Jakub Hauser and Eva Janáčová, eds., *Visual Antisemitism in Central Europe: Imagery of Hatred* (Berlin - Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2021), pp. 290.

by *Carl-Eric Linsler*

This collection of eleven essays, edited by Jakub Hauser and Eva Janáčová, results from the international conference "Visual Antisemitism in Central Europe," which was organized by the Institute of the History of Art of the Academy of Sciences on October 17, 2019 in the Academic Conference Center in Prague. It was first published in 2020 by Artefactum (Prague), in Czech, bearing the title *Nenávist v obrazech. Vizuální projevy antisemitismu ve střední Evropě*. The volume is richly illustrated and encompasses case studies from the Czech lands, Poland, Hungary, and Austria, focusing on varying manifestations of visual anti-Judaism and antisemitism from the Middle Ages to the present day. The authors, who originate from diverse academic fields and disciplines, hereby make a significant contribution to the study of visual antisemitism, which has been curiously neglected for many decades despite its potential relevance for the understanding of the mechanisms governing the circulation, entrenchment, and persistence of antisemitic stereotypes.

From this collection of entirely noteworthy contributions, only three particularly enlightening essays can be addressed here in the interest of brevity. Drawing on the example of the Tiszaeszlár blood label, an accusation and trial that occurred in Hungary in 1882-1883, Daniel Véri's article sheds light on the "significance of cultural products in the creation, dissemination and survival of antisemitic prejudices" (p. 35). By way of an impressively elaborate and precise historical reconstruction, Véri shows, among other things, how paintings depicting the imagined ritual murder contributed immensely to the popularization of the myth; not only were they reproduced on numerous occasions and thus found their way into mass media and popular culture, but they assumed a reality of their own, living on and providing supposedly "authentic" proof for the alleged crime. In her essay on antisemitism in interwar Vienna, Julia Secklehner juxtaposes blatantly antisemitic caricatures from the satirical magazine *Kikeriki* with less aggressive—but nonetheless anti-Jewish—drawings in the humorous, rather sophisticated art

journal *Die Muskete*, thereby convincingly illustrating that "visual antisemitism was, in fact, much more widespread across social and political factions and that, aside from blatant attacks on 'the Jew,' softer undercurrents of stereotyping in entertainment magazines represented another, less visible though no less dangerous, layer of popular campaigns to ostracize the Jewish population" (pp. 123-124). Last but not least, in his essay on antisemitic caricatures in the Protectorate Press, Petr Karlíček investigates not only the drawings themselves, but also their creators. In doing so, he approaches an area which is difficult to research and frequently omitted, and succeeds in presenting some very interesting details about the authors of visual antisemitic propaganda.

By addressing multiple geographical and cultural regions, different historical eras, varying forms and degrees of antisemitic imagery, and by taking into account a broad spectrum of media and materials, the volume *Visual Antisemitism in Central Europe* provides a rich and helpful overview of the broad field of visual antisemitism and reveals three of its distinctive characteristics. First, the studies draw on a multitude of primary sources, including magazine illustrations, postcards, photographs and original internet creations, hereby highlighting the ordinariness and deep cultural embeddedness of the subject matter: Anti-Jewish images were and still are part of popular culture and everyday life. Second, the ensemble of essays illustrates the long history, persistence, adaptability and—alas! —the topicality of antisemitic imagery. In the words of Hauser and Janáčová: "What is demonstrated above all is the intransigence and at times even immutability of many anti-Jewish stereotypes" (p. vii). Third, the book's broad regional approach and the displayed similarities between anti-Jewish depictions in various Central European countries show that despite all regional and national particularities, great insight may be gained from considering and studying antisemitism, and indeed its visual dimension, from a transnational perspective.

In this context, two further assets of this volume are worth mentioning: For those of us who are, primarily due to linguistic ignorance, not overly familiar with the characteristics of visual antisemitism in the Czech lands, Poland and Hungary, this collection of essays offers rare but all the more illuminating insights. In addition, and on a more general level, while a number of specialized anthologies bearing on

the history and specific manifestations of visual antisemitism have been published in German and—to a lesser degree—in French,[1] comparable works in English are still scarce. Here too, this book is a veritable asset.

Given all the merits of this volume, one point of criticism does need to be addressed here as well. It is somewhat surprising and disturbing to see terminology such as "Semitic features," "Jewish physiognomy," or "the Jewish figure portrayed" without quotation marks or any other form of orthographic distancing when antisemitic images are described. Naturally, the content of this volume clearly shows that the authors do not intend to propagate antisemitic stereotypes—quite the contrary! Nevertheless, it would have been preferable to emphasize, by use of a consistent sensitive terminology and orthography, that antisemitic images never depict Jews or Jewish characters, but are products originating from the imagination of antisemites, applying the antisemitic construct of alleged Jewish physiognomy.

In addition, a number of desiderata should be mentioned: For instance, not much is known to date about the precise mechanisms of design, production and control of visual antisemitism. How were antisemitic images created? How did the creators operate? Did they use templates? Were there specific instructions, be it from the editorial team or from state officials, or did they create antisemitic images on individual initiative? More importantly perhaps, there remains the highly complex question about the precise function and effects of antisemitic imagery: Are antisemitic images "merely" an expression and indicator of antisemitic prejudices, or do they actively foster them, thus assuming an agency and serving as a catalyst of antisemitism?

Obviously, an in-depth analysis of these aspects, some of which are broached in a number of contributions, would have exceeded the scope of the present volume.

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[1] See, by way of example, Jüdisches Museum Wien, ed., *Die Macht der Bilder. Antisemitische Vorurteile und Mythen* (Wien: Picus, 1995); Helmut Gold and Georg Heuberger, eds., *Abgestempelt. Judenfeindliche Postkarten. Auf der Grundlage der Sammlung Wolfgang Haney* (Heidelberg: Umschau/Braus, 1999); Mémorial de Caen, ed., *Dessins assassins ou la corrosion antisémite en Europe, 1886-1945. Collection d'Arthur Langerman* (Paris: Fayard, 2018).

These desiderata should therefore not be understood as criticism but rather—and I am certain Hauser and Janáčová will approve—as an incentive for further research.

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