literary creations into a constant, harmless chaperon of the occupation, into a means of generating excitement that does not require any commitment and relates to the complexity of the conflict between two nations and to the human tragedy involved." Also, his choice to cling to the clichés of the political discourse does create a "realistic" novel, as the back cover announces, but it is a realistic novel that "lacks a suitable independent artistic stance."[84] 'Amīr's last novel *Na'ar Ha-Ofanayim* (Bicycle Boy, 2018) is another quasi-autobiographical work in which he returns to his protagonist Nūrī from the aforementioned *Mafriyaḥ ha-Yonīm* (The Pigeoneer, 1993). Now Nūrī leaves the Kibbutz, upon his father's request to come and help the family in the transit camp, but soon after his return he is asked again to move to Jerusalem to try to assist the whole family to relocate to Jerusalem. While working as a distributor of newspapers, he finds a job as a delivery boy at the Prime Minster office, where he can witness significant occurrences in the life of the young Jewish state. The events of the novel occur during the first half of the 1950s, and more precisely between 1953, when the author was sixteen, and 1956, before the start of the Suez Crisis, when Israeli armed forces pushed into Egypt

[82] Avraham Burg (b. 1955), former Knesset speaker and former head of the Jewish Agency, considers the novel to be a kind of an elegy on the missed opportunity to let Arabized Jews build bridges between the new Israel and the old, ancient Middle East; see Avraham Burg, *Le-Natseḥ et Hitler* (Victory Over Hitler) (Tel-Aviv: Yedioth Ahronoth Books and Chemed Books, 2007), 52.

[83] See Fredric Jameson, *The Prison-House of Language: A Critical Account of Structuralism and Russian Formalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972).

[84] Yochai Oppenheimer, "My Gentle Occupier" [Hebrew], *Ha'aretz* (Books), February 9, 2005.

toward the Suez Canal after Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser (1918-1970) nationalized it. Here the narrator is much more sophisticated than in his previous novels, in fact, if we compare him to the author himself, and the views he has expressed in the media, we can safely say that ʻAmīr himself functions as the narrator of this novel, in other words, the gap between the narrator and the implied author is very small. We can see this, for example, when the narrator uses terms such as *ʻAravim Yehudim* (Arab-Jews) (p. 396), or when Nūrī wonders "why we don't learn at school on the Jews' life in the Arab countries" (p. 394)—both issues started to be discussed in Hebrew public cultural and intellectual discourse only in the 1980s. The voice of the implied author of the novel is expressed very well in the school where Nūrī studies, when the teacher asks one of the students to read aloud a eulogy that the Israeli Chief of Staff at the time, Moshe Dayan (1915-1981), gave for Roi Rotberg, a kibbutz security officer killed on April 29, 1956 near the Gaza Strip. ʻAmīr quotes the whole text of the eulogy, some sections of which reflect the author's views when he published the novel, such as when Dayan refers to the murderers of the young officer:

> Let us not cast the blame on the murderers today. Why should we declare their burning hatred for us? For eight years they have been sitting in the refugee camps in Gaza, and before their eyes we have been transforming the lands and the villages, where they and their fathers dwelt, into our estate. It is not among the Arabs in Gaza, but in our own midst that we must seek Roi's blood. How did we shut our eyes and refuse to look squarely at our fate, and see, in all its brutality, the destiny of our generation?[85]

ʻAmīr has propagated the central myths of Zionism—the kibbutz, *ʻaliyya*, and the Israeli army—and since the mid-1990s has been considered one of the most established Hebrew writers. One of his novels, *Mafriyaḥ ha-Yonīm*, was even published in a shortened version (by Rina Tsdaka) for a young audience as part of the Israeli Hebrew school curriculum. ʻAmīr's novels are steeped in an awareness of the injustice done to the Oriental Jews, but at the same time they deal with the

[85] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Death_and_eulogy_of_Roi_Rotberg (accessed July 23, 2020).

mitigating circumstances under which the Zionist vision was pursued. The founders of the kibbutz had themselves rebelled against their original culture with the aim of "overturning the pyramid," as Dolek, in charge of the fertilizer section in *Tarnegol Kapparot*, puts it. Dolek himself had abandoned his doctoral studies in physics in order to take part in the Zionist project. 'Amīr expresses his appreciation of the way in which the kibbutz has absorbed the newcomers and the values it represents. "No other immigrant society in the modern era has registered," says 'Amīr, "a comparable success or social revolution in absorbing nearly two million immigrants in difficult economic conditions and while fighting five wars."[86] Attempting to bridge the gap between East and West, he is trying in his novels to fulfill Jacques Derrida's (1930-2004) ideal "to speak the other's language without renouncing his own."[87] Yet, more than any other author of Iraqi origin, his writings illustrate the adoption of the Zionist master narrative.[88]

*Almog Behar: "*Anā min al-Yahūd*"*

The demise of Arab-Jewish writing in Arabic may be best illustrated by Almog Behar's (b. 1978) story "Anā min al-Yahūd" (I Am One of the Jews).[89] Behar was born in Ra'anana, Israel, to an Iraqi-born mother and a father that was born in Copenhagen. He was expected to grow up, like many of his ilk, as a *Sabra* —a native-born Israeli Jew which should have distanced him from any dimension of Arab-Jewish identity and culture, were it not for a conscious twist of fate: he decided to create for himself an Arab-Jewish identity or, better still, to reclaim the

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[86] *The Jerusalem Post Magazine*, March 18, 1988, 4.

[87] Henry Louis Jr. Gates and Kwame Anthony Appiah, eds., *"Race," Writing and Difference* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1986), 333.

[88] On 'Amīr and his works, see also Berg, *Exile from Exile*, 391-394; Kerbel, *Jewish Writers of the Twentieth Century*, 42-43; Mendelson-Maoz, *Multiculturalism in Israel*, 91-95; and Oppenheimer, *Mi-Rḥov Ben-Gurion to Shāri' al-Rashīd*, 22-23, 60-61, 148-150, 194-195, 217-218, 254-259.

[89] The story was first published in *Ha'aretz*, Literary Supplement, April 22, 2005. For an English translation, see Snir, *Arab-Jewish Literature*, 309-316. The Arabic translation, by Muḥammad 'Abbūd, was published on his blog at http://aboud78.blogspot.com/ (accessed September 24, 2020). For a short film based on the story, see https://www.facebook.com/anaminelyahud/ (accessed August 5, 2019). For a theatrical production based on the story, see http://www.arab-hebrew-theatre.org.il/show.php?id=6594 (accessed August 1, 2020). On the story itself, see Mendelson-Maoz, *Multiculturalism in Israel*, 112-120; and Snir, *Arab-Jewish Literature*, 142-148, 168-169, 189-190, 196-202.

identity of his Iraqi-Arab mother and her original family. In fact, Behar is one of the only few members of the new generation of Arabized and Mizrahi Jews who has decided to consciously adopt an Arab-Jewish identity and invest their energies into acquiring a culture that Israeli-Jewish society has decided to abandon. Behar's efforts are by no means part of the fictional Arab-Jewish identity that was invented somewhere in the late 1980s and the early 1990s mostly for the goals of identity politics.[90] "Anā min al-Yahūd" is an exceptional autobiographical meta-fictional Hebrew story with an Arabic title that might be a good illustration of the demise of Arab-Jewish cultural hybridity. The Arabic title of the Hebrew story is understandable for every Hebrew-speaking Israeli: The Arabic words correspond to the same Hebrew words, showing the common Semitic origins and the similarity of both languages. At the same time, the title shocks readers who are not used to Arabic titles for Hebrew literary works. The plot is somehow surrealist: as the narrator walks down the street in Jerusalem, he loses his Hebrew Israeli accent and begins to speak in the Arabic accent of his Iraqi-Arab-Jewish grandfather Anwar. This "return to his roots," which is accompanied by reviving the pre-1948 Palestinian reality in Jerusalem, only exacerbates the narrator's estrangement. The Jews suspect him of being an Arab, and the Arabs alienate themselves from him. Policemen start to head assertively toward him on the streets, stopping him and inquiring as to his name and identity. Because of the suspicion that he is not a Jew but an Arab, he wants to pull out his identity card before every passing policeman on the street and point out the nationality line and tell them: "*Anā min al-Yahūd, Anā min al-Yahūd*" ("I Am One of the Jews, I Am One of the Jews"). But the policemen take time to check him, going over his body with metal detectors, eager to defuse any suspicious object. Suddenly, explosive belts begin to form on his heart, "swelling and refusing to be defused, thundering and thundering." But at the same time, he is suffering from a sort of schizophrenia; the self-denial of his new situation reflects the tragedy of the demise of Arab-Jewish hybridity: "And my heart did not know I had returned to my heart, it didn't know, and my fears didn't know they had all returned to me, they did not know." Then this "plague" begins to strike other Israeli Jews, who also begin to speak in the accents of their

[90] See Reuven Snir, *Who Needs Arab-Jewish Identity? Interpellation, Exclusion, and Inessential Solidarities* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 225-226.

parents and grandparents. Upon the advice of his dead grandfather, the narrator chooses silence, only to discover that this too does not provide security, and again he is taken to jail. He starts to write stories and poems of opposition to Hebrew in Hebrew because he has no other language to write in. In his silence, he shows to his parents his writings, trying to convince them that his estrangement is a reflection of their alienation because "you too are the same exile, the same silence, the same alienation between heart and body and between thought and speech; perhaps you will know how the plot will be resolved." But his parents' response is a total denial: "This is not our son [...] we don't have this accent [...] his grandfather Anwar died before he was born." The last sentence of the story, a variation on the aforementioned sentence which reflects his schizophrenic situation, reflects the tragedy of the demise of Arab-Jewish hybridity: "And my parents did not know that I had returned to their heart, they did not know, and they did not know that all of their fears had returned to me, they did not know."

The reader is led to the conclusion that the estrangement of the narrator in Israeli society is due to some sort of historical blindness. The direct inter-textual allusion is to *Blindness* (1995) by the Portuguese writer José Saramago (1922-2010), in which a man suddenly loses his sight while he is waiting in his car at a traffic light. The mysterious epidemic of "white blindness" spreads to the whole nation. The novel ends when people start to regain their sight: "Why did we become blind, I don't know, perhaps one day we'll find out, Do you want me to tell you what I think, Yes, do, I don't think we did go blind, I think we are blind, Blind but seeing, Blind people who can see, but do not see."[91]

In Behar's story, too, initially one person is affected in one of his capacities, the capacity for speech, though he is not rendered mute but only loses his Hebrew accent and begins to speak in his grandfather's Iraqi accent. But, unlike Saramago's novel, which is full of hope, Behar's story is full of despair. The "plague" or the *dybbuk*—the return of the narrator to his Arab roots—is by no means the start of a revolution, but only "the last visit of health before death."

[91] José Saramago, *Blindness* (trans. Giovanni Pontiero) (London: Vintage, 2013), 309.

It is possible to compare Behar's story with novels detailing the immigrant experience, such as *My Antonia* (1918) by the American writer Willa Cather (1873-1947), *Bread Givers* (1925) by American-Jewish author Anzia Yezierska (1885-1970), and *The Fortunate Pilgrim* (1965) by the American author of Italian descent Mario Puzo (1920-1999). However, unlike these novels, which feature members of the younger generation as the driving force behind the adaptation to a new society and a different culture, and portray them as going against tradition, in Behar's story the young man rebels by going back to tradition. It is instructive, from both a literary and a symbolic point of view, to note the inter-textual links of Behar's story with "The Metamorphosis" (1915) by Franz Kafka (1883-1924), which also begins with the protagonist being inexplicably changed by some external force. Obviously, the stories do not exactly parallel each other—Kafka's protagonist, the hard-working Gregor, is turned into a bug and left alone by his family, while Behar's unnamed protagonist starts speaking with an accent and watches his "disease" spread all around him. Yet, the ending of both stories is one of rejection by those whom the protagonist loves most, and the changes that occur in the protagonists are not within their control. In a sense, both stories emphasize the same sort of despair and lack of hope for the future as illustrated, for example, by Samīr Naqqāsh's works, such as the novella "Prophecies of a Madman in a Cursed City."[92] Behar provides no real resolution, instead echoing in his final sentence the same ambiguity of identity that runs through Naqqāsh's work. Shortly before the story came out, Almog Behar published his poem "My Arabic Is Mute," which seems to be the nucleus of the story and at the same time encapsulates the demise of Arab-Jewish culture and identity:

הָעֲרָבִית שֶׁלִּי אִלֶּמֶת
חֲנוּקָה מִן הַגָּרוֹן
מְקַלְקֶלֶת אֶת עַצְמָהּ
בְּלִי לְהוֹצִיא מִלָּה
יְשֵׁנָה בָּאֲוִיר הַמַּחֲנִיק
שֶׁל מִקְלְטֵי נַפְשִׁי
מִסְתַּתֶּרֶת
מִבְּנֵי–הַמִּשְׁפָּחָה

[92] For a translation of the story, see Snir, *Arab-Jewish Literature*, 295-308.

מֵאֲחוֹרֵי תְּרִיסֵי הָעִבְרִית.
וְהָעִבְרִית שֶׁלִּי גּוֹעֶשֶׁת
מִתְרוֹצֶצֶת בֵּין הַחֲדָרִים
וּמַרְפְּסוֹת הַשְּׁכֵנִים
מַשְׁמִיעָה קוֹלָהּ בָּרַבִּים
מְנַבֵּאת בּוֹאָם שֶׁל אֱלֹהִים
וַדַּחְפּוֹרִים
וְאָז מִתְכַּנֶּסֶת בַּסָּלוֹן
חוֹשֶׁבֶת אֶת עַצְמָהּ
גְּלוּיוֹת עַל שְׂפַת עוֹרָהּ
כְּסוּיוֹת בֵּין דַּפֵּי בְּשָׂרָהּ
רָגַע עֵירֻמָּה וְרָגַע לְבוּשָׁה
הִיא מִצְטַמְצֶמֶת בַּכֶּרֶסָא
מְבַקֶּשֶׁת אֶת סְלִיחַת לִבָּהּ.
הָעֲרָבִית שֶׁלִּי פּוֹחֶדֶת
מִתְחַזָּה בְּשֶׁקֶט לְעִבְרִית
וְלוֹחֶשֶׁת לַחֲבֵרִים
עִם כָּל דְּפִיקָה בִּשְׁעָרֶיהָ:
"אַהְלָן! אהלן!"
וּמוּל כָּל שׁוֹטֵר עוֹבֵר בָּרְחוֹב
שׁוֹלֶפֶת תְּעוּדַת זֶהוּת
מַצְבִּיעָה עַל הַסְּעִיף הַמְּגוֹנָן:
"אֲנַא מִן אַל–יַהוּד, אֲנַא מִן אַל–יַהוּד".
וְהָעִבְרִית שֶׁלִּי חֵרֶשֶׁת
לִפְעָמִים חֵרֶשֶׁת מְאֹד.

My Arabic is mute
Strangled in the throat
Cursing itself
Without uttering a word
Sleeping in the suffocating air
Of the shelters of my soul
Hiding
From family members
Behind the shutters of Hebrew.
And my Hebrew erupts
Running around between rooms

And the neighbors' porches
Sounding her voice in public
Prophesizing the coming of God
And bulldozers
And then she settles in the living room
Thinking herself
Openly on the edge of her skin
Hidden between the pages of her flesh
One moment naked and the next dressed
She almost makes herself disappear in the armchair
Asking for her heart's forgiveness.
My Arabic is scared
Quietly impersonating Hebrew
Whispering to friends
With every knock on her gates:
"Welcome, welcome!"
And in front of every policeman on the street
She pulls out her ID card
Pointing out the protective clause:
"*Anā min al-Yahūd, Anā min al-Yahūd*" [I am one of the Jews, I am one of the Jews],
And my Hebrew is deaf
Sometimes so very deaf.[93]

Conclusion

The 1960s marked the beginning of the end for the Arabic literature of the Arab Jews: the majority of the writers who belonged to the Communist party left it after their faith in Communism was undermined following the exposure of Stalinist crimes, the border conflicts between the USSR and China, the increased radicalism

[93] The poem was first published in *Helicon - Anthological Journal of Contemporary Poetry* 68 (2005): 30.

within the Communist party in Israel and the USSR's blind support for the Arab states. On the other hand, having failed to create a "positive" and meaningful Arab culture, the governmental establishment gradually relinquished its support for those who had taken shelter in its shade. A few succeeded in adapting to writing in Hebrew, while others severed themselves from literary activity in Arabic. It was sad to observe those few who were unable to accept this reality, like the aforementioned writer Samīr Naqqāsh, who arrived in Israel at the age of thirteen and developed most of his talents there. With astounding devotion, he continued to write and publish Arabic novels, short stories and plays even when there was almost no one interested in his or his comrades' Arabic writings. Several years before his death, Naqqāsh expressed his tragic situation as an Arab-Jewish writer in the Israeli Zionist Western-oriented society in the following words: "I don't exist in this country, neither as a writer, citizen, or human being. I don't feel that I belong anywhere, not since my roots were torn from the ground [in Baghdad]."[94]

We can hardly find any example of the Ashkenazi establishment's attitude toward Arab-Jewish culture and identity that does not carry the "burden" of the previously mentioned cognitive dissonance. *Ha-Merkkaz le-Shilūv Moreshet Yahadūt Sepharad ve-ha-Mizraḥ* (The Center for the Integration of the Heritage of the Oriental and Sephardi Jewry), established in 1977 within the Ministry of Education, has been frequently cited to point out that the Israeli establishment is tolerant toward Arab-Jewish culture. However, its main orientation has been Zionist, and it has hardly dealt with contemporary Arabic literature by Jews at all.[95] As a result of the political and national Arab-Israeli conflict in the Middle East, on the one hand, and Israel's Western-oriented Ashkenazi cultural hegemony, on the other, the refusal inside Israel to tolerate any aspect of non-Zionist Arab culture is gaining a foothold in mainstream society and has become quite powerful. Israeli society, according to Yossi Ginosar (1945-2004), a former high official in the Israeli General Security Services (*Shabak*), "has not humanized Arab society yet [...] there

[94] Berg, *Exile from Exile*, 3.

[95] For an evaluation of the center's activities during the first twenty-five years of its existence, see the various contributions in the two special issues of *Pe'amim*: *Studies in Oriental Jewry*, namely, 92 (Summer 2002) and 93 (Autumn 2002).

is a deep abhorrence of its essential perspectives throughout Israeli social classes."[96] Recent signals of interest in Arab culture among Israeli-Jewish intellectuals have generally only been a theoretical tool in the discussion around the future of Israel in the Middle East. Literary Arabic writing by Jews will gradually disappear in the next few years. Paradoxically enough, even Jewish advocates of the inclusion of Arab culture as a fundamental component of Israeli society do not see this culture as part of their own cultural world; those among them who immigrated to Israel from Arab countries without becoming proficient in the standard Arabic language or who were not born in Arab countries do not, as a rule, bother with Arabic anymore. The fact that an Israeli-Jewish manager of a McDonald's fired a female Arab employee for "speaking Arabic to another Arab employee"[97] without arousing any public protest only serves to undercut the legal status of Arabic in Israel despite its being at the time an official language. The formal governmental seal on the demise of Arabic as a "Jewish language" was set by the "Basic Law: Israel as the Nation-State of the Jewish People," which stated the "The state's language is Hebrew." This law was passed by the Knesset in July 2018.

It is not too far-fetched to see Arabic literature by Jews as another victim of the conflict that has played out in Palestine, especially following the disappearance of the distinction between "Jew" and "Zionist" in Arab nationalist discourse and the attitude of the hegemonic Zionist narrative towards Arab culture. Since the early 1950s, the literature of twentieth-century Iraqi Jews produced in Arabic has entirely been relegated to the margins of Arabic literature. Political, national, and cultural reasons are behind that process and the paucity of scholarly attention that this literature has been given through the years. Although the literary writing of Iraqi Jews in the 1940s gained some attention among Jewish intellectuals in Palestine at the time,[98] since 1948 scholars outside Iraq have totally shunned the study of that literature. Now, unfortunately, only rarely do we hear Muslim and Christian authors and intellectuals regret the fact that the Jewish voice in Arab

[96] *Yedi'ot Aḥronot* (Saturday Supplement), January 9, 2004, 24.

[97] *Al-Ahram Weekly Online*, March 10, 2004.

[98] See, for example, Y. Ben Hananya, "Jewish Writers and Poets in Iraq" (Hebrew), *Hed Ha-Mizrah*, September 29, 1943, 12; October 13, 1943, 6-7; October 29, 1943, 7; November 12, 1943, 6-7.

literature has been lost.[99] Moreover, most of them hardly know that such a voice ever existed. At the same time, the scholarship of Arabic literature has recently been experiencing vital changes that shed another light on Arab-Jewish culture, the basic component of which since the pre-Islamic period has been *literature*.

The rapid development and spread of Internet technologies has done much to change the way culture is perceived and has changed dramatically the way literature in general—Arabic literature included—is created and consumed. The impact of the Internet on Arabic literary writing has been gradually intensifying, and there are signs that Arabic literature is changing in many respects. Where the Internet is available (without strict governmental interventions), there is no censorship, no publishing limitations, no need for literary editors, and no need for financial resources to publish whatever you want. Also, the temporal distance between writing and publishing has now become shorter, if it still exists at all.[100] Consequently, the scholarship of Arabic literature has frequently been moving into non-academic spaces without sticking to unbiased academic discourse, and sometimes it has turned into a discourse directed by unrelated ideological, political, and social motives. For example, those scholars who insist that Jewish-Arab identity still exists and that the relevant culture is flourishing among Jews in Israel today do not act as impartial academics but adopt post-truth populist strategies, which have unfortunately recently penetrated academic circles as well,

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[99] The Lebanese writer and critic Ilyās Khūrī (Elias Khoury) (b. 1948) considers the "Jewish-Arab voice" a central voice in Arab culture; therefore, its loss has been a severe blow to that culture (interview with Anton Shammās in *Yediot Aḥronoth*, March 15, 2002, 60. See the Arabic version of the interview *Mashārif* [Haifa] 17 [Summer 2002], 237-238). It is ironic that, about six years earlier, Khūrī himself threatened to walk out of the hall during a conference on Arabic literature in Carthage (Tunis) when the Israeli writer Sami Michael, himself an Arab-Jew in origin, was ready to come up on the stage to give his lecture. Michael's anger was expressed in his essay "Shylock in Carthage," *The Jewish Quarterly*, Winter 1994-1995: 71-72. Under the title "The Experience of Oriental Jews in Israel: Have We Lost for Ever the Jews of Iraq?" The Jordanian writer Ibrāhīm Gharāyiba (b. 1962) laments the failure of the Arabs to keep the Arab-Jews, especially the Iraqis among them, as an integral part of Arab society and culture (*al-Ḥayāt*, July 25, 2002, 25). His article appeared in English translation in *The Scribe*, the journal of Babylonian Jewry published by the Jewish Exilarch's Foundation in London, volume 72 (September 1999), 25. However, the translation omits some sentences in which the writer argues that said failure has only served the Israeli and Zionist aggression against Arabs.

[100] See Snir, *Modern Arabic Literature*, 274-275.

as it happens when scientific discourse turns to emotions in order to support perceptions that are scientifically unsubstantiated. Two examples will suffice here: the first is the publication of a special issue of the *Ho! - Literary Magazine* (March 16, 2018) with the title "Arabic Literature and Yiddish Literature: Modern Hebrew Culture's Two Sisters." Unlike the Yiddish section in the volume, the Arabic one, despite the huge energy invested in it by the editors, illustrates in its poor scholarly foundation the demise of Arabic culture among Jews, and I hope to discuss this volume in more detail in a future review essay. The second example is the controversy surrounding Arab-Jewish identity that has emerged among a research group known as "Jewish Life in Modern Islamic Contexts," which convened during the 2018-2019 academic year at the Herbert D. Katz Center for Advanced Judaic Studies in Philadelphia, a controversy about which I have already written in detail.[101]

[101] See my essay "Arab-Jewish Identity: For a Long Time, There Has Been No Such Thing," published in *Ha'aretz*, April 10, 2019. Four of the fellows at the group, Yoram Meital, Orit Bashkin, Nancy Berg, and Yoval Evri, responded in their essay "Arab-Jewish Identity: There Is Certainly Such a Thing," published in *Ha'aretz*, May 25, 2019. The response, to say the least, basically uses fallacious straw-man arguments, attributing to me distorted weaker arguments and misrepresenting my positions, only to "successfully" defeat them. Strangely, one of the authors, Orit Bashkin, published in 2017 a book whose conclusion, entitled "The Death of Arab Jewishness," contradicts the content of their article (Orit Bashkin, *Impossible Exodus: Iraqi Jews in Israel* [Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2017], 221-229). For my detailed response to their essay, see Reuven Snir, "Who Needs Arab-Jewish Identity? On Politics of Identity, Social Capital, and Academic Ethics" (Hebrew), *Jama'a - Interdisciplinary Journal of Middle East Studies* 25 (2020): 317-352. By no means I overlook the multiplicity of popular manifestations of Arab-Jewish and Mizrahi identities and oriental musical traditions (*Musica Mizraḥīt*) as expressed, for example, in the studies of the poet and scholar Haviva Pedaya (b. 1957) such as *Ha-Mizraḥ Kotev Et 'Atzmo* (The Mizrah Writes Itself) (Tel Aviv: Gama Press and Van Leer Jerusalem Institute, 2015); and *Shivato shel Ha-Kol Ha-Goleh: Zehut Mizraḥīt, Po'etika, Muzika U-Merchav* (Return of the Lost Voice: Poetics, Music and Space) (Tel Aviv: Ha-Kibbutz Ha-Me'uḥad, 2016). See also Motti Regev, "*Musica Mizrakhit*, Israeli Rock and National Culture in Israel," *Popular Music* 15, no.3 (1996): 275-284; Motti Regev and Edwin Seroussi, *Popular Music and National Culture in Israel* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 191-235; and Yochai Oppenheimer, *Ma Ze li-Hiyot Otenti - Shira Mizraḥīt be-Yisrael* (What Is to Be Authentic - Mizrahi Poetry in Israel) (Tel Aviv: Resling, 2012). Also, it goes without saying that my arguments have nothing to do with issues of the civil rights struggle as expressed, for example, in Bryan K. Roby, *The Mizrahi Era of Rebellion: Israel's Forgotten Civil Rights Struggle 1948-1966* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2015). In addition, my arguments do not deal with the linguistic interactions between Hebrew and Arabic within the intensely politicized space of Israel/Palestine and the relationship through literature between Jewish and Palestinian authors as discussed in Lital Levy, *Poetic Trespass: Writing Between Hebrew and Arabic in Israel/Palestine* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton

We are currently witnessing the demise of Arab-Jewish culture—a tradition that started more than 1,500 years ago is vanishing before our very eyes. The main factor in the Muslim-Christian-Jewish Arab symbiosis up to the twentieth century, from the Jewish point of view, was that the great majority of the Jews under the rule of Islam had adopted Arabic as their spoken language. Yet Arabic is gradually disappearing as a language spoken on a daily basis by Jews. The image of an hourglass is an opposite one for the magnitude of cultural loss: the grains of sand are quickly running out. Furthermore, in the field of literature there is not even one Jewish writer of record who was born in Israel after 1948 and is still writing in Arabic. A Jew who is now fluent in Arabic must have either been born in an Arab country (and their numbers, of course, are rapidly decreasing) or have acquired the language as part of his training for service in the military or security services (and their numbers, needless to say, are always increasing). The Israeli-Jewish canonical elite does not see the Arabic language and culture as intellectual assets—there is no better illustration of this point than the structure of the comparative literature departments at Israeli universities, where one can hardly find tenured scholars with knowledge of Arabic or its literature. In short, we all know that the chapter of Arab-Jewish symbiosis has reached its end, and that the hourglass will not be turned over anytime soon, if at all.[102] The great Arab poet Abū al-Ṭayyib al-Mutanabbī (915-965), one of the Arab-Jewish authors' favorite poets from the golden age of Arabic poetry, had already said:

مَا كلُّ ما يَتَمَنّى المَرْءُ يُدْرِكُهُ تجرِي الرّياحُ بمَا لا تَشْتَهي السّفُنُ

A man can never gain everything he hopes for,
The winds blow contrary to what ships wish.[103]

University Press, 2014).

[102] On the demise of Arab-Jewish culture and identity, see Snir, *Who Needs Arab-Jewish Identity*, especially, the conclusion 219-228.

[103] Abū al-Ṭayyib al-Mutanabbī, *Dīwān al-Mutanabbī* (The Poetry Collection of al-Mutanabbī) (Beirut: al-Maktaba al-Thaqāfiyya, n.d.), 472.

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Keywords: Arab-Jewish culture, Iraqi Jews, Shimon Ballas, Sammy Michael, Elī ʻAmīr

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Magda Teter, *Blood Libel: On the Trail of an Antisemitic Myth* (Cambridge-London: Harvard University Press, 2020), pp. xvi+540.

by *Diego Quaglioni*

The myth of a ritual murder perpetrated in hatred of the Christian faith is the subject of this vast, learned, well-informed inquiry, the work of a distinguished historian of Jewish culture and Jewish-Christian relations. Magda Teter is Professor of History and Shvidler Chair in Judaic Studies at Fordham University in New York, and the author of *Jews and Heretics in Catholic Poland: A Beleaguered Church in the Post-Reformation Era* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), as well as *Sinners on Trial: Jews and Sacrilege after the Reformation* (Cambridge-London: Harvard University Press, 2011).

In *Blood Libel* Professor Teter examines how the myth that the Jews murdered Christian children to use their blood in Passover rites emerged in medieval England, and spread all over Europe and especially in Eastern European countries. In particular, the book explores the role of the printed media in the widespread dissemination and surprising persistence of this unfounded belief over generations and centuries. The *Introduction* begins with the most recent episodes of anti-Semitic propaganda, in which the myth of ritual murder persistently re-emerges. The first chapter of the book, on the other hand, provides in about thirty pages an overview of the entire history of the myth, starting from the mid-twelfth century case of William of Norwich—reported only by monastic chronicles—up to the important and well-known case of Simon of Trent, in the second half of the fifteenth century ("From Medieval Tales to the Challenge in Trent," pp. 14-42).

This introduces the main topic of the book, as the case of "little Simon" is at the center of this extensive investigation. The case ignited a persecutory frenzy between the end of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth century: the story was disseminated throughout Europe and had consequences for Jews well beyond the continent. The case occurred in Trent and dates back to the Easter-Passover of 1475. Professor Teter's reconstruction is based on a complete re-examination of the published and partly still unpublished sources, represented primarily by the records of the trials against the Jews of Trent and the writings of

the papal legate in defense of the Jews,[1] as well as the extensive literature of the past decades.[2]

The State Archives and the Municipal Library of Trent host a large collection of documents, mostly from the ancient Archives of the Prince-Bishop,[3] related to the trials against the Jews of Trent, which lie at the origin of the widespread anti-Jewish cult of Little Simon. Smaller collections of documents are kept in the Vatican Secret Archives and Vatican Library, the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek in Vienna, the Tridentine Diocesan Museum and elsewhere. Taken as a whole, this extensive documentation is of enormous importance firstly

[1] Battista de' Giudici, *Apologia Iudaeorum. Invectiva contra Platinam. Propaganda antiebraica e polemiche di curia durante il pontificato di Sisto IV (1471-1484)*, ed. Diego Quaglioni (Rome: Roma nel Rinascimento, 1987); Anna Esposito and Diego Quaglioni, eds., *Processi contro gli Ebrei di Trento (1475-1478), 1: I processi del 1475* (Padua: Cedam, 1990), *2. I processi alle donne (1475-1476)* (Padua: Cedam, 2008); Fabrizio Leonardelli, Diego Quaglioni and Silvano Groff, "Simonino da Trento: un nuovo esemplare degli atti del processo agli ebrei del 1475 acquistato dalla Biblioteca (ms. BCT1-6342)," *Studi trentini di scienze storiche* 90, no.1 (2011): 261-272.

[2] See Ronnie Po-chia Hsia, *The Myth of Ritual Murder. Jews and Magic in Renaissance Germany* (New Haven-London: Yale University Press, 1988); Diego Quaglioni, "I processi contro gli Ebrei di Trento. 1475. Il procedimento inquisitorio," in *La parola all'accusato*, eds. Jean-Claude Maire Vigueur and Agostino Paravicini Bagliani (Palermo: Sellerio, 1991), 282-294; Willehad Paul Eckert, "Motivi superstiziosi nei processi agli ebrei di Trento," in *Il principe-vescovo Johannes Hinderbach (1465-1486) fra tardo Medioevo e Umanesimo*, eds. Iginio Rogger and Marco Bellabarba (Bologna: Edizioni Dehoniane, 1992), 383-394; Anna Esposito, "Il culto del 'beato' Simonino e la sua prima diffusione in Italia," Ibid., 429-443; Ronnie Po-chia Hsia, *Trent 1475. Stories from a Ritual Murder Trial* (New Haven-London: Yale University Press, 1992); Diego Quaglioni, "Il processo di Trento del 1475," in *L'Inquisizione e gli Ebrei in Italia*, ed. Michele Luzzati (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 1994), 19-34; Wolfgang Treue, *Der Trienter Judenprozeß. Voraussetzungen, Abläufe, Auswirkungen (1475-1588)* (Hannover: Hahn, 1996); Susanna Buttaroni and Stanisław Musiał, eds., *Ritualmord. Legenden in der europäischen Geschichte* (Vienna-Cologne-Weimar: Böhlau Verlag, 2003); Daniela Rando, *Dai margini la memoria. Johannes Hinderbach (1418-1486)* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2003); Tommaso Caliò, *La leggenda dell'ebreo assassino. Percorsi di un racconto antiebraico dal medioevo ad oggi* (Rome: Viella, 2007); Diego Quaglioni, " 'Christianis infesti.' Una mitologia giuridica dell'età intermedia: l'ebreo come 'nemico interno,' " in "I diritti dei nemici," ed. Pietro Costa, *Quaderni fiorentini per la storia del pensiero giuridico moderno* 38 (2009): 201-224; Emanuele Curzel, "Simone da Trento," in *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani*, Vol. 92 (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 2018), 731-733. For Little Simon iconography see Valentina Perini, *Il Simonino. Geografia di un culto*. Con saggi di Diego Quaglioni e Laura Dal Prà (Trent: Società di Studi Trentini di Scienze Storiche, 2012).

[3] Until the beginning of the nineteenth century Trent was an ecclesiastical principality of the German Empire.

for the history of the legal status of Jews in Christian society, secondly for the history of the myth of the ritual infanticide *in vilipendium Christianae fidei* ascribed to the Jews, and thirdly for the transformation of this myth into a long-lasting hagiographic model, as evidenced by the widespread distribution, even beyond the Alpine arc, of Little Simon's iconography.[4]

Compared to the literature of the past decades, *Blood Libel* adopts a partially new approach to the long and persistently re-emerging story of the myth of ritual murder. The author's intent is not to reexamine the sources in order to construct a narrative, but rather to provide a rigorous reconstruction of the facts, building its analysis both on an understanding of the specific aspects of the legal procedure in use in 1475 and on the awareness of the blatant violation of the very legal procedure, which was distorted in order to demonstrate, at any cost, the habitual use of Christian blood in Jewish rites. The book summarizes the best previous scholarship and furthers its findings, reaching conclusions of great importance not only at a historiographical level, but also with regard to the very topical issue of contemporary anti-Semitism. As framed by the book, the case of Little Simon acquires a central role that helps us understand the survival of anti-Jewish hatred and the causes of its resurgence.

> Viewed in a *longue durée* and cast expansively across time and place, this story reveals what is now understood as "confirmation bias" or "cognitive bias," when readers embrace sources they agree with and find reliable, while rejecting information that contradicts their views, even if that information is in fact accurate (Epilogue, p. 383).[5]

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[4] For a wider survey of sources and literature see the recently published catalog of the exhibition on "The invention of the guilty" at the Diocesan Museum of Trent. This source could not be known to Professor Teter, as it appeared in print at the same time her book was published: Domenica Primernano, ed., *L'invenzione del colpevole. Il "caso" di Simonino da Trento dalla propaganda alla storia* (Trent: Temi, 2019).

[5] Considering further the book's relationship to previous literature, it is worth noting that the author avoids mentioning the embarrassing episode of the publication, by one of Italy's major university presses, of Ariel Toaff's book, *Pasque di sangue* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2007), in which the author, examining the case of Simon of Trent, hypothesized that the myth that some Jews killed children to use their blood for ritual purposes may have been based on an actual "ritual of blood". This thesis was quickly taken up by far-right commentators and historians, triggering in turn a

Chapters two and three of the book ("The Death of Little Simon and the Trial of Jews in Trent," and "Echoes of Simon of Trent in European Culture," pp. 43-151) therefore form a substantial part of the volume. The rest of the book follows the dissemination of the anti-Jewish myth, as well as the reaction from Jewish communities up to the turn of the eighteenth century, including the role of Pope Benedict XIV and the important contemporary secret document in defense of the Jews, written by Cardinal Ganganelli (see chapters four-nine, pp. 152-344: "Blood Libels and Cultures of Knowledge in Early Modern Europe," "Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jews Respond to Blood Libels," " 'Who Should One Believe, the Rabbis or the Doctors of the Church?'," " 'Jews Are Deemed Innocent in the tribunals of Italy,' " "The 'Enlightenment' Pope Benedict XIV and the Blood Accusations, " and "Cardinal Ganganelli's Secret Report").

The trials against the Jews of Trento are in fact pivotal, in the transition to early modernity, for they fix the anti-Jewish stereotypes within a new paradigm, a very effective mixture of words and images, propagandistic texts and doctrinal writings that form a handover between modern anti-Semitism and ancient anti-Judaism. The anti-Jewish Middle Ages feeded on confused superstitions, which made it the era of the great incubation of antisemitism. The myth from which the Blood Libel ultimately originates, contains a story in which legendary or "folkloric" elements give life to a hagiographic and iconographic *topos* of exceptional resilience: that of the "*puer a Iudaeis necatus*," a composition of stereotypes and myths that together represent a form of narrative aggression. The myth was transmitted to the modern world as a tool of a "persecuting society:"[6] the Trent trials did not have the limited purpose of proving the guilt of the Jews of Trent, but the more radical and ambitious one of proving the universal guilt of all Jews and justifying their destruction.

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strong criticism of the author's willingness to give credit to confessions extorted under torture. The book was eventually withdrawn from circulation. Diego Quaglioni, "Vero e falso nelle carte processuali: la parola 'data' e la parola 'presa,' " in *Vero e falso. L'uso politico della storia*, eds. Marina Caffiero and Micaela Procaccia (Rome: Donzelli, 2008), 63-82.

[6] Robert I. Moore, T*he Formation of a Persecuting Society. Authority and Deviance in Western Europe (950-1250)* (Hoboken: John Wiley, 2006).

The trials originated from the disappearance of Little Simon, on the evening of March 23, 1475, Holy Thursday (when the Jews observed the enclosure prescribed by canon law). After the report of the child's disappearance, the rumor spread that the Jews had kidnapped him. A search did not yield any results, but on March 26, Easter Sunday, the Jews themselves reported to the prince-bishop of Trent and his judges the discovery of Simon's body in the basement of the house of the main member of their community, the lender Samuel of Nuremberg. The judges ordered the arrest of Samuel, his wife Brunetta and the other male Jews present at the Passover rites in the synagogue. The other women, who could not be accused of direct participation in the alleged ritual infanticide, were imprisoned at home together with their children. A controversial medical report led to the conclusion that the wounds were caused by purposefully inflicted torments. From the collection of testimonies, which took up most of the preliminary phase, the so-called "general inquisition", confused rumors emerged about similar past episodes, and a more general accusation was made by a converted Jew, detained in prison for common crimes, whose deposition, according to the norms and the doctrine of *ius commune*, should have been considered inadmissible, as it was not confirmed by any other witness and came from a prejudiced person.

Bishop Johannes Hinderbach gave credence to the rumors that Simon had been kidnapped by the Jews out of hatred of the Christian faith and in order to consume the victim's blood in the unleavened bread of the Jewish Passover, which in that year coincided with the Christian one. On the basis of this rumor, the Jews were subjected to tortures that went systematically far beyond the ordinary and ritual stretches of rope. From the outset the investigation was aimed at demonstrating a procedural truth that was already firmly present in the minds of the judges.

Between the June 21 and the 23, death sentences were carried out against Samuel of Nuremberg, his son Israel and the other Jews. Two of them had their sentence commuted to beheading because of their conversion to Christianity. The others were burned at the stake, including the eldest of them, Moses of Würzburg, who died of torture and was burned at the stake *post mortem*. All their assets were confiscated. Samuel's wife, Brunetta, to whom the inquisitors attributed a main

role in the alleged ritual infanticide, also presumably died in prison following the torture.

It took a month for the envoy of the Holy See to arrive in Trento with the mandate to investigate the facts and to bring a copy of the proceedings of the trials to Rome. The papal legate, Battista de' Giudici, a conscientious Dominican bishop and theologian, only with great difficulty managed to acquire the procedural documentation. He believed that he was facing a plot against the Jews and that the judges had falsified the records to cover up serious procedural defects and to conceal an unjust sentence. He tried in vain to obtain the liberation of the children and women, who were manifestly innocent. Finally, he returned to Rome without having obtained anything, at the same moment in which the trials against the Jewish women resumed. In Rome, Pope Sixtus IV set up a commission of cardinals to judge the legality of the trials.

On November 3, 1475, the first two women were interrogated for the first time in the presence of the instruments of torture. Five days earlier the papal legate had sent a mandate to suspend the trials, ordering under penalty of excommunication to free the women and children. In all the interrogations of the women, the use of torture, albeit limited to the rope and without any recourse to the atrocities witnessed in the records of the main defendants, was systematically employed to obtain substantially identical depositions, which were immediately ratified for fear of new tortures. Thus the stake was ready for the Jewish women, guilty of confessing acts in contempt of the corpse of the child-martyr, acts made public and disseminated by the images that accompanied the Story of Simon, which appeared in print in September 1475 coinciding with the arrival of the apostolic legate. The bishop's book of accounts, preserved today in the Municipal Library of Trento, attests, in clear contempt for apostolic mandates, that six wagons of wood were purchased on the September 8, 1476 to burn the women at the stake ("*pro comburendis Iudeabus que postea conducte fuerunt ad castrum quia baptizate.*")[7] The forced baptism of the women and children ended the entire trial. On January

[7] Trent, Municipal Library, Ms. 335, c. 42r. See Diego Quaglioni, "Rituali della grazia a Trento nel 1477," in *Grazia e giustizia. Figure della clemenza fra tardo medioevo ed età contemporanea,* eds. Karl Härter and Cecilia Nubola (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2011), 127-145.

12 and 19, 1477, Anna, Bella and Sara, exorcised and catechized, received baptism by making full public confession of their crimes and sins and promising to remain in the new faith, under threat of death penalty for the crime of apostasy, and assuming the names of Elizabeth, Susanna and Clara respectively. Nothing is known about another woman, Bona, except that a robe was purchased for her in view of the baptism, which she would have received with the name of Justine.

The conclusion of the judicial affair was sealed in 1478 by the decision of the commission of cardinals established by Sixtus IV, which recognized the legality of the procedure applied by the judges of Trento, declaring that the trials had taken place fairly, "*rite et recte*." The solution offered to the cardinals was provided by two legal opinions drafted by Giovanni Francesco Pavini, judge of the Roman Rota and a former colleague of the bishop of Trento, while both were studying canon law in Padua. He was also an active promoter, in those same years, of the first legal typography in Rome. The repercussions were immediate and lasting, with the proliferation of numerous trials for ritual murder, in Italy and especially in Germany, where a strong echo of the case of Trent could still be read in Luther's book of 1543, *Von den Jüden und jren Lügen*.

In the words of the author: "The trial at Trent was a turning point. Not only did Bishop Hinderbach deploy sophisticated multimedia propaganda campaign in the aftermath of the death of the toddler Simon in March 1475, exploiting the new print technology to disseminate the story far and wide, but he also turned to earlier stories and freshly printed books to justify his persecution of Jews and the veneration of Simon as *beatus*" ("Epilogue. The Trail Continues," pp. 377-378). It is impossible not to share Professor Teter's bitter conclusion: the long memory trail, the ambiguous responses by Church officials, and the papal recognition of Simon of Trent and other alleged "martyrs" in the early modern period "have made it difficult to eradicate this bloody Christian tale." And this is why former shrines such as that of Simon of Trent

> despite their abolition in the second half of the twentieth century, persist unofficially, attracting anti-Semitic groups and individuals [...]. This long story of the persistence of anti-Jewish blood libels despite arguments to

> the contrary is dispiriting [...]. With so many sources repeatedly telling the same deleterious stories about Jews, it is no wonder that belief in them has persisted. These stories, scattered across printed chronicles, not only introduced the image of "murderous" and dangerous Jews and reinforced the belief in blood accusations but also [...] reflected the same impulses that incited anti-Jewish violence.

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Magda Teter, *Blood Libel: On the Trail of an Antisemitic Myth* (Cambridge-London: Harvard University Press, 2020), pp. xvi+540.

by *Kenneth Stow*

When Quest approached me and asked to do an extended review of the Teter book, I was in a quandary. I had already agreed to review the book for the *Journal of Modern History*. Nonetheless, because I was limited by JMH to 1,000 words, and the audience for Quest is likely different from that of JMH, after consultation with its editorial board, I accepted Quest's invitation. At the same time, I feel it appropriate to open this lengthy examination of Teter's signal contribution with a large section of what will appear in the JMH. I do so to ensure that it not be said that I reviewed the book with two voices. I have much to say that is positive. Where I would like to expand is in examining the mode of analysis of a most extraordinary cache of information, much of which, we did not previously know. Hence:

> This book is unique, the product of exhaustive foraging in archives from Poland, to Rome, to Dublin that yielded documentation in Latin, Italian, German, Polish, Yiddish, and more. Few are the scholars who would, could, undertake a similar endeavor, whose result is a detective-like reconstruction of blood libel accusations. The list of manuscript and primary sources is so lengthy that secondary bibliography had to be held back for presentation separately online.
>
> The book is structured as a series of intensively argued micro-histories, whose origins lie in early modern Poland, Italy, and the South Tyrol, this last being the most famous of all, that of Simonino of Trent in 1475. Published Latin texts of this episode, which ended in thirty Jewish men being executed, have been available for some time, including the trial-records. But never have we been led through them step by step. An introductory chapter examines medieval libels, from William of Norwich, to Robert of Pontoise, to the Good Werner. Subsequent chapters investigate novelly, and penetratingly, how literary responses to the Trent

affair shaped attitudes both North and South of the Alps. Christian Hebraists in Italy and elsewhere were skeptical, churchmen in Poland far more receptive. It was humanists, however, who were prime movers in the case of Simonino, a point that Teter joins others in emphasizing. Also discussed are the somewhat analytic responses of Yosef haCohen, Shlomo ibn Verga, and Menasseh ben Israel. Yiddish religious poetry, perhaps because it was rooted so far in the North and East (Poland), reinvigorated the medieval Crusade tales of martyrdom, urging the accused to accept death rather than yield under torture and convert.

In Poland, as much of the second half of the book reveals, multiple accusations almost by default ended in horrid executions. By contrast, in Italy, in 1705, proper legal investigation led, albeit after more than a year, to defendants being freed; this is one of the most illuminating portions of the book, at least with respect to my own direct interests. Amazingly, Teter ranged as far afield as the archive of Trinity College Dublin to obtain the material, and she notably emphasizes the role played by Christian lawyers in assisting the famed Tranquillo Corcos in pressing his case. At the same time, in 1755, Pope Benedict XIV reaffirmed the cult of Simonino, first approved by Sixtus V, and sanctioned that of Simonino's rough contemporary, Andreas of Rinn, creating a fait accomplit that Cardinal Ganganelli, the future Clement XIV, had dutifully to acknowledge in his unpublished-in-its-day 1758 tract refuting libels, composed in response to a Polish Jewish request.

The interpretative theme of the book is that high medieval popes like Innocent IV, in 1247, spoke out forcefully against the libel. But from the time of Sixtus IV (Trent), matters deteriorated, especially in Poland, whose church hierarchy, mostly ignorant of Judaism and Jewish practice, freely accepted that Jews killed Christian children to use their blood in Passover rituals despite Innocent IV's insistence that Jews abhor blood absolutely. Even Sixtus IV, who, it is said, "remained firmly within the medieval tradition," (p. 84) eventually approved the legitimacy of the Trentine trial record, (p. 83) limiting himself to an oblique warning against

> the accusation's repetition, which, however, was indirectly dismissed in *Beatus Andreas*, of 1755, where Benedict XIV hints at abandoning physical protection. Thus, even in Rome, where Jews were protected by what Teter refers to as *buon governo*, "In the long run, the records would affirm the validity of the cult of Simon, undermining the centuries of protection of Jews" (p. 63).

Thus the review, whose brevity, nevertheless, did not afford me the needed space to delve into the book's analytic direction. What, in its particulars, I would like to ask does it signify to point to a deteriorating papal defense? The concept of Jewish protection by the popes was not monolithic. To explain, Teter refers on many occasions to the idea that Jews were accused of acting in "*odium fidei*," which is translated "hatred" of the faith. Elisheva Carlebach's meticulous study of the accusations related to the death, in 1694, of Shimon Abeles, too, emphasizes that Abeles was killed "*in odium fidei*."[1] Yet, more than as hatred, if at all, *odium* is properly translated as "in contempt of" or "to denigrate" the faith. *Odium*, moreover, is regularly paired with a second term, "*favor fidei*," meaning "to the glory, enhancement, or benefit of the faith." Hence, attack (denigration) is invariably, whether explicit or by implication, countered by a hopes for triumph.

This pairing—as I have examined it in studies shared with our author—also goes back to at least the high Middle Ages.[2] Its use was anything but cavalier. To wit,

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[1] Elisheva Carlebach, *The Death of Shimon Abeles: Jewish Christian Tension in Seventeenth Century Prague* (New York: Center for Jewish Studies, 2001).

[2] The acknowledgements to the books *Jewish Dogs* and *Anna and Tranquillo*, to be cited in full in this note, thank Magda for her good advice. In addition, I note a paper and a book that are devoted to the subject of *odium vs. favor fidei*, as well as my study of Sixtus IV at the time of the Simon of Trent blood libel. Leo XIII in the late nineteenth century also falls within my ken. These persons and issues are the fulcra of Teter's analysis. I have written at length, too, about the letters that accompany the incident at Blois, which is central to her opening chapter, and, finally, on the Good Werner. See Kenneth Stow, "Favor et Odium Fidei: Conversion invitis parentibus in Historical Perspective," *Archivio italiano per la storia della pietà,* ed. Gabriella Zarri, 25 (2012): 55-86; Id., *Jewish Dogs, An Image and Its Interpreters: Continuity in the Jewish-Catholic Encounter* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006); Id., *Anna and Tranquillo: Catholic Anxiety and Jewish Protest in the Age of Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016); Id., "The Cruel Jewish Father: From Miracle to Murder," in *Studies in Medieval Jewish Intellectual and Social History: Festschrift in Honor of Robert Chazan,* eds. David Engel, Lawrence H. Schiffman and

Gratian (1140): *Decretum, de poenitentia*, *Dist. 1, q. 18, d. p. c.*, speaking of penalties invoked *favore religionis et fidei*, and in *odio sicariorum*. Commonly, *favor fidei* was invoked to argue why potential clashes between ecclesiastical and state/lay law should be decided to the advantage of the former. *Favor fidei* features again in decisions of the most distinguished jurists over the centuries to tip the scales—to borrow a term from Benedict XIV—in favor of a problematic, not patently illegal, baptism; it is misleading to say *favor* was invoked "to justify situations that according to existing laws appeared illegal" (p. 341). In terms of establishing priorities for governance, therefore, the pairing was fundamental. It also highlighted the danger *odium* posed. Thus the Torinese jurist Giuseppe Sessa, who composed a full tract on Jews in law in 1716, resolved all questions he raised with respect to baptism and whether it should be administered, including by removing children from their parents, by asking whether refraining from removing the children generated contempt for the faith (*odium*), which, without fail, was opposed to the "favor of the faith" that would be baptism's direct product.[3]

Nowhere, however, is the pairing of *odium* and *favor* clearer than in the case of the Good Werner. Werner, as a victim of *odium*, is said to suffer both *pro Christi* and *propter Christi*, as well as *loco Christi*, and, as such, he is transfigured, to replicate the glory of the Eucharist in its manifestations as both the *corpus verum* and the wider *Corpus Christi* that is the *societas fidei.* In short, *favor* wars against and vanquishes *odium*. This kind of Eucharistic transformation, which Robert Stacey, followed by Lisa Lampert, has also espied,[4] is central to the surviving narrative of Werner (used by the Bollandists), which dates to 1427, and which was

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Elliot R. Wolfson (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 245-278; Id., *Levi's Vindication: The 1007 Anonymous Revisited,* Revised version of the original 1984 book (Cincinnati-Pittsburgh: Hebrew Union College Press, 2017); Id., "Papal Mendicants or Mendicant Popes: Continuity and Change in Papal policies toward the Jews at the end of the Fifteenth Century," in *Friars and Jews in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, ed. Steven McMichael (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 255-273.

[3] Giuseppe Sessa, *Tractatus de Judaeis* (Turin: Typis Ioannis Francisci Mairesse & Ioannis Radix, 1716).

[4] Robert Stacey, "From Ritual Crucifixion to Host Desecration: Jews and the Body of Christ," *Jewish History* 12, no. 1 (1998): 11-28; Lisa Lampert, "The Once and Future Jews: The Croxton Play of the Sacrament. Little Robert of Bury and Jewish Memory," *Jewish History* 15, no. 3 (2001): 235-255.

created to bolster pleas to have Werner beatified. It predates by more than a half century the early reports about Simon of Trent and any to follow, such as that by Michelangelo Mariani, whose *Il glorioso infant S. Simone* (1668), studied illuminatingly by Teter, equates Simonino with Christ. The identification of ritual murder victims with the Eucharist had become dominant.

When we read again and again that the Jews murdered a child *in odium fidei*, we must imagine recipients of this news, without further prompting, seeing the event as a Eucharistic assault. Eucharistic identification also suggests that blood and host libels had merged, which is illustrated by the claim of the late twelfth century Guillaume Le Breton, who wrote that "every year the Jews communed, *communicabant*, with heart of a Christian lad." This description, moreover, was not confined to Le Breton.[5] It was widely diffused. It appears verbatim in *Lachrymabilem*, the 1247 bull of Innocent IV, which denies this claim, and which Teter recalls many times. I should add that the Eucharistic character of the ritual murder victim is stressed by Miri Rubin in her important *Gentile Tales*.[6]

Ritual murder (whether as murder alone or enhanced with the use of blood in Jewish ritual) is also central to the events at Blois in 1171, in particular, in the letters attached to the accounts of this fearful episode. Teter recognizes this, but she treats these letters positivistically, viewing them as a declaration that Jews should seek refuge in the king. A full semester spent painstakingly analyzing every syllable of these letters with advanced graduate students, which total but a few hundred words—the first one of which has nothing to do with Blois, but with Loche, which was ruled by the English, not the French King—led to the conclusion that they are an intentional parody which depicts a king saying he wishes to honor the Jews, when, to the contrary (the text's likely model is the nefarious Philip II Augustus), he is spitting in their face, as kings habitually did. This conclusion also applies to King Joao III of Portugal, who figures in ibn Verga's report of the Lisbon Massacre of 1506. Beginning with Yerushalmi's analysis, Jaime, as ibn Verga portrays him, has been considered to exemplify the legend of the good king in whom Jews might

[5] Stow, *Jewish Dogs*.

[6] Miri Rubin, *Gentile Tales*: *The Narrative Assault on Late Medieval Jews* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

trust. Surely, ibn Verga himself knew better—he certainly should have—so that it might be a good idea to view ibn Verga less as a modern historian or, alternately, as a narrator of fictions and more as a writer of burlesques. In the same vein, it is perhaps wishful on Teter's part (p. 365) to suggest that Jews in Poland who confessed to ritual murder and then converted under torture were following the advice of Yiddish poems that praised martyrdom, when, more likely, at least as I see it, these poems were holding up what even their authors knew to be an exalted ideal.

It is again the king, together with a Duke (much like the Jews' nemesis at Blois, the Count of Champagne), who is the villain in *The Terrible Events of the Year 1007*, a text composed most likely between 1236 and 1242. By then, patterns of royal behavior, especially in England and France, were evident to all, and as put by Meir ben Simeon's *Milhemet Mitzvah*, it was unquestionably to the pope that Jews had to turn for redress.[7] Teter herself rightly stresses papal protection. Yet even that protection must be contextualized within the bounds of theology, and, even more, canon law. Thus the 1007 author notes the need to bow before papal claims to censure and censor Jewish (rabbinic) writings in exchange for protection. Jews, wrote Pope Innocent III, in a codicil to his issue of the bull *Sicut iudaeis non*, a piece of which bull the 1007 cites, will enjoy protection as long as they do not machinate against Christianity.[8] This codicil, when read literally, was perhaps potentially threatening enough to persuade the Dominican Raymond of Peñaforte to eliminate it from the final text of the bull that entered the binding *Decretales*. Yet where did this codicil originate? For years, I thought it was taken from the so-called Pact of Omar, similar to *Sicut iudaeis* in many ways, which regulated Jewish life under Islam (in theory). In fact, both the Pact and *Sicut iudaeis* likely are drawing on the same source, *Lex nullus* in the Justinianic Code, which its two inheritors so closely emulate, stating:

> No Jew who is innocent shall be oppressed, nor shall any person of any creed cause him to be exposed to insult; nor shall their synagogues or

[7] Stow, L*evi's Vindication.*

[8] It is not clear why Teter writes *Decretalium* two times on p. 203, although otherwise correctly *Decretales*, pp. 24 and 101.

> habitations be burned; nor shall they be maliciously injured without reason; for when any one of them is implicated in crime, the authority of the judges and the protection afforded by the public law has been established to preclude anyone from taking vengeance for himself. But, as We desire that provision be made for the personal safety of the Jews, so We think that notice ought to be given to prevent them from becoming arrogant, and, elated by their security, rashly commit some act against the Christian religion, by way of revenge (*Code* 1,9,13).

Both texts, *Sicut iudaeis* and the Pact of Omar (as we have it), thus fit like a hand in *lex nullus*'s glove; the only clause missing is that of *Sicut iudaeis* which inveighs against forced baptism, although the word "oppressed" in *nullus* may be understood in that sense. Why Innocent made the addition, I am not sure; he was, after all, the first pope (the first ecclesiastical authority, in fact) directly to cite Augustine on Psalm 59:12, which he did, I believe, because he saw the Jews of his day needed extra protection, as the canons and theology obligated him to afford (not an obligation imposed by any so-called, and, to be blunt, inexistent Augustinian theory).[9] Read positively, and in the light of *lex nullus*, rather than threateningly, as Peñaforte may have feared, the clause reminds readers or hearers that repressing Jews requires a justification, for example, Jewish "arrogance."

Protection, in other words, came embedded within a shell, whose two halves were adherence to canonical regulation in exchange for papal defense, two halves, moreover, that were subject to constant modification, yet, and this is critical, with neither one crushing the other. It was no accident that in 1758, a moment, as we shall see, when harboring Jews even in Rome was questioned, the Judge of the Roman Rota Lucio Ferraris justified the prohibition on expelling Jews by pointing to the bull *Etsi iudaeos*. This was the harshest among many letters Innocent III issued, censuring Jewish behavior, yet which still indicated that the Church accepts Jews out of "Caritas," a term that in the medieval lexicon meant not "charity," but

[9] I have challenged the existence of such a theory elsewhere, and in the works cited above, but suffice it to say that if it really existed in Augustine, nobody seems to have paid attention to it until Innocent III; nobody. It was theology and its realization in the canons that determined the Church's stance always.

fundamental justice. Nor was Lucio Ferrari alone in citing this bull for just this reason. "Protection," therefore, was a protean concept, whose dimensions might be revised on the slightest pretext.

However, as also explained by Lucio Ferrari, revision had a limit, about which, Sixtus IV was certainly aware when he revived Innocent's novel clause in his decisive bull of 1478, containing his final opinion about the trial of Simon of Trent (it is inexplicable why the bull attributes the clause to the "General [Fourth Lateran] Council). This bull, writes Teter, confirms the validity of the trial. Yet the wording is subtle. As pointed out already by the early twentieth century Jesuit and Bollandist Francois van Ortroy, and as I myself have observed, the bull states clearly that the trial was approved by a commission of cardinals, pointedly *not* by the pope himself.[10] That the notary of the papal chancery chose—was instructed—to make this careful distinction speaks loudly. What Sixtus surely meant was that if Jews misbehave, they may be punished. But, by implication, since he, Sixtus, harbored doubts, his cardinals approval of the trial record violated his trust. Moreover, although it was too late to do anything to help the Jews of Trent, judicially murdered three years earlier, the pope was announcing that he would not suffer a repetition of events. Not because Sixtus IV was being "benevolent." On other occasions, this same Sixtus had no compunction about berating what he called Jewish blasphemy.[11] What must guide us, then, in analyzing papal actions is not a yes-or-no question of papal protection, but how individual popes interpreted their legal (canonical) obligations. Unlike his cardinals who saw in the Simon affair the epitome of Jewish threats to the well-being of Christian society, to Eucharistic integrity, and to the overall *favor* of the Church—Jewish *odium*, in technical terms—Sixtus saw a miscarriage of justice.

Indicative of limits on papal action is the murky charge of ritual murder made in Rome in the early 1550s, which never got traction, especially when it outed that the

[10] See again Stow, "Papal Mendicants or Mendicant Popes," and Id. *Jewish Dogs* on van Ortroy. Teter cites in her notes a preliminary version of "Papal Mendicants or Mendicant Popes," presented at a meeting of the Early Modern Workshop she founded and has continued to shepherd.
[11] Ibid.

culprit was the victim's father (or stepfather). Nor during the critical late sixteenth century papacies of Paul IV and Sixtus V do we again hear of a ritual murder accusation. The latter of these two popes did agree to what Sixtus IV rejected in 1475, namely, to beatify Simon of Trent. Nonetheless, for all that the Jews—in particular, the ones under direct papal rule, especially, in Rome—were now placed in a ghetto, the purpose was not to "harass" Jews to convert, as Teter suggests (p. 299). It was, rather, to harness strict legal enforcement and to employ it as a tool to achieve what Gregory the Great called "pious lashes," a term the Camaldulese monks Quirini and Giustiniani had reframed in 1513, discussing the means of seeking out Jewish conversion.[12] Toward this end, in 1558, Marquardus de Susannis composed his systematic legal tract the *De Iudaeis et Aliis Infidelibus*, whose constant refrain is that meticulous application of the law, not wanton violation, will persuade the Jews that they have rightly been consigned to "perpetual servitude" (meaning to submission to canonical restriction, not to real servitude) and lead them to convert. This, at least, was the intention, even if, truth be told, the greatest number of conversions occurred when the law became a cudgel: for instance, following the closing of Jewish banks in 1682 and, apparently, again in 1731, when Jewish books were once more sequestered and there was a threat to convert Rome's *Cinque scuole* into one. The rules, however, required restraint. One could devise means to make Jewish life uncomfortable, even extremely so, but the use of outright force for whatever reason—which the canons prohibited—was out of the question.

The role played in establishing policy toward the Jews by their long Roman sojourn, beginning in Antiquity, must also be considered. Paradoxically, Jews were among the most permanent fixtures of the Roman population. Their banishment after such a "*longue durée*" had to have been inconceivable. The route to achieving religious and social uniformity in the city, therefore, followed not the path of banishment, as in England, France, and Spain. Rather, as I have written

[12] Kenneth Stow, *Catholic Thought and Papal Jewry Policy, 1555-1593* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1977), 217-220, deals with this tract extensively.

elsewhere, it chose the way of "expulsion *into* the ghetto" where conversionary pressure could efficiently be brought to bear.[13]

Poland was different, unique. There, in the 1550s, uncovering the truth would have been irrelevant. Teter's incredibly detailed reconstructions demonstrate forcefully that the fomenters were the clergy, whose anxiety over approaching modernity was enormous. The Polish clergy was also sufficiently powerful to constrain the papal curia to tread gingerly, the best testimony being the shelving (the non-publication) of Cardinal Ganganelli's (Clement XIV) tract, which challenged the blood accusation itself. In Poland, moreover, legally, Jews depended for their existence on charters and special privileges. In Rome, the Jews' social presence was rooted—even more than in theology and, as just suggested, demographic inertia—in their status as cives within *ius commune*, the regnant system of law. Teter prefers to describe Roman Jews as living under what Irene Fosi calls *buon governo*. But Fosi herself is careful to suggest that *buon governo* (even though there was a Congregation of *Buon Governo*) was more a broad concept of governing than subject to rigorous definition. Rigorous definition was *ius commune*'s most outstanding characteristic, violations of which, moreover—for those there certainly were—could be identified and corrected. More particularly, about the Jews' status as *cives* living under *ius commune*, the overwhelming majority of jurists concurred, including, notably, G. B. de Luca, perhaps the most prominent of his ilk.

By law and by right, Jews enjoyed all civic privileges and were unchallenged Roman residents. Their presence in the city was neither contingent on special dispensations nor subject to instant cancellation, as it was in places like Poland, which seems to have sunk deep into the worst of governmental medievalism just as, elsewhere, modernity marched forward. If, in Rome, the popes mostly honored legal obligations, by contrast, Polish Jewry's perilously opaque legal status (alongside their demographic, economic, and even political expansion) was bound to facilitate unrestrained zealotry. Marring Rome's "civil paradise," however, was

[13] See Kenneth Stow, *Theater of Acculturation: The Roman Ghetto in the Sixteenth Century* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001). Italian trans.: Id., *Il ghetto di Roma nel Cinquecento. Storia di una acculturazione,* ed. Stefania Sottile (Rome: Viella, 2014).

the regime of heavy canonical restriction. As de Luca himself, and so many others, specified: in matters governed by religion, Jews were distinct, subject to restraints that were enormous and to rules that stayed in force as long as the papal confessional state existed. At the same time, and despite their steady increase, canonical limitation never deteriorated into the judicial mayhem that sanctioned the enormities committed in Poland.

What did change was a growing conviction, among even the popes themselves, that the Jews committed ritual murder. As Teter observes, this movement is strikingly exemplified by Benedict XIV. Yet even Benedict had to hold back, aware that he could not wantonly flout the law. Benedict was not, as he has been accused, a trickster, guilty of resort to *escamotages*.[14] His bull *Postremo mense* of 1751 is a classic of cementing together bits of the old in order to create the new.[15] Just as Innocent III based his enhancement of *Sicut iudaeis* on the Roman law *lex nullus*. so the scholarly Benedict XIV knew that in establishing a policy allowing relatives other than parents, including cognates (in-laws), to "offer" children to the Church for baptism, he had license to violate neither the canons nor *ius commune*. He could legitimately go no further than to create his strategy by assembling into one whole centuries of evolving canonical interpretations. When he stretched a point by likening the abovementioned *favor fidei* to "placing a weight on the scales" in moments when civil and canonical privilege metaphorically squared off, the jurist Carlo Luti, who more than once represented Jews in court, called this papal "arrogance." [16]

At the same time, Benedict never considered proposing the seizure of any and all Jewish children for baptism on the grounds like those suggested by the jurist G. B. Riganti that Jews were "the real slaves" of the pope or at least draftable like soldiers, with whom a sovereign might do as he pleased.[17] There was also context. *Postremo mense*'s direct stimulus was a request for clarification by the Jewish Community

[14] See the review of Marina Caffiero, *Forced Baptisms*, by Kenneth Stow, *Journal of Religion* 93, no.2 (2013): 239-242.
[15] Stow, "*Favor et Odium*."
[16] Stow, *Anna and Tranquillo.*
[17] Ibid.*,* 151-152 on Ulrich Zasius and G. B. Riganti.

itself, fed up with Christians, especially neophytes, who entered the ghetto and clandestinely baptized Jewish infants and small children. It was no accident that however bitter was the result—and despite the many times they had been forced to present wives and children of converts who had been "offered" to the *Catecumeni*—Rome's Jewish leaders did not sense that they had been thrown into freefall. To the contrary, they themselves appealed more than once to this bull to protest ostensible violations.

Why, then, in *A quo primum* of 1751, did Benedict verge on crossing even his own red lines? It was not because of a specific charge of ritual murder. Rather, he saw (always sinful) Jewish lending corrupting Polish clergy; it matters little that the original lenders were the clergy themselves, whose money the Jews lent out in return, and on which they eventually paid the bishops interest. The Jews were threatening the Church—and in this terrible mid-eighteenth century moment, when the Church was reeling from assaults by secular powers on time honored ecclesiastical prerogatives, most particular, the power over marriage, the danger was potentially far more lethal than the theological one once posed of Luther. And, here, Benedict broke down, invoking the name of the monk Rudolph, whom St. Bernard had dressed down in 1146; indeed, Teter agrees with what I have written previously that this was a moment of true rupture with the past. To be sure, Benedict went no further than to intimate: what, he said, would Rudolph (who had preached attacking Jews) think now. Still, one gets the feeling the flood gates were about to break, to be further unhinged by Pius VI, in 1776, who virtually threatened to bring a plague of sickness on the ghetto by placing restrictions on the Jews' water supply, their access to wet nurses, laundrywomen, and the collection of refuse. He also allowed an unprecedented "offering" by an uncle. It was in this deteriorating atmosphere that responding to a petition, Benedict confirmed—note: he did not initiate—the cults of both Simonino and Andreas of Rinn.

In one matter, however, Benedict may have truly violated the law, by allowing pregnant women whose fetuses had been offered to the Church to be seized and held in the *Casa dei catecumeni* until they gave birth, whence the newborn was immediately baptized. The pope was reacting to the not uncommon belief that a

prospective Jewish mother whose fetus had been "offered" would abort, or she would kill her newborn; solace was taken from dipping once more into legend and considering the child, like Herod's Innocents, to have been "baptized in utero by blood." The image of the ritual murder victim as Eucharistic had again come to the fore; Benedict's motivation extended well beyond "hatred." He was also clearly conjuring up a transposed reenactment of the story of the Jew of Bourges, the very drama of a father who throws his son into a furnace rather than see him become a Christian, to be saved and transfigured by the Virgin, that undergirds the story of Shimon Abeles. The protection of Jews, more, the safeguarding of their legal rights had truly been made subservient to fears about ritual murder. Moreover, as in 1478, here, too, we must look for additional protagonists. Pope Benedict was not alone. Also promoting ritual murder fantasies at about this time was Francesco Rovira-Bonet, head of the *Casa dei catecumeni* from 1760-1798 and the author of, yes, a life of Simon of Trent, one so persuasively written, for that matter, that Ariel Toaff was able to coopt and present it as the fruits of his, Ariel's, own research in the closing chapter of the scurrilous[18] *Passover of Blood*.[19]

The early modern deterioration in papal willingness to maintain the balance of privilege and limitation with respect to Jews, alongside the ever greater heed being paid to ritual murder libels, was progressing hand in hand with mounting anxiety about the future of the Church. We should not be surprised that the height of ecclesiastical acceptance of the libel came in the wake of the sudden abolition of the Papal State in 1870. Nor should there be surprise that the beat of the accusatory drum sounded loudest in the "integralist"—and papally supervised—Jesuit periodical *La Civiltà Cattolica*. The orchestrator was Cardinal Merry del Val, who led the successful struggle blocking Pope Leo XIII from republishing Innocent IV's *Lachrymabilem* in 1899. A few years later, the same del Val demanded that the review of G. Divina's 1902 *Storia del beato Simone* composed by the "modernist" Francois van Ortroy, the very Jesuit and Bollandist who correctly distinguished papal reservation from the cardinals' assertiveness in approving the trial in Trent, be censored. Van Ortroy had denounced the book as "inanity." In

[18] Stow, *Anna and Tranquillo*, 125-127.

[19] Kenneth Stow, "A Book full of Sound and Fury," *Storicamente* 3, no. 22 (2007). Accessed May 16, 2021. doi: 10.12977/stor547.

the same vein, in 1913, del Val had to admit the authenticity of both Innocent IV's *Lachrymabilem* and the tract of Cardinal Ganganelli (Clement XIV), trapped, as del Val was, by the publication, in 1900, of both texts by that pioneer student of papal Jewish relations Moritz Stern, in a book which, as Teter intimates, Rothschild himself may have possessed.[20] Disingenuously, however, del Val—about whose response Teter remarks that "though not an explicit letter defending the Jews, Cardinal del Val's short response was more than what Polish Jews ever obtained" (p. 382)—refused to go further. He shirked to reaffirm the denunciations these works contained, which is surely what Rothschild desired.

The matter of papal dealings with the Jews must, therefore, be approached as one of enormous shading. Deterioration there was, but the path downward was flush with deviations and sharp turns. If we neglect this topography, we must remain mystified as to why Jews were always certain that when they turned to the pope and asked for help, an answer would be forthcoming, as two-sided as that answer might be. We saw this with regard to even Benedict XIV. By start of the twentieth century, this expectation had been reduced to almost nil. With Pius XII, who refused to speak out at the moment of greatest trial, the papacy finally gave way. One suspects that the enormous rancor with this pope has its origins in knowing he turned his back on centuries-old Jewish expectations. Yet, and this is my main hesitation with respect to Teter's marvelous book, we would struggle to fathom this pope's decision, and perhaps fail to do so, were we to see the papal-Jewish past only in terms of reactions based purely on *odium* understood as "hatred" and on protection viewed as essentially one-dimensional.

We are better served by creating a perspective that focuses on fears of denigration as they led to steps to preserve Eucharistic—*read: the Church's*—integrity and that of the "body of the faithful," the *societas fidei*. Regardless of how many Jews Pius XII physically saved, especially in Rome (even here there has been debate), surely it was his fear for the Church—his no doubt misplaced anxiety, encouraged by some of those in his closest circles, to shield a vulnerable ecclesiastical body—that prompted him to hold his tongue when his word would have brought hope, and

[20] Moritz Stern, *Die Päpstlichen Bullen Über Die Blutbeschuldigung* (Munich: August Schupp, 1900).

perhaps more. Yet if we consider papal policies toward Jews as unarticulated, varying only in the angle of their descent, we shall not perceive this sequence. What, instead, we should be measuring is the papal ability—or (un)willingness—to navigate within a resilient theological and legal-canonical framework—as that framework, when it came to the Jews, increasingly succumbed to a burgeoningly vicious attack.

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Jonathan Adams and Cordelia Heß, eds., *Antisemitism in the North: History and State of Research* (Berlin-Boston: De Gruyter, 2020), pp. 302.

by *Håkon Harket*

From Anti-Semitism without Jews to Anti-Semitism without Anti-Semites

The book-cover of *Antisemitism in the North* harbors a story. It shows the photo of a sprinter in a Makkabi jersey crossing the finish line first at the Helsinki Olympic Stadium on June 21, 1938. Abraham Tokazier is ahead of the rest, but the Jewish athlete is ranked fourth and deprived of any medal. Complaints from the Makkabi sports Club and the publication next day in *Helsingin Sanomat* of the photo-finish do nothing to correct the falsification of the result, and for years to come this case remained both a scandal and an exception in the public eye: not only the most famous, but also the sole publicly known example of anti-Semitism in Finland—a country that due to unfortunate circumstances was forced to navigate between Schylla and Charybdis, and spent the years 1941-1944 as comrades-in-arms with Nazi-Germany, before the legendary Commander in chief and Head of State Carl Gustav Mannerheim reached an agreement with the Soviets and turned against Germany in the endgame of the war.

The history of Finland during the war differs dramatically from that of the other Nordic countries: Sweden stayed neutral, Denmark accepted a so-called peaceful occupation, the Norwegian king famously turned down any offer of submission. There was however no correspondence between the will to resist the occupation and the protection offered to the Jewish population. The cold facts suggest the opposite: The prime victims of the Nazi aggression were better served by the compliant protection offered by the pragmatic Danes than the heroic resistance of the principled Norwegians, an outcome maybe necessitated by the coup d'état by Quisling in April 1940. To put it simply: Many Norwegian Jews were deported in November 1942, most Danish Jews were saved in October 1943. Again, Finland is a different story: Despite the brotherhood in arms, or perhaps because of it, none

of the Jewish citizens of Finland were handed over to Germany as requested by Himmler.

On the other hand, the protection of the Jews of Finland did not extend to a group of Austrian refugees and Soviet prisoners of war, and Sweden, the haven for Jewish refugees from Norway, Denmark and Finland, recently had to reconcile with its profitable dealings with Nazi-Germany. Likewise, Danish fishermen, hailed for their heroic rescue of the Jewish population, profited nicely from the shipping of countrymen across the Sound, and in Norway it is now hotly disputed whether anti-Jewish sentiments among the leaders of the Resistance movement can help explain why such a large proportion of the Jewish population were abandoned to be arrested, deported and murdered.

It has then become increasingly complicated to stick to the established national narratives regarding the Jews of the North. The reasons are highlighted in this fine compendium of texts presenting the state of research in the whole Nordic region, including Iceland, Greenland and the Faroe Islands.

Antisemitism in the North: History and state of research is the first volume in a series on religious minorities in the North, published by De Gruyter, edited by Jonathan Adams (Gothenburg) and Cordelia Heß (Greifswald) and funded by the Archives of Antisemitism at the University of Gothenburg and the University of Greifswald. This volume has also benefited from editorial contributions by Christhard Hoffmann (Bergen). It is structured in an introduction and three parts: "Nordic Otherness," "Antisemitism without Jews," "The State of Research on Antisemitism" and "Perceptions, Encounters and the Presence of Antisemitism." It is based on a three-day workshop at the University of Greifswald in February 2018, but several of the contributions have been commissioned specially for the volume. They are all worth reading, but apart from the central part on the state of research, all very solid presentations, it is a rather incoherent collection of texts, some brilliant scholarly exposés, some more impressionistic, but nevertheless valuable explorations into unmapped territories. It serves to underscore the motivation behind the project: to communicate loud and clear that research into anti-Semitism in the North—from an "Antisemitism without Jews"

(apart from the hermeneutical ones) to the present situation with an "Antisemitism without Antisemites"—is a work in progress.

Holocaust remembrance didn't disappear with the last survivor, as was feared by many; in the twenty-first century it has become the main narrative of the Second World War. Even the social democratic nations of the North with small Jewish populations have had to adapt and confront their past, not as "willing executioners" but as complicit bystanders or facilitators. Nation by nation, this has mostly been handled as a question of managing embarrassment. Book by book, accusation by accusation, the past keeps coming back. But so does anti-Semitism.

All reflections on this subject unfold in the shadow of a looming word. No one can deny the importance of distinguishing between discrimination and destruction; no one can deny the necessity of investigating the connection. One of the commendable aspirations of Antisemitism in the North is the attempt by co-editor Cordelia Heß to deal with this head-on in the introduction. Her point is the need to educate our understanding of the complexity of the phenomenon, both conceptually and historically, when we seek to identify contemporary expressions of the malaise.

A concept from the 1870s has become the common denominator for this age-old bug, but not even in Nazi-Germany in the years of the Holocaust is it possible to draw a razor-sharp line between the old and the new, the traditional and the modern shape and form of justification. The Semites stayed Jews. The esoteric racial rhetoric has long been out of fashion, Jew-hatred is not. That's why we need to study the language and its many manifestations. We need to engage in a long and deep conversation with our history beyond the Hitler era. As we are reminded these days by the pandemic: it is not enough to deal with the original virus, we must be able to protect ourselves against new mutations.

The main aim of this book has been to gather information on the state of research in the Nordic Countries. It demonstrates clearly the late arrival of a systematic approach in all the countries of the North. It also demonstrates that the Nordic

perspective is new to the field. Not much comparative research has been going on. A look further back into the past is also called for. The Century of Emancipation is yet to be researched. A history of anti-Semitism without a firm understanding of what shaped the anti-Jewish sentiments of the nineteenth century is futile. So is any attempt to analyze the contemporary outbursts of anti-Semitism without tools to identify what is new and what is not.

It is well known that the University of Greifswald was named after Ernst Moritz Arndt from 1933 until 2018. It may be less well known that it was also the alma mater of Christian Friedrich Rühs. In 1808 he was appointed to the chair of History and in 1810 he was offered a position at the new University in Berlin. He spoke Swedish, and until 1815 the city of Greifswald belonged to Sweden, so the point is not that he was German, but that an investigation into the exchange of ideas in the Nordic region must involve a thorough rereading of a writer like Rühs, who helped shape the habitat of Scandinavian studies in Napoleonic times.

He was the author of a *History of Sweden*, a book on Finland and its Residents, a thesis on the culture and constitution of the old Scandinavian societies as well as a controversial translation of the Edda with a book-long introduction. He was in many aspects an admirable and modern historian infatuated with the past of the peoples in the North, including the Sámi. He was also the author of two infamous anti-Jewish pamphlets in 1816. It is possible to argue that they belong to a corpus of texts on the Jewish question that made a lasting impact, not only in the German lands, but also in Sweden, Denmark and Norway. Today the chair of Nordic history at Greifswald is held by Cordelia Heß.

In 2013 Abraham Tokazier was posthumously declared the winner of the 100 meter sprint in Helsinki, thanks to the publication of the novel Mirage 38 by Kjell Westö. Perhaps a minor injustice, knowing what was to come, perhaps a canary in the coal mine. It is all about setting the record straight in an effort to protect the future. So is this highly recommendable book.

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Maria Chiara Rioli, *A Liminal Church: Refugees, Conversions and the Latin Diocese of Jerusalem, 1946-1956* (Leiden: Brill, 2020), pp. 387.

by *David I. Kertzer*

Basing her work on a remarkable wealth of materials from dozens of archives, Maria Chiara Rioli examines the experience of the Latin Church of Jerusalem in the eventful decade stretching from the contentious establishment of the state of Israel to the Suez crisis. It is a story of conflict along multiple dimensions, between the local patriarch and the Holy See, between the Latin Church and the new Israeli state, between various European national church groups claiming rights over the Holy Places of Christianity, between European and Arab Catholics, as well as among the various different Christian churches present in the area.

The Catholic Church in the Middle East is composed of seven different church groups, all under the authority of the pope, but the church in the diocese of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem is the only one following the western rites. Its territory encompasses Israel, the Palestinian territories, Jordan, and Cyprus. While most of its members are local Arabs, the clergy includes a significant number of Europeans, and among the members is a modest number of European Catholics of Jewish origin and Catholics married to Jews.

A *Liminal Church* grows out of a doctoral dissertation at the Scuola Normale Superiore of Pisa and is notable for the impressive list of archives consulted, including the newly opened Vatican archives for the papacy of Pius XII, the archives of various Catholic religious orders, Jerusalem municipal and Jewish archives of various sorts, private archives of religious figures, United Nations archives, and other archives, scattered across numerous countries. It has much new to tell.

Luigi Barlassina, Latin patriarch of Jerusalem for over a quarter century (1920-1947), shared the Vatican's opposition to the immigration of Jews to Palestine and the establishment of a Jewish state there, a sentiment shared by both Palestinian Latin and Eastern Catholics. In 1926 an Arabic publication of the Latin

Patriarchate published a positive review of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, described in the journal as an authentic documentation of the Jewish plan to rule the world. Barlassina shared the widespread Catholic equation of Jews with communism and worried that the increased presence of Jews in the area would lead to the spread of communism. He would come into conflict with Cardinal Eugène Tisserant, the long serving secretary of the Holy See's Congregation for the Oriental Churches, who was both more open to dialogue with Jewish organizations and, unlike Barlassina and many of the clergy of the Latin church, eager to promote the coming together of the Latin and Eastern Catholics.

Rioli recounts the trauma for Palestinian Catholics of the war that was waged around the founding of the Jewish state and the tense relations immediately following the war. Rioli's examination of the internal patriarchate correspondence makes clear, as she puts it, that its language "was still heavy with prejudice and exhibited little faith in the Israeli authorities" (p. 189).

Rioli devotes considerable attention to the founding, organization, and activities of the Association of Saint James, described as a Hebrew-Christian church, its nucleus Jewish converts to Roman Catholicism, including Holocaust survivors. A key development was the decision to abandon earlier church policy of proselytism, not least because suspicions by Israeli authorities of the conversionary goals of the organization placed it in jeopardy. Members saw themselves as proud of their Jewish origins and called on the Church to reject its traditional anti-Jewish prejudices.

After a two-year hiatus following Barlassina's death, the Vatican named a European Franciscan, Alberto Gori, to replace him as patriarch. Gori shared his predecessor's anti-Israeli attitude, a stance reinforced by fears of possible Muslim retaliation should Catholics support the Jewish state. The tensions with Cardinal Tisserant continued, while Gori complained of what he cast as Israeli persecution of Christians in the country.

While the number of members of the Latin Patriarchate was, and remains, relatively modest, and it is only one of seven different Catholic churches in the

Middle East, the story Rioli tells in this book is of considerable interest given the location of the Patriarchate in Jerusalem during the fateful and dramatic years during which Israel was created and established. The drama of the flight of many of the Palestinian Catholics from their homes amidst the violence of the war of Israeli independence, the subsequent need to deal with large numbers of refugees, the need to negotiate the Church's longstanding anti-Jewish attitudes as well as Arab hostility to the Jewish state, along with tensions between European-origin Catholics—clergy and lay—and Arab Catholics, make this story especially intriguing. The archival research that went into *A Liminal Church* is truly exemplary. It has resulted in a book that offers a valuable touchstone for an understanding of this chapter of church and political history, as well as the history of Christian-Jewish relations.

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Wendy Lower, *The Ravine: A Family, a Photograph, a Holocaust Massacre Revealed* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2021), pp. 272.

by *Elissa Bemporad*

I must admit that when I first sat down to read Wendy Lower's new book, entitled *The Ravine: A Family, A Photograph, A Holocaust Massacre Revealed*, I was rather skeptical about the possibility of telling the unique story of destruction and suffering endured by the Jews in the occupied territories of the Soviet Union during Operation Barbarossa through one photograph. How could one photograph of one family being murdered by five perpetrators at the site of one of the hundreds of trenches and pits where as many as 1.5 million Jews were executed by the Germans and their collaborators capture the process and preserve the memory of what is now known as the "Holocaust by bullets"? Many of us who teach about the Holocaust in the territories of the USSR, purposefully steer away from using images of mass shooting operations when we explain the events that unfolded after the summer of 1941; or at least we tend to reduce to an absolute minimum the use of images in the fear that these might deflect the students from the work of the historian's craft, from the real labor of examining and understanding the perpetrators' motivations, the victims' voices, and the bystanders' reactions. In the digital era of visual mass production, I assumed that the focus on Holocaust photographs risks further dehumanizing the victims, demeaning their experience instead of shedding light on it.

In fact, Lower's book helped me rethink this position, as it provides us with some essential tools to effectively analyze the photos of the "Holocaust by bullets" with nuance and care, thereby enriching our understanding of the events. As it turns out, once I started reading the book, I was unable to put it down. This focus stemmed from two main reasons, or two challenging journeys through which Lower guides us, generating between author and reader a deep sense of intimacy. In the first journey, Lower walks us through the experience of genocide of the Jews in Ukraine, by zooming in on the members of one family (a mother and two children) from the small shtetl of Miropol, whose last moments before their death are captured in a photograph. Through a refined sensory analysis of the

photograph, Lower takes the readers by the hand, virtually allowing them to see, to feel, to hear, thus bringing us very close to witnessing the events.

The second journey is the scholar's investigative one. In this case too, Lower takes the readers by the hand so they can witness the obstinate search for truth in first person: she brings us through the different stages of the research journey, from the moment she held the photograph, through the many rounds of her tenacious quest for evidence, archival material, interviews, witness accounts, as she retraces the last moments of the victims, until the very end when together with her we concentrate on one detail of the photograph: the shoes on the brink of the ravine, the only memento of the murdered family. It truly takes a remarkable scholar and an exceptional writer to recreate these two experiences for the reader, the experience of the victims and the experience of the historian in her quest for evidence and truth.

I am deeply appreciative for this book also because Lower gives us the words to describe something that is indescribable, namely the unique experience of Jewish women in the context of the mass shooting operations in Ukraine. Especially when I teach about the female experience in the context of the "Holocaust by bullets" words sometimes fail me. How to convey through words the experience of those last moments, the journey to the pit, standing at the ravine, holding one's children by the hand? In the absence of the more than 400,000 Jewish men who left and joined the Soviet forces to fight at the front, Jewish women became responsible for children and elderly, and for the thousands of Jewish families killed in the ravines of Ukraine and Belarus. It was the mothers who usually carried the children, or the daughters who walked with their elderly parents, to the brink of the pit. When after the war a Jewish Red Army Sergeant reached the Great Synagogue of Kovel, in Ukraine, where Jews had inscribed farewell notes on the walls before being shot, he imagined his mother writing her last pleas and felt ashamed, "You went away and left us. You did not take us with you. You knew that this would happen to us and you left us alone."[1] "You" referred to fathers, brothers, and sons.

[1] Quoted in Arkadi Zeltser, *Unwelcome Memory: Holocaust Monuments in the Soviet Union* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2018), 216-217.

Even the great writer Vasily Grossman, also known as the Jewish Tolstoy of the Soviet Union for the power of his pen, could not bring himself to capture the victims' experience of the "Holocaust by bullets." As a special war correspondent for the Red Army's newspaper, Grossman witnessed almost all the major events on the Eastern front; he reported the brutality of the extermination process in his powerful account *The Hell of Treblinka*; and he captured the last moments in the gas chamber describing the harrowing experience of a Jewish woman in his masterful novel *Life and Fate*. But even though the Soviet Jewish experience of war was marked primarily by the mass shooting operations—and Grossman's own mother was murdered in one of them, carried out in the city of Berdychiv—the writer never used his literary skills to attempt to recreate the victims' experience.

One crucial question is missing from Lower's otherwise superb, and widely accessible, narrative of genocide. The unanswered question pertains to the nature of the region's culture of violence that preexisted World War II, and of how this might have weighed on the events of 1941-1943. After all, Miropol is located in the heart of Volhynia, an area which together with Podolia, was affected in the most brutal way by the pogroms of the Russian Civil War: from 1918-1921, in the wake of the Bolshevik Revolution, a wave of unprecedented anti-Jewish violence destroyed many Jewish communities. This violence, which resulted in the death of as many as 150,000 Jews, was perpetrated by the different armies involved in the civil conflict, in what have been described as military pogroms; but the violence was also the consequence of the messy and chaotic reality of neighbors killing neighbors.[2] The "Holocaust by bullets" was systematically carried out in these same territories, only twenty years after the genocidal violence unleashed by the Russian Civil War. The parents of those who chose to collaborate with the Germans in murdering Jews, witnessed, participated in, or conveyed the story of the violence carried out against Jews in 1919. The story of the scale and nature of the violence of the pogroms of the civil war was narrated and preserved as part of the family history, or local lore. The depths of human cruelty did not emerge in the context of World War II, but in the wake of World War I, when many Jewish

[2] On these pogroms see, for example, Elissa Bemporad, *Legacy of Blood: Jews, Pogroms, and Ritual Murder in the Lands of the Soviets* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019).

families were murdered in their entirety, when rape was used as an instrument of ethnic cleansing, when Jewish homes were demolished and neighbors ripped the wooden planks from the floors and walls to use for firewood, when signs hanging from the telephone posts encouraged "to kill Jewish children because when they grow up they will become communists." In a way this violence, which featured neighbors killing neighbors, and also targeted, albeit not systematically, the family unit, lays the groundwork for what Lower describes, giving rise to practices and memories of violence that deeply affected the events of 1941-1942.

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Manuela Consonni and Vivian Liska, eds., *Sartre, Jews, and the Other: Rethinking Antisemitism, Race and Gender* (Oldenbourg: De Gruyter, 2020), pp. 292.

by *Brian Klug*

This collection of seventeen essays constitutes Volume one of *The Vidal Sassoon Studies in Antisemitism, Racism, and Prejudice*, published on behalf of the Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism, The Hebrew University, Jerusalem. (What is slightly confusing is that Volume two was published the previous year.) Although not stated explicitly, the volume appears to have its origins in a symposium on Sartre's Anti-Semite and Jew, which the Centre sponsored in January 2016. Whatever its origins, the result is a volume that makes a significant contribution to the literature on Sartre and on the intersection between antisemitism, race and gender. The essays are rich in content and broad in scope.

Both the Foreword by Martina Weisz and the Introduction by the two editors emphasize the significance of Sartre's *Réflexions sur la Question Juive* when it was first published in Paris in 1946. (The book appeared in English with the title *Anti-Semite and Jew* two years later.) The editors point out that *Réflexions* "was one of the first philosophical engagements with the Holocaust" (p. 1). As such (and this is a theme about Sartre's philosophical work in general that runs through many of the essays), it was also a political engagement. Philosophy, for Sartre, was not a retreat from the human world but, on the contrary, an engagement with it. Weisz observes that Sartre's "was one of the few voices that dared to speak about antisemitism at a time when French national interest imposed a pact of silence regarding Jewish issues" (pp. v-vi). As Renée Poznanski remarks at the close of her chapter, many French Jews felt "relief" when the book was published: "Sartre simply broke the silence" (p. 87).

The "deep impact" of *Réflexions* (quoting Weisz) extended far beyond the borders of France, "to the Americas, Africa and the Middle East" (p. vi), as several of the essays testify. Its influence crossed disciplinary boundaries as well as

geographical borders, which, again, is reflected in this collection. Furthermore, Sartre's *Réflexions* is a seminal text for thinking about any form of Othering, and it has left a profound mark in both postcolonial studies and feminist theory. Hence the volume's subtitle: *Rethinking Antisemitism, Race and Gender*. "Rethinking," for most of the authors, also means bringing in Sartre's later writings on "*la Question Juive*." Thus, taken as a whole, this volume looks at Sartre's political thought in the round.

But it is not an uncritical look; far from it. This volume of essays pays tribute to Sartre not only by acknowledging his philosophical insights but also by taking issue with his blindspots. This, of course, continues a long tradition that began shortly after *Réflexions* was published, when Levinas's essay *Etre Juif* appeared in the journal Confluences. At the time, as Bruno Chouat explains in his essay on Levinas' reading of Sartre, Levinas was a little-known figure, dwarfed by Sartre, but the critique he gave of Sartre's text became a template for critics, not least Jewish critics, who took issue with what they saw as Sartre's reduction of Jewish identity to the fantasy that haunts the antisemitic imagination. Chaouat suggests that "the Jew as invented by the gaze of the anti-Semite—in opposition to Jewish identity as a concrete, particular situation—constitutes the prevailing interpretation of Sartre's book throughout the history of its reception in France" (p. 93). Arguably, this has been the prevailing interpretation everywhere. It continues to be a focus of debate, as several other essays in this collection illustrate.

A second bone of contention, one that did not emerge until much later, was over Zionism and the Israel-Arab conflict. In his essay "Sartre's Multidirectional Anti-Racism," Jonathan Judaken explores the complexities of this controversy, not so much for its own sake but in order to illuminate Sartre's opposition to colonialism and racism. This is consistent with what I take to be a primary ambition of the volume, indicated in the title, which is to bring Sartre's thinking on Jews and the Other into clearer focus. The other Other who enters the frame is (to borrow De Beauvoir's phrase) "the second sex." The connections between the Othering of Jews, Blacks and women—always with an eye to Sartre—are made in different essays in a variety of contexts. In Yael Feldman's essay "Women, Blacks, Jews: Overcoming Otherness," the context is Israel. Her closing words refer to "the

existentialist trio: Sartre, Beauvoir, and Fanon" (p. 268). This echoes what Weisz says in the Foreword: she mentions "the hermeneutic field created by the confluence of Sartre's, De Beauvoir's, and Fanon's works" (p. vii). She adds: it has "remained mostly unexplored" (p. vii). This existentialist trio recurs in one essay after another in the pages of this collection, which thus begins to explore what has mostly been unexplored. This, I take it, is another primary ambition of the book.

Given this ambition, and bearing in mind the trickiness of the terrain that the book seeks to explore, it would be handy to have certain aids for the reader, which, unfortunately, are absent or incomplete. First, the Table of Contents consists simply of a list of chapter titles (with authors' names). It would help to group the chapters into sections (and to number them). The editors' Introduction helpfully gives a thumbnail sketch of each essay in turn, and a careful reading suggests a rough structure for the contents. But I emphasize "suggests" and "rough," and I hesitate to extrapolate, in case I divide the pie wrongly. Second, there is an index of names (which, weirdly, appears in duplicate) but not of subjects. With a book of this kind, a subject index would be especially useful, enabling a reader to track an idea or topic across different chapters. Third, while nine of the 17 chapters include a bibliography, six do not; there is no apparent reason for this inconsistency.

None of these defects (which hopefully will be rectified in a second edition) detract from the quality of the essays. This collection will be an invaluable resource for scholars of Sartre and students of Othering. The final essay, "Indeterminate Jews" by Eva Illouz, gives the book a sting in the tail. Adapted from her keynote lecture to the 2016 Jerusalem symposium, it is less an essay and more an afterword in which Illouz captures the spirit of the volume as a whole. In a sense, she performs what the book discusses: she takes the task of "rethinking" to her lived experience. She speaks about her own society (Israeli) and her own people (Jewish) with a voice inflected by Sartre. Her satirical comments about "Jewish pride" as inauthentic (in the Sartrean sense of the word), aimed at remarks made by Tzipi Hotovely (Israel's ambassador to the UK) and Jonathan Sacks (the late UK Chief Rabbi), might not be everyone's cup of tea (they are mine), but they will be sure to wake up the reader at the back of the room. Looking back to an earlier era, the closing section of her

essay puts the question: "Zionism as Existentialism?" On this electrifying note the book ends. It is the perfect coda.

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