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Jewish Masculinities, 1200-1800

edited by *Francesca Bregoli*

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Piazza Edmond Jacob Safra 1, 20125 Milano Italy
tel. 003902316338 – fax 00390233602728
www.quest-cdecjournal.it
questjournal@cdec.it

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Introduction

This special issue of *Quest* presents new research on experiences and perceptions of Jewish masculinity in medieval northwestern Europe and early modern Polish and Italian lands between 1200 and 1800. A small but growing field investigating aspects of pre-modern Jewish masculinity is an important addition to the robust research on medieval and early modern masculinities informed by gender and sexuality studies that literary scholars, social and cultural historians, and art historians have produced over the past three decades.[1] Masculinity studies often blur extant disciplinary boundaries and rely on multiple sources and methodologies to investigate both representations and lived lives of men.[2] In general, however, there is still limited research on premodern non-Christian experiences, although attending to both gender and religious difference intersectionally can prove productive.[3] Since studies of gender are inherently

[1] Inquiries into notions of Jewish masculinity in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Europe and North America have also been developing for several years, with a recent turn towards the examination of masculinity during the Holocaust. While this growing bibliography is too vast to cite here, see Paul Breines, *Tough Jews: Political Fantasies and the Moral Dilemma of American Jewry* (New York: Basic Books, 1990); Benjamin Maria Baader, Sharon Gillerman, and Paul Lerner, eds., *Jewish Masculinities: German Jews, Gender and History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012); Sarah Imhoff, *Masculinity and the Making of American Judaism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017); Maddy Carey, *Jewish Masculinity in the Holocaust: Between Destruction and Construction* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017); Björn Krondorfer and Ovidiu Creangă, eds., *The Holocaust and Masculinities: Critical Inquiries into the Presence and Absence of Men* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2020).

[2] For a rich overview of the development of the field, see Todd W. Reeser, "Concepts of Masculinity and Masculinity Studies," in *Configuring Masculinity in Theory and Literary Practice,* ed. Stefan Horlacher (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 11-38.

[3] Notably, Björn Krondorfer, ed., *Men and Masculinities in Christianity and Judaism: A Critical Reader* (London: SCM Press, 2009) does not include pieces on medieval and early modern Judaism. It is telling that a 2020 three-day conference at the University of Toronto on "Masculinities in the Premodern World: Continuities, Change, and Contradictions" had no single paper on Jewish topics. Additionally, studies of premodern English masculinities still greatly outnumber investigations of continental ones.

interested in power dynamics and hierarchies, understanding Jewish men as gendered offers new perspectives on both intra-Jewish and Jewish-Christian relations: it allows us to pry open mechanisms of competition and domination within the Jewish community that may have escaped historians, and to frame the precariousness and attainments of premodern Jewish life in Christian lands in novel ways.

Excellent historiographical surveys on medieval and early modern masculinities already exist.[4] The next few pages intend to give a sense of research questions and intersections between general and Jewish history in light of the range of topics addressed in this issue: articulations of medieval Jewish manhood, as perceived by Christians and as experienced by Jewish men of different ages (Sewell and Levinson); the disparaging representation of Jewish men in English Renaissance drama (Friedman); male sexuality as reflected through kabbalistic ideals and practices (Stillman); Jewish-Christian male homosociality (Aron-Beller); and evolving articulations of patriarchal merchant masculinities (Bregoli).

Several important contributions on premodern European manliness began appearing in the mid-1990s.[5] The earliest comprehensive effort to investigate medieval and Renaissance men as men was published in 1994, as the proceedings

[4] Reeser, "Concepts of Masculinity and Masculinity Studies"; John H. Arnold and Sean Brady, eds., *What is Masculinity? Historical Dynamics from Antiquity to the Contemporary World* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); Denise Bezzina and Michaël Gasperoni, "Mascolinità mediterranee a confronto (Medioevo - Età Moderna). Saggio introduttivo," *Genesis: Rivista della Società Italiana delle Storiche* 20, no. 1 (2021): 5-21. Helpful assessments are also included in Jacqueline Murray, "Masculinity and Male Sexuality in the Middle Ages," *Oxford Bibliographies Online in Medieval Studies*, accessed December 21, 2023, https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780195396584/obo-9780195396584-0251.xml; Gerry Milligan, "Masculinity," *Oxford Bibliographies Online in Renaissance and Reformation*, accessed December 21, 2023, https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780195399301/obo-9780195399301-0114.xml.

[5] The history of modern masculinities was becoming established exactly at the same time: John Tosh, "What Should Historians Do with Masculinity? Reflections on Nineteenth-Century Britain," *History Workshop* 38 (1994): 179-202; for a later reflection, John Tosh, "The History of Masculinity: An Outdated Concept?" in *What is Masculinity?*, eds. Arnold and Brady, 17-34. An influential contribution to the historical study of masculinity was George Mosse, *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity* (New York - Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

of a 1990 Fordham conference entitled "Gender and Medieval Society: Men."[6] This volume set much of the research agenda that has informed the history of medieval masculinity studies since.[7] It countered the notion that studying medieval men's history meant to study "universal history," instead applying a feminist perspective to varied understandings of manliness. At the time, the editors grappled with their choice. The preface by Thelma Fenster is tellingly entitled, "Why men?,"[8] while Clare Lees programmatically emphasized that the volume's focus on men was not "a return to traditional subjects that imply a neglect of feminist issues, but a calculated contribution to them, which can be formulated as a dialectic."[9] Natalie Zemon Davis' remark that "we should be interested in the history of both women and men [...] we should not be working only on the subjected sex any more than an historian of class can focus exclusively on peasants" was quoted several times in the volume.[10]

Thirty years later, the field no longer needs justifying, as the rich body of literature available today demonstrates—in John Tosh's formulation, its aim is not so much to provide "symmetry or balance" to women's history, but rather to contribute to a necessary holistic view of pre-modern gender systems.[11] But how do we read premodern Jewish men into the existing scholarship on European premodern masculinity? Do they align with or contradict representations and behaviors highlighted over the past thirty years? Before we can address these questions, a few

[6] Clare A. Lees, ed., with Thelma S. Fenster and Jo Ann McNamara, *Medieval Masculinities: Regarding Men in the Middle Ages* (Minneapolis - London: University of Minnesota Press, 1994).

[7] Despite the groundbreaking significance of Lees' collection, it should be mentioned that two other fields of research had already broached questions of pre-modern masculinity in the 1980s. Scholars of homosexuality published foundational texts in the 1980s. These early works on non-normative sexuality provided important ground for investigations of manhood to follow: John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980); Alan Bray, *Homosexuality in Renaissance England* (London: Gay Men's Press, 1982). English literature also turned to early modern masculinity in the 1980s, utilizing a psychoanalytic lens: Coppelia Kahn, *Man's Estate: Masculine Identity in Shakespeare* (Berkeley - Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1981).

[8] Thelma Fenster, "Preface: Why Men?," in *Medieval Masculinities*, ed. Lees, ix-xiii.

[9] Clare A. Lees, "Introduction," in *Medieval Masculinities*, ed. Lees, xv-xxv; xv.

[10] Natalie Zemon Davis, "Women's History in Transition: The European Case," *Feminist Studies* 3 (1976): 83-103; 90.

[11] Tosh, "What Should Historians Do with Masculinity," 179.

words are in order about commonly accepted notions of medieval and early modern manhood.

Displaying sexual prowess or defending one's honor and reputation through violence against other men and dominance over women are frequently associated with premodern masculine behaviors, yet realities were more complex for both Jews and non-Jews.[12] Medieval and early modern masculinities had sometimes conflicting connotations. Masculine honor and virtue could be articulated in contradictory ways leaving medieval men "to reconcile acts of abstinence, sexual prowess, adventure, and domestication."[13] Among the elites, ideals of rationality as man's supreme virtue emerged as humanist education took hold, leading to the policing and regulation of the male body and its debasing vis-à-vis the male mind.[14] In turn, manhood and effeminacy, its alleged polar opposite, maintained a constant, uneasy relationship during the Renaissance. Norms and representations evolved subtly, as "the benefits of patriarchy became [...] redistributed," in Alexandra Shepard's astute definition. [15] As the Protestant and Catholic Reformations reshaped European religious institutions, aspirations, and models of government and authority, notions of manhood resisted or adapted.[16] The eighteenth century has often been taken as a dividing line between premodern and modern masculine sensibilities. Histories of the public sphere suggest an ostensible "civilizing process" over the course of the eighteenth century, whereby older masculine notions of violence and aggression were allegedly subsumed into gentlemanly ideals of polite society.[17] George Mosse notably pointed to the late

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[12] Jacqueline Murray, "Premodern Hegemonic Masculinity," in *Patriarchy, Honour, and Violence: Masculinities in Premodern Europe*, ed. Jacqueline Murray (Toronto: Centre for Renaissance and Reformation Studies, 2022), 9-22.

[13] Gerry Milligan, "Masculinity, Femininity, and Gender," in *Encyclopedia of Women in the Renaissance: Italy, France, and England*, eds. Diana Maury Robin, Anne R. Larsen, and Carole Levine (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2007), 249-253; 250.

[14] Ibid., 250.

[15] Alexandra Shepard, "From Anxious Patriarchs to Refined Gentlemen? Manhood in Britain, circa 1500–1700," *Journal of British Studies* 44 (2005): 281-295; 282.

[16] Scott H. Hendrix and Susan C. Karant-Nunn, eds., *Masculinity in the Reformation Era* (Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press, 2008).

[17] Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994); Susan Dwyer Amussen, "The Part of a Christian Man: The Cultural Politics of Manhood in Early Modern England," in *Political Culture and Cultural Politics in Early Modern England: Essays Presented to David Underdown,*

eighteenth-century emergence of middle class bourgeois society as a turning point in the creation of a comprehensive "masculine stereotype" that combined moral and physical strength, idolized male bodily beauty, and provided fodder to virile nation-building efforts.[18]

Regardless of its varied articulations, masculinity was always contestable and understood to be at risk, a fact that obtained for all social groups in different historical periods. It needed to be learned, gained, maintained, and proved to other men and to women over time.[19] Household dynamics and power relations between husbands and wives, which have been the object of intense study based on seventeenth- and eighteenth-century documents, notoriously highlight forms of *anxious* masculinity, emphasizing the gap between ideals of what it meant to be a *pater familias*, on the one hand, and lived experiences that routinely challenged prescriptive norms of patriarchal manliness, on the other.[20] Premodern masculinities were not monolithic, in sum, and even more dominant forms displayed remarkable complexity.[21] The spectrum of masculine aspirations aligned with differences in status, activity, and geographic location. The medieval knight, the scholar, the Catholic priest and the Reformed minister, the craftsman, the merchant, the urban poor, the early modern middling businessman and the landed gentleman—all had specific masculine ambitions and ideals. And to be

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eds. Susan D. Amussen and Mark. A Kishlansky (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 213-233; Michèle Cohen, "'Manners' Make the Man: Politeness, Chivalry, and the Construction of Masculinity, 1750–1830," *Journal of British Studies* 44 (2005): 312-329.

[18] Mosse, *The Image of Man*.

[19] Ruth Mazo Karras, *From Boys to Men: Formations of Masculinity in Late Medieval Europe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003).

[20] Alexandra Shepard, *Meanings of Manhood in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); see also Lyndal Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil: Witchcraft, Sexuality and Religion in Early Modern Europe* (London - New York: Routledge, 1994). On the interiority and emotions of men, Derek Neal, *The Masculine Self in Late Medieval England* (Chicago: University of Chicago 2008); *Men at Home: Domesticities, Authority, Emotions, and Work*, *Gender & History* 27, no. 3 (2015).

[21] Murray, ed., *Patriarchy, Honour, and Violence*. Shepard, "From Anxious Patriarchs to Refined Gentlemen?," points out a disconnect within English histories of masculinity due to the different foci and methodologies of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century experts, respectively working on the domestic space and on the public sphere. Other national historiographies have corroborated the notion of anxious masculinities throughout the eighteenth century, see Bregoli's essay in this issue.

sure, representations and expressions of masculinity specific to a given social order or class were not sealed off from each other but could and did intersect.[22]

A Non-Hegemonic Jewish Masculinity?

The intricate relationship between Jewish and non-Jewish masculinities is a vexed question. Within the broader discipline of Jewish studies, interest in masculinity appeared in concomitance with the growth of critical "men's studies," an antisexist reconsideration of the role and position of men in society which emerged out of the second wave of US feminism in the 1970s. Contemporary or modern issues were, and generally continue to be, the emphasis, even as the term "men's studies" gave way to "masculinity studies" in the 1990s. In the late 1980s, feminist Jewish scholars led by sociologist Harry Brod—one of the pioneers of the "new men's studies" in North America[23]—turned their focus to articulations of American Jewish male identity, intergenerational Jewish male relations, the intersections of antisemitism and sexism, and calls for a self-aware male Jewish social activism.[24] This activist work, championed by progressive Jewish religious leaders, therapists, and literary and cultural critics, only tangentially impacted academic research, but in the 1990s, Brod further promoted efforts to theorize Jewish masculinity studies. He did so in light of the notion of "hegemonic masculinity," first formulated in the early 1980s and later notably elaborated on by R.W. Connell, the Australian sociologist whose work has left an enduring imprint on the study of modern masculinities.[25]

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[22] Daniel F. Pigg, "Masculinity Studies," in *Handbook of Medieval Studies: Terms, Methods, Trends*, 3 vols., ed. Albrecht Classen (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011), vol. 1, 829-835.

[23] Harry Brod, ed., *The Making of Masculinities: The New Men's Studies* (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1987).

[24] Harry Brod, ed., *A Mensch among Men: Explorations in Jewish Masculinity* (Freedom, CA: The Crossing Press, 1988).

[25] Harry Brod, "Some Thoughts on Some Histories of Some Masculinities: Jews and Other Others," in *Theorizing Masculinities*, eds. Harry W. Brod and Michael Kaufman (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1994), 82-96. The concept emerged in Australian academia in the early 1980s and was presented systematically for the first time in Tim Carrigan, Bob Connell, and John Lee, "Toward a New Sociology of Masculinity," *Theory and Society* 14, no. 5 (1985): 551-604; 587. For a

This idea, stimulated by the gay liberation movement and gay histories, posits plural articulations of masculinity in a given time and place, all relationally inscribed within a field of power, rejecting the simplistic notion that "the history of masculinity is the story of the modulation, through time, of the expressions of a more or less fixed entity."[26] Instead, early proponents of the concept of hegemonic masculinity argued that the hegemonic variety dominates over subordinate articulations, asserting that hegemonic masculinity is always constructed in relation to nonhegemonic kinds and to women. As Connell put it, hegemonic masculinity "occupies the hegemonic position in a given pattern of gender relations, a position always contestable."[27] Although the concept has been at times misappropriated, essentialized and reified, or incorrectly applied transhistorically, the idea has had a productive impact on scholarship on gender, furthering the hierarchical complexity of gender power dynamics.[28]

Turning to Jewish men as expressions of *nonhegemonic* masculinity, Brod suggested that Jewish male standards emerge out of a double bind generated by "foreign gender norms imposed by the hegemonic culture," as well as "specifically Jewish patriarchal norms within a culture that valorizes intellectual over physical prowess."[29] The example he selected is telling of an enduring trope of Jewish masculinity. "The ideal of the intellectual Jewish male," Brod argued, "is held to so strongly because it emerges both from within the intellectual traditions of Jewish culture and as a defense mechanism against attacks on Jewish men for not conforming to dominant, more brawny standards of masculinity."[30] The notion of Jewish men as expressing a nonhegemonic form of masculinity that hinges around intellectual, rather than physical, pursuits found proponents in other subfields as well, and looms large on the study of medieval and early modern Jewish manliness.

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history of the concept and critiques thereof see R.W. Connell and James W. Messerschmidt, "Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept," *Gender & Society* 19, no. 6 (2005): 829-859.

[26] Carrigan, Connell, and Lee, "Toward a New Sociology of Masculinity," 589.

[27] R.W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Berkeley - Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995), 76.

[28] Connell and Messerschmidt, "Hegemonic Masculinity."

[29] Brod, "Some Thoughts on Some Histories of Some Masculinities," in *Theorizing Masculinities*, eds. Brod and Kaufman, 91.

[30] Ibid.

Concomitantly with the endeavors of sociologists like Connell and Brod, two areas of Jewish research turned to manliness. Scholars of rabbinic literature like Michael Satlow and Daniel Boyarin started investigating Talmudic concepts of manliness, homosociality, and homoeroticism in the early 1990s.[31] Almost simultaneously, another branch of the new Jewish cultural studies that came to the fore during those years proceeded to contribute to understandings of Jewish masculinity through its prominent focus on sexuality and the body. In particular, the research of David Biale on Jewish sexuality over the centuries and of Sander Gilman on clinical understandings of the Jewish body and psyche in modern Europe had much to say about conceptions of Jewish manliness, both within Jewish tradition and as deployed by antisemites.[32]

These books provided a nuanced investigation of a powerful modern trope—the notion of the feminized, pathologically weak male Jew of the Diaspora and its ideological opposite, the oversexed Jewish man, both despised by Zionists and antisemites alike. These *topoi* have inflected understandings of pre-modern Jewish masculinity as well.[33] The 1997 publication of Daniel Boyarin's *Unheroic Conduct* was an important turning point in this respect. Boyarin's controversial take on rabbinic masculinity helped inscribe the notion of the nonhegemonic/counter-hegemonic Jewish man further in the literature, with implications for the study of pre-modern Jewish history.

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[31] Early examples of research by Talmudic scholars on questions of rabbinic sexuality and manliness are Daniel Boyarin, *Carnal Israel: Reading Sex in Talmudic Culture* (Berkeley - Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993); Michael L. Satlow, *Tasting the Dish: Rabbinic Rhetorics of Sexuality* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995); Daniel Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man* (Berkeley - Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997), on which more below. For an overview of the "masculinity turn" in Talmud studies see Ishay Rosen-Zvi, "The Rise and Fall of Rabbinic Masculinity," *JSIJ – Jewish Studies, an Internet Journal* 12 (2013): 1-22.

[32] David Biale, *Eros and the Jews: From Biblical Israel to Contemporary America* (New York: Basic Books, 1992). In surveying "the internal contradictions in the erotic imagery of Zionism," Biale touched on early thinking about European Jews' sexual "abnormalities," the erotic return to the land (of Israel) as a solution to diasporic dysfunction, and, perhaps most famously, the Revisionists' celebration of muscle Judaism and virility: ibid., 176-203. Sander Gilman, *The Jew's Body* (New York: Routledge, 1991).

[33] See for instance the overview in Matthias Morgenstern, "Images of the Feminine Jewish Man. Debates on Masculinities in Rabbinic and Talmudic Culture," in *God's Own Gender? Masculinities in World Religions*, eds. Daniel Gerster and Michael Krüggeler (Baden Baden: Ergon Verlag, 2018), 185-200.

In Boyarin's interpretation, the traditional Ashkenazi rabbinic ideal of the effeminate man, which in his view dominated from the Middle Ages through the nineteenth century, arose from ancient Talmudic interpretations that resisted Roman gender paradigms of active masculinity and passive femininity. The rabbis' model posited instead a form of "gentle, timid, and studious" masculinity defined in opposition to the warrior-like Christian trope popular in European romances.[34] Far from being unerotic, moreover, the feminized, delicate *yeshivah bocher* (Torah scholar) is the ultimate object of Jewish female sexual desire and a powerfully sexual being himself.[35] If anti-Jewish tropes had depicted European Jewish men as womanly, Boyarin claims that the feminized Jewish man was not an antisemitic invention: Jewish culture assertively created a form of Torah-centric "alternative gendering" to distinguish itself from its surroundings (to be sure, women were also deliberately excluded from this male homosocial system, actively set to subordinate and subjugate them).[36] Thus, premodern Ashkenazi culture was "openly resistant to and critical of the prevailing ideology of "manliness" dominant in Europe," while its consciously negative presentation of non-Jewish men was a form of anticolonial opposition to the hegemonic, dominant culture.[37] It was only in the modern period, as a result of the (allegedly) assimilationist impulses of Zionism and psychoanalysis, that a new Jewish man would be invented, supplanting the older model of the "soft man."

Boyarin's thought-provoking meditation is above all a deeply personal and political work. Historical truth was never the author's goal, although his formulations, based on little to no historical evidence, have sometimes been (mis)taken as reflecting empirical realities.[38] In fact, Boyarin aimed to recover from Talmudic discourse "the "best" of what Jewish culture has offered in the past," in the hope of informing a novel, feminist, and anti-homophobic Orthodox

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[34] Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct*, 1-13, quote at 1. Boyarin does not discuss early Christian thinkers' views on sex and celibacy, see Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988).

[35] On rabbinic sexuality see also Michael L. Satlow, *Tasting the Dish: Rabbinic Rhetorics of Sexuality* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995).

[36] Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct*, 81ff.

[37] Ibid., 23.

[38] An early critique was raised by Judith Baskin in her "Review of *Unheroic Conduct*," *Criticism* 41, no. 1 (1999): 124-128.

Judaism.[39] But as medieval and early modern historians show, the idea of the pre-modern "Jewish sissy" publicized by Boyarin should be heavily corrected.[40] Certainly, historical and literary research has argued convincingly that pre-modern Christianity did at times imagine Jewish men as effeminate and powerless.[41] As Becky Friedman shows in this issue, sixteenth-century English playwrights presented emasculated Jewish figures and disparaged Jewish male bodies to make audiences laugh while reasserting the ideal of Christian dominance. Through an analysis of canonical examples of Renaissance drama—Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* and Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta*—Friedman argues that English playwrights depicted Jewish characters that were not only weak and unmanly, usually to achieve humorous effects, but also bordering on the inhuman; in this way, popular culture reproduced and reinforced Jewish-Christian hierarchies, forever reminding the spectator of Jewish inferiority and subordination. An overview of performance history through portrayals of Shylock from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries corroborates this finding: "He crouches,

[39] Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct*, 29.

[40] Even before the appearance of *Unheroic Conduct*, the idea of the gentle husband or of the rabbi disapproving of wife-beating was challenged in Howard Adelman, "Wife-Beating Among Early Modern Italian Jews," in *Proceedings of the Eleventh World Congress of Jewish Studies*, div. B, vol. 1 (World Union of Jewish Studies: Jerusalem, 1994): 135-142. See also Howard Adelman, "'A Disgrace for All Jewish Men': Preliminary Considerations for the Study of Wife-Beating in Jewish History," *Medieval Feminist Newsletter* 21 (1996): 21-23. Boyarin's notions were further criticized in Luciano Allegra, "Ne *machos*, ne mammolette. La mascolinità degli ebrei italiani," *Genesis. Rivista della società italiana delle storiche* 2, no. 2 (2003): 125-155. More recently see Andreas Gotzmann, "Respectability Tested: Male Ideals, Sexuality, and Honor in Early Modern Ashkenazi Jewry," in *Jewish Maculinities: German Jews, Gender, and History*, eds. Benjamin Maria Baader, Sharon Gillerman, and Paul Lerner (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2012), 23-49. It goes without saying that Boyarin's schematic representation of European Christian culture requires correction as well.

[41] Louise Mirrer, "Representing 'Other' Men: Muslims, Jews, and Masculine Ideals in Medieval Castilian Epic and Ballad," in *Medieval Masculinities,* ed. Lees, 169-186; Steven Kruger, "Becoming Christian, Becoming Male?," in *Becoming Male in the Middle Ages*, eds. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen and Bonnie Wheeler (New York: Garland, 1997), 21-41.

hunches, and crawls. He leers, sneers, and scowls. He also grasps [...]."[42] These violently negative tropes continued perilously in the modern period.[43]

In turn, Talmudic discourse undoubtedly did promote forms of intellectual, rather than physical, masculinity. Still, *pace* Boyarin, scholars of rabbinics have convincingly emphasized that the rabbis' masculinity was articulated around violently agonistic, war-like notions of scholarly discipline and conflict.[44] Early modern judicial sources, communal deliberations, and halakhic responsa further show that the ideal notion of a gentle Jewish man was not necessarily borne out in reality; in fact, aggressive behavior vis-à-vis other men and women was not only acceptable but also accepted within Jewish communities.[45] Moreover, we should not assume that Talmudic concepts of masculinity were universally embraced, or embraced at all times, by Jewish men and women; to the contrary, we can safely presume they were the purview of a small elite, alongside other established notions of what it meant to become and be a Jewish man.[46] As the pieces by Levinson, Aron-Beller, and Bregoli demonstrate, Jewish men regularly adopted forms of masculinity that paralleled those embraced by non-Jews around them.

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[42] Becky S. Friedman, "'We Are No Soldiers': Jewish Unmanliness in English Renaissance Drama," 58-82; 75.

[43] Matthew Biberman, *Masculinity, Anti-Semitism and Early Modern English Literature: From the Satanic to the Effeminate Jew* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2004) argues that the notion of the hypersexual, satanic Jew emerged in English literature first, with notions of Jewish male effeminacy spreading only later.

[44] Michael Satlow, "From Salve to Weapon: Torah Study, Masculinity, and the Babylonian Talmud," in *Religious Men and Masculine Identity in the Middle Ages*, eds. P. H. Cullum and Katherine J. Lewis (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell, 2013), 16-27; Rosen-Zvi, "The Rise and Fall," 14.

[45] Adelman, "Wife Beating," Allegra, "Ne *machos*, ne mammolette," and Gotzmann, "Respectability Tested."

[46] Contrary to Boyarin's counterhegemonic reading of rabbinic masculinity, Michael Satlow claims that the rabbis' understanding was not unique but shared essential traits with notions of manhood found among non-Jewish elites: Michael Satlow, "'Try to Be a Man': The Rabbinic Construction of Masculinity," *Harvard Theological Review* 89, no. 1 (1996): 19-40; 39-40. The rabbis, in Satlow's reading, understood Torah study as a supremely manly pursuit based around the male virtue of self-restraint. Torah study both requires the male virtue of self-restraint and reinforces it by combating the evil inclination (*yetzer ha-ra*) that continuously threatens men; in this reading, women are excluded from Torah study because they are believed to utterly lack the self-discipline necessary for it.

Jewish and Non-Jewish Masculinities in Dialogue

If representations of Jews as effeminate and weak were common currency in English Renaissance drama, an earlier moment in English history highlights that Jewish masculinity could have a positive connotation for at least a class of Christian men: clerics faced with new ecclesiastical impositions of celibacy. Scholarly comparisons between medieval lay and clerical masculinities have received a great deal of attention. JoAnn McNamara's early theoretical intervention on what she dubbed the *Herrenfrage* (the question of men) paved the way. The topic raises thought-provoking questions for Jewish history, as male celibacy was never glorified in mainstream Judaism.[47] In McNamara's interpretation, the whole western Christian gender system underwent a restructuring between 1050 and 1150 due to "broad social changes, complicated by the ideological struggle between celibate and married men for leadership of the Christian world."[48] The *Herrenfrage* is a complement to the *Frauenfrage* (the question of women), formulated by Karl Bücher in 1882.[49] McNamara claims that clerical celibacy brought about not only the *Frauenfrage*, but also "a crisis of masculine identity": "If men who repudiated connection with women not only remained men, but

[47] For a helpful introduction to clerical masculinities see Jennifer D. Thibodeaux, ed. *Negotiating Clerical Identities: Priests, Monks, and Masculinity in the Middle Ages* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010). For an attempt at theorizing this comparison see Derek Neal, "What Can Historians do with Clerical Masculinities? Lessons from Medieval Europe," in ibid, 16-36. The earliest collection entirely devoted to masculinity and religion was P.H. Cullum and Katherine J. Lewis, *Holiness and Masculinity in the Middle Ages* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004). See also P. H Cullum and Katherine J. Lewis, eds. *Religious Men and Masculine Identity in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell & Brewer, 2013); Mathew Kuefler, *The Making and Unmaking of a Saint: Hagiography and Memory in the Cult of Gerald of Aurillac* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014); Jennifer D. Thibodeaux, *The Manly Priest: Clerical Celibacy, Masculinity, and Reform in England and Normandy, 1066–1300* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015).

[48] JoAnn McNamara, "The *Herrenfrage*: The Restructuring of the Gender System, 1050-1150," in *Medieval Masculinities*, ed. Lees, 3-29; 3.

[49] Bücher argued that there was an excess of women in late medieval Germany, due to, among other reasons, the Church's imposition of celibacy on the clergy, which led to a surplus of unmarried women. His essay is still influential today: Karl Bücher, "Die Frauenfrage im Mittelalter," *Zeitschrift für die gesamte Staatswissenschaft* 38, no. 2 (1882): 344-397.

even claimed to be superior to other men, what did this mean to the self-image of men in the secular world?"[50]

Rebekah Sewell's essay in this collection addresses this long-standing issue when comparing evolving Christian clerical masculinities in thirteenth-century England with non-celibate Jewish masculinity, unexpectedly desirable under new circumstances. Sewell analyzes three chronicles narrating the case of an Oxford deacon who was sentenced to death in 1222 after converting to Judaism and marrying a Jewish woman. The event sheds light on two overlapping developments in thirteenth-century religious history: mounting anti-Judaism, and the Church's enforcement of reforms imposing celibacy on the English secular clergy, which met with hostility from defenders of clerical marriage. The deacon's choice is thus read in light of three contemporaneously competing models of pious masculinity: Jewish norms that emphasized the sacrality of marriage, marital sex, and procreation; Anglo-Norman ideals widespread before Lateran IV that celebrated clerical marriage; and Church Reform models that identified male virtue with celibacy and childlessness.[51]

The question of which ideals of masculinity men could embrace based on the accepted tripartite order of medieval society opens further interesting vistas for Jewish historians working on a population that was not part of the Christian social body but was exposed to, and sometimes shared (or grappled with), many of its values. It has been suggested that knightly ideals exerted a quasi-hegemonic cultural power among medieval men, whether they belonged to the nobility or not. There were great variations in knightly and courtly representations and experiences of manhood—differences existed as well between kingly and knightly articulations and within the knightly construction of gender systems, although notions of honor and power were likely transversal within this social category.[52] As Eyal Levinson's recent monograph shows, young Jews too, usually excluded

[50] McNamara, "The *Herrenfrage*," in *Medieval Masculinities*, ed. Lees, 5.

[51] On these English developments see Anne L. Barstow, *Married Priests and the Reforming Papacy: The Eleventh Century Debates* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1982); Jennifer Thibodeaux, *The Manly Priest: Clerical Celibacy, Masculinity, and Reform in England and Normandy, 1066-1300* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015).

[52] Sergi Mainer, "Contrasting Kingly and Knightly Masculinities in Barbour's Bruce," in *Nine Centuries of Man: Manhood and Masculinity in Scottish History*, eds. Lynn Abrams and Elizabeth Ewan (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), 122-141.

from the order of "those who fought," were fascinated by and adapted certain knightly ideals, while simultaneously engaging with masculine ideals as they transpired from rabbinic materials.[53] In his article for this issue, Levinson traces the ways in which Jewish texts, images, and material culture from thirteenth- to fifteenth-century England, France, and the German lands provide insights into what he dubs "medieval rabbinic masculinity."

Ashkenazi rabbinic norms prescribed a man's obligation to father children while stressing that men were superior to women, favoring the education of boys over that of girls, and circumscribing women's activities to the domestic sphere. And yet, Jewish male moral and physical ideals ("beauty, strength, wisdom, wealth, honor, hoary head, and children," in keeping with Mishnah Avot 6:8), as they transpire from medieval texts, coexisted with an attraction to masculine aspirations and behaviors found among non-Jews. This was particularly true among young Jewish men, who enjoyed hunting and falconry, sometimes bore arms and fought, and, to the chagrin of Jewish leaders, very much liked to wear the same clothing styles as non-Jewish men.

Early modern Jewish historiography too has paid attention to male youth culture and its negative perceptions by Jewish patriarchs.[54] Elliott Horowitz and Roni Weinstein, focusing on Italian lands, were pioneering in this regard.[55] To the contrary, the roles of Jewish husband and father remain less studied,[56] although

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[53] Eyal Levinson, *Gender and Sexuality in Ashkenaz in the Middle Ages* (Jerusalem: The Zalman Shazar Center, 2022) [Hebrew].

[54] For an initial orientation on premodern youth culture, see Giovanni Levi and Jean-Claude Schmitt, eds., A *History of Young People in the West*, vol. 1 (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1997); Konrad Eisenbichler, ed., *The Premodern Teenager: Youth in Society, 1150–1650* (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2002).

[55] Elliott Horowitz, "The Worlds of Jewish Youth in Europe, 1300-1800," in *A History of Young People in the West*, eds. Levi and Schmitt, 83-119; Roni Weinstein, *Marriage Rituals Italian Style: A Historical Anthropological Perspective on Early Modern Italian Jews* (Leiden: Brill, 2004). For a kabbalistic take on early modern male youth culture see Roni Weinstein, *Juvenile Sexuality, Kabbalah, and Catholic Reformation in Italy:* Tiferet Bahurim *by Pinhas Barukh ben Pelatiyah Monselice* (Leiden: Brill, 2009). On Sephardi attitudes on adolescence see Julia R. Lieberman, "Adolescence and the Period of Apprenticeship among the Western Sephardim in the Seventeenth Century," *El Prezente: Studies in Sephardic Culture* 4 (2010): 11-23.

[56] On Jewish fathers in seventeenth-century Livorno, see Cristina Galasso, "Diventare adulti, diventare padri. Paternità e patria potestà nella comunità ebraica di Livorno (secolo XVII)," in *Pater Familias*, ed. Angiolina Arru (Rome: Biblink, 2002), 101-121. On medieval Ashkenazi

urban householders are a category of premodern men that has received significant attention in general historiography.[57] Becoming a householder able to protect the home from internal and external threats, controlling one's wife and other dependents and protecting the reputation and piety of one's family name, was an essential masculine ideal—although realities were often more complicated.[58] Specific prudential norms, transmitted by parents and surrogate parental figures like an apprentice's master, were associated with becoming an independent householder in light of dominant patriarchal models.[59] European Jewish lay authorities, representing a social body largely involved in urban professions, seem to have shared many of the same concerns about reputation and decorum as their non-Jewish peers. Sources as varied as belletristic literature, conduct manuals, court cases, notarial records documenting marriage and dowering patterns, and wills can be deployed to assess the concepts of masculinity widespread among bachelors and *patres familias*.[60]

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fatherhood see now Eyal Levinson, "Situated Fathering in Medieval Ashkenaz," *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 28 (2021): 278-296.

[57] The literature on fatherhood is medieval and early modern Europe is enormous. For a helpful overview see Marco Cavina, *Il padre spodestato. L'autorità paterna dall'antichità ad oggi* (Bari: Laterza, 2007). On medieval fatherhood, see Rachel Moss, *Fatherhood and its Representations in Middle English Texts* (Suffolk: D. S. Brewer, 2013); Philip Grace, *Affectionate Authorities: Fathers and Fatherly Roles in Late Medieval Basel* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2015). On early modern *patria potestas* in Italian lands, Daniela Frigo, *Il padre di famiglia. Governo della casa e governo civile nella tradizione dell'"economica" tra Cinque e Seicento* (Rome: Bulzoni, 1987); Angiolina Arru, ed., *Pater Familias* (Rome: Biblink, 2002). For German and Swiss lands, see the classic study by Steven Ozment, *When Fathers Ruled: Family Life in Reformation Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985). On eighteenth-century changes in France, Julie Doyon, "L'autorité paternelle dans la culture pénale Parisienne au siècle des Lumières," in *Paris et ses peuples au xviiie siècle*, eds. Pascal Bastien and Simon Macdonald (Paris: Éditions de la Sorbonne, 2020), 221-235; Julie Doyon, "Le père dénaturé au siècle des Lumières," *Annales de démographie historique* 2 (2009): 143-165.

[58] Julie Hardwick, *The Practice of Patriarchy: Gender and the Politics of Household Authority in Early Modern France* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 1998). See also John Tosh, "Current Issues in the History of Masculinity," in *La costruzione dell'identità maschile nell'età moderna e contemporanea*, ed. Angiolina Arru (Rome: Biblink, 2001), 63-78.

[59] On the formative role of apprenticeship see Maarten Prak and Patrick Wallis, eds., *Apprenticeship in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020). For the importance of guild culture as a conduit of masculinity, Christina M. Fitzgerald, *The Drama of Masculinity and Medieval English Guild Culture* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

[60] On early modern bachelors, Sandra Cavallo, "Bachelorhood and Masculinity in Renaissance and Early Modern Italy," *European History Quarterly* 38, no. 3 (2008): 375-397.

Investigating which educational models were available to premodern men, how children and adolescents were socialized into them, and the ways in which lived lives deviated from the norms leads us to the intimate world of the family. The sphere of merchant masculinity offers a productive subset of related questions, as those notions of honor and reputation that bolstered mercantile trust and credit were inextricable from concepts of what it meant to be an accomplished husband and father. They too appear to have been largely shared by Christians and Jews across European regions.[61] Still, more research is needed to determine how such ideals were articulated at different times, and what specificities distinguished Jews from non-Jews, to avoid the pitfalls of an essentialist take on a transhistorical merchant masculinity.[62]

My essay aims to nuance understandings of mercantile fatherhood, in light of recent understandings that the experiences of, and models available to, early modern fathers were more complex than previously believed. The piece highlights a specific emotional style found in Jewish personal and communal documents from the late eighteenth century. This "rhetoric of paternal affliction," as I call it, was expressed by Italian Jewish heads of households in relation to threats to their overlapping paternal and commercial authority, particularly when filial disobedience was involved. Yet, this sentimental display of sorrow was not a show of effeminacy, but rather a display of virtuous masculine ethics. Ultimately, it was an effort to reinforce the unstable status of Jewish patriarchs towards the end of the Old Regime, by forging bonds of sympathy with like-minded Jewish and non-Jewish men, based on the belief that a household in disarray because of disobedient sons simultaneously undermined the natural order of society and caused Jewish economic ruin.

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[61] On medieval merchant masculinities see Juliann Vitullo and Diane Wolfthal, "Trading Values: Negotiating Masculinity in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe," in *Money, Morality, and Culture in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, eds. Juliann Vitullo and Diane Wolfthal (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2010), 155-196. For the early modern period: John Smail, "Coming of Age in Trade: Masculinity and Commerce in Eighteenth-Century England," in *The Self-Perception of Early Modern Capitalists*, eds. Margaret C. Jacob and Catherine Secretan (New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2008), 229-252; Martha Howell, "Merchant Masculinity in Early Modern Northern Europe," *Cultural and Social History* 18, no. 3 (2021): 275-296.

[62] Francesca Bregoli, "'Your Father's Interests': The Business of Kinship in a Trans-Mediterranean Jewish Merchant Family, 1776–1790," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 108, no. 2 (2018): 194-224.

Along with studies of the ways in which men operated within a web of power relations informed by the premodern social order, and research on the cultural construction and representation of masculinity over time, another significant branch of scholarship on premodern manhood has concentrated on understandings of the male body and male sexuality. Drawing on insights from medicine and science, on the footsteps of Michel Foucault's seminal *History of Sexuality*,[63] cultural historians have explored the ways in which bodies were understood to be sexed—such as the growing knowledge of male and female physiology and anatomy and the increasing awareness of sex differentiation over the course of the early modern period and the Enlightenment.[64] In turn, some attention has been paid to religious concerns about the limitations and weaknesses of the sexed male body, with his impulses and involuntary emissions.[65] Mystical notions of the body and its urges is another crucial element to ponder. In general

[63] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 3 vols. (New York: Random House, 1978). Foucault left a fourth volume unfinished. Scholars of Jewish thought and philosophy have devoted particular attention to menstruation, and the laws and ethics of marital sex, with particular attention to Abraham ibn David's *Ba'ale ha-nefesh* (twelfth century) and to the anonymous thirteenth-century kabbalistic work *Iggeret ha-Kodesh*. For an initial orientation in this vast literature see Monford Harris, "Marriage as Metaphysics: A Study of the Iggereth ha-Kodesh," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 33 (1962): 197-220; Fred Rosner, *Sex Ethics in the Writings of Moses Maimonides* (New York: Bloch, 1974); Ron Barkaï, *Les infortunes de Dinah: Le livre de la generation: La gynécologie juive au Moyen Âge* (Paris: Cerf, 1991); Jeremy Cohen, "Rationales for Conjugal Sex in RaABaD's *Ba'alei ha-nefesh*," *Jewish History* 6 (1992): 65-78; Charles Mopsik, *Lettre sur la sainteté: La relation entre l'homme avec sa femme* (Lagrasse: Verdier, 1993); Evyatar Marienberg, *Niddah: Lorsque les juifs conceptualisent la menstruation* (Paris: Belles Lettres, 2003); Sharon Faye Koren, *Forsaken: The Menstruant in Medieval Jewish Mysticism* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2011).

[64] Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990); Patricia Simons, *The Sex of Men in Premodern Europe: A Cultural History* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2011). But along with the "one-sex" model posited by Laqueur, premodern people were cognizant of sex ambiguity: Kathleen Long, *Hermaphrodites in Renaissance Europe* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006); Irina Metzler, "Hermaphroditism in the Western Middle Ages: Physicians, Lawyers and the Intersexed Person," in *Bodies of Knowledge: Cultural Interpretations of Illness and Medicine in Medieval Europe*, eds. Sally Crawford and Christina Lee (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2010), 27-39; Leah DeVun, "Erecting Sex: Hermaphrodites and the Medieval Science of Surgery," *Osiris* 30 (2015): 17-37.

[65] Dyan Elliott, *Fallen Bodies: Pollution, Sexuality, and Demonology in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999); Jacqueline Murray, "'The Law of Sin that Is in My Members': The Problem of Male Embodiment," in *Gender and Holiness: Men, Women, and Saints in Late Medieval Europe*, eds. Samantha J. E. Riches and Sarah Salih (New York: Routledge, 2002), 9-22.

historiography, the research on embodied medieval mysticism, spearheaded by Caroline Walker Bynum, has tended to examine women's experiences, focusing on the female body and highlighting the gender-specific ways in which Christian female mystics accessed avenues of communion with the divine that were traditionally reserved for men.[66] Within Zoharic and Lurianic kabbalah, however, mystical takes on male sexuality and the male body come into sharp relief, clarifying Jewish views on the sexualized, male-female body of the divine and its hypostases, the eroticized nature of the mystic's union with the Godhead, and the regulation of male bodily impulses, intentional and automatic, such as spilled semen.[67]

While most of the contributors to this issue situate Jewish masculinity in relation to the surrounding Christian culture—whether to examine how Christians understood Jewish men, the ways in which Jewish and Christian men interacted, or the forms in which Jewish men represented themselves to non-Jews—Avinoam Stillman takes us to the heart of Jewish male spirituality and how it may have affected Jewish sexuality. His essay concentrates on the kabbalistic preoccupation with masturbation and "wasted seed" to offer an outline of early modern kabbalistic masculinity, "characterized by a claim to cosmic influence and an imperative to self-discipline."[68] Zoharic and Lurianic kabbalah viewed wasting seed as an act involving sexual intercourse and procreation with demons, with destructive (and yet generative) reverberations at the cosmic level. The writings on

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[66] Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987); Caroline Walker Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York: Zone Books, 1991). See also Ulrike Wiethaus, ed., *Maps of Flesh and Light: The Religious Experience of Medieval Women Mystics* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1993).

[67] For classic views on these themes see Lawrence Fine, "Purifying the Body in the Name of the Soul: The Problem of the Body in Sixteenth-Century Kabbalah," in *People of the Body: Jews and Judaism from an Embodied Perspective*, ed. Howard Eilberg-Schwartz (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 117-142; Yehuda Liebes, "Zohar ve-Eros," *Alpaim* 9 (1994): 67-119; Moshe Idel, *Kabbalah and Eros* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005); Charles Mopsik, *Sex of the Soul: The Vicissitudes of Sexual Difference in Kabbalah*, ed. Daniel Abrams (Los Angeles: Cherub Press, 2005); Elliot R. Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being: Kabbalistic Hermeneutics and Poetic Imagination* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005). For kabbalistic views of femininity, see now Moshe Idel, *The Privileged Divine Feminine in Kabbalah* (Berlin - Boston: De Gruyter, 2019).

[68] Avinoam Stillman, "On Kabbalah and 'Wasted Seed' in Seventeenth-Century Poland: A Chapter in the History of the Male Jewish Body," 83-111; 108.

wasted seed of two seventeenth-century Polish kabbalists, Meir Popper and his student Joseph Calahora, shed light on notions of permitted sexuality and ever-present sexual temptations rooted in mystical literature, which profoundly informed Ashkenazi culture. By the seventeenth century, kabbalistic views on proper male behavior, sexual comportment, and relations between men and women were no longer solely the purview of learned elites but had seeped into mainstream Eastern European Judaism through ethical tracts and sermons, influencing gender constructs up to this day.

Whereas Jewish kabbalistic and ethical sources were deeply preoccupied with marital sexuality and heterosexual temptations, the organization of medieval and early modern sexuality was not linear. As Michael Rocke incisively suggested in his landmark study of homosexuality in Renaissance Florence, the binary understanding of "straight" and "gay," so predominant in the twentieth century, does not capture the sexual spectrum that transpires from premodern documents.[69] Investigating experiences of male homosociality and homosexuality thus adds another necessary layer to the complexity of medieval and early modern masculinity. Bonds of friendship and brotherhood between men, which flourished both outside and inside of the home, were inscribed within societal webs of power and hierarchy, and so were sexual relations between men. "Friend" was a term used to refer to a patron or a client, to a business partner, to kin—although it could also denote a deeply loved, intimate companion, as Alan Bray showed.[70] In turn, homosexual relations were referred to as "sodomy," a term which technically connoted a broader variety of sexual activities that did not lead to procreation. During the Middle Ages, sodomy, viewed as a perversion of God's laws and nature, had become a capital sin punishable by death.[71] Because of its severity, ad hoc magistracies like Florence's *Ufficiali di Notte* were appointed to deal with it.[72] In the sixteenth and seventeenth century, the Church considered

[69] Michael Rocke, *Forbidden Friendships: Homosexuality and Male Culture in Renaissance Florence* (New York - Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 10-11.
[70] Alan Bray, *The Friend* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).
[71] Michael Goodich, *The Unmentionable Vice: Homosexuality in the Later Medieval Period* (Santa Barbara, CA: Ross-Erikson, 1979).
[72] Rocke, *Forbidden Friendships*.

sodomy as a crime of heresy, to be investigated by the Roman and Iberian Inquisitions.[73]

In the spectrum of male relationships, the virtue of friendship and the grave sin of sodomy seemed to be at opposing ends, and yet physical closeness and intimacy were required of both.[74] In her essay, Katherine Aron-Beller takes us inside a Modenese household to examine the violent rape committed by adult Christian men against a boy, an intimate male Jewish-Christian friendship, and dynamics of male domestic labor. These themes all emerge from a 1670 sodomy trial against a Jew, Lazarro Norsa, who served as the household's tailor and was falsely implicated in the sodomy case by the boy's father, the household's coachman. In Italian lands, sodomy was often tolerated and punished with moderation, as long as it conformed to the established patriarchal social structure, with an older man from a higher social rank penetrating a younger partner, usually from a lower social class.[75] Sodomy could assert manhood through the sexual submission of younger boys, but an allegation against a Jewish man dangerously subverted these understandings.[76] Aron-Beller shows that Norsa's friendship with his master and his master's son, whose bed he often shared, granted him protection and patronage, allowing him to escape the trial unscathed.[77] In the complex domestic

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[73] Historians have mined criminal and inquisitorial records to investigate its meanings and ramifications: Guido Ruggiero, *Boundaries of Eros: Sex, Crime, and Sexuality in Renaissance Venice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985); Tom Betteridge, ed., *Sodomy in Early Modern Europe* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002); Federico Garza Carvajal, *Butterflies Will Burn: Prosecuting Sodomites in Early Modern Spain and Mexico* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003); Cristian Berco, *Sexual Hierarchies, Public Status: Men, Sodomy and Society in Spain's Golden Age* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007); Umberto Grassi, *L'Offitio sopra l'Onestà: il controllo della sodomia nella Lucca del Cinquecento* (Milan: Mimesis, 2014); Vincenzo Lavenia, *Un'eresia indicibile: inquisizione e crimini contro natura in età moderna* (Bologna: EDB, 2015). For an overview influenced by the history of emotions, see now Umberto Grassi, *Sodoma: persecuzioni, affetti, pratiche sociali (secoli V-XVIII)* (Rome: Carocci, 2019).

[74] Alan Bray, "Homosexuality and the Signs of Male Friendship in Elizabethan England," *History Workshop Journal* (1990): 1-19.

[75] Rocke, *Forbidden Friendships*; Umberto Grassi, "Shame and Boastfulness in Early Modern Italy: Showing Off Masculinity and Exposing Sexual Submission in Class and Age Competitions," in *Gender and Status Competition in Pre-Modern Societies*, eds. Martha Bayless, Jonas Lilequist, and Lewis Webb (Turnhout: Brepols, 2021), 109-124.

[76] Rocke, *Forbidden Friendships*.

[77] For a late fifteenth-century case with a very different outcome, see Tamar Herzig, *A Convert's Tale: Art, Crime, and Jewish Apostasy in Renaissance Italy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2019), 59-69.

space of an early modern household, male Jewish-Christian friendship was cemented through loyalty, affection, and the physical intimacy of bedsharing.

In conclusion, the essays collected here at times confirm established understandings of pre-modern Jewish men's behaviors and ideal models, at others correct them. Many questions remain, and fruitful avenues of research await. Back in 1985, Carrigan, Connell and Lee forcefully claimed that "the political meaning of writing about masculinity turns mainly on its treatment of power."[78] While significant attention has been paid to power dynamics in the fraught system of premodern Jewish-Christian relations, new studies of medieval and early modern intra-Jewish hierarchies of power can be facilitated by uncovering constructs of manhood among different Jewish social classes—rabbis, householders, servants, and the poor. An observant reader will have also noticed that this collection primarily explores male-male relations; only tangentially do Jewish women come into view. And yet, women were crucial in the construction of premodern Jewish masculinities—in their familial roles as mothers, daughters, sisters, wives; as elementary school teachers; as co-workers sharing in the economy of domestic labors; as religious models like the biblical matriarchs and heroines. Future research will certainly strive to better integrate relations between women and men into the agenda of premodern Jewish masculinity studies. By attending to gender in relational and intersectional ways, we will be able to bring into even sharper relief what roles and opportunities were open to medieval and early modern Jewish men as men, depending on their multiple social identities and their positionality vis-à-vis other Jewish men, Jewish women, and non-Jews.

Francesca Bregoli holds the Joseph and Oro Halegua Chair in Greek and Sephardic Jewish Studies and is Associate Professor of History at Queens College and the Graduate Center, City University of New York. Her research focuses on eighteenth-century Italian and Sephardic Jewish history. She is the author of "Mediterranean Enlightenment: Livornese Jews, Tuscan Culture, and Eighteenth-Century Reform" (Stanford University Press, 2014) and co-editor of "Connecting Histories: Jews and Their Others in Early Modern Europe" (Penn Press, 2019) and "Italian Jewish Networks from the Seventeenth

[78] Carrigan, Connell, and Lee, "Toward a New Sociology of Masculinity," 552.

to the Twentieth Centuries: Bridging Europe and the Mediterranean" (Palgrave, 2018). Her current project, influenced by the history of the family and the history of emotions, investigates overlaps between affective and business ties in transregional Jewish merchant families.

Keywords: Masculinities, Gender, Sexuality, Power, Jewish-Christian relations

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Conversion and Masculinity in Thirteenth-Century England: One Man's Decision to Leave the Priesthood for Judaism

by *Rebekah Sewell*

Abstract

In 1222, an anonymous Christian deacon was executed for heresy in Oxford after converting to Judaism and marrying a Jewish woman. The first known execution in England for heresy, this paper explores how devout masculine standards in Judaism had the potential to create incentives and rationales for Christian clerical conversion to Judaism at a time when the Church was showing a new determination to enforce clerical celibacy and eradicate father-son religious relationships. This paper argues that his conversion to Judaism might be understood as a reclamation of a masculine identity that had come to be forbidden by the Church. It further suggests new points of contentions between Jews and the Church during the thirteenth century in that the Church seems to have had reasons to regard Jewish masculinity itself as threatening as it offered secular clergymen something they wanted but which the Church now withheld: legitimacy for married, religious men.

Reform in Discourse

Anglo-Norman Clerical Experiences

Chronicles Recording the Trial

Thomas Wykes

Memoriale

Matthew Paris

Medieval Jewish Masculinity

BT Bava Metzia 84a

Rebekah Sewell

Thirteenth-Century Jewish Polemicist

Conclusion

From the eleventh through the thirteenth centuries, the secular clergy in England confronted a growing challenge to their way of life from the Church's broad agenda for moral reform. This agenda often contradicted or ignored the secular clergy's local cultural practices and embedded standards of masculinity.[1] Sparking passionate resistance, the requirement for celibacy and the banning of clerical marriage, perhaps the most contentious of these reforms, were especially provocative to the secular clergy in the Anglo-Norman region, where these reforms were openly flouted and clerical marriages often officially tolerated.[2] While reforms began in the eleventh century, it was not until the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) that the Church was powerful and present enough to seriously enforce clerical celibacy. This council, unlike previous attempts, created enforcement mechanisms for these reforms, which were propagated and upheld by subsequent local councils.[3]

On 17 April 1222, Archbishop of Canterbury Stephen Langton held one of these local councils at the conventual church in Oseney, just outside of Oxford. At this council, a trial occurred wherein an anonymous deacon residing in Oxford was tried and convicted of heresy after converting to Judaism and marrying a Jewish

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[1] Jennifer Thibodeaux, *The Manly Priest: Clerical Celibacy, Masculinity, and Reform in England and Normandy, 1066-1300* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), 1-14 and 41-111; Thomas Hugh, *The Secular Clergy in England, 1066-1216* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 8-9, 31-35; Anne L. Barstow, *Married Priests and the Reforming Papacy: The Eleventh Century Debates* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1982), 71-76; The present analysis focuses specifically on how Anglo-Norman clergymen responded to the new celibacy requirements during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. For a broader representation of Christian masculinities during this period, the reader may wish to consult Ruth Mazo Karras, *Thou Art the Man: The Masculinity of David in the Christian and Jewish Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2021).

[2] Thomas, *The Secular Clergy*, 171-175; Thibodeaux, *The Manly Priest*, 42-46, 50-57 and 90-93.

[3] Thibodeaux, *The Manly Priest*, 6, 113; Robert Bartlett, *The Making of Europe, 950-1350* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 243-250.

woman.[4] This event was the first known execution for heresy in England and the only known one for about the next two hundred years.[5]

In addition to a new momentum for the reform movement, anti-Jewish rhetoric was also intensifying at the beginning of the thirteenth century, particularly among the friars. Indeed, the Dominican order had moved into Oxford just one year prior to the convert's heresy trial.[6] In England, this order in particular intentionally located themselves within Jewish neighborhoods in order to further attempts to convert Jews to Christianity.[7] From the late twelfth century, the Church exhibited a growing anxiety toward the presence of Jews in Europe, a fear that gained force throughout the thirteenth century and increasingly viewed Jews as threats to the security of Latin Christendom.[8] The Church's unprecedented response to this clergyman's decision to convert to Judaism suggests that this was an important moment in the relationship between Christianity and Judaism.[9]

I argue that the deacon's conversion to Judaism in Oxford may be interpreted as a reclamation of masculine customs that the Church was finally powerful enough to effectively prohibit. I also argue that this interpretation helps explain how rewriting devout masculine customs might provoke a medieval Anglo-Norman clergyman to question his own truth convictions. During the thirteenth century, Jews and Christians alike viewed learned males, such as clergymen, as trophy converts since both perceived learned males as signifiers of religious truth.[10] This Jewish-Christian coupling of devout masculinity with truth may help us understand this man's decision to convert as an alignment of normative standards of masculinity with their associated truth claim, in that Jewish views of devout

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[4] Frederic Maitland, "The Deacon and the Jewess," *Transactions* 6 (1908-1910): 260-276.

[5] Ibid., 260, 265; Paola Tartakoff, *Conversion, Circumcision, and Ritual Murder in Medieval Europe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020), 26.

[6] Cecil Roth, *The Jews of Medieval Oxford* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951), 19.

[7] John Tolan, *England's Jews: Finance, Violence, and the Crown in the Thirteenth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2023) 164-165; Robert C. Stacey, "The Conversion of Jews to Christianity in Thirteenth-Century England," *Speculum* 67, no. 2 (1992): 267.

[8] Jeremy Cohen, *The Friars and the Jews* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), 15, 51-76, 234 and 242-264; Rebecca Rist, *Popes & Jews, 1095-1291* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), xi, 81 and 129.

[9] Tartakoff, *Conversion, Circumcision*, 26; Cohen, *The Friars and the Jews*, 15, 51-76, 234 and 242-264.

[10] Tartakoff, *Conversion, Circumcision,* 26, 33, 78-84 and 98.

masculinity expected marriage and children where Christian reform masculinity prohibited them.[11]

Since we do not have personal testimony from our deacon, our investigation requires an oblique methodological approach. The chronicle accounts of his conversion and trial, in addition to being mediated, are also from an unfriendly source—the institution from which he apostatized; but as Carlo Ginzburg's *The Cheese and the Worms* reminds us, history is by its nature mediated and partial, and inquiries that rely on sources with layers of mediation need not be counted as hopeless.[12] Chroniclers describing the trial of a man they potentially view as threatening fit this bill. Thus, I combine my analysis of the chronicles by analyzing two additional source repositories in order to map out thought worlds relevant to an Anglo-Norman clergyman converting to Judaism: 1) Anglo-Norman clerical experiences during the reforms and 2) medieval Jewish writings addressing devout masculinity. As a theoretical basis, we look to Yair Mintzker's *The Many Deaths of Jew Süss*, in which he invokes Aristotle's idea of "thinking as a kind of discourse."[13] While we cannot state with certainty our deacon's individual motives for converting, putting these relevant thought worlds into discourse with one another holds potential to generate creative thinking about Jewish-Christian relations in terms of masculinity at this moment.

An era abundant in antisemitic narratives, the Middle Ages can pose challenges for historians trying to discern actual events from literary ones. Although many accounts are obviously contrived, like host desecration and ritual murder libels, some narratives are more difficult to assess.[14] Since the nineteenth century scholars have engaged with the sources related to this event as representations of a real occurrence, but many also note that as we get further from the event in question, the retellings tend to exhibit greater disparities.[15] F.W. Maitland, the first scholar

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[11] See discussion below on Jewish masculinity. Thibodeaux, *The Manly Priest*, 1-14.

[12] Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller*, trans. John and Anne C. Tedeschi (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 2013), xii and xxiv-xxvi.

[13] Yair Mintzker, *The Many Deaths of Jew Süss: The Notorious Trial and Execution of an Eighteenth-Century Court Jew* (Princeton: Princeton University, 2017), 231-279.

[14] Miri Rubin, *Gentile Tales: The Narrative Assault on Late Medieval Jews* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 7-36; Rist, *Popes & Jews*, 84-86.

[15] Maitland, "The Deacon and the Jewess," 268; Tartakoff, *Conversion, Circumcision*, 26; Adrienne Williams Boyarin, *The Christian Jew and the Unmarked Jewess: The Polemics of*

to comprehensively interpret these sources, understood the event as a real conversion and romance, but also noted how later chroniclers tended toward narrative ornamentation.[16] Other historians have likewise treated this event as an actual conversion and/or romance.[17] Scholars, in fact, identify two thirteenth-century conversions of Christian clergymen who converted and married Jewish women: the Oxford deacon in 1222 and Robert of Reading in 1275.[18] It is telling that both romances come from the Anglo-Norman region. Robert of Reading's conversion was tethered to his study of Hebrew at Oxford University, a medieval university town in which Jews and Christians had ample opportunities for interaction.[19] This counterintuitive choice by a Christian cleric to convert to Judaism during a period of growing antisemitism in Europe begs for an explanation.[20]

My analysis begins by discussing the development of the Church's moral reforms in the Anglo-Norman region. Subsequently, I delve into a selection of oppositional responses to these reforms originating among Anglo-Norman secular clergymen. These responses provide essential context for understanding the deacon's conversion—namely, the fact that a distinct community of Anglo-Norman secular clergymen defined itself in part through defiance of these reforms. By contextualizing the deacon's conversion within the broader framework of these reforms, my analysis expands our understanding of how Anglo-Norman secular clergymen might have creatively resisted these changes, in this instance through conversion. Next, I examine selected trial sources. These texts reveal that the authors responded to the anxiety generated by the deacon's conversion by

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Sameness in Medieval English Anti-Judaism (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2021), 213-216.

[16] Maitland, "The Deacon and Jewess," 260-276.

[17] Robin Mundill, *England's Jewish Solution: Experiment and Expulsion, 1262-1290* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 48-49; Roth, *The Jews of Medieval Oxford*, 15; David Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence: Persecution of Minorities in the Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 128 n2; Boyarin, *The Christian Jew and the Unmarked Jewess*, 213-216; Tartakoff, *Conversion, Circumcision*, 70-78.

[18] Boyarin observes that tales of the Jewish seductress type were rare in thirteenth century England and argues that the styles and timing of the sources recording the deacon's conversion and marriage indicate a real event. Boyarin, *The Christian Jew and the Unmarked Jewess*, 213-216.

[19] Boyarin, *The Christian Jew and the Unmarked Jewess*, 120, 122-123, 213 and 216.

[20] Cohen, *The Friars and the Jews*, 15, 51-76 and 242-264.

employing various methods to discredit him.[21] Finally, I explore standards of medieval Jewish masculinity and show how the very aspects of manhood that the Church had recently prohibited for the secular clergy were not only celebrated but also required in Judaism.[22] In conclusion, I employ this framework to discuss how the intersection of devout masculinity and truth could have shaped the deacon's decision to convert.

Reform in Discourse

The Church was not in a position to enforce many of its reforms until the Fourth Lateran Council (1215).[23] This ability was demonstrated by the local, reform-minded councils that followed Lateran IV in Anglo-Norman areas, with one notable example being Langton's Oxford Council.[24] Twelve of the bishops who attended Langton's Oxford Council had also been present at Lateran IV seven years earlier.[25] Rome's influence in England was particularly pronounced during this period, given the recent papal interdict. This authority was extended through papal legates who helped implement Lateran IV's decrees. While none of these legates were stationed in England during Langton's council, Langton himself took up the torch of enforcing Lateran IV with his 1222 council; a notable focus of his

[21] Of apostate clergymen Tartakoff writes: "The conversions to Judaism of learned churchmen suggested that no segment of Christian society was safe." Tartakoff, *Conversion, Circumcision*, 83-84.

[22] Babylonian Talmud *Bava Metzia* 84a, *William Davidson Talmud*, *Sefaria*, accessed December 21, 2023 https://www.sefaria.org/Bava_Metzia.84a.2?lang=bi&with=Rashi&lang2=en; Michael L. Satlow, "Salve to Weapon: Torah Study, Masculinity and the Babylonian Talmud," in *Religious Men and Masculine Identity in the Middle Ages*, eds. Katherine J. Lewis and Pat H. Cullum, (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2005), 19; David Berger, *The Jewish-Christian Debate in the High Middle Ages: A Critical Edition of the Nizzahon Vetus* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1979), 69-70.

[23] Bartlett, *The Making of Europe*, 243-250; Thibodeaux, *The Manly Priest,* 7, 112-118; Barstow, *Married Priests*, 190-191.

[24] Thibodeaux, *The Manly Priest*, 113-115; Rist, *Popes & Jews,* 171; Tartakoff, *Conversion, Circumcision*, 33. For an English translation of the proceedings from the Oxford council, which reiterate the canons of Lateran IV, see the serialized articles by John William White in *The British Magazine*, Jun 1844-Oct 1844.

[25] Tartakoff, *Conversion, Circumcision*, 33.

efforts was the attempt to enforce badge requirements on England's Jewish communities.[26]

Entrenched expectations for Anglo-Norman men to marry and have children, coupled with local officials often turning a blind eye to bans on clerical marriage, posed formidable obstacles to legislative attempts to uproot clerical marriage prior to Lateran IV.[27] Often, individual reformers assumed the task of legislative enforcement but proved to be isolated, ineffective voices for reform. Anselm of Canterbury's attempts to legislate against celibacy in twelfth-century England, for example, were ignored by several of the bishops who attended the council that produced this legislation.[28] Likewise, English reformer Gerald of Wales observed that supporters of clerical marriage and fatherhood were "indulging [their] native land," while Anglo-Norman clergymen saw reformers as promoting "foreign hypocrisy."[29] The campaign for celibacy was thus understood on some level by both sides as a local versus foreign issue. Prior to Lateran IV, Anglo-Norman clerics openly flouted marriage bans and passionately defended a clergyman's right to marry and "enjoy his wife."[30] It would take more than legislation and the efforts of lone reformers to eradicate an entrenched local practice.[31]

In the thirteenth century, the Church also began to exhibit growing anxiety over Jews' sexuality. This unease manifested in various Christian attempts to feminize Jewish men, portraying them as sexually threatening figures. Additionally, the Church reiterated its ban on Jewish-Christian intermingling during the Lateran IV Council. Reformers regarded the Jews' rejection of celibacy as evidence of their supposed sexual wantonness; during this time clerical portrayals of Jewish men attempted to feminize them further by portraying them as licentious and subject

[26] Thibodeaux, *The Manly Priest*, 114; Tolan, *England's Jews*, 87-89 and 98-107.
[27] Thomas, *The Secular Clergy*, 155-190; Thibodeaux, *The Manly Priest*, 42-63 and 86-111.
[28] Thibodeaux, *The Manly Priest*, 50-51; Barstow, *Married Priests*, 93-94.
[29] Gerald of Wales quoted in Thibodeaux, *The Manly Priest*, 58; *Tractatus pro clericorum conubio* quoted in Thibodeaux, *The Manly Priest*, 91.
[30] Thibodeaux, *The Manly Priest*, 46-63 and 90-93; "Married clergy," trans. John Boswell in *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980), 398-401; During the century after the Gregorian Reforms, "England's clergy remained as uxorious as ever." Barstow, *Married Priests*, 94.
[31] Barstow, *Married Priests*, 47-156; Thibodeaux, *The Manly Priest*, 41-63.

to menstruation.[32] Reform masculinity thus asserted masculine superiority over both Jewish men and Anglo-Norman married clergy on the grounds that they were sexually active.[33] These portrayals had the potential to shape married clergymen's perceptions of Jewish men in unintended ways, making it seem as if reformers regarded both groups as similarly impure. After the Gregorian Reforms, clerical perspectives on the views on the male body espoused by the Hebrew scriptures were divided. One perspective aligned with, arguably even derived from, the Jewish understanding of sex and marriage, while the other sought a heightened spiritual masculinity through ascetic celibacy.[34] The Church's attempts to enforce clerical celibacy intensified this division, provoking significant resistance from Anglo-Norman clergy who saw marriage and procreation as normative aspects of their masculinity.[35] It is worth noting that Lateran IV, in addition to bolstering the authority of the reforms, also legislated that Jews wear distinguishing badges so that the "damnable mixing" of Jews and Christians, "may not spread further."[36]

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[32] Joan Young Gregg, *Devils, Women, and Jews: Reflection of the Other in Medieval Sermon Series* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1997), 104, 186-187, 194-196 and 219; Daniel Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 210; Peter Biller, "View of Jews from Paris around 1300: Christian or 'Scientific'?" in *Christianity and Judaism,* ed. Diana Wood, *Studies in Church History* 29 (1992): 187-207; Irven M. Resnick, *Marks of Distinction: Christian Perceptions of Jews in the High Middle Ages* (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2012), 70, 78-80; Barstow, *Married Priests*, 22-23; Thibodeaux, *The Manly Priest*, 1-14.

[33] Barstow, *Married Priests*, 21-22; Gregg, *Devils, Women, Jews*, 104 and 185-187; Thibodeaux, *The Manly Priest*, 8-9 and 132.

[34] Thibodeaux, *Manly Priest*, 1-11, 90-91 and 124. Norman cleric Serlo of Bayeux's arguments defending clerical marriage cited the Hebraic-Christian tradition of married priests from the Old Testament to support his position. Barstow, *Married Priests*, 131-133; Thomas, *The Secular Clergy*, 170-171; Barstow, *Married Priests*, 21-23.

[35] Barstow, *Married Priests*, 105-156; C.N.L Brooke "Gregorian Reform in Action: Clerical Marriage in England, 1050-1200" *The Cambridge Historical Journal* 12, no. 1 (1956): 1-21; Thibodeaux, *The Manly Priest*, 86-111 and 131-150.

[36] Cohen, *The Friars and the Jews*, 15, 51-76 and 242-264; "Fourth Lateran Council—1215 A.D." *Papal Encyclicals Online*, accessed December 21, 2023, https://www.papalencyclicals.net/councils/ecum12-2.htm; Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence*, 133. In 1218, England was the first European country to issue legislation reinforcing Lateran IV's injunction that Jews wear a badge, but despite this royal mandate, most English Jewish communities purchased exemptions, including Oxford's Jewish community in 1221. Langton opposed these exemptions and reissued the requirement at the Oxford council, though the king rescinded his attempt. Tolan, *England's Jews*, 12, 18 and 140.

A clergyman who, at this time and place, apostatized and married a Jewish woman would have been a nightmare scenario.

Anglo-Norman Clerical Experiences

In Anglo-Norman regions, a community comprised of stigmatized married clergymen began to form as early as the eleventh century. Late eleventh-century rallying letters that circulated among married Anglo-Norman clerics provide evidence that they perceived themselves as a distinct community characterized by their defiance. In these letters, they urged each other to "resist emerging adversaries [promoters of celibacy] manfully" and acknowledged that this conflict had affected them "no less than others."[37] (Another Norman defense of clerical marriage was, in fact, favorably quoted by a cleric in twelfth-century Oxford, demonstrating a cross-channel conversation well before the time of our convert.)[38] Bemoaning that they had become "objects of jeering infamy" to laypeople, clergymen in Anglo-Norman areas felt humiliated by celibacy requirements.[39] The poem *Nos uxorati sumus* (*We Married Clergy*), written by an Anglo-Norman priest defending marriage, offers evidence that this sense of isolation continued into the twelfth century. The poet regrets that married clerics seem "born to be made fun of."[40] Directly confronting celibacy requirements, the poet maintains the goodness of male sexuality for its role in the propagation of humanity, arguing that it is indispensable "in [humanity's] quest for perpetuity," and without it "the world would be finished."[41] This cleric's argument that marriage and procreation were goods for all men better aligned, as we will see, with medieval Jewish views of masculinity than with reform masculinity.[42] This community would face

[37] These men united around both the right of a priest to marry and to have legitimate sons, who could inherit their benefices. "*Cameracensium et Noviomensium clericorum epistolae*" [Letters of the clergy of Cambrai and Noyon], trans. John Ott, accessed December 21, 2023, https://web.pdx.edu/~ott/hst407Church/letter/.

[38] Barstow, *Married Priests*, 137-139; Thibodeaux, *The Manly Priest*, 106-108.

[39] "Letters of Cambrai and Noyon," trans. John Ott.

[40] "Married clergy," trans. John Boswell in *Christianity, Social Tolerance*, 398-401; Thibodeaux identifies Serlo of Bayeux as the author of this poem, *Married Priests*, 100-176.

[41] "Married clergy," trans. John Boswell in *Christianity, Social Tolerance*, 398-401.

[42] Berger, *Nizzahon Vetus,* 69-70 and 205.

increasing stigmatization as the Church dug in its heels on this issue and became more willing and able to discipline sexually active priests beginning in the thirteenth century.[43]

In response to Lateran IV, pro-marriage English clergymen wrote a series of spirited songs imitating fake council proceedings, in which they comically addressed the most recent prohibitions of clerical marriage. In one song, echoing the biblical commandment not to covet your neighbor's wife, one priest writes that it is wrong to steal another man's woman; rather, "you should have your own, and delight in her, and thus await the last day more securely."[44] This author privileges the commandments found in Deuteronomy over the new laws of the Church. Another priest concludes his poem with a humorous misinterpretation of the commandment to love, declaring that since the pope has commanded clergymen to fulfill it, "[w]e clerics will have two concubines, monks and canons, the same number or three, deans and bishops, four or five. Thus[,] at last we will fulfill divine law."[45] With blithe insubordination, these responses declare the priests' intention to disregard the freshly reiterated requirements for celibacy established at Lateran IV. The dominant tone of these poems, significantly, is not so much a defense of clerical marriage as it is one of defiance. Expressing frustration through humor, these English clergymen no longer seem to see engagement as a way forward. English clergymen had faced a century of uneven enforcement from various parties, often motivated by ulterior (usually financial) motives. The English monarchy, for example, had seized the wives and mistresses of clergymen multiple times (most recently in 1208) and ransomed them back to their husbands. Even some Church reformers exploited the requirement for celibacy for financial gain, such as the when canons at Dunstable attempted, with partial success, to unseat several veteran clergymen from valuable benefices through accusations of fornication.[46] Thus, this dismissive tone, rather than a defensive one, not only suggests a loss of hope that the bans would eventually be lifted and a determination to defy them, but also likely reflects the disingenuous enforcement

[43] Thibodeaux, *The Manly Priest*, 32-40, 86-125 and 126-150; "Fourth Lateran Council—1215 A.D."
[44] Portions of poems translated in Thomas, *The Secular Clergy*, 154-155; full poems in original Latin in *The Latin Poems commonly attributed to Walter Mapes*, ed. Thomas Wright (London: John Bowyer Nichols and Son, 1841), 171-173.
[45] Thomas, *The Secular Clergy*, 154-155.
[46] Ibid., 160-165.

that English clergymen had experienced. This resolve and potential loss of hope following Lateran IV is important to remember when considering the decision of our deacon to convert to Judaism in Oxford during these very same years.

Chronicles Recording the Trial

There exist eight known thirteenth-century records of the deacon's trial at Oseney in 1222. Maitland, the first historian to compile these records into one place, assessed that the most reliable narratives are Henry de Bracton's record and the accounts from the chronicles of Waverley, Dunstable, Ralph of Coggeshall, and Walter of Coventry's *Memoriale*.[47] Three less reliable accounts were written later in the thirteenth century: two by Mathew Paris (one in *Historia Anglorum* and one in *Chronica Maiora*) and one by Thomas Wykes. The reliable accounts, mostly written within about five years of the event, give us a reasonably clear picture of what happened: a deacon residing in Oxford converted to Judaism, underwent circumcision, married a Jewish woman, and was subsequently convicted of heresy and burnt at the stake.[48]

Later in the thirteenth century chroniclers embellish this basic framework.[49] The Jewish woman, for example, who was passively acknowledged or ignored by the more reliable sources, was cast by Matthew Paris, decades later, as a proselytizing seductress.[50] My analysis focuses on how Wykes, Paris in *Historia Anglorum*, and Walter of Coventry's *Memoriale* narrate this event.[51] In their attempts to discredit the deacon, these narrations suggest anxiety over improper expressions of masculinity in both body and behavior. While Wykes and Paris' accounts include less reliable plotlines, their embellishments engage with the dialogues on masculinity under discussion, particularly in their insistence on discrediting the deacon whose supposed impure masculine expressions would have been perceived as destabilizing to Christianity.

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[47] Maitland, "The Deacon and the Jewess," 268.
[48] Translations of these sources come from Maitland, "The Deacon and the Jewess," 260-276.
[49] Ibid., 268-276.
[50] Tartakoff, *Conversion, Circumcision*, 26.
[51] Maitland, "The Deacon and the Jewess," 267-272.

Thomas Wykes

Other than the proceedings of the council, Wykes' chronicle from Oseney is the only known local record of the trial.[52] Wykes embellishes our original story with an accusation of host desecration—intentional mishandling of the bread of the Eucharist—against the convert, claiming that "[a] Jew revealed" the convert's abuse of the host, which was miraculously "found unpolluted, uncorrupted, in a fair vessel."[53] Not only does the miraculous preservation of the host serve to "corrobor[ate] the Christian faith" by discrediting the clergyman's conversion, but also, casting the accuser as a Jew isolates the convert, potentially damaging his credibility.[54] Given the perceived religious authority of a deacon, it is unsurprising that Wykes narrates his conversion as a demonstration of Christianity's superiority.[55] However, this accusation does more than merely discredit the deacon; it also serves to connect the celibate priestly body to the emerging perception of Jews as threats to Christendom.

The antisemitic narrative of the host's miraculous preservation from Jewish pollution emerged toward the end of the thirteenth century after the establishment of the doctrine of transubstantiation, which required that only celibate priests handle the host.[56] During the century in which the priestly body was rededicated to celibacy, in part so that it could properly handle the host, a narrative emerged in which "the circumcised" consistently failed in their attempts to do bodily harm to the host, the holiest of bodies.[57] Implicitly casting the Jew as antithetical to the celibate priest, this narrative suggests a conscious fear that the Jewish body was villainously impure, but not just in any circumstance: it was particularly threatening in circumstances where it stood in for the celibate priest.

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[52] Ibid., 261, 271. For an English translation of the Oxford Constitutions, see serialized articles by John William White in *The British Magazine*, Jun 1844-Oct 1844. Constitutions 34, 35, 37 deal with clerical celibacy.

[53] Maitland, "The Deacon and the Jewess," 271-272.

[54] Ibid., 272.

[55] Roth, *The Jews of Medieval Oxford*, 20-21; Tartakoff, *Conversion, Circumcision*, 10, 70-84 and 98.

[56] Rubin, *Gentile Tales,* 1-2; Thomas, *The Secular Clergy*, 20-25; Gregg, *Devils, Women, Jews*, 189-194.

[57] Tartakoff, *Conversion, Circumcision*, 21, 84; Thibodeaux, *The Manly Priest*, 13.

In Wykes' entry, the resurrected body of Christ, celebrated at Easter and manifest in the host, stands opposite the convert's circumcised body. The two male bodies—Christ's crucified body and the convert's circumcised body—become competing truth claims.[58] The miraculous preservation of the host serves as an instrument to declare victory over Judaism—the victory of the blood of Christ over the blood of circumcision. By circumcising himself to enter the Judaic covenant, the convert joined the very people whom Christians portrayed as responsible for the bodily death of Christ.[59] In fact, married clergymen would not have been far off the mark in thinking that reformers regarded them as impure in a way similar to how Jewish men were perceived. In the twelfth century, English reformer Thomas Agnellus referred to noncelibate clergymen who handled the host as "Christ-killers," an antisemitic libel that, in this instance, directly compared Jews to sexually active priests.[60]

Wykes' retelling of the trial, with the inclusion of a charge of host desecration, notably combines the newly invigorated requirement for clerical celibacy with portrayals of Jewish males as a threat to it. This suggests that the deacon's conversion could, at the very least, be used to express and resolve anxieties over the perceived threat accompanying a clergyman's apostasy to a religion that stood opposite to reform masculinity's calls for religious men to be unmarried and childless. Wykes' attempt to discredit the clergyman's conversion through a host desecration libel underlines the connection between the discipline of the religious male body—handlers of the host and authorities of religious truth—and the perceived security of Christendom, preserved in this case through a miracle.

Memoriale

The entry for this event in Walter of Coventry's *Memoriale* is thought to be written nearly contemporaneously to the event and focuses on key moments of

[58] Tartakoff, *Conversion, Circumcision*, 11, 83-84.
[59] Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence*, 200-201, 214-221; Maitland, "The Deacon and the Jewess," 272; Rubin, *Gentile Tales*, 1-6.
[60] Thomas, *The Secular Clergy*, 179-180; Rist, *Popes & Jews*, 108.

the trial.[61] The author writes that three clergymen were convicted of wrongdoings that day: one for homicide, one for sacrilege/theft, and one—the deacon—for heresy. Once convicted, Archbishop Langton stripped them of their clerical garments.[62] Significantly, our convert is the only one to be described as having "sinned enormously." He was the only one to be degraded publicly ("before the people") outside of the church at Oseney, to be made a spectacle of.[63] Afterwards, he was immediately burnt, the only convicted clergyman to suffer this end. On that day in Oxford, it was a clergyman's apostasy to Judaism that required the greatest public rejection, rather than homicide.[64] There was no precedent for executing Christian converts to Judaism in England. Did the Church perhaps fear that other Anglo-Norman clerics, resentful of newly enforced reform requirements, might find reasons for converting?[65]

A second moment worth our attention is the physical inspection of the deacon's body, seemingly conducted to expose his circumcision after he appeared at the council in clerical garments.[66] The chronicler describes his circumcision with suspicion: "[H]e had caused himself to be circumcised in imitation of the Jewish rite."[67] The language suggests that the chronicler believes this to be a self-circumcision, language also echoed by Ralph of Coggeshall, who writes that the convert "had circumcised himself."[68] An assessment of self-circumcision suggests that the convert's body was seen; however, it is unclear by what metric observers would have been able to determine if he had self-circumcised, especially considering that this circumcision would have been performed on an adult rather than an infant. In fact, portraying this as a self-circumcision and possible imitation serves to question the authority, and perhaps the authenticity, of the deacon's

[61] *Memoriale Walteri de Coventria*, *Vol. II,* ed. William Stubbs (London: Longman & Co., 1873), viii; Maitland, "The Deacon and the Jewess," 267-268.
[62] Maitland, "The Deacon and the Jewess," 268.
[63] Ibid., 268.
[64] Ibid., 260 and 267-268.
[65] Maitland, "The Deacon and the Jewess," 260, 265; Tartakoff, *Conversion, Circumcision,* 26.
[66] Maitland, "The Deacon and the Jewess," 267-268.
[67] Ibid., 268.
[68] Ibid., 267.

conversion.[69] The exposure of his circumcision ultimately seems to have sealed his fate. It is this moment in the trial to which we presently turn our attention.

Matthew Paris

One of the longest surviving narratives is found in Matthew Paris' *Historia Anglorum*. This account was scrawled in the margins of the original manuscript, around the entry for the year 1222, decades after the event it describes.[70] Paris' source is believed to have been eyewitness John of Basingstoke, who studied in Oxford.[71] In this version, a Jewish woman is depicted as seducing the deacon to Judaism.[72] Subsequently, when confronted with "evidence," the deacon allegedly confesses to both his illicit relationship and to crucifying a Christian boy as part of a Jewish sacrifice. However, it is noteworthy that he is portrayed as apostatizing only *after* his bodily inspection. Once the council witnessed his circumcision, he is recorded as making a formal renunciation of his Christian faith: "I renounce the new-fangled law and the comments of Jesus the false prophet." His renunciation ended with a slander toward Mary, "a charge not to be repeated."[73] While the content of the slander is unknown, medieval Christian antisemitic narratives connected Jewish denials of Mary's virginity to the supposed sensuality of the Jews. Likewise, clergymen frustrated with calls for celibacy sometimes argued that Mary's conception was the product of adultery.[74] Both these narratives could potentially be present at once: the deacon was married while still considered to be a clergyman and was also presented as a Jewish man once his circumcision was revealed. If the unrepeatable slander was indeed meant to indicate his denial of Mary's purity, we can speculate that the deacon's marriage and conversion might

[69] Medieval Christian narratives also interpreted circumcision as feminizing the Jewish male, that is as evidence of excessive sexual appetite (Resnick, *Marks of Distinction,* 79.)
[70] *Matthæi Parisiensis, Historia Anglorum,* Vol. II, ed. Frederic Madden (London: Longmans, 1866), 254 n1.
[71] Maitland, "The Deacon and the Jewess," 269.
[72] Ibid., 269-270; Thibodeaux, *The Manly Priest*, 30.
[73] Maitland, "The Deacon and the Jewess," 269-270. Blood libel accusations originated in England in the mid-twelfth century: *Thomas of Monmouth: The Life and Passion of William of Norwich*, trans. by Miri Rubin (London: Penguin, 2014)
[74] Thibodeaux, *The Manly Priest*, 107-108.

have materialized Christian fears of Jewish men, often portrayed effeminately as licentious predators of Christian purity. If the alleged slander against Mary was a commentary on the converted, circumcised, and married deacon's impurity, it could be suggested that Christian portrayals of Jewish males as effeminate predators were perhaps elicited by an underlying fear of the Jewish male as an object of envy for Christian clergymen.[75]

After his apostasy, Archbishop Langton turned the convert over to the Sheriff of Oxford Fawkes of Bréauté, who is portrayed as bloodthirsty ("ever swift to shed blood") and itching to execute whoever is handed to him.[76] The only person who emerges from this incident virtuously is the archbishop, who grieves for the convert's soul, while the convert is emasculated as irrational, wooed away from truth by a woman ("no argument would bring him to his senses").[77]

In Paris' entry, only the archbishop provides a model of masculine authority and, implicitly of self-control.[78] As in Wykes' account alleging host desecration, the association of religious truth is tethered to an expression of proper masculinity.

Although the line between fact and fiction in Paris' account may be elusive, elements of the convert's outburst may not be as contrived as they first appear. The moral reforms largely defined what clergymen were banned from doing, setting nearly impossible standards for even the most devout secular clergymen, who operated in the world outside of the cloister.[79] Anglo-Norman defenders of clerical marriage perceived reformers as "creators of new traditions;" it may not be a coincidence that our convert is portrayed as declaring that he "renounce[d] the new-fangled law."[80] While apparently referring to the New Testament, this linguistic choice could be also read in light of the recent peak in frustrations over the reforms: the convert could have seen the reformers as perverters of truth through the creation of new traditions and his own actions as a return to tradition

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[75] Gregg, *Devils, Women, Jews*, 104, 185-189 and 194-196; Tolan, *England's Jews*, 155-159.

[76] Maitland, "The Deacon and the Jewess," 269-270.

[77] Ibid., 269-270.

[78] Jacqueline Murray, "Masculinizing Religious Life: Sexual Prowess, the Battle for Chastity and Monastic Identity," in *Holiness and Masculinity in the Middle Ages*, eds. P.H. Cullum and Katherine J. Lewis (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2004), 24-42; Thomas, *The Secular Clergy*, 179-180; Thibodeaux, *The Manly Priest*, 28-32 and 112-113; Maitland, "The Deacon and the Jewess," 269-270.

[79] Thomas, *The Secular Clergy*, 8-9, 17-18 and 27-29.

[80] Thibodeaux, *The Manly Priest*, 91; Maitland, "The Deacon and the Jewess," 269.

and truth. While the deacon's conversion to Judaism sets his case apart from other Anglo-Norman clerical experiences, a shared trait emerges in the clerics' frustration with the Church over their loss of social legitimacy.[81] The convert's outburst, seemingly designed to discredit him as irrational, gains a deeper context when viewed alongside the experiences of Anglo-Norman clergymen grappling with the reforms after Lateran IV.[82] Moreover, it becomes better understandable how a religion that not only permitted marriage but also regarded it as a positive commandment could hold increasing appeal for a clergyman during this pivotal moment.

Medieval Jewish Masculinity

From the tenth through twelfth century, the Babylonian Talmud became the cornerstone of Jewish education as a result of what Talya Fishman describes at the "textualization" of medieval Jewish culture.[83] At the tail end of this process, during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, Christian clerical scholars also began consuming and studying rabbinic exegesis, a development Jeremy Cohen describes as an "intellectual awakening."[84] These clergymen often took it upon themselves to study Jewish perspectives of the Old Testament, the Hebrew language, and the Talmud as part of their religious education. Thirteenth-century Christian clergymen accessed Jewish religious texts, studied them, and even sought out Jews for instruction in Hebrew and rabbinical exegesis.[85] Robert of Reading, for

[81] Thibodeaux, *The Manly Priest*, 64-85 and 96-98; "Married clergy," trans. John Boswell in *Christianity, Social Tolerance*, 398-401; "Letters of Cambrai and Noyon," trans. John Ott; Brooke "Gregorian Reform," 20-21; Barstow, *Married Priests*, 103-104.

[82] Thomas, *The Secular Clergy*, 154-155; *The Latin Poems*, ed. Wright, 171-173.

[83] Talya Fishman, *Becoming the People of the Talmud: Oral Torah as Written Tradition in Medieval Jewish Cultures* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 1-4 and 7-10; Satlow, "Salve to Weapon," 26-27.

[84] Jeremy Cohen, "Scholarship and Intolerance in the Medieval Academy: The Study and Evaluation of Judaism in European Christendom," *American Historical Review* 91, no. 3 (1986): 593; Rist, *Popes & Jews*, 27 and 108.

[85] Cohen, "Scholarship Intolerance," 592-593, 596, 600 and 605-613; Boyarin, *The Christian Jew and the Unmarked Jewess*, 214-216; Tolan, *England's Jews*, 139-189; Tartakoff, *Conversion, Circumcision*, 80; Robert Chazan, *Fashioning Jewish Identity in Medieval Western Christendom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 324-326.

example, a clergyman in late thirteenth-century Oxford, converted to Judaism after formally studying Hebrew.[86]

A Christian clergyman who converted to Judaism would presumably be interested in the opinions of its religious learned. Accordingly, our construction of Jewish masculinity begins with a passage from the Babylonian Talmud that was actively commented upon during this period and ends with a compilation of texts by a thirteenth-century Jewish polemicist.[87] While the observations about Jewish masculinity that follow are not entirely new to the Middle Ages, that they continued to be discussed and reaffirmed is significant for their potential to dialogue with the upheaval in standards for holy masculinity occurring within Christendom at this time.[88]

BT Bava Metzia 84a

A passage from the Babylonian Talmud (BT *Bava Metzia* 84a), which received active commentary during the Middle Ages, draws a complex portrait of the devout Jewish male, and while the precise moral may be difficult to identify, its narration demonstrates the importance of marriage and procreation to Jewish masculinity.[89]

This passage narrates an encounter between Reish Lakish and his teacher, Rabbi Yohanan. Lakish, a bandit, sees Rabbi Yohanan from afar, mistakes him for a woman due to his beauty, and pursues him. Michael Satlow argues that Rabbi Yohanan in this encounter represents the Torah, coded as feminine.[90] The male pursuit of the Torah is thus presented as heterosexual desire. Rabbi Yohanan teaches Lakish Torah, "turn[ing] him into a great man," and arranges for Lakish

[86] Boyarin, *The Christian Jew and the Unmarked Jewess*, 213 and 290.

[87] Satlow, "Salve to Weapon," 25. Commentary for this passage during the eleventh through thirteenth centuries is found in Rashi's commentary and the Tosafot. BT *Bava Metzia* 84a, *Sefaria.*

[88] Satlow, "Salve to Weapon," 19; Michael Satlow, "'Try to be a man': The Rabbinic Construction of Masculinity," *Harvard Theological Review* 89, no. 1 (1996): 26-35.

[89] BT *Bava Metzia* 84a*, Sefaria.* Daniel Boyarin describes this passage as "a paradigmatic story of the formation of the Jewish male subject:" *Unheroic Conduct*, 128.

[90] Satlow, "Salve to Weapon," 24-27.

to marry his sister, with whom he has children.[91] Notably, this passage presents perhaps the central feature of being a Jewish man after circumcision, the study of Torah, as sexual desire, couching Resh Lakish's growing family life and his growing Torah knowledge as parallel developments.[92] Daniel Boyarin characterizes this passage as telling the Jewish male: "You can have it all, both the spiritual female, the Torah, and an embodied female…"[93] For Anglo-Norman clergymen, it could have seemed as if the embodied female was precisely what the reformers sought to deny devout men.

Not coincidentally, this exemplum follows a passage about rabbis boasting of the size of their sexual organs in order to defend the legitimacy of their children.[94] In this story, a Roman noblewoman accuses two rabbis of being so obese as to be unable to have intercourse with their wives, casting doubt on the legitimacy of their offspring. The Gemara records three responses, one of which quotes Judges 8:21 ("For as the man is, so is his strength"), suggesting that their sexual organs were proportionate to their bellies.[95] The procreative use and size of the male reproductive organ is presented as a metric for devout manliness, thus tying masculine virtue to marital intercourse and legitimate children, which the story of Lakish following these comments fulfills. While in Judaism the emphasis was placed on the transmission of Torah wisdom to one's sons, in Anglo-Norman clerical masculinity, the focus was the transfer of one's benefice to one's son.[96] Medieval Judaism and Anglo-Norman clerical masculinity were thus similarly at odds with Church reformers on the proper relationship between male sexuality, fatherhood, and religious devotion.

For Anglo-Norman clerics after Lateran IV, marital sex, legitimate children, and a religious relationship between father and son became increasingly difficult.[97] While some simply ignored these new regulations, an Anglo-Norman clergyman, frustrated with such reforms, might conclude that it was the practitioners of the "old law" who correctly understood the virtues of marriage, children, and father-

[91] BT *Bava Metzia* 84a*, Sefaria*; Satlow, "Salve to Weapon," 16 and 24-27.
[92] Thibodeaux, *The Manly Priest*, 32-40; Satlow, "Salve to Weapon," 19.
[93] D. Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct*, 132.
[94] Satlow, "Salve to Weapon," 23-24; BT *Bava Metzia* 84a*, Sefaria.*
[95] BT *Bava Metzia* 84a, *Sefaria.*
[96] Thibodeaux, *The Manly Priest*, 64-85; Satlow, "Salve to Weapon," 19-20.
[97] Thibodeaux, *The Manly Priest*, 64-85.

son religious devotion as proper virtues for men in religious service, not just laymen.[98] As the Jewish polemical texts we now turn to demonstrate, medieval Jews defending Judaism critiqued Christian priests for advocating singleness, celibacy, and by consequence childlessness as signs of male virtue.

Thirteenth-Century Jewish Polemicist

In the late thirteenth century, an anonymous Franco-German Ashkenazi Jew compiled a collection of anti-Christian polemical texts, now entitled the *Nizzahon Vetus* (*Old Book of Polemic*).[99] Passages from it addressing conversion to Judaism and Christian priestly celibacy demonstrate an understanding of exceptional disincentives for Christian male converts and reaffirm the Jewish perspective that devout men ought to marry and father children.[100]

For Christians, converting to Judaism in the Middle Ages could be isolating, dangerous, and for males, painful. Praising the fortitude of converts to Judaism, a passage from the *Nizzahon Vetus* explains the discomforts of a male convert who "[...] must wound himself by removing his foreskin through circumcision [...] exile himself from place to place [...] deprive himself of worldly goods and fear for his life from the external threat of being killed by the uncircumcised, and [...] lack many things that his heart desires."[101] (Notably, the list of deterrents for female proselytes is subordinated to the male's list, noting briefly that she "also separates herself from all pleasures.")[102] Jewish converts to Christianity were on occasion accused of converting out of social convenience; the opposite accusation could not be made.[103] Circumcision was a particularly powerful and male-exclusive deterrent

[98] Thibodeaux, *The Manly Priest*, 2, 5-6, 14 and 58.
[99] Berger, *Nizzahon Vetus*, 3-4; Tartakoff, *Conversion, Circumcision*, 78-84.
[100] Medieval Jews of northern Europe seem to have been particularly resistant to the idea of celibacy as a lifestyle. Elisheva Baumgarten, *Practicing Piety in Medieval Ashkenaz: Men, Women, and Everyday Religious Observance* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 253 n244.
[101] Berger, *Nizzahon Vetus,* 206; Cohen, "Scholarship and Intolerance," 598. "Uncircumcised" was a metonym for Christians. Tartakoff, *Conversion, Circumcision*, 78.
[102] Berger, *Nizzahon Vetus,* 206.
[103] Cohen, "Scholarship and Intolerance," 598; Tartakoff, *Conversion, Circumcision*, 10 and 78-89. There were social incentives (some explicitly manufactured) for Jews to convert to Christianity that were not present in the reverse. Stacey, "The Conversion of Jews," 263-283.

to conversion that in turn heightened the perceived threat of male converts to Judaism.[104] As the polemicist argues here, the willingness of converts to undergo things like circumcision demonstrates that, unlike converts to Christianity who convert for "worldly pleasures," converts to Judaism "knew for certain that their [previous] faith is without foundation."[105] Male converts to Judaism, due to all these disincentives, might be perceived as converting for the most serious religious reasons.[106]

In another passage from the *Nizzahon Vetus*, celibacy is rejected as a masculine virtue and Christian priests who refrain from marriage and procreation are grouped with heretics.[107] The author rebukes Christian priests who attempt to achieve celibacy through castration asking "what do eunuchs have to do with priests? The latter have testicles...," and further declares that "having children is a characteristic of the God-fearing man."[108] He interprets this masculine biological feature as something that leads to licentiousness if not properly expressed through marriage, in which the devout man's wife ought to be "as fruitful as a vine."[109] In line with the Talmudic passage above, he views the biological potential of the male sexual organs as a virtuous and normative expression of masculinity. Where the Christian reformers asserted that virtue came through overcoming sexual desire, this Jewish polemicist, specifically referring to celibate priests and nuns, argued that their unconsummated lustful desires were "the sort of burning which is an abhorrent act that the Lord detests."[110] In agreement with the Talmud, the author argues for a masculinity in which sexual desires are not wholly denied but rather find holy expression.[111] Another passage puts the question at the center of our analysis more bluntly:

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[104] Tartakoff, *Conversion, Circumcision*, 84 and 89.
[105] Berger, *Nizzahon Vetus,* 206.
[106] Tartakoff, *Conversion, Circumcision*, 89.
[107] Berger, *Nizzahon Vetus,* 69.
[108] Ibid., 69-70.
[109] Ibid.
[110] Ibid., 70.
[111] Thibodeaux, *The Manly Priest*, 1-11 and 32-40; Satlow, "Salve to Weapon," 19; Brooke "Gregorian Reform," 17-19.

> If the Christian priest is supposed to take the place of the biblical priest, why doesn't he get married and have children like Aaron the high priest? Moreover, the first commandment given to Adam dealt with being fruitful and multiplying, yet you refrain from this and instead pursue fornication and wine, which capture your fancy.[112]

This passage portrays celibate priests as not only disobeying religious commandments but also as lacking self-control, feminizing them as vulnerable to fleshly desires, and ignoring their responsibility to marry and father children. In the mid-twelfth century, in fact, Herman-Judah, a future Jewish convert to Christianity, was supposedly given a choice by his fellow Jews, who suspected him of Christian sympathies, to either consummate his marriage to prove his Jewish convictions or depart the synagogue.[113] From outside this debate on clerical celibacy, the polemicist of the *Nizzahon Vetus* objects to it like some Anglo-Norman clergymen did; however, by the late thirteenth century, Jewish men alone would have been able to return to their marriage and children as a religiously devout men, their social legitimacy intact.[114]

Conclusion

I have argued that the Oxford clergyman's conversion to Judaism in thirteenth-century England might be understood as the reclamation of a masculine identity that had come to be forbidden by the Church and that was banned with increasing efficiency after Lateran IV.[115] His status as a deacon would have provoked alarm among the reformers, who had recently sought both to ban (once more) the sexual

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[112] Berger, *Nizzahon Vetus,* 205.

[113] Karl Morrison, *Conversion and Text*, 39-40 and 94-95.

[114] Anglo-Norman priests likewise argued that celibacy would lead to licentiousness. "Married clergy," trans. John Boswell in *Christianity, Social Tolerance*, 398-401. Serlo of Bayeux, a twelfth century Norman clergyman, cited Old Testament precedent to defend married priests in *De Concubinis Sacerdotum* [Concerning Concubines of Priests]. His works were used by Thibauld d'Etampes to defend clerical marriage and its sons in twelfth-century Oxford. Thibodeaux, *The Manly Priest*, 86, 103-06; Barstow, *Married Priests*, 131-133; Thomas, *The Secular Clergy*, 170-172.

[115] Thibodeaux, *The Manly Priest*, 113.

intermingling of Jews and Christians and to enforce clerical celibacy.[116] Moreover, the coupling of masculinity with truth in both Christianity and Judaism at a time when Christian anxiety over the presence of Jews in Europe was on the rise would have made the deacon's conversion all the more threatening to the Church.[117] Demonstrating this anxiety, sermon exempla from the thirteenth century represent clergymen's conversion to Judaism as a result of lust rather than rational choice.[118] The Church's determination to enforce clerical reforms and its growing nervousness toward Jews—perhaps even the connection between the two—could have contributed to the outcome of the deacon's trial. As the first execution for heresy in England, this moment was a new direction for the clerical reform movement there.[119]

After 1215, married clergymen (or those who wanted to marry) were less likely to be officially tolerated.[120] While defiance or conformity might seem to have been the only options for Anglo-Norman clergymen, our case indicates that conversion to Judaism might have offered a different path—that of leaving the Church altogether. But how does a new paradigm of masculinity lead to a religious conversion? Both Christianity and Judaism understood devout masculine behavior to hold moral and religious meaning that went beyond the individual man himself: paradigms of masculinity reaffirmed the broader religious social order. In Christianity, for example, after 1215 it was only the pure, celibate, male body that could deliver divine grace via the sacraments.[121] Celibacy also reinforced the pastoral revolution of the thirteenth century, wherein clergymen saw the value of their duties to their flock as proceeding from their celibate lifestyle; that is as spiritual rather than a biological fathers.[122] For Jews, the longstanding structure of the home organized around husband, wife, and children was integrated into religious observance. Men preserved Torah through the fathering of sons and

[116] "Fourth Lateran Council—1215 A.D."; Tartakoff, *Conversion, Circumcision*, 78-89.
[117] Tartakoff, *Conversion, Circumcision,* 4, 78-84; Cohen, *The Friars and the Jews*, 15, 51-76 and 242-264.
[118] Tartakoff, *Conversion, Circumcision,* 26, 75.
[119] Maitland, "The Deacon and the Jewess," 260, 265; Tartakoff, *Conversion, Circumcision,* 26.
[120] Thibodeaux, *The Manly Priest*, 8, 49-63 and 112-119.
[121] Barstow, *Married Priests*, 4; Thomas, *The Secular Clergy*, 9-10, 30-32 and 178-180.
[122] Thibodeaux, *The Manly Priest*, 7-8, 114-115 and 125.

through observing the commandment to procreate.[123] Both the Jewish requirement for men to have children and the reformers' reverse requirement for clergymen's celibacy connected the right expression of masculinity to broader understandings of a proper social order and religious truth. Although from different confessions, Anglo-Norman married clergymen and the thirteenth-century Jewish polemicist who penned the *Nizzahon Vetus* held something significant in common—the belief that a married man with children and a devout man could, perhaps even should, occupy the same body.

At a critical moment in the lives of secular clergymen in England, a cross-confessional dynamic emerged along the lines of different expectations for devout males wherein Judaism offered something forbidden to a significant number of devout Christian men. If the Oxford convert saw marriage and children not only as traditional but also as normative, the reformers' attempts to enforce a new paradigm of masculinity could have motivated him to question the very things that seemed to depend on it. The possibility for Jewish masculinity, and the truth of Judaism, to be attractive to Anglo-Norman clergymen in the face of the Church's shifting paradigm may expand our understanding of why the Church began increasingly portraying and perceiving Jews as more threatening in the thirteenth century.[124] While we cannot say with certainty what caused our deacon's conversion, situating it within a context of relevant ideas encourages productive thinking about this moment in the history of Christian-Jewish relations. Exploring these ideas in dialogue opens the possibility of a narrative wherein Jewish notions about masculinity held relevance for Christian secular clergymen and were received seriously. By interpreting this man's conversion as potentially engaging in a discourse between Christian and Jewish masculinities, we can also gain a broader understanding of how moments of change can upset boundaries and simultaneously motivate their reinforcement out of fear that those whose lives are disrupted may cross them.

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[123] Satlow, "Salve to Weapon," 19-21; Maimonides exemplifies the connection between Jewish masculine expectations and Jewish social order in a late twelfth-century passage: "Sexual relations are considered a dimension of Sabbath pleasure. Therefore, Torah scholars who are healthy set aside Friday night as a night when they fulfill their conjugal duties." *Mishneh Torah* 30:14, trans. Eliyahu Touger, *Sefaria*, accessed December 21, 2023, https://www.sefaria.org/Mishneh_Torah%2C_Sabbath.30.14?lang=bi.

[124] Cohen, *The Friars and the Jews*, 15, 51-76 and 242-264.

Rebekah Sewell is an independent scholar who holds master's degrees in international affairs and history. She earned her master's in international affairs from Texas A&M University in 2014 and her master's in history from the University of Alabama in 2021. Her historical scholarship has focused on Jewish history in medieval England and Europe.

Keywords: Jewish-Christian conversion, Clerical masculinity, Jewish masculinity, Clerical celibacy, Anglo-Norman secular clergy

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Between Rabbinic and Knightly Masculinities: Constructing Gendered Identities Among Jewish Young Men in Medieval Ashkenaz*

by *Eyal Levinson*

Abstract

A vivid depiction of a jousting scene in an illuminated Hebrew prayerbook allows a unique pictorial representation of a custom common among Jewish young men in Northwestern Europe during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries: jousting-like tournaments at Jewish weddings. The article contextualizes this image more broadly with contemporaneous sources originating in different genres, including rabbinic literature, vernacular documents, illuminated Hebrew manuscripts, frescos that decorated affluent Jewish homes, epitaphs, and archaeological findings, to describe the lives, self-image, and social expectations of medieval Ashkenazic men. Moreover, the article sheds light on the influences of the surrounding culture on medieval rabbinic gender constructs and on the constructions of gendered identities among these young men, and particularly on two indicators of identity: daily conduct and clothing. The article argues that these Jewish young men were navigating two masculinities, and that they internalized complex identities, which enabled them to identify as Jews and at the same time to feel that they were part of mainstream urban culture to some degree.

Introduction

Gendering Medieval Ashkenazic Historiography

Jews Identified with Knights

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Introduction

An illuminated Hebrew prayerbook from Italy, often referred to as the *Forlì Siddur* (1383), contains various marginal illustrations, including one depicting what looks like a jousting scene: two knights, wearing helmets, each holding a shield in one hand and lance in the other, one of the men portrayed falling off from his horse after apparently being struck by the other knight.[1] This image appears underneath a blessing for a newlywed couple. Since jousting competitions were a common entertainment at weddings of the upper echelons, we assume this is one reason why the image appears under a blessing for a newlywed Jewish couple.

[1] British Library, Additional 26968, fol. 339r, Central Italy (Romagna, Forlì), Prayer book (*Forlì Siddur*) for the entire year, Italian rite, 1383.

Fig. 1. Two Knights Jousting. *Forlì Siddur*, British Library, Additional 26968, fol. 339r (Public Domain).

The *Forlì Siddur* originates in northern Italy, just outside the geographical area covered by this study. But its vivid depiction of a jousting scene and its placement underneath a wedding blessing allows a unique pictorial representation of a custom common among Jewish young men in Christian Europe during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries: jousting-like tournaments at Jewish weddings. This image poignantly connects knightly conduct and Jewish customs. In this article, I will contextualize it more broadly with contemporaneous sources originating in different genres, including rabbinic literature, vernacular documents, illuminated Hebrew manuscripts, frescos that decorated affluent Jewish homes, epitaphs, and archaeological findings, to describe the lives, self-image, and social expectations of medieval Ashkenazic men.

Such a varied body of sources enables a more nuanced depiction of the social behavior under investigation, the interweaving of rabbinic and knightly masculinities among young Jewish men. While each genre presents its own interpretive challenges, it can also allow the identification of overlaps or emphases. Unfortunately, there are hardly any documents written by Jewish young men.

However, a careful reading of the available sources sheds light on the influences of the surrounding culture on medieval rabbinic gender constructs and on the constructions of gendered identities among these young men, and particularly on two indicators of identity: daily conduct and clothing. Before examining these two indicators, what follows is a brief discussion of the Ashkenazic communities these young men called home.

Gendering Medieval Ashkenazic Historiography

The medieval Jews of northwestern Europe, collectively referred to as Ashkenazic Jews, lived in the geographical area incorporating the Holy Roman Empire, northern France, England (from 1066 until the expulsion of the Jews from the kingdom in 1290), and parts of northern Italy (mainly during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries). The members of these communities shared important cultural traits, differentiating them from other Jewish communities on the continent, from those in the Iberian Peninsula and those scattered along the European shores of the Mediterranean.[2] Since the 1990s, social and cultural historians have overturned well-established historiographical conventions which had depicted the medieval Jewish communities of Ashkenaz as culturally isolated from mainstream medieval Christian urban society.[3] These new studies instead

[2] See Tzafrir Barzilay, Eyal Levinson, and Elisheva Baumgarten, eds., *Jewish Life in Medieval Northern Europe, 1080-1350: A Sourcebook* (Kalamazoo: Western Michigan University Press, 2022), xiii.

[3] Among these studies are Ivan G. Marcus, *Rituals of Childhood: Jewish Acculturation in Medieval Europe* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996); Robert Chazan, *In the Year 1096: The First Crusade and the Jews* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1996); Jeremy Cohen, "Between Martyrdom and Apostasy Doubt and Self-Definition in Twelfth-Century Ashkenaz," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 29 (1999): 431-471; Miri Rubin, *Gentile Tales: The Narrative Assault on Late Medieval Jews* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999); Elisheva Baumgarten, *Mothers and Children: Jewish Family Life in Medieval Europe* (Princeton University Press, 2004); Judith Baskin, "Women and Sexual Ambivalence in Sefer Hasidim," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 96, no. 1 (2006): 1-8; Israel J. Yuval, *Two Nations in Your Womb: Perceptions of Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, trans. Barbara Harshav and Jonathan Chipman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008); David Joshua Malkiel, *Reconstructing Ashkenaz: The Human Face of Franco-German Jewry, 1000-1250* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009); Ephraim Shoham-Steiner, *On the Margins of a Minority: Leprosy Madness and Disability among the Jews of Medieval Europe* (Detroit: Wayne State

portray a vibrant picture of daily contacts between Jews and Christians, without denying the continuous impact of pogroms, violence, and anti-Judaism. They show that Jews adapted a range of cultural elements from their neighbors, among them stories and legends, manners and clothing, songs and music, esthetics, and gender constructs. Alongside this "inward acculturation,"[4] as Ivan Marcus refers to this cultural appropriation, rabbinic norms and teachings were inseparable from the daily lives of medieval Jews, and from a very young age Jewish children were educated to internalize them. Gender constructs played an essential role within these norms and boys were expected to familiarize themselves with them. Still, these young men lived in Christian Europe and were also strongly influenced by the hegemonic masculinity ideal, that of the courageous, violent, and chivalrous knight.[5]

Jews Identified with Knights

Already in 1888, Moritz Güdemann briefly discussed Jewish knights, and in 1896 Israel Abrahams mentioned in passing that there were several English Jews that seem to have ranked as knights.[6] Only recently have scholars such as Ivan Marcus, Joseph Shatzmiller, Sarit Shalev Eyni, Sara Offenberg, and Markus Wenninger begun exploring more thoroughly the influences of chivalric culture on medieval Jews and Jewish participation in this culture.[7] Some of these studies analyze

University Press, 2014); Elisheva Baumgarten, *Practicing Piety in Medieval Ashkenaz: Men, Women, and Everyday Religious Observance* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014); Elisheva Baumgarten and Judah D. Galinsky, introduction to *Jews and Christians in Thirteenth-Century France* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 1-14; Ephraim Shoham-Steiner, ed., *Intricate Interfaith Networks in the Middle Ages: Quotidian Jewish-Christian Contacts* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016); Ephraim Shoham-Steiner, *Jews and Crime in Medieval Europe* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2020).

[4] Marcus, *Rituals of Childhood*, 12.

[5] See Ruth Mazo Karras, *From Boys to Men: Formations of Masculinity in Late Medieval Europe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 20-63.

[6] Moritz Güdemann, *Geschichte des Erziehungswesens und der Cultur der Juden in Deutschland während des XIV. und XV. Jahrhunderts* (Vienna: A. Hölder, 1888), 164-167; Israel Abrahams, *Jewish Life in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1993), 377.

[7] Markus Wenninger, "Von jüdischen Rittern und anderen waffentragenden Juden im mittelalterlichen Deutschland," *Aschkenas* 13 (2003): 37-67; Sarit Shalev Eyni, *Jews among Christians: Hebrew Book Illumination from Lake Constance* (London: Harvey Miller, 2010), 85-

written documents while others focus on illustrations of knights in medieval Hebrew manuscripts, but the evidence for chivalric influences on Ashkenazic Jews goes beyond written sources and illustrations to include archaeological findings, epitaphs and frescos. Marcus concluded that "[i]n medieval Germany and France, Jews identified with knights and transformed them into didactic symbols. Medieval Jews sometimes compared themselves to Christian knights, but they were different from all other knights."[8] This identification was significant, I argue; it was an integral part of young Jewish men's daily lives and included the appropriation of knightly masculinity ideals. These young Jewish men, however, were also expected to internalize and act according to rabbinic masculinity. What follows is a preliminary attempt to articulate what this marginalized masculinity comprises, how it was structured, and what it aimed to achieve.

Medieval Rabbinic Masculinity

By the term medieval rabbinic masculinity, I refer to a set of behavioral codes, religious rules, as well as cultural ideals instructing Jewish men on how to conduct their lives from childhood to death, and from the moment they woke up each morning until they retired to bed at night. These instructions, regulations, and ideals are scattered throughout halakhic expositions and responsa literature, Hebrew moral treatises, biblical and Talmudic exegeses, liturgical works, chronologies, and even in Hebrew sources less affiliated with the rabbinic elites, like tales and legends. Drawings and illuminations in Hebrew manuscripts also enhance our understanding of medieval rabbinic masculinity, as do epitaphs

92; Ivan G. Marcus, "Why is this Knight Different? A Jewish Self-Representation in Medieval Europe," in *Tov Elem: Memory, Community and Gender in Medieval and Early Modern Jewish Societies: Essays in Honor of Robert Bonfil*, eds. Elisheva Baumgarten, Roni Weinstein and Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 2011), 138-152; Joseph Shatzmiller, *Cultural Exchange: Jews, Christians, and Art in the Medieval Marketplace* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013); Sara Offenberg, "A Jewish Knight in Shining Armour: Messianic Narrative and Imagination in Ashkenazi Illuminated Manuscripts," *The University of Toronto Journal of Jewish Thought* 4 (2014): 1-14.

[8] Marcus, "Why Is This Knight," 152.

found in medieval Jewish cemeteries (discussed later in this essay).[9] This Jewish masculinity is based on medieval interpretations of biblical commandments, such as "A woman must not put on man's apparel, nor shall a man wear woman's clothing: for whoever does these things is abhorrent to the Lord your God" (Deut. 22:5). In Late Antiquity and in the Middle Ages this biblical commandment enabled rabbis to argue that Jewish men must not wear women's clothing nor their jewelry, must avoid shaving body hair, and even refrain from looking in a mirror.[10] Some halakhic authorities went as far as interpreting this biblical commandment as ground to forbid men from teaching Torah to their daughters.[11] The interpretations of this commandment included prohibitions regarding women's behavior, and especially on women carrying weapons. Yael, who killed Sisera with a peg and a hammer—rather than with a sword—was depicted as an exemplary woman who adhered to biblical law.[12] Additional important sources for studying this medieval rabbinic masculinity are contemporaneous readings of biblical stories, legends, and idioms; central among them are the creation stories, the sacrifice of Isaac, and the Davidic tales, as well as stories from Late Antiquity about famous rabbis and warriors.[13]

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[9] See for example the drawings of the Seder table showing the paterfamilias or baal ha-bayit seated in his special chair while conducting the ritual: London, British Library, Additional 26968, fol. 119v; Paris, BNF, Hébreu 1388, fol. 4v; Paris, BNF, Hébreu 1333, fol. 20v. See also illustrations of circumcision, like the one in the Rothchild Miscellany located at the Israel Museum, IM Ms. 180/51, fol. 246v. Another is an illustration of men studying Torah: London, British Library, Add. Ms. 14762, fol. 7v.

[10] Isaac b. Moses, *Or Zarua*, vol. 3, ed. Jacob Hirschenson (Jerusalem: Makhon Yerushalayim, 2010), 607 § 151; Moses of Coucy, *Sefer Mitzvot Gadol ha-Shalem*, vol. 1 (Jerusalem: Makhon Yerushalayim, 2003), 50 § 45.

[11] Judah son of Samuel he-Hasid, *Sefer Gematriyot - Parferaot al ha-Torah,* vol. 2, ed. Jacob Israel Stal (Jerusalem: Makhon Hararei Kedem, 2005), 712 § 2.

[12] *Sefer Hadar Zekenim on the Five Books of The Torah* (Bnei Brak: Ha-Makhon le-Hafatzat Perushei Baalei ha-Tosafot al ha-Torah, 1944), 412. On the perceptions of Yael in medieval Ashkenaz see Elisheva Baumgarten, *Biblical Women and Jewish Daily Life in Medieval Ashkenaz* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2022), chap. 3.

[13] For a recent study centering on how the Davidic stories contributed to formulating medieval masculinities see Ruth Mazo Karras, *Thou Art the Man: The Masculinity of David in the Christian and Jewish Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2021). Legends about late-antique famous rabbis that were popular in the Middle Ages can be found in Eli Yassif, *Ninety-Nine Tales: The Jerusalem Manuscript Cycle of Legends in Medieval Jewish Folklore* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University Press, 2013) [Hebrew].

The characterizations of the "ideal Jewish man" according to Ashkenazic rabbis appear in what I call their "masculinity discourse," a discourse representing and defining their gendered worldviews. Discourse, as defined by Michel Foucault, connects knowledge with power and control founded on allegedly "universal truths," and defined as such by the experts themselves who formulate and perpetuate such discourse.[14] Thus discourse can be understood as an intricate system of power relations operating in society in a wide range of manifestations. In this sense, discourse is used to clarify what is considered as a "correct" or "normative" behavior—what is allowed and what is forbidden—eliciting a range of responses from absolute acceptance to a challenge of its premises, to total rejection and disobedience.

The masculinity discourse of Ashkenazic rabbis reflects institutionalized ways of thinking—overt or covert—common mainly among members of the rabbinic hegemony but exerting its influences on the entire community, on how people thought and behaved, on how bodies were shaped, and regulating behavior of community members through ethical codes among other means.[15] The purpose of this discourse was to educate boys and men, as well as girls and women, to comply with rabbinic gendered norms, which among other things stress the superiority of males over females, emphasize the religious duty to procreate, assign specific gender roles, delimit women's activities to domestic spaces, and encourage the education of boys over girls.[16] This masculine discourse consisted of a set of

[14] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality vol. 1: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 17-35.

[15] For a discussion of institutionalized discourse, its functions and methods of operation, see Adrian Bangerter, Joep Cornelissen, "Studying Discourse Processes in Institutional Contexts", *The Routledge Handbook of Discourse Processes Routledge*, November 21, 2017. Accessed December 21, 2023, https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781315687384-4.

[16] There are several studies focusing on the education of boys and young men in Ashkenaz in the Middle Ages, mainly discussing Jewish education. However, this type of teaching was only one aspect of this discourse. Ivan G. Marcus, *The Jewish Life Cycle: Rites of Passage from Biblical to Modern Times* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004); Ephraim Kanarfogel, *Jewish Education and Society in the High Middle Ages* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1992); Avraham Grossman, "The Yeshivot in Babylon, Germany and France in the Tenth-Eleventh Centuries," in *Education and History: Cultural and Political Contexts*, eds. Rivka Feldhay and Emanuel Etkes (Jerusalem: The Zalman Shazar Center for Jewish History, 1999), 100-179 [Hebrew]. These studies expand our knowledge regarding the lives of young Ashkenazic men in the Middle Ages, but in these yeshivot only a small number of young men studied, and even in the

behavioral codes, and mental and physical depictions, transmitted orally or via written and visual representations, and the meanings instilled in them by contemporaries. Importantly, while cultural ideals are mental images people are called to internalize and act upon, by their very nature as *ideals* they are in fact unachievable.

To exemplify this process, let us consider a list of masculine characteristics as they appear in *Masekhet Avot im perush R. Simha me-Vitry*, from the second half of the thirteenth century, which disseminate age-old masculinity ideals originating in the Mishnah (Avot 6:8): "Beauty, strength, wisdom, wealth, honor, hoary head, and children are fitting for the righteous and fitting for the world [...] And it says: 'The glory of young men is their strength; and the beauty of old men is the hoary head.'"[17] Some medieval thinkers wondered whether all these qualities could manifest in a single man, as it is stated in the Mishnah regarding the second-century Rabbi Judah ha-Nasi and his sons. According to the Midrashic compilation *Yalkut Shim'oni*, compiled in Frankfurt in the thirteenth century, "[a] man of flesh and blood, if he is a hero, is not handsome, and if he is handsome, is not a hero. But the Holy One, blessed be He, is not like that, but rather holds both qualities and is proud of them."[18] In sum, if a single man cannot attain both qualities, he even more so would not be able to achieve other traits like wisdom, wealth, and honor. Masculine perfection, it is implied, is reserved for God alone, not for mortals. In *Sefer Hasidim*, an early thirteenth-century compilation of moral advice written primarily by Judah son of Samuel the Hasid (d. 1217), it is argued that even venerated biblical heroes were far from being perfect, as they could not resist their sexual urges. Unsurprisingly, women were blamed for the heroes' misconduct: "Samson was a hero of heroes, David was the most pious among all men, and Salomon was the wisest among all wisemen, and [yet] they all

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more popular ones there were no more than 25 students at a time (Kanarfogel, *Jewish Education*, 67). According to Israel Peles and Shlomo Spitzer, in Maharil's yeshiva in its last years, that is, in the third decade of the fifteenth century, there were about 50 students. Israel Peles and Shlomo Spitzer, *Introductory Book and Additions to Maharil's Books* (Jerusalem: Makhon Yerushalayim, 2012), 136-138.

[17] Jacob ben Shimshon, ed., *Masekhet Avot im perush R. Simha me-Vitry* (Tel Aviv: Emunim Publishing House, 1955), 117.

[18] Hanokh Vagshal, ed., *Yalkut Shim'oni Hashalem*, vol. 5 (Jerusalem: Vagshal Publishing House, 2003), 151.

failed. Samson and Solomon were failed by a woman and David was failed by a pretty maiden."[19]

It is important to emphasize that the traits listed above—beauty, strength, wisdom, wealth, etc.—were ideals that men should strive to internalize rather than inherent qualities present in some and absent in others. These qualities are better understood as relative and context dependent. One can strive to be strong in every conflict, but even the strength of the strongest man does not last forever; even a mighty warrior like Goliath could be defeated by a young shepherd unexperienced in warfare.

Embodied Masculinity

A crucial aspect of masculinity is the male body—its physique and representations. Thus, medieval Jewish men were instructed on how to handle, groom, and adorn their bodies. Circumcision, originating in the Levitical commandment: "On the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised" (Lev. 12:3), is the most obvious example. But these men were also told how they should trim their beards, whether it was halakhically permissible to shave pubic hair and armpits and to grow long hair, and even whether it was appropriate for men to look in the mirror. Regarding the prohibition of shaving the male body, in the twelfth century Maimonides ruled that in those geographical areas where non-Jewish men shaved their armpits and pubic hair, Jewish men too were allowed to do so, while in those localities where this was only female conduct, it was forbidden. Men who refused to comply with this ruling risked being punished by flogging: "That is saying concerning a district where only women are practicing it, to prevent men from imitating the practice of women; but in a district where both men and women resort to the practice, no punishment is meted out to men therefor. It is permitted to remove the hair with a pair of scissors from all other limbs."[20]

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[19] Judah Wistenetsky, ed., *Sefer Hasidim*, Parma (Frankfurt: M. A. Wahrmann, 1924), 50 § 69.

[20] Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Avodah Zarah ve-Hukot ha-Goyim*, 12:9, ed. Philip Birnbaum (New York: Hebrew Pub. Co, 1967), Sefaria, accessed December 21, 2023, https://www.sefaria.org.il/Mishneh_Torah%2C_Foreign_Worship_and_Customs_of_the_Nations.12.9?vhe=Wikisource_Mishneh_Torah&lang=bi&with=all&lang2=en.

Still, some Ashkenazic scholars found the halakhic ruling of Maimonides, who was immersed in his Muslim cultural context and its gender constructs, contradictory to their understandings of the male body. In northern France in the middle of the thirteenth century, R. Isaac of Corbeil warned men against shaving their bodies with a razor or with scissors.[21] Maimonides' words shed light on the influences of hegemonic, non-Jewish masculinity on marginalized forms of masculinity and on the abovementioned social process of "inward acculturation," exemplifying how medieval rabbinic gender constructs were influenced by the surrounding cultures to some degree.

According to this masculinity discourse, Jewish men were also expected to comply with a strict sexual regime. They were taught how to conduct their sexual lives, when they should perform which sexual acts, and with whom. To buttress and perpetuate this discourse, biblical and rabbinic commandments were often enlisted. The Levitical injunction "Do not lie with a male as one lies with a woman; it is an abhorrence" (Lev. 18:22) is just one example used by medieval rabbis to police male sexuality. The fear of breaking normative sexual boundaries led Rashi (R. Solomon son of Isaac of Troyes, c. 1040-1105) to interpret the Deuteronomic commandment mentioned above ("A woman must not put on man's apparel, nor shall a man wear woman's clothing") as instructing clear gender separation.[22] Normative Jewish sexuality was primarily confined to the marital unit, though sexually active unmarried men were tolerated (particularly young men, if they refrained from seducing another man's wife). Unmarried sexually active women, in turn, were condemned.[23]

While Jewish husbands were halakhically commanded to procreate and to sexually satisfy their wives, Jewish wives were expected to act as obedient helpmates and assist their husbands in their quest to abide by their religious obligations. Beyond these two marital duties required of husbands, rabbis encouraged men to sexually

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[21] Isaac son of Joseph of Corbeil, *Ha-Semak me-Tzurikh*, vol. 1, ed. Jacob Har-Shoshanim-Rosenberg (Jerusalem: A. B. Printing House, 2008), 112 § 34. R. Isaac of Corbeil's book, *Sefer Mitzvot Katan* (*SeMak*) is an abbreviated version of *Sefer Mitzvot Gadol* (*SeMag*) written by R. Moses of Coucy, which is based on Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah* and supplemented with other rabbinical sources known to the author.

[22] Rashi, on BT Nazir 59a.

[23] See Eyal Levinson, *Gender and Sexuality in Ashkenaz in the Middle Ages* (Jerusalem: The Zalman Shazar Center - Leo Baeck Institute, 2022), 74-78 [Hebrew].

treat their wives as they wished.[24] R. Eleazar of Worms, for example, insisted that, "anything a man desires to [sexually] do with his wife, he is permitted to do it, so he may not look at another woman. However, he should conduct sexual intercourse face to face because this is what satisfies a woman.' "[25] The reason why any sexual position was permitted was to help men avoid pursuing extra-marital sexual relations. According to R. Eleazar, what has become known as the "missionary position" befit the "the ideal Jewish man"; this advice was similar to what thirteenth-century Christian theologians, canon lawyers, and writers of penitential handbooks prescribed for Christian men.[26]

Appropriate femininity, according to medieval Ashkenazic rabbis, implied that women willingly accept their husbands' sexual demands and refrain from loudly requesting sexual intercourse. Any woman who refused to have sex with her husband risked being labeled a *moredet* (a halakhic term meaning, "a rebellious wife"); her husband could demand a divorce without paying her the sum specified in the *ketubah* (the marriage contract). Halakhically, a wife could demand a divorce, claiming that her husband was repulsive to her (*ma'is alay*) and that she was unable to have sexual intercourse with him; but women who pursued this line of argumentation in divorce cases knew that they might lose the sum of their *ketubah*.[27]

Reading Rabbinic Masculinity in Funerary Epitaphs

The epitaphs found in Ashkenazic cemeteries provide further valuable insight into medieval rabbinic masculinity. The epitaphs present culturally accepted formulations that Ashkenazic Jews inherited from the Bible or from late-antique Hebrew and Aramaic literature, such as "a blameless and upright man" (Job 1:8),

[24] *Sefer Hasidim*, 282 § 1111; Alexander Suslin ha-Cohen, *Sefer ha-Agudah, Seder Nashim*, ed. Eleazar Brizel (Jerusalem: Eleazar Brizel, 1979), 173 § 8.

[25] Eleazar son of Judah, *Sefer Ha-Rokeah Ha-Gadol*, ed. Barukh S. Schneerson (Jerusalem: Otzar Haposkim, 1967), 23.

[26] Michael Camille, "Manuscript Illumination and the Art of Copulation," in *Constructing Medieval Sexuality*, eds. Karma Lochrie, Peggy McCracken, and James A. Schultz (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 58-90; 70.

[27] See Avraham Grossman, *He Shall Rule Over You? Medieval Jewish Sages on Women* (Jerusalem: The Zalman Shazar Center, 2011), 247-249.

the Talmudic honorific term "*Gedol ha-Dor* (the greatest of the generation),"[28] or the tenth-century Midrashic expression "*Av la-Hakhamim* (father of the wise)," originally referring to Moses.[29] These formulations demonstrate cultural ideals that relatives sought to attribute to their dead. They also function within the masculinity discourse of Ashkenazic rabbis. The epitaph of Nathan ben Yitzhak, located in the Worms medieval Jewish cemetery, is a good example.[30] Nathan died on 4 October 1333, at the age of 71:

> At the end of the holiday on the month of the mighty[31] [:?] In the year 94 [?] according to the [Jewish] count: Father of the wise and the learned, he was gathered to his ancestors: With a good name and reaching old age, aged 71 [?:] Rabbi Nathan son of Rabbi Yitzhak the greatest of the generation, counselor, and honorable:[32] An old man who sits among the wise: gained his learning and taught decent students: his adolescent years did not shame his old age: all his days he dedicated to the needs of many and to improvements: with body and soul he was in all matters, and his house was open like the desert, a refuge for the poor and the needy: Therefore, may the king who dwells above recognize him as one of his servants, and bring his only one into his innermost chamber.[33]

Nathan's epitaph shows that he was valued because he demonstrated wisdom, counseled others, learned and taught, his students were excellent, he was involved in communal affairs, and showed generosity towards the poor and needy.

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[28] See for example BT Moed Katan 22b, Sota 12a, Kiddushin 32b.

[29] Tanna Debei Eliyahu, 25, Sefaria, accessed December 21, 2023, https://www.sefaria.org.il/Tanna_Debei_Eliyahu_Rabbah.25.1?vhe=OYW_(segmentation_according_to_Warsaw_1880)&lang=bi.

[30] Nathan's epitaph is not unique, see among others the epitaph of Schmuel ben Eljakim (died 05.10.1319) http://www.steinheim-institut.de/cgi-bin/epidat?id=wrm-442&lang=de; or the one erected for Elasar ben Natan Halevi [died 21.01.1314], accessed December 21, 2023, http://www.steinheim-institut.de/cgi-bin/epidat?id=wrm-1006&lang=de.

[31] The term "month of the mighty" in Hebrew "*Yerah ha-Eitanim*" is one of the biblical names given to the month of Tishrei (I Kings 8:2). According to the Talmud (BT, Rosh Ha-Shanah 11a) this is the month in which the mighty ones of the world, i.e., the Patriarchs, were born.

[32] This is based on Isaiah 3:3.

[33] See this epitaph, a Hebrew transliteration, and a German translation via EPIDAT, accessed December 21, 2023, http://www.steinheim-institut.de/cgi-bin/epidat?id=wrm-190&lang=de.

Moreover, an important characteristic of this masculinity is the uncompromising adherence to rabbinic norms throughout a man's life, from childhood to old age. Thus, "his adolescent years did not shame his old age." The epitaph is another example showing how biblical and Talmudic gendered constructs were interwoven. Interestingly, attributes associated with knightly masculinity, like courage, prowess, and strength, are absent. One possible explanation is that knightly masculinity befitted the young and strong while old age was associated with a loss of masculinity; another tentative explanation is that old age was a time to fully embrace rabbinic masculinity, a time to study Torah, abide by the commandments, and repent for past sins.[34]

Thus far we have explored abstract ideals characterizing the "perfect Jewish man"; now we turn to the material culture associated with these young Jewish men and move from what was expected of them to exploring their daily lives.

Clothing, Masculine Identity, and Social Boundaries

Studying material culture, and especially clothing, as suggested by Susan Crane, sheds light on the inner worlds of medieval men and women and their gendered identities.[35] By clothing I mean what Julia Twigg defined as "the empirical reality of dressed bodies,"[36] and like Twigg I approach the sources applying sociological and anthropological methodologies that "regard clothing as a form of material culture, a species of situated body practice, and part of lived experience of people's lives."[37] Clothes may indicate internal characteristics, social affiliation, economic status, and gendered identities, but they can also help in disguising a person's identity and in subverting or reinforcing social norms. Therefore, we need to explore the written documents and illustrations in Hebrew manuscripts not only for discussions regarding clothing but also for those attesting for daily conduct,

[34] See Levinson, *Gender and Sexuality in Ashkenaz*, 172-175.

[35] Susan Crane, *The Performance of Self: Ritual, Clothing, and Identity During the Hundred Years War* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012).

[36] Julia Twigg, "Clothing, Identity and the Embodiment of Age," in *Aging and Identity: A Postmodern Dialogue*, eds. Jason Powell and Tony Gilbert (New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2009), 1.

[37] Ibid., 3.

speech acts, and nonverbal communications if we are to claim, as I do in this article, that young Jewish men's identities were influenced not only by rabbinic masculinity, but also by knightly masculinity.

This methodological approach enables a better understanding of what Judith Butler defined as the performativity of gender. As Twigg further argues, Butler's approach is fruitful to appreciate "the dynamic interaction of self, body and dress, acknowledging the embodied nature of clothing as it both expresses identity to the outside world and acts back on and reinforces it for the individual at a directly physical level."[38] As in recent anthropological studies, I consider dress "as a set of competing discourses, linked to the operation of power, that construct the body and its presentation."[39]

The material culture of Ashkenazic young men, therefore, raises a number of productive questions: How did they dress and what accessories did they possess, and what does this tell us about their Jewish identities and perceptions of masculinity, and about the social boundaries that separated the Jewish minority group from the majority Christian society? To contextualize young men's clothing within their broader cultural landscape, what follows is a brief discussion of the changes in men's fashion that occurred in northwestern Europe towards the end of the eleventh and the first half the twelfth century, coupled with the criticism Christian moralists expressed regarding those developments.

For about 600 years, young men in northwestern Europe wore short tunics, resembling those of the Romans of Late Antiquity. Sometime during the eleventh century these grew longer and more extravagant, as other clothing items, hairstyle, and facial representations changed as well. In England, these changes occurred following the Norman conquest of 1066. As Nancy Bradfield states,

> Tunics were long and lavishly decorated. Flowing hair and beards returned to favour. The under-tunic with the fitting sleeves was longer during this reign [of William II (1087-1100)]. The long, richly embroidered tunics of the Normans and Flemings who came to the English court in great numbers were soon adopted by the fashionably minded men. The skirts, reaching to the ankles, were sometimes slit at the sides, and for full dress

[38] Ibid.

[39] Karen Tranberg Hansen, "The World in Dress: Anthropological Perspectives on Clothing, Fashion, and Culture," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 33 (2004): 369-392; 370.

> the gowns were so long that they trailed on the ground [...] Short hair went out of fashion; it was now cut in quite a long 'bob' covering the ears [...] Bands were sometimes worn round the head.[40]

Contemporary Christian moralists, like Edmar (ca. 1060-ca. 1128), William of Malmesbury (ca. 1090-ca. 1143), and the English chronicler and Benedictine monk Orderic Vitalis (1075-ca. 1142) expressed harsh criticism of these fashionable changes; long tunics and curled hair and beards were especially criticized. For Vitalis, for example, these changes showed a loss of masculinity:

> Our wanton youths are sunk in effeminacy, and the courtiers study to make themselves agreeable to the women by every sort of lasciviousness [...] Sweeping the dusty ground with the prodigious trains of their robes and mantles [...]. The forepart of their heads is bare after the manner of thieves, while on the back, they nourish long hair like harlots [...] Now, almost all the world wear crisped hair and beards, carrying on their faces the tokens of their filthy lust, like stinking goats. Their locks are curled with hot irons, and, instead of wearing caps, they bind their heads with fillets.[41]

The young aristocrats, however, turned a deaf ear to such admonitions, and these changes infiltrated from the nobility to the wealthy urban population and from there to the lower classes. These changes, as mentioned above, arrived in England with the Normans and the Flemings, thus it comes as no surprise that young Jewish men in Ashkenaz were also influenced by these fashionable changes.

Rabbinic Criticism of Young Men's Dress Code

Already at the end of the eleventh century, Rashi criticized Jewish young men for imitating the fashion of young Christian noblemen, whom he called *parashim* (literally meaning "horsemen," but referring to knights): "Israel is arrogant in their

[40] Nancy Bradfield, *Historical Costumes of England, from the Eleventh to the Twentieth Century* (London: George G. Harrap, 1997), 15-17.
[41] Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History of England and Normandy*, vol. 2, trans. Thomas Forester (London: H.G. Bohn, 1854), 478.

hair and in their arrogant clothes like these *parashim*."[42] Rashi's critical approach was reiterated in the thirteenth century by R. Eleazar of Worms, who reminded his readers "[t]hat even with his clothes one must show that he is a Jew."[43] Apparently, both the garments and the new hairstyle, featuring curled locks, attracted criticism, blaming the young men for exhibiting pride and for not differentiating themselves from their Christian neighbors. According to some Ashkenazic rabbis, the reason that young men curled their hair was "to be beautiful and to show their pride."[44] This critical attitude reappears in Rashi's commentary on the book of Genesis (39:7), where he argued that the wife of Potiphar was Joseph's punishment for curling his hair. The idea that hair growing is motivated by pride appears already in the Mishnah (Sotah 1:8); in the fourteenth century it was echoed in *Sefer ha-Agudah*, written by R. Alexander Suslin of Frankfurt. This time not Joseph but Absalom was the one who grew his hair, was proud of it, and therefore was hung by it.[45]

The connection between a certain dress code and pride appears also in *Orhot Tzadikim*, an anonymous fourteenth-century Ashkenazic ethical treatise. Pride, argued the author,

> is also evident in the matter of food and drink, and in garments of vanity, the clothes of the gentiles [...] All in one matter, [God] warns that Israel must be separated in his garments and in his words and in all his customs from the gentiles.[46]

In the German lands in the early thirteenth century, R. Judah the Hasid forbade men who grew their hair, shaved their beards, and dressed like the gentiles from reading from the Torah scroll at the synagogue: "And any man who grows his hair and shaves his beard even [if he does not do it with a knife as the law forbids, but

[42] Rashi, on BT Shabbat 139a.
[43] *Moshav Zekenim on the Torah*, ed. Sasson Saliman ben David (London: Hill Printing House, 1959), 305.
[44] Ibid., 431.
[45] Suslin ha-Cohen, *Sefer ha-Agudah,* 58.
[46] *Orhot Tzadikim ve-hu Sefer ha-Midot* (Jerusalem: Or ha-Haim, 2008), 11.

rather] with scissors, or he is dressed like the Gentiles, must not be called up to the Torah."[47]

While for Orderic Vitalis and other Christian moralists, the young aristocrats who grew their hair and curled it showed a loss of masculinity, for medieval Ashkenazic rabbis, the Jewish young men who adopted the fashion of the aristocracy were blamed for *ga'ava*, or arrogance. Christian preachers were preoccupied with the transgression of gender categories; the rabbis were more concerned about the blurring of social boundaries between Jews and Christians.

Throughout the high and late Middle Ages there were young Jewish men who dressed like their affluent neighbors, "those *parashim*" as Rashi referred to them. Exploring these young men's daily conduct shows that dressing like the men of the upper echelons was not only a superficial, outward manifestation. It reveals some appropriation of chivalric culture and knightly masculinity ideals.

Jewish Young Men, Leisurely Activities, and Chivalric Masculinity

Hunting and falconry are two leisurely activities associated with chivalric masculinity, and according to halakhic sources, illustrations in Hebrew manuscripts, frescos, and court documents in Latin, Jewish young men were also fond of these activities. Israel Abrahams already noted that "as a matter of fact, Jews did at least occasionally participate in hunting."[48] But apparently, it was more than just occasionally. A fascinating example from 1286 England is found in a source containing medieval lawsuits and legal cases heard before travelling courts.[49] The text describes a hunt conducted by a group of twenty Jewish young men, among them Moses of Oxford, Aaron of Winchester, as well as a Jacob, Samson, and Abraham, who travelled to attend a friend's wedding in Stamford.[50]

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[47] Judah son of Samuel he-Hasid, *Sefer Gematriyot*, 29 § 30.

[48] Abrahams, *Jewish Life*, 376.

[49] The British National Archives, Eyre Rolls, PRO E 32/76 m.12.

[50] Jean Birrell, "Who Poached the King's Deer? A Study in Thirteenth Century Crime," *Midland History* 7, 1 (1982): 9-25; 19. See also Barbara Hanawalt, *Of Good and Ill Repute: Gender and Social Control in Medieval England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 146. On Jewish hunters in Medieval England, see Charles R. Young, *The Royal Forests of Medieval England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1979), 104; Robin R. Mundill, *The King's Jews Money, Massacre*

On their way to the wedding, in Rockingham Forest, they hunted a deer with the help of two greyhounds, as was common among Christian hunters of the upper echelons, and later consumed it at the wedding. This incident, however, happened in one of the King's forests; hunting the king's deer was a serious crime which could result in severe punishments. Importantly, according to the court document, Moses of Oxford, who slaughtered the deer, did so according to his custom (*more suo*), slicing the deer's neck while his servant held its feet. These young Jewish men slaughtered the deer according to their understanding of Jewish law.[51] The act of slaughtering clearly identified them as "other," those who have different customs, both in their own eyes and in the eyes of the presiding judge. This story demonstrates that there were Jewish young men in thirteenth-century England who behaved like their Christian peers while preserving their cultural uniqueness and Jewish identities.

Medieval Hebrew manuscript illustrations portraying hunting scenes serve as further evidence that hunting was a favorite activity known in detail to Ashkenazic Jews and part of their cultural imagery to convey their thoughts, beliefs, and hopes. Art historians often interpret these hunting scenes as alluding to the persecution of Jews by Christians.[52] Marc Epstein emphatically concluded that "hunting by Jews was unequivocally condemned throughout ancient and medieval rabbinic literature, which viewed it as a distinctly non-Jewish activity, one of the classical excesses of the gentiles."[53] Therese and Mendel Metzger, on the other hand, argued that "although essentially not a Jewish pastime, hunting—either with dogs or with falcons—was a sport indulged in by the Jews who frequented Spanish courts even as late as the second half of the fourteenth century. For other Jews hunting was no more than an occasional spectacle."[54] However, even among Ashkenazic Jews the picture is more nuanced, particularly when

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and Exodus in Medieval England (London: Continuum, 2010) 34; Cecil Roth, "Oxford Starrs," *Oxoniensia* 22 (1957): 66-67.

[51] Whether they strictly abided by laws of *shehita* (slaughtering) is unclear, but it seems that this was their intention.

[52] Shalev Eyni, *Jews among Christians*, 71-6; Sara Offenberg, "Beauty and the Beast: On a Doe, a Devilish Hunter, and Jewish-Christian Polemics," *AJS Review* 44, no. 2 (2020): 1-17.

[53] Mark Epstein, *Dreams of Subversion in Medieval Jewish Art and Literature* (University Park: Penn. State University Press, 1997), 23.

[54] Therese and Mendel Metzger, *Jewish Life in the Middle-Ages: Illuminated Hebrew Manuscripts of the Thirteenth to the Sixteenth Centuries* (New Jersey: Chartwell Books Inc., 1982), 212.

distinguishing between hunting for sustenance and hunting as a sportive activity and when considering differences between French and German halakhic authorities.[55]

An illustration of a hunting scene appears in a Hebrew manuscript originating in Coburg, Germany, also dated to the last decade of the fourteenth century. On folio 170r there is a decorated initial-word panel marking the beginning of *Ein ha-Koreh* (The Eye of the Reader), a grammatical treatise composed by Yekutiel ben Judah ha-Nakdan in the first half of the thirteenth century. At the bottom of the panel, underneath the gold initial word, *Barukh* (blessed), there is a detailed pictorial representation of a hunting scene. Here we see two hunters riding horses; one of them is blowing a horn while another hunter, also blowing a horn, is walking in front of the riders, two of the hounds biting into a large deer.[56] One of the hunters wears a pointed hat that looks more like a *Judenhut* than a medieval hunting hat, which may indicate his Jewishness. Moreover, it seems unfitting to interpret this opening scene of a grammatical treatise as alluding to the persecution of the Jewish people, allegorized as the chased doe, while the dogs and hunters are seen as representative of the enemies of Israel, as often argued by art historians when interpreting similar illustrations.[57] This pictorial representation rather shows that hunting was an activity with which Jews were familiar, important enough to be included in a range of manuscripts, and which carried for them different meanings.

[55] Leor Jacobi, "Rabbis on the Hunt: From Palestine to Poland," in *Falconry - Its Influence on Biodiversity And Cultural Heritage in Poland And Across Europe*, eds. Urszula Szymak and Przemyslaw Sianko (Bialystok: Muzeum Podlaskie Bialymstoku, 2016), 169-186.

[56] London, British Library, Add. 19776, fol. 170r.

[57] Epstein, *Dreams of Subversion*, 22.

Fig. 2. A hunting scene accompanied by dogs, appearing in manuscript from Coburg, Germany dated to 1390-1396 and including the Pentateuch, the five scrolls, haftarahs and other books. London, British Library, Add. Ms. 19776, fol. 170r (Public Domain).

Some rabbis, including R. Isaac of Vienna, criticized Jews who hunted with dogs, and warned that "anyone who hunts with the gentiles with the aid of dogs will not see the joy of Behemoth and Leviathan [in the world to come]."[58] Still, this rabbinic warning did not deter some Jewish men from hunting with dogs. R. Eliezer ben Joel of Bonn, active in the second half of the twelfth and in the early thirteenth centuries, was asked for his opinion regarding the halakhic permissibility to leash hunting dogs to a riding horse; he permitted it.[59] The main concern of the responsum was not whether hunting was permissible, but rather

[58] Isaac son of Moses, *Or Zarua*, vol. 1, 17 § 51.

[59] Eliezer son of Joel of Bonn, *Sefer Ra'abiah: Hu Avi Ha-Ezri,* vol. 1, ed. David Deblitzky (Bene Brak: David Deblitzky, 2005), 172.

whether leashing a dog to a horse transgresses the laws of *Kilayim* (mixed species).[60]

Young Jewish men in Ashkenaz were also engaged in another type of hunting, falconry, a most endearing occupation of the upper echelons during the Middle Ages. Several illustrations in Hebrew manuscripts corroborate the notion that Jews expressed interest in falconry. One image of a young man riding a horse and holding a bird of prey in his hand appears in a micrographic illustration from Germany dated to the second half of the thirteenth century, known as the "Jonah Pentateuch." The illustration shows a rider wearing a leather glove on his right hand, resembling the glove falconers used while hunting to protect their hands from the sharp claws of the bird.[61] Dalia-Ruth Halperin suggests that this falconer may represent the Messiah son of David, a plausible interpretation, carefully crafted by reading the micrographic texts forming the image.[62] Moreover, this reading follows similar interpretations by art historians depicting hunting scenes and images of knights in Hebrew manuscripts as harboring eschatological messages.[63]

[60] These laws, part of the Laws of *Kilayim* (mixed species) originate in the biblical commandment "you shall not plow with an ox and an ass together" (Deut. 22:10), and expounded by late-antique rabbinic scholars to include a list of different animals: "A wolf and a dog, a wild dog and a fox, a goat and a deer, a gazelle and a ewe-lamb, a horse and a mule, or a mule and a donkey, a donkey and a wild donkey, even though they are similar one to the other, constitute nevertheless, kilayim one with the other" (Mishna, Kilayim 8:1) Sefaria, accessed December 21, 2023, https://www.sefaria.org.il/Mishnah_Kilayim.1.6?lang=bi .

[61] London, British Library, Add. Ms. 21160, fol. 181v.

[62] Dalia-Ruth Halperin, "The Three Riders: The Apocalypse in the Figured Micrography of BL Add 21160," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 69, no. 2 (2018): 340-373; 364.

[63] Sara Offenberg, "A Jewish Knight in Shining Armor: Messianic Narrative and Imagination in Ashkenazic Illuminated Manuscripts," *The University of Toronto Journal of Jewish Thought* 4 (2014): 1-14; Offenberg, "Jacob the Knight in Ezekiel's Chariot: Imagined Identity in a Micrography Decoration of an Ashkenazi Bible," *AJS Review* 40 (2016): 1-16; Shalev Eyni, *Jews among Christians*, 81.

Fig. 3. A micrography of a falconer appearing in a manuscript originating in Germany, dated ca. 1250-1299.
London, British Library, Add. Ms 21160, fol. 181v (Public Domain).

However, falconry, as Joseph Shatzmiller explains, "was a favorite sport of the knightly class and one that sent a message of romance and desire of the flesh."[64] An illustration of a falconer appears also in a medallion for the month of *Sivan* (May) in the Tripartite Mahzor (c. 1322).[65] Sarit Shalev Eyni, described this image: "Here against the background of a tree in blossom, a young man wearing a wreath or crown on his head is seated in a royal posture: his legs are crossed, one hand is at his waist, while the other supports a falcon."[66] Shalev Eyni further remarked that, "[m]ost of the depictions of courtly scenes, such as the combat and falconry, reflect a noble ideal in which Jews could not directly participate."[67] However, as Leor Jacobi has demonstrated, some notable rabbis were engaged in this leisurely

[64] Joseph Shatzmiller, *Cultural Exchange: Jews, Christians, and Art in the Medieval Marketplace* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 67.
[65] Budapest, Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Kaufmann Collection, MS. A. 384, fol. 143r.
[66] Shalev Eyni, *Jews among Christians*, 94.
[67] Ibid., 103.

activity while others forbade it as incompatible with Jewish law.[68] Furthermore, the above mentioned responsum regarding hunting with dogs leashed to riding horses was understood by contemporaries as referring to hunting with falcons or hawks.[69] This responsum, so it seems, is not a mere theoretical deliberation, but rather discusses an activity in which Jewish men were involved.

The divergent opinions among rabbinic authorities regarding falconry indicate that chivalric culture exerted its influences not only on young men unaffiliated with the erudite elite but also on members of the rabbinic elite.[70] Some medieval Jewish men were engaged in hunting with dogs and in falconry, two activities associated with chivalric masculinity. There was yet another daily conduct inseparable from this masculinity, and that was fighting.

Jewish Fighters

Fighting skills, prowess, courage, protecting one's family and community, and the ability to carry and display armor and weapons—these were all essential aspects of knightly masculinity. Christine Magin and Markus Wenninger have shown that throughout the high and late Middle Ages Ashkenazic Jews owned weapons and carried them openly in times of danger.[71] Indeed, responsa literature and Hebrew chronicles indicate that during this period Jews armed with their weapons often fought against rioters, robbers, or crusaders.

A well-known example took place in Mainz in May 1096, when during the First Crusade Count Emicho of Leiningen arrived with a large army to the gates of the city. There, Jewish men wearing armor (most likely, chainmail gear) and carrying

[68] See Leor Jacobi, "Jewish Hawking in Medieval France: Falconry, Rabbenu Tam, and the Tosafists," *Oqimta* 1 (2013): 421-504. Accessed December 21, 2023, http://www.oqimta.org.il/english/gil1eng.aspx#.

[69] Isaac son of Moses, *Or Zarua*, vol. 1, 221 § 291.

[70] In his article, Jacobi discusses mainly Rabbi Jacob ben Meir Tam (Rabbenu Tam, ca. 1100-1171) and his circle of Tosafists.

[71] Markus J. Wenninger, "Bearing and use of Weapons by Jews in the (late) Middle Ages," *Jewish Studies* 41 (2002): 83-92; Christine Magin, "›Waffenrecht‹ und ›Waffenverbot‹ für Juden im Mittelalter," *Aschkenas Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Kultur der Juden* 13, no. 1 (2003): 17-33. Israel Yuval, "Rabbinical Perspectives on the Bearing of Weapons by the Jews," *Jewish Studies* 41 (2002): 51-55.

weapons fought for their lives: "Then they wore armor and harnessed their weapons, from old to young, and R. Kalonymus [...] at the head [...] and they approached the gate to fight the crusaders and the burghers."[72] In February 1201 the Jews of Worms defended their city together with the other citizens, even on a Sabbath, and in 1309 the Jews of Erfurt participated in the defense of their town. In Cologne, Jews were obliged to defend the city fortifications. In 1112, they were assigned to protect one of the city's gates, and again, in 1331, they were granted a letter of protection by the city council which included their duty to guard and defend the so-called "Jewish Gate" whenever the city was attacked.[73] During the struggles between the municipality of Cologne and the Archbishop Conrad von Hochstaden (1232-61), Jewish men courageously defended the city alongside their Christian neighbors against the troops of the archbishop. The municipality showed its gratitude by including them in the peace treaty of March 1252.[74]

Some Ashkenazic Jewish men carried weapons not only when their lives or property were in danger. In thirteenth-century Bohemia, young Jewish men proudly strolled around their neighborhood on Friday nights carrying their swords and shields. Rabbi Isaac of Vienna warned that these young men were desecrating the Sabbath: "Our brothers in Bohemia are not doing the right thing, when they carry swords and shields on Friday night. Sometimes when people are afraid and guard the city, then it is permitted."[75] These young men were undoubtedly influenced by knightly masculinity. R. Isaac did not criticize the fact that they were displaying chivalric masculinity but only that they did so on the Sabbath.

A few Jewish men lived like knights and were rewarded for their courage and fighting skills. In an early twelfth-century example, Joshua, a Jewish physician

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[72] Eva Haverkamp, ed., *Hebräische Berichte über die Judenverfolgungen während des Ersten Kreuzzugs.* Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Hebräische Texte aus dem mittelalterlichen Deutschland, 1 (Hanover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 2005), 317.

[73] Adolf Kober, *Cologne*, trans. Solomon Grayzel (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1940), 65.

[74] Tanja Potthoff and Michael Wiehen, "'da man die Juden zu Colne sluch [. . .] inde die hus in der Judengassen verbrannt wurden'. Das Kölner Judenpogrom von 1349," *Archäologie des Glaubens. Umbrüche und Konflikte. Mitteilungen der deutschen Gesellschaft für Archäologie des Mittelalters und der Frühen Neuzeit* 31 (2018): 21-36.

[75] Isaac son of Moses, *Or Zarua*, vol. 2, 40.

leading a chivalric lifestyle, served Bruno, the archbishop of Trier (1102-24).[76] The English Abraham the Jew, a crossbowman, was rewarded with a house in Canterbury in 1215 by king John.[77] Markus Wenninger mentions another Jew who "quite clearly led his life in the manner of a knight,"[78] named in sources as "the Jew D" and also known as Teka, who in the Spring of 1236 robbed a castle belonging to Bela IV, king of Hungary. Other Jews became owners of castles, Jörg Müller has shown recently.[79] These Jews lived like knights, and yet continued to identify themselves and be identified by others as Jews.

Jewish Children and Knightly Masculinity

Startling evidence for the integration of knightly ideals in Jewish culture can be found among the archaeological items unearthed by the MiQua-LVR Jewish Museum in the Archaeological Quarter Cologne, a museum currently being built on the ruins of the medieval Jewish quarter, which was completely destroyed in 1349 in a pogrom associated with the Black Death.[80] The museum is located right in front of Cologne's historical city hall. With its synagogue, ritual bath (*mikveh*), and other community buildings and private houses, it is the most preserved medieval Jewish neighborhood in Germany. These buildings were an inseparable part of Cologne's medieval landscape before the Plague, as was the whole Jewish community.

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[76] Alfred Haverkamp, *Jews in the Medieval German Kingdom*, trans. Christopher Cluse (Online Edition: Trier University Library, 2015), 27. Accessed December 21, 2023, https://ubt.opus.hbz-nrw.de/opus45-ubtr/frontdoor/deliver/index/docId/671/file/Jews_German_Kingdom.pdf.

[77] Robert Bartlett, *England under the Norman and Angevin Kings 1075-1225* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), 349.

[78] Wenninger, "Bearing and use of Weapons," 85. Teka was recently discussed by Birgit Wiedl, "Den Panzer von den Juden gekauft und empfangen: Jüdische Lebensrealitäten zwischen Krieg und Katastrophen," in *Krisen, Kriege, Katastrophen: zum Umgang mit Angst und Bedrohung im Mittelalter*, eds. Christian Rohr, Ursula Bieber, and Katharina Zeppezauer-Wachauer (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter 2018), 199-232; 217.

[79] Jörg R. Müller, "Juden und Burgen im Mittelalter Eine nur scheinbar marginale Beziehung," *Die Burg: Wissenschaftlicher Begleitband zu den Ausstellungen „Burg und Herrschaft" und „Mythos Burg"*, eds. G. Ulrich Großmann and Hans Ottomeyer (Dresden: Sandstein, 2010), 110-125.

[80] For more information regarding this project see https://miqua.blog, accessed December 21, 2023.

In a cellar of one of the Jewish homes the archaeologists found several chainmail shirts. Damages caused by the fires are detectable. It is still unclear whether these chainmail shirts were private property, merchandise, obtained by a pledge or even the remains of the fighting that may have taken place during the pogrom. According to fourteenth-century French chronicler, Gilles le Muisit (1272-c. 1353), the city's Jews had armed themselves and offered bitter resistance to the attacking mobs.[81] Although historians take his report with a grain of salt, the idea that armed Jews protected themselves seems very plausible, especially in Cologne.
Another artifact found at the site is a slate on which a drawing of a knight riding a horse is etched. This is one of many slates found by the MiQua team that present various drawings, writing exercises in Hebrew, and lists of Hebrew names with amounts of money next to each one. Perhaps the most exquisite finding was found in the pit underneath the women's synagogue. It is a tin and lead toy representing a knight riding a galloping horse.

Fig. 4. A fourteenth-century toy of a knight riding a horse found in the pit underneath the women's synagogue in Cologne.
Photo credit: Stefan Arendt; LVR-Zentrum für Medien und Bildung.

Remarkably, this finding may indicate that Jewish children too were fascinated with knights and that at least some parents thought that such a toy suited their

[81] Gilles le Muisit, *Chronique et annales de Gilles le Muisit, abbe de Saint-Martin de Tournai 1272-1352*, ed. Henri Lemaître (Paris: Librairie Renouard, H. Laurens, successeur, 1906), 223-227.

children. A similar toy, this time made of clay, was also unearthed by the MiQua team. These artifacts demonstrate that chivalric culture and knightly masculinity were an integral part of everyday life for Ashkenazic Jews—adults and children alike. The beautiful mid-fourteenth century frescos found in Frau Minne's home in Zurich, depicting chivalric culture drawings and coats-of-arms, further corroborate this notion.[82]

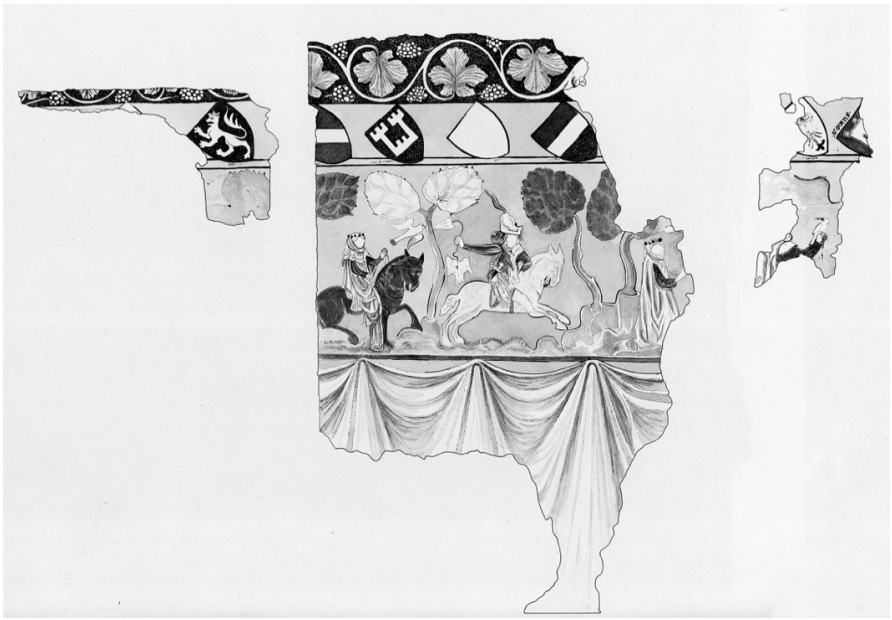

Fig. 5. Reconstruction of the fourteenth-century fresco
in the west wall of the Jewish house located at 8 Brunngasse, Zurich.
Stadtarchäologie Zurich. Photo courtesy of Wild Dölf.

Joseph Shatzmiller describes the scene in detail: "On the extreme left a gracious lady riding a black horse is setting free a falcon. She is preceded by a galloping horse led by a man who is trying to capture the bird. Then the lady appears again, this time standing on the ground. The original painting, of which only a faint fragment has survived, obviously had a longer story to tell. It is noteworthy nevertheless that

[82] Dölf Wild and Roland Böhmer, "Die spätmittelalterlichen Wandmalereien im Haus «Zum Brunnenhof» in Zürich und ihre jüdischen Auftraggeber," *Zürcher Denkmalpfleg Stadt Zürich* (1995/96): 15-33.

similar hunting scenes were discovered in other medieval buildings in Zurich."[83] This affluent family, like other contemporaneous well-off Jewish families, adopted a lifestyle similar to the one exhibited by their noble clients and neighbors.[84]

Between Two Masculinities

To conclude, let us return to the illustration in the *Forlì Siddur* with which we began. This image appears underneath a blessing for a newlywed couple because most likely it reflects jousting-like competitions taking part during Jewish weddings. If as a result of these competitions men and horses were injured, this raised a halakhic question whether compensations should be paid for the damages: "Those young men who ride horses for a bridegroom and fight with each other (i.e., joust) and rip off their friend's garment or spoil his horse, they are exempt from paying compensation because they do so for the joy of the groom."[85] The renowned twelfth-century troubadour Chrétien de Troyes vividly described the violent reality of the tournaments: "The knights snap lances, break shields, and knock men and horses to the ground in such a way that it is impossible to know which side has the better or the worse."[86] As Maurice Keen concluded, "[t]he line could indeed be thin between mock war and the real thing."[87] These violent jousting competitions held by Jewish young men are discussed in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century rabbinic literature from Spain, Provence, northern France, and Austria.[88] This was seemingly a widespread phenomenon, perhaps an attempt to imitate the jousting competitions conducted during wedding celebrations of the nobility. It is yet additional evidence of the extent to which Jews absorbed knightly ideals from their surroundings.

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[83] Shatzmiller, *Cultural Exchange*, 67.
[84] See Shalev Eyni, *Jews among Christians*, 88.
[85] Tosafot, *Sukkah* 45a. This custom is mentioned in Marcus, "Why is this Knight Different?," 142.
[86] Joan Tasker Grimbert and Carol J. Chase trans., *Chrétien de Troyes in Prose: the Burgundian 'Erec' and 'Cligés'* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2011), 42.
[87] Maurice Keen, *Chivalry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 85.
[88] See Levinson, *Gender and Sexuality in Ashkenaz*, 96-97.

Jewish young men were not only involved in jousting competitions during Jewish weddings, but some also participated in real tournaments. Evidence for Jews participating in tournaments is found in a responsum written by R. Eliezer ben Joel of Bonn probably in the early thirteenth century, discussing a man who lost a shield he had borrowed from a friend in a tournament.[89] Young Jewish men took part in a tournament in Weissenfels in 1386.[90] Moreover, there is a good possibility that Jewish men also participated in a tournament in Regensburg in 1408.[91] Interestingly, the rabbis expressed no objection to this custom. They were more preoccupied with the young men's garments and hair style, hoping to reinforce social boundaries.

The rabbis' goal was to direct young men to a different masculinity ideal than the one encouraged by chivalric culture—one which valued *some* aspects of knightly masculinity such as prowess, strength, honor, and courage, yet inwardly acculturated them. These traits were not meant for self-aggrandization and enhancing one's own reputation, but rather for the glorification of God's name and the Jewish people. Nevertheless, as we have seen in this essay, young men's dress and conduct show that they were navigating two masculinities, and that they internalized complex identities, which enabled them to identify as Jews and at the same time to feel that they were part of mainstream urban culture to some degree. This is yet another example, joining those of previous studies, demonstrating the extent to which medieval Ashkenazic Jews were part of their surroundings.

Eyal Levinson is currently a researcher at *Contending with Crisis: The Jews in IX^th Century Europe*. In the past six years he was a postdoctoral research fellow at *Beyond the Elite: Jewish Daily Life in Medieval Europe*. He researches youth, men, fatherhood and masculinities in medieval Ashkenaz. His book, *Gender and Sexuality in Ashkenaz in the Middle Ages* (in Hebrew) was recently published by the Zalman Shazar Center and the Leo Baeck Jerusalem Institute. He also co-authored with Tzafrir Barzilay and Elisheva Baumgarten *Jewish Life in Medieval Northern Europe, 1080-1350: A Sourcebook* (Western Michigan Press, forthcoming). Levinson is the author of several articles among

[89] Eliezer son of Joel of Bonn, *Sefer Ra'abiah: Hu Avi Ha-Ezri,* vol. 3, ed. David Deblitzky (Bene Brak: David Deblitzky 2005), 425. I thank Aviya Doron for this reference.

[90] Abrahams, *Jewish Life*, 377.

[91] See Wenninger, "Von jüdischen Rittern," 62.

them: "Situated Fathering in Medieval Ashkenaz" and "Male Friendship in Medieval Ashkenaz."

Keywords: Medieval Masculinities, Jousting, Youth Culture, Material Culture, Medieval Jewish Fighters

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"We Are No Soldiers":

Jewish Unmanliness in English Renaissance Drama

by *Becky S. Friedman*

Abstract

This article explores the denigration of Jewish manhood on the English Renaissance stage and the ways that the inherently performative space of the theater and the collective experience of spectatorship created the ideal conditions for reconstructions of Jewish-Christian power relations. I argue that canonical late sixteenth-century plays incorporated emasculating humor about Jewish men to exercise control over those that challenged white Christian dominance. By analyzing a dramatic culture that represented Jewish male figures as being unfit for martial action, humiliatingly emotional, and physically inferior, I show how gendered constructions of Jewishness provide evidence of Renaissance theater's celebration of Christian supremacy in one of the most popular secular spaces of the day at the same time that it secured associations of Jewish unmanliness in the English cultural imagination for centuries to come.

Introduction

In 4.1 of *The Merchant of Venice* (c. 1598), Shylock and his debtor Antonio face off in a court scene.[1] A mediator, introduced as a doctor of laws, emerges to arbitrate the case and to determine whether Shylock may move forward with the cutting of Antonio's pound of flesh, as is promised to him in a mutually agreed-upon contract drawn up at the play's start. This doctor—"so young a body with so old a head"—is actually a woman called Portia dressed as a man named Balthazar, whose purpose is to intervene on Antonio's behalf (4.1.165).

Within moments of arriving, Portia-as-Balthazar famously asks, "Which is the merchant here? And which the Jew?" (4.1.176). Her questions invite audiences to consider what actual points of distinction exist between Jews and Christians. Indeed, despite scholarly arguments about what performance practices, including props and costuming, would have individuated Shylock, Portia's lines suggest that it was still difficult to determine, upon sight, which character was meant to be the Jewish one.[2] The line also draws attention to Portia's poor fit to adjudicate in this matter. However, within some 160 lines, she assertively tells Shylock, "If thou tak'st more / or less than a just pound …nay, if the scale do turn / But in the estimation of a hair, / Thou diest, and all thy goods are confiscate" (4.1.340-346). The danger for Antonio quickly deescalates, while it spirals for Shylock, whose own life is at stake should he err "but in the estimation of a hair." The scales used for measuring flesh come to symbolize the scales of justice, which are righted after the threat of Jewish disruption. The good Christian ultimately walks free, while the bad Jew suffers the consequences of overreaching.[3] And the audience,

[1] William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, eds. Barbara A. Mowat and Paul Werstine (New York: Washington Square Press, 2002). All subsequent references to the text of this play are to this edition.

[2] A contentious debate in the field of Shakespeare studies concerns Shylock's "Jewish nose," a prosthetic piece that would have communicated racial difference as much as comic effect. Most recently, Laurie Johnson has argued against this practice having been a part of early modern performance, but the argument has long been a part of *Merchant*'s performance history discussions. For more, see Laurie Johnson, "The Nose Plays: Nasiform Negotiations at Newington Butts," *Shakespeare* (2023): 24-37.

[3] Ultimately, Shylock's punishment is that he must convert to Christianity and promise to give "of all he died possessed unto his son Lorenzo and daughter Jessica" (4.1.405-406).

watching the delicious takedown of the bloodthirsty Jewish stage figure, celebrates at Shylock's defeat.

This scene is a reversal of the Crucifixion narrative, in which Jesus and Barabas are presented before a crowd. In the New Testament account, the Jewish criminal goes free, while the innocent (proto-)Christian man is executed. In Shakespeare's version, however, in what Janet Adelman describes as "threaten[ing] to replay the killing of Christ," the virtuous Christian is freed, while the wicked Jew receives intense penalties.[4] For an audience primed to hate Jews, this result would have been a satisfying one. The salient role of a Christian woman in this story intensifies the humiliation of Shylock's downfall, further stimulating spectators' delight.

In this article, I examine such moments of Jewish humiliation in canonical English Renaissance plays, showing how both actors and audiences celebrated the shame of Jewish characters by staging and savoring their failures, weaknesses, and losses for crowds of viewers used to liturgical traditions which touted anti-Jewish rhetoric and sentiment. Jewish male stage figures served "as a reference group to which the English could relate in order to determine their own position," just as they had served in the European medieval chronicle.[5] But in the early modern period, the "collective fantasies" of these dramatic representations breathed new life into anti-Jewish recreational practice.[6] Shakespeare's usurer and characters like him were designed to reenact episodes of white Christian powers dominating the Jewish Other for the entertainment of London crowds.[7] A historicized study of these theatrical constructions reveals how anti-Jewish thought was upheld in secular settings as in religious ones, how English performance culture popularized visions of the "unmanly Jew," and how the western literary canon has preserved these injurious inventions centuries after they were first concocted. As Sander

[4] Janet Adelman, *Blood Relations: Christian and Jew in The Merchant of Venice* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 3.

[5] Sophia Menache, "Faith, Myth, and Politics: The Stereotype of the Jews and Their Expulsion from England and France," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 75, no. 4 (1985): 351-374.

[6] Lara Bovilsky, *Barbarous Play: Race on the English Renaissance Stage* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 67-68.

[7] The varied geographic settings of the English Renaissance plays examined in this essay demonstrate how the English saw the trope of the "unmanly Jew" as universal. Rather than formulating the Jewish male stage figure as a unique product of the English imagination, therefore, playwrights such as Shakespeare were participating in broader supersessionist culture when contriving characters like Shylock.

Gilman avers, "The nature of the male Jew and his representation… lies at the very heart of western Jew-hatred." [8] The English Renaissance stage contributed significantly to this portraiture.

I begin by considering the displays of physical incapacity, including mockery, associated with perceived indisposition to military prowess in Christopher Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* (c. 1589). I also explore the backdrop of the courtroom as a crucial context for this anti-Jewish presentation. Then I turn to the conflation of circumcision and castration in popular English culture, and the loss of patriarchal status that derives from that emasculating association. I focus, in particular, on its application in *The Merchant of Venice*, which further features visions of Jewish impotence and undesirability through the erosion of female companionship. And finally, I show how these recurring patterns operate within the broader imaginary of Jewish corporeal denigration, which the popular English theater of the early modern period significantly reinforced and helped to sustain.

Synthesizing Sermon and Spectacle

In an address delivered at Christ Church, Oxford on Good Friday in 1621, a preacher argues that there is no precedent as disturbing as the Jews' participation in the execution of Jesus Christ even in the furthest reaches of historical chronicles or the most outrageous efforts of the literary imagination:

> History or inuention has anciently told vs of some altars, where-on wild deuotion sacrificed men: but durst Poetry euer faigne a people that sacrificed their God? Would any man haue thought that the Iew would haue beene the first Antichrist of his Messias? That the children of Abraham would murder the God of Abraham? That the partakers of the Lords glory, would crucifie the Lord of glory?[9]

[8] Sander Gilman, *The Jew's Body* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 5.

[9] Barten Holyday, *Three sermons upon the Passion, Resurrection and Ascension of Our Sauior preached at Oxford, by Barten Holyday, now archdeacon of Oxford. EEBO British Library records - unstructured* (London: Printed by William Stansby for Nathaniell Butter, and are to be sold at his shop at Saint Austines Gate in Pauls Church-yard, 1626), 6. Early English Books Online (13619).

The escalating rhetorical questions launch the retelling of the Crucifixion narrative, and audiences gathered on the day intended to commemorate the event are petitioned to embrace the irrevocable damnation of the Jews. Though this particular sermon was devised for a holiday setting, the Crucifixion story was regularly deployed at Christian assemblies. A sermon delivered at St. Paul's Cross in London in 1608 refers to the Jews as "the cruel butchers of Christ."[10] One delivered in 1617 asks, "And as for the *Iewes*, had not they then crucified our Lord and Sauiour?"[11] John Donne's *Holy Sonnets* does something similar when it notes that "They kill'd once an inglorious man…"[12] The recitation of the Jews' participation in the death of Christ kept this portrait of the Jews as killers sharp in English imaginations, even at a time when Jews were nearly invisible in contemporary life.[13]

The theater of the period brought the liturgical practice of anti-Jewish rhetoric to popular performance culture. An essential example of this effort is Christopher Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta*, which presents the figure of Barabas as an English Renaissance super-villain.[14] Having a name that instantly recalls the Crucifixion narrative, the protagonist fuels anti-Jewish conspiracy theories by delivering lines about slaying friends and enemies, by "extorting, cozening, forfeiting," and by generally boasting about vile and violent conduct (2.3.175-201). His interference in political affairs, like his obsessive dedication to personal vengeance, demonstrates

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[10] *Pharisaisme and Christianity compared and set forth in a sermon at Pauls Crosse*, May 1, 1608. By I.H. Vpon Matth, 65. Early English Books Online (12699).

[11] *A sermon preached in Italian, by the most Reuerend father, Marc' Antony de Dominis, Archb. of Spalato, the first Sunday in Aduent, anno 1617. In the Mercers Chappel in London, to the Italians in that city, and many other honorable auditors then assembled. Vpon the 12. verse of the 13. chapter to the Romanes, being part of the Epistle for that day*. First published in Italian by the author, and thereout translated into English, 22. Early English Books Online (7004).

[12] John Donne, "Holy Sonnet 7," in *The Divine Poems*, ed. Helen Gardner (Oxford: Oxford University Press; Oxford Scholarly Editions Online, 2012).

[13] The Jews' expulsion from England in 1290 meant that those living in London during Marlowe's lifetime would have been part of small enclaves, generally unobserved by the swelling Christian English population of the capital city. This continued, shadowy presence on English soil, despite Edward I's thirteenth-century Expulsion Edict, contributed to the popular sentiment of Jewishness as both an historical and mythical construction.

[14] Christopher Marlowe, *The Jew of Malta*, in *Doctor Faustus and Other Plays*, eds. David Bevington and Eric Rasmussen (New York - Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 247-322. All subsequent references to the text of this play are to this edition.

his broad commitment to Christian destruction. But Marlowe's stage-Jew complicates the familiar depiction of viciousness by way of his apparent unwillingness and stated incapacity to take up arms.

In an early scene of the play, the Maltese Governor Ferneze resolves to pay off a debt to Turkish authorities with monetary support from the Jews, commanding, "call those Jews of Malta hither" (1.2.34). The scene that follows involves a peculiar verbal exchange in which Barabas worries aloud that he and the other Jews will be asked to support Malta in a military capacity:

> FERNEZE. ...and, Hebrews, now come near.
> From the Emperor of Turkey is arriv'd
> Great Selim Calymath, his highness' son,
> To levy of us ten years' tribute past:
> Now, then, here know that it concerneth us.
>
> BARABAS. Then, good my lord, to keep your quiet still,
> Your lordship shall do well to let them have it.
>
> FERNEZE. Soft, Barabas! there's more 'longs to't than so.
> To what this ten years' tribute will amount,
> That we have cast, but cannot compass it
> By reason of the wars, that robb'd our store;
> And therefore are we to request your aid.
>
> BARABAS. Alas, my lord, we are no soldiers!
> And what's our aid against so great a prince?
>
> FIRST KNIGHT. Tut, Jew, we know thou art no soldier:
> Thou art a merchant and a money'd man,
> And 'tis thy money, Barabas, we seek.[15]

[15] Marlowe, *The Jew of Malta*, 1.2.38-53.

The court-like setting, not unlike the trial scene in *The Merchant of Venice*, reenacts foundational Christian visions of Jews interrupting judicial processes, made apparent when Barabas refuses to cooperate with the Maltese authorities.[16] He describes Malta's political climate as "*your* quiet," and adds, "*your* lordship shall do well to let them have it" to communicate his clear disinterest in supporting Malta in its moment of need. These lines reflect his characteristic sauciness as well his "boisterous burlesque."[17] But it is in the scene's attention to Barabas's physical weakness that Marlowe delivers an innovative construction of anti-Jewish representation; namely, the frailty of Jewish men.

"Alas, my lord, we are no soldiers!" Barabas protests. He admits both to his interlocutors and to the audience that he is physically inadequate, grouping all Jews together as one stock-type with his use of the pronoun "we." The diction recalls anti-Jewish literary and historical precedents that Geraldine Heng traces in medieval English texts as much as it reveals the continuity of premodern racial profiling that remained popular in the Renaissance period.[18] It is no accident that

[16] The Geneva Bible—the religious text which both Marlowe and Shakespeare would have used—records this foundational vision well. The multitude votes to execute Jesus, and "Then said the governor, But what evill hath hee done? Then they cryed the more, saying, Let him bee crucified." The Jewish communal participation in this moment, the lack of evidence in their arbitration, and the use of the word "tumult" in subsequent lines all contribute to the presentation of a scene in which the Jewish populace disrupts established judicial processes and violates legal protocol. Matt. 27:23

[17] This descriptive language comes from a now-infamous essay by Elmer Edgar Stoll, in which he asserts the use of a red wig and prosthetic nose as essential props that adorned the body of the English Renaissance stage Jew, a claim which has since been challenged by scholars. For more, see Elmer Edgar Stoll, "Shylock," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 10, no. 2 (1911): 236-279; 249.

[18] While Geraldine Heng explores the "panopticon" of English politics in the medieval world, her observations about England as a racial state offer context for this moment in Marlowe's popular premodern drama. Heng writes, "It is a politics of race that transforms a few individuals who are visible and conspicuous into symbolic icons that represent, and stand for, an entire abominated population"; that is certainly the operating principle in this moment of *The Jew of Malta*, if not in the entirety of the play's treatment of Jews. For more, see Geraldine Heng, *England and the Jews: How Religion and Violence Created the First Racial State in the West* (New York - Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 47.

Barabas's confession of being unfit for military service suggests that all Jews are similarly indisposed.[19]

The knight's immediate corroboration of Barabas's claim—"Tut, Jew, we know thou art no soldier"—first addresses the widespread belief of Jewish unmanliness and then offers a ripe transition point to request funds. "Thou art a merchant and a money'd man, and 'tis thy money, Barabas, we seek," he states. It is not merely that Jews are yoked to economic concerns rather than military ones but that Jewish men, in particular, are valuable only inasmuch as they offer monetary support. The multidimensional layers of contemporary anti-Jewish logic in these lines would have excited audiences who were primed to enjoy the caricaturization of Jews in a play which unabashedly announces its thematic interest in Jewishness.[20]

Celebrating Jewish diminution was a common practice in early modern England, when Josephus's texts depicting Jewish military defeat at the hands of the Romans were widely read in newly translated editions by Peter Morwyng (1558) and Thomas Lodge (1602).[21] Both translations went through numerous rounds of publication in the decades after their releases, testaments to their broad readership and the public's demand for texts that commemorated Judea's defeat. It was in Elizabethan England, as Freyja Cox Jensen observes, that Josephus "enjoy[ed] a particularly favorable reception."[22] Beatrice Groves's work[23] on the power of Jerusalem's destruction in the English imagination supports Jensen's findings, and those of Martin Goodman and Joanna Weinberg, among others. Scholars of Jewish studies and English literature have addressed the ways in which Josephus's historical works affected early modern culture, but there is much work to be done on the ways in which the Elizabethan theater participated in this trend; it was in

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[19] The language also operates as a historical reference to the military dispensations that Jews received centuries before Marlowe penned this play. For more, see Saskia Zinsser-Krys, *The Early Modern Stage-Jew: Heritage, Inspiration, and Concepts* (New York: Peter Lang, 2017).

[20] The play's full title is *The Famous Tragedy of the Rich Jew of Malta*, inviting audiences to anticipate these types of connections between Jews and money.

[21] For more, see Carol A. Morley, "Critical Introduction to *The Jewes Tragedy*," in *The Plays and Poems of William Heminge*, ed. Carol A. Morley (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2006), 44-45.

[22] Freyja Cox Jensen, "What Was Thomas Lodge's Josephus in Early Modern England?," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 49, no. 1 (Spring 2018): 3-24.

[23] Beatrice Groves, *The Destruction of Jerusalem in Early Modern English Literature* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

these public gathering spaces that audiences assembled in communal celebrations of Jewish defeat. Exhibits of white Christian dominance over the Jews, as Marlowe's work demonstrates, provided mutual benefit for political powers whose anti-Jewish policies were still active, the playwrights whose commercial concerns drove ticket sales, and the English public whose sense of superiority could be confirmed by the subjugation of Jewish characters through humiliation and/or overthrow.

The stage was, after all, a commercial space that solicited continued patronage from "a large and committed crowd of hearers," and wove in-demand features into language and performance.[24] Whether those features were celebrity actors, displays of spectacle, or even engagement with supernatural figures like ghosts, the stage was a public site hosting performances designed for popular consumption at the same time that it satisfied its political overseers.[25] An audience member paying somewhere between one and sixpence[26] for a play titled *The Jew of Malta* was expecting a production that engaged with all of the cultural and racial associations of Jewishness. This exchange between Barabas, the Maltese governor, and a knight should be regarded as a delivery on that promise for the audience's enjoyment, exploiting anti-Jewish stereotypes while advancing those feelings by promoting Jewish impotence.

Performance history records offer a valuable resource in discerning this scene's entertainment value, since we know that Edward Alleyn played Barabas from the time that *The Jew of Malta* opened in the 1590s until his death in 1626.[27] A man of great physical stature, he was well cast for the eponymous lead in Marlowe's

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[24] Andrew Gurr, *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London* (New York - Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 3.

[25] After a playwright penned a script, a prompter removed problematic text, including swear words, and then passed the play on to the Master of the Revels, who ensured seditious or blasphemous language did not make it to the stage. As Tiffany Stern writes, "The Master of the Revels himself would also make his own amendments to the text, censoring bits he disapproved of, before returning the play to the theatre." For more, see Tiffany Stern, *Making Shakespeare: From Stage to Page* (London: Routledge, 2004), 144-145.

[26] The cost of admission for public outdoor theaters like the Globe started at just one penny for the cheap spots directly in front of the stage. For more, see Gurr, *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*.

[27] Lois Potter, "Marlowe in Theater and Film," in *The Cambridge Companion to Christopher Marlowe*, ed. Patrick Cheney (New York - Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 262-281; 262.

earlier play *Tamburlaine* (c. 1587), which begins with the Prologue describing him as "threat'ning the world with high astounding terms and scourging kingdoms with his conquering sword" (Prologue, 5-6).[28] Alleyn's imposing presence made perfect sense when depicting a formidable mercenary that commands armies. S. P. Cerasano has asserted that it was Alleyn's performance in *Tamburlaine* that made him an English Renaissance superstar.[29] "Distinguished by his unusual height and his thundering voice, and an actor well suited to the large, intense characters that allowed him to claim the limelight," Alleyn had, according to Cerasano, "unique swagger" as well as a large fanbase.[30] Playgoers enjoyed his performances as a man of valor, vigor, and virility.

Alleyn's status as a dramatic hero makes him a fascinating choice for Marlowe's Jew, for while his theatrical record and notable stage presence correlate to precisely the level of egomania that playing Barabas entailed, any performance of meekness or timidity would not align with Alleyn's stage history or general physicality. When he frets about taking on a militaristic role in *The Jew of Malta*, he is acknowledging this paradox, a joke that audiences would have been in on. The fact that he poses his concern as a question—saying, "And what's our aid against so great a prince?"—further emphasizes the jocular nature of his claim to military unfitness. In other words, this question functioned as a "nod-nod-wink-wink" moment for spectators who perceived the ridiculousness of such a line. It was not that Alleyn was feeble, but that the Jewish man he was playing was meant to be. Likewise, it was not that Barabas was uniquely ill-adept for soldierly duty, but that *all* Jewish men were.

This casting corroborates Matthew Biberman's claim that the early modern period drew from medieval stereotyping, especially "the conflation of Judaism with a range of hypermasculine behavior, most especially a penchant for physical violence, duplicitous bargaining, and impulsive, irrational decision making."[31] As a performer with hypermasculine associations due to other theatrical roles, Alleyn

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[28] Christopher Marlowe, *Tamburlaine the Great, Part I*, in *Doctor Faustus and Other Plays*, eds. David Bevington and Eric Rasmussen (New York - Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 1-68.

[29] S. P. Cesarano, "Edward Alleyn, the New Model Actor, and the Rise of the Celebrity in the 1590s," *Medieval & Renaissance Drama in England* 18 (2005): 47-58.

[30] Ibid., 49-50.

[31] Matthew Biberman, *Masculinity, Anti-Semitism and Early Modern English Literature: From the Satanic to the Effeminate Jew* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2016), 21.

was the consummate choice for the performance of "misogyny, contemptuousness, resourcefulness, cynicism, egotism, and avarice" required for the Barabas part.[32] But as a speaker of lines attesting to fear of conflict or physical incapacity, his casting would complicate the caricature. Barabas was thus an amalgamation of Biberman's "Jew-Devil" and "Jew-Sissy," delighting audiences with the familiar Crucifixion-era tropes while undermining the threat of Jewishness with language of fear and confessions of fragility.

It must also be noted that the main weapon of choice for Barabas is poison, an inherently un-masculine method of murder. Piotr Sadowski has persuasively argued that, "as a form of premeditated violence, poison has been almost universally judged as dishonourable and unmanly, and for that reason often associated with women, members of other disempowered social and ethnic groups, and, as perceived in Renaissance England, with Machiavellian politics from continental Europe, especially Italy."[33] Even if, therefore, Marlowe's villain encapsulates a "problematic hypermasculinity stigmatized by normative Christian ideals," as Biberman rightly observes,[34] Barabas also manages to undermine that excessive male-ness by virtue of enacting revenge through seemingly feminized media.

At once a depiction of passivity and femininity, a Jewish character opting out of conflict reduces any threat brought on by his presence. For a nation with a long literary and historical record attesting to the Jews as violently anti-Christian, with homicidal, if not cannibalistic, fantasies,[35] this dramatic interpretation repositions Jewishness as the very antithesis of danger. Lack of machismo, strength, or bodily autonomy is a crucial element of undermining Jewish men in early modern England.

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[32] Ibid., 19.

[33] Piotr Sadowski, "'Foul, Strange and Unnatural': Poison as a Murder Weapon in English Renaissance Drama," *Mosaic: An Interdisciplinary Critical Journal*, 53, no. 3 (Sept. 2020): 139-154.

[34] Biberman, *Masculinity, Antisemitism and Early Modern English Literature*, 19.

[35] The insidious myths of Blood Libel and Host Desecration both contributed to these violent associations. Magda Teter's recent work on the former explores how the proliferation of printed materials enabled the spread of that harmful canard, while Miri Rubin's book on the latter provides an excellent framework of the development and dissemination of Host accusations. For more, see Magda Teter, *Blood Libel: On the Trail of an Antisemitic Myth* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2020). Also Miri Rubin, *Gentile Tales: The Narrative Assault on Late Medieval Jews* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999).

Manufacturing Jewish Emasculation

The sermonic and the secular coalesce around the figure of the male Jew as a locus of condemnation and ostracization in early modern England. If in *The Jew of Malta* the emphasis is on the Jew's military incapacity, in *The Merchant of Venice* it is on the Jew's domestic incompetence. After Shylock discovers that his daughter Jessica eloped with a Christian man named Lorenzo, taking with her an armful of money, he becomes distressed. His embarrassing outburst is not only demonstrative of an unmanly level of emotion, but of an altogether hysterical nature:

> SOLANIO. I never heard a passion so confused,
> So strange, outrageous, and so variable
> As the dog Jew did utter in the streets.
> "My daughter, O my ducats, O my daughter!
> Fled with a Christian! O my Christian ducats!
> Justice, the law, my ducats, and my daughter,
> A sealèd bag, two sealèd bags of ducats,
> Of double ducats, stol'n from me by my daughter,
> And jewels—two stones, two rich and precious
> stones—
> Stol'n by my daughter! Justice! Find the girl!
> She hath the stones upon her, and the ducats."
>
> SALARINO. Why, all the boys in Venice follow him,
> Crying "His stones, his daughter, and his ducats."[36]

Citing passion, confusion, outrage, and variability, Solanio's language describes Shylock as exhibiting a ridiculous concoction of emotions.[37] The inclusion of the

[36] Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, 2.8.12-25.

[37] David Sterling Brown observes a similar show of unmanliness in *Hamlet* when the eponymous prince displays "incessant grief" and "rejects the rigid boundaries of white masculinity and exhibits feminine behavior." While Brown's assessment links blackness with disrupted social behaviors, similar links emerge in *The Merchant of Venice* with Jewish characters disrupting Christian conduct. For more, see David Sterling Brown, "Code Black: Whiteness and Unmanliness in

word "strangeness" reveals how Shylock's identity as a Jew is a crucial contributing factor in the moment's humor, as the term encompasses both the befuddled nature of the outburst as well as Shylock's foreignness.[38] It is important for audiences to remember his Jewishness to understand that this display is funny[39]; otherwise, playgoers may sympathize with the violation of filial piety that's also at stake. As Mary Janell Metzger explains, "Patriarchal authority was divinely ordained… Jessica's disregard for that authority thus creates the first obstacle to a Christian audience's expectations of her as a Christian."[40] Turning the attention to Shylock's behavior instead, this scene refocuses the audience's judgment from Jessica to her humiliated father.

Solanio makes a similar effort when he describes Shylock as "the dog Jew," a term that unmistakably conveys derision.[41] James Shapiro has explained that "the word Jew had entered into the English vocabulary in the thirteenth century as a catchall term of abuse," a linguistic development that lasted well through the early modern period.[42] The addition of the word "dog" clarifies the insulting nature of Shylock's Jewishness, though this racial slur is meant to inspire comedic response just as the rest of this scene's narrative. The fact that "all the boys in Venice follow him," as Salarino says, further demonstrates the buffoonery associated with Shylock's emotions, since this diction illustrates not only how the boys in Venice trailed behind Shylock through his public humiliation, taunting him as he moved, but also how they followed his example, imitating his physical and verbal paroxysms.[43] The scene being described by Solanio and Salarino links Jewish

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Hamlet," in *Hamlet: The State of Play*, eds. Sonia Massai and Lucy Munro (New York: The Arden Shakespeare, 2021), 101-127; 111.

[38] *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. "strange (adj. and n.)," www.oed.com/view/Entry/191244, accessed December 22, 2023.

[39] The word "strange" in this context is overlooked in scholarship. When Janet Adelman counts the use of the word "stranger" in *The Merchant of Venice*, she does not include this moment among that number. See Adelman, *Blood Relations*, 10.

[40] Mary Janell Metzger, "'Now by My Hood, a Gentle and No Jew': Jessica, *The Merchant of Venice*, and the Discourse of Early Modern English Identity," *PMLA* 113, no. 1 (1998): 52-63.

[41] For an overview of the ways that Christianity deployed "dog-Jew" rhetoric over time and across contexts, see Kenneth Stow, *Jewish Dogs: An Image and Its Interpreters* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2006).

[42] James Shapiro, *Shakespeare and the Jews* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 24.

[43] A version of this observation appears in my dissertation, in a chapter focused on the performativity of Jewishness in English Renaissance drama and what was meant by "acting Jewish"

masculinity with hyper-emotionality. It fits perfectly within the nexus of fabricating Jewish difference, as it is entirely described by Christian characters who construct the hysteria while the audience watches, a meta-demonstration of the invention of Jewish unmanliness in the popular English imagination and the ways that theater both exploited and reinforced such stereotypes.

Emasculating wordplay performs a significant role in the humor of this moment, by way of the heavy-handed catalog of paired losses. "Two sealèd bags," "double ducats," "two stones, two rich and precious stones"—there is little left to the imagination in Shylock's loud, public confession of having been castrated. This admission would have made sense to contemporary audiences who were familiar with the Jewish circumcision ritual but erroneously conflated it with castration. It was widely believed that Jews were marked by a permanent kind of genital mutilation, a signifier of aberration that connected un-Christian practices to diminished manhood.[44] Julia Reinhard Lupton has shown that the early modern English were not only aware that Jews were circumcised, but that the circumcision ritual was a major symbol of somatic difference between Christians and the other Abrahamic religions.[45] Thus Shylock's humiliation is wrapped up in gendered 'funniness'. The exchange between Solanio and Salarino draws out that humor, denigrating Jewish men in public theater, inviting audiences to join in their ridicule, and confirming the shared superiority of Christians over the superseded Jew.

Shakespeare's novel contribution to the "unmanly Jew" is the demise of family lineage. When proclaiming, "O my daughter! Fled with a Christian!," Shylock is declaring a loss of paternity, not dissimilar from the effects of castration. The dispossession of power—in being unable to control his daughter's movement, in being unable to express himself clearly in his distress, and in being unable to reclaim Jessica or the riches she took when departing—further emphasizes this

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at that time. For more, see Becky S. Friedman, "'The Badge of All Our Tribe': Contradictions of Jewish Representation on the English Renaissance Stage" (PhD diss., University of Massachusetts, 2021), 175-226.

[44] James Shapiro addresses anxieties connected to the Jewish circumcision ritual and explains succinctly how it was misconstrued specifically to emasculate Jewish men. For more, see *Shakespeare and the Jews*.

[45] Julia Reinhard Lupton, "Othello Circumcised: Shakespeare and the Pauline Discourse of Nations," *Representations* 57 (1997): 73-89; 82.

emasculation. It can even be linked to other Shakespearean episodes about paternal failures; *King Lear* (c. 1606) features a freshly blinded Gloucester whose "precious stones"—eyes, in Gloucester's case—are lost after his son Edmund betrays him (5.3.226).[46] The bodily corruption suggested by this recurring phrase likens the domestic chaos in both plays, though Gloucester's story is regarded as pitiable, enshrined as it is in a tragedy, while Shylock's is regarded as amusing, contained within a comedy. Shylock's subsequent call to get Jessica back, saying, "Find the girl! She hath the stones upon her, and the ducats," is as much a desire to regain his paternal status as it is to restore his wealth and his bodily integrity. His call goes unanswered, confirming the fecklessness of Shylock's words and their emotional rather than productive nature.

There is no doubt that Jessica's agency in this moment is contrasted with Shylock's. She willfully casts off her Jewish difference at the same time that she abandons her father. She is even given joint authority of a Belmont estate, as Portia leaves and says, "I commit into your hands the husbandry and manage of my house [...] My people do already know my mind and will acknowledge you [Lorenzo] and Jessica in place of Lord Bassanio and myself" (3.4.24-40). The statement equates Jessica with Christian nobles, and even more, contrasts Jessica's ability to manage a house with her father's demonstrated failures.

Metzger has argued that "representations of Jessica [...] turn on alternating characterizations of her as a latent Christian and as a racialized and thus integrable Jew."[47] This reasoning is especially cogent when juxtaposed with the ways that Christian characters describe Shylock. If he is the "cruel devil," she is a "most beautiful pagan" (4.1.225; 2.3.10-11). And whereas he is a "cutthroat dog," she is "gentle Jessica" or "fair Jessica" (1.3.121; 2.4.21; 2.4.43). These linguistic disparities reveal how anti-Jewish attitudes in English Renaissance drama were applied to representations of Jewish men but not their female counterparts. The fact that Jessica participates in this culture of denigration—saying, "Our house is hell" before escaping from it (2.3.2)—further communicates the extent of the gendered animus; Jewish women detest Jewish men as much as Christians do, reinforcing the collective impression of Jewish men as undesirable.

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[46] William Shakespeare, *King Lear*, eds. Barbara A. Mowat and Paul Werstine (New York: Washington Square Press, 2002).

[47] Metzger, "'Now by My Hood, a Gentle and No Jew'," 52.

The lack of Jewish wives is another meaningful detail in texts that seek to isolate and derogate Jewish men. The subtle references to a wife in *The Merchant of Venice* suggest that Shylock has been abandoned. At one point, he laments the loss of a ring given to him by someone named Leah, but her absence is never explained.[48] Neither Shylock nor Jessica shares anything about her, and, when Lancelet the servant jests that Shylock's wife had been unfaithful, Jessica does not deny it:

> LANCELET. Marry, you may partly hope that your father got you not, that you are not the Jew's daughter.
>
> JESSICA. That were a kind of bastard hope indeed; so the sins of my mother should be visited upon me!
>
> LANCELET. Truly, then, I fear you are damned both by father and mother; thus when I shun Scylla your father, I fall into Charybdis your mother. Well, you are gone both ways.[49]

Jessica's response to the claim that her mother committed adultery is remarkable; she does not reject the insinuation, even if she admits to hoping it isn't true. Neither does she clarify her mother's whereabouts or even get angry at the suggestion that her mother deceived her father. Lancelet observes how she does not challenge the accusation and then compares Leah to a mythical monster from Greek antiquity.[50] This abusive commentary insults Leah and Jessica, but is also injurious to Shylock whose wifelessness becomes a question of his ability to maintain domestic order. The unexplained absence of Leah is another item in a

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[48] Shylock learns that Jessica traded this ring for a monkey and exclaims, "It was my turquoise! I had it of Leah when I was a bachelor. I would not have given it for a wilderness of monkeys" (3.1.119-122).

[49] Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, 3.5.9-13.

[50] The comparison should be familiar to readers of Adelman, who has shown how "contaminating mothers" may have contributed to the monstrous differences of the Jews. See Adelman, *Blood Relations*, 34.

long inventory of Shylock's losses, constructing a vision of male Jewishness which is marked by erosion, abandonment, and failure.

The mockery of Jewish ritual, the jokes about castration, the failure of Jewish fatherhood, the desertions perpetrated by a Jewish daughter, and the absence or attrition of a wife all contribute to an imaginary space where Jewishness hurtles towards an inevitable extinction. This vision of a world without Jews, staged in the popular context of early modern England's public theater, offers us a glimpse of the shared, robust fantasy of white Christian hegemony. At the end of *The Merchant of Venice*, the audience is left feeling as though order has been restored when Shylock is made to convert and then disappears. This outcome is consistent with medieval English texts engaging with Jewish questions and characters. As Lisa Lampert-Weissig has described it, such "movement[s] from disorder to order, from fragmentation to wholeness" capture the supersessionist fantasy.[51] There is little doubt that the canonical works from the late Elizabethan period function precisely this way and use the emasculation of characters like Shylock to enable those conclusions.

The Shakespearean Legacy of Enfeebling Jewish Men

The performativity inherent in drama has enabled playwrights and players significant opportunity for denigrating Jewish characters. When Shylock asks, "Shall I bend low" in his negotiations with Antonio at the start of *Merchant*, for example, he demonstrates how the text and performance of Jewishness worked synchronously to present the Jew's position as inferior to his Christian stage peers (1.3.133-134). Shylock elucidates what Jewish behavior should be performed in the presence of Christians, and also how the actor should conduct himself when reciting those lines, since "he [was] free only to act as the text wished [him] to."[52] Such physical lowering is not only recalled but demanded at the play's conclusion, when Portia addresses Shylock, saying, "*Down*, therefore, and beg mercy of the

[51] Lisa Lampert-Weissig, *Gender and Jewish Difference from Paul to Shakespeare* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 104.

[52] Stern, *Making Shakespeare*, 84.

Duke" (4.1.378; emphasis added). This language encapsulates the rightful display of Jewishness, and invites audiences to witness its inferiority.

The direct call for the performance of Jewish subordination demonstrates how popular English culture reproduced socio-political hierarchies in the theater, where reconstructions of power relations could be staged for the entertainment of spectators. When Christian authorities triumph over the threat presented by the Jewish figure, audiences would encounter the denouement with satisfaction that justice had won out. The direction to get "down" thus confirms the appropriate arrangement of Venice's social order. If, at the beginning of the comedy, Shylock's question is, "Shall I bend low," this scene provides the answer.

Elizabethan dramas attest that the Jewish male body is undesirable, coursing with blood as corrupt as the Jews' sense of morality, and adorned with physical features that are objectively repulsive:

> SHYLOCK. I say my daughter is my flesh and my blood.
>
> SOLANIO. There is more difference between thy flesh
> and hers than between jet and ivory, more between
> your bloods than there is between red wine and
> Rhenish.[53]

The invocation of jet and ivory provides a fitting analogy for a text that engages so directly with questions of difference and likeness, composed at a time when categories and formations of race were being invented. Solanio's claim discloses contemporary associations of fairness with favorable feeling and darkness with negativity, while his insistence that these somatic traits are not passed on from father to daughter reveals how the English were grappling with the heritability of race, religion, and nationhood.[54] *Merchant*'s incorporation of a Prince of

[53] Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, 3.1.37-41.

[54] Kim Hall's work on the interconnections of evil, darkness, and race formation in the early modern world provides context for this contemporary thought well. For more, see Kim Hall, *Things of Darkness: Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995).

Morocco as a suitor to Portia offers more evidence of the text's broader questions about these themes, even if this character is quickly dismissed from the narrative. According to David Nirenberg, "The idea that the reproduction of culture is embedded in the reproduction of the flesh" proliferated in the premodern Iberian peninsula.[55] It was in this setting, where burgeoning populations of Jewish and Muslim converts and their descendants lived, that the fifteenth-century Spanish doctrine concerning the purity of blood (*Limpieza de sangre*) asserted the superiority of 'Christians by nature'. [56] England embraced this racial logic, establishing a national identity, in part, by fabricating difference among Christian, Jewish, and Muslim bodies.[57] It is thus historically accurate for Shylock to cite his flesh and blood as proof of similitude between himself and his daughter. Solanio's denial of those shared traits, however, indicates that there were competing theories on the subject. This argument concerning the affinities and variances between Jewish men and women captures the period's rapidly evolving negotiations of communal exclusion and belonging. Shylock is understood to have the somatic features of a Jew, while Jessica, by contrast, is spared.

Merchant's engagement with the problematization of Jewish male bodies and the theater's continued investment in their somatic difference is reflected in performance history records. The Folger Shakespeare Library's Digital Image Collections (LUNA), for example, contain a copious array of portrayals of Shylock as he was depicted in theater over a period of several hundred years.[58] Despite the range of media—including engravings, pencil illustrations, pen and ink drawings, watercolors, prints, photogravures, and more—Shylock is rendered with impressive consistency. He crouches, hunches, and crawls. He leers, sneers, and scowls. He also grasps, highlighting his constant engagement with material objects, whether they be moneybags, scales, or knives. When he appears in pictures with

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[55] David Nirenberg, "Was there race before modernity? The example of 'Jewish blood' in late medieval Spain," in *The Origins of Racism in the West*, eds. Miriam Eliav-Feldon, Benjamin Isaac, and Joseph Ziegler (New York - Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 256-257.

[56] The former were variously referred to as *Cristianos nuevos*, *confessos*, *conversos*, *marranos*, while the latter were described as *Cristianos de natura* and *cristianos viejos*.

[57] Jean Feerick, *Strangers in Blood: Relocating Race in Renaissance Literature* (Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 2010).

[58] See the LUNA Collections online database: https://luna.folger.edu/luna/servlet/allCollections, accessed December 22, 2023.

other characters from *The Merchant of Venice*, his costuming is distinctive, darker than the garb of the Christian stage figures, or plainer in comparison. Often, he wears a robe or a loose shroud, demonstrative of his "Jewish gaberdine" as much as his unstylishness (1.3.122).

Fig. 1. Felix Octavius Carr Darley, *Shy. "What should I say to you? ... I'll lend you thus much monies?," The merchant of Venice, act I, scene III [graphic] / F.O.C. Darley, 1884*, Indian ink wash with white pigment highlights, 409 x 318 mm, 1884, used by permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library.

Consider this late nineteenth-century drawing by Felix Octavius Carr Darley (Figure 1). The black-and-white illustration shows Shylock in a long tunic, adorned with utilitarian buttons and a circular badge on the upper-right sleeve.

This latter feature may be a reflection of Shylock's own reference to "the badge of all our tribe" (1.3.120), or to the injunctions across Europe which had called for Jews to wear a badge in order to distinguish them in public.[59] He bows before two bored-looking Venetians, Bassanio and Antonio.[60] In stark contrast to Shylock's bland, unornamented costume, the two men wear hats with feathers, embroidered garments, tights, swords, and elaborate footwear and jewelry. Their ornate sleeves and coiffured presentation all communicate superiority, and their haughty expressions and postures likewise convey their high rank. From costume to comportment, the performance of Jewish-Christian social differences as they were depicted in *Merchant* are preserved in Darley's drawing.

My interest in this illustration is the diminished nature of Shylock's body. He is old, a fact communicated by his white hair and wrinkles, and he carries a cane, a signifier not only of his corporeal weakness but also of the way his physicality is reduced. He may be bowing in this depiction, but even if he weren't, his body would still be lower to the ground than Antonio's or Bassanio's. The cane bespeaks a general state of incapacity and emerges with regularity in the LUNA archive, revealing not only how the stage sought to deteriorate Shylock's corporeal integrity in the early modern imagination but also how the legacy of enfeebling Jewish men was reproduced in the centuries after *Merchant* was composed.[61] The preservation of the late sixteenth-century English stage-Jew in performances and depictions through the nineteenth century shows how popular culture latched on to visions of Christian dominance and Jewish subordination. The body of Shylock sustained the calculated performativity of Jewishness as weak, antiquated, and unmanly.

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[59] This mandate came from the Fourth Lateran Council in the early thirteenth century, when a convocation of Catholic authorities produced a number of canons, including the enforcement of "a difference of dress…" so that non-Christians ("Jews or Saracens") could "be distinguished in public from other people by the character of their dress." See Norman Tanner, ed., *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1990), 266.

[60] The penciled-in notes on the bottom of the image provide the quote for context: 1.3.130-139.

[61] See the search results for "Shylock" in the LUNA Collections online database: https://luna.folger.edu/luna/servlet/view/search?search=SUBMIT&cat=0&q=%22shylock%22&dateRangeStart=&dateRangeEnd=&sort=call_number%2Cmpsortorder1%2Ccd_title%2Cimprint&QuickSearchA=QuickSearchA, accessed December 22, 2023.

While most of the LUNA images date from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries,[62] these visualizations communicate associations of Jewishness that had circulated in early modern London. Robert Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621), for example, alleged that the Jews suffered from biologically determined maladies. In his encyclopedic study, Burton writes that "voice, pace, gesture, and looks [are] likewise derived with all the rest of [the Jews'] conditions and infirmities."[63] The diagnostic claim is useful not only in better accessing contemporary attitudes about Jewish bodies and their differences, but also in visualizing those "conditions and infirmities." This scientific rhetoric offers valuable support for early modern English theories of Jewish debility. Many of the Shylock illustrations in LUNA, particularly those featuring Charles Macklin, draw attention to the Jewish man's body via rounded shoulders or a hunched back, indicative of the infirmities associated with Jewish corporeality as well as the performance of physical lowness that became a part of "acting Jewish" in the centuries after Shakespeare's lifetime.

[62] Emma Smith explores the Victorians' explosive interest in Shakespearean production and the figure of Shylock in particular in "Was Shylock Jewish?," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 64, no. 2 (2013): 188-219.

[63] Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy: What It Is, With All the Kinds, Causes, Symptomes, Prognostickes and Severall Cures Of It*, ed. Holbrook Jackson (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), 211-212.

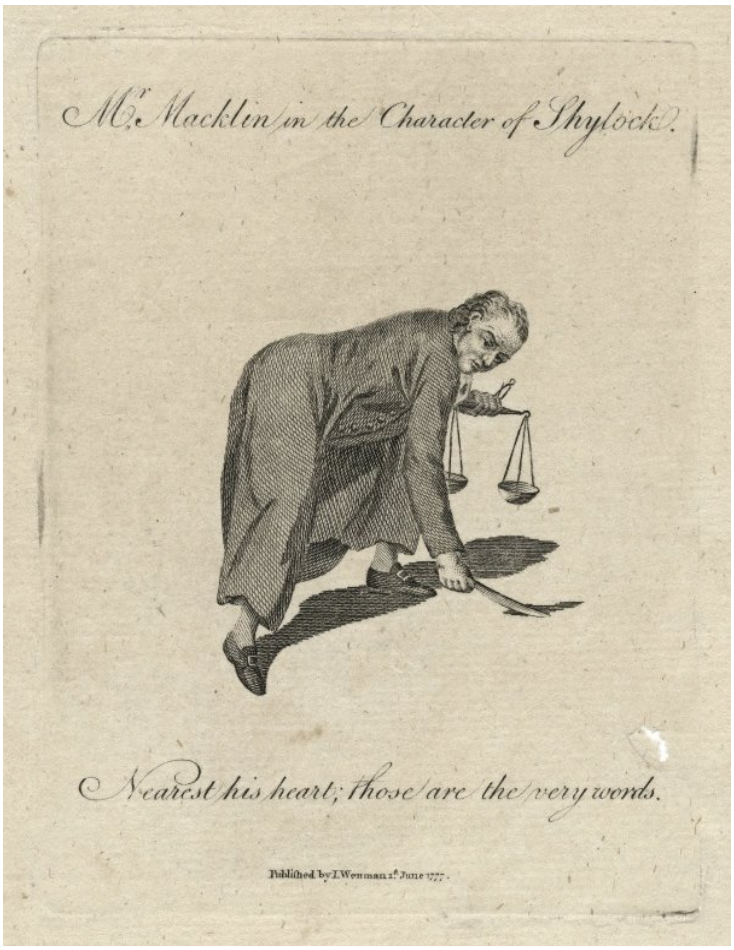

Fig. 2. I. Wenman, *Shy. Mr. Macklin in the character of Shylock [in Shakespeare's Merchant of Venice]: Nearest his heart, those are the very words [graphic]*, print engraving, 4 1/2 x 3 1/2 in., on sheet 8 1/2 x 5 1/4 in., 1777, used by permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library.

Figure 2 communicates how that posture could be read as humiliating and undignified even if it was also meant to convey violence. Macklin's front is facing away from the viewer, positioning his head low to the ground, his haunches directly before the audience's gaze. The comical presentation matches the combination of racism and humor that Peter Berek showed were intrinsic to early modern productions of *Merchant*.[64] Performativity was an important part of

[64] "Making characters 'look Jewish' was a way of making them funny," writes Berek. For more, see Peter Berek, "Looking Jewish on the Early Modern Stage," in *Religion and Drama in Early Modern*

Jewish male stage representation in Shakespeare's lifetime and after, and the manipulation of the body was a central mechanism of conveying that amusement. The Macklin etching also depicts how Shylock's access to space was thwarted on the stage, echoing the limitations on his access to social advancement.[65] It is a prime example of "space foster[ing] and troubl[ing] the antisemitism at work in English texts," which Kathy Lavezzo has observed in the entangled connections between the Jew, built environments, and spatial concerns.[66] While the familiar props such as the knife and scales accompany the stage figure, it is the pose that reveals the performativity of male Jewishness and the way that the theater enabled spectacles of debasement and subjection. Popular drama of the English Renaissance period capitalized on playgoers' established ideas about Jewish inferiority to produce such visualizations, and the canonicity of Shakespeare has made these visions an essential part of western imaginations through the enduring interest in and reproduction of *The Merchant of Venice*.

Conclusion

This article has shown how the English Renaissance stage manipulated the inherently performative space of the theater and the collective experience of spectatorship to exercise control over power relations that challenged white Christian dominance. Jewish male characters served as productive figures over which English Renaissance playwrights and audiences asserted superiority, appealing to religious, political, and social sensibilities all at once. Whether by exploiting jokes about their un-militaristic nature, feminine displays of emotion, and incapacity to be authoritative, or by capitalizing on ideations concerning their bodily difference or personal failures as fathers and husbands, the stage and the anti-Jewish culture of early modern England produced an icon of unmanliness.

England: The Performance of Religion on the Renaissance Stage, eds. Jane Hwang Degenhardt and Elizabeth Williamson (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011), 55-70; 69.

[65] This theatrical rendering of Jewish social and spatial limitations is another form of ghettoization. Dana E. Katz explores this phenomenon in "'Clamber not you up to the casements': On ghetto views and viewing," *Jewish History* 24, no. 2 (2010): 127-153.

[66] Kathy Lavezzo, *The Accommodated Jew: English Antisemitism from Bede to Milton* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2016), 8.

This gendered construction of Jewishness provides a valuable lens for the ways that contemporary popular culture celebrated Christian supremacy and ensured its longevity by canonizing non-Christian others as rightfully, and laughably, inferior.

Becky S. Friedman is the Associate Director of Undergraduate Studies in the Department of English at the University of Pennsylvania. Her research interests include English Renaissance drama, the history of Jews and Judaism in England, and gender and religion in early modern Europe. Her work reveals how London playhouses embraced Jewishness as a productive means of exploring difference and likeness at a time when economic transformation and globalizing influences were renegotiating the terms of communal belonging.

Keywords: Jewishness, Masculinity, Performance, Early Modern, England

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On Kabbalah and "Wasted Seed" in Seventeenth-Century Poland: A Chapter in the History of the Male Jewish Body*

by *Avinoam J. Stillman*

Abstract

This essay begins by conceptualizing a "kabbalistic masculinity" characterized by pious discipline and a presumption to cosmic influence. This ideal was embodied in the kabbalistic discourse about the sin of "wasted seed," or improper emission of semen. Kabbalists developed theories and practices intended to prevent the wasting of seed, atone for its spiritual consequences, and neutralize its demonic effects. I then trace these themes in texts from seventeenth-century Poland, beginning with Meir Poppers' ethical text Or Tzadiqim*, which wove theoretical Lurianic kabbalah into everyday routines and embodied practices. Finally, I turn to Poppers' relative and student Joseph b. Solomon Calahora, the* darshan *(preacher) of Poznań. Calahora composed and published the first Hebrew book devoted exclusively to the causes, consequences, and cures for wasted seed:* Yesod Yosef *(Frankfurt an der Oder, 1679). These texts and their contexts show how the kabbalistic discourse on wasted seed played out, both individually and communally, in the bodies of early modern Jewish men in East-Central Europe.*

Introduction

The Lurianic Lifestyle

Sex, Study, and Salvation

Preaching Piety

Conclusion

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Introduction

Jewish men have historically held disproportionate power within their communities. However, the persistence of patriarchy does not mean that all Jewish conceptions of masculinity are the same. Different historical moments have seen different ideals and realities of Jewish gendered selfhood.[1] "Being a man" meant many things in rabbinic literature.[2] It meant other things entirely for medieval Jewish philosophers.[3] So too, the multiple forms of Jewish esoteric literature known as "kabbalah" developed specific visions of masculinity.[4] Most (Jewish male) kabbalists imagined a gendered cosmos, what might be called a "cosmic patriarchy."[5] Most of the various divine forms emanated by the Infinite God were considered masculine, although some were seen as feminine. Similarly, the kabbalists addressed their thinking to Jewish men, notwithstanding occasional entreaties to Jewish women.[6]

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[1] See the sources collected in Noam Sienna, ed., *A Rainbow Thread: An Anthology of Queer Jewish Texts from the First Century to 1969* (Philadelphia: Print-O-Craft, 2019).

[2] Ishay Rosen-Zvi, "The Rise and Fall of Rabbinic Masculinity," *Jewish Studies Internet Journal* 12 (2013): 1-22.

[3] Susan E. Shapiro, "A Matter of Discipline: Reading for Gender in Jewish Philosophy" in *Judaism Since Gender*, eds. Miriam Peskowitz and Laura Levitt (New York and London: Routledge, 1997), 158-173; Julia Schwartzmann, "Gender Concepts of Medieval Jewish Thinkers and The Book of Proverbs," *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 7 (2000): 183-202; Hava Tirosh-Samuelson, ed., *Women and Gender in Jewish Philosophy* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2004).

[4] Hava Tirosh-Samuelson, "Gender in Jewish Mysticism," in *Jewish Mysticism and Kabbalah: New Insights and Scholarship*, ed. Frederick E. Greenspahn (New York - London: New York University Press, 2011), 191-230. Daniel Abrams, "'A Light of Her Own': Minor Kabbalistic Traditions on the Ontology of the Divine Feminine," *Kabbalah* 15 (2006): 7-29.

[5] This term is inspired by the phrase "cosmic polity" coined by David Graeber and Marshall Sahlins, *On Kings* (Chicago: HAU Books, 2017), 2-4, 23-64.

[6] In characterizing the mainstream of kabbalistic discourse as Judeo- and andro-centric, I tend towards the critical approach of Elliot R. Wolfson. Of his many studies, see Elliot R. Wolfson, "Woman—The Feminine As Other in Theosophic Kabbalah: Some Philosophical Observations on the Divine Androgyne," in *The Other in Jewish Thought and History: Constructions of Jewish Culture and Identity*, eds. Laurence J. Silberstein and Robert L. Cohn (New York and London: New York University Press, 1994), 166-204; Elliot R. Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being: Kabbalistic Hermeneutics and Poetic Imagination* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 46-141; Elliot R. Wolfson, *Venturing Beyond: Law and Morality in Kabbalistic Mysticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 80-128. In contrast, Moshe Idel, *Kabbalah and Eros* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005); Moshe Idel, *The Privileged Divine Feminine in Kabbalah* (Berlin - Boston: De Gruyter, 2019).

Within this gendered cosmology, Jewish men had a hefty metaphysical influence, linking heaven and earth. Pure thoughts and ritual actions could positively impact the Godhead, draw down material benefit, and bring the redemption, while misdeeds could have catastrophic effects.[7] This "practical" emphasis on the effects of Jewish male action is particularly characteristic of the kabbalistic literature associated with Isaac Luria of Safed (d. 1572).[8] Lurianic kabbalah, which rose to prominence in the late sixteenth-century and gradually gained unparalleled authority, charged righteous Jewish men with bringing about the redemption of the cosmos through *tiqun*, the restitution of the divine sparks which fell during the process of creation. To this end, Lurianic kabbalists developed a complex textual corpus and a body of knowledge which ranges across cosmology and theosophy, ritual and liturgy, psychology and eschatology, hagiography, and hermeneutics. Focusing on post-Lurianic texts from Poland, this essay explores what I call "kabbalistic masculinity"—that is, the condition of being a Jewish man within the cosmic patriarchy, and hence of having great power and great responsibility.

The best way to understand the discipline and the potency of kabbalistic masculinity is to consider masturbation. In *Solitary Sex: A Cultural History of Masturbation*, Thomas W. Laqueur traces a genealogy of modern European discourse about autoeroticism. Laqueur argues that masturbation—a sexual behavior characterized by imagination, secrecy, and excess—first became a "problem" in the eighteenth century. In pre-modern Europe, "solitary sex" was almost irrelevant; sexual morality was perceived as "a deeply social phenomenon. What mattered was with whom one had sex, how, and when."[9] Only after modern European philosophers became fixated on the relations between individual interiority and social order did masturbation become a topic of anxieties and treatises.

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[7] Arthur Green, "The *Ẓaddiq* as *Axis Mundi* in Later Judaism," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 45 (1977): 327-347; Jonathan Garb, *Manifestations of Power in Jewish Mysticism* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2005) [Hebrew].

[8] Assaf Tamari, "Medicalizing Magic and Ethics: Rereading Lurianic Practice," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 112 (2022): 434-467.

[9] Thomas W. Laqueur, *Solitary Sex: A Cultural History of Masturbation* (New York: Zone Books, 2004), 248-249. For a brief mention of kabbalah, see Ibid., 112.

An analogous story is told by scholars of Jewish culture, who identify an increased preoccupation—even obsession—with "wasted seed," or improper emissions of sexual fluids, in early modernity.[10] Where Laqueur's explanation of this shift points to the Enlightenment, historians of the Jews invoke kabbalah, that most erotic of esoteric traditions.[11] To be sure, rabbinic literature tends to condemn autoeroticism.[12] However, a new conception of wasted seed emerged in medieval kabbalah, especially in the *Zohar*, and was elaborated by the kabbalists of sixteenth-century Safed and their disciples across the diaspora.[13] In particular, Lurianic kabbalah applied human anatomy, physiological development, and sexual and familial relationships to divine and earthly beings.[14] The trope of wasted seed looms large in Lurianic discussions of the initial divine desire for creation, the cataclysmic "breaking of the vessels," and biblical figures like Adam and Joseph.[15] Many kabbalistic texts describe this embodied human experience, the psycho-physical mechanism of seminal emission, and the penances for inevitable mistakes.

For the kabbalists, wasting seed was not just a moral failing or a cause of impurity; rather, it was at once destructive and generative.[16] In a fusion of scientific discourse, subjective experience, and mythic imagery, kabbalistic texts claim that

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[10] The most comprehensive treatment remains Shilo Pachter, "*Shmirat ha-Brit*" (PhD diss., Hebrew University, 2006) [Hebrew]. I use "wasted seed" to refer to emissions of sexual fluids deemed improper or forbidden by kabbalistic and rabbinic standards. This term encompasses nearly synonymous Hebrew terms such as *hashatat zer'a* (destruction of seed), *zer'a le-batalah* (seed for naught), and *qeri* (involuntary, usually nocturnal, seminal emission).

[11] David Biale, *Eros and the Jews: From Biblical Israel to Contemporary America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 109-118; Gershon David Hundert, *Jews in Poland-Lithuania in the Eighteenth Century: A Genealogy of Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 121-137; Roni Weinstein, *Kabbalah and Jewish Modernity* (Oxford: Littman Library, 2014), 109-111.

[12] Pachter, "*Shmirat ha-Brit*," 36-118; Michael L. Satlow, " 'Wasted Seed,' The History of a Rabbinic Idea," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 65 (1994): 137-175.

[13] Patrick B. Koch, " 'Gathering the Dispersed of Israel': The Evolution of a Kabbalistic Prayer Addendum for *Tiqqun Qeri*," *Harvard Theological Review* 114 (2021): 241-264.

[14] Assaf Tamari, *God as Patient: The Medical Discourse of Lurianic Kabbalah* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press - Van Leer Institute Press, 2023) [Hebrew].

[15] Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being*, 182-184, 310-311; Lawrence Fine, *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos: Isaac Luria and his Kabbalistic Fellowship*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 137-138; Shaul Magid, *From Metaphysics to Midrash: Myth, History, and the Interpretation of Scripture in Lurianic Kabbala* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2008), 57-59.

[16] Pachter, "*Shmirat ha-Brit*," 7.

wasting seed negatively impacts the emanated cosmos, harms one's own body and soul, and creates demonic offspring. In kabbalistic physiology, the brain is the seat of the divine soul, connected to higher realms. "Seed," meaning both male and female sexual fluids, originates in the brain and draws its reproductive potential from divinity before it descends, via the spinal cord, to the genitalia. Any seed that is emitted outside of the body of a permitted sexual partner—or in kabbalistic terms, any "light" that has no proper "vessel"—is considered "wasted." Wasted seed sullies the divine mind from which it stems and the human body through which it flows. Moreover, masturbation is never "solitary sex," as it involves sexual union with seductive demons who, in turn, give birth to destructive offspring. After kabbalah, the emission of seed was not merely a moral failing or a function of the human body. Rather, it was a process which began in the emanated divine planes, was felt within the human body, and which culminated in the physical world full of demons.

The kabbalistic concern with wasted seed was always a concern with bodies. First and foremost, wasted seed implicated the male kabbalist's own body—and his circumcised phallus.[17] The phrase *tzadiq yesod 'olam*, or "the righteous man has an everlasting foundation" (Proverbs 10:25) became the nexus of a web of associations linking the *tzadiq*, or righteous Jewish man, with the ninth *sefirah* of *yesod*, "foundation," itself the phallus of the anthropomorphic divine form.[18] The term *shmirat ha-brit* or "guarding the covenant," which could mean fidelity to God or Torah, came to connote guarding the covenant of circumcision from sexual impropriety. As Moses de Leon put it, "[A] man is not called righteous [*tzadiq*] unless he guards the covenant [of circumcision]."[19] The control of one organ, one biological function, and one bodily fluid was now the defining trait of the ideal Jewish male body. Given the cosmic influence of each Jewish man, the question of wasted seed was inextricable from the question of human purpose on earth, from the grand drama of exile and redemption.

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[17] Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being*, 135; Wolfson, *Venturing Beyond*, 87-88.

[18] Gershom Scholem, *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead: Basic Concepts in the Kabbalah* (New York: Schocken Books, 1991), 88-139.

[19] Quoted in Pachter, "*Shmirat ha-Brit*," 130. Cf. Morris M. Faierstein, "*Sod ha-Neshamah*, Basel, 1609: A Yiddish Paraphrase of Moses de Leon's *Nefesh ha-Hakhmah*, Basel, 1608," *Kabbalah* 52 (2022): 137.

This esoteric symbolism was embodied in restrictive and penitential forms of kabbalistic asceticism. Although the kabbalists did not promote total celibacy, the restriction of sensual pleasures was an integral part of their ethos.[20] By shifting their focus from halakhic rules to the metaphysics of seed, Lurianic kabbalists forbade even legally permitted sexual acts. Any wasted seed, even during permissible relations, was condemned. Of course, seed was still wasted, and kabbalistic literature became preoccupied with penitential disciplines—in particular, intermittent fasting—for this sin.[21] A passage from Isaiah Horowitz's influential *Shnei Luhot ha-Brit* exemplifies the uniqueness of wasted seed as a full-bodied error. Horowitz paraphrases the popular *Reishit Hokhmah* by the Safedian moralist Elijah De Vidas, which asserts that each sin must be atoned for through afflicting the part of the body which committed it. In the case of wasted seed, however, one must atone for and through the entire body. This is because seed is "the root and source of a man's entire stature, and man comes into existence from seed."[22] The procreative power of seed implicates the entire human body, from the brain through the spinal cord to the phallus; therefore, if one sins with seed, one must repent with the whole body.

The kabbalistic concern over wasted seed also involved non-human bodies; namely, demons. Learned Jews—unlike dogmatic Christian divines—routinely assumed that demons had bodies and could have sexual intercourse with human beings.[23] Jewish folklore and law recognized the possibility of human-demon "marriages"; the sixteenth-century rabbi Meir of Lublin, for example, appears

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[20] Lawrence Fine, "Purifying the Body in the Name of the Soul: The Problem of the Body in Sixteenth-Century Kabbalah," in *People of the Body: Jews and Judaism from an Embodied Perspective*, ed. Howard Eilberg-Schwartz (Buffalo: SUNY Press, 1992), 117-142; Elliot R. Wolfson, "Asceticism, Mysticism, and Messianism: A Reappraisal of Schechter's Portrait of Sixteenth-Century Safed," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 106 (2016): 165-177.

[21] Patrick B. Koch, *Human Self-Perfection: A Re-Assessment of Kabbalistic Musar-Literature of Sixteenth Century Safed* (Los Angeles: Cherub Press, 2015), 152-157; Fine, *Physician of the Soul*, 171-180.

[22] Isaiah Horowitz, *Shnei Luhot ha-Brit*, *Sha'ar ha-Otiyot*, *Hilkhot Biah* (Amsterdam, 1648), f.98r.

[23] Walter Stephens, *Demon Lovers: Witchcraft, Sex and the Crisis of Belief* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003); Dyan Elliot, *Fallen Bodies: Pollution, Sexuality, and Demonology in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999). Cf. Jeffrey H. Chajes, "Sexorcism: Sexual Dimensions of Dybbuk Possession and Exorcism," *El Prezente: Journal for Sephardic Studies* 14-15 (2020-2021): 17-47.

unfazed by a woman who had a demonic lover.[24] But the kabbalists were not so sanguine; demons were the embodiment of the *sitra ahra*, the evil "Other Side."[25] Wasting seed entailed two demonic threats; the act of coupling with succubi such as Lilith, and the consequent birth of "destructive children" who followed the sinner to the grave.[26] The generative aspect of wasting seed was particularly dire; as Luria's prime student Hayyim Vital wrote, "of all the sins of the Torah, even the most egregious, there is none which truly births destructive demons like the wasteful emission of seed."[27] Lurianic texts prescribed apotropaic rituals to protect against demons and to slay their offspring; indeed, such rituals were often cultivated alongside magical practices.[28] Kabbalistic masculinity involved exercising power and even violence against demonic bodies.

Wasting seed and sexual demons were also a problem for female bodies. Since antiquity, Jewish sources have attested a "dual seed theory" in which both male and female bodies contribute "seed" to the embryo.[29] This theory was dominant in much kabbalistic literature as well.[30] It followed, therefore, that Jewish women could be tempted by Samael to waste their seed, for "just as these destructive demons emerge from a man without a woman, so too the woman creates these destructive demons without a man."[31] Male Jewish preachers did address Jewish

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[24] Joshua Trachtenburg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition: A Study in Folk Religion*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004 [1939]), 51-52.

[25] Scholem, *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead*, 56-87. Cf. Nathaniel Berman, *Divine and Demonic in the Poetic Mythology of the Zohar: The "Other Side" of Kabbalah* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2018).

[26] Gershom Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 154-156.

[27] Hayyim Vital, *Sha'ar ha-Tefilah* (Jerusalem: Ahavat Shalom, 2020), 311. Cf. Meir Poppers, *Torah Or* (Jerusalem: Ahavat Shalom, 2021), 135, who conflates the ritual impurity associated with semen and the demons generated by the wasting of seed.

[28] Agata Paluch, "Intentionality and Kabbalistic Practices in Early Modern East-Central Europe," *Aries* 19 (2019): 83-111.

[29] Laura Quick, "Bitenosh's Orgasm, Galen's Two Seeds and Conception Theory in the Hebrew Bible," *Dead Sea Discoveries* 28, no. 1 (2021): 38-63.

[30] Sharon Faye Koren, "Kabbalistic Physiology: Isaac the Blind, Nahmanides, and Moses de Leon on Menstruation," *AJS Review* 28 (2004): 317-339; Merav Carmeli, "Upper and Lower Waters: A New Appraisal of Sexual Fluids and Conception in the Zohar in Light of Medieval Medical Texts," *Daat* 84 (2017): 83-138 [Hebrew]; Tamari, *God as Patient*, 185-213. Cf. the defense of "dual seed theory" against the Aristotelian "philosophers" in Poppers, *Torah Or*, 134.

[31] Hayyim Vital, *Sefer ha-Kavvanot* (Venice, 1620), f. 12v-13r.

women, guiding them to prevent the wasting of seed and protect themselves from demons. However, we should be cautious about speculating about the lived experiences of Jewish women based on texts by and for Jewish men.[32] The ideal of kabbalistic masculinity underpinned all discourse about wasted seed, even when it was directed towards Jewish women.

The rest of this essay focuses on two seventeenth-century Polish rabbi-kabbalists. My story begins with Meir Poppers (d. 1662), a scholar working in Palestine and Poland. His *Or Tzadiqim* wove theoretical Lurianic kabbalah into everyday routines and embodied practices. I then turn to Poppers' student Joseph b. Solomon Calahora, the *darshan* (preacher) of Poznań in the second half of the century. Calahora composed the first book devoted to the causes, effects, and cures for wasted seed: *Yesod Yosef* (Frankfurt an der Oder, 1679). *Yesod Yosef* exemplifies kabbalistic masculinity in a particular context; Calahora addresses his colleagues and community, elaborating the connections between esoteric study, erotic restraint, and redemption. The two poles of kabbalistic masculinity—pious discipline and cosmic influence—are everywhere in evidence.

The Lurianic Lifestyle

In 1649, a young kabbalist named Meir Poppers left Jerusalem, where he had been studying Lurianic kabbalah, and returned to his hometown of Kraków.[33] He brought rare manuscripts with him, including his own edition of the writings of Isaac Luria's primary student Hayyim Vital. These three volumes, entitled *Derekh 'Etz Hayyim*, *Pri 'Etz Hayyim*, and *Nof 'Etz Hayyim*, contained many texts which were unknown in East-Central Europe. Although some of the "Writings of the *AR"I* " had previously circulated in print and manuscript, Poppers' work transformed the distribution of Jewish esoteric knowledge. With comprehensive

[32] Cf. Chava Weissler, "The Religion of Traditional Ashkenazic Women: Some Methodological Issues," *AJS Review* 12 (1987): 73-94; Chava Weissler, "Women's Studies and Women's Prayers: Reconstructing the Religious History of Ashkenazic Women," *Jewish Social Studies* 1 (1995): 28-47; Jeffrey H. Chajes, "He Said She Said: Hearing the Voices of Pneumatic Early Modern Jewish Women," *Nashim: A Journal of Jewish Women's Studies & Gender Issues* 10 (2005): 99-125.

[33] Moshe Hillel, "*Yediot Hadashot le-Toldot Rabi Meir Poppers*," *Min ha-Genazim* 14 (2020): 1-90.

books in hand, readers in East-Central Europe could now delve into Vital's explorations of rarefied Lurianic secrets.

While in Poland, Poppers found that his colleagues and students wanted practical advice about how to live a pious life. Around 1650, Poppers compiled a book entitled *Or Tzadiqim*, the "Light of the Righteous." In his introduction, he describes its impetus as follows:

> I heard from my colleagues: Would that we had all the customs of the holy Rabbi [Isaac Luria] of blessed saintly memory and the matters of piety in the order of positive and negative commandments. Then it would be clear to each man, according to his desire, how he falls short of what is incumbent upon him with regards to piety and asceticism. Also, [we would want] an abridgment of the deep penances [*tiqunei teshuva*]—extremely abridged—for every sin and iniquity, so that they not need to go to a sage to teach them. Then we would surely be among those who make the masses righteous.[34]

Poppers' colleagues asked him for a compilation of Luria's personal customs (*minhagim*) arranged according to the 613 positive and negative commandments. They also asked Poppers to condense Luria's prescribed penances for specific transgressions. Poppers' students seem to have been thinking of two Lurianic texts which were extant in print; Moses Trinki's *Sefer ha-Kavvanot* (Venice, 1620), which contained a section entitled "The Customs of the Rabbi [Isaac Luria]," and the Lurianic *tiqunei teshuva*, first published in *Marpe le-Nefesh* (Venice, 1595) and later in a corrected edition by Menahem 'Azariah of Fano in *Reishit Hokhmah ha-Qatzar* (Venice, 1600). Although they knew this printed literature, Poppers' students wanted a guide which could help them to adopt Lurianic practices and spread piety among the masses.

Like a good teacher, Poppers heeded the curiosity of his students, but he also disregarded their suggestions. *Or Tzadiqim* is not organized as a list of Luria's personal customs, nor does it devote much attention to *tiqunei teshuvah*. Rather, Poppers writes that

[34] Meir Poppers, *Or Tzadiqim* (Jerusalem: Ahavat Shalom, 2021), [i].

> I organized it according to the order of each day, like the order of *Orah Hayyim* [The "Path of Life," the first section of Joseph Karo's halakhic code *Shulhan Arukh*]. I included the entire order of a man's behavior as is necessary, and in the order of repentance I arranged the *tiqun* of all the sins.[35]

Or Tzadiqim follows the routine of a scholar: waking up in the morning, dressing and washing, praying, studying Torah, eating, more praying, and going to sleep, observing the Sabbath and Jewish holidays. By following the scheme of the *Shulhan Arukh*, Poppers presents kabbalistic *minhag* as an authoritative supplement to Halakhah.[36] In fact, kabbalah can even contradict prior codifications of Halakhah; as he wrote, "some of the varieties of laws [in the Lurianic writings] are opposed to what was decided in the *Shulhan Arukh*."[37] For Poppers, Lurianic customs could legitimately restructure the daily life of Jewish men.

Masculine sexuality is prominent in the chapter of *Or Tzadiqim* entitled *Hilkhot Derekh Eretz*, literally "The Rules of the Way of the Earth," which in rabbinic parlance can refer to working for one's livelihood, manners and propriety, mundane behaviors, or sexuality.[38] *Hilkhot Derekh Eretz* is about comportment when one is out in the streets and involved in the world beyond the synagogue and the study hall. For example, one should greet every person with a friendly expression, avoid negative thoughts, and visit the sick. Some passages are good business advice: "If you own money to someone and cannot pay them back, better to ask them for an extension than to avoid them with daily excuses," he says, and

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[35] Ibid.

[36] Of the many relevant studies, see Jacob Katz, "Post-Zoharic Relations between Halakhah and Kabbalah," in *Jewish Thought in the Sixteenth Century*, ed. Bernard Dov Cooperman (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), 283-307; Jacob Katz, "Halakhah and Kabbalah as Competing Disciplines," in *Jewish Spirituality: From the Sixteenth-Century Revival to the Present*, ed. Arthur Green (New York: Crossroad, 1987), 34-63; Maoz Kahana and Ariel Evan Mayse, "Hasidic Halakhah: Reappraising the Interface of Spirit and Law," *AJS Review* 41 (2017): 375-408; Andrea Gondos, *Kabbalah in Print: The Study and Popularization of Jewish Mysticism in Early Modernity* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2020), 105-130.

[37] Poppers, *Or Tzadiqim*, [i].

[38] Ibid., 29-38.

"read a contract thoroughly before signing it."[39] Others relate to hygiene: "Do not go into the market while drunk, and do not walk in patched shoes, and do not belch in front of another."[40] The chapter serves as a manual to being a proper kabbalistic gentleman.

The chapter also contains advice related to male sexual modesty, which often means avoiding contact with women. Poppers instructs his male reader not to look at the face of any woman other than his wife, "for this is a sin and a great damage," and not to listen to women singing.[41] He writes that "one should stay far away from a prostitute and her four cubits, so that you not look at her and come to fantasize in your thoughts, God forbid."[42] Poppers also addresses the male reader's proper relationship with his wife:

> One is forbidden to speak with his wife about matters of intercourse, for he will come to fantasize and transgress with his holy covenant to emit seed for nothing, God forbid. His sin is too great to carry, and he is judged for eternal death, and his judgement is turned into evil, and his prayer is not heard for forty days, and his soul does not ascend above, and in the Palace of *Nogah* seven angels with 245 entourages excommunicate him.[43]

The fear of wasted seed is so acute, and its punishments so ramified, that it overrides any intimate communication between husband and wife. To be fair, Poppers did have affectionate marital advice: "Be very careful about your wife's honor, like that of your own body, and particularly regarding her jewelry, if you have the means to do her will."[44] Yet under the threat of wasted seed, even an everyday occurrence like a Jewish man talking to his wife raised the threat of damnation, divine rebuke, and angelic punishment.

Poppers shares additional instructions for proper married sexuality in the chapter devoted to "The Laws of Procreation." This section emphasizes the role of mind and body in sexuality; before, during, and after intercourse, "one must purify one's

[39] Ibid., 31.
[40] Ibid., 35.
[41] Ibid., 30.
[42] Ibid., 34.
[43] Ibid., 33.
[44] Ibid., 37.

thought and speech and action." The kabbalist must hold proper intentions, recite certain prayers, and preserve his seed for permitted relations. Self-discipline literally produces "holy seed," for by adhering to interior and exterior expressions of piety, the kabbalist ensures that his seed originates in the divine soul within the brain:

> One should greatly repent on the day before one's wife immerses [i.e., for her menstrual period, after which sexual intercourse is halakhically permitted] to draw down holy seed. There were some lofty holy men who would also immerse when their wives immersed, lest they had fantasized during the menstrual days.[45]

In kabbalistic thought, repentance or *teshuvah*, which literally means "return," signifies a return to the *sefirah* of *binah*, the divine Mother, the supernal womb from which Jewish souls are hewn.[46] This spiritual ascent is mirrored by a physical descent into a ritual bath. Whereas Halakhah expects every Jewish wife to immerse after menstruating, only the most pious Jewish men immerse before intercourse, especially if they "had fantasized" sexually. Kabbalistic masculinity involves what Elliot R. Wolfson calls "hypernomian" behavior: going beyond the letter of the law in pursuit of saintliness.[47]

Still, Poppers was aware of carnal pleasures. His wife, whose name is unknown, was the daughter of Azariah Ze'evi, a Sephardic rabbi; they were likely married before 1649, shortly after Poppers arrived in Jerusalem. Poppers probably returned to Poland alone; one wonders what he felt when he wrote that "a man is obligated to have intercourse with his wife when he leaves for a journey, because then the holy spark of the *Shekhinah* is found with him to guard him on the journey."[48] Poppers' *Or Shabbat*, a commentary on Isaac Luria's Sabbath poems, also speaks

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[45] Ibid., 42. Paraphrased from Moses ben Makhir, *Seder ha-Yom* (Venice, 1599), f. 42v.

[46] Elliot R. Wolfson, "Fore/giveness on the Way: Nesting in the Womb of Response," in *Luminal Darkness: Imaginal Gleanings from Zoharic Literature* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2007), 228-257.

[47] Wolfson, *Venturing Beyond*, 186-285.

[48] Poppers, *Or Tzadiqim*, 42.

to his sexuality.[49] Poppers makes the following comment on Luria's poem for the third Sabbath meal:

> *Yesod* [the sixth *sefirah*, the phallus] is enjoyable for all the 248 limbs of the male, for the entire stature of *Zeir Anpin* [the "small face," the divine masculine] has pleasure at the moment when the efflux goes out. 'From my flesh I shall behold the Divine,' [Job 19:26] for it is impossible for efflux to go out without the pleasure of the whole body. For this reason [intercourse] is called '*biyah*' [lit., entering], for it seems to him that his entirety has entered into the female. 'The enjoyment is to all those above'—[meaning] the ten *sefirot* of *Zeir* [*Anpin*]—'and the enjoyment is to all those below'—[meaning] that there is also pleasure for the entire stature of *Malkhut* [the tenth *sefirah*, *Shekhinah*, the divine feminine] at the time when *Yesod* effluxes to her.[50]

Poppers is describing the eroticized interactions between the two lower *partzufim* or divine "faces," the anthropomorphic configurations of *sefirot* which populate Lurianic cosmology and theurgy. The pleasurable divine "efflux" (*shef'a*) permeates the entire array of *sefirot*, just as human orgasm is felt in the entire body. As Poppers writes elsewhere, "the drop [of semen] is drawn from the entire body."[51] Alongside the pleasure of *Zeir Anpin* and *Malkhut*, Poppers also invokes his own embodied pleasure, citing Job 19:26 to compare the Godhead and the human body.[52] Poppers knew sexual pleasure to be full-bodied, affecting all the organs and even the surrounding world.

A final passage from *Or Tzadiqim* exemplifies how the concern over wasted seed functioned within early modern Jewish society. Poppers is describing the obligation of a father to arrange a marriage for his young son:

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[49] On Luria's poems see Yehuda Liebes, "*Zemirot le-Seudat-Shabbat she-Yasad ha-AR"I ha-Qadosh*," *Molad* 4 (1972): 540-555.

[50] Poppers, *Or Shabbat* (Jerusalem: Ahavat Shalom, 2021), 6.

[51] Poppers, *Or Bahir* (Jerusalem: Ahavat Shalom, 2021), 20.

[52] On *Zeir Anpin* and the Lurianic practitioner, see Menachem Kallus, "The Theurgy of Prayer in the Lurianic Kabbalah" (PhD diss., Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2003), 141-156.

> 'The fear of God is pure, [this refers to] one who marries a woman and subsequently studies Torah.' [Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Yoma, 72b] Therefore, every man is required to make efforts to marry off his son while he is still a child, before he comes to the evil days, which are the days of youth, for then evil thoughts begin to overcome a man. One must pray to the Holy Blessed One to arrange a worthy wife for him, [who is] able to give birth, so that he not taint his seed with a barren women, God forbid.[53]

Child marriage is meant to save Jewish boys from the erotic trials of puberty by giving them permitted outlets for their sexuality. Indeed, Gershon Hundert has suggested that one factor in the early modern Jewish anxieties over wasted seed was the rising age of marriage among Ashkenazi Jews. As the Jewish population grew, it became less economically viable for families to support their young married children. This led to the delay of marriages and to more sexual temptations for Jewish youth.[54] While young Jewish men faced the danger of wasted seed, the passage concludes with a challenge for young Jewish women: infertility. Still, Poppers' explicit concern here is with the young Jewish men whose seed would be "wasted" if their prospective wives were infertile.

In the first edition of Poppers' *Or Tzadiqim* (Hamburg, 1690), the above passage appeared at the beginning of the "Laws of Procreation," while in the second edition, entitled *Or ha-Yashar* (Amsterdam, 1709) it appeared at the end of *Hilkhot Derekh Eretz*. This implies that the editors of these publications intuited the connection between kabbalistic sexual regimens and everyday life. By juxtaposing erotic self-control and esoteric concerns with ethics, business, and hygiene, Poppers presented his readers with a model of kabbalistic living. Far from being a private anxiety, sexual temptations were something to combat in all spheres of daily activity. The ethos of kabbalistic masculinity informed every stage of male Jewish life, from childhood and adolescence to married adulthood.

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[53] Poppers, *Or Tzadiqim*, 40-41.

[54] Hundert, *Jews in Poland-Lithuania*, 136. Cf. Roni Weinstein, *Juvenile Sexuality, Kabbalah, and Catholic Reformation in Italy: Tiferet Bahurim by Pinhas Barukh ben Pelatiyah Monselice* (Leiden: Brill, 2009).

Sex, Study, and Salvation

It was one of Poppers' Polish students and relatives who composed and published the first Jewish book dedicated entirely to the causes, consequences, and cures of wasted seed. Joseph b. Solomon Calahora (1601-1696) was born in Poznań to a prominent family of Sephardic origins. His great-grandfather Solomon Calahora (d. 1597) was court doctor to Sigismund II Augustus in Kraków and himself a Torah scholar, while his father and grandfather both served as rabbis in Łęczyca.[55] Later family traditions link Calahora to several prestigious rabbis of the period and to several East-Central European communities.[56] Calahora survived the Khmelnytsky massacres of 1648 and arrived in Kraków shortly thereafter. Importantly for us, he studied with "R. Meir Poppers from the Holy Land, his relative who taught [him] most of his kabbalah, whose name is known as the father of the sages of the kabbalah in the holy community of Kraków," receiving oral instruction and copying some of the latter's kabbalistic texts.[57]

By 1659, Calahora had taken up the post of preacher (*darshan*), in Poznań, one of Europe's largest and most stratified Jewish communities.[58] As a preacher, Calahora delivered regular homilies; although he recorded many in manuscript, none were printed until recently.[59] Calahora was second in the religious hierarchy of the town to the head of the rabbinic court, Isaac b. Abraham (d. 1685), a halakhic

[55] Majer Bałaban, *A History of the Jews in Cracow and Kazimierz, 1304-1868*, vol. 1 (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2002), 122-125 [Hebrew].

[56] Shlomo Zalman Landsberg, *Toar Pnei Shlomo* (Krotoschin: B.L. Monasch, 1870), 53-57; *Mein Lebensbild im Anschluss an sieben Ahnenbilder dargestellt von Salomon Kaliphari gen. Posner*, Edward Luft Collection (AR 6957), Leo Baeck Institute, New York.

[57] Calahora, *Yesod Yosef*, 1, 8. Cf. Joseph Avivi, *Kabbala Luriana*, vol. 2 (Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, 2007), 718-719 [Hebrew].

[58] Anna Michałowska-Mycielska, *The Jewish Community: Authority and Social Control in Poznań and Swarzędz, 1650–1793*, trans. Alicja Adamowicz (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2008). Calahora's name appears in the Poznań communal records; see the index to Dov Avron, *Pinkas ha-kesharim shel kehilat Pozna, 1621-1835* (Jerusalem: Mekitze Nirdamim, 1966).

[59] Calahora's homilies are extant in two manuscripts in the Salomon Baer Spiro Collection (AR 7055), Box 1, Folder 3, Leo Baeck Institute, New York; they were recently printed as *Sefer Yad Yosef al ha-Torah* (Brooklyn, NY; Makhon Netzah Ya'akov, 2023). Cf. Gershom Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi: The Mystical Messiah, 1626-1676*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016), 596.

authority whose expertise extended to Lurianic kabbalah.[60] In short, Calahora was an elite member of urban Polish Jewry, highly educated and well connected. Although directed outwards at listeners and readers, Calahora's message emerged from educated Jewish, from the sites where esoteric knowledge about masculinity and wasted seed was cultivated.

Calahora, with the help of his brother Isaac of Lelów, brought three short books to print in Frankfurt an der Oder in 1679. Almost pamphlets, *Tiqun Hatzot* (The Midnight Rectification), *Sadeh Bokhim* (The Vale of Tears), and *Yesod Yosef* (Joseph's Foundation) were all under 32 pages and printed in octavo format. *Tiqun Hatzot* and *Sadeh Bokhim* were both dedicated to the midnight liturgy performed in sympathetic identification with the exile of the *Shekhinah*.[61] The theme of wasted seed is already present in these pamphlets; Calahora notes in *Sadeh Bokhim* that failing to arise for *Tiqun Hatzot* increases the chances of an improper seminal emission. But the main treatment of this topic is in the third pamphlet, *Yesod Yosef*. The title page begins as follows: "Joseph's Foundation, being *tiqun qeri* [the rectification of improper seminal emission]. One who guards this commandment will not know evil."[62] Using kabbalistic wordplay, Calahora invoked his own name and the ninth *sefirah* of *yesod*, which symbolizes the phallus and the biblical Joseph, often praised as *ha-tzadiq*, the righteous, for his sexual restraint when facing Potiphar's wife. Calahora assures his readers that piety and proper sexual discipline will protect them from "evil."

Yesod Yosef is divided into three sections. Following a short introduction, the first section lists the causes of wasted seed, the second section enumerates its punishments, while the final section offers various *tiqunim* to atone for wasted seed. Almost like a doctor, Calahora was grappling with a problem of the body: he diagnosed its etiology, identified its symptoms, and prescribed its cures. *Yesod*

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[60] *She'elot U-Teshuvot Rabenu Yitzhaq ha-Gadol mi-Pozna*, (Jerusalem: Makhon Yerushalayim, 1982), 11-19; Joseph Avivi, "*Hagahot al 'Etz Hayyim*," *Moriah* 13 (1984): 33-37.

[61] Elliott Horowitz, "Coffee, Coffeehouses, and the Nocturnal Rituals of Early Modern Jewry," *AJS Review* 14 (1989): 17-46; Shaul Magid, "Conjugal Union, Mourning and 'Talmud Torah' in R. Isaac Luria's 'Tikkun Hazot'," *Daat* 36 (1996): xvii-xlv.

[62] Joseph b. Solomon Calahora, *Yesod Yosef* (Frankfurt an der Oder, 1679). *Yesod Yosef* was excerpted from a longer book amounting to "approximately fifty sheets," itself anthologized from three other books by Calahora entitled *Yad Yosef Hadash*, *Ve-Yalkot Yosef*, and *Ve-Yekalkel Yosef*. Idem, *Sadeh Bokhim* (Frankfurt an der Oder, 1679), 6, notes that he devoted a "special *quntres*" to *tiqun qeri*, which he hoped to print.

Yosef is often characterized as a "popular" work, and this claim finds some support in Calahora's own introduction to the book. Inspired by the Zohar and "the books of the pious and the books of fear [of God]"—particularly *Reishit Hokhmah* and *Shnei Luhot ha-Brit*—Calahora writes that "I decided in my mind and said in my heart, it is time to act for God [Psalms 119:126], to distribute among Jacob and disseminate among Israel that which I have researched and expounded about this sin, and what its causes are."[63] Nevertheless, Calahora's book—composed in a dense rabbinic Hebrew idiom, full of complex exegeses and learned references—would have been read mostly by educated Jewish men.

Although all young men are prone to sexual sins, Calahora believed that Torah scholars were most vulnerable to temptation.[64] Lilith "desires to sully the lofty pious ones," who therefore must struggle hardest against wasting seed.[65] In Calahora's world, esoteric study and sexual discipline were intertwined. Kabbalistic texts called for sexual restraint, but permission to study esoteric knowledge was itself predicated on age and marital status, both indicators of erotic self-discipline. As Poppers himself codified, "The time of the study of kabbalah: for one who is not married it is forbidden forever, and for someone who is married it is specifically [permitted] from age twenty and onwards."[66] Even if this restriction was not enforced, it reminds us that the pursuit of masculine self-discipline was not simply a product of studying kabbalah. For many young Jewish men, the injunction to control one's sexuality would have preceded any initiation into kabbalistic studies. Kabbalistic discourse about wasted seed circulated both on the page and between the elite Jewish males whom it most concerned. Early modern Ashkenazi rabbinic literature reflects a complex cycle of orality and textuality; printed homilies preserved traces of public speeches and provided motifs for other preachers to use.[67] Preachers both read each other's books and met face to face; for example, Calahora mentions encountering Betzalel b.

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[63] Calahora, *Yesod Yosef*, 2.

[64] Trachtenburg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition*, 50 and 297 n. 3.

[65] Joseph b. Solomon Calahora, *Tiqun Hatzot* (Frankfurt an der Oder, 1679), 6.

[66] Poppers, *Or Tzadiqim*, 25. Cf. Moshe Idel, "On the History of the Interdiction against the Study of Kabbalah before the Age of Forty," *AJS Review* 5 (1980): i-xx [Hebrew].

[67] Marc Saperstein, *Jewish Preaching 1200-1800: An Anthology* (New Haven - London: Yale University Press, 1989); Roee Goldschmidt, *Homiletic Literature in Eastern Europe: Rhetoric, Talmudic Erudition and Social Stature* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2022) [Hebrew].

Solomon of Kobrin and the latter's book *Qorban Shabbat*.[68] Thanks to these sorts of interpersonal and literary interactions, the ethos of kabbalistic masculinity was in the air—especially for those who hoped to attain esoteric knowledge.

Within this social context, several of Calahora's texts draw tight conceptual connections between esoteric study and masculine sexuality.[69] Calahora explicitly compares wasted seed with improper kabbalah study:

> One cause [of wasting seed] is revealing a secret to one who is not worthy that the secret be revealed to him. For through this, his punishment is that he comes to emit seed for nothing. The reason [for this] is that the receptacle of the lofty secrets which flow forth from the righteous, who is called *yesod*, is [called] 'for those who fear him' [after Psalms 25:14], [meaning those] who are in the *Shekhinah*. When [the student] is not worthy, [the teacher] draws the light of the Torah from within and does not find a vessel in which it can reside, and [the light] goes out to the 'outsiders,' and [the teacher] finds himself 'threshing within and winnowing without.' [*coitus interruptus*, after Genesis Rabbah 85:5][70]

The careless revelation of kabbalistic secrets causes the wasting of seed, which is here termed a "punishment," but the relationship between the two behaviors is even more messy and circular. Calahora offers a three-fold analogy between kabbalistic pedagogy, divine structures, and human sexuality. The teacher of esoteric Torah is compared to the phallic *sefirah* of *yesod*. The God-fearing student is like the *Shekhinah*, the divine feminine; he learns secrets from his teacher just as the final *sefirah* of *Malkhut* receives emanation from the higher *sefirot*. An unworthy student who receives secrets is like a demonic "outsider" who misappropriates the divine flow. However, the text refrains from spelling out the

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[68] Calahora, *Yesod Yosef*, 12-13.

[69] Elliot R. Wolfson, "Circumcision, Vision of God, and Textual Interpretation: From Midrashic Trope to Mystical Symbol," in *Circle in the Square: Studies in the Use of Gender in Kabbalistic Symbolism* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1995), 29-48; Elliot R. Wolfson, "Occultation of the Feminine and the Body of Secrecy in Medieval Kabbalah," in *Rending the Veil: Concealment of Revelation of Secrets in the History of Religion* (New York - London: Seven Bridges Press, 1999), 113-154.

[70] Calahora, *Yesod Yosef*, 3, based on Elijah de Vidas, *Reishit Hokhmah*, *Sha'ar ha-Qedushah*, Ch. 17, and Moses Cordovero, *Or Ne'erav* 3:4.

full analogy; the worthy student, homologous to the *Shekhinah*, implicitly parallels the kabbalist's wife. Perhaps we can detect some unconscious anxiety about gendering the male student as female, about the homoeroticism of the pedagogic relationship.[71]

In the continuation of this passage, Calahora invokes the Lurianic writings to introduce another key theme: the cycles of exile and redemption which define world and Jewish history. Again, we find a triple analogy between the cosmos, kabbalistic knowledge, and the male body:

> In the holy writings of the *AR"I* of blessed saintly memory it is said that the [meaning of] the exile of the *Shekhinah* is that in the time of exile, the secrets of the Torah are passed to the husks. This is correct, for his good intention was according to the principle which we wrote, that through this sin, which is common among us due to our many sins, we obstruct secrets of the Torah and convey them to the hand of the husks.[72]

The exile of the *Shekhinah*, her distance from her Beloved, is linked to the loss of the secrets of the Torah during the period of Jewish exile. This lamentable situation is perpetuated by "this sin" of wasting seed. A parallel passage appears in *Tiqun Hatzot*; Calahora writes that during the midnight ritual one should place ashes on one's forehead and "focus on the burning of the Torah, which was burnt by Apostomus and made into ashes. Since then, the secrets of the Torah have been transmitted to the outsiders. This is the exile of the *Shekhinah*, as the *AR"I* of blessed memory wrote."[73] The burning of a Torah scroll by the Roman soldier Apostomus epitomizes how the persecution of the Jewish people is synonymous with the decline of esoteric knowledge. The exile of the *Shekhinah*, the Jewish diaspora, the dispersal of secrets, the wasting of seed; all of these share a common structure, namely the scattering of positive energies and their negative descent.

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[71] On homoeroticism and kabbalah see M.D. Georg Langer, *Die Erotik der Kabbalah*, (Prague: Verlag Dr. Josef Flesch, 1923); Elliot R. Wolfson, *Through a Speculum That Shines: Vision and Imagination in Medieval Jewish Mysticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 369-75; Shaul Magid, "Constructing Women from Men: The Metaphysics of Male Homosexuality Among Lurianic Kabbalists in Sixteenth-Century Safed," *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 17 (2010): 4-28.

[72] Calahora, *Yesod Yosef*, 3.

[73] Calahora, *Tiqun Hatzot*, 1. Cf. *Pri 'Etz Hayyim*, *Sha'ar Tiqun Hatzot*, Chapter 3.

The "common" sin of wasting seed has high stakes: it inhibits knowledge of the Torah and obstructs the redemptive process. In turn, Calahora argues for the curative and redemptive properties of proper kabbalah study and sexual discipline:

> Its *tiqun*: One who is a master of Torah should accustom himself to study the secrets of the Torah…When we fix this sin, then we will merit redemption, for from the power of this sin is the lengthiness of the exile, for the maidservant inherits her mistress,[74] and the fixing of this sin is through the secrets of the Torah.[75]

The "secrets of the Torah" are accessible only to a "master of the Torah," a *ba'al torah*, like Calahora himself. The approaching messianic age, however, is a time when secrets will be revealed more widely. The study of kabbalah fixes the sin of wasted seed, but sexual discipline also gives one access to esoteric truths. The two are inseparable: "One who fixes this sin [of wasted seed] merits to understand the secrets of the Torah."[76] Beyond conveying information about wasted seed, the study of kabbalah, when paired with self-discipline, emerges as a potent *tiqun* of intimate sexual sins and the cosmos.

Preaching Piety

How did Calahora bring this ethos of kabbalistic masculinity, which linked sexual restraint, esoteric study, and the striving for redemption, to bear on his world? As a preacher in a large Polish town, addressing both Jewish men *and* Jewish women, how did he attempt to manifest his ideals in reality? *Yesod Yosef* is rife with descriptive and prescriptive passages where he records the social contexts of his preaching and suggests normative practices to his readers. Calahora's urgent concern with wasted seed translated into a campaign to reform his community and strengthen its adherence to law and custom.

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74 This refers to Lilith usurping Eve/*Shekhinah*; cf. Nathaniel Berman, *Divine and Demonic*, 193-210. Isaac of Poznań uses the same phrase, as cited in Avivi, "*Hagahot 'al 'Etz Hayyim*," 36.

75 Calahora, *Yesod Yosef*, 15.

76 Ibid., 18.

Throughout his writings, Calahora often mentions the occasions where he gave his homilies, marking time by the year and the weekly Torah portion. Sometimes he even describes his preaching practices in greater detail:

> I often turned my face away during my homilies, for in the large communities, on the Sabbath at the time of *minhah*, men and women stand in a multitude and look at one another, and they come, due to our many sins, to fantasies and to the emission of seed for nothing. Woe to the eyes who see this! Therefore, it is incumbent upon the sages of the generations who are in communities where there is this bad custom, to annul it, and to decree upon the *shamashim* that they should rebuke the men and women, [and tell them] that they should go to their homes and make the third meal [of the Sabbath]. For through this they also miss the time of the third meal, for when they stand on the street with one another, they cause a transgression, for they also speak gossip together, and they damage the covenant of the tongue, and the covenant of the flesh, and the covenant of the eyes.[77]

On a Sabbath afternoon, probably in Poznań, Jewish men and women have gathered to hear Calahora preach. However, by standing on the street in a mixed-gender group, they fall prey to immodesty. Calahora turns his head away, shielding his eyes; as his teacher Poppers once wrote, "Nothing prevents lust like the shutting of the eyes, therefore take care not to look at a woman."[78] In diagnosing the problem, Calahora bundles together minor offenses, such as being late to the third meal of Sabbath, with more severe sins: improper talk, improper vision, and even improper seminal emission. The Jews who attended his homily were probably expecting to be reprimanded, but they may not have expected Calahora

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[77] Ibid., 4.

[78] Poppers, *Or Tzadiqim*, 37. See also the linkage between the brain, seed and "the emission of light from the eyes" in Poppers, *Torah Or*, 70, and compare J.H. Chajes, "Re-envisioning the Evil Eye: Magic, Optical Theory, and Modern Supernaturalism in Jewish Thought," *European Journal of Jewish Studies* 15 (2020): 13-14. On the kabbalistic association between the eyes and the phallus, see Elliot R. Wolfson, "Weeping, Death, and Spiritual Ascent in Sixteenth-Century Jewish Mysticism," in *Death, Ecstasy, and Other Worldly Journeys*, eds. John J. Collins and Michael Fishbane (Albany: SUNY Press, 1995), 220-230.

to call on the rabbis to mobilize the *shamashim*, the communal functionaries. He criticized his audience directly and turned to his fellow rabbis and their subordinates to enforce gender separation in public spaces.

Punitive rabbinic authority figures in other passages as well. In one piquant case, after bemoaning the fact that wasted seed prolongs the exile, Calahora protests the immodesty inherent in prevalent wedding customs:

> It is incumbent on the sages of the generation to mend this brokenness and to annul the bad custom that grooms and brides sit together. The lofty *hasid*, the author of the *Shnei Luhot ha-Brit* [R. Isaiah Horowitz], was greatly angry at this and denounced it, and preached to annul this tradition. After him arose [...] our honorable teacher and rabbi, R. Isaac [of Poznań], and preached to annul this tradition, and in general even to annul this [other tradition], that men and women should not be together in one winter house at a wedding. [The women] dance for the men who sit there, and they are drunk. Their great drunkenness causes them to come to fantasize and to look at women who are married women, and they fail at night with this sin [through nocturnal seminal emissions].[79]

The seating of groom and bride together, in addition to licentious celebrations and dancing, draw the ire of the preacher and the rabbi. That Polish Jews in the seventeenth century were occasionally flirtatious, or even drunk and promiscuous, should surprise no one; moreover, Ashkenazi weddings had long included mixed-gender dancing.[80] However, the ideal of kabbalistic masculinity culminated in rabbis attempting to exert social pressure and to repress mixed-gender dancing and interactions.

Calahora and Isaac of Poznań took their lead from Isaiah Horowitz, who decried premarital immodesty in a letter to a rabbinic colleague in Poland. In Horowitz's opinion, the suffering of Polish Jews, including antisemitic libels, were due to

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[79] Calahora, *Yesod Yosef*, 7-8.

[80] Walter Zev Feldman, *Klezmer: Music, History, and Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 175-179.

> the sins which are committed by those who are to be married in your countries, that is, what they do before the *hupah* and what they do after the *hupah*. Before the *hupah*, the groom hugs and kisses the bride, even if she is old enough to menstruate. The groom also comes to have an erection and may even emit seed for naught, and his sin is too great to bear. Secondly, you perform marriages on the Sabbath eve, and the groom lays next to the bride when she is permitted to him, and the two are naked, and he does not perform the commandment of sexual intercourse. Is such a thing possible without emitting seed for naught? Even if he does nothing with his hand, in any event it occurs automatically.[81]

This rather explicit description is meant to strike fear in the hearts of Polish rabbis, and to encourage them to discipline their communities. The pious entreaties of kabbalists like Horowitz and others bore fruit over the next decades, as the case of Calahora shows.

Intriguingly, Calahora almost entirely eschewed the fasting and asceticism of Lurianic *tiqunei teshuva*.[82] For him, rather, "fixing" wasted seed consisted of minor interventions into the embodied religiosity of his audience. Calahora chose to inculcate an internalized and ritualized sexual discipline rather than impose harsh punishments for sexual wrongdoing. The secret of this choice may lie with his wider historical context. There are indications that Calahora was caught up in the Sabbatian enthusiasm of 1665-1666.[83] However, for all Calahora's discussions of exile and redemption, his texts are hardly crypto-Sabbatian. Like many others, even if Calahora had believed in Sabbatai Zevi, he probably abandoned this belief after the erstwhile messiah's apostasy.[84] I would even characterize Calahora's *Yesod Yosef* as a subtle reaction *against* Sabbatianism, which (famously and

[81] Abraham David, "A Letter by R. Isaiah Horowitz (Author of *Shenei Luhot ha-Berit*) from Jerusalem, after 1622," *Kobez Al Yad* 16 (2002), 245.

[82] Pachter, "*Shemirat ha-Brit*," 222-224.

[83] Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi*, 596.

[84] Gershom Scholem, "Regarding the Attitude of Jewish Rabbis to Sabbatianism," *Zion* 13/14 (1948): 47-62 [Hebrew]; Elisheva Carlebach, "Two Amens That Delayed the Redemption: Jewish Messianism and Popular Spirituality in the Post-Sabbatian Century," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 82 (1992): 241-261.

paradoxically) at times endorsed both ascetic penance and antinomian licence.[85] Calahora wanted to avoid these extremes and excesses, which challenged communal stability and gendered hierarchies. His conservative rhetoric linked sexual purity to halachic practice and aimed to strengthen normative Jewish life in exile.

What pious practices did Calahora prescribe for the men of his community? Much like Poppers' *Or Tzadiqim*, *Yesod Yosef* emphasized ethical behaviors like humility and charity. Embodied recommendations include abstaining from disproportionate eating and drinking, from excessive sleep, and even from worrying too much. Calahora tells his readers to "warm up their bodies" by performing physical *mitzvot*, such as baking *matzah*. Crucially, he encouraged normative involvement in synagogue and communal life. Jewish men should, among other things, be among the first ten men of the prayer quorum, be called up to read from the Torah every month, and wear *tzitzit* and *tefillin*. Calahora encourages them to study Torah to the best of their abilities, to honor Torah scholars, and observe the Sabbath carefully. In the fight against wasted seed, Calahora enlisted standard halakhic obligations.

Calahora, like other elite Jewish men, also addressed and disciplined Jewish women.[86] For example, Calahora writes that "it is one of the rectifications of *qeri* to multiply the lighting of candles on the Sabbath eve. I heard this principle from [...] the rabbi of our community [Isaac of Poznań], in his class [*shi'ur*] which he teaches in the evening, in the name of the writings of the *AR"I*."[87] Strategically, Calahora and his colleague augmented a halakhic requirement which devolves primarily on women, namely the lighting of Sabbath candles. In another example of the messy interface between the spoken and the written word, Calahora quotes Isaac of Poznań, who cited the Lurianic corpus in one of his regular lectures.

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[85] Matt Goldish, *The Sabbatean Prophets* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004); Ada Rapoport-Albert, *Women and the Messianic Heresy of Sabbatai Zevi, 1666-1816* (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2011). I should note Nathan of Gaza's kabbalistic condemnation of wasting seed in his *tiqunei teshuva*; see Yehuda Liebes, "Ha-Tikkun Ha-Kelali of R. Nahman of Bratslav and Its Sabbatean Links," in *Studies in Jewish Myth and Jewish Messianism* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1993), 143-144.

[86] Cf. Cornelia Aust, "Covering the Female Jewish Body. Dress and Dress Regulations in Early Modern Ashkenaz," *Central Europe* 17 (2019): 5-21.

[87] Calahora, *Yesod Yosef*, 9. He again quotes Isaac of Poznań on ibid., 22.

Probably only Jewish men were present at these lectures, but we can imagine them bringing this esoteric advice home to their wives, enjoining them to light extra Sabbath candles to atone for their wasted seed and to assure the piety of their children.

Another example is the bedtime recitation which includes the Shema and several other texts. Intuitively, night is a time of sexual danger; across cultures, beds, sleep, darkness, and dreams bear erotic risks.[88] Lurianic texts present the bedtime liturgy as an effective apotropaic ritual against involuntary seminal emissions, capable of slaying demons and their offspring. In the words of Hayyim Vital, the recitation of the Shema "becomes a sword and kills" the demons created by wasted seed.[89] Some adepts can slay up to 1,125 demons per night, a form of mass demonic infanticide.[90] When addressing Jewish men, Calahora writes that "it is one of the *tiqunim* of *qeri* to read the recitation of the Shema of the *AR"I* of blessed memory, as it is printed in *Sha'arei Tziyon*. Fortunate is the one who merits to read it with all the secrets and the intentions [*kavvanot*] which are mentioned in the writings of the *AR"I*."[91] But Jewish women also needed protection from wasted seed. As Calahora explains: "there are types of male demons who come in the form of men and stand themselves before the women at night and cause them to fail with the emission of seed for naught." For that reason, "I strove and preached in our community that the women be careful to recite Shema at night like the men."[92] Theoretically, kabbalistic practices connected to wasted seed could have been employed by both men and women; both had bodies which produced seed, and both faced demonic temptations. However, Calahora did not recommend that his female listeners engage in Lurianic prayer intentions. Rather, Calahora continues, "I preached that the women should also read the Shema which is printed in the *benshen* for they also stumble in this sin through male demons."[93] The *benshen*

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[88] Charles Stewart, "Erotic Dreams and Nightmares from Antiquity to the Present," *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 8 (2002): 279-309.

[89] Vital, *Sha'ar ha-Tefilah*, 616.

[90] Ibid., 312.

[91] Calahora, *Yesod Yosef*, 16. Calahora directs his male readers to the Lurianic prayerbook edited by Nathan Neta Hanover, *Sha'arei Tziyon* (Prague, 1662). The Lurianic bedtime rites were also published in pamphlets like *Seder ve-Tiqun Qriat Shm'a 'al ha-Mitah* (Prague 1615) and *Tiqun Qriat Shem'a* (Prague 1668).

[92] Calahora, *Yesod Yosef*, 10.

[93] Ibid., 16.

were liturgical pamphlets, often with Yiddish translation, which contained the grace after meals and the bedtime Shema—but not the Lurianic *kavvanot*. Calahora did not initiate women into Lurianic secrets, but rather encouraged them to adopt a deracinated form of a "male" apotropaic practice.

How successful was Calahora's project? It is hard to say how many Jewish men and women followed his instructions, but rabbis did read his book after its publication.[94] A tale included in Tzvi Hirsch Kaidonover's *Kav ha-Yashar*, a kabbalistic ethical text first published in 1706, is also suggestive.[95] In a section devoted to the dangers of wasted seed, we find a tale set in Poznań around 1681 in which a house is haunted by the destructive offspring of a Jewish man and his demoness lover. With the help of Joel Ba'al Shem, the Jews of Poznań successfully take the demons to the rabbinic court and banish them from town.[96] The same story was reported to Jacob Emden by the rabbi-kabbalist Naftali Katz, who himself lived in Poznań in those years.[97] Is the location of this story a coincidence? Or is this a reflection of Calahora's war against sexual demons?

This story has drawn extensive scholarly attention; the common anxieties about human-demon eroticism may reflect concerns about Jewish-Christian relations.[98]

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[94] On the use of *Yesod Yosef* by Yehiel Mikhel Epstein in his *Kitzur SHLA"H* (Fürth 1693/1696), see Hundert, *Jews in Poland-Lithuania*, 129-30. The earliest reference to *Yesod Yosef* which I have found is Abraham b. Benjamin Zev, *Zer'a Avraham* (Sulzbach, 1685), f. 4r. Calahora's book was reprinted in an expanded edition (Berlin, 1739) and earned a commentary by Rafael Unna, *Yesod M'aravi* (Jerusalem, 1896).

[95] Jacob Elbaum, "Kav ha-Yashar: Some Remarks on Its Structure, Content, and Literary Sources," in *Studies in Askenazi Culture, Women's History, and the Languages of the Jews presented to Chava Turniansky,* eds. Israel Bartal et al. (Jerusalem: Shazar, 2013), 15-64 [Hebrew]; Jean Baumgarten, "Eighteenth-Century Ethico-Mysticism in Central Europe: the 'Kav ha-yosher' and the Tradition," *Studia Rosenthaliana* 41 (2009): 29-51.

[96] On Joel and other *ba'alei shem*, see Nimrod Zinger, *The Ba'al Shem and the Doctor: Medicine and Magic among German Jews in the Early Modern Period* (Haifa: Haifa University Press, 2017) [Hebrew].

[97] Jacob Emden, *Migdal 'Oz* (Altona, 1748), f. 259r.

[98] Sara Zfatman, *The Marriage of a Mortal Man and A She-Demon* (Jerusalem: Akademon Press, 1987), 82-102; Jeremy Dauber, *In the Demon's Bedroom: Yiddish Literature and the Early Modern* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2010), 164-171; Astrid Lembke, *Dämonische Allianzen. Jüdische Mahrtenehenerzählungen der europäischen Vormoderne* (Tübingen: Francke Verlag, 2013); David Rotman, "Sexuality and Communal Space in Stories about the Marriage of Men and She-Demons," in *Monsters and Monstrosity in Jewish History: From the Middle Ages to Modernity* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019), 187-200; Maoz Kahana, *A Heartless*

Reading such tales alongside Lurianic discourse can also be instructive. In the Poznań story, for example, the Jew and his demon-lover meet during the Passover seder for a tryst in a magical room within an outhouse. Similarly, in the "Laws of the Outhouse" in Poppers' *Or Tzadiqim* we read that "one should not speak in the outhouse, for there is a type of demon that can possess one and cause one to sin." [99] Perhaps Lurianic kabbalistic concepts were amenable to the Jewish population because tales about sexual encounters with demons were so familiar. Conversely, it is worth remembering that even "elite" forms of Jewish esotericism were thoroughly embedded in more "popular" worldviews.[100]

Calahora's preaching, as enshrined in *Yesod Yosef*, reflects a particular moment in the history of kabbalistic masculinity in East-Central Europe. Although Calahora's content originated with kabbalistic sources, his techniques were honed during his homilies for Sabbaths and holidays, often in the synagogue and sometimes on the street, over the course of decades. He translated conceptual frameworks into forms of communal discipline. *Yesod Yosef* reflects Calahora's own kabbalistic thought and reading habits, carried out within elite rabbinic networks. Simultaneously, it records his attempts to influence local Jewish men and women to guard the covenant.

Conclusion

What I have called "kabbalistic masculinity" was characterized by a claim to cosmic influence and an imperative to self-discipline. From the sixteenth century onwards, this became the ideal of personhood for rabbinic elites across the Jewish diaspora. Concurrently, the embodied problem of wasted seed became ubiquitous in Jewish early modernity, figuring in all genres of Jewish writing—from halakhic codes to ethical literature to dream diaries. By the end of the seventeenth century, kabbalistic discourse about wasted seed was codified in Jewish liturgy and law, with entire monographs dedicated to the subject. Kabbalistic masculinity and the

Chicken: Religion and Science in Early Modern Rabbinic Culture (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 2021), 116-119 [Hebrew].

[99] Poppers, *Or Tzadiqim*, 4.

[100] Paluch, *Intentionality*.

concern over wasted seed quickly impacted the "popular religion" of less-educated Jews, taking new forms in the process.[101] Kabbalistic masculinity deeply informs both Eastern European Hasidism and contemporary ultra-Orthodoxy.[102] The messianic virility and valorized repression of kabbalistic masculinity may even have left impressions on the ostensibly "secular" gender ideals of psychoanalysis, Zionism, or socialism, to name but three expressions of Jewish modernity.[103]

This essay is just one chapter in the still unwritten history of the male Jewish body, a history which must also account for various relations with non-male and non-human bodies. Without ignoring the restrictive and conservative nature of the kabbalistic sexual ethic, it was not a mere anxiety or neurosis. Rather than pathologize the kabbalistic concern over wasted seed, we should historicize and corporealize it. Through their writing and preaching, kabbalists promulgated a conception of the ideal Jewish male body and tried to govern its interactions with other bodies and with itself. Within the "cosmic patriarchy" of kabbalah, to be a Jewish man meant having the power to create or destroy worlds, and hence strict responsibilities for one's own body. And kabbalistic masculinity, as I have argued, is unthinkable without considering wasted seed, without examining the intensely ambivalent sensations and emotions which accompanied this physiological process and its generative implications.

Avinoam J. Stillman studies early modern Jewish history with specific interests in kabbalah, the history of the Hebrew book, and Jewish diasporas. He completed his BA at Columbia University and his MA at Ben Gurion University of the Negev. He is currently

[101] Michael Stanislawski, "Toward the Popular Religion of Ashkenazic Jews: Yiddish-Hebrew Texts on Sex and Circumcision," in *Mediating Modernity: Challenges and Trends in the Jewish Encounter with the Modern World: Essays in Honor of Michael A. Meyer*, ed. Lauren Strauss and Michael Brenner (Detroit: Wayne University Press, 2008), 93-106.

[102] Benjamin Brown, "*Kedushah*: The Sexual Abstinence of Married Men in Gur, Slonim, and Toledot Aharon," *Jewish History* 27 (2013): 475-522; Yakir Englander, *The Male Body in Ultra-Orthodox Jewish Theology* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2021).

[103] I note the absence of kabbalistic discourse from Daniel Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997). The ideal kabbalist, an ascetic spiritual warrior, is almost the opposite of Boyarin's passive-yet-carnal rabbis.

completing his PhD at Freie Universität Berlin; his dissertation is an intellectual biography of Meir Poppers (d. 1662), a Kraków-born and Jerusalem-educated kabbalist who transmitted Lurianic manuscripts between the Ottoman Empire and East-Central Europe. He is also a founding editor of Blima Books, an independent press dedicated to "Radical Jewish Literature" and based in Jerusalem and Berlin.

Keywords: Kabbalah, Sexuality, Masculinity, East-Central Europe, Early Modernity

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Sodomy, Homosociality and Friendship among Jewish and Christian Men: The Proceedings Against Lazarro de Norsa (Modena, 1670)

by *Katherine Aron-Beller*

Abstract

At the heart of the sodomy trial against Lazarro de Norsa in 1670 before the Modenese Inquisition lies a relationship between the Jewish tailor Lazarro and the son of the household, Cesare Cimicelli. Lazarro sleeps, not in the servants' quarters, but with Cimicelli. There is nothing unusual or sinister about two men sharing a bed, but when two men of different faiths and status do so it gives rise to gossip and suspicion. This essay focuses on enmity, friendship and homo-sociality among Jews and Christians in an early modern Italian Christian household. It shows how men had a primary role within this domestic space and how relationships between servants could be made and unmade. It also reveals an unusual case in which a Jew appearing before an inquisitorial tribunal was successfully defended by a Christian procurator, paid for by the head of the Christian household, Signor Enrico Cimicelli.

Introduction

In the late seventeenth-century wealthy household of the *cavagliero* Enrico Cimicelli (sometimes listed as "Cimiselli" in other archival documents), male servants, professional acquaintances, and local artisans were forever in motion, coming and going.[1] The family lived in a *palazzo* in Modena, the city capital of the northern Este Duchy, situated in the main street of the parish of San Giovanni Evangelista. In 1670, Enrico and his (unnamed) wife had seven sons aged from 28 down to a toddler and had clearly accumulated a great fortune. Enrico's oldest son, Cesare, worked for his father.[2] His second son, Camillo, served as a steward to Duke Francesco II d'Este of Modena, and the third served the Prince Cardinal Rinaldo d'Este. By 1650, the number of male servants in Italian households had grown substantially, and the *padrone*'s honor depended upon his efficient management of his domestic staff.[3] The social world of these male servants—the contacts they made, the circles and institutions they frequented, even their degree of mobility about the city—was determined largely by the duties and responsibilities assigned to them by their masters and mistresses. The domestic structure regulated these workers' personal lives, and free time was severely limited.

A significant number of the lower classes in early modern Italy, particularly those who were immigrants to a city, were employed as domestic labor.[4] Gioseppe Sauli da Forlì had left Forlì in 1665 or 1666 to take up a placement in the Cimicelli household. He probably had an informal agreement concerning his long-term

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[1] A *cavagliero* (cavalier or knight) was an honorific title and office that carried a degree of prestige but no nobility. See James S. Grubb, *Provincial Families of the Renaissance: Private and Public Life in the Veneto* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 171-172 and Dennis Romano, *Housecraft and Statecraft: Domestic Service in Renaissance Venice 1400-1600* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 81.

[2] Archivio di Stato di Modena, Fondo dell'Inquisizione, Causae Hebreorum 250 folio 33 and continued in Processi busta 161 no 9. 19th July 1670. From here on these references will be abbreviated to ASMo. FI CH 250 f. 33 and ASMo. FI P 161 no. 9 respectively. The pages are not paginated but I followed the order of the pages in the folios. Ibid., 60r. Cesare testifies that he has "the dealings of the house on my shoulders."

[3] Bill Bryson, *At Home: A Short History of Private Life* (New York: Anchor Books 2010), 233.

[4] Romano, *Housecraft and Statecraft*, 105 confirms that from the middle of the sixteenth century, a new style of "aristocratic servant keeping" developed: in particular an increase in the employment of male servants.

employment.[5] Since he was a married man and a father, it might have stated that his son Giovanni could earn his keep as an apprentice coachman (*garzone*) when he reached the age of eleven and sleep in the *palazzo* when necessary.[6] In 1669, perhaps more confident that this would be a long term agreement, Gioseppe had brought his wife Lucia and Giovanni to Modena, and set them up in tiny rental accommodation consisting of a single room.[7] Employed as a stable hand to care for horses, Giovanni's daily activities were probably confined to the stables—grooming, cleaning out the stalls and mending harnesses. Gioseppe was unlikely to have been paid a salary on a regular basis but would have lived on lucrative tips and bribes and expected Enrico to keep his salary "in salvo" for him and his son.[8] Lucia described her family as being "very poor."

To become a coachman, Gioseppe must have been tall and good looking.[9] Outside the household his livery, which would have displayed the Cimicelli coat of arms, would have identified him as a retainer and made him a symbol of his master's status. His daily routine was determined by the Cimicellis' transportation needs as he escorted the family members around the city and to their country villa in the parish of San Pietro, 12 miles away, where they lived for five months of the year from the middle of June to the beginning of November. His duties and responsibilities probably involved waiting for his employers for hours, and at other times performing tasks such as collecting bills, delivering messages, and receiving goods.[10]

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[5] The time period of four or five years can be calculated from Gioseppe's comment that he had known Lazarro for this period, since he had started working as a coachman in the household. See ASMo. FI CH 250 f. 33, 68r-69v, 129 and 135r.

[6] For the significant exploitation of child labor in domestic service at this time see Maria Agren, "The Complexities of Work: Analyzing men's and women's work in the early modern world," in *What Is Work?: Gender at the Crossroads of Home, Family, and Business from the Early Modern Era to the Present,* eds. Raffaella Sarti, Anna Bellavitis and Manuela Martini (New York - Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2018), 226-242; 234.

[7] Ibid., 94 where Lucia discusses how hard it was for married servants who often had to live apart, seeing each other infrequently. ASMo. FI CH 250 f. 33, 14r-15. On the type of accommodation of the very poor see Sandra Cavallo, "The Artisan's Casa" in *At Home in Renaissance Italy exh. Cat.,* eds. Marta Ajmar-Wollheim and Flora Dennis (London: V & A Publishing, 2006), 65-75; 68.

[8] Cissie Fairchilds, *Domestic Enemies: Servants and Their Masters in Old Regime France* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983), 2, 147, and 149.

[9] Ibid., 32.

[10] Ibid., 168.

Gioseppe was expected to be something more than a hired servant: he ought to be loyal, a defender of his master's honor, and an asset to the household. Pulled into the homocentric world in Enrico's household as well as in the Palace of the Duke - the center of Modenese politics - Gioseppe met other male coachmen and servants. His self-perception clearly depended upon his affiliation to this group of servants.

On May 17, 1670, Gioseppe delated to the Holy Office in Modena that his 11-year-old son, Giovanni, had been raped by the 24-year-old Lazarro Leonicini de Norsa, a Jewish tailor working in the Cimicelli household.[11] Although the Roman Inquisition was no longer dealing with crimes of sodomy in general, it was gravely concerned because of the suggestion that there had been violent intercourse between a Jew and a Christian.[12] Had this been a matter of Christians committing sodomy it would have gone to the episcopal or one of the secular courts. The Roman Inquisition had started prosecuting Jews for this crime in 1567, the punishment authorized by the Congregation in Rome being ten years' galley service.[13] Despite the Modenese Inquisition being one of the busiest tribunals of the seventeenth century, conducting far more trials than its counterpart in Venice,

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[11] See my previous article, "*Sopra l'imputatione del delitto di sodomia con christiano:* The proceedings against Lazarro de Norsa (Modena, 1670)," in *Mascolinità mediterranee (secoli XII-XVII) Genesis* 20, eds. Denise Bezzina and Michaël Gasperoni, no. 1 (2021): 65-93. Whereas this article looked particularly at the allegation of sodomy and the trial proceedings, this essay takes the lens of homosociality between Jews and Christians who are attached to a Christian household.

[12] See Archivio di Stato di Modena, Fondo dell'Inquisizione, Causae Hebreorum 250 folio 33, 7r. Letter of the Inquisitor. On the eighteenth-century cases see Matteo Al Kalak "Investigating the Inquisition: Controlling Sexuality and Social Control in Eighteenth-Century Italy," *Church History* 85 (2016): 529-551. See Umberto Grassi, "Emotions and Sexuality: Regulation and Homoerotic Transgression," in *The Routledge History of Emotions in Europe (1100-1700)*, eds. Susan Broomhall and Andrew Lynch (London - New York: Routledge, 2010), 133-150; 140 for work done on sodomy in the criminal sources of early modern Italy. He highlights both the increased surveillance and social tolerance of these courts.

[13] Even though no mention was made of sexual crimes committed by Jews against Christians in the 1581 bull *Antiqua Iudeorum improbitas* which had authorized inquisitorial supervision of Jews, the Inquisition in northern Italy had asserted its jurisdiction over these offences. For the copy of the papal bull see Sebastiani Franco and Henrico Dalmazzo, eds., *Bullarium Diplomatum et Privilegiorum Sanctorum Romanorum Pontificum (Augustae Taurinorum, 1857–72)*, vol. VIII, 378-379. For cases of sexual relations—but not sodomy—between Jews and Christians in Modena see ASMo. FI. CH 245 f.44 in 1628 and ASMo. FI. CH 248 f.23 in 1657, ASMo. FI CH 249 in 1660; and 1735, ASMo FI. Processi 209 f.14. See also Robert Bonfil "Jews, Christians and Sex in Renaissance Italy: a Historiographical Problem," *Jewish History* 26 (2012): 101-111.

it devoted an unusual amount of time and effort to investigating this case.[14] The record of the trial, which runs to over 480 pages, is the longest transcript of proceedings against a professing Jew to be found in the Modenese inquisitorial archive. It is also the Inquisition's only known prosecution of a Jew for sodomy in the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries.[15]

A written medical report submitted by Francesco Bisogni, the barber surgeon, on 18th May confirmed that Giovanni had been raped and his back passage ruptured (*la rottura alle parti d'abasso*). Lazarro was therefore accused by the Inquisition of committing a crime aggravated by violence.[16] He was arrested on 31st May and taken to the Holy Office, to be imprisoned in the convent of San Domenico. Throughout his six interrogations (on 31st May, 11th June, 18th June, 22nd June, 12th July and 13th July) during his three months' imprisonment, he repeatedly denied committing sodomy and refused to deviate from his declaration of innocence.

Without obtaining a confession from Lazarro, it was impossible for the Inquisition to prove that he had committed the offense. Twenty-three days after his incarceration, on 22nd June, at his fourth interrogation, Lazarro accepted legal counsel, thereby preventing the tribunal from using torture to secure a confession.[17] It was immediately announced that a legal procurator, Dr. Domino Benedetto Septo, would defend Lazarro. A procurator was a private solicitor or attorney retained by supporters of the accused, rather than an inquisitorial advocate appointed by the court; Septo had been retained by the Cimicellis, and

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[14] Andrea del Col, *L'Inquisizione in Italia dal XII al XXI secolo* (Milan: Oscar Mondadori, 2006), 776.

[15] In Modena, Jews were subject to secular courts including the Giudici Ordinarii, the Ducale Camerale, the Tribunale dei Dodici Savi and the Giudici del Maleficio, which dealt specifically with heresy and blasphemy if they committed crimes and the Magistrati delle Artii regarding guild issues.

[16] ASMo. FI CH 250 f. 33, 12r-13v. 18th May 1670, 21r. This is how Giovanni's backside was described by the barber surgeon Francesco Bisogni.
In 1647 Venetian legislation had ordered that any surgeon or barber who treated anyone for injuries resulting from anal intercourse had to report this to a court of law Whether this was the case in Modena is not clear. See Guido Ruggiero, *The Boundaries of Eros: Sex Crime and Sexuality in Renaissance Venice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 117. The Modenese Inquisition ordered another examination of Giovanni on June 8, 1670, this time performed by Giovanni Manzini. By this time the rupture had healed. See ASMo. FI CH 250 f. 33, 273r - 275v.

[17] Ibid., 93r-94r. Before Lazarro confirmed his decision, the Inquisitor had sent a standard letter asking for the guidance of the Congregation of the Holy Office in Rome as to whether torture should be applied to the prisoner in this case.

was handed a copy of the trial on 22nd June.[18] He was given 15 days to prepare a list of questions (also recorded in the file) to put to witnesses of his choice, who were to be interrogated by him in the presence of the court.[19] All the witnesses questioned by Septo had already been summoned by the prosecution, and he chose merely to re-interrogate those who had already given testimony.[20] The detailed information that he extracted during these interrogations showed his superiority over the Inquisitor in the skills of investigation and interrogation as well as his attention to detail. He threw serious doubts on the case against Lazarro and exposed the deviousness of Gioseppe Sauli and the Christian witnesses who supported his indictment.

Eventually, it would become clear to the Inquisition that the denunciation against Lazarro had arisen from malice and vindictiveness and the Jew was exonerated from the accusation. Yet the case illustrates relations between Jewish and Christian men, their arguments and jealousies as well as their loyalty, kinship, friendship, and bedsharing. It demonstrates the threat of conflict when a young Jewish male was allowed to enter a Christian household and confirms how Lazarro's position as a favorite with the *padroni* meant that he was resented, particularly by Gioseppe. The case also reveals an unusual situation in which a Jew appearing before an inquisitorial tribunal was successfully defended against this malicious allegation by a Christian procurator, paid for by his master. It uncovers how and why the false denunciation was formulated, how it was responded to, and the defense's efforts to exonerate him.

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[18] Ibid. 56r, 57r and 58v. See also ASMo FI Processi 77 folio 14 19r. A similar situation had occurred in 1622 during the trial of Moise de Modena. The Jew had used his own procurator, one Andrea Ledazario, to defend him. Like Septo, Ledazario compiled a defense document purely from the testimonies and documents that the Inquisition supplied to him.

[19] For Septo receiving a copy of the trial, ASMo. FI CH 250 f. 33, 34r-35v. For the notes of the procurator see 86r-88v. Ibid. 58v and see at the beginning of the interrogation of Cesare by Septo, ibid. 68r.

[20] See the interrogations of Cesare Cimicelli, Gioseppe, and his wife Lucia on 1st July, a neighbor of Gioseppe and Lucia - Lodovica on 4th July, Giovanni on 7th July, Gioseffo (another Christian servant in the household) on 8th July and Lazarro on 12th and 13th July. It is unclear why Enrico chose not to give testimony himself, but perhaps he trusted Cesare to do what was necessary. As to why the Inquisition did not call him to give testimony, perhaps his proximity to the Duke of Modena meant that they preferred not to involve him. None of the children besides Cesare were called to testify.

Bedsharing in the Cimicelli household

The scene of the alleged crime was the servants' quarter in the Cimicelli household.[21] The servants' room, [*una camera mezzana detta communemente de servitori*] as it was described, was a mezzanine—a low-ceilinged space usually located between two main stories of the building. It was in the least congenial part of the *palazzo* on the lower ground floor, overcrowded and not conducive to comfort, quiet or seclusion, without any natural light and hidden from the *padroni* and visitors.[22] The mezzanine housed four beds in the male section, which meant that when the household was full, up to eight men could sleep there, two in each bed.[23]

Bedsharing was a common practice in the early modern world, not only among the poor but also among employers and householders. To demonstrate how habitual it was for men to share beds in his household, Cesare Cimicelli told the Inquisitor that he had even shared a bed with ecclesiastics and officials of the Holy Office who had passed through his home: "Ordinarily I slept alone, but I have slept with some strangers (*forestiere*) when there was a need for beds, and among those whom I know that I have slept with are Signor Archpriest of Cavezzo, and even some officials of the Holy Office here. "[24]

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[21] For the most common venues for acts of sodomy, see Umberto Grassi "Shame and Boastfulness in Early Modern Italy: Showing Off Masculinity and Exposing Sexual Submission in Class and Age Competition," in *Gender and Status Competition in Pre-Modern Societies*, eds. Martha Bayless, Jonas Lilequist, and Lewis Webb (Turnhout: Brepols, 2021), 109-124; 118. The servants' quarters of a wealthy household were not listed.

[22] Don Giosaffat, the caretaker of the house, admitted to never going to the servants' room. It was clearly not a place one would choose to go. See ASMo. FI CH 250 f. 33, 31r. See also Bryson, *At Home: A Short History of Private Life,* 262; Peter Thornton, *The Italian Renaissance Interior 1400-1600* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1961), 294; Raffaele Sarti, *Europe at Home: Family and Material Culture 1500-1800* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 130 and Romano, *Domestic Servants,* 95.

[23] Romano, *Housecraft and Statecraft,* 94.

[24] ASMo. FI CH 250 f. 33, 329 r. See also Ibid., 60v-61r. Cesare stated: "When they need to come to town - whether they are masters or servants, all ordinarily, have their rooms, in which they sleep...". See Raffaella Sarti, "Rural Life-Cycle Service: Established Interpretations and New (Surprising) Data – The Italian Case in Comparative Perspective (Sixteenth to Twentieth Centuries)," in *Servants in Rural Europe 1400-1900*, ed. Jane Whittle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 227-254; 229. ASMo. FI CH 250 f. 33, 21r-22v and 188r. According to

In the servants' quarter, having a bedfellow did not suggest immoral behavior, but it clearly gave opportunities for sexual abuse. For about a year on and off, Giovanni was forced to sleep either in the stables or to share a bed with Galvano, who had served as a groom or a general servant (no specific title is given), or Gioseffo Romagnolo da Cesana, an apprentice locksmith [*magnano*] probably in his late teens or early twenties. Gioseffo worked for a local master locksmith and carried out some work in the Cimicelli household. Gioseffo had even been given a key to the servants' room and had permission by the *padroni* to sleep there when the family were away.[25] In his first interrogation on 18th May, Giovanni had not blamed Lazarro for the initial rape as his father had done, but accused Gioseffo Romagnolo da Cesana of raping him, and then Galvano and Lazarro for sodomizing him on other nights in the servants' quarters:[26]

> First, I slept with Gioseffo Romagnolo da Cesana, then with Galvano servant of Signor Enrico Cimicelli and with Lazarro the Jew in the house of the said Signor Enrico in the room of the servants. These acts dirtied my backside, the first one slept there for a long time, the second around a month and Lazarro the Jew, for around three weeks, and he always made me dirty behind...[27]

Perhaps because some time had passed since these events, Giovanni's report suggested that he found the memory distasteful, rather than traumatizing.[28] It was not the forceful or violent penetration of the sexual act that had stuck in his

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Francesco di Rossi, Gioseppe had left his son strict instructions about where he was to sleep in the Cimicelli household and: "When the wife of the coachman came to Modena, the coachman began to sleep in his house with her, and Giovanni, his son, slept in the house of Signor Cimicelli in the bed where his father had slept before, in the room of servants. But when the coachman was outside the city, the boy was ordered by his father to go and sleep with his mother. I know this because I heard the father order his son to do this, but whether he obeyed his father I don't know."

[25] Ibid. 251r-252v.

[26] Lazarro continually testified that he had never slept with Giovanni in the servants' quarters.

[27] Ibid., 13r. Giovanni was three years under the age of legal responsibility and unable to take an oath. Ibid 80-81r.

[28] Ibid., 60r. See also David F. Greenberg, *The Construction of Homosexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 310.

mind, but how the men's ejaculation and fluid semen had made him feel "dirty." He could give no indication of being treated differently by the Jew and tried instead to include him in a general accusation. These testimonies contradicted other witnesses' accounts, particularly those of Lazarro, himself and Gioseffo, who completely denied the accusations.[29]

In his testimony before Cimicelli's defense lawyer on 2nd July 1670, Giovanni again downplayed Lazarro's role in the sexual attack. Here he confirmed that it was the Christian men who had raped and then sodomized him before he was penetrated by Lazarro:

> When my mother noticed that I had been harmed in my backside, and she saw blood on my bed – it must have been three or four months ago, since I had a wounded backside... I had not said anything, before this, because I was afraid that I would get a beating. And it is true that although the Jew was the last to do this to me – to penetrate me from behind – in every way, however, harm had also been done to me by Gioseffo and Galvano.[30]

Giovanni also mentioned here his fear of being reprimanded. Was he referring to a beating by his parents, angry that he had been powerless to defend himself, or more likely a threat to harm him made by Galvano and/or Gioseffo if he revealed what they had done to him?

Gioseppe knew that he had been remiss in not ensuring the surveillance and protection of his son at night in the servants' quarter.[31] The 11-year-old boy had been left vulnerable to the sexual advances of his older bed partners.[32] Both Galvano and Gioseffo had subjugated Giovanni not only to the initial rape but to subsequent sodomy as he tried to sleep in the bed he was forced to share. These

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[29] Don Giosaffat, the Cimicelli household's priest and caretaker, testified that Giovanni never slept in the house when the *padroni* were in the villa, which contradicted the testimony of Giovanni, Lucia, and Lodovica. See ASMo. FI CH 250 f. 33, 24r.

[30] Ibid., 80r.

[31] It is questionable whether we should trust Gioseffo's testimony that occasionally when the family was in the villa, Gioseppe used to travel back to the palazzo and sleep at home. Ibid., 84r. This was his reasoning as to why the Jew could sleep with the boy in the Cimicelli household at this time.

[32] If Gioseppe had not seen his son's bloodied bedsheets, the case would have escaped suspicion and remained unreported. Giovanni had no intention of telling his father.

testimonies provide a picture of a young unsupervised boy becoming a victim of lawless sexual violence in the male servants' quarters of an early modern household.

Just before Gioseppe had turned to the Inquisition in May 1670, he had reported to Cesare Cimicelli that his son had been raped and sodomized. Cesare had immediately fired Galvano, and Galvano had probably fled Modena to avoid investigation.[33] It is unclear whether Cesare had also punished Gioseffo. Gioseffo Romagnolo was called to give testimony in the inquisitorial court on two occasions. Because the Inquisition did not have jurisdiction over Christians accused of committing acts of sodomy with other Christians, it could only interrogate Gioseffo as a witness to Lazarro's alleged offence. When Gioseffo was summoned by the court on 4th June and by the defense on 8th July, he was not even asked if he had sodomized the boy himself.

Whereas Gioseppe and his son were only allowed to sleep in the servants' quarter, Lazarro testified that he hardly ever slept in these quarters and never shared a bed with Giovanni.[34] In fact, the Cimicellis had turned a blind eye to ducal rules that specified that the Jew had to sleep in the ghetto on what is now Piazza Mazzini, the residential enclosure of the Jews established in Modena in 1638. At night all Jews had to return to this area and only Jewish physicians were allowed to emerge from it in order to attend to Christian patients. In fact, Lazarro was allowed to sleep in any part of the *palazzo* when the *padroni* were away and was chosen by Cesare Cimicelli, Enrico's oldest son, to share a bed with him in his personal apartment at the top of the house.[35] This arrangement clearly bothered Gioseppe. In his delation, Gioseppe describes Lazarro not as sleeping occasionally in the Cimicelli household, but as actually "living" there:

> Father, I have to say this to you that around a month ago, my wife called Lucia, on the occasion of making the bed of my son Giovanni who is 11 years old, saw that the sheets were bloodied (*insanguinati*), and suspected

[33] See Ibid., 72r. Galvano did not appear as a witness in the *processo.*

[34] Ibid., 35r and 23r, Lazarro told the Inquisitor "at times I slept below with a servant called Francesco di Rossi."

[35] ASMo. FI CH 250 f. 33, 191r, 328r. In contrast, Cesare reported that "he [Giovanni] was not allowed to sleep in another place".

> that the boy had been harmed. When she asked him what had happened and what the blood signified, he [Giovanni] said that Lazarro the Jew, who *lives and often came to sleep in the house* [my italics] of Signore Enrico Cimicelli, because he serves in the house, as well as Galvano, the groom of the said Signore Enrico, had sodomized him...[36]

There was some correlation between sleeping chambers, social status, and who slept where, and the coachman may have felt cheated since he was one of the most prominent servants of the household. The *padroni* apartments were situated far from the main entrance and provided some privacy and protection from intrusion.[37] The apartment probably had four rooms—an antechamber; a room with a bed with feather mattress, feather pillows, woolen blankets, quilt and sheets; a lavatory and a linen room.[38] A luxurious bed—particularly the four poster beds or canopy beds—provided a different sleeping experience from the woolen mattresses in the servants' quarter.[39] Servants wandered around everywhere, even in the inner parts of the building, and it was well known and a topic of conversation in the household that Lazarro and Cesare slept together. Francesco di Rossi, a Christian servant in the household until 1st November, 1669, when he had become a footman to Duke Alfonso IV d'Este of Modena, reported that he saw the Jew leaving Cesare's apartment in the morning after he had slept there.[40] Gioseppe may have felt jealous or, possibly, disgusted.

Additionally, Cesare's detailed testimony that the household's sleeping arrangements allowed temporary bedsharing suggests some kind of intricate code regarding its civility and sociability. When all the family were in the *palazzo,* each had their allocated places for sleeping. Cesare sharing a bed with Lazarro was done not out of necessity but as a deliberate decision that offered Lazarro and Cesare

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[36] Ibid, 32r.

[37] Daniel Jütte, *The Strait Gate: Thresholds and Power in Western History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 53.

[38] Sarti, *Europe at Home: Family and Material Culture,* 120.

[39] Galandra Cooper and Mary Laven "The Material Culture of Piety in the Italian Renaissance," in *The Routledge Handbook of Material Culture in Early Modern Europe,* eds. Catherine Richardson, Tara Hamling and David Gaimster (London: Routledge, 2017), 338.

[40] ASMo. FI CH 250 f. 33, 191r.

protection, space, time, and privacy.[41] Cesare testified that Lazarro slept in their household at night during his busiest periods, when styling garments for *carnevale* or Christmas. Cesare also hinted at some antagonism from the servants towards Lazarro and explained that he wished to protect the Jew from their animosity. Whether he was referring specifically to Gioseppe is not clear. Cesare testified to the Inquisitor that he had not allowed Lazarro to sleep in the servants' room when he was in the *palazzo* "because of the danger that the Jew would be attacked in some way."[42] He continued:

> In the winter, that is those nights that I said around Christmas, and Carnival he slept with me <u>in the same</u>[43] bed, since all the servants were in the house. I did not want him to go down below in case the servants would do something insolent against him.[44]

When Cesare was asked by Septo where the Jew slept when he was not there, he indicated that Lazarro had his full permission to sleep where he wanted and therefore it made sense for the Jew to stay away from the servants' quarter: "I don't know if the Jew ever slept in the room of servants. He would have been a big fool if he had. Why would he want to go to a bad room when he could go to a good one? "[45]

Cesare confirmed that it was Lazarro whom he naturally favored and protected thereby justifying his bedsharing in this way. Not only does Cesare hint at the potential danger that the Jew would have faced had he slept in the servants' quarter when he was not there because of the antagonism of the other servants, but his statement also indicates a firm and deep attachment to Lazarro. This needs to be further assessed.

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[41] On bedsharing see Alan Bray, *The Friend* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 151-158 and A. Robert Ekirch, *At Day's Close: Night in Times Past* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co), 280-284.

[42] ASMo. FI CH 250 f. 33, 334r.

[43] This is the notary's own underlining in the text.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Ibid., 66r.

Enmity, Friendship and Homo-sociality among Jews and Christians

The official Catholic position on relations between Jewish and Christian men was that they might be business acquaintances but not affectionate friends or intimates. Shylock's aspirations to friendship with Antonio ('I would be friends with you and have your love') are surely a mockery.[46] When Gioseppe's wife, Lucia, was interrogated on the 1st July, she was asked why Lazarro had stayed in the Cimicellis' house. Lucia expressed her dislike of the Jew, calling him the *padroni*'s "friend" (*amico*), and emphasizing the favoritism the Cimicellis showed their Jewish tailor.[47] "A friend" in early modern society did not necessarily mean someone for whom one felt affection, a sincere social relationship or reciprocity, but essentially someone one could trust or rely on, either generally or for a particular purpose.[48] Christians might argue before the Inquisition—as they did on occasion—that they had become "friends" with Jews in order to redeem their souls, and that it made sense to be a friend for that purpose.[49]

Did Lazarro's friendship with the Cimicellis have anything to do with his flirtations with Christianity? Lazarro was already known to the Inquisition before Gioseppe accused him of sodomy in April 1670. A month earlier, on the 24th March, Lazarro had approached the Holy Office requesting baptism.[50] When the Inquisitor inquired who had encouraged him, Lazarro did not in fact mention the

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[46] William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice,* edited by E.C. Pettet (London: Blackie, 1969), Act One Scene Three [14].

[47] Ibid., 131r.

[48] On friendships in the early modern period See Francesca Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers: The Sephardic Diaspora, Livorno and Cross-cultural Trade in the Early Modern Period* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 181-183. See the recent pertinent edited volume on Jews and friendship, Lawrence Fine, ed., *Friendship in Jewish History, Religion and Culture* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2021), 204. See in particular the article which discusses friendships between Jews and Christians in the early modern period by Daniel Jütte, "Interfaith Encounters Between Jews and Christians in the Early Modern Period and Beyond: Toward a Framework," 185-211.

[49] See my discussion of the Christian witnesses in Viviano Sanguinetti's case in Katherine Aron-Beller, *Jews on Trial: The Inquisition in Modena 1598-1638* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), 175ff.

[50] ASMo. FI CH 250 f. 33, 96r–97v.

Cimicellis as being this type of Christian friend.[51] He failed to provide the names of any Christians who had influenced him.

Like many potential converts, at some stage Lazarro hesitated and stalled.[52] There was no *casa dei catecumeni* (an institution for the instruction of Jewish or Islamic converts) in Modena until the *Pia Casa* was erected in the duchy's capital in 1700.[53] Instead, in late March, Lazarro had been sent to the home of a recent convert from Judaism to Christianity, Anna Maria da Moisi, for his catechetical instruction.[54] A week later, on 31st March, Lazarro seems to have changed his mind and, afraid that he would get into trouble—or so he told the Inquisitor—he had fled to Reggio Emilia with the help of some Christians who had been waiting outside the house in the middle of the night to help him escape.[55] Lazarro refused to give the names of the Christians who had aided him. He had continued his journey to deliver a letter for a "friend" and to have some *spasso* (leisure/fun)—a clear

[51] Ibid., 112r-113v.

[52] ASMo. FI CH 250 f. 33, 123r. A similar case is reported in the inquisitorial archives in 1601. ASMo FI CH244 f5. Here Israele Sacerdote, the 15-year-old the son of Davide Sacerdote, had approached Stephano de Malvertio in his tailor workshop in Vignola to tell him that he wanted to become a Christian. Stephano had taken the boy to the Archpriest in the Cathedral, who suggested the boy go immediately to the bishop. According to the testimony of de Malvertio, Bishop Gaspare Silingardi did not have a place to keep the boy during the day and requested that de Malvertio take him home. During this interval in de Malvertio's home, the delator reported that Israele had taken flight and gone back to his father's house. When Israele was interrogated, he told the Inquisitor that he had only wanted to convert for a brief moment, as some sort of angry rebellion against his father. Also in 1609 Emmanuel de Corrigio, a teenager, had come to Modena from Carpi and toyed with the idea of conversion after coming to the big city. He soon changed his mind, although his father Leone was indicted and imprisoned by the Holy Office. The trial was dropped due to lack of evidence. See ASMo FI CH244 f11.

[53] On the Modenese and Reggio *Case dei Catecumeni,* see Matteo Al Kalak and Ilaria Pavan, *Un'altra fede. Le case dei catecumeni nei territori estensi (1583-1938)* (Florence: Olschki, 2013).

[54] It was unusual for a Jewish man to be placed in the home of a female convert, but all conversations between them would no doubt be held in the presence of her Christian husband. See Archivio Storico Diocesano di Modena-Nonantola, Archivio della Curia, *Opera Pia dei Catecumeni*, Registri, 15, «Catalogo delli neofiti battezzati in Modena» hich lists two women with this name. The first is Anna Maria Emanuela who converted in 1635 and the second is Anna Maria da Vignola who was baptized on 3rd June 1657, in the church of San Vincenzo by the Bishop of Modena, Ettore Molza. Anna Maria di Moisi was probably one of these women. I thank Matteo Al Kalak for discussing this with me.

[55] This is according to the testimony of Anna's (unnamed) neighbor. See ASMo. FI CH 250 f. 33, 102r-104r, 108r.

indication that he felt comfortable in a Christian environment.[56] He had removed his Jewish badge and, pretending to be Christian, had gambled with two Christian soldiers in Barbaro Mosca's tavern.[57]

Soon afterwards, he denounced himself to the Inquisition. Spontaneous confession of an offence would usually help the guilty party to escape severe punishment. On the 16th April, he returned to the Holy Office and admitted to having sex with two Christian women in another inn, the Montone tavern in Modena. He apologized for his behavior without mentioning his short-lived interest in conversion and suffered nothing worse than house arrest. On 17th May, while he was under house arrest, the accusation of sodomy was brought against him by Gioseppe.[58]

It is hard not to see Lazarro as an experimenter, determined to test the perimeters of Christian friendships—trying anything from entering a Christian household and flirting with Christianity to forbidden sexual practices with Christian women. As a Jewish tailor, he did not serve in the Cimicelli household as a servant, but as a Jewish artisan called whenever he was needed and sometimes working full days in the *palazzo.* He seemed to navigate the Christian world with careful calculation. He managed to acquire Christian acquaintances, bedfellows, and supporters who were willing to put themselves at risk to help him. The Cimicellis had clearly allowed Lazaro to stay in the *palazzo* when he was tired at the end of a long day dealing with their alterations. He was provided with sheets for his bed, or so he said. On other nights, it seems, he would return to the ghetto accompanied by a Christian servant or alone, with a torch to illuminate his way through Modena's dark streets.[59]

How unusual was Lazarro's position? Examples of similar privileges for and experiences of Jews are difficult to uncover. Christians were certainly known to enter Jewish homes as servants rather than friends, and sometimes stay the night,

[56] ASMo. FI CH250 f.33, 109r-111v.

[57] On the yellow or blue letter badges that Jews had to wear in Modena see Federica Francesconi, *Invisible Enlighteners: The Jewish Merchants of Modena, from the Renaissance to the Emancipation* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2021), 39.

[58] Ibid., 34r.

[59] Ibid., 66r.

but any evidence of Jews entering Christian homes is more difficult to find.[60] There is little evidence of Jews entering Christian households to attend Christian banquets, or to play backgammon, nor of Jewish men or women being hired as domestic servants. I have uncovered only one other case of a Jew entering a Christian household regularly. This case also resulted in an accusation of illicit sexual activity, but investigations revealed instead another friendship between a Jew and a Christian. In 1628, 15-year-old Leone Usilio was accused of having sexual relations with Margherita Bescheni, a Christian prostitute in Carpi. Christian neighbors had seen the teenager enter the home which she shared with her mother, Julia. Curious witnesses had assumed that the boy had entered the home for sex.[61] At the time of the investigation, Leone had escaped from Modena to avoid prosecution, but it became clear through numerous interrogations of neighboring Christians that most of those who had seen him held petty grievances against the Christian women and wanted to cause them trouble.[62] Eventually the Inquisition uncovered the real reason for the young Jew entering the Christians' home. Leone had gone, not to have sex with Margherita, but to read the two illiterate women letters that he had delivered from Giovanni Battista Masatori, the husband of one of Julia's daughters, who had been banished.[63] When Giovanni Battista was eventually brought before the Inquisition on 7th August 1628, he openly described Leone as his "friend" (*amico*), whom he particularly trusted to deliver his letters.[64] The investigation confirms a form of friendship between the two, providing Giovanni Battista with someone he could rely on for a particular purpose: enabling the family to keep in touch.

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[60] See Aron-Beller, *Jews on Trial,* 87-124 and Aron-Beller, "Christians in Jewish Houses: The Testimony of the Inquisition in the Duchy of Modena in the Seventeenth Century," Religions 14 (2023): 614-628. Also ASMo. FI CH 250 f. 33, 35r.

[61] ASMo. FI. Causae Hebreorum busta 245 f 44.

[62] One, Hippolita Cavana, reported that Julia had even threatened to kill her, when she had discovered that Hippolita had denounced her to the Inquisition Ibid. 6r and 13r. Margherita testified: "I know this Jew Leone very well because he has come at times to my house to carry letters to my mother and I have only seen him two times…This Leone was never in my house when I was alone but he always came when my mother was present."

[63] Ibid. Both women are unable to sign their names at the end of the record of their interrogations - a clear sign of their illiteracy.

[64] Ibid., 46r.

It would seem that Lazarro had established a real friendship with the Cimicellis which included protection, patronage and privilege. In the Cimicellis' household he, his brother, and his father before him had already experienced this loyalty. Lazarro would go to the Cimicellis whenever called, and one can imagine him becoming an indispensable member of this elite family.[65] He was a skilled workman whose superior abilities might have been preferred to those of Christian tailors belonging to the guild in Modena.[66] He probably used both new fabrics and rich textiles, including cotton, to dress the wealthy and prominent patrician families for the main Christian festivals each year.[67] Lazarro told the Inquisitor with some pride about his position as tailor to the Cimicellis and spoke openly as to where he slept:[68]

> At times in the rooms of the apartment of the *Padroni*, and at times above in the dressing room [*camerino*] with his son who is called Signor Cesare and at times with one called Don Giosaffat Battochi, I believe, and at times below with a servant called Francesco di Rossi [adding of his own accord] and when I slept in the same room with those I mentioned, not only did I sleep in the same room, but also in the same bed where they slept.[69]

He had experienced the whole range of chambers in the household, not only the sparse servants' quarters but also the most comfortable sleeping facilities. Lazarro knew the *palazzo* well and even had complete freedom to come and stay in the *palazzo* when everyone was away. Moving in and around the household, he would have also been exposed to Christian traditions, devotional practices, and the Cimicellis' leisure time activities.

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[65] ASMo. FI CH 250 f. 33, 35r.

[66] In other cities like Turin and Venice, the Christian tailors' guilds objected strongly to Jews making new clothes. There is no suggestion that the tailors' guild in Modena had such strong views. See Francesconi, *Invisible Enlighteners*, 4, 45, 129-130. On these guilds, see Richard Mackenney, *Tradesmen and Traders: The World of the Guilds in Venice and Europe c.1250-c.1650* (Totowa: Barnes and Noble Books, 1987), 12, 107.

[67] ASMo. FI CH 250 f. 33, 178r. The Cimicellis' 33-year-old housekeeper, Isabella de Stocali, reported how the Jew frequently appeared with a young boy who carried the fabrics for him.

[68] Ibid., 35r.

[69] Ibid., and a second copy on 230r.

Signs of friendship, protective concern, and efforts to ensure that Lazarro would be found innocent were exhibited by other members of the Cimicelli household. The footman, Francesco di Rossi and the 29-year-old Christian priest/chaplain and caretaker of the house, Don Giosaffat Bottocchio, defended Lazarro's character and actions, claiming that he had not sodomized Giovanni and that he was a well-liked, valuable, and reliable figure. Another Christian witness, Francisco Barberi, a 30-year-old confectioner and owner of the pastry shop where young Giovanni had also been employed (but not a member of the household) also refused to support Lazarro's indictment. He denied that he had seen the Jew with Giovanni at the pastry shop or that Lazarro had ever waited for Giovanni outside. Barberi had sacked the boy, and implied that he could not be trusted.[70]

Would these Christians have chosen to endorse Lazarro out of friendship or were they pushed to support his case by the Cimicellis? It is difficult to know but there is a suggestion of some sort of kinship being established—a solidarity, a pattern of giving and receiving favors—that demanded that the Jewish tailor be protected. Francesco di Rossi testified that the Jew was "well-liked by Christians in Modena": "The Jew is held as a good person. I am able to swear that I have never heard disconcerting words from his mouth."[71]

Lazarro's contact with the Jesuit priest of the household, Don Giosaffat Bottocchio, is even more intriguing. Don Giosaffat had been named by Gioseppe as a witness for the prosecution, but when he was interrogated, he did not support Gioseppe's testimony against Lazarro.[72] He taught at the Jesuit college in Modena and was in charge of the education of the young Cimicellis. Accorded the same dignity as other chief servants, he was also in charge of the religious life of the household, responsible for the vessels of worship and daily communion.[73] When Don Giosaffat and Lazarro were sleeping in the *palazzo* on their own (when the *padroni* were in the villa), the two of them enjoyed a choice of rooms but sometimes, when the house was busy, they too shared a bed.[74]

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[70] Ibid., 46r and the second copy 269ff. His only interrogation was on 8th June 1670.

[71] Ibid., 23r.

[72] Ibid., 11r and 25r. Don Giosaffat testified that Giovanni never slept in the house when the *padroni* were in the villa, which contradicted the testimony of Giovanni, Lucia and Lodovica.

[73] See also ASMo. FI CH 250 f. 33, 24r. Here Don Giosaffat testified that Lazarro had shared a bed with Cesare.

[74] See Ibid., 64r.

The one Christian who was critical of Lazarro (besides the delators) was his fellow accused, Gioseffo di Romagnolo. Gioseffo criticized the Jew, perhaps in the hope of avoiding blame himself. He testified that he had seen Lazarro and Giovanni sleeping in the same bed.[75] He told the Inquisitor that he himself had slept across from Lazarro and Giovanni in the servants' quarter, and that the two had slept together on at least six or seven nights.[76] He falsely testified to Lazarro's abusive control of Giovanni as well as intimacy between them. No other witnesses mentioned this:

> One evening, they were fooling around together… the Jew gave him two or three spanks, making fun of him, saying to him that he had to go to bed. Also Francesco, that evening when they were making a noise – the Jew and the boy – he found them and said that they should go to bed, I know this because I was present, and I heard them.[77]

Francesco did not testify that he had seen or shouted at Lazarro and Giovanni in the servants' quarter. Also, according to Gioseffo, between Easter 1669 and May 1670, Lazarro often followed Giovanni around late at night, loitering around the pastry shop where he worked and buying him *aqua vita.*[78] Gioseffo called Lazarro a "whoremonger and a spendthrift or wastrel (*sellaquatore*) who went with women of bad conduct that stand outside the Porta di Bologna, and he even asked me if I had a bedroom so that he could take a woman there."[79]

Gioseffo's testimony about Lazarro and Giovanni did not tally with any other Christian's and therefore could not be taken as proof by the Inquisition.

The hardest relationship to penetrate remains that of Lazarro and Cesare. When Cesare was interrogated on 1st July, he showed concern and support for the Jew.

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75 Ibid., 56r and 298r. Lazarro denied these charges.

76 Ibid., 255r-256v.

77 This was in his second interrogation, this time by the defense procurator on 8th July 1670. Ibid., 83r, 258r-260v, and copy on 433r ff.

78 On *aqua vitae* see Sarti, *Europe at Home: Family and Material Culture*, 184. "Water of life" was a generic name for all spirits. Gioseffo is the only Christian witness who gives the impression that the Jew was waiting around for Giovanni late at night.

79 ASMo. FI CH 250 f. 33, 83r. I thank Brian Pullan for discussing the term "sellaquatore" with me.

Calling Lazarro his *creatura*—his protégé, or favorite—he reported that the de Norsas had a tradition of household service to the Cimicellis and was unable to remember when Lazarro's father had first been employed as their tailor.[80] It is certainly possible that Cesare's patronage of and relationship with Lazarro was more than just as a male friend. Cesare showed a detailed knowledge of Lazarro's movements, including his reasons for travelling to Reggio Emilia. This strong sense of loyalty and affection is particularly demonstrated in Cesare's readiness to aid his friend's case and work with the defense procurator, Dr. Domino Benedetto Septo.

Had their bed been a crucial place to foster their sociability? Did Cesare's protective concern, loyalty, and friendship indicate homosexual intimacy? Bedsharing and pillow talk must have strengthened their personal affections. Here, perhaps, familiarity and trust grew between them, and they shared secrets and intimate and private thoughts relating to their inner lives.[81] Within the closed doors of the apartment in the Cimicelli household, homoerotic feelings between these young, energetic males might well have been expressed without interference from hostile servants, church, or society.[82]

The enmity exhibited by Gioseppe may have been inspired by this favoritism. But it remains unclear whether his antagonism was motivated by his own experiences or broader anti-Jewish prejudices. He confirmed that two incidents had estranged him from the Jew. First, he described an occasion when he was in the ducal court with Lazarro, and the Jew's actions had offended him[83]:

> In the court of Prince Cesare there was a Jew named Rosso who makes buttons. Since I was often there together with Signor Enrico, who is the servant of Prince Cesare, he [Enrico] was also a regular visitor of the court.

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[80] Ibid., 59r.

[81] As Handley points out in "Sociable Sleeping in Early Modern England," 102, Samuel Pepys ranked his bedfellows in terms of preferences by the quality of their conversations and behavior in bed.

[82] Sarti, *Europe at Home*, 76.

[83] ASMo FI Processi busta 161 folio 9, 5r. The notes of Septo, the procurator, confirm that he saw this as evidence against Gioseppe. He notes that Lazarro had had no idea that he was going to be accused of sodomy. If Gioseppe had asked him for the money to pay for the barber surgeon's treatment of Giovanni, "he would have known about the crime." So, Septo deduced, Gioseppe was not being honest.

> Lazarro came to see the Jew Rosso. One day Lazarro got into an argument with a servant of Signor Giuseppe Cassola (who was also in the court of Cesare) because Lazarro, wanting to make himself at home there, took some food from the table of the servants. The servant of Giuseppe Cassola told Lazarro that he was impertinent and other similar things. Lazarro also replied other words of discord, that I do not remember well. On that occasion, I told the servant that he should let him go, that Lazarro was impertinent and that he still owed me money that I had lent to him. I do not remember if he asked me the reason why I had given him money, but I know he did not say anything else to the Jew.[84]

According to Gioseppe, Cassola's servant had clearly had some kind of altercation with Lazarro. Gioseppe was arguing that it was highly improper for Lazarro, as a Jew, to attempt to share food with Christian servants, or take food from their table, something that they, not he, had earned with their work. The Jew was intruding on their company, thereby assuming equality with the Christians. It seems that, in Gioseppe's mind, Jews ought at all times to be manifestly inferior to Christians, to eat separately and at a different table from the Christians in the household, a view which most clerics would have shared and transmitted to their flocks.[85] The servants' homosociality had its own rituals and customs that played a role in shaping the social identity of those involved in them. Gioseppe seemed to imply that Lazarro was so impertinent that there was no point in reprimanding him. His resentment towards the Jew is clear.

When interrogated on 1st July, Gioseppe testified to a second altercation, when Lazarro had broken the brakes on Signora Cimicelli's carriage, which he had borrowed.[86] The repairs had cost Gioseppe 70 or 80 *bolognini* and he was still

[84] ASMo. FI CH 250 f. 33, 69r. I thank Martina Mampieri for her assistance with this particular text.

[85] Ibid., 38 and copied on Ibid., 239. See also 240r-241v. In his testimony, Lazarro confirmed that he had always sat at a different table from the Christian servants, and ate separately when he visited the Cimicelli *palazzo*: "I did not eat with him [Giovanni]. I ate always before the servants ate, and I always ate alone, at times in the room and at times in the kitchen. The boy ate with his father, and another servant."

[86] Ibid., 368r. The Inquisitor records in his notes a slightly different reason for Gioseppe's grievances. Gioseppe had taken Lazarro in Signor Enrico's coach, and the Jew had not tipped him (*di buona mano*).

waiting for the Jew to pay him back.[87] Gioseppe admitted that he had threatened to harm Lazarro:

> One day I told him that I wanted him to give me satisfaction, and that if he had not been in the master's house, I would have made some trouble for him, and he replied to me that he would give it [the money] to me when he had it, or he would make me some article of clothing.[88]

It sounds like a very non-specific threat, but hints that Gioseppe was limited in how much harm he could inflict on Lazarro because of Lazarro's favored status in the household.[89] Gioseppe knew he had to control his anger and not attack the Jew if he wanted to keep his position. It seems probable that Gioseppe had therefore decided to blame Lazarro for the rape and injury of his son.[90]

Perhaps Gioseppe's approach to the Inquisition was a final move to strike at the Jew and also, indirectly, at his master. Gioseppe had tried several ways to make his allegation against Lazarro both effective and financially beneficial for himself. In his testimony, he admitted that when he had discovered the rape of his son, he approached Cesare Cimicelli to demand justice and recompense for the injury (as noted above).[91] Gioseppe had not been able to speak to Enrico directly about it and had been told to speak to his son Cesare. Cesare advised him that he should leave the situation to his father, who would make those held responsible by Giovanni pay for the expenses of the barber surgeon who had treated him. Enrico clearly wanted to prevent Gioseppe's grievances being aired in court. A delation of sodomy would discredit the household's reputation and standing, and reflect

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[87] Gioseppe had even been in touch with Lazarro's brother who said he would pay the money for Lazarro. Ibid., 379r.

[88] Ibid., 69r.

[89] In this trial, these statements provided the defense with a motive for Gioseppe denouncing Lazarro.

[90] Gioseppe failed to produce fellow servants in the household who would support his denunciation. The one witness he provided, Don Giosaffat, did not corroborate his testimony: ibid., 131r.

[91] Ibid., 108r: "After this… he [Cesare] said to me that he had spoken to his Signor father, and that it was not good that I complain, and that they would give me something for the expense and for the barber-surgeon and not only from the brother of the Jew… but also from Gioseffo the Locksmith and he would send Galvano out of the house."

badly on the master of the household. Very likely, many sexual assaults were never reported to public authorities for this reason.

Unfortunately, what Gioseppe thought of Enrico is irretrievably lost to us, but Gioseppe was unhappy with the Cimicellis' response, and this might explain why he had turned to the Inquisition. He decided to defy the Cimicellis' desire to treat the situation in-house, and to denounce the Jew, besmirching his master's honor and disturbing the peace of the household at the same time.[92] He clearly hoped to do more damage to both Lazarro and the Cimicellis this way. By making Lazarro the sodomizer, he hoped to attack the Jew and expose his privileged position in the household. Ultimately, Gioseppe's disobedience and his failure to provide loyal service and protect the name of the Cimicelli household cost him his position. Enrico's exercise of authority meant that Gioseppe and Giovanni were fired.

Despite his victimization, no Christian witness could say a good word about Giovanni. Francesco di Rossi argued that Giovanni was an unpleasant child: "You cannot find a more insolent boy than him." [93] Gioseffo Romagnolo da Cesana also had bad words to add, although, since he was a suspect himself, they should be read cautiously:

> I heard many times the boy speaking dishonestly…and also at times when his father ordered him to give the horses something to eat, he blasphemed on the blood of God, because he did not want to obey his father, and he also did dishonest things with the other boys, and all of this information can be got from his master [at the pastry shop].[94]

With such negative character references, both father and son were regarded suspiciously by the Inquisition.

The Inquisitor General's notes of 1st and 4th July registered the court's increasing doubts as to whether to continue with the investigation, since the Christian denouncers had proved to be "criminals and therefore their testimony could not

[92] On household integrity, see Juttë, *The Strait Gate*, 64.

[93] ASMo. FI CH 250 f. 33, 22r, 46r and 189r,

[94] Ibid., 44r and 263r-4v. Giovanni's disobedience is hinted at here and this might explain his carelessness in not reporting the denunciation exactly as his father told him.

be trusted."[95] Septo's interrogations of Gioseppe had forced him to admit that he himself had been in trouble with the law on previous occasions. Gioseppe had been incarcerated in Forlì for having, for some reason, thrown stones at boys with intent to injure them, and twice imprisoned for disturbing the peace in the middle of the night. It seems that, while the Inquisitor General was still deliberating, the bishop of Modena, Ettore Molza, who had heard about the case, gathered a group of eleven inquisitorial and episcopal consultants in his palace. Perhaps he was claiming some jurisdiction over the case, or perhaps the Inquisitor had asked for his opinion.[96] The consultants proffered differing opinions, mostly against the Jew, some demanding that Lazarro be tortured to find out the truth and others that he be punished with imprisonment and whipping, or even passed to the secular or ecclesiastical court for sentencing. Yet after this consultation, nothing was done and it was merely noted by Inquisitor General Giovanni Tommaso Visconti who served in Modena between 1664 and 1673, that "we in this case, principally, agree that there has been sexual intercourse between a Jew and Christian [women],[97] but not the crime of sodomy as such,"[98] a clear suggestion that the Jew was to be exonerated of the crime of sodomy.

Conclusion

The inquisitorial trial records against Lazarro de Norsa serve to shed light on male sociability in a Christian household in early modern Italy. They have shown how men had a primary role within the domestic space, how relationships between male servants could be made and unmade, and how beds could be spaces of Jewish-Christian encounter, homosociality as well as sodomy.

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[95] ASMo. FI CH 250 f. 33, 2r-7v. Here is inserted a letter from an Inquisitor discussing the case. He notes too that "confessions serve more the defense of Norsa."

[96] This is in a separate folio. "Processo contro Lazarro Norsa d. Barboino, ebreo," in ASMo. FI., P 161 no. 9, 19th July 1670. On the Inquisition's relationship with the bishop see Aron-Beller, *Jews on Trial*, 30-31. Although Inquisitors became the predominant judicial figure in the church hierarchy in the peninsula, this did not stop bishops from wanting to maintain some role in Inquisitorial proceedings. In 1635, Pope Urban VIII (1623-44) ordered Inquisitors to transfer to the palace of the bishop any interrogations in which the bishop wanted to be personally involved.

[97] This referred to Lazarro's previous offense for which he was given house arrest in March 1670.

[98] Ibid.

It remains uncertain whether Gioseppe was instinctively hostile to Jews in general or was revenging himself on Lazarro in particular, moved by jealousy and petty grievances, with the intention of destroying Lazarro's reputation. Gioseppe might have had over-optimistic ideas of what the case could have achieved and hoped that blaming Lazarro would ensure his punishment. Sodomy was an accusation of shameful misconduct, but it was difficult to prove. Ideally, to prove his case, Gioseppe needed two reliable eyewitnesses to the Jew's crime, and he was far from finding them. His lies and those of his wife, neighbor, Gioseffo, and Giovanni served only to create confusion.

Whatever Gioseppe's motives, the collaboration of most of the members of the Cimicelli household to support the Jew, as well as the sophisticated investigation of Septo, are revealing. Lazarro's frequent presence in the Christian household enabled him to be identified as part of that household. He had successfully exploited and taken advantage of the patronage and protection of a prominent family of Modena. Even without Septo's intervention, it seems clear that Lazarro would have been released without punishment, although the process would have taken far longer.

This article has revealed how far friendships could develop between men of different faiths and social standing in seventeenth-century Italy. Lazarro's own activities and practices confirm the lengths he could go to in the Christian world, without being forced to convert. The emotional ties, bonding, and friendship demonstrated are revealing. The Cimicelli household was an important structure for helping Lazarro conceive, comprehend, and execute a rather different existence as a Jew in early modern Italy. He had removed his Jewish badge, lived temporarily with a Christian family, and had even shared a bed with Christians, in particular Cesare, with whom he appeared to have cultivated an intimate and perhaps homosexual relationship. The transcript therefore shows two very different types of male sociality under the roof of an early modern household. On the one hand, an aggressive act of sexual violence between Christian men and a pre-adolescent boy, and on the other a relationship of intimacy and friendship between two young men, a Jew and a Christian. As far as we know, Lazarro remained a Jew, conscious after 1670 that the grievances of a Christian male servant could cause him to be blamed for a serious crime he had not committed.

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Katherine Aron-Beller is lecturer of Jewish History at the Rothberg International School of the Hebrew University and Tel Aviv University. Her areas of expertise are the early modern Inquisition, Jewish-Christian relations and antisemitism. At present she is a Visiting Scholar of the Stephen Roth Institute for the Study of Contemporary Antisemitism and Racism. She is the author of *Jews on Trial: The Papal Inquisition in Modena 1598-1638* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), the co-editor of *The Roman Inquisition: Centre versus Peripheries* (Leiden: Brill, 2018) and a forthcoming book *Christian Images and their Jewish Desecrators: The History of an Allegation* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2024).

Keywords: Sodomy, Homo-sociality, Friendship, Jewish-Christian Relations, Modena, Early Modern Inquisition

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Paternal Affliction: Emotions and Masculinity among Eighteenth-Century Italian Jewish Merchants*

by *Francesca Bregoli*

Abstract

This essay focuses on the "rhetoric of paternal affliction" that late eighteenth-century Italian Jewish merchant patriarchs employed in letters and supplications addressing threats to their intertwined paternal and commercial authority, particularly when filial disobedience or apostasy was involved. I examine this rhetoric as an emotional style that illuminates Jewish merchant masculinity. Although the image of a suffering father seems to deviate from known early modern models of hegemonic masculinity, within the context of the eighteenth-century culture of sensibility this rhetoric emphasized Jewish patriarchs' honesty and righteousness, beseeching male compassion and sympathy. By performing vulnerability vis-à-vis Jewish associates, as well as Jewish and state authorities, the vocal expression of paternal affliction was meant to reinforce threatened mercantile patriarchal power. This complicates our understanding of early modern fatherhood, demonstrating that a sentimental display of masculine helplessness went hand in hand with better-known notions of hegemonic paternal authority.

Affliction and Consolation

A Scandalous Brother

The Anxious Jewish Patriarch

The Threat of Conversion

Conclusions

* I am grateful to two anonymous reviewers for their helpful suggestions. For their comments on earlier drafts of this essay, I thank Umberto Grassi, the New York State Working Group on Jewish Women and Gender in Global Perspective, and members of the Jewish Studies Starr seminar at Harvard University.

The absolute power of fathers over their dependents is a well-established trope of Renaissance treatises of household government (*oeconomica*), one that has also influenced historiographical overviews of early modern fatherhood.[1] Still, recent studies have started questioning this and other enduring notions about the pre-modern patriarch.[2] This essay aims to contribute to a growing literature that nuances our understanding of early modern fathers and paternal masculinity by focusing on the figure of the Jewish merchant patriarch and the emotional style employed in relation to perceived threats to his family and business.[3] Late eighteenth-century letters and supplications by Italian Jewish merchants articulated anxiety about family and business ruin in a way that, today, may strike us as counterintuitive in light of engrained notions of early modern patriarchal masculinity.[4] Such a discourse, found both in personal and communal documents, vocally expressed the affliction of heads of households relative to threats to their intertwined paternal and commercial authority, particularly in the form of filial disobedience.[5] The notion that filial disobedience, upending

[1] Daniela Frigo, *Il padre di famiglia. Governo della casa e governo civile nella tradizione dell' "economica" tra Cinque e Seicento* (Rome: Bulzoni editore, 1985). For an important survey on *patria potestas*, see Marco Cavina, *Il padre spodestato. L'autorità paterna dall'antichità ad oggi* (Rome: Laterza, 2007).

[2] For a study that probes the continued centrality of marriage and fatherhood to understand models of early modern manhood see Susan Broomhall and Jacqueline Van Gent, "Introduction," in *Governing Masculinities in the Early Modern Period: Regulating Selves and Others*, eds. Susan Broomhall and Jacqueline Van Gent (London - New York: Routledge, 2011), 1-22; Beatrice Zucca Micheletto, "Husbands, Masculinity, Male Work, and Household Economy in Eighteenth-Century Italy: The Case of Turin," *Gender & History* 27 (2015): 752-772, in turn, challenges one of early modern masculinity's cardinal ideas, namely the *pater familias* as main bread winner within the family economy.

[3] On early modern Italian Jewish fathers see Cristina Galasso, "Diventare adulti, diventare padri. Paternità e patria potestà nella comunità ebraica di Livorno (secolo XVII)," in *Pater familias*, ed. Angiolina Arru (Rome: Biblink, 2002), 101-121; Luciano Allegra, "Né *machos*, né mammolette. La mascolinità degli ebrei italiani," *Genesis: Rivista della Società Italiana delle Storiche* 2, no. 2 (2003): 125-155; 145-148.

[4] Scholars have devoted some attention to merchant masculinities in England, northern Europe, and the Atlantic world: Toby L. Ditz, "Shipwrecked, Or Masculinity Imperiled: Mercantile Representations of Failure and the Gendered Self in Eighteenth-Century Philadelphia," *The Journal of American History* 81 (1994): 51-80; John Smail, "Coming of Age in Trade. Masculinity and Commerce in Eighteenth-Century England," in *The Self-Perception of Early Modern Capitalists*, eds. Margaret C. Jacob and Catherine Secretan (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 229-252; Martha Howell, "Merchant Masculinity in Early Modern Northern Europe," *Cultural and Social History* 18 (2021): 275-296.

[5] On the emotional significance of order and disorder in premodern Europe, see Susan Broomhall, "Introduction: Destroying Order, Structuring Disorder: Gender and Emotions," in *Gender and*

paternal authority and the natural order of society, would result into both economic ruin and masculine affliction is common enough in the sources to warrant an inquiry. Why affliction, and not, say, anger or indignation?

For the purpose of this essay, I will focus on relations among older and younger men.[6] The four case studies I consider below draw from sources produced by Jewish men who were either located in Mantua or had Mantuan cultural and familial connections. Methodologically, I approach these documents as strategic narratives. I do not try to reconstruct how these individuals "felt" about their supposedly rascal male relatives. Rather, I view their rhetoric of affliction as an *emotional style* which responded to specific needs of Jewish merchant fathers. Carol and Peter Stearns, who first introduced the notion of emotional styles, depicted them as "the attitudes or standards that a society, or a definable group within a society, maintains toward basic emotions and their appropriate expression."[7] According to Benno Gammerl, emotional styles are both "communally and spatially constituted" and still adaptable enough to allow for cross-cultural communication.[8] These men's emotional style was based on widely shared understandings of the necessity of familial quiet and religious virtue to uphold credit and protect the natural order of society—perduring values that were held dear by Christian and Jewish *patres familias* alike.

Honor, reputation, and credit formed the foundation of early modern merchant masculinity.[9] A patriarch losing those crucial values risked being "unmanned."[10] However, I argue, the vocal expression of paternal affliction was not meant to feminize Jewish traders. Instead, within the context of the eighteenth-century culture of sensibility that regarded masculine tears as expressions of moral virtue, it emphasized suffering Jewish merchants' honesty and righteousness, beseeching

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Emotions in Medieval and Early Modern Europe: Destroying Order, Structuring Disorder, ed. Susan Broomhall (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2015), 1-13.

[6] It goes without saying, however, that to fully understand the Jewish mercantile *pater familias* it is necessary to consider his bonds with *both* women and men.

[7] Peter N. Stearns and Carol Z. Stearns, "Emotionology: Clarifying the History of Emotions and Emotional Standards," *The American Historical Review* 90 (1985): 813-836; 813. For Stearns and Stearns, emotional styles are to be investigated by "emotionology." See also Katie Barclay, *The History of Emotions: A Student Guide to Methods and Sources* (London: Macmillan, 2020), 35-52.

[8] Benno Gammerl, "Emotional Styles – Concepts and Challenges," *Rethinking History* 16, no.2 (2012): 161-175; 166.

[9] Howell, "Merchant Masculinity," 281-282.

[10] Ditz, "Shipwrecked, Or Masculinity Imperiled," 66-72.

compassion and sympathy.[11] This rhetoric had restorative goals: it performed vulnerability vis-à-vis Jewish associates, as well as Jewish and state authorities, to reinforce threatened mercantile patriarchal power. The unfettered expression of affliction ultimately demonstrates that a sentimental display of helplessness went hand in hand with better-known notions of hegemonic paternal authority.

Affliction and Consolation

According to early modern ideal constructs of hegemonic masculinity, one of the goals of the *pater familias*, by which he also exerted his authority, was protecting the household from risks, attacks, and usurpations—including threats not only from outside but also from inside the family. The patriarch, Sandra Cavallo has claimed, "had to be able to control the behavior of his subordinates in terms [...] of their conduct too, assuring the domestic order that was the basis of order in the community." [12] Within this framework, maintaining domestic order by controlling subordinates—one's wife, children, servants—was paramount. As John Tosh noted, "domestic disorder, which later generations would regard as a personal predicament, was [...] seen as a serious blow to a man's standing in the community."[13]

For merchants, there was an additional factor: a businessman's "standing in the community" reverberated on the perception of his credit and trustworthiness, and hence on the success of his affairs.[14] The line separating "family" and "business"

[11] The bulk of scholarship on the culture of sensibility focuses on Britain and France; see G. J. Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Marco Menin, *La filosofia delle lacrime. Il pianto nella cultura francese da Cartesio a Sade* (Bologna: Il Mulino 2019). See also Katrina O'Loughlin, "Sensibility," in *Early Modern Emotions: An Introduction*, ed. Susan Broomhall (London - New York: Routledge, 2017), 78-80.

[12] Sandra Cavallo, "Bachelorhood and Masculinity in Renaissance and Early Modern Italy," *European History Quarterly* 38 (2008): 375-397; 378.

[13] John Tosh, "Current Issues in the History of Masculinity," in *La costruzione dell'identità maschile nell'età moderna e contemporanea*, ed. Angiolina Arru (Rome: Biblink, 2001), 63-78, 71.

[14] Peter Mathias, "Risk, Credit and Kinship in Early Modern Enterprise," in *The Early Modern Atlantic Economy*, eds. John J. McCusker and Kenneth Morgan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 15-35; Luuc Kooijmans, "Risk and Reputation: On the Mentality of Merchants in the Early Modern Period," in *Entrepreneurs and Entrepreneurship in Early Modern Times: Merchants and Industrialists within the Orbit of the Dutch Staple Market*, eds. Clé Lesger and Leo Noordegraaf (The Hague: Gegevens Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 1995), 25-34.

was blurred for early modern men of commerce.[15] Prudential values of temperance and self-control informed their notions of success and failure. Over the course of the century, ruin and loss of credit were increasingly ascribed to moral shortcomings such as dishonesty, extravagance, irreligion, and sexual laxity, with the understanding that such assaults to family and business often came from within.[16] *Pace* the still widespread notion that early modern fathers enjoyed complete rights of *patria potestas* over their dependents, their power was in fact more tempered than normative tracts suggest. Men in ostensibly hegemonic positions were routinely challenged by male figures occupying non-hegemonic masculine roles.[17]

The upholding of *patria potestas*—the legal authority of the male head of the domestic group—was therefore perceived as an urgent necessity for traders, because *patria potestas* and the socially recognized authority from which a family business derived its credit and reputation were deeply imbricated. Merchant fathers seem to have perceived their intertwined paternal and commercial *potestates* as easily prone to unraveling under the pressure of generational challenges. Protecting domestic order was tantamount to safeguarding one's own reputation and creditworthiness, since a house in order reflected on a merchant's business.

For Jewish merchants, even more than for their non-Jewish peers, threats to both forms of authority increased due to legal restrictions, anti-Jewish stereotypes, and radical changes in status, such as conversion. Prominent Jewish merchants were a minority committed to the increase of family patrimony and yet one also subjected to specific political and legal limitations.[18] Cases of filial disobedience,

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[15] Frédéric Mauro, "Merchant Communities, 1350–1750," in *The Rise of Merchant Empires: Long Distance Trade in the Early Modern World*, ed. James D. Tracy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 255-286; Francesca Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers: The Sephardic Diaspora, Livorno, and Cross-Cultural Trade in the Early Modern Period* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 132-152.

[16] For an illuminating discussion of the English sphere see Margaret R. Hunt, *The Middling Sort: Commerce, Gender, and the Family in England, 1680-1780* (Berkeley - Los Angeles - London: University of California Press, 1996), 34-40. For an eighteenth-century Italian example, see Carlo Goldoni, *La bancarotta, o sia il mercante fallito* (Bologna: Nella stamperia di S. Tommaso d'Aquino, 1766).

[17] The four articulations of early modern manhood proposed by Alexandra Shepard, "From Anxious Patriarchs to Refined Gentlemen? Manhood in Britain, circa 1500–1700," *Journal of British Studies* 44 (2005): 281-295; 291-292, can be applied to Italian realities as well.

[18] Unlike the aristocracy and non-Jewish merchants, early modern Jewish traders could not invest heavily in land. By the late eighteenth century, however, with the relaxation of ghetto legislation in the most progressive Italian states, some wealthy Jewish merchants bought real estate and even large plots of land in the Po valley and the Tuscan countryside.

incompetence, and, above all, apostasy undermined the ideal order of the Jewish family and the position of the Jewish merchant patriarch, raising the specter of possible ruin.[19] For this subset of traders, dangers to *Jewish* domestic stability conceptually overlapped with fears of business failure. In the regime of honor and reputation that formed the basis of early modern commerce, erosion of domestic order and religion was evoked with distress as causing the breakdown of Jewish households and finances.

One common risk envisioned by Jewish merchant patriarchs was the challenge of filial independence and the lack of direct paternal supervision engendered by the necessities of long-distance trade. Consider Joseph Franchetti (1721 or 1734-ca. 1794), a Tunis-based merchant of Mantuan origins who was a head partner in the *Salomone Enriches & Joseph Franchetti Company*, a firm that in the 1770s and 1780s specialized in the sale of *chechias* (Tunisian hats made with European wool that were especially popular in the Ottoman Empire) and had branches in Tunis, Livorno, and Smyrna.[20] Between 1776 and 1790, Franchetti wrote 397 letters in Italian to 65 business associates;[21] among them were also two of Franchetti's sons, Reuben (b. 1757), stationed in Smyrna, and Isache (b. 1763), stationed in Livorno, whose mercantile education he endeavored to guide.[22] Joseph's letters to Reuben

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[19] For important reflections on the effects of bankruptcy on Jewish merchants' status and reputation, see Cornelia Aust, "Daily Business or an Affair of Consequence? Credit, Reputation, and Bankruptcy among Jewish Merchants in Eighteenth-Century Central Europe," in *Purchasing Power: The Economics of Modern Jewish History*, eds. Rebecca Kobrin and Adam Teller (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), 71-90.

[20] On Franchetti's business, see Jean-Pierre Filippini, "Gli ebrei e l'attività economica nell'area nord-africana," *Nuovi Studi Livornesi* 7 (1999): 131-149; Jean-Pierre Filippini, *Il porto di Livorno e la Toscana (1676–1814)*, vol. 2 (Naples: Edizioni scientifiche italiane, 1998), 259-261. More generally on the Franchetti family, see Mirella Scardozzi, "Itinerari dell'integrazione: una grande famiglia ebrea tra la fine del Settecento e il primo Novecento," in *Leopoldo e Alice Franchetti e il loro tempo*, eds. Paolo Pezzino and Alvaro Tacchini (Città di Castello: Petruzzi, 2002), 271-320; Mirella Scardozzi, "Una storia di famiglia: i Franchetti dalle coste del Mediterraneo all'Italia liberale," *Quaderni storici* 38 (2003): 697-740.

[21] Franchetti Family Archive, MS General 237 (henceforth 'MS237'), vols. 2:1 and 2:2, Columbia University Library, New York, NY, United States. Volume 1 is paginated with a number on the left side of two facing pages and volume 2 follows the traditional recto and verso pagination. References to volume 1 will be followed by "L" (left) and "R" (right), and to volume 2, by "r" and "v." For a description of the volumes see Amedeo Spagnoletto, "Nuove fonti sulla famiglia Franchetti a Tunisi, Smirne e Livorno fra XVIII e XIX S.," *La Rassegna mensile di Israel* 76 (2010): 95-113; 99-105 and Francesca Bregoli, "'Your Father's Interests': The Business of Kinship in a Trans-Mediterranean Jewish Merchant Family, 1776-1790," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 108, no. 2 (2018): 194-224; 195-196.

[22] Bregoli, "Your Father's Interests"; Francesca Bregoli, "A Father's Consolation: Intracultural Ties and Religion in a Trans-Mediterranean Jewish Commercial Network," in *Jews and the*

and Isache occasionally chided them and their middle brother Jeudà (to whom no letter has survived) for the affliction caused by their disobedience.[23] Due to their physical separation, Franchetti had to rely on his business correspondents for precious information about the conduct of his children. When he received allegations of his sons' irreligion or profligate expenses, undermining the stability of his credit and fortune, Franchetti emotionally emphasized his own affliction, that of his wife and of his eldest son Abram, who stayed with him in Tunis, and even the suffering and tears of some business associates.

Writing to Reuben in 1782, for instance, he lamented the feared extravagant conduct of Isache and Jeudà, whose rumored disobedience had delivered him "such a sharp pickaxe [on his head] [...] that *has opened my head in two, and it's almost reached my brain has ve-shalom* (God forbid), and I'm beside myself and I no longer know what I'm doing." He went on:

> If I think about Isache, who if he continues *has ve-shalom* this life in Livorno spending time with comedians he may lose *has ve-shalom* his soul and body, I let you consider what sort of Pesach I will pass, *a man of my age and my toils*, and if your *mother* came to understand [what's going on], I am certain that both of [your brothers] would bury themselves alive; you will observe the copy of the letter that my close friend and a good Jew, Joseph Coen Tanugi, wrote me, who is the brother of this Caid Jeusuah. Yesterday when [...] Caid Jeusuah brought it to me, *he was crying like a baby,* telling me that he would have never thought he would hear this about your aforementioned brothers, *whom he loves like his own sons.*[24]

Relying on the same emotional style, on similar occasions Franchetti hinted at the affliction of various members of the family, destined to an early grave because of such disobedient children. In 1783, he wrote Isache chastising him for his numerous expenses: "Don't mind [my ruin], I did not think that my Isache would have wasted in such a short time his father's capital, gained with sweat and blood [...] my dear Isache, *you have killed me* [...] your mother is *three-quarters dead*

Mediterranean, eds. Matthias Lehmann and Jessica Marglin (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2020), 129-148; Francesca Bregoli, "Intimate Affairs: Family and Commerce in a Trans-Mediterranean Jewish Firm, 1776-1790," in *Keeping Family in an Age of Long-Distance Trade, Imperial Expansion, Upheaval and Exile, 1550-1850*, ed. Heather Gaye Dalton (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2020), 213-235.

[23] MS237, vol. 2:1, 47R (May 10, 1782), to Isache; vol. 2:2, 92r (December 20, 1782), to Reuben.

[24] MS237, vol. 2:2, 43v (March 22, 1782), to Reuben. Emphasis mine.

because of you, *bahabonot* (for my sins)."[25] To his horror, the same year he received word that Reuben had fallen in with a group of Christian "freemasons:" "My dear joy, hearing these rumors [...] for an *old father* like me, and your *religious brother* [Abram], *who is ill, you have sent us to our grave has ve-shalom*."[26]

On happier occasions, Franchetti praised Reuben and Isache for the consolation of their filial obedience;[27] as he put it to Reuben in 1787, "[k]nowing well how *obedient* my son Reuben is, I await your letter for my *consolation* and as an example for your brothers."[28] An emphasis on the consolation that filial obedience and reports of good conduct brought Joseph appeared even more frequently in discussions about his sons that Franchetti included in letters sent to his closest business correspondents, particularly around the time 15-year-old Isache left Tunis to begin his apprenticeship in Livorno.[29] After leaving the parental household to begin their mercantile training, Jewish boys were placed into circuits of supervision made up of male Jewish business associates, envisioned as surrogate fathers and brothers.[30] Forms of "social parenthood" were not unique to the Jewish merchant world; they promoted reciprocity among long-distance traders from different cultures and ethnicities.[31] In the case of Franchetti, his rhetoric suggests that he envisioned his business network as an extended Jewish family imbued in a culture not only of mercantile interdependency, but also of domestic sentimentality—one in which a show of paternal vulnerability was not out of place.

When Isache moved to Livorno in 1778, company member Abram Coen de Lara was tasked with living and working with the boy in Livorno. Turning to him in an emotional letter, Franchetti recommended Isache's wellbeing to Coen de Lara,

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[25] MS237, vol. 2:2, 133r (June 20, 1783), to Isache. Emphasis mine.

[26] MS237, vol. 2:2, 122v (July 15, 1783), to Reuben. Emphasis mine.

[27] MS237, vol. 2:2, 35r (March 18, 1782), to Reuben; 110v (January 30, 1783), to Isache; 144r (December 9, 1784), to Reuben.

[28] MS237, vol. 2:2, 156v, (June 24, 1787), to Reuben. Emphasis mine.

[29] MS237, vol. 2:1, 106R (May 5, 1777), to Abram Coen de Lara; 190L (January 28, 1779), to Samuele and Moisè Leon; 195L-R (May 20, 1779), to Jacob Bassano; 197L (May 19, 1779), to Paltiel Semach; 197R (May 19, 1779), to Samuele and Moisè Leon; 211L (July 23, 1779), to Samuele and Moisè Leon; 218R (September 24, 1779), to Samuele and Moisè Leon.

[30] This section offers new insights on themes first broached in Bregoli, "A Father's Consolation," 135-136.

[31] Kooijmans, "Risk and Reputation," 31-32; Daviken Studnicki-Gizbert, *A Nation upon the Ocean Sea: Portugal's Atlantic Diaspora and the Crisis of the Spanish Empire, 1492–1640* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 81.

asking him to be like a father for the boy.[32] Soon after, he wrote letters to all of his regular Jewish associates in the port, such as David de Montel, Samuele and Moisè Leon, and Paltiel Semach, asking them repeatedly to watch over Isache, fearing for his safety and his morals in the Tuscan hub.[33] A few months later, the Leon brothers informed Franchetti of Coen de Lara's decision to return to Tunis, which would leave Isache without supervision. "I cannot express the agitation, which the point in your letter about my son Isache who lives there has caused me, that I can assure you it's caused me enough agitation," Franchetti lamented. Should Coen de Lara decide to leave without Isache, he begged the Leon brothers "not to withdraw [...] [their] affectionate vigilance" from his son, to protect Isache from the looming risk of ill behaviors:

> In doing so you will *console an afflicted father*, that can only find repose in you Sirs for his own quiet, and then I will be even more certain of your great propensity towards me, and so *I plead with you from the bottom of my heart, and above all take it upon your hearts*, if you want to truly favor me, to prevent suspicious practices and [those] of people of inferior standing, which lead to the precipice. I am very much in your debt because of the kind precautionary notice that you give me about the matter, *but you have wounded my heart so much that I cannot be consoled* [...]. I place in you all my trust for the good education and salvation of my dear son.[34]

Barbara Rosenwein's notion of "emotional communities," namely social groups that share the same emotional value system and practices, helps understand the phenomenon at play, which I call "rhetoric of paternal affliction."[35] Within the emotional community of merchants to which Franchetti and his associates belonged, credit and trust were reinforced through social bonds articulated with the sentimental language of the late eighteenth-century household. Such language built on the assumption that menaces to Jewish paternal authority, construed as

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[32] MS237, 2:1, 169L (July 22, 1778), to Abram Coen de Lara.

[33] MS237, 2:1, 166R (July 17, 1778), to David de Montel; 173L (August 18, 1778), to David de Montel; 195L-R (May 20, 1779) to Jacob Bassano; 197L (May 19, 1779) to Paltiel Semach; 197R (May 19, 1779) to Samuele e Moisè Leon; 211L (July 23, 1779) to Samuele and Moisè Leon; 218R (September 24, 1779) to Samuele and Moisè Leon.

[34] MS237, 2:1, 190L (January 28, 1779), to Samuele and Moise Leon. Emphasis mine.

[35] Barbara Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), 24-26. Emotional communities can be small or large, and one emotional community can partially overlap with another, making this heuristic tool particularly apt for nuanced historical studies.

leading to domestic disorder and business instability, generated masculine suffering. In practice, the rhetoric of affliction enabled Franchetti to create a moral and affective connection with like-minded business associates in the hope of better securing his position, threatened by the vagaries of long-distance trade, through the assistance of self-interested friends. He promised he would do the same for them.[36]

Emotional language rooted in the pair "affliction-consolation" underscores the tangle of affection and interest that characterizes family business relations.[37] But these passages also alert us to the limits of unmediated paternal reach among transregional merchants. By calling on their associates with an emotional display of weakness, merchant patriarchs could access channels of in-person supervision and control for their distant sons and younger male relatives. In order to perform its communicative function effectively and as expected, summoning sympathy and compassion, such epistolary performance of affliction had to be based on a shared vocabulary of love and anxiety. This suggests that the notion of paternal affliction was not unusual, but rather a readily understandable emotional style among merchants. It won't come as a surprise, then, that this emotional rhetoric was not only confined to personal letters. We find it also in Jewish supplications requesting intervention and legal resolution from Jewish and state authorities.

A Scandalous Brother

Turning to Mantua, a small Habsburg center in northern Italy, let's consider the case of another, likely unrelated, Franchetti household. The bulk of Mantua's wholesale and retail commerce, along with banking, was conducted by Jewish families, placing Mantuan Jewry, which constituted over 8 percent of the city's total population in the 1770s and 1780s, at the heart of the local economy.[38] In

[36] MS237, 2:1, 166R (July 17, 1778), to David de Montel; 168R-169L (July 22, 1778), to Abram Coen de Lara; 182R (December 7, 1778), to Samuel and Moise Leon.

[37] For a classic reflection on the connection between emotion and interest in family life see Hans Medick and David Warren Sabean, "Interest and Emotion in Family and Kinship Studies: A Critique of Social history and Anthropology," in *Interest and Emotion: Essays on the Study of Family and Kinship*, eds. Hans Medick and David Warren Sabean (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 9-27.

[38] Mantuan Jewry was composed of around 2100 souls in the 1770s and 1780s. For an overview, see Simona Mori, "Lo Stato e gli ebrei mantovani nell'età delle riforme," in *La questione ebraica dall'Illuminismo all'Impero (1700-1815). Atti del convegno della Società italiana di studi sul secolo XVIII, Roma, 25-26 maggio 1992*, eds. Paolo Alatri and Silvia Grassi (Naples: Edizioni scientifiche

1770, Leone and Sansone Franchetti, who traded as *Ditta Laudadio Franchetti* in northern Italy and all the way to Lyon in France, emphatically petitioned both the Mantuan Habsburg authorities and the Jewish *massari* (lay leaders) on the occasion of a quarrel with their estranged brother, Laudadio. In their petitions, terms referring to disquiet and anxiety (*inquietudine*, *inquietarci*, *sturbare*) and harassment (*molesto*, *incomodato*, *molestie*, *agravi*) recurred in conjunction with the threat to family life and its economy posed by Laudadio. They were rhetorically contrasted to the ideal state of *quiete*, *sicurezza*, and *calma* (quiet, safety, calm) that Leone and Sansone wished to ensure to their households. Terms referring to affliction (*disgrazia*, *afflizione*, *dolore*) appeared strategically, as did *male* (ill) in various references to their brother's character and behavior. Laudadio wasn't just represented as an unreliable scoundrel, but as actively attempting to destabilize the domestic quiet of his two hard-working, dutiful brothers, as if animated by an evil impulse to spread chaos.

When Laudadio Franchetti had moved to London in 1753, Leone wrote to the Habsburg authorities, "a change of sky" had not modified his behavior, "but rather continuing the scandalous conduct he had kept in Mantua, he was no less deleterious to the paternal home while he was far away than he had always been in his fatherland;" he had even taken up with an Anglican woman and fathered children with her. In 1760, their late father Vitale had given in to Laudadio's pressure and emancipated "his dissolute, incorrigible son" offering him "that portion [of his assets] which might at any time be owed to him from within the paternal patrimony,"[39] and duly registered the act with a Christian notary.[40] Despite Vitale's generosity, Leone claimed, Laudadio was on his way to Mantua "to *disquiet*" him. Concerned about the financial "*harassments* [...] that he can justly fear due to his [brother's] bad nature and to the poverty into which he often falls because of his gambling vice, on top of the burden of his English wife and the children he had with her," Leone requested that the government void any monetary demand on Laudadio's part.[41]

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italiane), 209-234; Paolo Bernardini, *La sfida dell'uguaglianza. Gli ebrei a Mantova nell'età della Rivoluzione francese* (Rome: Bulzoni Editore, 1996).

[39] This is a reference to the legitime, that share of the estate that in *jus commune* is forcibly set aside for the so-called "necessary heirs," namely children or (in the absence of children) parents of the deceased. See below for a full discussion.

[40] On the ritual and legal implications of emancipation in early modern Italy see Angiolina Arru, "'Padre di Famiglia libero ed assoluto Padrone della sua Persona': Un'introduzione," in *Pater familias*, ed. Arru, 7-21, and Sandra Cavallo, "O padre o figlio? Ruoli familiari maschili e legami tra uomini nel mondo artigiano in età moderna," in *Pater familias*, ed. Arru, 59-100; 77-85.

[41] Supplication of Leone Franchetti to the *Giunta di Vicegoverno* (June 1770), *Sezione antica*, filza 164, cart. 01, Archivio della Comunità Ebraica di Mantova, Mantua, Italy (henceforth ACEM).

Once he arrived in Mantua, Laudadio in turn appealed to the *massari*, asking that his requests over the family's patrimony be judged according to Jewish law (*din Israel*). On that occasion, Leone and Sansone too sent a long petition to the *massari*, depicting their brother, "born for [their] *disgrace and affliction* by common parents," as an unscrupulous rascal intent on disquieting and vexing them.[42] Although born a Jew, Laudadio could no longer be considered one and enjoy the legal benefits of belonging to the community, they claimed. Laudadio's request to rely on *din Israel* was thus unsupportable. Given his scandalous English marriage, "of the character of Jew," they stated, "it is evident that he only retains the *od* [sic, but *ot*] *berit kodesh* (sign of the Holy Covenant) unfortunately gravely profaned, and his name, purely out of interest."[43] Even after his move to London, Laudadio had "*inconvenienced* the paternal home due to his dissipating proclivity (*genio dissipatore*)" and kept "milking considerable sums out of his parents' affection, with the false promise of reforming his behavior."[44] The *massari*'s "religion and prudence" ought to decide whether a man of such character could be still considered Jewish.

The Franchetti brothers' description of Vitale's attitude and emotional state at the time of Laudadio's emancipation opens a vista on normative models and hierarchies of masculinity available to late eighteenth-century Jewish *patres familias*, who appear perched precariously between patriarchal and paternalist impulses. "As [Laudadio] sought to separate himself from his family while our common father *alav ha-shalom* (peace be upon him) was still living," the petition claimed, "the latter felt torn between the desire of pleasing his ill-intentioned son [...] and the *sorrow* of losing his paternal authority and, by dismembering his possessions, of undermining our interest as his other sons, who were obediently acquiescing to him and succumbing under the yoke of the business through our personal efforts." Even after Laudadio's emancipation, "*harassments and burdens*" on the family did not stop. A steady stream of cash filled Laudadio's

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Emphasis mine. The authorities ruled equivocally, deputizing bureaucrat Francesco Antonio Tamburini to "recognize the merit of [Laudadio Franchetti's] pretensions against the petitioner," but also "to provide an economical expedient as required by said Laudadio's behavior, for the sake of the petitioner's redress." On the juridical role of the *Giunta di Vicegoverno* (Council of Vice-Government) (1750-1775) see Emanuele Pagano, *"Questa turba infame a comun danno unita". Delinquenti, marginali, magistrati nel Mantovano asburgico (1750-1800)* (Milan: Franco Angeli 2014), 22, 42.

[42] Memorandum of Leone and Sansone Franchetti to the *massari* (undated, but 1770), ACEM, *Sezione antica*, filza 164, cart. 01. Emphasis mine.

[43] Namely, his circumcision. The expression is in Hebrew in the otherwise Italian text. The spelling of *ot* with a final *dalet* mimics the pronunciation of the word among Italian Jews.

[44] Memorandum of Leone and Sansone Franchetti, ACEM, *Sezione antica*, ibid. Emphasis mine.

pockets; he had collected an additional bequest from his father's will after Vitale's death, and the previous year, when Leone and Laudadio had met in Lyon, "persuaded by the requests and the affected, *insidious tears* of this *ill-affectionate* brother," Leone had given him 100 lire, "under the most sacred promise that [Laudadio] would give a public demonstration of his behavior's reformation." Instead, their unrepentant brother had now arrived in Mantua, "moved by turbid thoughts and *overly eager to disquiet us*."

In conclusion, Leone and Sansone Franchetti emphasized their "need to provide for their own *quiet and safety*, both of [our] possessions and of the persons of our numerous family" against Laudadio's "squandering proclivity," his "obscure religion," his ability to "take advantage of the kindness of his parents," and his "turbulent spirit, ready to *disturb familial quiet*." The division of his father's possessions; the bequest Laudadio had received after Vitale's death; the subsidies his brothers had continued giving him, despite their being "heads of numerous children, whom God *barukh hu* (blessed be He) may preserve *la-avodato it'aleh* (for His service, may He be exalted)"—none of those measures had been enough to stop Laudadio's "unjust *desire to disquiet us*," they concluded, appealing to the *massari*'s "clearest understanding" to receive a favorable decision on the case.[45]

The Franchetti brothers' petitions strategically deployed a vision of domestic quiet and commercial productivity maliciously assaulted by one disorderly relative, warm familial affection having been equally upended. For it to be effective, a supplication followed mutually intelligible formal and rhetorical conventions. Rhetorical choices were tailored to the supplicants' goals, displaying their political competences.[46] In any early modern petition, a particular linguistic register specific to the circumstances was utilized to lend greater legitimacy to demands and "to resonate with official expectations."[47] Their father Vitale was thus portrayed as a kindly patriarch torn between his duties and paternal fondness, just as Leone and Sansone had for a long time given in to Laudadio's demands out of their brotherly love. The reliance on emotional language was a deliberate tool in the supplicants' arsenal. The Franchetti brothers' display of sorrow served as a testament to the sincerity of their claims.[48]

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[45] Memorandum of Leone and Sansone Franchetti, ACEM, ibid. Emphasis mine.

[46] Simona Cerutti and Massimo Vallerani, "Suppliques. Lois et cas dans la normativité de l'époque moderne – Introduction," *L'Atelier du Centre de recherches historiques* 13 (2015), https://doi.org/10.4000/acrh.6545.

[47] Zucca Micheletto, "Husbands, Masculinity, Male Work, and Household Economy," 759.

[48] This performance of "weakness" can also be compared to the strategic performance of "poverty" studied by Massimo Vallerani for late-medieval Bologna and Simona Cerutti for eighteenth-century Turin: Massimo Vallerani, "La pauvreté et la citoyenneté dans les suppliques

We do not know whether Laudadio was able to see his pretensions recognized. But should we take Leone and Sansone's claims about Laudadio's character entirely at face value? One intriguing element is the fact that Laudadio was an emancipated son. Emancipation formally released a son—often an adult son with children of his own—from *patria potestas*, which was absolute and in theory perpetual in early modern Italian states where Roman law was applied.[49] Once a son left his paternal home and cohabitation stopped, in practice a father's control had many limitations. [50] Still, sons whose fathers were still alive, even if they lived independently, were not fully in control of their property and earnings, unless their fathers legally allowed them to; they could not make a will unless they underwent emancipation.

Research on emancipation in Italy suggests that this practice, though relatively unusual, had a particularly high incidence in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries among the artisan and commercial classes when a capable minor son was able to create business networks of his own and wanted to branch out.[51] Once freed from his father's *patria potestas*, a man became a completely independent entity for partners and associates, released not just from his family's support, but also from obligations towards them. Emancipation therefore helped distinguish a father's careers and affairs from those of his son, leading to clear patrimonial divisions and the assumption of separate responsibilities, which could reassure business associates as well as creditors.[52]

Had this possibly been the case with Vitale and Laudadio—was Laudadio more business savvy than his brothers let it understand, or was his emancipation stemming only from his greedy insistence, as Leone and Sansone accused? Certainly, Laudadio Franchetti's continued financial dependence on Vitale first, and later on Leone and Sansone, muddled the orderly separation of familial and business destinies that the process of emancipation was meant to enable. It destabilized the "domestic tranquility" much sought after by the Franchetti brothers, as the good name and credit of the Franchetti family were jeopardized by

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du xiv[e] siècle," *L'Atelier du Centre de recherches historiques* 13 (2015), https://doi.org/10.4000/acrh.6547; Simona Cerutti, "'The Poor's Justice.' Jurisdiction & Debt-Credit Relationships (paper circulated at the Harvard Legal History Workshop, October 19, 2020). I thank Simona Cerutti for allowing me to cite this forthcoming article.

[49] Cavallo, "Bachelorhood and Masculinity," 380. Among these states were the Kingdom of Savoy, Habsburg Lombardy, and the Habsburg-Lorraine Grand-Duchy of Tuscany.

[50] On the history of emancipation more broadly see Cavina, *Il padre spodestato*, 93-97.

[51] Sandra Cavallo, "O padre o figlio?," 77-85.

[52] Arru, " 'Padre di Famiglia'," 11.

the immoral behavior of Laudadio, legally no longer a member of the domestic group, and yet still very much part of it.[53]

The Anxious Jewish Patriarch

In Jewish merchant patriarchs like Joseph Franchetti and Leone and Sansone Franchetti we see traces of what Kathleen Brown has dubbed the "anxious patriarch." Brown was writing about the heads of households in colonial Virginia, whose anxious masculinity, she claims, was due to their marginal position vis-à-vis metropolitan English models and unmet expectations about hegemonic power over their wives, children, and slaves.[54] If hegemonic authority was the ideal model to which early modern *patres familias* aspired, it was unreachable in practice well beyond colonial Virginia.[55] On the one hand, paternal ambitions to absolute power might be routinely challenged by any disobedient member of the household, as so many civil and criminal court cases show; on the other, fathers embraced several identities along the benevolent-repressive spectrum throughout their existence, often simultaneously, depending on the occasion and necessity, as well as their age and status.[56]

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[53] In theory, an ungrateful emancipated son could fall back under paternal authority if his father was still alive: Cavina, *Il padre spodestato*, 96.

[54] Kathleen M. Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race, and Power in Colonial Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 319-366.

[55] The formulation of the concept of "hegemonic masculinity" as the "normative [...] most honored way to be a man [...] [requiring] all other men to position themselves in relation to it" can be traced to R.W. Connell's studies on Australian masculinity in the 1980s: R.W. Connell and James W. Messerschmidt, "Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept," *Gender & Society* 19 (2005): 829-859; 832. In this formulation, hegemonic masculinity works above all to ensure and institutionalize men's dominance over women.

[56] In the second half of the eighteenth century, for instance, Italian Jewish merchants were committed to affectionate relationships with teenage and adult sons. They wished to please them whenever possible and were actively concerned about their proper rearing as men, Jews, and traders. Similar behaviors were common also among Italian non-Jewish merchant fathers: Elena Puccinelli, "Il carteggio privato dei Greppi. Spunti per un'analisi delle relazioni familiari e intime tra i membri della casa," *Acme. Annali della Facoltà di lettere e filosofia dell'Università statale degli studi di Milano* L (1997), 93-116; Puccinelli, "Tra privato e pubblico: affari, politica, e famiglia nel carteggio di Antonio Greppi," in *"Dolce dono graditissimo": La lettera privata dal settecento al novecento*, eds. Maria Luisa Betri and Daniela Maldini Chiarito (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2000), 38-61. See also Stefano Levati e Giovanni Liva, eds., *Viaggio di quasi tutta l'Europa colle viste del commercio dell'istruzione e della salute* (Milan: Camera di Commercio e Archivio di Stato, 2006).

Although paternal claims to hegemonic authority remain at the center of scholarly attention, cracks in the authority of the *pater familias* are alluded to in both Italian literary and archival sources from the eighteenth century. Carlo Goldoni's 1750 play, *Il padre di famiglia*, a long-lived piece that was translated into multiple European languages and inspired Diderot's *Le père de famille* (1758), provides one of the most effective treatments of the ideal "father of the family" beleaguered by a sudden challenge to the domestic quiet, his good name, and credit, brought about not by one single threat, but by a trifecta of disasters—a dishonest tutor, an imprudent wife, and a reprobate son.[57] Goldoni's protagonist, honest merchant Pancrazio, is led to believe that his loyal son Lelio stole from him, due to the machinations of his sons' tutor and the irresponsible behavior of his younger child Florindo, mollycoddled by his foolish second wife. Pancrazio's masculine authority revolves around the preservation of reputation and honor, but he openly shares his sorrows with his good friend and fellow father, Geronio, who in turns faces a challenge of his own when one of his two daughters absconds with Florindo. "Poor fathers of families! So much fatigue, so much pains [sic], so much toil, so much attention, in educating children properly; and yet all will not do," Pancrazio exclaims once the thick plot of misdeeds comes to light.[58] His anguished cry captures the anxiety of the eighteenth-century patriarch.

Turning from literature to real life, another protracted and dramatic case from Mantua, between Salomon and Abram Vita Bassani, highlights the concerns a Jewish merchant father could harbor regarding the ruin of his name and firm and the dissipation of his fortune. The clash between Salomon and Abram Vita can be understood in light of "anxious masculinity"—at once authoritarian and moralizing, balancing love and discipline, yet always alarmed by generational difference—to explore how Jewish paternal rights were challenged, what limited strategies "afflicted fathers" had at their disposal to contain such challenges, and how the intervention of non-Jewish authorities could resolve or precipitate them. In March 1775, Salomon Bassani, one of the wealthiest merchants in Mantua, turned to the local government to ask for help with his son, Abram Vita.[59] The "disorders and debauchery of his dissolute son" had reached such an excess, Salomon wrote, that he was forced to "reveal them *with much embarrassment*, in order to implore the most efficacious and rapid intervention before they became

[57] Carlo Goldoni, *Il padre di famiglia*, ed. Anna Scannapieco (Venice: Marsilio, 1996) includes three significantly different versions of the play (1751, 1754, and 1764). An English translation appeared in 1757: Goldoni, *The Father of a Family* (London: J. Nourse, 1757).

[58] Goldoni, *The Father of a Family*, Act III, scene XVII, 177.

[59] The last name recurs as either Bassano or Bassani in documents produced by the same individual or organization. I have chosen to use Bassani throughout.

irreparable."[60] Salomon accused his son of "most intemperately straying from his own Laws, honesty, and moderation," dissipating "the paternal substances" and engaging in several fraudulent behaviors, as well in "unendurable, contemptuous behaviors" against his parents and in "mean and bitter threats" against his wife, Ricca Sullam.[61] His father's "reiterated corrections, friendly admonishments, gifts, favors, and promises" had not sorted any effect. With "*tears in his eyes*," therefore, Salomon Bassani requested the government to "correct and restore to a good behavior" "a son who had become the ruin of his family, hated by his relatives, and despised by his Nation." Despite bringing the matter from the relative privacy of his home to the knowledge of government authorities, he asked for a discreet intervention to avoid negative repercussions on his credit ("without that publicity that might cause harm to his name or to the concept of family"). Ideally, Abram Vita ought to account for all his expenses, return the stolen goods, respect his wife and parents, stay with his family, and observe "the divine and human laws."[62]

This supplication's rhetoric is in line with examples surveyed above. Based on widely shared understandings of the necessity of familial quiet to uphold credit and protect the natural order of society, it featured the by-now familiar rhetoric of paternal affliction that emphasized sincerity through the display of one's heart of hearts, to win the sympathy of the authorities. Yet, by asking for direct governmental intervention to reform a son's behavior, there is a qualitative difference. According to the Aristotelian understanding of the management of the household (*oikonomia*), which had a long medieval and early modern legacy, the family unit mirrored the *polis*. Within the hierarchy of the household, the head of the domestic group was the absolute sovereign and organizing authority, in the same way as the sovereign was the organizing principle and absolute head of the state.[63] Does Bassani's involvement of the local Habsburg authorities signal an actual weakening of the head of the household—an abdication of his (theoretical)

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[60] Petition of Salomon Bassani (March 1775), *Culto, parte antica*, filza 2163, busta 4, Archivio di Stato di Milano, Milan, Italy (henceforth ASMi), 184. See also Shlomo Simonsohn, *History of the Jews in the Duchy of Mantua* (Jerusalem: Ktav, 1977), 154.

[61] The sufferings of Ricca Sullam, who petitioned for divorce after her husband's conversion, are detailed extensively in ASMi, *Culto, parte antica*, filza 2163, busta 5; ACEM, *Sezione antica*, filza 193, cart. 41 (*Relation on the divorce lawsuit brought by Mrs. Ricca Sullam against the Neophyte Ferdinando Bassani, her husband*). My book in progress investigates these records along with legal pamphlets published on the occasion of the lawsuit.

[62] Petition of Salomon Bassani (March 1775), *Culto, parte antica*, filza 2163, busta 4, ASMi, 184. Emphasis mine.

[63] Otto Brunner, *Per una nuova storia costituzionale e sociale* (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 1977), 133-164; 147; Frigo, *Il padre di famiglia*; Cavina, *Il padre spodestato*, 47-51.

absolute authority in favor of the authority of the prince, implored to step in to reorder the family—which anticipates governmental ambitions to discipline family matters through legislation, as we see in late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century legal codes? Or was this yet another iteration of the strategic performance of paternal vulnerability, meant to stress the supplicant's noble morality and elicit a redress of perceived injustice, leading to the ultimate strengthening of the head of the household? Both phenomena seem to be at play simultaneously, as the rest of Bassani's story demonstrates.

The Habsburg government concurred that the situation warranted their involvement. After the appointment of a mediator, father and son Bassani registered an agreement in September 1775, defining their mutual responsibilities. In exchange for the reformation of Abram Vita's ways and the removal of his son, seven-year-old Israel, from Mantua to Tuscany, where he would join the Livornese branch of the family business, Salomon promised a monthly stipend to Abram Vita, two new suits every other year, daily meals "at the family table," as well as full and generous upkeep for Abram Vita's wife. To show his generosity and good will, Salomon even agreed to pay a considerable portion of his son's debts.[64]

For three years, father and son must have found ways to coexist. It's possible that Salomon harbored genuine hopes for Abram Vita's reformation. Goldoni's fictional Pancrazio, mulling over the theft allegedly committed by his son Lelio, had philosophized over the consolation that a son's repentance could offer a father: "If he has robbed me, he may repent, and mend; therefore, either from his innocence, or from his repentance and amendment I expect that *consolation*, which is much to be desired by a father, who loves his children, his family (*casa*), and his reputation."[65] Unlike Pancrazio, Salomon was not to receive solace. The Bassani family crisis came to a head in 1778, as Salomon submitted yet another petition to the Habsburg authorities detailing his son's grave transgressions.

In spite of his efforts "to receive the *consolation* of seeing his only son directed on a path leading to moderation [...], subordination under his parents, and respect for divine and human laws," Salomon had been repeatedly disappointed, his "loving paternal corrections" having been in vain. Even after "despairingly" turning to the government's authority to curb his son's excesses, and in spite of their duly certified agreements, Abram Vita had continued in his dissolute behaviors.[66] Salomon feared for the reputation of his business and the destruction of its substances, all the more so that his "subject firm" (*suddita casa*)

[64] Clauses defining the Bassani affair (25 September 1775), ASMi, *Culto, parte antica*, filza 2163, busta 4, 185.

[65] Goldoni, *A Father of a Family*, Act III, scene II, 149.

[66] Petition of Salomon Bassani (undated, 1778), ASMi, *Culto, parte antica*, filza 2163, busta 4, 180.

"ha[d] always cultivated a decorous commerce to the advantage of the population." The "ungrateful son," Salomon insisted, "with *significant affliction of his most inconsolable father*" was "immersed in gambling vices, frequenting Christian women with public scandal, [engaged] in many other disorderly behaviors, unrestrained in his contempt against his parents and in the terrible treatment of his wife."

This "unhappy father" had even obtained a warrant for his son's arrest, without ultimately executing it. Despite all this, Salomone complained, Abram Vita carried on as usual: "Alien to any principle of family love and of respect for his parents, [he] persever[es] in his usual debauchery with total indifference and licentiousness, because he's not governed by any religion, and for this he is so despised by the dominant one, as he is detested by his own, squandering everything that he can get his hands on."[67] Similarly to Leone and Sansone Franchetti's supplication, Salomon Bassani's petition relied on the language of affliction to emphasize the vast damages caused by a son's disorderly conduct and irreligion, which upended the "natural order" of household government and with it the familial economy. Despite its employment of established tropes, the petition remained unanswered—but not because of Habsburg lack of interest. Enticed by Mantua's authorities with the promise that conversion to Christianity would grant him authority over his son Israel and the full extent of his material interests from the Bassani estate, Abram Vita decided to become a Christian in July 1778, with the new name of Ferdinando Amalia Bassani.[68] This conversion triggered a sustained legal assault against Salomon's *patria potestas* and commercial authority, which is best left for a separate discussion.[69]

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[67] Petition of Salomon Bassani (undated, 1778), ASMi, *Culto, parte antica*, filza 2163, busta 4, 183.

[68] See Letter of Giorgio de Waters in Mantua to Carlo Giuseppe de Firmian in Milan (26 May 1778), ASMi, *Culto, parte antica*, filza 2163, busta 4, 178. For good measure de Waters also suggested that Abram Vita reform his behavior. He was baptized on July 27, 1778. His godparents were Duke Ferdinand of Parma and the *Infanta* Duchess Amalia, a daughter of Empress Maria Theresia of Austria. Letter of Giorgio de Waters in Mantua to Carlo Giuseppe de Firmian in Milan (30 July 1778), ASMi, *Culto, parte antica*, filza 2163, busta 4, 164. This conversion was surveyed in Bernardini, *La sfida dell'uguaglianza*, 167-170, who did not have access to some key sources on the affair. On Mantua's house of neophytes, see Sara Campana, "La casa dei catecumeni e la legislazione sulla conversione degli ebrei a Mantova a nel mantovano fra XVI e XIX secolo," *Materia Giudaica* 19 (2014): 157-167.

[69] On September 1 of the same year, Ferdinando Amalia began a lawsuit against his father, which would drag on until 1785, demanding the return of young Israel to Mantua and the largest possible portion of his father's estate: Archivio di Stato di Mantova (ASMa), *Senato e Supremo Consiglio di Giustizia*, busta 6863, Causa Ferdinando Amalia Bassani. See Francesca Bregoli, "Conversion, *Patria Potestas*, and Capital Devolution in Eighteenth-Century Livorno and Mantua," in *Jews in*

The Threat of Conversion

The rhetoric of paternal affliction, finally, appears in communal Jewish supplications. Returning to Leone and Sansone Franchetti, in the 1780s their family experienced three conversions to Christianity.[70] Conversions had both emotional and financial reverberations for early modern Jewish households; in fact, not only did neophytes retain property rights to those goods they had owned as Jews but they also enjoyed the exceptional right to collect the portion of their parents' estate that they would have been entitled to as heirs according to *jus commune* (namely the *legitima*, or legitime, the share of the estate that is set aside for all "necessary heirs"), immediately after becoming Christians and while their parents were still alive (*parentibus viventibus*).[71] This canon law norm, accepted by most Italian rulers, could lead to the untimely break-up of family capital.[72] This is the context for the supplications that the Mantuan Jewish *massari* sent to the *Regio Imperial Consiglio di Governo* in August 1787, in connection to the then still threatened conversion of Jacob Franchetti, Sansone's 23-year-old son.[73] There, the *massari* presented conversion and its economic effect in sentimental tones as a menace to domestic tranquility, undermining the fabric of family life as well as a Jewish family's reputation and, consequently, its credit.[74]

Early Modern Italy: Religious, Cultural, and Social Identities, eds. Martin Borýsek and Davide Liberatoscioli (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2024), forthcoming.

[70] This section offers new insights on themes first presented in Bregoli, "Intimate Affairs," 225-227.

[71] This right was granted by Pope Paul III in an apostolic constitution dated 21 March 1542. Ubaldo Giraldi, *Expositio juris pontificii: juxta recentiorem ecclesiae disciplinam*, 2 vols., vol. 1 (Rome: Apud Dominicum Ercole, 1829), 616-617. On this question see also Kenneth Stow, "Neofiti and Their Families: or, Perhaps, the Good of the State," *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 47, no. 1 (2002): 105-113.

[72] Duke Guglielmo Gonzaga (1538-1587) ordered the observance of Paul III's decree in the Mantuan territory, where it was still valid in the late eighteenth century. The "necessary heirs" are the children and the children of a deceased child, or, in the absence of children, the parents of the deceased. In countries using civil law systems, spouses are today included in the reckoning of the legitime; they were not in the eighteenth century, when they received the usufruct of a portion of the estate but did not usually inherit. The share is reckoned according to different systems at different times, depending also on the number of necessary heirs.

[73] Between 1786 and 1791, the *Regio Imperial Consiglio di Governo* (Royal Imperial Council of Government) functioned as the central administrative organ in Habsburg Lombardy. The colorful process of conversion of Jacob Franchetti, who was baptized by a solicitous maid after collapsing and most likely feigning his sickness, is surveyed in Bernardini, *La sfida dell'uguaglianza*, 170-173.

[74] The better-known supplication that the *massari* handed to Joseph II during his 1784 visit to Mantua anticipates some of these themes: Bernardini, *La sfida dell'uguaglianza*, 163. In response to this petition, in 1786 Joseph II extended to Mantua's Jewry a protective Habsburg decree first

First, they lingered on the perils of growing up in a transregional mercantile family, distant from paternal control. The family business of the Franchetti brothers, the *massari* claimed, required "that their sons be now in one, now in another place far away from the paternal eye, put[ting] them in danger of getting embroiled in *contemptible and unhealthy loves*." They continued:

> One of them after the *most ruinous dissipations* turned his back on his family and took up residence in France, taking with him what remained of his share in the business. A second one, having fallen in love with the daughter of an innkeeper, fled to Ferrara and there despite all valid dispositions managed to get baptized, so as to be able to pursue his *ill-conceived passion*, and *to torment his poor Father*, obliging him to give him a share of his assets; and a third one following in the footsteps of the others is about to do the same.[75]

This was young Jacob, who had fled his paternal home with a non-Jewish dancer, Assunta Scanzi from Milan, taking "some quantities of money, two gold watches, clothes, and linen" for good measure.[76]

Conversion was presented as a significant hazard not only for the fabric of family life, but also for the family's reputation and, by extension, its credit. Ultimately, the *massari* aimed to persuade the authorities to introduce a "penal sanction" restricting would-be converts from collecting any economic benefits, to prevent abuses.[77] To avoid unsubstantiated conversions generated not by sincere faith but by domestic discord or "contemptible and unhealthy loves," the Habsburg government ought to remove financial incentives such as the neophyte's ability to inherit his portion of the family's estate, the *massari* argued. Not only would this be "the most opportune way to keep children (*figli*) in that dependence that they

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issued to the Jews of Gorizia in 1782. According to it, Jews could not be baptized unless it was proved that their decision to become Catholic stemmed from genuine "religious illumination" and was not caused by animosity against their families, fear, passion, or other utilitarian reasons. The text is reproduced in Mauro Perani, "Conversioni a Mantova e nel mantovano fra Sette e Ottocento. Il caso del neofito Moisè Aron Sacerdoti di Revere del 1786," *Materia Giudaica* XIX (2014): 145-153; 146.

[75] Supplication of Mantua's *massari* (8 August 1787), HM5192, Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People, Jerusalem, Israel (henceforth CAHJP). Emphasis mine.

[76] Letter from *Auditore Criminale* Gioseffantonio Sozzi in Parma to *Regio Capitano di Giustizia* Giuseppe Guaita in Mantua (22 July 1787), *Culto, parte antica*, filza 2163, busta 7, ASMi, 3.

[77] The 1786 Habsburg decree that ostensibly protected Mantuan Jewry from conversions motivated by family resentment or other unreligious passions did not include a specific clause regarding the converts' patrimonial rights.

try to shake by threatening their fathers with a conversion that always turns out to be advantageous to the former and gravely prejudicial to the latter."[78] It would also serve, they claimed, as "a way to hinder that loss of credit that merchant families suffer as a result of the spread of rumors and the break-up of their status." Ultimately, the measure would not only benefit the "good order of families" and the "decorum and purity of religion," but also the "wellbeing and [...] prosperity of the state."[79]

The *massari* reiterated their request to introduce a block on converts' patrimonial claims in October 1787; by that point, Jacob Franchetti had converted to Catholicism.[80] Again, they justified it appealing to a sentimental vision of domestic peace and concord intertwined with successful business. A targeted governmental intervention would protect "the *inner tranquility of families*, the necessary education and subordination of children (*figli*) to parents, the credit and backbone of Jewish commerce, and finally the very subsistence of the [Jewish] Nation." The supplication presented the economy of the household and, for that matter, of the entire Jewish community, as depending on unbroken, serene family life, unmarred by disorderly passions. Familial bonds and credit, and by extension the survival of Mantuan Jewry itself, were instead "undermined and *hurt* by the *disquiets, financial break-ups, and discredit* that ordinarily result from that kind of change in religion which originates from the *license* of young men who *give themselves over to libertinism.*"[81] This was a risk amplified by the demands of mercantile life, they implied. In their petitions, the Mantuan *massari* depicted a son's conversion to Christianity as the ultimate personal and economic disaster for Jewish families. Family break-up due to conversion was portrayed as a status of undesirable disorder thrust upon merchant fathers by children presented as scoundrels and troublemakers unable to control their passions, a most unwelcome outcome of the absence of parental supervision for distant sons and the freedom apprehensively associated with long-distance travel.

Communal supplications were one of the genres most frequently used by the semi-corporate early modern Jewish community in beseeching access to the sovereign's

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[78] *Figli* could be intended as children in general or sons more specifically.

[79] Supplication of Mantua's *massari* (8 August 1787), CAHJP HM5192. Emphasis mine.

[80] In the 1787 census, Sansone is listed has having only one younger son, Vidale Abramo, and three daughters, Regina, Stella, and Consola. I thank Michaël Gasperoni for sharing this information. Under the new name of Giuseppe Maria Borelli, Jacob married Assunta Scanzi in 1788 and went on to have a successful business career in Milan during the Napoleonic period: Bernardini, *La sfida dell'uguaglianza*, 173.

[81] Further supplication of Mantua's *massari* (15 October 1787), CAHJP HM5192; see also ASMi, *Culto, parte antica*, filza 2163, busta 7, 88-91. Emphasis mine.

power and *ad hoc* concessions.[82] In this case, and similarly to the merchant householders we have encountered above, the *massari* too relied on an emotional style informed by parental anxieties, with the understanding that it would be possible to foster a cross-cultural bridge with the Habsburg authorities based on the shared belief that a disorderly home and radical filial disobedience, upending the authority of the *pater familias* and the natural order of society, resulted into economic ruin and paternal affliction.

Conclusions

Focusing on the emotional style that Jewish merchant patriarchs employed in letters and supplications in relation to family businesses and perceived threats to their survival helps us reevaluate the affective components of trade and credit, moving our attention to the role of "family" within the "family business," often overlooked by business historians.[83] In his seminal study on the early modern English culture of credit, Craig Muldrew emphasized that families interpreted economic trust, a relational phenomenon, in emotional terms.[84] Credit relations, facilitated by a "competitive piety in which the virtue of a household and its members gave it credit so that it could be trusted and thus profitable," were always "interpersonal and emotive."[85] This argument should be extended to merchant households well beyond England. An analytical emphasis on emotions further brings into focus the imbrication of domestic and commercial spheres in merchants' experiences.

The emotional style I surveyed above often revolves around a generational tension: on the one hand, a son whose irreligion and wicked mores are dreaded, rumored, or confronted; on the other, the sorrow of a father wounded in his authority and fearing for his credit and fortune. This rhetoric may be seen as a companion piece to those alarmed depictions of bachelors found in the prescriptive literature of early modern Jewish communities, where they were

[82] On petitions and supplications in early modern Italy see Cecilia Nubola, "La 'via supplicationis' negli stati italiani della prima età moderna (secoli XV-XVIII)," in *Suppliche e "gravamina": politica, amministrazione, giustizia in Europa (secoli XIV-XVIII)*, eds. Cecilia Nubola and Andreas Würgler (Bologna: Il Mulino 2002), 21-63; see also Cerutti and Vallerani, "Suppliques."

[83] Robin Holt and Andrew Popp, "Emotion, succession, and the family firm: Josiah Wedgwood & Sons," *Business History* 55 (2013): 892-909; 892-893.

[84] Craig Muldrew, *The Economy of Obligation: The Culture of Credit and Social Relations in Early Modern England* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1998), 5. The concept recurs throughout Muldrew's book.

[85] Muldrew, *The Economy of Obligation*, 195, 3.

associated with sinful behavior such as sexual looseness or group violence.[86] As Roni Weinstein has emphasized, rabbinic scholars depicted young people as "frivolous, sinful, violent, and inclined to unbridled behavior."[87] In addition to normative Jewish views, Jewish traders internalized ideas of youth common within a broader mercantile culture. Young men were expected to develop into mature traders through education and example, but anxieties abounded. In England, for instance, "the erring son" had become "a stock character in trading life" by the eighteenth century and this was accompanied by widespread fear about parental inability to properly raise children and about the temptations of youth, a time associated with lack of self-discipline.[88] Among the English "middling sort," great efforts were directed to shape young men into creditworthy, reliable, honest businessmen.[89]

Similarly, Jewish merchants hoped that young men would learn to behave according to their status and develop into full-fledged traders through education and example, upholding the good name of the family and ensuring the continuation of its business.[90] The "rhetoric of paternal affliction," then, may have signaled the feared failure of the paternal project to raise good men, good traders, and good Jews. This emotional language can be understood as a way to articulate reactions to potential or actual disorder, and ideally exert some control over such instability.[91] In its attempt to elicit sympathy for suffering Jewish fathers, who, in line with notions of sensibility displayed their emotions and vulnerability in a show of great sincerity, it also importantly underscores a defense of Jewish commerce as a fundamentally moral and socially virtuous pursuit.

This emotional style raises additional questions about continuities and change in the history of the early modern Jewish family. Yosef Kaplan and Shmuel Feiner,

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[86] Elliott Horowitz, "The Worlds of Jewish Youth in Europe, 1300-1800," in *A History of Young People in the West*, vol. 1, *Ancient and Medieval Rites of Passage*, eds. Giovanni Levi and Jean Claude Schmitt (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 83-119; 93-97; Roni Weinstein, "'Thus Will *Giovani* Do:' Jewish Youth Sub-Culture in Early Modern Italy," in *The Premodern Teenager. Youth in Society, 1150-1650*, ed. Konrad Eisenbichler (Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies: Toronto, 2002), 51-74: Roni Weinstein, "Between Liberty and Control: Jewish Juveniles in Early Modern Italy," *Zemanim: A Historical Quarterly* 102 (2008), 30-37 [Hebrew].

[87] Weinstein, "'Thus will *Giovani* Do,'" 58.

[88] Margaret R. Hunt, *The Middling Sort. Commerce, Gender, and the Family in England, 1680-1780* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1996), 50-51.

[89] Ibid., 46-72.

[90] For the Ashkenazi environment see Natalie Zemon Davis, "Religion and Capitalism Once Again? Jewish Merchant Culture in the Seventeenth Century," *Representations* 59 (1997), 56-84; 68-69.

[91] Broomhall, "Introduction: Destroying Order, Structuring Disorder," 6-7.

looking at communal regulations in Western Sephardic communities and rabbinic writings in northern and central Europe, have emphasized a growing preoccupation with familial and sexual morality among eighteenth-century Jewish lay and religious leaders.[92] This has been taken as proof of a secularizing Jewish society, increasingly unwilling to adhere to the traditional standards of Jewish observance. I suggest that we might also read it as the mounting discomfort of Jewish *patres familias* and lay leaders with changes in conceptions of patriarchal power that seemed to disrupt the Jewish family's "natural order." Towards the end of the Ancien Régime, some historians argue, the position of the head of the household had indeed become more vulnerable; filial disobedience and "domestic pathologies" became subject to police intervention in European states such as Tuscany, the Republic of Venice, and France.[93] The authority of the father was undermined then not only by new models of filial behavior, but also by the increasing interference of the state and its laws into domestic matters. Every story of household government in the early modern period is a story with political reverberations: considering the ways in which the rhetoric of paternal affliction was employed in individual and communal petitions allows us to read the relations between Jews and the Enlightened Absolutist state from a fresh perspective.

Finally, thinking with "affliction" helps probe further notions of eighteenth-century patriarchal power, by assessing the boundaries between the private and the public and between notions of feminine and masculine. The sentimental declarations of paternal affliction employed in the semi-public arena of merchant correspondence and in official supplications show, if we needed any further proof, that the lines between the domestic and the public sphere remained profoundly blurred well into the late eighteenth century. At face value, the emotional style I described carries elements considered "feminine" rather than masculine, as public displays of sorrow and vulnerability could be heavily coded as female in the

[92] Yosef Kaplan, *An Alternative Path to Modernity: The Sephardi Diaspora in Western Europe* (Leiden: Brill, 2000); Shmuel Feiner, *The Origins of Jewish Secularization in Eighteenth-Century Europe*, tr. Chaya Naor (Philadelphia: Penn Press, 2011), 52-63.

[93] Cavina, *Il padre spodestato*, 90-93; Arlette Farge and Michel Foucault, *Le Désordre des familles: Lettres de cachet des Archives de la Bastille au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Gallimard, 1982). Work on Venetian petitions to "correct children" (and children's reactions to what was perceived as paternal tyranny) argues that the number of requests for governmental intervention increased exponentially after 1750: Tiziana Plebani, "Se l'obbedienza non è più una virtù. Voci di figli a Venezia (XVII-XVIII secolo)," *Cheiron* 49 (2008): 159-178; 171; Tiziana Plebani, *Un secolo di sentimenti: amori e conflitti generazionali nella Venezia del Settecento* (Venice: Istituto Veneto di Science, Lettere ed Arti, 2012).

eighteenth century.[94] Long-standing anti-Jewish tropes, moreover, mocked the alleged effeminacy of Jewish men, who were believed to menstruate and share other "womanly" traits.[95] Was the rhetoric of paternal affliction a result of the feminization of the Jewish merchant patriarch, a mercantile variant of Daniel Boyarin's "Jewish male sissy"?[96]

Despite their accent on vulnerability, emphatic displays of affliction did not unreservedly feminize the Jewish merchants who embraced such emotional style.[97] To be sure, the letters and supplications surveyed above underscored that merchant patriarchs were constantly at risk of losing their masculine hegemonic position. Any younger male relative whose behavior was understood to threaten the *pater familias*' credit, honor, and fortune undermined his masculine authority, implicitly "unmanning" him. Expressions of affliction might be understood as feminized declarations of victimhood. And yet, the nature of the texts in which paternal affliction was articulated—merchant letters and supplications—suggests that this rhetoric in fact served to reinforce merchant masculinity. With the emergence of the culture of sensibility around the middle of the century, new notions spread about the permissibility and desirability of masculine displays of sorrow as examples of moral virtue and superiority of spirit.[98] An emotional style emphasizing the outpouring of affliction situated Jewish merchant patriarchs within the stream of noble masculine ethics.

A rhetoric that highlights the vulnerability of the head of the household, challenged by a younger male dependent who threatens to undermine or does indeed destabilize the "paternal home"—by eluding paternal supervision through sheer geographical distance, like Reuben, Jeudà, and Isache Franchetti; through an incomplete emancipation, as in the case of Laudadio Franchetti; or due to thefts and conversion, like Abram Vita Bassani and Jacob Franchetti—is certainly a far cry from ideal notions of heroic masculinity and absolute power of the *pater familias* that constituted the best-known ideological model available to early

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[94] For feminized expressions of mercantile sorrow, see Ditz, "Shipwrecked, Or Masculinity Imperiled," 58-72. On gender and public crying see Mario Menin, "«Le sexe des larmes»: emozione e genere tra fisiologia e moralità nel Settecento francese," in *Femminile e maschile nel Settecento*, eds. Cristina Passetti and Lucio Tufano (Florence: Firenze University Press, 2018), 201-214.

[95] Sander Gilman, *Jewish Self-Hatred: Anti-Semitism and the Hidden Language of the Jews* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 74-5.

[96] Daniel Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man* (Berkeley - Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997), xxi.

[97] For other instances of mercantile feminization, see Ditz, "Shipwrecked, Or Masculinity Imperiled," 58-72.

[98] Menin, "«Le sexe des larmes»," 208-209.

modern patriarchs. The Franchetti and Bassani patriarchs did not hesitate to present themselves as suffering, on the brink of ruin and even death. However, masculine affliction played a restorative role within the strategic narratives surveyed above. Within the genre of merchant letters, paternal vulnerability was invoked to bring children to obedience and to bolster bonds of interdependency in the commercial network as an emotional community. In turn, within the economy of petitions, Jewish patriarchs and their collective representatives, the *massari*, depicted paternal weakness to elicit a redress of perceived injustice and reaffirm threatened rights. Ultimately, through an emphasis on weakness and sorrow, this emotional style was meant to strengthen the patriarch's position. Virtuous domesticity, the good order of society, and the morality of Jewish commerce all came to rest on the tears of a father.

Francesca Bregoli holds the Joseph and Oro Halegua Chair in Greek and Sephardic Jewish Studies and is Associate Professor of History at Queens College and the Graduate Center, City University of New York. Her research focuses on eighteenth-century Italian and Sephardic Jewish history. She is the author of "Mediterranean Enlightenment: Livornese Jews, Tuscan Culture, and Eighteenth-Century Reform" (Stanford University Press, 2014) and co-editor of "Connecting Histories: Jews and Their Others in Early Modern Europe" (Penn Press, 2019) and "Italian Jewish Networks from the Seventeenth to the Twentieth Centuries: Bridging Europe and the Mediterranean" (Palgrave, 2018). Her current project, influenced by the history of the family and the history of emotions, investigates overlaps between affective and business ties in transregional Jewish merchant families.

Keywords: Masculinity, emotions, *patria potestas*, Jewish merchants, conversion

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Resilient Women, Rebuilt Lives: A Study of JDC's Work in Szeged after the Holocaust

by *Dóra Patricza*

Abstract

The Jewish community of Szeged, Hungary, has a rich cultural and historical heritage dating back more than two centuries. Approximately 60% of the Szeged Jewish population was killed in the Holocaust. In the end of June 1944, three trains departed from Szeged, taking the Jewish population from Szeged and the surrounding towns and villages. The first train went to Auschwitz, where most of the Szeged Jews were killed upon arrival. The second train was uncoupled, half going to Auschwitz, while the second half of the second transport and the third train ended up at the Strasshof Labor Camp near Vienna, where most people survived. The setup of the three transports resulted in Szeged's Jewry having an exceptionally high survival rate in the Holocaust, including children and elderly. Basic human needs formed the core of concentration camp survivors' interests following liberation. Jewish camp survivors received help from the Jewish community, obtained nourishment from Jewish-run soup kitchens, and mostly survived on care packages from the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee and other Jewish organizations. The current paper aims to present and analyze the role played by the Joint as well as the post-war life of women of three generations in Szeged, thus depicting life immediately after the war in Szeged.

Background

Restarting life in Szeged

A New Chapter: Szeged's Jewish Community in the Post-War Era

Background[1]

The renowned Jewish community of Szeged stands as the largest Jewish community in southern Hungary and one of the most important in central Europe. Its Jewish community was founded in 1785, and at its peak, in the 1920s, it had 7,000 members as the third biggest one in Hungary. Nowadays, it counts only 300 members. The Jewish population of Szeged has a vibrant history, both intellectually and culturally. It is one of the few communities outside Budapest where, after 1945, Jewish religious and communal life continued and is still taking place. Essentially, this made it possible for a significant part of the community to retain its valuable collection of documents and a rich archive of material memories. The Szeged Jewish community is unique because Szeged was a primary focal point of Neolog (progressive) Judaism[2] and thus a prime locus (outside of Budapest) of the attempts of Jews living in Hungary to acculturate into mainstream, Hungarian-speaking urban culture after the creation of Austria-Hungary in 1867. Jewish community members have been active in Szeged's scientific, economic, cultural, architectural, and charitable life.

Unlike many other European Jewish Archives, the archives of the Szeged Jewish Community (SzJCA) survived relatively intact despite the destructive forces of the Holocaust and World War II. The archives contain interesting records and precious historical documents from the Neolog community of Szeged. These sources chronicle the life of the largely destroyed Szeged Jewish community and provide an essential window into its broad network with other central European

[1] The author acknowledges the generous grant by Ruth and David Musher in the form of the JDC Archive Fellowship. The author also wishes to thank the Conference on Jewish Material Claims against Germany (the Claims Conference, grant nr. 21880) and the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (grant nr. 2021/952) for making the ongoing research project (2020-2022) possible. The author would like to express her gratitude to Mrs Terézia Horváth, née Löw (b. 1931, Szeged), who recounted her memories of the post-war period and her grandmother's fate after the Holocaust.

[2] Neolog Judaism can be defined as a 19th century movement within Judaism in Hungary, that sought to modernize and reform traditional Jewish practices and beliefs. It emphasized the use of the local language and a more liberal approach to Jewish law and tradition.

Jewish communities, utterly lost in the Shoah. In 2018-19, these archives were entirely processed, catalogued, indexed, and partly digitized.[3]

At the time of the 1941 census, the Szeged Jewish community numbered 4161 members.[4] After the German occupation (19 March 1944), the Jews were confined to a ghetto together with other Jews from surrounding villages. As a major regional center in Southern Hungary, the city of Szeged was the main deportation center for the surrounding towns and villages (Csongrád County) and parts of current Northern Serbia, the Bačka region, at that time under Hungarian occupation. Approximately 2,000 Jews living near Novi Sad in Bačka were ultimately transported to Auschwitz-Birkenau or Strasshof from April-6 May 1944, via Szeged. In June 1944, 8617 people, including all the Jews of the surrounding cities and villages, were deported from Szeged in only three days.

The first train went to Auschwitz, with most victims being murdered. The second train was uncoupled, with half going to Auschwitz and half to Strasshof, a labor camp north of Vienna, while the third train was sent to Strasshof, too, with most of the Jews surviving.[5] A third destination was Budapest, for a group of sixty-six people. Most of the deported to Auschwitz were killed within 24 hours of arrival, no records were kept about their fates, and we only know about their stories through the testimonies of survivors.[6] Compared to other towns in Hungary (except Budapest, Szolnok, and Debrecen), Szeged had a relatively high rate of survivors, estimated to 60%, including children and elderly people.

Before the ghettoization and deportation in May 1944, the Jewish population had to hand in all their possessions. The Jews left behind their belongings, pieces of

[3] The webpage of the archive can be accessed at https://szegedjewisharchive.org (accessed November 8, 2023).

[4] József Kepecs, ed., *A zsidó népesség száma településenként* (Budapest: KSH, 1993), 26-27.

[5] Dóra Pataricza, "'Put My Mother on the List Too!' – Reconstructing the Deportation Lists of the Szeged Jewish Community," in *Deportations in the Nazi Era,* eds. Henning Borggräge and Akim Jah (Arolsen: DeGruyter - Arolsen Archive, 2023) https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110746464-017. See also Kinga Frojimovics and Judit Molnár, eds., *Szeged – Strasshof – Szeged: Tények és emlékek a Bécsben és környékén "jégre tett" Szegedről deportáltakról. 1944–1947* (Szeged: Szegedi Tudományegyetem Állam- és Jogtudományi Kar Politológia Tanszék; Szegedi Magyar–Izraeli Baráti Társaság, 2021). Similarly, many Jews from Debrecen and Szolnok also ended up in Strasshof, altogether 15011 Hungarian Jews (Molnár in Frojimovics and Molnár, eds., *Szeged – Strasshof – Szeged*, 34)

[6] Laurence Rees, *The Holocaust: A New History* (London: Viking, 2017), 392.

furniture, as well as artworks at the synagogue, together with the community's objects. As for these items, survivors were relatively fortunate since the synagogue was neither destroyed nor plundered. About 40% of the pre-war Szeged Jewish population returned and many have re-established their lives and families in their former homes.[7]

Several questions can be raised regarding both the process of resettling and the ways of restarting life. The current paper aims to analyze and present the role Joint in rebuilding post-war life. Holocaust studies have given comparatively less attention to the experiences of women, resulting in an incomplete understanding of the Holocaust and its impact on this gender group. Most scholarship has primarily focused on the male population, leaving women's experiences under-examined. Examining JDC's role in post-war Szeged from the viewpoint of women is essential to gain a better understanding of the challenges faced by female survivors, including the loss of family members, disruption of traditional gender roles, and limited access to resources. Analyzing JDC's contributions can provide insights into the ways in which gender impacted survivors' experiences in post-war Szeged. Thus, through a few case studies of women belonging to various age groups, life immediately after the war can be depicted and new findings relevant to the history of Holocaust, trauma, and memory studies can be uncovered. The primary sources used for this article are testimonies and requests which are mostly inaccessible to a broader international audience since it primarily consists of handwritten texts only in Hungarian.[8] The paper seeks to answer the following research questions: What information is available on the immediate post-war life of women from various generations? What kind of help was needed immediately

[7] 3,881 Jews were included in the ghettoization list of Szeged (May 1944), out of whom 3095 were taken to the brick factory from where they were deported. 1894 Jews returned to Szeged, however, not all of them were Jews included in the ghettoization list, as some of the survivors might have returned to Szeged instead of moving to their settlements near Szeged. Pataricza, "Put my mother," 310-311. It must be noted that the real estate and artwork were taken away from the Jews in the months and years prior to deportation and never returned. László Marjanucz, "A szegedi zsidó polgárság műértékeinek sorsa a deportálások idején," in *Móra Ferenc Múzeum Évkönyve, Studia Historica 1* (Szeged: Móra Ferenc Múzeum, 1995), 241-303.

[8] On requests from Szeged see also Kinga Frojimovics, "JDC Activity in Hungary, 1945-1953," in *The JDC at 100 – A century of Humanitarianism,* eds. Avinoam Patt, Atina Grossman, Linda G. Levi, and Maud S. Mandel (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2019), 421.

after the war, and how did relief organizations fulfil these needs? How did women of different age groups cope with the hardships after the war?
This contribution is one outcome of a broader, ongoing research project to create the most extensive list of individuals who were deported from and through Szeged during World War II, allowing for further in-depth analysis of various segments of their lives as well as the circumstances of their deportation.

Restarting life in Szeged

The exceptional situation in Szeged, both regarding the relatively high rate of Jewish survivors and their pre-Shoah possessions being relatively well kept, can be attributed to several factors. Firstly, the arrangement of trains to Strasshof allowed for a higher number of survivors in Szeged and a few other cities compared to the rest of Hungary. Additionally, Szeged was reached from the South by the Soviet army on 11 October 1944,[9] thus the Hungarian Arrow Cross Party did not even have a chance to operate and kill more local Jews. Concerning the fate of objects and belongings, it should be noted that pieces of furniture, carpets, curtains, and other everyday equipment, along with shoes and clothes, were kept at the synagogue, which was never hit by a bomb.[10]
The first Jews from Szeged—men in forced labor who were in the region and who managed to escape—could return to the town as early as October 1944 and restart the local Jewish Community's operation in early November 1944. Leó Dénes (born Leó Rottman) (1897, Mohora-1977, Budapest), must have had a significant role in protecting Jewish property after October 1944. He was a member of the Szeged Jewish Community, serving in forced labor in Szeged in October 1944,

[9] György Pálfy, "A városházán," *Délmagyarország,* October 11, 1969, 5.
[10] The six bomb attacks, carried out by the United States Air Force between 2 June 1944 and 3 September 1944 aimed to destroy its airport, railway stations and food warehouses that were vital to the Hungarian and German war effort. According to Tóth, these bombing caused extensive damage to the city, with an estimated 146 people killed and 60 injured. The attack destroyed approximately 200 buildings, including homes and public buildings. During the first half of October, the Russians conducted bombings in Szeged, followed by the Germans after the occupation of the city in October. However, the bombs dropped by the Russians and Germans did not cause as many civilian casualties as the carpet bombings by the Anglo-American planes. Marcell Tóth, "Az első amerikai bombázás és Szeged," *Szeged folyóirat* 31, no. 6 (2019): 35-41.

when he managed to flee. Already in the same month, he was appointed as a deputy mayor's secretary.[11] One of the first things he did was to render the anti-Jewish laws and decrees invalid.[12] In November 1944, he became a councilor, then in January 1945, the deputy mayor of Szeged,[13] at the same time he was an honored member of the Jewish Community. The high rate of survivors, the early return of forced laborers and the good collaboration between the Jewish community and the city's administration played a significant role in protecting Jewish property and in making Szeged one of the least devastated Jewish communities in Hungary.

The geographic location of Szeged and the fact that it was one of the first cities to be liberated resulted also in the American Joint Distribution Committee (JDC, often called simply Joint) resuming its operation in Szeged at the end of 1944, reestablished by escaped forced laborers from Bor, joined by the Hungarian committee in Bucharest. At the end of January 1945, a food kitchen was also established in the territory of the former ghetto.

Originally JDC was founded end of 1914 with the specific aim of helping Jews in Eastern Europe who had been hit hard by the war, especially the Galician front movements. It continued and expanded its activities between the two world wars. It should be mentioned that non-Jewish individuals have received aid from the very beginning as well. In June 1941, Hungary entered the war, followed by the US in December, and thus JDC became a foreign agent in a hostile country and could no longer send money to Hungary. The organization's main issue was that it steadfastly followed US government directives banning the transfer of money to, and personal contact with, those living in Nazi-held territories while, at the same time, aiming to assist such people.[14] Throughout the initial months of 1945 in Hungary, the collaborative partnership between JDC and the International Red Cross (IRC) Division A was characterized by the latter acting as the implementing

[11] István Sárközi, "Adalékok Dénes Leó munkásmozgalmi és közéleti tevékenységéhez (1919–1977)," in *Móra Ferenc Múzeum Évkönyve 1980–81/1* (Szeged: Móra Ferenc Múzeum, 1984), 330.

[12] "Dénes Leó Szeged polgármestere," in *Szegedi Népszava*, 23 August 1945, 1. In other parts of the country, the anti-Jewish laws were annulled later, in January 1945 by the newly established government.

[13] "Dénes Leó," in *Magyar Életrajzi Lexikon,* eds. Ágnes Kenyeres and Sándor Bortnyik (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1967).

[14] Yehuda Bauer, *American Jewry and the Holocaust* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2017), 217. Accessed November 8, 2023, https://bibliotecacomplutense.odilotk.es/opac?id=00628045

agency of the relief branch, a role which they fulfilled until the end of June in the same year.[15]

In response to the early communication from the National Organization of the Hungarian Deportees in April 1945, informing the Szeged Jewish Community that many people deported to Vienna [Strasshof] had survived,[16] the city and the community had some time to prepare for their arrival. Upon liberation, concentration camp survivors' immediate interests focused on addressing basic human needs. They were temporarily housed at the Hotel Bors near the railway station in Szeged, where they received essential items and aid such as cleaning and disinfection from Szeged City's Bath and Disinfection Services. Survivors required essential everyday items such as clothes and bed linen, which were provided in cooperations with the Jewish community. The soup kitchen, also run by the community served them all meals. Despite their desire to return to their former homes, many survivors faced difficulties when looking for surviving family members and finding new homes.[17] Physical and mental health issues were widespread, requiring medical care and social welfare support. Rebuilding their lives in the aftermath of the Holocaust proved challenging, most survivors were unable to return to their pre-war lifestyles.

[15] "A Joint történetéből," in *Szombat* 2 (1991). Accessed November 4, 2023, https://www.szombat.org/archivum/a-joint-tortenetebol.

[16] Letter from the National Organization of the Hungarian Deportees to the Szeged Jewish, 15 April 1945, SzJCA 1945/262

[17] Dóra Patericza and Mercédesz Czimbalmos, "'We really did not expect to see you again' – A case study on Jewish – non-Jewish relations in post-war Szeged," in *AREI: Journal for Central and Eastern European History and Politics* (forthcoming).

Fig. 1. A kosher kitchen run by JDC in Szeged, American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee Archives, NY_53612, photograph of Pál Jónás.

Dr. Joe Schwarcz, the European President of JDC, was responsible for defining the mission of the Hungarian branch, which aimed to provide aid to Jews of all denominations in the aftermath of the Holocaust. This assistance focused on two key issues: facilitating the repatriation of deported Jews and supporting those in need after their return home, including those who were released from the ghetto or had been in hiding. To achieve these goals, the JDC distributed food, clothing, and temporary housing through soup kitchens, temporary residences, clothing, one-time cash assistance, and medical aid. Additionally, the organization coordinated the lending and borrowing of household equipment and was responsible for tracking the victims and survivors, providing information about their status to their relatives.[18] During the post-war period the JDC in Szeged performed numerous tasks, related to the resettlement of survivors, which were supposed to be the responsibility of the state. The JDC's economic and social assistance was also crucial to both the Hungarian state and the Communist Party,

[18] "A Joint történetéből," in *Szombat* 2 (1991). Accessed November 8, 2023, http://szombat.org/archivum/a-joint-tortenetebol.

as it helped alleviate the government's burden in providing for survivors. Furthermore, as the largest foreign organization operating in Hungary after WW2, the Joint played a significant role in providing the country with foreign currency, making it Hungary's largest annual foreign currency provider, receiving a total of 52 million dollars over the course of eight years (1945-1953).[19]

In August 1945, the National Jewish Assistance Committee was established as Hungarian Jewry's unified aid organization. Besides immediate support, it provided more permanent kinds of care, such as e.g., setting up children's homes. DEGOB (National Committee for the Deported Persons) was also instrumental in aiding survivors and was one of the organizations cooperating with the JDC in Hungary.

The archives of the Szeged Jewish Community hold various documents from 1945-50, such as correspondence with other Jewish communities about the activities of the Joint, different forms of aid provided by it, the operation of the local JDC office, and requests by locals to the JDC. This documentation provides valuable insight into the challenges faced by the JDC-run hospital and the broader Jewish community in Hungary during the post-war period, highlighting the extent to which the JDC's commitment to meeting diverse needs was necessary and ongoing. Survivors were sending requests to the community and asking for essential items right after their return to their hometowns, starting from May 1945. Most of the claims are on small pieces of paper, primarily handwritten, although a few are typewritten. Many documents include reports on the returnees' families, health, and economic status. Upon arrival, most requests include bedlinen, clothes, and household equipment necessary for everyday life, with little monetary value.

In Szeged, the JDC operated in close cooperation with the Soviet leadership of the city, which is also reflected in the bilingual (Hungarian and Russian) letterheads and the text of the official stamp.[20] Its operations were widely known in town. According to an article written by Magda Szántóné Ipolyi in September 1945, the JDC had been carrying out serious and remarkable activities in Szeged from

[19] Frojimovics, "JDC Activity in Hungary, 1945-1953," 426.

[20] International Red Cross * American Joint Distribution Committee Szeged / Междунаро́дный комите́т Кра́сного Креста́ * Американ ДжойнтДистриб'юшн Комите.

December.[21] In the above-mentioned article, the two directors of the Szeged branch, István Bárok and Dr Béla Basch, gave a report to the local newspaper *Szegedi Népszava* in September 1945 on the activities of JDC's Szeged branch so far, including the donations given to the (non-Jewish) returning prisoners of war. At that time, nearly two thousand people received aid regularly, mainly those returning from deportation, a vast number of university students and, in general, everyone who needed help. Those returning from deportation receive 1500 pengő per person in a lump sum immediately, and additionally either two hundred pengő every six days, or access to meals in the canteen consisting of breakfast, lunch, and dinner. In the autumn of 1945, two hundred university students were assisted by the JDC which covered fees to continue their studies and, in addition, provided meals or money for food.

The JDC also provided help for foreigners in transit, who received a travel allowance and access to the canteen where seven hundred and fifty people could eat daily. It also maintained a hospital providing free treatment and free medication to about six hundred patients monthly. Additionally, it also helped by providing anything that would improve the quality of life of the returning Jews by distributing furniture, and medical equipment such as glasses, dentures, instep raisers, and hernia belts. According to the aforementioned article, between December 1944 and August 1945, the Szeged branch of JDC spent 16 million pengő.

The case of Gabriella Göttler underscores the significance of the multifaceted approach adopted by the JDC in Szeged's post-war restoration. Beyond providing help by allocating objects that were necessary for the restart, JDC's employment of local Jews, particularly a young mother, fostered economic empowerment, social stability, and intergenerational support. Employment not only enabled Göttler to provide for her own family, but also ensured the care of her elderly mother and young daughter, thus contributing to the broader goal of community rehabilitation. Her case highlights the importance of holistic interventions that address both material and human needs, as critical components of post-war reconstruction efforts. Gabriella's daughter, Györgyi Göttler, was born in

[21] Magda Szántóné Ipolyi, "Nyolc hónap alatt tizenhat millió pengő segély," *Szegedi Népszava*, September 16, 1945, 4.

Budapest in 1934 to a Christian man and a Jewish mother, out of wedlock. She grew up with her mother, Gabriella Göttler, and grandmother Mrs Mór Göttler (née Sarolta Friedmann)[22] in Hódmezővásárhely, a town ca. 10 kms from Szeged. Her grandmother was 76 years old at the time of the deportation, when their family was deported through Szeged to Strasshof. Once liberated, in May 1945 in Hauskirchen, they headed home through Czechoslovakia, and upon arriving in Hódmezővásárhely, in July 1945, they had to start all over again.
An excerpt from the unpublished memoir of Györgyi, a child survivor, sheds light on the difficulties faced by Gabriella and her family as they attempted to rebuild their lives amidst the devastation of war:

> People were staying in our flat. One of the relatively well-to-do neighbors had a lovely, big farmhouse with a driveway. They were big farmers, my mother had sewn for them before, and they gave us a room so we could still be near our flat. Then they took quick action, and after a few days, they emptied our flat, but there was nothing in it. Apart from one or two bad dishes, nothing was left, none of my toys, and we never got back the things that were looted. We never found out who took them. [...] The only thing necessary for her was getting her sewing machine back. She thought she would continue to earn her living with it. [...] However, my mother could not make a living sewing underwear after the war because who had shirts and pajamas made in great poverty? So, my mother cooked with her sister in the Joint kitchen for a while, and we children went there for lunch. I would take meals home to my grandmother, who could no longer go there because it was far from our flat.[23]

[22] Imre Makó and János Szigeti, *"Vihar és vész közepette": A Holokauszt hódmezővásárhelyi áldozatai* (Hódmezővásárhely: MNL Csongrád Megyei Levéltár 2014), 53.
[23] Mrs Ferenc Maczelka, née Györgyi Göttler (b. December 12, 1934), an unpublished manuscript written down by her daughter Dr Noémi Maczelka. n.d.

Fig. 2. Györgyi Göttler, aged 16, Maczelka family archive.

According to Györgyi's daughter, Noémi, the family moved into a Jewish doctor's house (who most probably did not survive the deportation). Sarolta lived long enough to see her great-granddaughter, Noémi Maczelka, born in 1954. She died in the same month, at the age of 87. Gabriella first got employed by the Joint,

where she cooked meals, and later she ended up getting a job in the catering industry, and worked first as a bartender, then as a kitchen clerk and cashier.[24]

Child survivors like Györgyi provide a significant source of testimony for assessing the after-effects of the Holocaust. Many of these survivors were deported and remained with their closest relatives during the war, something which is often present in their recollections. Despite variations in accuracy, the use of autobiographical accounts and memoirs—both formal and informal—provides a foundation for historical reconstruction. While some commonalities exist among the testimonies,[25] seemingly minor details can offer valuable insights into the circumstances these children experienced. The recurring theme of the presence of parents and grandparents in these narratives obviously helped alleviate some of the survivors' pain.[26]

Veronika Szöllős, b. 1937 in Szeged, was also deported together with her parents and maternal grandparents. All of them survived. Her maternal grandmother, Mrs László Hoffmann, née Ilona Szigeti (1888, Budapest-1966, Budapest), used to be the director of the Szeged Jewish Kindergarten, and she set up a kindergarten also during the displacement. Her testimonial account underscores the support provided by the JDC, operating as a connection to American Jews and providing opportunities for communal meals and other forms of assistance:

> We returned to our flat, rang the doorbell politely and said we had just come from deportation and were living here. Now we live here, they [the new residents] said, and bang, they slammed the door. Then we left. Well, what could we have done? That flat had already been rented out to them, or maybe the landlord had rented it out. We did not even know what we had a right to after they had completely excluded us. We have been

[24] Personal correspondence with Noémi Maczelka over emails, August 2022

[25] Due to spatial limitations, the author of this article decided not to focus mainly on language or language use, while it can most definitely affect the narratives and the recollection of specific memories of the victims.

[26] Dóra Pataricza, "'The first time I saw my father cry' – Children's accounts of the deportations from Szeged," *The Usage of Ego-Documents in Jewish Historical Research. Jewish Culture and History* 24, no. 2 (2023): 277-291. Accessed November 8, 2023, https://doi.org/10.1080/1462169X.2023.2202085.

> banished, they tried to kill us but failed, and now we would even try to get back?
> After returning home, our first accommodation was a small room, if I remember correctly, in the Hotel Hungária in Szeged. [...] We got our accommodation from the Joint, and they also gave us clothes and money. Also, probably through the Joint, they gave our address to American Jews, and from there, I got two packages from a little girl about the same age, with all kinds of clothes, art supplies, candy, and things like that. We went to the Joint for lunch regularly. At first, there was a canteen, later they gave out coupons, which you could redeem at a non-meaty restaurant, I think, it was called Milk bar [Hun. Tejcsarnok]. Back in those days, when we used to go to the Joint canteen, my father met an acquaintance there and asked him if he knew of a sublet, and he recommended the one to which we then went.[27]

Vera resumed her studies at the Jewish elementary school following the war, though not in the class taught by her grandmother. During this time, the school accommodated 44 students across four classes.[28] Owing to her lung disease, Vera was compelled to spend several months at a Jewish orphanage, which functioned as a sanatorium and a preparation center for orphans planning to migrate to Israel under the auspices of the Dror Zionist movement. The institution in question was likely the same as the one referred to as a children's home in several photos captured for JDC in the summer of 1948.[29] Vera was one of the few surviving students in the Jewish Elementary school up until 1948, when it was nationalized. On the other hand, the fact that there was a Jewish school running in the Hungarian countryside was unique, as pointed out in a JDC's report written in 1948:

> They [the Szeged Jewish Community] are very proud of their Jewish School, which 150 children attend. They have seven classes, and the

[27] https://www.centropa.org/hu/biography/szollos-veronika, accessed November 8, 2023.
[28] Dr Sándor Vág, "Felszabadult ország, felszabadult zsidóság," *Új élet*, January 15, 1960, 4.
[29] Photos of the JDC camp, item IDs: 572894 – 572850 at archives.jdc.org (accessed November 8, 2023).

> President [Dr Kertész] pointed out that very few Jewish children go to Szeged City School, even though they are admitted, because the Jewish school has better teachers, and parents desire their children to have Jewish culture.[30]

A recurring motif in the narratives of these young girls is various forms of Holocaust traumatization, such as silence in their families and the use of expressions such as "before and after the deportation." Their families did not talk about their experiences and could not find a way to process the trauma. The phenomenon is known as encapsulation in psychology. Emotional encapsulation, psychic numbing of responsiveness and total amnesia of the past were among the post-traumatic responses. Less dramatic survival techniques that persisted until adulthood include becoming invisible, not sticking out, being quiet, submissive, and being "good."[31] Parents and grandparents simply had no tools and knowledge to alleviate the feeling of loss in their children.[32] Another phenomenon is that of uncertain identity, [33] also mentioned by Vera Szöllős.

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[30] Letter from Israel G. Jacobson to AJDC Paris, Re: Field Trip to Szeged, JDC archive, item ID: 1028603. For more information on these temporary homes aimed at preparing aliya: Viktória Bányai and Eszter Gombocz, "A traumafeldolgozás útjain – Holokauszt túlélő gyerekek Magyarországon, 1945-49," *Régió* 24, no. 2 (2016): 41-44 and on the Jewish orphanages after the war in Hungary in general: Eszter Gombócz and Viktória Bányai, *A Vészkorszak Árvái: A Magyarországi Zsidó Árvaházak és Gyermekotthonok Emlékezete* (Budapest: "NÜB" Nácizmus Üldözötteinek Országos Egyesülete, 2020). The location of the sanatorium and the children's camp is what used to be the Gerliczy Castle in Deszk, currently serving as the department of pulmonology of the University of Szeged. (https://u-szeged.hu/szakk/tudogyogyaszati-tanszek/bemutatkozas-211221, accessed August 27, 2022).

[31] Natan Kellermann, "The long-term psychological effects and treatment of Holocaust trauma," *Journal of Loss & Trauma* 6 (2001): 207.

[32] Gabriella Markovicsné Bobár has extensively analyzed the issue of PTSD in 30 Holocaust survivors, all deported from Szeged. She conducted 30 interviews with survivors, most of whom were children or teenagers during the Holocaust, approaching the topic as a health professional. Her research questions included the psychological or social effects that the persecution had on the later lives of the survivors and the ways and methods the survivors used when coping with the psychological trauma. Her interviews are quoted anonymously; thus, the author of the current paper is not aware of the overlap in the informants. Gabriella Markovicsné Bobár, "A holocaust túlélési szindróma, mint poszttraumás stressz zavar pszichoszociális vonatkozásai" (MA thesis, University of Szeged, 2007).

[33] Bányai and Gombócz, "A traumafeldolgozás útjain," 33-34.

Terézia Löw, who was 14 years old in 1945 and the granddaughter of Chief Rabbi Dr Immánuel Löw, was one of the 66 people saved by Kasztner[34] on the merits of her grandfather, and she vividly remembers the aid they received from JDC in restarting their life in Szeged:

> As for the furniture piled up in the synagogue, it was not carried by our Jewish fellows who had been deported to the ghetto but were thrown in after we had been taken away. You can see from the pictures how badly they were stacked! When we returned (from Pest)—I think it was February—we did not get our apartment back, of course, and I remember that my parents did not want to evict the family with small children. After a short respite, they allocated us an apartment in the same building as ours. There we had to share an apartment with a couple, they gave us a room, and the kitchen and the bathroom had to be shared. But we put furniture into that room, pieces we took out of the synagogue, so we all had a bed. Thanks to the Joint, we were initially provided with food. I remember we got parcels from abroad (and Hershey chocolate and cocoa), and then my mother's brothers and sisters were able to send parcels of clothes and food from Bogota.[35]

When trying to reconstruct the post-war fate of middle-aged and elderly women survivors, we face several brick walls. DEGOB has only two testimonies by women deported from Szeged, and both were younger than 45 at the time of the recording. At least to our knowledge, none of the elderly women wrote accessible memoirs or testimonies after the war, and this age group did not live long enough to be interviewed by scholars in the 1980s and 1990s. Their lives must be reconstructed

[34] Rezső Kasztner, a Jewish journalist from Kolozsvár, managed to rescue 396 people from Hungarian administration custody and the local brick factory and saved them from deportation to Auschwitz and secured a place for them in the garden of the Wechselman Blind Institute, known as the "Columbus Street Camp." As more and more people arrived, they built additional barracks. When Kasztner could no longer bring more people from Transylvania to Budapest, he focused on rescuing Jews from the Alföld region. As a result, 66 prominent Jews from Szeged and its surroundings were selected for Kasztner's special group, from which eventually many ended up in Switzerland via Bergen-Belsen. (Testimony of Dr Lipót Löw, nr. 3618, http://www.degob.hu/index.php?showjk=3618, accessed May 5, 2023).

[35] Personal correspondence with Mrs János Horváth, née Terézia (Teresa) Löw, April 2021.

piece by piece based on alternative sources, and these reveal only a small and fragmented part of their everyday existences.

Mrs Immánuel Löw (née Bella Brenning, Galați, 1862-Szeged, 1950), aged 83, the widow of Chief Rabbi Immánuel Löw (Szeged, 1854-Budapest, 1944), survived the war in the international ghetto of Budapest. She too was among the 66 exempts to be saved by the Kasztner rescue operation. After her husband's death in Budapest, she survived with her daughter and son-in-law in a yellow-star house, and later in a Swedish-protected house on Pannónia Street. Her son, Lipót Löw and his family were in the Columbus Street collection camp before moving to a protected house on Pannónia Street [also located in Újlipótváros].[36] Three months after returning to Szeged, Bella Löw filed a 4-page long typewritten complaint and request to the Szeged Jewish Community on 1 June 1945, emphasizing that the only help she received was from the Joint:

> It is known to the Honorable Board that on my return from deportation, I found my apartment destroyed and looted and had to live for weeks in the janitor's apartment offered to me by the congregation. My husband had died in the deportation, and I was left without any property or means of support, in view of which the honorable board paid 500 pengő a month to me in the form of alimony. This small amount gave me a living initially, but only because I got my lunch from Joint's kitchen. Today, when food prices have risen several times,[37] this amount has shrunk to a pittance and does not even provide a minimum living.[38]

[36] Máté Hidvégi, "Löw Immánuel élete," in *Löw Immánuel Válogatott Művei 1, Virág És Vallás,* eds. Máté Hidvégi and Tamás Ungvári (Budapest: Scolar, 2019), 59.

[37] Bella Löw referred to the hyperinflation in Hungary, following World War II, when Hungary experienced one of the most severe cases of hyperinflation in history. In July 1946, the country recorded the highest monthly inflation rate ever recorded, at 41.9 quadrillion percent (4.19 × 1016%). Prices doubled every 15.3 hours during this period. The hyperinflation led to the issuance of the largest denomination banknote ever officially circulated, a 100 quintillion (1020) pengő note, to keep up with skyrocketing prices. Beatrix Paal, "Measuring the Inflation of Parallel Currencies: An Empirical Reevaluation of the Second Hungarian Hyperinflation," *Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000).

[38] Bella Löw' complaint to the Szeged Jewish Community, 1 June 1945, SzJCA 321/1945.

Thus, Bella asked the community to grant her, through its organizations, the same treatment as any other member of the community and to provide her with the most necessary furniture and bedding. The Jewish community most likely could not fulfil all her requests, despite her old age and the important role of her late husband, as she had to submit a new request a month later, with a list of fourteen items, all of which were pieces of furniture and all of which once belonged to Chief Rabbi Dr Immánuel Löw. Some of these must have been essential to lead her everyday life, such as chairs and a dining table, a mangle, while others, such as two note stands, most probably had been reclaimed simply because they were once owned by them.[39]

Bella Löw remained in Szeged, where she lived with her daughter and her son-in-law (after his death in 1949, along with her daughter), first at Margit (now Gutenberg) street 4, then at Ostrovszky street 2/c.[40] She died there in 1950 and is buried in the same grave as Immánuel Löw, since he was exhumated and reburied in Szeged in 1947.

[39] Bella Löw' request to the Szeged Jewish Community, 15 October 1945, SzJCA requests 225.
[40] Hidvégi, "Löw Immánuel élete," n73.

Fig. 3. Mrs Immánuel Löw, née Bella Brenning and Eszter Löw in Szeged, 1950, Hidvégi collection, Budapest.

Mrs Vilmos Fuchs (née Terézia Neuwald, 1879, Érsekújvár-1966 (?), Budapest) most probably was deported with the third transport together with one of her daughters, photographer Borbála Fuchs. They must have been selected to be on the third transport since they were family members of a former employee of the

Jewish community. The late Vilmos Fuchs (1876, Mocsonok-1942, Szeged)[41] served as a teacher and later as the principal of the Szeged Jewish elementary school for over 30 years. She did not leave behind any memoirs; thus, her story must be reconstructed at least partly based on other sources. Terézia was liberated in Theresienstadt, from where she returned to Szeged with Borbála. At the time of the return to Szeged, she was 66 years old. As reflected by her registry sheet filled in at the time of arrival, she returned to Szeged on 4 July 1945, together with Borbála, and first stayed at the Bors hotel. As an aid, she received flour, household packages and cash aid from the JOINT.[42]

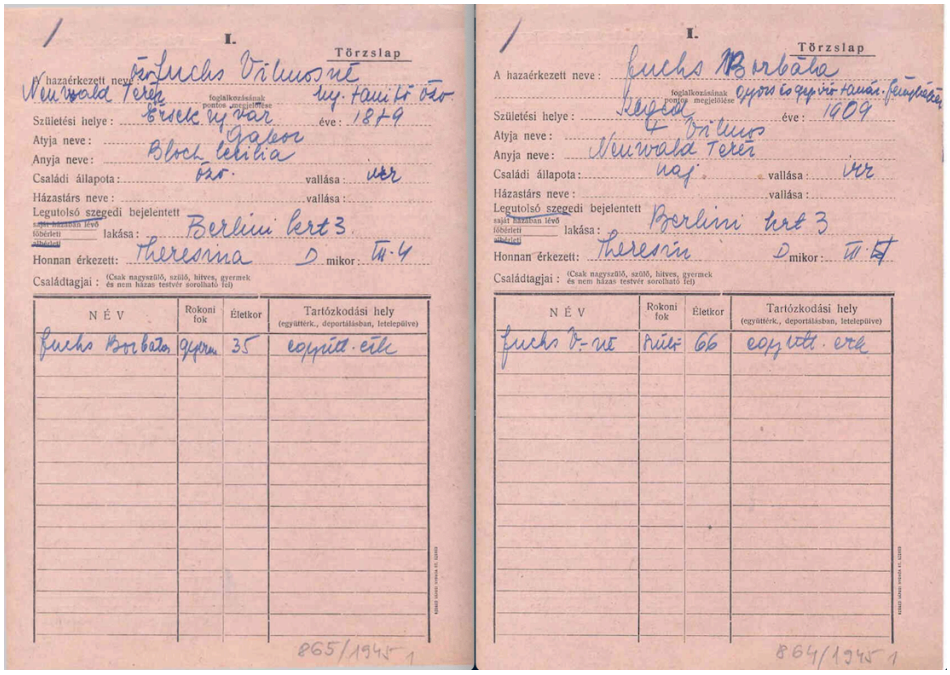

Fig. 4. Registry sheet card of Terézia Neuwald, SzJCA.

[41] Terézia Neuwald and Vilmos Fuchs are my great-great-grandparents. Even though my father, András Pataricza (b. 1954 in Budapest) had lived for 12 years in the same city with his great-grandmother, they never had a chance to meet due to an unsolved conflict in the family. Thus, Terézia's stories have not been handed down directly to him and thus neither to me.

[42] Registry sheet of Vilmosné Fuchs, SzJCA 865/1945.

Fig. 5. Terézia Neuwald, Hon family archive.

She left behind only one request, asking back her nightstand lamp: "Please return my copper nightstand lamp I took to the ghetto. Szeged, 20 August 1945, Mrs

Vilmos Fuchs." According to the document, she actually received the nightstand lamp. Due to the lack of other sources, it is impossible to determine if Terézia Fuchs requested that very nightstand lamp simply because of practical reasons or if it had particular emotional importance to her. This latter assumption could be supported by the fact that others were begging for mere clothes and bedsheets and among such mundane objects, a nightstand lamp seems almost extraordinary. Similarly to Bella Löw, Terézia Fuchs, too, received a pension from the Jewish community as a benefit after her husband. Her daughter picked up the pension. They left Szeged sometime after the war, and Terézia died in Budapest, probably in 1966. Her daughter, Borbála (Szeged, 1908-Budapest, 1996), never married. Terézia Fuchs was among the many Hungarian Jews who received aid from the JDC.

It can be concluded that the unique challenges faced by elderly women who survived the Holocaust, including issues related to healthcare and restarting life, have been largely overlooked in the existing literature, despite increased attention paid to the experiences of survivors. The marginalization of this group can be attributed to several factors, such as the gendered nature of Holocaust memory, the invisibility of elderly women in broader societal contexts, and the lack of emphasis on the experiences of non-western survivors. However, first-hand accounts of the challenges faced by elderly women in the aftermath of the Holocaust, found in sources produced immediately after the war, can help bridge specific gaps in the reconstruction of their immediate post-war life. Additionally, archival sources, such as requests for everyday items, can provide data that contributes to a more nuanced understanding of this group. By utilizing a range of sources created immediately after the war, a more comprehensive picture of the experiences of this group of survivors can be formed, filling in gaps in our understanding, including the type and extent of aid provided by organizations such as Joint.

Furthermore the JDC kept playing a crucial role in providing financial assistance to other Hungarian Jews in the aftermath of the war, aiding hundreds of thousands of people. The extent of the Joint's financial help in 1945-46 in Hungary included 26 expeditions to get deportees home, and the registration of 85,000 Hungarian returnees. JDC spent 52,000,000 USD in Hungary (on today's value: 700,000,000 USD). In 1945 over 66% of the Jewish community in the countryside

got assistance only from the JDC.[43] In 1946, according to an article in the newspaper Világosság,[44] 180,000 people received support, 52,000 people were fed in canteens, 40,000 people got medical aid, and 130,000 people were given clothes. Altogether 180 agricultural centers and industrial factories were supported, also proving the total lack of state aid and the fact that Jewish communities had to restart through self-aid.[45]

A New Chapter: Szeged's Jewish Community in the Post-War Era

Another essential source for the reconstruction of the JDC's operation is a report written in 1948. They were still present when the primary industries of Szeged were nationalized in June 1948, and then, a couple of months later, also the Szeged Jewish Elementary school.[46] The soup kitchen still existed in 1948: Szeged served as a center for various little communities in the vicinity, where approximately another 3000 Jews lived. At that time, the JDC provided aid to approximately one-third of the members, ca. 1000 people, who were categorized into three groups according to their needs. The first category included 335 people. People in category two were issued with food and clothing only, while the third category consisted of 250 persons who were employed but could not afford to buy clothing, thus received clothes. In addition, it provided aid to 100 needy Jewish university students, 40 of them in Szeged.[47]

The Joint was active in the community, presumably until 1950. Although its size was decreasing, the Szeged Jewish Community remained one of the few existing ones, in Hungary. In 1957, eight months after the 1956 revolution, 800 Jews lived there. Only 50 emigrated, and 25 applied for emigration passports. In 1957, at least

[43] Kinga Frojimovics, "Beilleszkedés vs. Kivándorlás," in *Beszélő* 9, no. 6 (2004).

[44] "Huszonhat millió svájci frankot juttatott a Joint a Nemzeti Banknak," *Világosság*, 7 August 1946.

[45] On the extent of JDC's aid in Hungary in 1945, see Kinga, Frojimovics, "JDC Activity in Hungary, 1945-1953," 424.

[46] Letter from Israel G. Jacobson to Elinor D. Rosenberg, Re: Jewish Elementary School in Szeged, Hungary SP-12180, JDC archive, item ID: 1029247

[47] Letter from Israel G. Jacobson to AJDC Paris, Re: Field Trip to Szeged, JDC archive, item ID: 1028603.

150 Jews attended the synagogue on Friday evenings, and 36 of the 50 children of elementary school age were enrolled in Talmud-Torah classes. The congregation at that time had 260 taxpayers, but seventy per cent of the Jewish population of Szeged was over 60 years old. The elderly people's home had 22 residents, 40 needy people still ate there, and six university students received kosher meals.[48]

The JDC became active in Szeged once more in the late 1970s, when Dr Péter F. Váradi (1926, Szeged-2022, Florida), a member of the community who moved to the US and became a successful businessman, donated a memorable sum to the JDC and commissioned the repairs of the synagogue, in memory of his parents.[49] Besides Váradi's contribution of 120,000 USD, the Hungarian State Office for Church Affairs and the Hungarian Jewish Central Board (MIOK) had secured the funds.[50] The JDC was involved in the coordination of the restoration process, and, between 1979 and 1989, the synagogue was fully renovated. Its rededication took place on 9 October 1989.

Currently, the Szeged Jewish Community has an estimated 300 members, additionally there are several residents of Jewish origin living in Szeged and Israeli students studying at the local University. Around 30-40 people attend the events of the community regularly.[51] The Szeged New Synagogue, up to this day, is active and popular among local and international tourists.

Dóra Pataricza is a post-doctoral researcher in History. She is currently working at Åbo Akademi University in Turku, Finland, on a project titled "Antisemitism Undermining Democracy" that is funded by the Kone Foundation. Since January 2020, she has also been conducting a project that reconstructs the fate of Holocaust victims from the Szeged region, funded by the Claims Conference and the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance. She is the editor of Immánuel Löw's essay "The Kiss," which will be published

[48] Restoration of Szeged Synagogue, Hungary, written on 6 June 1980, JDC archive, item ID: 2926901,

[49] Memorandum #349 from Joan Kagan to Ralph I. Goldman, Re: Chronological Report Regarding Szeged Synagogue Repairs, JDC archive, item ID: 3067366,

[50] Restoration of the Szeged synagogue, JDC archive, item ID: 2926901,

[51] "Múlt, jelen és jövő a Tisza partján," in *Új élet,* June 1957, 3.

in 2024 with Hebrew Union College Press. In 2021, she received the Immanuel Löw Award from the Szeged Jewish Community.

Keywords: Szeged, Female Holocaust Survivors, Elderly Holocaust Survivors, JDC, Strasshof

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From Rabbi to Reviser: Once More on Giovanni Antonio Costanzi (1702-1786), a Convert in the Service of the Holy Office*

by *Miriam Benfatto*

Abstract

This paper focuses on Giovanni Antonio Costanzi, a converted Jew in the service of the Holy Office. Primary sources, including his writings and documents related to his service in the Roman Inquisition, form the foundation of our study, supplemented by secondary sources from ecclesiastical archives. These materials allow us to reconstruct aspects of Costanzi's life, comprehend his involvement with the Holy Office, and explore his potential contributions to Anna del Monte's Diary. Building upon previous research, the aim is to present new data, establishing a revised chronology for Costanzi and shedding light on his role within a broader historical context. As individuals straddling two worlds, converts occupied a precarious position, continually striving to demonstrate their loyalty to Christianity. The paper includes an appendix that details Costanzi's direct involvement in the conversion of Jews, revealing the intricate dynamics of this period.

Introduction

"Rinacqui colle acque Battesimali" (I Was Reborn in Those Baptismal Waters): An Overview of Giovanni Antonio Costanzi's Biography

"Trattasi della destruzione dell'antica Sinagoga" (On the Destruction of the Ancient Synagogue): The Polemical Anti-Jewish Literature

"Il veleno talmudico che ne libri Ebraici si nascondeva" (The Talmudic Poison Hidden in Hebrew Books): The Role of the Holy Office Interpreter of Hebrew Books

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Conclusion

Appendix

Introduction

The term conversion is generally used to indicate a change in religion. It can refer to a range of important sociocultural scenarios that come under various guises. For example, conversion can be forced or false, or it can be for convenience. A conversion can involve individuals or groups. The conversion from Judaism to Christianity is not the only form of conversion,[1] but it is one with specific characteristics, due to the close historical and cultural links between the two religions.[2] In Italy, there has been much pressure on Jews to convert, especially from the mid-sixteenth century onwards. The Church's attitude to Jews in the Papal States can be seen, for example, in the establishment of the ghetto and the Casa dei Catecumeni (the House of Catechumens), the onslaught against Hebrew

[1] For studies on the complexity and varied guises of conversion, see Anna Foa and Lucetta Scaraffia, eds., "Conversioni nel Mediterraneo (Atti del convegno – Roma, 25-27 Marzo 1996)," *Dimensioni e problemi della ricerca storica* 2 (1996); Mercedes García-Arenal and Yonatan Glazer-Eytan, eds., *Forced Conversion in Christianity, Judaism and Islam: Coercion and Faith in Premodern Iberia and Beyond* (Leiden: Brill, 2020).

[2] Kenneth Stow, "Church, Conversion, and Tradition: The Problem of Jewish Conversion in Sixteenth Century Italy," in "Conversioni nel Mediterraneo," eds. Foa and Scaraffia: 25-34; Kenneth Stow, "Favor et Odium Fidei: Conversion invitis parentibus in Historical Perspective," *Archivio italiano per la storia della pietà* 25 (2012): 55-86; Adriano Prosperi, Danilo Zardin, Jacques Le Brun, and Pietro Stella, "Convertirsi e convertire. Itinerari del messaggio religioso in età moderna," *Ricerche per la storia religiosa di Roma* 10 (1998): 17-73; Elisheva Carlebach, *Divided souls: Converts from Judaism in Germany, 1500-1750* (New Haven - London: Yale University Press, 2001); Tamar Herzig, *A Convert's Tale: Art, Crime, and Jewish Apostasy in Renaissance Italy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2019); Pawel Maciejko and Theodor Dunkelgrün, eds., *Bastards and Believers: Jewish Converts and Conversion from the Bible to the Present* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020).

books and the Talmud, and the beginning of forced preaching.[3] Jews converted to Christianity often occupied a significant role during the roll-out and implementation of these harsh arrangements.[4] Reconstructing the biography of a figure central to the control of Hebrew books helps shed light on the extent to and the means by which converts were involved in the Church's practices, where the intention was to convert Jews.[5]

To paint a fully comprehensive picture of a Jew converted to Christianity is a challenge, especially given the often limited information available on his life prior to conversion. For one thing, baptism is often considered the most important event in the life of a convert, to the extent that it is considered a second birth—or rather, a rebirth—overshadowing any former life.[6] In fact, in the example explored here, Costanzi's Jewish past is recalled only through obscure hints that serve to highlight his new state.[7] That former life is clearly considered undignified. Despite these difficulties, it is possible to trace his life story by pursuing certain evidence and thus to try to establish a clear outline of it. It is impossible to avoid gaps in the documentation. My efforts at reconstruction at times proceed by

[3] Kenneth Stow, "The Burning of the Talmud in 1553, in the Light of Sixteenth Century Catholic Attitudes toward the Talmud," *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 34, no. 3 (1972): 435-459; Kenneth Stow, *Catholic Thought and Papal Jewry Policy 1555-1593* (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1977); Kenneth Stow, *Il ghetto di Roma nel Cinquecento. Storia di un'acculturazione* (Rome: Viella, 2014) (ed. or. *Theater of Acculturation. The Roman Ghetto in the Sixteenth Century*, Seattle - London: University of Washington Press, 2001).

[4] As we shall see later on, converts were active opponents of their former fellow worshippers. See also how sermons were translated into Hebrew: Kenneth Stow, "Conversion, Christian Hebraism, and Hebrew Prayer in the Sixteenth Century," *Hebrew College Annual* 47 (1976): 217-236.

[5] When referring to the control of Hebrew books, I am addressing the surveillance and authority exerted by the Church, through its various means, over Hebrew books found within households and frequented locations.

[6] For more on this, see Adriano Prosperi, "Battesimo e identità cristiana nella prima età moderna," in *Salvezza delle anime, disciplina dei corpi. Un seminario sulla storia del battesimo,* ed. Adriano Prosperi (Pisa: Scuola Normale Superiore, 2006), 1-65; Herzig, *A Convert's Tale*, 70-71. For a reflection on the difficulties of using accounts concerning conversions as a historical source, see Pawel Maciejko and Theodor Dunkelgrün, Introduction to Maciejko and Dunkelgrün, *Bastards and Believers*, 10-14.

[7] Giovanni Antonio Costanzi refers to his Jewish past as "tenebre del Giudaismo" (the dark times of Judaism). Giovanni Antonio Costanzi, *La verità della Cristiana Religione contro le vane lusinghe de' moderni ebrei* (Rome: Giovanni Maria Salvioni, 1749), xii. As we will see later, Costanzi speaks of his past as a Jew and a rabbi only to extol his knowledge of Hebrew and of Jewish subjects.

means of conjecture and hypotheses, comparisons and derived dates. This attempt is intended as a starting point and will inevitably lead to some problems being left unsolved.

The affairs of Giovanni Antonio Costanzi, the focus of this paper, have left traces from which we can uncover first- and second-hand information. The primary sources are texts he wrote himself. The secondary ones are those that can be found through his relations with the Holy Office of the Inquisition (henceforth, Holy Office or Roman Inquisition) and with institutions close to the Church. Indeed, I used both his written work—including controversial material and documents relating to his role in the Roman Inquisition—and archival documents drawn up for practical reasons and in connection with the Roman Inquisition.[8] These sources form the basis of my work, but other documentation will also be used. Cross-analyzing these materials will allow me to reconstruct part of his biography and also some matters concerning his relations with the Holy Office.

Costanzi has been the subject of significant studies. Abraham Berliner's early research served as the basis for William Popper's studies of his involvement in the history of Jewish book censorship and on accounts of his work for the Holy Office.[9] Ariel Toaff delved into some of the events related to his biography and his role as a reviser in eighteenth-century Rome;[10] meanwhile, Fausto Parente critically studied Costanzi's polemical writing entitled *La verità della cristiana religione contro le vane lusinghe de' moderni ebrei* and has framed the book within the literature produced by converts.[11] More recently, it was Maria Caffiero who provided a more comprehensive picture of Costanzi's life and role in the affair

[8] Specifically, I consulted archival materials kept at the Archive of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (henceforth, ACDF). Most of the information comes from documents in the *Privilegia Sancti Officii Urbi* (Priv. S.O. Priv. S.O.) series, which compiles letters relating to the governance of the Holy Office. The series contains everything concerning the skills, obligations, authority, privileges and pledges handed out in the Holy Office, as well as anything that generally concerns life within it and its staff.

[9] Abraham Berliner, *Censur und Confiscation hebräischer Bücher im Kirchenstaate* (Frankfurt am Main: J. Kauffmann, 1891); William Popper, *The Censorship of Hebrew Books* (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1969) (1ed.: New York: The Knickerbocker Press, 1899).

[10] Ariel Toaff, "Giovanni Antonio Costanzi. Ultimo censore di libri ebraici a Roma (1745-1756 c.)," *La Rassegna Mensile d'Israel* 67, no. 1-2 (2001): 203-214.

[11] Fausto Parente, "Di uno scritto antiebraico della metà del XVIII Secolo: «La verità della cristiana religione contro le vane lusinghe de' moderni ebrei» di Giovanni Antonio Costanzi (1705 c.-1785)," *Italia* 13-15 (2001): 357-395.

concerning the books of the Jews and their relationship with the Holy Office,[12] especially in regard to the *Norme per la revisione dei libri ebraici* he produced.[13] Recognizing the importance of previous studies and building on them, the aim is to present data that can help construct a new timeline for Costanzi's life, frame some of the events in which he was involved and provide information on the role he may have played in Anna del Monte's *Diary*. From a broader perspective, this paper can help shed light on the cultural and polemical-religious role that converts played in the conversion policies the Church enacted against the Jews, on the complexity of the operations for the control of Hebrew books, on the relationships between converts and authorities within Church, and on their economic and social status. As individuals who could be described as liminal, converts aroused suspicion from both the community they were leaving and the one they were joining.[14] This status, sitting astride the two social and religious worlds, made converts a very particular case: to one side they were traitors, while to the other they had to constantly prove themselves good Christians, to stave off suspicions of apostasy. It is at least true of Costanzi that he strove in various instances to prove his servitude to the Christian doctrine. One such means of doing so was to convince other Jews to convert. This is why I have chosen to furnish this paper with an appendix containing details on the events in which Costanzi himself played a first-hand role in the conversion of Jews who would once have been his peers.

[12] Marina Caffiero, *Legami pericolosi. Ebrei e cristiani tra eresia, libri proibiti e stregoneria* (Turin: Einaudi, 2012), *ad indicem.*

[13] Ibid., 44-71.

[14] For studies on the relationship between converts and their former fellow worshippers, see Kenneth Stow, "A Tale of Uncertainties: Converts in the Roman Ghetto," in *Shlomo Simonsohn Jubilee Volume: Studies on the History of the Jews in the Middle Ages*, eds. Moshe Gil, Daniel Carpi, and Yosef Gorni (Jerusalem: Tel Aviv University Press, 1993), 257-281; Giuseppe Sermoneta, "Il mestiere del neofita nella Roma del Settecento," in Ibid., 213-243.

"Rinacqui colle acque Battesimali" (I Was Reborn in Those Baptismal Waters): An Overview of Giovanni Antonio Costanzi's Biography

The biographical details of Giovanni Antonio Costanzi's life have not, until now, been known.[15] He was born in Constantinople around 1702 and died in 1786[16], presumably in Rome. Costanzi himself named his place of birth,[17] but his original Jewish name has not been recorded. He converted to Christianity at some time around 1730 [18] and was baptized—as he himself reported—in Herbipoli (Würzburg) on March 4, 1731, [19] probably around the age of 29. Before his conversion and his new life as a Christian, Costanzi was a rabbi for eight years in Split and in other Dalmatian cities.[20] He moved to Rome in 1733 and immediately began working with the Roman tribunal of the Holy Office. [21] In a request Costanzi submitted asking for financial support, he in fact declared that "fin dall'anno 1733 diede diversi lumi al Tribunale della Sagra Inquisizione circa le materie spettanti alla [Santa] Fede Cattolica, con interpretare alcuni libri ebraici, e

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[15] As mentioned, important attempts to reconstruct Costanzi's biography can be found in Parente, "Di uno scritto antiebraico"; Toaff, "Giovanni Antonio Costanzi."

[16] A petition from his son Vincenzo Alessandro Costanzi, dated 1786, reports that his father died at the age of 84. His date of birth might therefore be calculated by subtracting his age from the date of his death, which probably took place in the year Vincenzo Alessandro wrote his letter (1786). ACDF, Priv S.O. Priv S.O. 1786-1778, 54.

[17] See the authorization of Costanzi's book written by Dominican Raimondo Maria Berolati, in Costanzi*, La verità della Cristiana Religione*, xi. Costanzi himself recalls this in his written request to be appointed as Reviser of Hebrew books: ACDF, Priv. S.O. Priv. S.O. 1743-1749, 49.

[18] The date is taken from reading a request from Costanzi himself for appropriate financial support. In 1747 he declares himself to have already been a convert for 17 years, ACDF, Priv. S.O. Priv. S.O. 1743-1749, 117.

[19] Costanzi, on the subject of his baptism, writes: "rinacqui colle acque Battesimali" (I was reborn in those Baptismal waters). Costanzi, *La verità della Cristiana Religione*, xii.

[20] Ibid. xiv. This is stated many times. Even Francesco Rovira Bonet, in his monumental *L'armatura de' Forti, ovvero memorie spettanti agl'infedeli ebrei che siano, o turchi utili alli catecumeni, alli neofiti, ed altri cristiani* (Rome: Paolo Giunchi, 1794), writes of Costanzi: "Già Rabbino in Levante, e nel Dominio Veneto" (previously a rabbi in the Levant and in the Venetian dominion), Ibid., 381.

[21] ACDF, Priv. S.O. Priv. S.O. 1743-1749, 117. This is also confirmed by Dominican Domenico Teoli signing off the *censure* prepared for the Holy Office in 1733, in which Costanzi's name also appears. It comes from ACDF, St. St. NN3-r, c. 182r and is given by Margherita Palumbo, "«Pensando che facilmente in S. Officio possan esservi Libri ebraici e rabbinici…». Gli hebraica del Sant'Uffizio, oggi in Biblioteca Casanatense," *La Rassegna Mensile di Israel* 76, no. 3 (2010): 201-219, 203-204, and n10. For more on Domenico Teoli see below.

chiarificare diverse materie [oc]culte de perfidi Ebrei insidiatori della nostra S. Fede" (from 1733, he, in various ways, helped the Tribunal of the Holy Inquisition understand matters relating to the [Holy] Catholic Faith, by interpreting various Hebrew books and shedding light on the various occult subjects of the perfidious Jewish infidels of our Holy Faith).[22] It can be supposed that in 1736 his son, Vincenzo Alessandro Costanzi, was born. He would go on to help his father with his duties in later life.[23] Costanzi was particularly well known for his efforts as an interpreter and reviser of Hebrew books for the Holy Office.[24] That role would lead to his being one of the key players in the Church's search operations concerning Hebrew books in the Papal States in the eighteenth century.

On May 6, 1745 he was appointed as "Interprete de' Libri Ebraici presso il Sant'Uffizio (Interpreter of Hebrew Books at the Holy Office),"[25] after a petition addressed directly to the incumbent pope, Benedict XIV. In that request he declared he knew "tutti li caratteri ebraici sì antichi, che moderni, tanto orientali come Italiani e Tedeschi, ed ancora di Libri Talmudici, Rabbinici e Caldaici" (all the Hebrew alphabets, ancient and modern, Eastern as well as Italian and German,

[22] ACDF, Priv. S.O. Priv. S.O. 1743-1749, 117. It is unlikely, in light of the timeline given here, that he was already involved just months after his conversion, as reported in Popper, *The Censorship of Hebrew Books*, 118-122.

[23] In a petition in 1786, Vincenzo Alessandro Costanzi requests to succeed his father in the role of Reviser of Hebrew books: ACDF, Priv S.O. Priv S.O. 1786-1778, 54. When he writes his petition, he speaks of being 50 years old and already a priest. His ordination took place after the death of his wife. See Filippo Maria Renazzi, *Storia dell'università degli studj di Roma, detta la Sapienza*, vol. IV (Rome: Stamperia Pagliarini, 1806), 376-377. He is presumed to have died in the first years of the 19th century. Vincenzo Alessandro is permitted to read rabbinic books in 1755. That privilege is reconfirmed in 1758 and 1764, as one can read in the rescripts attached to the petition.

[24] Marina Caffiero, "I libri degli ebrei. Censura e norme della revisione in una fonte inedita," in *Censura ecclesiastica e cultura politica in Italia tra Cinquecento e Seicento. VI giornata Luigi Firpo. Atti del Convegno, 5 marzo 1999*, ed. Cristina Stango (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2001), 203-223; Caffiero, *Legami pericolosi*, 44-77. On the term "reviser" see: Richard Gottheil, Nathan Porges, Herman Rosenthal, M. Zametkin, and Joseph Jacobs, "Censorship of Hebrew books," in *The Jewish Encyclopedia,* eds. Cyrus Adler and Isidore Singe, vol. 3, (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1903), 642-652; 643-644.

[25] ACDF, Priv. S.O. Priv. S.O. 1743-1749, 49. This is cited elsewhere, too: ACDF, Priv. S.O. 1743-1749, 117: "si degnò la S.V. con suo speciale rescritto sotto li 6 maggio 1745 concedere all' O.re l'officio di interprete de libri ebraici nel suddetto tribunale, con condizione che dovesse servire gratis" (he favored His Excellency with a special request on May 6, 1745 to grant the *Oratore* the office of interpreter of Hebrew books for the aforementioned tribunal, provided that he would perform it without remuneration).

and also the Talmudic, Rabbinic and Chaldean Books) as could already be seen from the license granted to him by the Inquisition to read books considered "proibiti talmudici" (forbidden Talmudic books).[26] In support of his request, he declared that he had also worked with two Dominican preachers to the Jews of Rome—Lorenzo Filippo Virgulti (1683-1735)[27] and Antonino Teoli (fl. mid-eighteenth century)[28]—on some matters concerning the "materie occulte delli perfidi insidiatori [ebrei]" (occult subjects of the perfidious infidels [Jews]),[29] and that he convinced some of them to convert to Catholicism, as documented in writing.[30] Recalling that the Inquisition had always employed converted rabbis—as shown by the examples Costanzi himself gave (Domenico Gerosolomitano (c.

[26] ACDF, Priv. S.O. Priv. S.O. 1743-1749, 49.

[27] Lorenzo Filippo Virgulti, whom Benedict XIII appointed as preacher to the Jews, also authored various anti-Jewish works: *L'Ebreo catecumeno istruito ne' principali Misterij della Santa Fede Cristiana* (Rome: Girolamo Mainardi, 1726); *La vera idea del Messia* (Rome: Giovanni Battista de Caporali, 1730); *Risposta alla lettera di un Rabbino* (Rome: Giovanni Battista de Caporali, 1735). For more on Virgulti's polemical writings, see Fausto Parente, "Il confronto ideologico tra l'ebraismo e la Chiesa in Italia," *Italia Judaica. Atti del convegno internazionale: Bari 18-22 maggio 1981* (1983): 303-381; 362-365, in which Parente also attributes Virgulti with having written *L'Ebreo convinto dei suoi errori* (Rovereto: Pierantonio Berno, 1729); Moritz Steinschneider instead claims the author is anonymous. See Moritz Steinschneider, "Letteratura antigiudaica in lingua italiana," *Vessillo Israelitico*, 31, (Settembre 1883): 275-277; 276. For more on Virgulti, see Caffiero, *Legami pericolosi*, 40-42; Marina Caffiero, *Il grande mediatore. Tranquillo Vita Corcos, un rabbino nella Roma dei papi* (Rome: Carocci, 2019), 35-38, 69-72, and 80-82; Margherita Palumbo, "Il fondo ebraico della Biblioteca Casanatense," *La Rassegna Mensile di Israel* 82, no. 2-3 (2016): 37-52; 41-42.

[28] There is little biographical data for Antonino Teoli. He also assisted in censoring various Hebrew books for the Holy Office, as can be inferred from the documents in ACDF, St. St. Bb-3-r. See Palumbo, *Il fondo ebraico*, 42-44; Caffiero, *Legami pericolosi*, 15, nota 33; 32, nota 64; 76; 79; 83-86. Teoli published the successful *Storia della vita, e del culto di S. Vincenzo Ferrerio* (Rome: Giovanni Battista de Caporali, 1735), of which various editions were published over the course of the 18th and 19th centuries.

[29] ACDF, Priv. S.O. Priv. S.O. 1743-1749, 49. His work with Antonino Teoli is also recorded in his text Costanzi, *La verità della Cristiana religione*, xiii.

[30] Costanzi states several times that he has written evidence of having converted Jews: Ibid., xii-xiii. ACDF, Priv. S.O. Priv. S.O. 1743-1749, 49.

1555-1621)[31] and Giovanni de Borghesi (fl. eighteenth century.)[32]—Costanzi wrote a petition to Benedict XIV asking him to order the *assessore* of the Holy Office to appoint him in the role[33], which he would occupy until his death. The request was accepted on the "condizione che dovesse servire gratis" (provided that he would perform it without remuneration).[34] That arrangement continued for some years, until Costanzi was given remuneration. It was not, however, paid regularly, and he was forced to submit several requests to be paid his dues.[35]

[31] Domenico Gerosolimitano drew up an expurgatory index that was widely used for the correction of Hebrew books, both by Jews and Christians. For more on his work, see Gila Prebor, "Domenico Yerushalmi: his life, writings and work as a censor," *Materia Giudaica* 15-16, (2010-2011): 467-481; Pier Cesare Ioly Zorattini, "Domenico Gerosolimitano a Venezia," in *Sefarad: Revista de Estudios Hebraicos y Sefardíes* 58, no. 1 (1998): 107-116.

[32] Giovanni de Borghesi, whose Hebrew name was Johann Weyr, worked as a reviser of Hebrew books with the Holy Office and with the Casanatense Library on matters relating to those books. In his 1735 petition to Clement XII requesting a grant, Borghesi says he is moving to Rome with his wife and two children after having been a rabbi in Pitigliano, Tuscany. ACDF, Priv. S.O. Priv. S.O. 1728-1735, 151. In 1737, he asks to be appointed to the role of *scriptor hebraicus* at the Vatican Library. Palumbo, *Il fondo ebraico*, 42-43.

[33] ACDF, Priv. S.O. Priv. S.O. 1743-1749, 49. The *assessore* is a secretary of sorts, working within the Holy Office and serving the Inquisition cardinals. Andrea Del Col, "Assessore," in *Dizionario storico dell'Inquisizione*, eds. Adriano Prosperi, Vincenzo Lavenia, and John Tedeschi, vol. I, (Pisa: Edizioni della Normale, 2010), 107.

[34] ACDF, Priv. S.O. Priv. S.O. 1743-1749, 117.

[35] Payment requests are found in various letters in the ACDF. ACDF, Priv. S.O. Priv. S.O. 1743-1749, 117, reads: "Implora perciò l'O.re dalla Paterna Clemenza della S.V. un qualche tenue soccorso o con fargli ottenere un assegnamento dal S. Officio per la Carica ch'esercita, o con quel mezzo ch'alla S.V. sembrerà più spediente, acciò possa sostenere la sua povera famiglia, affidato sull'esempio di tanti Neofiti Rabini, i quali abbracciata ch'ebbero la S. Fede al solo riflesso ch'erano stati Rabini la S. Fede non mancò mai di soccorrerli" (the *Oratore* thus requests from His Holiness's paternal clemency a meagre support or appointment at the Holy Office for the Duties he is performing, or by whichever means His Holiness deems most expedient, so that he might support his poor family, the trusted example to so many neophyte rabbis who, having embraced the Holy Faith, only for their having been rabbis the Holy Faith has never failed to support them). A list of names follows: "Camillo Jaghel," "Domenico Gerosolomitano," "Gio. Batt.a Jona," "Giulio Morosini," "Agostino Pipia." Costanzi adds that thus the danger of "essere deriso dagli ebrei" (being mocked by Jews) who berated him for his poverty, is exposed, decrying it "un evidente castigo per l'abbandonato Ebraismo e per aver convertito alla S. Fede diverse famiglie Ebree" (a clear punishment for having abandoned Judaism and for converting many Jewish families to the Holy Faith). Other requests can be found in: ACDF, Priv. S.O. 1750-1754, 132; ACDF, Priv. S.O. 1755-1759, 88. For a study on the socio-economic status of neophytes in the 18th-century Roman ghetto, see Sermoneta, "Il mestiere del neofito nella Roma del Settecento."

Just months after his appointment as interpreter of Hebrew books, Costanzi appeared as the recipient of a payment for having produced a text described in no greater detail than "Indice de libri ebraici" (An Index of Hebrew Books). This can be found in a list of payments by the Holy Office *Maestro di Casa* to copyists and the related receipt dated September 1745.[36] It is likely that this fell under the preparatory work for a much larger project on which Costanzi had begun regular work from the mid-eighteenth century: compiling an index of Hebrew books and writing the rules for correcting them. We will delve into more detail on this work later on, but he was likely working on it well into the final years of his life.

Costanzi also worked with the Church on matters concerning other areas of Jewish life. Specifically, he wrote a memorial for Pope Benedict XIV regarding "l'abuso del Libello del Repudio che costumano concedere in Roma, e in altri luoghi i Neofiti alle loro mogli rimaste nell'Ebraismo" (the abuse of the Libello del Repudio [sc. divorce] that neophytes in Rome, and elsewhere, often grant their wives who have remained Jewish).[37] After having consulted Costanzi on his opinion, Benedict XIV condemned the practice in his papal bull *Apostolici ministerii munus*, dated 16 September 1747. In it, he reaffirmed the ban on newly converted husbands granting their Jewish wives divorce, impeding them from remarrying.[38] This attitude likely arose from a desire to win the wife over to Christianity. In fact, if the Jewish wife of a convert refused to follow her husband in converting to the new religion, their marriage would be dissolved. The

[36] ACDF, ASV 062, 1745, 42. The payment's authorization is dated September 1745. On another occasion, Costanzi recalls having "essersi affaticato fin dal mese di Agosto 1745 per mostrare alla S. Inquisizione certi Indici de libri permessi ad uso degli ebrei, fra i quali ve ne sono molti contro la S. Fede Cattolica, e pieni di superstizioni" (striven from the month of August 1745 to show the Holy Inquisition certain Indices of books Jews were permitted to use, including many that contradicted the Holy Catholic faith and were full of superstitions). ACDF, Priv S.O. Priv. S.O. 1743-1749, 117. The *Maestro di Casa* took care of the general governance of the establishment in which they worked, including administrative work and often bookkeeping.

[37] ACDF, Priv. S.O. Priv. S.O. 1743-1749, 117. Costanzi is also consulted on matters concerning the baptism of Jews and parental authority. Marina Caffiero, *Battesimi forzati. Storie di ebrei, cristiani e convertiti nella Roma dei papi* (Rome: Viella, 2004), 117.

[38] Kenneth Stow, *Anna and Tranquillo: Catholic Anxiety and Jewish Protest in the Age of Revolutions* (New Haven - London: Yale University Press, 2016), 128-129.

neophyte could remarry with a Christian, while the ex-wife could not remarry. This was due to the absence of the *ghet*, the document of divorce.[39]

Benedict XIV likely also sought Costanzi's advice on a previous occasion, when the former was still Bishop of Ancona (1727-1731). I am referring to the matters handled in the bull *Postremo mens*e, dated February 28, 1747, on the legitimacy of baptizing Jewish children.[40] In the bull, Benedict XIV reported that to write it he had sought the opinion of "alcuni Ebrei, uno de' quali è a Noi ben cognito, essendoci convenuto il trattare più volte con lui, quando eravamo Vescovo d'Ancona" (some Jews, one of whom is well known to us, having worked with him several times when we were Bishop of Ancona).[41] If the consulted Jew was Costanzi, who had connections to Ancona,[42] he could also be identified as the neophyte "che pareva uno stregone" ([who] looked to me like a *stregone* [sc. a male witch]),[43] who Anna del Monte met in the Casa dei Catecumeni during her

[39] For a study on the granting of the *ghet*, see Caffiero, *Battesimi forzati*, 94-95; Caffiero, *Il grande mediatore*, 85-108.

[40] Caffiero, *Battesimi forzati*, passim.

[41] Cited from the version translated into Italian and published as a letter: *Lettera della Santità di Nostro Signore Benedetto Papa XIV. Sopra il Battesimo degli Ebrei o infanti o adulti*, 72. Also see Benedictus XIV, "De Baptismo Judaeorum. Sive Infantium, sive Adultorum," in *De Lambertinis Bullarium*, vol. 2 (Prati: In typographia Aldina, 1846), 170-191.

[42] Costanzi had various connections with Ancona, as can be inferred from his participation in the raids begun in the Papal State's ghettos in 1753. See Berliner, *Censur und Confiscation*, 32; Popper, *The Censorship of Hebrew Books*, 125; Palumbo, "Il fondo ebraico," 47; Luca. Andreoni, *Una nazione in commercio. Ebrei di Ancona, traffici adriatici e pratiche mercantili in età moderna* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2019), 162-163.

[43] The description in the *Diario/Diary* is as follows: "mi comparve [...] un certo Neofito, a me incognito, che pareva uno stregone, che poi con il suo parlare si fece conoscere che era stato non solo nella Religione Ebrea, ma che predicava ogni Sabbato nella Scuola d'Ancona [...] E così cominciò la sua predica alla presenza di altri due Preti" (a neophyte I did not know entered. He looked to me like a *stregone* [sc. a male witch], and he let me know that not only was he originally a Jew, but that he had preached to the Jews every Sabbath in the synagogue in Ancona. [...] He then began to preach, accompanied by two other priests). Cited from Giuseppe Sermoneta, ed., *Ratto della Signora Anna del Monte trattenuta a' catecumeni tredici giorni dalli 6 fino alli 19 maggio anno 1749* (Rome: Carucci editore, 1989), 57 and, in translation, from Stow, *Anna and Tranquillo*, 22. It must be noted, however, that here the neophyte is accompanied by "*altri* due Preti" (two *other* priests). Costanzi was not a priest; but we cannot exclude the possibility that whoever wrote the *Diario* did not know that. In fact, those giving sermons often were priests. Also see the annotated edition of Stow, *Anna and Tranquillo*, 22. The *Diario* in Italian, based on the edition by Giuseppe Sermoneta, can be found in Marina Caffiero, ed., *Rubare le anime. Diario di Anna del Monte ebrea romana* (Rome: Viella, 2008).

imprisonment there.[44] The person named and described in the famous *Diario* or *Diary* could be the Jew who had helped Prospero Lambertini, latterly Pope Benedict XIV but at that point Bishop of Ancona.[45]

The *Diario*'s protagonist, a Jewish girl from the Roman ghetto, is taken from her family in May 1749 to the Casa dei Catecumeni after she is reported by convert Sabbato Coen who claimed to be her betrothed. The Casa dei Catecumeni was founded in 1543, during the papacy of Paul III (1534-1549), to house Jews, Muslims and others considered *infedeli* (infidels), with the aim of increasing the number of conversions to Christianity. [46] Papal law required those held there to be "illuminated" and therefore converted during their imprisonment, which could happen after someone reported them. Anna del Monte did not convert and her memories were preserved in the *Diario*, which reached us in a copy compiled by her brother Tranquillo del Monte from the memories she left behind.[47] The *Diario* describes Anna del Monte's time in the *Casa* and the isolation and segregation she suffered, but also the meetings between her and the various people that tried—unsuccessfully—to convert her to Catholicism.

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[44] Ariel Toaff is convinced of this and identifies Costanzi as both the so-called "stregone" and as the "preacher," a central figure in the *Diario*, on the basis of reading Sermoneta, *Ratto della Signora Anna del Monte*, 29-30. Toaff, "Giovanni Antonio Costanzi," 212-214. It is not clear whether the two people are actually one and the same. Giuseppe Sermoneta rules this out in Sermoneta, *Ratto della Signora Anna del Monte,* 18-19. Ariel Toaff does not explain his reasoning for identifying him as such. The topics of the two characters' sermons are indeed similar, but here I have decided only to refer to the "stregone" out of caution. Furthermore, similarity in the subject matter of sermons is a given, due to the content typically found in sermons.

[45] That is the convincing argument in Stow, *Anna and Tranquillo,* 22, note 37, which says: "Was this fellow the same Jew – now *neofito* – whom Benedict XIV mentions, as we shall see, in his bull *Postremo mense*? Very possibly." Ibid., 147.

[46] Potential converts were held in the Casa dei Catecumeni, generally for a period of 12-40 days, with the expectation that they would eventually convert and then be baptized. For general information on the establishment and role of the Casa dei Catecumeni, see Domenico Rocciolo, "Documenti sui catecumeni e neofiti a Roma nel Seicento e Settecento," *Ricerche per la storia religiosa di Roma* 10 (1998): 391-452; Domenico Rocciolo, "Catecumeni e neofiti a Roma tra '500 e '800. Provenienza, condizioni sociali e 'padrini illustri,'" in *Popolazione e società a Roma dal Medioevo all'Età contemporanea*, ed. Eugenio Sonnino (Rome: Il Calamo, 1998), 711-724; Caffiero, *Battesimi forzati*, 21-29; Marina Caffiero, "Tra due fuochi. Ebrei, Inquisizione e Case dei catecumeni," in *L'Inquisizione e gli ebrei. Nuove ricerche*, ed. Marina Caffiero (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2021), 83-110. For further information on the Casa dei Catecumeni and its links to the Church's campaign to convert Jews, an effort that greatly intensified in the second half of the 18th century, see Stow, *Anna and Tranquillo*, 91-112.

[47] For information on the role of Tranquillo del Monte, see Stow, *Anna and Tranquillo*.

If Costanzi was the Jew in *Postremo mense* and if that Jew was the convert whom Anna del Monte met in the Casa dei Catecumeni, Benedict XIV would have met Costanzi before his conversion (in around 1730),[48] between 1727 and 1730, while still Bishop of Ancona (1727-1731).

In 1749, the year of Anna del Monte's abduction, Costanzi had already been working for the Holy Office for four years and could have visited the Casa dei Catecumeni where she was held. It was not unusual for converts to visit the *Domus Conversorum*, as also shown by the presence there of Giacomo Cavalli (1678-1758), convert and reviser of Hebrew books,[49] who is mentioned in the *Diario*.[50] The Casa dei Catecumeni could be seen as a training ground for converts, where their abilities to convert were put to the test, something the neophytes boasted of in conversation with their former fellow worshippers.[51] On many occasions Costanzi says he convinced some Jews to convert and, as we have seen, he worked with the preachers to the Jews of Rome, Dominicans Lorenzo Filippo Virgulti and Antonino Teoli.

These observations could support the theory that Costanzi might be the Jew that bishop Prospero Lambertini consulted in Ancona who, after converting, would meet Anna del Monte in the Casa dei Catecumeni and who Lambertini, after becoming Pope Benedict XIV, would consult again in the preparation of his 1747 bull, *Apostolici ministerii munus.*

As already hinted, Costanzi's role as Holy Office interpreter and reviser meant he played an important role in the overall process of controlling Hebrew books and their dissemination. But that is not all: he maintained relationships of other kinds with Jews—always as part of his role at the Holy Office—both with the Università degli ebrei in Rome and with individuals.[52] The task of analyzing the memorial of the Università degli ebrei, which dates back to as early as 1756 and which reached the Holy Office through *consultore* Giuseppe Simone Assemani (1687-1768), was

[48] This theory is feasible if Costanzi was not already in Würzburg where he was baptized in 1731.

[49] For more on Giacomo Cavalli, see Sermoneta, *Ratto della Signora Anna del Monte*, 27-30.

[50] Ibid., 79; Stow, *Anna and Tranquillo*, 35-36.

[51] Costanzi, for example, says he convinced various Jewish families to convert, both by means of private conversations and of letters: ACDF Priv. S.O. 1743-1749, 117. For more on his actions relating to converting other Jews, see appendix.

[52] Costanzi wrote various replies to letters in which ghetto inhabitants ask that the books be returned to them. Caffiero, *Legami pericolosi*, 73-77.

entrusted to Costanzi.[53] In it a request is put forward for some books to be restored that had been sequestered in the raid that took place across the Papal States, when entire libraries in the ghettos had been looted.[54]

In addition to the duties he performed with the Holy Office, Costanzi was *Scriptor* of Hebrew at the Vatican Library from 1765/6 to 1786 and Lector of Hebrew at the Pontifical Urban College for the Propagation of the Faith, probably between 1743 and 1754.[55] His partnership with the Vatican Library could however date back to some years prior to this: Moritz Steinschneider says that Costanzi was considered the actual author of the *Bibliothecae Apostolicae Vaticanae Codicum Manuscriptorum Catalogus*, the Vatican's first catalogue of Hebrew books dated

[53] The text is found in Lat. 8111, ff. 12r-13v. The memorial is not dated, but we can take 1756—the year in which Giuseppe Simone Assemani was appointed *consultore*—as a *terminus post quem.* A copy of the memorial (ff. 2r-11v, 14rv) is appended to this text. It was sent to the Holy Office after the 1731 raid of the ghettos of the Papal States, seven years after which the texts were returned. That text could therefore date back to around 1738. In the memorial entrusted to Costanzi, the Jews also ask for the restoration of the texts, on the basis of what had happened previously. For more on this, see Giancarlo Spizzichino, "L'Università degli ebrei di Roma tra controllo e repressione (1731-1741)," in *Gli abitanti del ghetto di Roma. La Descriptio hebreorum del 1733,* ed. Angela Groppi (Rome: Viella, 2014), 117-152, and 122, note 11 in particular. Caffiero, *Legami pericolosi*, 34-39, for an alternative dating. For general information on ms Vat. Lat. 8111, see Berliner, *Censur und Confiscation,* passim; Fausto Parente, "La Chiesa e il «Talmud»: l'atteggiamento della Chiesa e del mondo cristiano nei confronti del «Talmud» e degli altri scritti rabbinici con particolare riguardo all'Italia tra XV e XVI secolo," in *Storia d'Italia, Annali 16/1, Gli ebrei in Italia*, ed. Corrado Vivanti (Turin: Einaudi, 1996), 521-643; 618-620. The *consultore* is a consultant to the Holy Office cardinals.

[54] Abraham Berliner, *Geschichte der Juden in Rom von der ältesten Zeit bis zur Gegenwart, Band II* (Frankfurt am Main.: J Kauffmann, 1893); Berliner, *Censur Und Confiscation*, 10-11; Popper, *The Censorship of Hebrew Books*, 121-125; Attilio Milano, *Storia degli ebrei in Italia* (Turin: Einaudi, 1992), 295 (ed. or.: Turin: Einaudi, 1963).

[55] Jeanne Bignami Odier, *La Bibliothèque de Sixte IV à Pie XI: Recherches sur l'histoire des collections de manuscrits* (Città del Vaticano: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1973), 169 n111, which says that Costanzi was *Scriptor* of Hebrew at the Biblioteca Vaticana from 1765, but he occupied those roles from 1766 to 1786, the year in which his son Vincenzo Alessandro Costanzi replaced him, after his death. Also see Rovina Bonet, *L'Armatura de' forti,* 381, which says that he was Lector of Hebrew at the Urban College in Rome. Hints at some of his Hebrew lectures for the College can be found in the information provided in a request from Costanzi, in which it is specified that the lectures were entrusted to Costanzi by Pietro Girolamo Guglielmi (1694-1773), Holy Office *assessore* (1743-1753): ACDF, Priv. S.O. Priv. S.O. 1755-1759, 88. Costanzi, in his *Relazione Istorica* (Historic Report) on the 1753/4 raids, likely published around 1754, signs off as "Gio. Antonio Costanzi lettore di lingua ebraica nel Colleg. di Propag. Fide" (Gio. Antonio Costanzi lector of Hebrew at the Urban College for the Propagation of the Faith). ACDF, St. St. CC2 a.

1756,[56] which, however, has two named authors, Stefano Evodio Assemani (1707-1782) and Giuseppe Simone Assemani. [57] Furthermore, Costanzi collated the Vatican's Hebrew Bible manuscripts for the notable biblical scholar Benjamin Kennicott (1718-1783)[58] and worked with the Casanatense Library. Over a period of 30 years, beginning at least as early as 1738, he brought in various Hebrew books which today form part of the Casanatense Library's Jewish collection. [59] The history of the Library's Jewish collection is thus linked to the confiscations that took place in the Papal States and to Costanzi's work, he being an active Hebrew book merchant. In this case, we are talking about hundreds of texts—manuscripts and published editions—with titles translated into Latin and notes on each piece's author and content.[60]

Costanzi strove against his old religion in many circumstances and in many different ways. In fact, as we will see, he claims to have brought "alla S. Fede diverse famiglie Ebree" (many Jewish families to the Holy Faith) on many occasions.[61] Furthermore, he was also involved in producing two anti-Jewish works: the first was published in 1749 with the title *La verità della cristiana religione contro le vane lusinghe de' moderni ebrei* (The Truth of the Christian Faith Over the Futile Temptations of Modern Jews); the second seems to have remained unpublished.

There is little information on his personal life, but we can deduce that he had a large family and faced various financial difficulties,[62] worsened further by his

[56] Moritz Steinschneider, *Vorlesungen über die kunde hebräischer handschriften, deren sammlungen und verzeichnisse* (Leipzig: O. Harrassowitz, 1897), 71. This date is also given in Benjamin Richler, *Guide to Hebrew Manuscript Collections* (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of sciences and humanities, 1994), 192-193.

[57] For more on Giuseppe Simone Assemani see above. For more on Stefano Evodio Assemani, Giuseppe's grandson, see Giorgio Levi della Vida, "Stefano Evodio Assemani," in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, *ad vocem*.

[58] Theodor Dunkelgrün, "The Kennicott Collection," in *Jewish Treasures from Oxford Libraries*, eds. Rebecca Abrams and César Merchán-Hamann (Oxford: The Bodleian Library, 2020), 115-157; 153-154.

[59] This was also paid work. See Palumbo, "«Pensando che facilmente in S. Officio possan esservi Libri ebraici e rabbinici…»," 201-219.

[60] Palumbo*, Il fondo ebraico*, 37-52.

[61] In support of his request for financial support for his role as interpreter of Hebrew books, Costanzi also attaches a list of Jews who converted thanks to him. They would have been convinced to convert through sermons and letters. ACDF, Priv. S.O. Priv. S.O. 1743-1749, 117. See the transcription in the *Appendix*.

[62] ACDF, Priv. S.O. Priv. S.O. 1743-1749,117.

wife's ill health. In November 1753, Maria Teresa Costanzi's illness worsened and Giovanni Antonio was forced to make this known, by appending a medical certificate attesting to her terminal illness in his 1754 petition, in which he asks to be paid his dues.[63]

"Trattasi della destruzione dell'antica Sinagoga" (On the Destruction of the Ancient Synagogue): The Polemical Anti-Jewish Literature

There were many ways in which Costanzi took action against the religion he had left, as was typical of converts, and he produced two polemical anti-Jewish works.[64] The first appeared in 1749, as we have seen, with the title *La verità della cristiana religione contro le vane lusinghe de' moderni ebrei*. That remains the only known work published by Costanzi.[65] The second, written by 1753, remained unpublished, though we know of its existence due to the mention he himself makes of it in a request in 1758.[66]

[63] ACDF, Priv. S.O. Priv. S.O. 1750-1754, 132.

[64] With regard to Italian anti-Jewish literature, renowned scholar Moritz Steinschneider writes: "erano spesso i nati Ebrei che scrivevano dopo l'apostasia contro la nazione e religione abbandonate [...] lo scrivere contro il Giudaismo era anche per l'orgoglio clericale una specie di trionfo" (it was often those born Jewish who wrote in opposition to the nation and religion they had left, after their apostasy [...] written opposition to Judaism was also a sort of triumph for clerical pride). Taken from Moritz Steinschneider, "Letteratura Antigiudaica in lingua italiana," *Vessillo Israelitico* 29, (Giugno 1881): 165-167; 165-166; Parente, *Il confronto ideologico*.

[65] Costanzi, *La verità della cristiana religione*; Parente, *Di uno scritto antiebraico della metà del XVIII Secolo*. Together with a small number of other documents, this remained the only written text from which it was possible to glean biographical information on Costanzi. It was included in the monumental work by Rovira Bonet, *L'armatura de forti*, 381: "Gio. Antonio Costanzi [...] fece stampare in Roma nel 1749 *La verità della cristiana religione, contro le vane lusinghe de' moderni Ebrei*; e la dedicò al Pontefice Benedetto XIV. Gli Ebrei vollero rispondere a quest'Operetta, con una Lettera, la di cui confutazione, fa il Corpo di quest'Opera" (Gio. Antonio Costanzi [...] had *la verità della Religione Cristiana, contro le vane Lusinghe de' moderni Ebrei* printed in Rome in 1749, and dedicated it to Pope Benedict XIV. The Jews wanted to respond to it, by letter; this work is the confutation thereof). Moritz Steinschneider, "Letteratura antigiudaica in lingua italiana," *Vessillo Israelitico* 31, (Ottobre (1883): 313-315; 313.

[66] ACDF, Priv. S.O. Priv. S.O. 1755-1759, 88.

La verità della cristiana religione is dedicated to Pope Benedict XIV (Pope 1740-1758) and was approved by Antonio Martinetti (fl. eighteenth century), [67] Domenico Teoli, lector of Hebrew at the Sapienza University, and Raimondo Maria Berolati (fl. eighteenth century), Dominican preacher to the Jews of Rome. The text was written on the basis of a request from Roman Jews who had asked to be provided with the transcription of an oral sermon,[68] so that they might be able to give their response. It contains a summary of the sermon given by Costanzi, arranged in four short sections,[69] the Jews' response,[70] and Costanzi's objection to it, entitled *Risposta a ciascheduno de' motivi espressi nella Scrittura antecedente* (A Response to Whomever Gave the Reasoning Expressed in the Previous Text) and arranged in 16 sections.[71] Costanzi claimed his intent was to take care of the "destruzione dell'antica Sinagoga [...] la vanità della superstizione giudaica" (destruction of the ancient synagogue [...] the vanity of Jewish superstition); the intention to convert was explicit.[72] Costanzi claimed he wanted to make use of the only Hebrew Bible and other texts, whose authority was recognized by Jews. In fact, he writes: "La regola da me tenuta nel confutare le opposizioni degli Ebrei [...] altra non è stata, che riandare le Divine Scritture, e prender qualche

[67] He had already died by 1758, as stated in a request made by Costanzi found in ACDF, Priv. S.O. Priv. S.O. 1755-1759, 88: "dal defunto Abb.te Antonio Martinetti" (by the deceased Abbot Antonio Martinetti). In the authorization of Costanzi's work is written: "Antonio Martinetti Benefiziato della Basilica Vaticana," in Costanzi, *La verità della cristiana religione,* x.

[68] Ibid., 1: "L'avermi Voi richiesto di porre in iscritto tutto ciò che [...] per solo zelo della vostra salute vi rappresentai in voce" (you having requested that I put in writing all that [...] purely for the sake of your health I told you orally). Costanzi was not a priest, as the preachers to the Jews often were, but as we have seen he worked with Virgulti and Teoli, both preachers to the Jews. The example of converted Jew Andrea de Monte (16th century) also leads us to believe that preaching to the Jews was not reserved exclusively for priests. Parente, *Il confronto ideologico*, 315-316, 324. Furthermore, Antonino Teoli—also a Holy Office reviser of Hebrew books—was a preacher to the Jews of Rome. For more on Teoli, see above. Furthermore, Costanzi claims to have converted some Roman families and to have kept "un attestato autentico [...] fatto per gloria di Dio, e per contestare la verità dal fu P. da Antonino Teoli, allorché era in questa Città medesima Predicatore agli Ebrei" (certified evidence [...] made for the glory of God, and to have communicated the truth of the late Antonino Teoli, when he was in [Rome] as a preacher to the Jews), in Costanzi, *La verità della cristiana religione*, xii-xiii. For more on his work relating to attempts to convert Jews, see above.

[69] Ibid., 1-16.

[70] Ibid., 17-21.

[71] Ibid., 22-157. This is the longest section of the work (135 pages).

[72] (Dedication to Benedict XIV), in ibid., vi-vii.

Argomento anche dalla dottrina, e sentenze de' Rabbini, e del Talmudde" (the rule upheld by me in refusing the Jews' objections [...] was nothing more than a reiteration of Divine Scripture and the extraction of some topics from the doctrine, and statements from the rabbis and from the Talmud).[73] The topics addressed are the classic issues in the converts' anti-Jewish polemic. They concern Jesus's status as Messiah, the denial of Israel, the accusation of deicide and the consequent enslavement of the Jewish people in exile.[74]

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[73] Ibid., xv. For example, he cites the tractates *Sanhedrin, Shabbat, Yoma* and *Nedarim.* Ibid., 148-151.

[74] George Foot Moore, "Christian Writers on Judaism," *The Harvard Theological Review* 14, no. 3 (1921): 197-254; Federico Steinhaus, "Predicatori e scrittori antiebraici nella Spagna del Quattrocento," *La Rassegna Mensile di Israel* 35, no. 1 (1969): 30-35; Fausto Parente, "La controversia tra ebrei e cristiani in Francia e in Spagna dal VI al IX secolo," in *Gli ebrei nell'alto medioevo. Settimane di studio del Centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo* 26, no. 2 (1980): 529-639; Hyam Maccoby*, Judaism on Trial: Jewish-Christian Disputation in the Middle Ages* (London - Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1982); Jeremy Cohen, *The Friars and the Jews: The Evolution of Medieval Anti-Judaism* (London: Cornell University Press, 1982); Moshe Idel and Mauro Perani, eds., *Nahmanide esegeta e cabbalista. Studi e testi* (Florence: Giuntina, 1998); Robert Chazan, *Daggers of Faith: Thirteenth-Century Christian Missionizing and Jewish Response* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989); Carlebach, *Divided Souls,* 170-199; Giuseppe Veltri, *Renaissance Philosophy in Jewish Garb*, *Foundations and Challenges in Judaism on the Eve of Modernity* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 169-194; Piero Capelli, "Jewish Converts in Jewish-Christian Intellectual Polemics in the Middle Ages," in *Intricate Interfaith Networks: Quotidian Jewish-Christian Contacts in the Middle Ages,* ed. Ephraim Shoham Steiner (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016), 33-83. For some studies on Italian anti-Jewish literature, see Meir Benayahu, "R. Shimshon Morpurgo's Polemic against Benetelli," *Alei Sefer: Studies in Bibliography and in the History of the Printed and the Digital Hebrew Book* 8 (1979-1980): 87-94 [Hebrew]; Benjamin Ravid, "Contra Judaeos in Seventeenth-Century Italy: Two Responses to the Discorso of Simone Luzzatto by Melchiore Palontrotti and Giulio Morosini," *AJS Review – The Journal of the Association for Jewish Studies* 7, (1982): 301-351; Parente, *Il confronto ideologico*; Giulio Busi, "La Breve raccolta (Venice, 1649) del polemista antigiudaico Melchiorre Palontrotti," *Annali di Ca' Foscari* 24, no. 3 (1985): 1-19; Gianfranco Fioravanti, "Polemiche antigiudaiche nell'Italia del Quattrocento: un tentativo di interpretazione globale," *Quaderni Storici* 22, no. 64 (1987): 19-37; Asher Salah, *La République des Lettres: Rabbins, écrivains et médecins juifs en Italie au XVIIIe siècle* (Leiden: Brill, 2007); Martina Mampieri, "'The Jews and Their Doubts': Anti-Jewish Polemics in the Fascicolo delle vanità giudaiche (1583) by Antonino Stabili," in *Yearbook of the Maimonides Centre for Advanced Studies*, ed. Giuseppe Veltri (Berlin - Boston: De Gruyter, 2016), 59-75; Martina Mampieri, "When the Rabbi's Soul Entered a Pig: Melchiorre Palontrotti and His Giudiata against the Jews of Rome," *Jewish History* 33, no. 3-4 (2020): 351-375; Michela Andreatta, *The Persuasive Path: Giulio Morosini's Derekh Emunah as a Conversion Narrative*, in *Bastards and Believers,* eds. Dunkelgrün and Maciejko, 156-181.

The second anti-Jewish text was never published, despite having been approved in 1753. This was due to the intense duties Costanzi undertook during the raids that had taken place in Rome and in other ghettos in the Papal States from 1753.[75] In fact, in a 1758 request for his dues to be paid, Costanzi states that he has not managed to finish an anti-Jewish piece written with the clear aim of convincing Jews to convert by disputing 13 clauses "sopra de quali si regge al presente la superstizione giudaica" (upon which Jewish superstition currently rests).[76] No title is given for this text. It had, however, been authorized by Giorgi Agostiniano (1711-1797),[77] preacher to the Jews of Rome and Antonio Martinetti,[78] who had also approved Costanzi's previous work.

[75] Book requisitions could take place at any time and without warning, as decreed by Benedict XIV in 1751. For more on the raids in Rome, see Berliner, *Censur Und Confiscation*, 10-11; 25-43; Parente, "La Chiesa e il «Talmud»," 619-620; Milano, *Storia degli ebrei in Italia*, 295. See also Costanzi's "Relazione della perquisizione de' libri Ebbraici fatta nelli Ghetti di Roma, e di tutto lo Stato Ecclesiastico, colla maniera di correggere li permissibili, e ritenersi l'incorreggibili" (Report on the Hebrew book raids in the Roman Ghetto and in all the Papal States, including the method for correcting permitted books, and books deemed incorrigible) kept at the Vatican Apostolic Library (*Vat. Lat.* 8111, ff. 29-151). The cities of Urbino, Ancona, Senigallia, Pesaro, Lugo, Ferrara, Avignone, Cavallione (Cavaillon) and Lilla are also included in the report.

[76] ACDF, Priv. S.O. Priv. S.O. 1755-1759, 88: "stimano gli uomini eruditi che [l'opera] possa conferire alla conversione degli ebrei non meno dell'altra dal med.[esimo] O.[rato]re tempo fa' composta, e presentata alla Santa mem.[oria] di Benedetto XIV" (scholarly men offer praise that [the work] may—no less than that other work composed some time ago by the same *Oratore* and presented in Holy Memory of Benedict XIV—lead Jews to conversion). For more on the topic of Jewish superstitions reproached by Christians, see Marina Caffiero, "Il rabbino, il convertito e la superstizione ebraica. La polemica a distanza fra Tranquillo Vita Corcos e Paolo Sebastiano Medici," in *Prescritto e proscritto. Religione e società nell'Italia moderna (secc. XVI-XIX)*, eds. Andrea Cicerchia, Giudo Dall'Olio and Matteo Duni (Rome: Carocci, 2015), 127-150; Caffiero, *Legami pericolosi*.

[77] Giorgi Agostiniano (Agostino Antonio Giorgi) taught *Sacre Scritture* at the *Archiginnasio della Sapienza* (1746-1762). He was director of the *Biblioteca Angelica* from 1753 and Holy Office *consultore* from 1772. See Guido Gregorio Fagioli Vercellone, "Agostino Antonio Giorgi," in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani, ad vocem*.

[78] ACDF, Priv. S.O. Priv. S.O. 1755-1759, 88.

"Il veleno talmudico che ne libri Ebraici si nascondeva" (The Talmudic Poison Hidden in Hebrew Books): The Role of the Holy Office Interpreter of Hebrew Books

Giovanni Antonio Costanzi worked with the Holy Office and above all on matters relating to Hebrew books for over 50 years. It was under Benedict XIV that he was officially appointed *Interprete dei libri ebraici* (Interpreter of Hebrew Books) in 1745, as already mentioned. From that time, Costanzi also strove to bring to light "il veleno talmudico che ne' libri Ebraici si nascondeva" (the Talmudic poison hidden in Hebrew books).[79] It was also during Benedict XIV's papacy that Costanzi began devoting himself to editing a text known as the *Norme per la revisione dei libri ebraici* (Rules for Revising Hebrew Books). The creation of and updates to this text should be considered within the context of the raid ordered by Pope Benedict across all the ghettos of the Papal States from 1753.

The *Norme per la revisione dei libri ebraici* was one of Costanzi's most significant and well-known works.[80] It was probably not intended for immediate publication as a definitive edition. It underwent various updates over a period of 30 years. It is likely that the preparatory work was begun in 1745 and very likely by 1747,[81] but it

[79] ACDF, Priv. S.O. Priv. S.O. 1743-1749, 117.

[80] This is a document containing an introduction to the regulations, including some general rules, and two indices listing the Hebrew books permitted with corrections and those not permitted. For more on this important document, see Caffiero, *I libri degli ebrei*; Caffiero, *Legami pericolosi*, 44-71. Marina Caffiero believes that the text must be considered in relation to the compilation of Benedict XIV's Index, published in 1758, and the requisition of Hebrew books ordered by the Holy Office in 1753 (Ibid. 46). The document was introduced by Daniel Ponziani, in his contribution to Alejandro Cifres and Marco Pizzo, eds., *Rari e preziosi. Documenti dell'età moderna e contemporanea dall'archivio del Sant'Uffizio (Catalogo della mostra. Roma, Museo Centrale del Risorgimento febbraio-marzo 2008)* (Rome: Gangemi Editore, 2009), 66 and 84. Costanzi makes use of some earlier (16th century) rules and indices. For more on these texts, which Jews often used for making the corrections themselves, see Parente, "La Chiesa e il «Talmud»," 618-619; Isaiah Sonne, *Expurgation of Hebrew Books. The Work of Jewish Scholars: A Contribution to the History of the Censorship of Hebrew Books in Italy in the Sixteenth Century* (New York: New York Public Library, 1943); Caffiero, *I libri degli ebrei*, 211; Caffiero, *Legami pericolosi*, 53-54; Luca Andreoni and Martina Mampieri, "«Tutta l'arte de rabini». Un caso di confisca di libri ebraici ad Ancona: controllo e conflitto (1728)," in *L'Inquisizione e gli ebrei,* ed. Caffiero, 51-55.

[81] I am here referring to the aforementioned payment in the *Lista de' pagamenti fatti da Giacinto Cassima, Maestro di Casa del' S. Offizio* (List of payments made to Giacinto Cassima, Holy Office *Maestro di Casa*), made to copyists in 1745. In it we find a payment to Giovanni Costanzi for a copy of something described in no further detail than as "Indice de libri ebraici." ACDF, ASV 062, 1745,

was amended and expanded until at least the 1780s.[82] It is reasonable to suppose that in 1758, 10 years after the work was begun, Costanzi's work had still not reached a state of satisfactory completion. This can be inferred from reading a 1758 document entitled *Istruzzione sopra I Libri Rabbinici, e sopra la maniera da osservarsi nel Correggerli, ed espurgarli* (Instructions for Rabbinic Books, and Specifically the Methods to Follow when Correcting and Expurgating Them). It was written by Costanzi and addressed to Holy Office *consultore* Giuseppe Assemani.[83] In it, Costanzi reports that "dalli 30 novembre 1747 si è addossato la cura d'incominciare ad illustrare, ad ampliare le Regole del Zikuk, ed a registrare alcuni Libri Rabbinici in esso non compresi" (from November 30, 1747, he took it upon himself to begin illustrating, to widen the scope of the Zikuk Rules and to record some Rabbinic books not included therein),[84] but the work was unfinished

n. 42. Furthermore, in a 1747 request he recalls the strife of having, "fin dal mese di Agosto 1745 per mostrare alla S. Inquisizione certi Indici de ' libri permessi ad uso degli ebrei, fra i quali ve ne sono molti contro la S. Fede Cattolica, e pieni di superstizioni" (from the month of August 1745, to show the Holy Inquisition certain Indices of books Jews were permitted to use, including many that contradicted the Holy Catholic faith and were full of superstitions). ACDF Priv. S.O. Priv. S.O. 1743-1749, 117. The manuscript Vat. Lat. 8111 ff. *Istruzzione sopra I Libri Rabbinici, e sopra la maniera da osservarsi nel Correggerli, ed espurgarli* composed by Costanzi and signed off by Giuseppe Simone Assemani reads: "Gio. Antonio Costanzi destinato revisore dei libri ebraici, e rabbinici dalla suprema Inquisizione di Roma con l'oracolo della S: Mem: di Benedetto XIV. Sino dalli 30 novembre 1747, si è addossato la cura d'incominciare ad illustrare, ad ampliare le Regole del Zikuk, ed a registrare alcuni Libri Rabbinici in esso non compresi" (Gio. Antonio Costanzi, appointed reviser of Hebrew and Rabbinic books by the Supreme Inquisition of Rome with the divine authority of Benedict XIV. From November 30, 1747, he took it upon himself to begin illustrating, to widen the scope of the Zikuk Rules and to record some Rabbinic books not included therein), 18r. In a 1758 request we read of a payment made precisely on November 30, 1747: "li 30 novembre 1747 fu assegnato scudi tre il mese che puntualmente li sono stati pagati" (On November 30, 1747 he was assigned three *scudi* the month and they were punctually paid). And then in 1751 "in occasione di avere fatto un Indice e Istruzione sopra i Libri ebraici Monsig. Assessore le fece avere nel mese di Marzo 1751 tre zecchini effettivi di ricognizione" (having created an Index and Instructions on Hebrew books, *Monsignore Assessore* granted him as recognition three *zecchini* in March 1751). ACDF, Priv. S.O. Priv. S.O. 1755-1759, 88.

[82] A 1782 copy can be found in ACDF, St. St. CC2 -a, 2.

[83] The manuscript can be found in the Vatican Apostolic Library: Vat. Lat. 8111, ff. 15r-19v. On the manuscript, see Berliner, *Censur und Confiscation.* The same collection of manuscripts contains various texts relating to the requisition of Hebrew books in the Papal States.

[84] *Istruzzione*, Vat. Lat. 8111, 18r. The term "regole del Zikuk" probably refers to the *Sefer haziqquq,* an expurgatory index used to correct Hebrew books. Popper, *The Censorship of Hebrew Books*, 77-89; Parente, "La Chiesa e il «Talmud»," 598-612. For more on the correction of Hebrew books and related practices, see Sonne, "Expurgation of Hebrew Books. The Work of Jewish

and Costanzi lamented the absence of a "competente Onorario" (appropriate remuneration).[85] Costanzi showed his initial drafts to Pietro Girolamo Guglielmi (1694-1773), Holy Office *assessore* from 1743 to 1753, and also to Ludovico Valenti (1695-1763), Guglielmi's successor who occupied the role from 1753/4 to 1759.[86]
In addition to the work redacting and updating the *Norme* and the related indices, various copies of the same document would be needed to assist and govern the work of revisers and inquisitors located throughout the Papal States.[87] The stark difficulties of the general raid of 1753, as well as the enormous quantity of sequestered books to be examined, likely slowed operations.[88] Furthermore, for books permitted with corrections, revisers would have to provide "le pagine, le linee, con le parole in Ebraico o Rabbinico, tradotte in Italiano, che debbono cancellarsi o correggersi" (the pages and lines, and the words in Hebrew or Rabbinic, translated into Italian, that needed to be deleted or corrected),[89] to assist the local revisers in their task and to ensure that the practice of correcting Hebrew books was consistent. Costanzi's role in the mid-eighteenth century operations to

Scholars"; Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, *The Censor, the Editor, and the Text*: *The Catholic Church and the Shaping of the Jewish Canon in the Sixteenth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 120-174; Gustavo Sacerdote, "Deux index expurgatoires des livres hébreux," *Revue des Études Juives* 30 (1895): 257-283; Nathan Porges, "Der Hebräische Index Expurgatorius' in *Festschrft zum 70. Geburtstage A. Berliner's,"* eds. Aron Freimann and Meier Hildesheimer (Frankfurt: Kauffmann, 1903), 273-295; Mauro Perani, "Confisca e censura di libri ebraici a Modena fra Cinque e Seicento," in *L'Inquisizione e gli ebrei in Italia*, ed. Michele Luzzati (Rome - Bari: Laterza, 1994), 287-320; Shifra Baruchson-Arbib and Gila Prebor, "Sefer Ha-Ziquq: An Index of forbidden Hebrew books: The Book's use and its influence on Hebrew Printing," *La Bibliofilia* 109, no. 1 (2007): 3-31; Federica Francesconi, "Illustrious Rabbis Facing the Italian Inquisition: Accommodating Censorship in Seventeenth-Century Italy," in *Jewish Books and their Reader: Aspects of the Intellectual Life of Christians and Jews in Early Modern Europe*, eds. Scott Mandelbrote and Joanna Weinberg (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 100-121; Piet Van Boxel, "Hebrew Books and Censorship in Sixteenth-Century Italy," in Ibid., 75-99; Federica Francesconi, "La censura dei libri ebraici «infetti et perniziosi» nella Modena del Seicento: processi, negoziazioni e discussioni di ebrei e cristiani nei fori dell'Inquisizione," *Archivio italiano per la storia della pietà* 26, (2013): 387-412; 395-396.

[85] *Istruzzione*, Vat. Lat. 8111, 19v.

[86] Ibid., 18r-v.

[87] Ibid., 19r-v.

[88] For more on these issues, see the study by Caffiero, *Legami pericolosi*, 44-77.

[89] This citation comes from the text of the *Norme* itself, as recorded in Caffiero, *I libri degli ebrei*, 211.

confiscate Hebrew books[90] was divided into various tasks and continued for a long time after the requisitions had ended, especially in matters relating to the examination of books taken from Jews.[91] The texts sequestered—even those permitted—had to be signed off and therefore scrutinized by the local revisers,[92] who had hundreds and hundreds of books to check. The quantity of Hebrew books taken can be understood from Costanzi's *Relazioni*, the reports he wrote on the raids.[93] These accounts are presented as reports on the actions taken in the raids and on the resulting confiscations. They give details on the methods used, the timelines of the raids and any problems encountered. The lists annexed to the *Relazioni* are of particular interest as they can be considered veritable bibliographies of Hebrew books, often accompanied by a short but thorough note from the reviser explaining the reviser's motives and the seriousness of the

[90] For more on the raids in those years, see Berliner, *Censur Und Confiscation*; Popper, *The Censorship of Hebrew Books*; Parente, "La Chiesa e il «Talmud»," 619-620; Caffiero, *Legami pericolosi*, 44-77.

[91] For an example of a text corrected by Costanzi, see Nachmanide's' commentary on the Pentateuch, in manuscript format, digitalized by the University of Manchester: Hebrew MS 8 (XV sec.) and available in https://www.digitalcollections.manchester.ac.uk/view/MS-HEBREW-00008/1 (Accessed December 22, 2023). Costanzi's annotation is found in f254a: "Rivisto, et corretto da me s.tto, questo Libro di Biur al- / Htora, seu Expositio Legii, autore R. Mose Bar / Nachman, in compendio, detto Haramban – / scritto in Membrana, carattere Rabbinico – / q.to dì 16 Agosto 1769 – / – Gio An.to Costanzi –" (Reviewed and corrected by me, the undersigned, this Book Biur al- / Htora, seu Expositio Legii. Author R. Mose Bar / Nachman, in compendio, aka Haramban – / written on Membrane, Rabbinic alphabet – / 16 August 1769 – / – Gio An.to Costanzi –). The corrections (deletions) are found in ff 65b-66a, 67a, 92a, 173a, 198b, 200a-201a, 241b-242a. Other texts signed off and corrected by Costanzi were included in the *Fondo Zelada* (Cattedrale di Toledo-Biblioteca Nazionale di Madrid), as reported in Cesare Colafemmina ed., *Ahima'az Ben Paltiel. Sefer Yuhasin. Libro delle discendenze. Vicende di una famiglia ebraica di Ora nei secoli IX-XI* (Cassano delle Murge: Messaggi, 2001), 10-11.

[92] *Istruzzione*, Vat. Lat. 8111, 18v.

[93] See the previously cited *Relazione della perquisizione de' libri Ebbraici fatta nelli Ghetti di Roma, e di tutto lo Stato Ecclesiastico, colla maniera di correggere li permissibili, e ritenersi l'incorreggibili* (A Report on the Hebrew Book Raids in the Roman Ghetto and in All the Papal States, Including the Method for Correcting Permitted Books, and Books Deemed Incorrigible) by Costanzi in *Vat. Lat.* 8111, ff. 29-151. Other interesting texts are held in the archives of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, in the Stanza Storica collection. These documents can give us important evidence about the size of Hebrew book collections in the Papal States in the 18th century. For specifics on Ancona (1728): Andreoni and Mampieri, "«Tutta l'arte de rabini». Un caso di confisca di libri ebraici ad Ancona," 49-81.

judgment given to each Hebrew book, as well as some indications on the edition and its format.

It was also Costanzi who prepared various *censure* (censorship notes) between the 1760s and 1780s,[94] presented as a qualitative and analytical annotation to the sequestered books. *Censura* here does not refer to the complex Ecclesiastical control mechanism, but to one tool within it.[95] From reading contemporaneous documents, we can surmise that the term *censura* is intended in its Latin etymological sense, which includes examination and judgment. These documents speak of the reviser's careful examination of each book and the expurgatory action to be taken. The *censure* generally give the title of the book examined, a short introduction to the author of the book, a description of the edition examined, and some extracts from the text, accompanied by analytical observations explaining what the issue with the book is and indicating any other editions. They were prepared in response to requests submitted by Jews asking for their books to be returned to them, with the aim of explaining in detail the reasons for withholding and often outlawing the books.[96] They included the *Tiqqune shabbat* (Sabbath Prayers) by Isaac ben Solomon Luria (1534-1572), containing mystical poems for the Sabbath; *Shene luhot ha-berit* (Two Tablets of the Covenant) by Isaiah Horowitz (c.1555-1630), an encyclopedic compilation of Jewish rituals, ethics and mysticism; *Sefer ha-'iqqarim* (A Book of Principles) by Joseph Albo (c. 1380-1444), setting out the dogma of Judaism; *Yalqut Re'ubeni* (A Compilation of Reuben) by Reuben hak-Kohen Hoschke (?-1673), a collection of *midrashim*; '*En Israel* (or *En Ya'aqob*, The Well of Jacob) by Jacob ibn Habib (c. 1460-1516) on the Aggadic material in the Talmud; *Yalquṭ Shim'oni* (A Compilation of Simeon)—it is unclear who the author is, but it likely dates back to the thirteenth century and it handles the Aggadic materials in the Jewish Bible. Costanzi runs a sort of

[94] The *censure* are found in various folders held in the archives of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith: ACDF, st. st. cc2-a.

[95] For observations on this term: Mario Infelise, *I padroni dei libri. Il controllo sulla stampa nella prima età moderna* (Rome - Bari: Laterza, 2019), 20 (ed. or.: 2014); Vittorio Frajese, *Nascita dell'Indice. La censura ecclesiastica dal Rinascimento alla Controriforma* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 2008), 9 (ed. or.: 2006). On the complexity of *censura* and its definition: Robert Darnton, *I censori all'opera. Come gli Stati hanno plasmato la letteratura* (Milan: Adelphi, 2017), 25-41 and 255-272 (ed. or. *Censors at Work: How States Shaped Literature,* New York: W. W. Norton, 2014).

[96] For more on the requests for books to be returned: Caffiero, *Legami pericolosi*, 73-77.

comparison of the different editions of texts he examines, indicating the number of pages in the various editions found and checked, as is the case in his censorship of the *Tiqqune shabbat* and *Shene luhot ha-berit.*

Conclusion

For the most part, Giovanni Antonio Costanzi's life story can be reconstructed through the duties he carried out for the Holy Office. To understand Catholic concerns over Hebrew books it is necessary to provide an outline of the context in which Costanzi's work also fell. The Holy Office's policy concerning Jews was part of a hostile Catholic position that intensified and changed shape in the eighteenth century. During this period, modern challenges driven by ideas connected to the Enlightenment upset the stability the Church had enjoyed internally and externally. This crisis had many faces: the decline of the Catholic evangelization mission, the changing political framework in Europe and the encroachment of intellectual thought linked to the Enlightenment.[97] Ecclesiastical policy saw the number of decrees against the Jewish minority intensify—and the raids on the communities in the Papal States were a consequence.[98] Among the decrees were measures for controlling Hebrew books. The Ecclesiastical body in charge of controlling Hebrew books was the Holy Office rather than the Congregation of the Index, which was specifically in charge of controlling books.[99] The role of the

[97] For general information on these points: Vincenzo Lavenia, *Storia della Chiesa. 3. L'età moderna* (Bologna: Edizioni Dehoniane Bologna, 2020), 267-295. See the important reflections found in Stow, *Anna and Tranquillo*, 79-90. For a specific study on the Jewish *côté* and the impact of the context of the Enlightenment and governmental reforms: Francesca Bregoli, *Mediterranean Enlightenment: Livornese Jews, Tuscan Culture, and Eighteenth-Century Reform* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014).

[98] For the correlation between the upswing in uncompromising policies towards Jews and the Church's attitude towards the Enlightenment: Mario Rosa, "La Santa Sede e gli ebrei nel Settecento," in *Storia d'Italia, Annali 16/2, Gli ebrei in Italia*, ed. Corrado Vivanti (Turin: Einaudi, 1997), 1069-1087; 1072-1074; Caffiero, *Tra Chiesa e Stato. Gli ebrei italiani dall'età dei Lumi agli anni della Rivoluzione*, in Ibid., 1091-1132.

[99] For more on the Talmud and the Congregation of the Index, see Frajese, *Nascita dell'Indice*, 127-131. For general information on the relationship between the Inquisition, the Index and Jews: Pier Cesare Ioly Zorattini, ed., *Processi del S. Uffizio di Venezia contro Ebrei e Giudaizzanti*, 2 vol. (Florence: L. S. Olschki, 1980-1999); Ioly Zorattini, "Il S. Uffizio di Venezia e il controllo della

Holy Office's Congregation of Cardinals was to protect the purity of the Catholic faith, particularly against the spread of heterodox ideas and the Reformation, and thus to take action against heresy and heretics.[100] Jews did not theoretically fall within this category,[101] but they came within the Inquisition's purview if their views were deemed detrimental to Christianity: [102] that of course included the reading or storage of books deemed heretical and containing blasphemy.[103] Jews could be subject to the Holy Office's judgment for crimes involving offenses against the Christian doctrine. Alleged offenses—which could be contained in Hebrew books especially, as mentioned, in the Talmud—related to blaspheming against Jesus or Mary, cursing Christians and making propositions against God.[104]

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stampa ebraica nella seconda metà del '500," in *La censura libraria nell'Europa del secolo XVI*, ed. Ugo Rozzo (Udine: Forum, 1997), 127-147; Stephan Wendehorst, ed., *The Roman Inquisition, the Index and the Jews* (Leiden: Brill, 2004); Paul Grendler, *The Roman Inquisition and the Venetian Press, 1540-1605* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015).

[100] The establishment of the Holy Office of the Inquisition by Paul III (1534-1549) in 1542, with Apostolic Constitution *Licet ab initio,* was intended to renew the previous Inquisitorial office. For more on the history and goals set out in *Licet ab initio*, see Gianluca D'Errico, "Licet ab initio," in *Dizionario storico dell'Inquisizione*, eds. Prosperi, Lavenia, and Tedeschi, vol. II, 906. For general information on the history of the Inquisition: John Tedeschi, *The Prosecution of Heresy: Collected Studies on the Inquisition in Early Modern Italy* (New York: Binghamton, 1991); Adriano Prosperi, *Tribunali della coscienza. Inquisitori, confessori, missionari* (Turin: Einaudi, 1996); Andrea Del Col, *L'Inquisizione in Italia. Dal XII al XXI secolo* (Milan: Mondadori, 2006); Katherine Aron-Beller and Christopher Black, eds., *The Roman Inquisition. Centre versus Peripheries* (Leiden - Boston: Brill, 2018).

[101] Jews, especially those hailing from Spain or Portugal, could be persecuted in instances in which they were accused of practicing their former religion after having been baptized. Adriano Prosperi, "L'Inquisizione romana e gli ebrei," in *L'Inquisizione e gli ebrei in Italia,* ed. Luzzatti, 67-120; 76-78; Pier Cesare Ioly Zorattini, ed., *L'identità dissimulata. Giudaizzanti iberici nell'Europa cristiana dell'età moderna* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2000).

[102] For more information: Pier Cesare Ioly Zorattini, "Ebrei in Italia," in *Dizionario storico dell'Inquisizione*, eds. Prosperi, Lavenia, and Tedeschi, vol. II, 523-527. On the subject of the assimilation of Jews/heretics/infidels in the Middle Ages: Joshua Trachtenberg, *The Devil and the Jews: The Medieval Conception of the Jew and Its Relation to Modern Anti-Semitism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1943), 170-187.

[103] For information on the legal bases for the Inquisition's controls over Jews: Stow, *Il Ghetto di Roma nel Cinquecento*, 11-12.

[104] Parente, "La Chiesa e il «Talmud»," 548-566; Stow, *The Burning of the Talmud in 1553*. Also see the matter in connection with the Bible in Gigliola Fragnito, *La Bibbia al rogo. La censura ecclesiastica e i volgarizzamenti della Scrittura (1471-1605)* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1997).

Accusations of heresy arose from misunderstandings or distortions of the meaning of Scripture, especially with regard to passages relating to messianic prophecies.[105] In that same period, on 17 September 1751, Benedict XIV republished the so-called *Editto sopra gli Ebrei*, on the basis of what Clement XII (1730-1740) had issued on February 2, 1733.[106] Hebrew books play a significant role in the proposed Catholic rulings set forth in the text.[107] This is not the place for a detailed analysis of the relationship between the Holy Office and Hebrew books,[108] but it is necessary to call attention to certain tools through which the Church took care of the problem of books: the role of converts. Costanzi—former rabbi and Christian convert—represents one of those tools. His work as a reviser and interpreter of Hebrew books allows us today to investigate certain specific aspects of Catholic control in the Papal States. Through Costanzi, appointed as he was to roles in expurgation, censorship and sequestration, we can today access precious information not only on the complex mechanism of Catholic surveillance and rule, but also on the important library collections of eighteenth-century Jewish Italians. An in-depth study of the *Relazioni* cited above, alongside analysis of the size of the collections of Jewish works held, for example, in the Casanatense Library or in other collections to which the requisitions likely contributed, would reveal an important starting point for understanding part of the heritage of Hebrew books. [109]

[105] For information on the condemnation of the Talmud as a heretical book, see Parente, "La Chiesa e il «Talmud»," 612-615.

[106] L'*Editto sopra gli Ebrei* was republished by Pius VI (1775-1779) on April 5, 1775 and again in 1793. For more on this, see Attilio Milano, "L'Editto sopra gli ebrei di Pio VI e le mene ricattatorie di un letterato," *La Rassegna Mensile di Israel* 19, no. 2 (1953): 65-80; Milano, *Storia degli ebrei in Italia*, 296-296; Paolo Elia, "I fratelli Verri e l'editto di Pio VI," *La Rassegna Mensile di Israel* 43, no. 3-4 (1977): 133-136; Marina Caffiero, "Le insidie de' perfidi giudei. Antiebraismo e riconquista cattolica alla fine del Settecento," *Rivista storica italiana* 2 (1993): 555-581. The 1775 edict is perhaps the most renowned, as it has often been used in contemporary historiography to highlight the Church's attitude towards Jews in the 18th century.

[107] Books are the subject of the very first clauses, which underscore the prohibition of the Talmud and of other works deemed dangerous due to containing material offensive to Christianity. The sequestration of Hebrew books had to be authorized by the Church authorities. The rules reiterate earlier legislation on books, which is stated in the text itself.

[108] For more on this: Caffiero, *Legami pericolosi*.

[109] For some aspects concerning Hebrew books in the Jewish communities of Modena and Livorno, see, respectively, Federica Francesconi, "Dangerous Readings in Early Modern Modena: Negotiating Jewish Culture in an Italian Key," in *The Hebrew Book in Early Modern Italy*, eds. Joseph R. Hacker and Adam Shear (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 133-155;

Specifically, it could give us important information on what Jews in eighteenth-century Italian communities definitely read and had in their possession, and how Catholic control shaped the culture, altering what Hebrew books were produced, preserved and circulated.[110]

Appendix

A List of Jews converted by Giovanni Antonio Costanzi, provided in the footnote of his 1747 petition requesting suitable remuneration for his role as Reviser of Hebrew books.[111]

Jews Converted to the Holy Faith by the *Oratore*

Moisé Taracino Livornese, now Antonio Ricciajolo, convinced of the Catholic truth by way of a letter, came to Rome, where he received his Holy Baptism alongside his wife, three daughters aged 9, 7 and 2, and spinster sister-in-law, 18.

Gentile Gallica Romana, now Maria Teresa Albani, finding herself in the home of a Christian for obvious reasons was convinced that she had been tricked by Rabbis and, as the Messiah has already come, was baptized with her son known as Agostino Giustiniani who was an expert of the Christian faith in the first year of His Holiness's glorious Papacy.

Samuele Fermon Costantinopolitano, now Gaspare Cagnetti, of Livorno, was persuaded of the Catholic truth [by] way of a letter and came to Rome where he was baptized with his two daughters, 18 and 16, now both nuns outside of Rome.

Francesca Bregoli, "Hebrew Printing in Eighteenth-Century Livorno: From Government Control to a Free Market," in Ibid., 171-196.

[110] For general information on the influence the control of books has on culture, see Darnton, *I censori all'opera*.

[111] ACDF, Priv. S.O. Priv. S.O. 1743-1749, 117. The English translations was done by a translator from the Italian original language.

Angelo della Riccia, now Gioacchino di Santa Famiglia, 82, convinced of the truth by means of a sermon, received his Holy Baptism and now resides in the devout *Casa de Catecumeni*.[112]

Miriam Benfatto earned her PhD in History of Christianity and Church History from the University of Bologna. She is currently a research fellow at the Department of History and Cultures at the same university and is the recipient of a two-year scholarship sponsored by the Rothschild Foundation Hanadiv Europe. Her research focuses on historiography of the Historical Jesus and Jewish-Christian polemical literature in the early modern period.

Keywords: Giovanni Antonio Costanzi, Holy Office, Censorship, Hebrew Books, Jewish converts

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[112] The name Angelo della Riccia appears in the *Descriptio hebreorum* of 1733. See Monica Militi, "Descriptio hebreorum," in *Gli abitanti del ghetto di Roma*, ed. Groppi, 237; 250.

Andrea Riccardi, *La guerra del silenzio. Pio XII, il nazismo, gli ebrei* (Rome - Bari: Laterza, 2022), pp. 384.

by *Michele Sarfatti*

Andrea Riccardi is a well-known Italian historian, one of the founders of the Catholic Movement "Comunità di Sant'Egidio." He has published several essays on the Catholic Church in the 20th century. One of them, *L'inverno più lungo. 1943-44: Pio XII, gli ebrei e i nazisti a Roma* (Rome - Bari: Laterza, 2008) [*The Longest Winter. 1943-44: Pius XII, the Jews and the Nazis in Rome*], was written before the Vatican archives on those years were made open to the public. It deals with the assistance given by Catholics to Roman Jews during the Nazi occupation and under the Italian Social Republic [the Repubblica Sociale Italiana], from September 1943 to June 1944.

In 2008, when the book was published, the only documents of the Holy See's Secretariat of State pertaining to the Shoah available to scholars were those that the Holy See itself had published in *Actes et documents du Saint Siège relatifs à la seconde guerre mondiale*, eds. Pierre Blet, Robert Graham, Angelo Martini and Burkhardt Schneider, 11 vols. (Città del Vaticano: Libreria editrice vaticana, 1965-1981).

On March 2 2020, most of the documents either issued or collected by the Secretariat of State during the pontificate of Pius XII (1939-1958), particularly those dating from 1939 to 1945, were made available for public consultation. A few days later access was discontinued because of the Covid pandemic but was subsequently resumed, starting from May. The documents are kept in the Vatican Apostolic Archives (which until October 2019 were known as the Vatican Secret Archives) [Archivio Apostolico Vaticano, AAV] and in the Historical Archive of the Secretariat of State-Section for Relations with States and International Organizations [Archivio Storico della Segreteria di Stato-Sezione per i Rapporti con gli Stati e le Organizzazioni Internazionali, ASRS]. The two archives are independent and located on opposite sides of the Belvedere Court. Access may be obtained via a variety of procedures, each requiring special passes, making it less than easy for scholars to access the material.

The pleas for help sent to the Pope or to the Secretariat of State by those who had been classified as being "of Jewish race" in a number of anti-Semite countries, and who professed either the Jewish or (in many cases) the Catholic religion, are to be found mainly in the series "Jews" (Ebrei) in the Fond Extraordinary Ecclesiastical Affairs (Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari), (at the time First Section of the Secretariat of State), kept in the ASRS, or in the section "Race" (Razza) of the Fond Papal Commission for Aid [Pontificia Commissione Soccorsi] (that came under the authority of what was then the Second Section of the Secretariat of State) kept in the AAV. The series "Jews" for the most part contains requests concerning entry visas, passports and issues related to the implementation of anti-Semite laws in various countries, whereas the section "Race" is devoted to requests for aid, financial or otherwise. This division, however, could not be strictly maintained, with the result that other material relating to aid activities can be found in other archival resources.[1]

Information on how the Shoah was carried out in individual European territories is to be found mainly in the Extraordinary Ecclesiastical Affairs section of the ASRS archive, in the series organized by nation; but further material may be found in the archives of the Papal Nunciatures, of the Commission for Aid and of other bureaus and organizations kept in the AAV.

After examining these "new" documents, in November 2022, Andrea Riccardi published *La guerra del silenzio. Pio XII, il nazismo, gli ebrei* (Rome - Bari: Laterza, 2022) [*The War of Silence. Pius XII, Nazism, the Jews*, hereinafter referred to as *La guerra*]. The book runs to 380 pages. Though it has an index of names, it lacks a list of archival resources examined. It also lacks a bibliography and an explanatory list of acronyms.

Before the publication of *La guerra*, two books based on these "new" Vatican documents had also been published. Both dealt entirely or partially with the issue of the Holy See in the face of the Shoah. The first, by Johan Ickx, was *Le Bureau. Les Juifs de Pie XII* (Neuilly-sur-Seine: Lafon, 2020), translated into Italian with the title *Pio XII e gli ebrei* (Milano: Rizzoli, 2021). This book too lacks an index of names, a list of archival resources, a bibliography and an explanatory list of

[1] Giovanni Coco, "Concevoir le secours. Pie XII, la Secrétairerie d'Etat du Vatican et l'assistance aux Juifs (1938-1947)," *Revue d'Histoire de la Shoah*, 218 (octobre 2023): 93-127.

acronyms. Printed on the cover's inner pages is a list of over half the names on the dossiers contained in the series "Jews." According to the author, the total runs to some 2,800.

Ickx is head of the ASRS and all the Vatican documents he has used for the book are kept in that archive. Since the book's first edition in French was published in September 2020, one may infer that he conceived and partially wrote it while he was preparing to open the documents in his archive to the public. Ickx's book is divided into chapters, each devoted to a single topic following the Vatican's descriptive documentation. The stories have not been subjected to historiographical verification.

The second book is David I. Kertzer's *Un papa in guerra. La storia segreta di Mussolini, Hitler e Pio XII* (Milano: Garzanti, [May] 2022); Id., *The Pope at War. The Secret History of Pius XII, Mussolini, and Hitler* (New York: Random House, [June] 2022). The book does have an index of names, a list of archival resources consulted, a bibliography and an explanatory list of acronyms.

Kertzer devotes considerable attention to the issue of the Holy See in the face of the Shoah, but the main focus of the book is on the general question of the relations between the three governments, or rather between the representatives of each of them. The concluding chapter, 'Final Thoughts. The Silence of the Pope' is, however, though brief, of importance to the issue.

Kertzer's narrative is based on documents in the main archives of the Vatican and in the archives of five other countries. As to the Vatican material, Kertzer has made ample use of the "new" documental series. For many of the documents already present in the *Actes et documents*, he quotes only this latter publication, and does not add the record reference.

Finally, in November 2022, Riccardi published his *La Guerra*, the subject of this review.

The book consists of a brief introduction, nine chapters, and a few pages of concluding remarks. The author's reflections are scattered throughout the chapters, and it therefore seems easier, in commenting on them, to follow the order in which they appear in the book.

In the introduction, when describing the Second Vatican Council and the changes it ushered in, the author writes: "In this climate, Pius XII's choices during the war appear acquiescent [accomodanti], even embarrassing, not just because of the new

awareness of the Shoah that has matured in the Western world, but also because of the Church's 'prophetic vocation'" (p. XI). One might readily see this statement as a clear message to the reader that this book is not only an historian's reconstruction of a prominent Pontiff's actions, but also a Catholic's reflection on the guidance exerted by one of his pastors. As to the terms used in the above-quoted sentence, the word "choices" is noteworthy, as it points to Pius XII as the protagonist of the Holy See's position.

In this section, Riccardi states repeatedly that the subject of his book is "the silence" (or "the silences"). As we know, both in past and in recent years most historians have focused their reconstructions and analyses on the concept of "silence". One might feel, however, that it would have been preferable to focus the historical research on the question of Pius XII's "actions." Clearly, the Pope might on the one hand have publicly expressed hope, solidarity, or condemnation; on the other he might, even in a non-public manner, organize or support actions designed to combat the events. A simple account of the alternative between speaking and keeping silent does not, one might feel, cover the entire range of options that were open to Eugenio Pacelli at the time, although obviously that choice was a formative part of his deliberations. We should not forget, after all, that "Charity" includes "deeds" as well as intentions.

Riccardi informs the reader in his opening pages that "Pius XII's silence" was not limited to Nazi persecution of Jews, but also to other aspects of the war, primarily the Nazis' persecution of the Poles, by which he means the Catholic majority.

The first chapter paints a broad picture of the entire situation, of the Holy See and of some of the key actors in these events. This summary, although rather too succinct, is very useful. One would have appreciated a more detailed description of the people working in the Secretariat of State and an expansion of some of the issues mentioned. For example, "The Church cannot avoid having dealings (even if limited ones) with a State where its followers are living" (p. 12) is a proposition begging for further analysis.

Throughout these pages Riccardi makes a point that is one of the principal conclusions of his research. The theory that Pius XII "was not aware" of the extermination, that "he was not informed (or only very partially informed) of the fate of the Jews," is a theory that "does not hold true in face of documentary

evidence" (p. 52). This is clearly in agreement with his previous statement that the Pope's course of action regarding the Shoah was the result of a "choice."

The second chapter describes the prelude to war and the steps undertaken by the pontiff in 1939-1940 to prevent or limit it, steps that were unsuccessful, as is well known.

One might point out that the author can at times be somewhat flexible within the chronological constraints he himself has imposed on this chapter. For example, he mentions that towards the end of a long radio broadcast on 24 December 1942, the pope devoted a few words to the "... hundreds of thousands of guiltless people, (...) [who were] because of nationality or race [stirpe]... fated to die" (p. 80). This phrase is quoted again at a different point in the book, when Riccardi explains how news about the extermination reached the Holy See in the last months of 1942 (p. 191). On both occasions he quotes international reactions to the broadcast, but does not engage with the question as to whether the pope's words were of any substantive help to the Jews. This might suggest that for Riccardi, as for many other historians, the historiographical issue of the pope's "silences" on the Shoah has more to do with the pontiff than with the extermination itself.

The third chapter deals with the first of the two great issues concerning the "silences" of the Holy See, namely its position on the Nazi occupation of Poland. Berlin dealt very harshly with Poland as a country and with its (prevalently) Catholic nature. Riccardi writes that at first the Holy See did, on some occasions, express condemnation (for instance in the Encyclical *Summi Pontificatus* of October 20 1939), but then rightly adds that very soon "the term 'silence' began to be used to define Pius XII's attitude towards Poland during the war" (p. 95).

The author tells of various messages concerning this situation that were sent to the Vatican from Poland, both directly, and through Italian military chaplains travelling on Italian army hospital trains; he then writes: "The historian's role is neither that of a defending counsel nor of a prosecutor: this is obvious, but needs to be kept in mind when dealing with such a dramatic history that has stirred up so great an animosity. The historian's task is to understand the period and its actors" (p. 107). These reflections are obviously unimpeachable, but in *La Guerra* they come across as those of a prominent Catholic who looks with pain on the unsatisfactory behavior of a past pontiff, rather than the work an analyst intent on "defining," albeit without "judging."

As we know, the pope was a man accustomed to pondering the meaning and the perception of his actions. He chose not to express publicly any support of the Polish Catholics, particularly after the theater of war had changed so dramatically in June 1941. His intention was neither to be, nor to be perceived as being, either pro-Russian or anti-German, as such a perception might have proved damaging to both German and Austrian Catholics.

Following these considerations, the chapter becomes even more complex, when the author turns his attention to the extremely harsh persecution of the Jews, particularly in Poland and the adjoining territories. Here, the timing of the narrative shifts from 1939-1942 to 1942-1943.

As in the previous pages, *La Guerra* offers many quotations (some previously unpublished) taken from reports from members of the clergy, from Italian company managers, from representatives of the Polish government in exile. When referring to the Jews, the word extermination appears repeatedly and there are sporadic references to the deployment of gas (pp. 107-121). In this section, Riccardi quotes no less than twice the words written in September 1942 by Giovanni Battista Montini, one of the deputy Secretaries of State, after his well-known conversation with Giovanni Malvezzi, manager of IRI, who had visited Poland on a business trip: "The massacres of the Jews have reached dimensions and forms horrific and heinous [proporzioni e forme esecrande e spaventose]" (pp. 111, 121). These words, one may feel, refer very precisely to news of the use of gas for mass murder.

One senses that it might have been more helpful if these two issues, the position on the Poles and the position on the Jews, had been treated more independently. After all, at the time, the manner and intention with which the two persecutions were carried out by no means fully intersected. Moreover, in March 1943 the Secretariat of State made plans to break the first of the two silences (p. 129) and on June 2 the Pope publicly expressed his warm support of the Polish people. No such declaration was made on behalf of the Jews.

The fourth chapter deals with the complex relationship between the Vatican and Nazi Germany. It might usefully be pointed out that the frequent use of the term "Christianity" instead of "Catholicism" makes it difficult to understand fully the author's reflections. However, he outlines well how the two "projects" were deeply incompatible. On a different level, he writes that at the time the Catholic

community that looked to the Vatican for guidance faced the following dilemma: "Is it really the Church's task to defend the Jews? Or should the Church's priority be defending the interests of Catholics and its own freedom?" (p. 150). Riccardi does not answer his own questions, but the very fact that he does not, and the way in which the two questions are phrased, reveal the relevance that the first of the two has for him and the distress he feels because of the answer the Holy See gave to it.

The fifth section, titled "A Difficult Moment", is in my view the core of the book. In September 1942 Pius XII received Myron Taylor, whom President Roosevelt had appointed as his personal envoy to the Holy See. It should be noted that the transit of an "enemy" through Italy in wartime was eloquent proof of Rome's respect for the autonomy of the Vatican. Taylor's subsequent talks with Secretary of State Luigi Maglione and with deputies Giovanni Battista Montini and Domenico Tardini took place between September 19 and 26, and touched upon many issues. As he was leaving, Taylor handed the Secretariat of State a written report on the extermination of the Jews that he had only just received from Washington. From the late delivery of this report, we might reasonably assume that during the preceding weeks, while the mission was being prepared, the US Government had not included the treatment of Jews by the Nazis among the issues it considered of fundamental importance.

Be that as it may, the report contained extremely serious information, to the extent that the United States felt it necessary to bring it officially to the attention of the pope and of the Secretariat of State. The latter's opinion was encapsulated in a comment written by Monsignor Angelo Dell'Acqua, who disputed the truth of the facts listed in the report, was critical of what he called mere conjecture on the part of the Americans, and even claimed that an intervention by the Holy See would cause Nazi persecution to grow worse (thus denying that it had reached the level of severity certified in the report, or the level of severity reported to the Secretariat of State by other sources). Again, Riccardi's comment on Dell'Acqua's text, phrased as a question, is harsh: "The prelate's minimizing and dismissive opinion is striking, if only because the Holy See actually possessed very serious information on the treatment of the Jews. How is such an opinion possible, when it was known that the Nazis' aim was to exterminate the Jews?" (p. 170). Once

again, the author does not answer his own question, which once again takes on the import of a harsh comment by a man of deep faith.

The pages that follow describe how news of the genocide continued to accumulate and record the comments of various leading Catholic personages. One example is the message sent in November 1942 by the Apostolic Nuncio in Berlin, which Riccardi himself calls "important." Among other things, it contained the phrase: "however, little hope is harbored here that it may be possible, with the country's internal forces alone [con le sole forze interne del paese], to curb this extreme measure which intends to suppress in Germany any possibility of an even partially non-Arian progeny" (p. 187). This statement deserves to be examined very carefully: one might feel that its mention of the inadequacy of "internal forces alone" implied a request to the Holy See to intervene; *La Guerra*, however, does not dwell further on this aspect.

As already mentioned, towards the end of his radio message on 24 December 1942 Pius XII hinted, in an already quoted excerpt, at the people who "because of nationality or race [stirpe] are fated to die" (p. 191). Riccardi rightly writes that "the Pope, by using the word 'race' [stirpe], was convinced that he had spoken out clearly on the massacres of Jews" (p. 191); but in the next paragraph, "Is it a Condemnation?" (pp. 193-196), the author does not elaborate on his view, and simply offers the readers the post-war opinion of Cardinal Achille Silvestrini, that Pius XII's words were "pallid" and "not easy to decipher" (p. 193).

In the sixth chapter Riccardi gives a brief outline of the course the Pope and the Secretariat of State followed until Pius XII's public speech on June 2 1943. In that speech one sees on the one hand a short and veiled allusion to the situation of the Jews, and on the other an explicit declaration of solidarity with the Polish people. The allusion consisted in a few moving words about a "race" [stirpe] that had been struck by "exterminatory constraints" [costrizioni sterminatrici] and the declaration went so far as to express the hope of a "future" [avvenire] for those people (pp. 210-213).

Though the speech marked the end of the Pope's double silence on the two persecuted groups, Riccardi does not highlight this. Certainly, the explicit use of the word "exterminatory" in referring to the Jews was a novelty of enormous importance. One cannot however avoid remarking that this group, the one that was subject to harsher treatment, was not mentioned by name, nor did it benefit

from any good wishes for its future. *La Guerra* does not comment on Pius XII's choice of words, thus showing some timidity in defining the position of the Pope and of the Secretariat of State.

The pages that follow focus on the events in Rome after September 8 1943. In one passage Riccardi writes that, following the meeting on October 16 between the Secretary of State Luigi Maglione and the German ambassador Ernst von Weizsäcker, "in the Vatican they felt that they had saved [salvato] some of the people arrested" (p. 217). Actually, the release of some persons who had been hastily arrested was in accordance with the criteria established by Berlin at the time. Nonetheless, the men in the Secretariat of State may very well have "felt" what the author says; the episode, however, might have benefited from a more detailed description. Apart from that, Riccardi examines the mindset of the pope and his collaborators at the time of the October 16 raid. He reaches the conclusion that they "clearly did [not] think that something might happen to the Roman Jews, despite what the Germans were doing to the Jews all over Europe" (p. 219). Shortly after, he adds that "the Pope believed that the Jewish community [...] would not be deported" (p. 221). These remarks, that the pope and the Secretariat of State "did [not] think" and "believed" are for readers of *La Guerra* an avowal, uttered by a modern-day man of faith, that the men then leading the Catholic world were not equal to the situation they faced.

After that, the author dwells on some cases of assistance tendered to Roman Jews, summarizing parts of his previous book *L'inverno più lungo*.

The seventh chapter deals with countries (not including Italy) that were formally independent from Germany yet contributed to the Shoah. These were Slovakia, Croatia, Romania and Hungary. Riccardi describes the actions of nuncios and bishops in these territories. Although those actions encountered limits they did, however, achieve some results. In some cases, the Secretariat of State was able to obtain an easing or a postponement of some anti-Jewish measures. It was a very fragmented and complex situation.

Describing the specific situation in Budapest in the fall of 1944, which saw further massacres of Jews, along with public actions aimed at shielding them carried out by some foreign diplomats (including the apostolic nuncio Angelo Rotta), Riccardi writes that "somehow [...] a kind of asylum for the protection of the Jews similar to the 'Roman' model was put into practice" (p. 268). As to this statement,

it should however be remembered that the help given by Catholics to the Roman Jews was the result of actions neither organized nor initiated by the Holy See's Secretariat of State, and moreover, that no diplomatic status was conferred upon them.

The two following chapters are devoted to the growing news about the true extent of the mass murder of Jews, to the flare up of anti-Semitism in some already liberated territories, to the dawning of awareness of the Shoah.

In these pages the focus of the narrative shifts gradually from the Holy See as actor on the international scene to the Catholic Church as a religious body first and foremost. Greater relevance is thus attributed to issues such as the persistence of areas of Catholic anti-Judaism or the question of how far Catholics understood the various aspects and the meaning of the Shoah.

This shift is prompted by the book's chronological structure and by the interests and the feelings of the author. It does however result in a diminishing of the importance of some of the historiographical questions centering on the Holy See in the face of the Shoah. Did the information that the Secretariat of State received in those years, for instance, and particularly the information that accumulated in the second half of 1942, suffice to make them understand that by the end of that year the number of persons murdered amounted already to several millions? What information did Eugenio Pacelli, Luigi Maglione and the others have and what had they understood? Therefore, what did their "silence" relate to? And however, apart from what was said or not said, what actions or behaviors did they set in motion when they received that information?

The short final chapter of *La Guerra* bears the title: "Conclusions. Horror, Complexity and Defeat." These three words sum up the general historical event and Riccardi's research: the Shoah was a terrible event; the Holy See's response was inadequate; at all events, it was a heavy defeat for mankind.

In my view *La Guerra* offers an important contribution to the reconstruction of this historical event. However, Andrea Riccardi's passionate research is encumbered by the intertwining of questions posed by historiography and questions posed by faith. All of them are legitimate, of course, but the Shoah meant the murder of one, then two, then three, then four, then five, then six million Europeans "of Jewish race," and the main issue is how, while it was taking place, the principal authorities of other countries, of international institutions, of

main religions, received news of it, were aware of it, and acted. The understanding of the Shoah after it ended, of course, is also a very important issue, but that took place after 1945 (and after the Israeli Declaration of Independence in 1948).

To conclude, I would like to add a specific comment. Along with many other books dealing with the Holy See in the face of the Shoah, *La guerra* too devotes scant attention to the persecution itself. for instance, to the way in which it developed over time and in various places, or to the instances in which the killings decreased because of the extent of the previous massacres, or to other issues. The point is that the facts from which the news originated, news that in turn was greeted by reaction or lack of reaction, are as important as the news and the reactions themselves.

Another significant aspect of the history of the Shoah is the classification employed by anti-Semite governments, particularly the creation of two specific "categories" of people: those of "racially mixed" unions and those who were "of Jewish race" but Catholic by religion. As to the former, one needs to remember that Berlin almost always excluded them from deportation and that the same criterion was obviously applied in Rome in October 1943.[2]

As for Catholics "of Jewish race," the Holy See was successful in some countries (but neither in Germany nor in Italy) in obtaining some slight mitigation for them. The Vatican archives, moreover, hold a great many of their pleas for help. Their treatment therefore deserves focused attention.

Finally, I would like to clarify that it was not at the Wannsee Conference that the systematic extermination of the Jews was "planned" or "decided" (pp. 33, 107, 167). The extermination had already been willed, decided, and ordered at the highest level in Nazi Germany. The senior ministerial and political officials who met in Wannsee in January 1944 were concerned only with a few specific aspects of the implementation of that decision, starting precisely with the question of persons of "mixed race."

Michele Sarfatti, CDEC

[2] Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, revised ed. (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1985); Saul Friedländer, *The Years of Extermination: Nazi Germany and the Jews. 1939-1945* (New York: Harper Collins, 2007); Liliana Picciotto, *Il libro della memoria. Gli Ebrei deportati dall'Italia (1943-1945)*, 3rd ed. (Milano: Mursia, 2002).

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Andrea Riccardi, *La guerra del silenzio. Pio XII, il nazismo, gli ebrei* (Rome - Bari: Laterza, 2022), pp. 384.

by *Susan Zuccotti*

When Pope Francis ordered and arranged the opening of the records of Pius XII (pope from 1939 to 1958) in the Vatican archives in March 2020, historians of the Second World War looked on with great anticipation. What new material, what deeper insights, could be expected? The Church is not afraid of history, Francis seemed to be saying at the time. All well and good, most scholars responded, but there is nevertheless much to learn, much to clarify, much to explain.

"There is nothing more to be learned," a handful of specialists replied, and while vastly overstated, they had a point. Pope Pius XII's extreme reluctance publicly to criticize German aggression and atrocities and condemn the ongoing extermination of the Jews is well known simply because it *was* public. Papal statements, speeches, broadcasts, communications, everything the pope wished at the time to make public is accessible to scholars today and has been endlessly debated. As a result, it is difficult to argue with the fact that, while he made public pleas for peace and compassion for the victims of war, the pope did not utter the words "Nazi," "Fascist," or "Jews," much less describe and denounce the horrors of the Shoah.

With regard to diplomatic efforts by the Holy See to intervene behind-the-scenes on behalf of Jews and other victims of the war, relevant documents exist in the wartime archives of many other countries, including Italy, France, Germany, Britain and the United States, and have been carefully examined by scholars, sometimes for decades. Also available and highly relevant are the eleven volumes of diplomatic documents from the war years selected from the Vatican archives by an international team of historians, all priests, and published as *Actes et Documents du Saint Siège relatifs à la seconde guerre mondiale* (ADSS) between 1965 and 1981.[1] Naturally, scholars prefer the independent access to the archival

[1] *Actes et Documents du Saint Siège relatifs à la seconde guerre mondiale* (ADSS), eds. Pierre Blet, Robert A. Graham, Angelo Martini, and Burkhart Schneider, 11 vols. (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana), 1965-1981.

sources of the ADSS that has now been granted, but much has already been learned about papal wartime diplomacy.

What then remains? The answer, of course, is that documents shed light on issues in multiple ways, raising, revealing, or answering questions often unexpected by the researchers themselves, and in a manner always invaluable to our understanding of history. With that in mind, therefore, this essay will examine an important new book by Andrea Riccardi, *La guerra del silenzio: Pio XII, il nazismo, gli ebrei*.[2] Founder of the Comunità di Sant'Egidio in Rome and author or co-author of some forty other studies of the Catholic Church in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, Riccardi is extraordinarily well prepared to deal again with the subject of Pope Pius XII and the Second World War.

As the word "again" suggests, *La guerra del silenzio* can best be understood as a kind of sequel to Riccardi's earlier works, especially "*Roma città sacra"? Dalla Conciliazione all'operazione Sturzo* (1979) and *L'inverno più lungo, 1943-44. Pio XII, gli ebrei e i nazisti a Roma* (2008).[3] In his newest book, Riccardi often refers to events he has treated elsewhere. His primary concern in *La guerra del silenzio* is to present material that is new, both from recently opened Vatican archives and from secondary studies that he has not discussed elsewhere.

In examining Andrea Riccardi's new book, this essay will address two issues that have long necessitated further clarification and that may benefit greatly from access to the newly opened Vatican archives. The first issue involves the input of the pope's advisors during the Second World War, particularly regarding endangered European Jews. We may know much about what Pius XII did or did not say publicly, and we have read the many explanations of his reticence—his wish to remain impartial and help negotiate a peace; his worries about a Bolshevik victory in Europe; and his fears of angering the Nazi leadership, endangering institutions of the Church, alienating German Catholics, and making things worse for the Jews. We also know that Pius received pleas from many prominent Catholic laymen, prelates, and priests to condemn Nazi atrocities and antisemitism throughout the war years and beyond. But we know less about the advice Pius XII

[2] Andrea Riccardi, *La guerra del silenzio. Pio XII, il nazismo, gli ebrei* (Rome - Bari: Laterza, 2022).
[3] Andrea Riccardi, *Roma "città sacra"? Dalla Conciliazione all'operazione Sturzo* (Milano: Vita e Pensiero, 1979); Andrea Riccardi, *L'inverno più lungo, 1943-44. Pio XII, gli ebrei e i nazisti a Roma* (Rome - Bari: Laterza, 2008).

was receiving from his own staff of Vatican bureaucrats. More knowledge will greatly enhance our understanding of the pope's decision-making process. The Vatican archives can be expected to contain records of internal discussions and debates, and we shall begin by looking at what Riccardi has found on this subject. The second issue to be treated here involves the long-debated but far-from-answered question of Pius XII's encouragement, directives, and involvement behind the scenes in clandestine Jewish rescue. Evidence of such activities, secret by definition, cannot be found in papal declarations, contemporary newspaper articles, or archives other than those of the Vatican. Regarding the Vatican archives, it is to be supposed that the priests scouring them in the 1960s and 1970s would have included any evidence of papal involvement in Jewish rescue in their eleven-volume publication. There is in fact, however, very little there. What more may be accessible to scholars in those same now-public archives, and what has Andrea Riccardi found to date?

Regarding the first issue, requests to the Holy See during the war urging a public papal statement on behalf of the Jews were usually forwarded to Monsignor Angelo Dell'Acqua, the Vatican Secretariat of State staff member considered by the pope to be his foremost expert on Jewish affairs. In his most recent book, Riccardi has found several new documents revealing this bureaucrat's consistently negative advice. On October 2, 1942, for example, when American diplomats at the Holy See Myron Taylor and Harold Tittmann asked for a papal response to the many new eyewitness reports of ongoing massacres of Jews in Eastern Europe, including those addressed to the pope from a trusted Italian Catholic businessman who had recently travelled in Poland and another from the archbishop of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, Monsignor Dell'Acqua advised against a public statement. A protest would antagonize the Germans and reports of atrocities must still be verified, in part, he explained, because they might be exaggerated and "exaggeration is easy among the Jews."[4] Never mind that the reports of atrocities did not come from the Jews, or even, in their entirety, from the Allies. Eight days later, the Vatican Secretary of State Cardinal Luigi Maglione informed Tittmann that the pope would not make a statement.

[4] Dell'Acqua quote in Riccardi, *La guerra del silenzio*, 169.

Dell'Acqua's advice remained consistently negative and influential throughout the war. In November 1943, when Bishop Antonio Santin in Trieste asked the pope to intervene with the Germans on behalf of some 6,000 Italian Jews threatened with deportation from his city, Dell'Acqua objected, explaining that the Nazis would get the false idea that "the Holy See is in agreement with international Jewry, which preaches the necessity of the destruction or almost total destruction of the German people." He went on to wonder why the Holy See has "interested itself in the Jews and not deplored the massacres conducted by Communist Slavs and Germans [the latter, presumably, against Italian partisans]."[5]

A month later, Dell'Acqua advised against a proposal from the Jesuit Father Pietro Tacchi-Venturi, a former papal liaison to Mussolini and a frequent advisor to the pope, that Pius XII should privately request the government of the Third Reich to end the deportations of Jews from Italy, recently occupied by the Germans in September 1943. Tacchi-Venturi had sent his proposal to Cardinal Maglione, who, as he so often did, referred it to the Vatican's expert on Jewish affairs for his opinion. The reason to decline making such a request to the Germans, declared Dell'Acqua, was that it would have no effect and would simply antagonize the occupiers.[6] Riccardi does not add the sentence that historian David Kertzer found in the same document, revealing that Dell'Acqua, obviously annoyed by the frequent appeals from Jews for help, advised that Vatican authorities should "let the Jewish *Signori* know that they should speak a little less and act with great prudence."[7] Then, a full year later, in November 1944, after Rome had been liberated and the Vatican City faced no immediate threat from Nazi and Fascist forces, Dell'Acqua continued to advise against papal involvement in opposition to the ongoing deportations of Jews from Hungary, arguing that it would have no effect, would irritate the Germans and augment their suspicions, and would make things worse for the Jews.[8]

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[5] Ibid., Dell'Acqua quote, 173.

[6] Ibid., 153-155.

[7] Dell'Acqua quoted in David I. Kertzer, *The Pope at War: The Secret History of Pius XII, Mussolini, and Hitler* (New York: Random House, 2022), 383-387, and 565 n34.

[8] Riccardi, *La guerra del silenzio*, 175. Pius XII had appealed personally by telegram to the Hungarian head of state Admiral Miklos Horthy on June 25, 1944, as had spokesmen from Sweden, Great Britain, the United States, the International Red Cross, and several neutral nations, and the

Monsignor Dell'Acqua was far from alone when it came to giving such advice on Jewish issues. In March 1943, Monsignor Giuseppe Di Meglio, also on the staff of the Vatican Secretariat of State, dropped all pretense of objectivity in a report to his superiors, including the pope, on the question of helping Jewish fugitives reach Palestine. "Most Jews," he wrote, "are dedicated more than anything else to industry and especially to commerce. This commerce is quite fruitful when they are among Christians; if instead all and only Jews are gathered together, there is an enormous assembly of [...] swindlers, but a lack [...] of those to be swindled. Therefore most Jews have no desire to migrate to Palestine."[9] David Kertzer explains that Di Meglio's report had been prompted by an appeal to the Vatican by Monsignor Angelo Roncalli, the future Pope John XXIII but at that time papal delegate in Istanbul, asking for intervention with the Catholic priest Jozef Tiso, head of the Slovakian government, so that one thousand Jewish children threatened with deportation could be allowed to emigrate to Palestine. Kertzer adds that in his March report, Di Meglio also commented, "The Holy See is being beseeched to help this emigration [to Palestine] *only* [italics mine] in order to save thousands of people (especially children) from certain death."[10] Riccardi tells us that Di Meglio also wrote in March that the Holy See should try, with prudence and discretion, to help endangered Jews. Riccardi also explains that, unlike Di Meglio, some other Vatican diplomats were willing to help Jewish fugitives get to Palestine. But he does not make it clear that despite Roncalli's second appeal in May on behalf of Jewish children in Slovakia, Vatican bureaucrats continued to dither and squabble, and nothing was achieved.

Like Dell'Acqua and Di Meglio, Monsignor Domenico Tardini, head of the section for Affari Straordinari at the Vatican Secretariat of State and one of the top two advisors to Secretary of State Maglione, expressed extreme caution regarding the Germans and not infrequent signs of anti-Judaism. To cite just one example of the latter attitude, in notes on his report on October 18, 1940, on the proper use to be made of a gift to the pope of $125,000 from the American United Jewish

deportations that had begun in late April were paused on July 6. Deportations and local mass murder resumed in Budapest in autumn 1944 and continued until the liberation of Hungary by Soviet troops in February 1945.

[9] Ibid., Di Meglio quote, 281-282.

[10] Di Meglio quote, Kertzer, *The Pope at War,* 274-275 and 547 n4.

Appeal, Tardini referred to the donors as "rich American Jews" and observed that Jews who had converted to Catholicism had, "by the nature of their action more honored [...] their race than their Catholicism."[11] Tardini's official report was included in volume 6 of the ADSS, but these remarks were omitted. Kertzer found them on the original document in the recently opened archives. Riccardi does not mention them, but he does suggest in a different context that the previous research and selection of documents published in the ADSS seem "not to be guided by a defensive strategy" intended to protect Pius XII and his advisors.[12] That observation is apparently not quite accurate.

While many documents indicating the anti-Jewish attitudes of some of Pope Pius XII's advisors have emerged from the newly opened Vatican archives, the same cannot be said about the second issue to be addressed in this essay. What new information has been discovered regarding the pope's private efforts to encourage, direct, and involve the Holy See in Jewish rescue? The subject can be divided into two parts, private diplomatic interventions with foreign government authorities on behalf of endangered Jews and more personal appeals to men and women of the Church and Catholic laypersons to support clandestine rescue operations.

The diplomatic dimension of this issue is vast, indeed almost too broad to be discussed here. Andrea Riccardi has addressed it in *La guerra di silenzio*, but his relevant pages are complex, dense, and, in a sense, almost necessarily incomplete. Each Axis-affiliated or occupied country had a different chronology and a different context, and while Riccardi presents much useful new documentary evidence, he would require an entire book on each nation to integrate those findings into that already known. Better then, perhaps, to focus here on the nature of the pope's outreach to individual priests, prelates, and religious institutions on behalf of endangered Jews.

It is clear that some priests and prelates approached the pope during the war for guidance on what to do to help the Jews. We know that when Bishop Konrad von Preysing in Berlin asked Pius XII for such guidance, the pope replied, "we leave it

[11] Ibid., Tardini quotes, 186, 525 n5. The United Jewish Appeal had sent the gift to Pope Pius XII in the autumn of 1939 to honor Pope Pius XI, who had died in February. It was to be used to assist war refugees.

[12] Riccardi, *La guerra del silenzio*, 338.

to local senior clergymen to decide if, and to what degree. The danger of reprisals and oppression [...] may make restraint advisable—despite the reasons for intervention."[13] We know that some bishops in France spoke out publicly against the deportations of Jews from the unoccupied zone in the late summer of 1942; that several prelates in Italy were supportive of regional Jewish escape networks; that many men and women of the Church throughout occupied Europe rescued Jews at great risk to themselves. The pope may have known and approved, but is there any new evidence that he encouraged, much less ordered, such activities? We know also of priests who were ardent Nazis and Fascists; who became involved with violent militia gangs; who publicly endorsed vicious anti-Jewish propaganda. Is there any new evidence that the pope tried to rein in such activities?

There seems to be, as yet, very little that is new. David Kertzer has recently written of one case. Soon after the roundup of 1,259 Jews in Rome on October 16, 1943, a parish priest wrote to the Vatican to ask for help. The parents of two Jewish children, ages nine and fourteen, were desperately trying to hide them in local convents or monasteries, but according to the parish priest, several directors "refused to accept them because they are Jews, claiming a prohibition by the order of higher authorities." An internal note with the document in the Vatican Secretariat of State files reads, in Latin, "what to do?" A second note responds, "One doesn't see how the Secretariat of State can intervene."[14] It is difficult to reconcile this parish priest's appeal with Riccardi's undocumented statement that already in the weeks *before* the October 16 roundup in Rome, "some institutions of the Church were beginning to open themselves to hospitality to Jews, fugitives, draft evaders, and political dissidents (in some cases by following a *direct indication of Pius XII*) [italics mine]" and his reference to "clandestine hospitality in Church institutions, already begun" during the same period.[15] That many Church institutions sheltered fugitives before October 16 is not to be doubted, but most of the many Jews who were accepted entered later. More to the point, a "direct indication of Pius XII," especially at this early date, remains unproven.

In part because he has written of it in earlier works, Riccardi does not provide many details on the rescue of Jews and other fugitives in German-occupied Rome

[13] Ibid., 195-196.

[14] Kertzer, *The Pope at War,* 380 and 564 n22.

[15] Riccardi, *La guerra del silenzio*, 220 and 222.

in *La guerra del silenzio*. If the recently opened archives had provided him with new material, however, he would surely have mentioned it. He does discuss the case of some fifty fugitives who were being hidden by individual prelates in the Canonica, their residence within Vatican City, in February 1944. Soon after the German and Fascist raid on the extraterritorial Basilica of San Paolo fuori le mura on February 3-4 which resulted in the arrests of some sixty-four fugitives including at least five Jews, the prelates living in the Canonica received orders that their fifty "guests" were to be expelled. When the prelates objected to the commission for the administration of Vatican City, the three cardinals in charge, nervous about the security of both the fugitives and the Vatican itself, informed them that the orders of expulsion came from above ("*per ordine superiore*"). Monsignor Guido Anichini, director of the Canonica, appealed directly to the pope on behalf of the fugitives, and the prelates hosting them asked Cardinal Maglione to do the same. Within a few days the orders were apparently modified, and the "guests" seem to have been allowed to choose for themselves whether to remain or seek greater safety elsewhere.[16]

None of this information is new. All of it became available with the publication of the ADSS in the late 1960's and 1970's. The point here is that Riccardi seems to have found no new details in the recently opened Vatican archives. Are there no internal memos dealing with this issue? Did the pope himself relent after appeals from Anichini and Maglione? Was there more debate among Vatican bureaucrats about this case and about others, as, for example, when the Seminario Lombardo and the Basilica of San Paolo fuori le mura were also ordered to dismiss all non-clerics in February 1944? Was the pope behind the orders to those two institutions and to the Jesuit Father Paolo Dezza, rector of the Università Gregoriana, who was also granting refuge to fugitives, that no false seminarian should be issued clerical garb, knowing full well that clandestine existence was close to impossible without disguise? Are there no records of internal discussions of the case of the Pontificio Seminario Romano Maggiore, where some 200 fugitives, including many prominent anti-Fascists and fifty-five Jews, were hidden with recommendations from individual priests and prelates and with the knowledge of Monsignor

[16] Ibid., 207-208.

Giovanni Battista Montini, the future Pope Paul VI, but also where the rector, Monsignor Roberto Ronca, was reprimanded by Vatican bureaucrats for excessive zeal and indiscretion and for worrying the pope? And perhaps most interesting, are there any new documents indicating that the pope *directed* religious institutions in Rome to grant shelter to Jews? Riccardi does not mention any in *La guerra del silenzio*. Perhaps there are relevant documents in smaller Vatican archives not yet opened. If so, it would be gratifying to know.

In *La guerra del silenzio*, Andrea Riccardi ranges far beyond the issues of wartime bureaucratic advisors and papal assistance to endangered Jews in Rome described briefly here. His purpose is to integrate new archival material into his past research and to offer his updated conclusions on many relevant questions. There is much here with which one can agree. Riccardi does not deny the "silence" of Pius XII—indeed, on one of the first pages of his book, he writes that it was "a term and a reality that Vatican diplomats had to account for from the very beginning."[17] While he is careful not to overlook any instance of a public papal declaration on behalf of peace and compassion for the victims of war, he also describes the multiple appeals to the pope for stronger and more specific statements that were ignored. He presents new documents indicating that most Vatican bureaucrats, generally Italian by birth, were partial to an Italian victory in the war and were often sympathetic to Mussolini. He quotes several private Vatican documents that vaguely encourage support for "non-Aryan Catholics," the prevailing term for Jewish converts, without an equal commitment to individuals who were Jews by religion or culture. And he makes it abundantly clear that attitudes changed slowly or not at all during the first decade after the war, when many Vatican spokesmen sheltered and appealed for compassion for well-known Italian Fascists, maintained their traditional suspicions of Jews, refused to condemn anti-Semitic incidents in Poland, and continued to discourage Jewish immigration to Palestine. He does declare, however, that there is no new archival document indicating the involvement of Pius XII or Montini in the ratline.[18]

[17] Ibid., xvii.
[18] Ibid., 328.

Unlike some of the most fanatic defenders of Pius XII, Riccardi never denies that throughout the entire war, the pope and his advisors had extensive reliable information about the ongoing extermination of the Jews. He suggests occasionally that "knowledge" did not always result in full "understanding," as was tragically true of individuals in other nations and other capacities who were also trying to process the almost incomprehensible news of genocide. That point then leads Riccardi to one of his most important and convincing conclusions, involving the geographical, cultural, and generational isolation of the men who were making the decisions at the Vatican. The Vatican was, Riccardi writes, "a small group of men, united by the same faith and by the same ecclesiastical formation, with different sensibilities, all closely attached to a pope who governed in a reflective and slow manner, totally other than decisive."[19]

Many readers will disagree with some of Riccardi's other statements and techniques. For example, he occasionally describes a document in which a Vatican bureaucrat approves of a specific private diplomatic intervention on behalf of certain victims of war without telling us whether that intervention was ever made or, if made, whether there were results. Similarly, he quotes documents in which papal advisors instruct those who have sought advice to say that "The Vatican continues to do everything it can," without acknowledging the frequent deceit and hypocrisy involved in such statements. Typical would be the case of Tardini in October 1944 who, when rejecting a request for papal intervention on behalf of Jews in Hungary that he considered useless, advised that the message of refusal should be "Ample and warm. To say simply 'we will do what is possible' seems like bureaucratic coldness. The less that can be achieved, the more necessary to show the concern of the Holy See."[20] Pius XII's advisors were deeply concerned about the historic record.

Riccardi also sometimes makes a statement without explanation of its sources. For example, he writes, "When a Jew is about to be kicked out of the Vatican, by order of Cardinal Canali, a determined opponent of an activity he considered illegal, the pope blocks the decision."[21] Similarly, he writes that "Pius XII reassures the queen mother of Romania, Elena, of the commitment of the Church to promote the

[19] Ibid., 343-344.
[20] Ibid., 198.
[21] Ibid., 224.

expatriation of Romanian Jews to Palestine."[22] Both statements may be true, but they require details and documentation. Along the same lines, in some cases Riccardi cites as his only acknowledgement a secondary source known to historians to be consistently biased and unreliable. As an example here, he declares that at Lourdes in 1935 and at Notre Dame in Paris in 1937, Pius XII, at the time papal legate Eugenio Pacelli, publicly condemned "the superstition of race and blood." He cites a book by David Dalin, a wildly unreliable defender of Pius XII, but in that book, Dalin provides as his source his own article, written four years earlier. However true the statement may or may not be, Dalin does not constitute a standard of proof.[23]

From time to time, Riccardi also lets stand without examination a theory that is highly debatable and controversial. For example, he repeats a claim that the German SS security police released some 200 of the 1,259 victims arrested in the Rome roundup of October 16, 1943, because of intervention by a spokesman from the Vatican, when in fact it is clear that those prisoners were freed because they did not meet the Nazi criteria for deportation at the time.[24] They consisted of non-Jews arrested by mistake, Jewish spouses and children from mixed marriages, and Jewish citizens of countries where deportations were not occurring. No Vatican intervention was needed for their release.

In his conclusion to *La guerra del silenzio*, Andrea Riccardi expresses his conviction that "the work of the historian is not that of a judge and does not end with a judgment." He continues, "What is important is that the history of those decisive years [of the Second World War and the immediate post-war period] continues to be studied in order to understand what Europe is."[25] It is difficult not to judge, but it is more important, as Riccardi says, to continue to study and try to understand. But in our effort to understand, it is crucial to confirm and clarify the reality of those years, and to eliminate the tremendous number of false claims that

[22] Ibid., 284.

[23] Ibid., 10. Riccardi cites David Dalin, *La leggenda nera del papa di Hitler* (Casale Monferrato: Piemme, 2007), 110. The original English-language edition of Dalin's work is *The Myth of Hitler's Pope* (Washington D.C.: Regnery, 2005), 65 and 177 nn97-98. Riccardi cites several other questionable secondary sources in his work.

[24] Riccardi, *La guerra del silenzio*, 217.

[25] Ibid, 345.

have been made by the most extreme defenders of Pius XII. The pope did not defy the Germans and condemn Nazism and antisemitism courageously and unambiguously, using those words in a manner that all could understand. The Vatican did not issue tens of thousands of fake baptismal certificates in Italy and Romania; the pope was not responsible for saving 6,400 of the 8,000 Jews of Rome after the roundup on October 16, 1943; it is untrue that "Pius XII and his church were able to save up to 970,000 persecuted Jews."[26]

With regard to these false allegations, Andrea Riccardi, in *La guerra del silenzio*, disproves the first, the claims of papal defiance and condemnation in his public statements, but he neither repeats nor denies the others. It is to be hoped that the further research and study he recommends will clarify the reality and bring us closer to a shared understanding of the Church as it was during the war, and as it has become in recent decades, and as it can be in the future. In his new book, Riccardi points us in that direction, for as he concludes movingly, "Faced with the war, Pius XII and the Church of his time were witnesses and actors in events much larger than themselves. It was not the Church of Vatican II or of John Paul II in contact with a free and lively public opinion. It was not the opinion of a global world. The isolation was the condition and the grave fragility of the Holy See."[27]

Susan Zuccotti, Independent Scholar

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[26] These claims and the quotation are from Michael Hesemann, "The Silence of Pius XII: An Exchange," *The New York Review*, November 24, 2022, 61.
[27] Riccardi, *La guerra del silenzio*, 343.

Laura Almagor, *Beyond Zion: The Jewish Territorialist Movement* (London: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2022), pp. 286.

by *Stefan Vogt*

The Jewish Territorialist movement has always been a stepchild of both Zionism and the historiography of Jewish national movements. Only a handful of studies have addressed Jewish Territorialism in any comprehensive way. Laura Almagor's book is therefore a very welcome addition to an otherwise quite small body of scholarship. But it is also much more than this. The book is the first to study the Territorialist movement over its whole lifetime, from the beginning of the 20th century all the way to the 1960s, rather than focusing on its early incarnation until 1925. And it looks at the movement from a new perspective, placing it in the double context of Jewish politics in the 20th century broadly speaking, and of the processes of colonialism and decolonization, rather than seeing it only as an offshoot of, and thus in relation to, Zionism.

The Jewish Territorialism movement was founded in the aftermath of debate about the Uganda Scheme, in which the British government had offered territory in its Eastern African colony for Jewish settlement. When the proposal was turned down after much turmoil at the Seventh Zionist Congress in 1905, a small faction split from the Zionist Organization and formed the Jewish Territorialist Organization (ITO) under the leadership of the prominent British Zionist Israel Zangwill. Without much success, the ITO advocated Jewish settlement schemes outside of Palestine and disbanded in 1925. Territorialism reemerged in the 1930s throughout Germany and Eastern Europe in various initiatives. 1935 saw the foundation of the Freeland League for Jewish Territorial Colonization (Frayland-lige far Yidisher Teritoryalistisher Kolonizatsye), under which name it existed until 1979, although having abandoned its Territorialist agenda already by the early 1960s. The League, which was led during much of its Territorialist phase by the Jewish Socialist Revolutionary Isaac Nachman Steinberg, was particularly active in the years after the Second World War.

Almagor devotes the first two chapters of her book to a thorough and insightful reconstruction of the two phases of Territorialist history. In the first chapter on

the ITO phase from 1905 to 1925, she makes it clear that Territorialism was by no means an esoteric aberration from the Zionist mainstream, but rather a serious alternative to the Zionist orientation towards Palestine alone. There were supporters and sympathizers not only among non-Zionists, but also among dissident European Zionists and even members of the Yishuv. The second chapter analyzes the history of the Freeland League from the 1930s onwards. This is an especially important piece of scholarship, as it is the first comprehensive study of the League's history. It establishes the League as a distinct player within the field of Jewish national politics, especially in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, when the Jewish refugee crisis was particularly acute. As such, it was meanwhile far removed from its roots as a Zionist faction. The chapter is also important because it emphasizes the previously almost ignored role played in the movement by Ada Siegel, Isaac Nachman Sternberg's daughter. Most importantly, however, it lays the groundwork for the study's main achievements which can be found in the third and fourth chapters.

Chapter three not only discusses in great depth the strained relationship between Territorialism and Zionism, from the beginning all the way to the postwar era. In doing so, it also brings to light important new aspects of the Jewish political landscape both before and after the Second World War and the Holocaust. For instance, it shows how the DP camps, where Zionists and Territorialists competed for support, became extremely important locations for the struggles about the future course of Jewish politics, rather than being Zionist strongholds from the outset. Even if Almagor at times is a bit too quick to trust her (almost exclusively) Territorialist sources and might therefore see a little too much cunning in the Zionists' actions when they were merely being guided by pragmatism, she nevertheless gives a much more complete picture of Jewish politics in the DP camps than had previously been available. Her analysis of the relationship between Territorialists and Zionists also sheds new light on the latter, for example when she demonstrates that the bi-nationalist ideas of Brit Shalom and Ihud had a level of support that went beyond the few and mostly Central European members of these circles. This and other findings give a lot of additional credibility to the tendency in recent scholarship to question the long-assumed absolute predominance of Zionism in immediate postwar Jewish politics.

The last chapter, finally, represents the most innovative part of the study as it places Jewish Territorialism in the context of colonialism and decolonization or, as Almagor puts it, "Geopolitics". She analyzes the Territorialist schemes to organize settlements of Jewish refugees and DPs in various parts of the non-European world, such as Madagascar, Australia and, most importantly, the soon-to-be-independent Dutch colony of Suriname. This allows her to discuss how Territorialism related to this context and addressed issues such as space, race and population politics. Her employment of "Geopolitics" as a theoretical concept to understand this remains rather sparsely elaborated and somehow superfluous. Nevertheless, Almagor expertly shows the tension built into the Territorialist movement between participating in the European colonialist discourses (and at times politics) and seeing itself as a protagonist in the establishment of a post-colonial world. Here, she identifies a tendency within the Territorialist movement increasingly to identify with the decolonizing forces. It remains unclear whether this tendency was always based on conviction, how unambiguous it was, and whether this really constituted a clear difference to Zionism, as she claims. Almagor's conclusion that "the Territorialists eventually positioned themselves in opposition to the traditionally Western hegemonic character of the non-Jewish world" (242) seems to be, in any case, too strong. Yet she convincingly shows that the history of post-war Territorialism, just as the history of the Jewish Holocaust survivors (and, incidentally, the history of post-war Zionism) needs to be seen as part of the larger story of post-war decolonization, migration and displacement. Especially in this sense, her book is an important and path breaking contribution to the ongoing "colonial turn" in Jewish history.

Stefan Vogt, Goethe University Frankfurt am Main

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Nancy E. Berg and Naomi B. Sokoloff, eds., *Since 1948: Israeli Literature in the Making* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2020), pp. 306.

by *Piera Rossetto*

In 2018, Nancy E. Berg and Naomi B. Sokoloff[1] convened the symposium "Enshrining the Book: Israeli Literature at 70" at Washington University in St. Louis. The conference represented an opportunity for scholars to reassess "the literary history and trajectories of Israeli culture since the founding of the state in 1948."[2] It is precisely out of this conference that the volume *Since 1948: Israeli Literature in the Making*, edited by Berg and Sokoloff, arose. Indeed, the cover image—showing the Shrine of the Book in Jerusalem under construction in 1964–65—evokes not only the conference title but also, most significantly, the whole idea of the national literary canon as a "process" rather than a "product" (p. 3) and of Israeli literature as "still very much under construction" (p. 4).

The 'constructedness' of Israeli literature, the questions raised by the new genres it embraces (such as graphic novels and science fiction), and the multiple geographical and linguistic directions it has taken: these are some of the issues at the core of this important book. Organized in four parts, including three chapters each, the edited volume is concluded by the English translation of a short story by Eitan Notev.

Part one, "Through Time: Silences, Voices, Echoes," discusses "how new voices have succeeded old ones [...] as well as how they have reverberated with one another and built on intertextual references" (p. 14). This chain of successive transformations is explored in poetry in two different ways. A close reading of the theme of silence—its uses and reuses—in selected poems by Nathan Zach, Haim

[1] Nancy Berg is Professor of Hebrew and Comparative Literature at Washington University in St. Louis and Naomi B. Sokoloff is Professor of Near Eastern Languages and Civilization at the University of Washington.

[2] Naomi B. Sokoloff, interview by Anna Learn, March 21, 2022, University of Washington, Department of Middle Eastern Languages and Culture, https://melc.washington.edu/news/2022/03/21/interview-dr-naomi-b-sokoloff-1948-israeli-literature-making.

Guri, Yona Wallach, Carmit Rosen, and Tehila Hakimi reveals that the poet and translator Eran Tzelgov is interested in sketching "the moments of change, rather than a linear development" (p. 27) of Israeli poetry. By considering the use of Hebrew poetry by Yehuda Amihai and Avraham Halfi in liberal *siddurim* (Jewish prayer books), Wendy I. Zierler engages with contrasting opinions about "liturgical appropriation of secular Israeli poetry" (p. 62) and convincingly argues for the benefits of such appropriation both in terms of complicating "the very notion of contemporary Jewish religiosity" and deepening "the meanings, for an attentive reader, of both poetry and prayer" (p. 75). By expanding the understanding of poetry to include literary production at large, Michal Raizen explores the thematic of *ḥafla* in Eli Amir's trilogy (*Mafriach hayonim*, 1992; *Tarnegol kapparot*, 1983; *Yasmin*, 2005) and Almog Behar's book *Tchachla veḤezkel* (2005). A "poetic reservoir in its own, [...] an Arabic literary idiom couched in musical affect" (p. 55), the *ḥafla* trope represents a knot of memory and a source of challenging innovation for contemporary Mizrahi authors.

Part two, "Across Language and Territory: Literature and Identity," "emphasizes the point that the words *Hebrew, Jewish, Israeli, Erets Yisraeli*, and *Zionist* are not coterminous" (p. 14). The three essays included here (by Shachar Pinsker, Yael Dekel, and Melissa Weininger) explore "the complex multilingual literary reality in Israel" (p. 85) by focusing on examples taken from "marginal" literary movements of the 1950s and 1960s (Yung Yisroel and the Young Hebrews, or the Canaanite movement and from two recent novels (*The Ruined House*, 2013, and *Isra Isle*, 2005) written in Hebrew in the diaspora. Despite the heterogeneity of the authors and the works analyzed, all three essays lead readers to experience permeability and the blurring of places and times, characters and registers, as well as perspectives and points of view. The appendix offers readers the opportunity to "encounter" directly an example of the literature produced by the Canaanite Group, thanks to the English translation of Eitan Notev's "The Lord Be Praised."

Shai Ginsburg's chapter "From Here to Elsewhere and Back in Israeli-Hebrew Children's Literature" opens the third part of the volume, "Between the Lines: Rethinking Genres," in which new genres are considered, which up until recently were marginalized from mainstream literature. The most unsettling case is perhaps that of the pulp fiction called *stalagim*, critically addressed in this part of the book by Eric Zakim, while Ginsburg and Naomi B. Sokoloff deal, respectively, with

children's literature and biographical novels. The main argument in Ginsburg's essay is that in Israeli-Hebrew children's literature—in contrast to European and American children's literature, where fantasy often works as an escape from real experience—the "transition between real and imaginary spaces are employed to reflect on the politics of the Israeli here and now and to engage with Israeli rhetoric of territory and history" (p. 143). This argument is thoroughly demonstrated by analyzing the children's series *Hasamba* (1950–1994) by Yigal Mossinsohn and Avraham Shlonsky children's book *Ani ve Tali* (1957). Devorah Omer's novel *Kol mah shehayah (ulai), veKol ma shekarah (kim'at) leKarashindo veli* (1970) is also discussed in terms of "critical engagement with Israeli reality" (p. 149), including critical portrayals of the kibbutz, communal ethos, and state ideology. In her essay, Naomi B. Sokoloff reflects on the trilogy (*Yaldah,* 2004; *Na'arah*, 2009; *Ishah*, 2009) by the author and illustrator of children's literature Alona Frankel. In particular, she considers the role of animals in Frankel's writing and shows how "the text touches on the kind of question that has been fundamental in animal studies' approaches to fiction: how to reassess the scope of the human and rethink ideas about personhood" (p. 167–168).

The fourth and final part of the volume, "Concerning Canons," includes chapters that, according to the editors, "deal most directly or most self-consciously with questions of constructing canon" (p.14) but also, I would add, of departing from and transcending canons. Riki Traum's chapter on the poetry of Rina Shani provides an example of the "formation of a counterculture identity" in the Israeli poetics of the 1960s. By reading Leah Goldberg (who was a mentor to Shani at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem) and Rina Shani poems in parallel, Traum shows how the two elaborated differently on the questions of exile and belonging, double affiliation, and nonbelonging. By addressing the question of "What did Shani preserve of Goldberg's, and what did she discard?" (p. 221), Traum shows how Shani could identify with Goldberg's tension "between belonging and nonbelonging" (p. 221) and finally develop her own "nomadic stance [that] moves in-between modes of nonbelonging and intensities of alienation that merge biographical elements with cultural ones" (p. 225).

In the second chapter, Yaron Peleg discusses the five books by Asaf Schurr (all published between 2007 and 2014) as a way to navigate the aftermath of postmodernism in contemporary Israeli fiction. Peleg suggests reading the five

books as a series that, as a whole, addresses the question of how to deal with "the dissolution of the Zionist metanarrative and the inability to narrate history that such loss brings with it" (p. 231). Nancy Berg's essay on literary awards in Israel concludes this part. Notwithstanding the fact that all the examples of literary prizes discussed by Berg refer to the Israeli context, her reflection on the role such (contested) prizes play as "an expression of national identity and values, as opportunity for dissent, and as a discussion of changing times and tastes" (p. 248) undoubtedly has global value.

"Cultural memory," suggests Hanna Meretoja, professor of Comparative Literature at Utu University, Finland, "refers to the collective practices that societies use to build and uphold their relationship to the past, live in the present, and prepare for the future."[3] Literature is part and parcel of this very complex process. When a country turns 70, as was the case for Israel in 2018, the "national literature" might indeed serve as a useful litmus test to read the past of a nation, its relationship with the present, and how it imagines itself in the future. This volume represents, in the reviewer's view, an excellent instrument for such a reading.

Piera Rossetto, Ca' Foscari University of Venice

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[3] https://www.utu.fi/en/research/thematic-collaborations-in-research/cultural-memory-and-social-change. Accessed November 13, 2023.

Jessica M. Marglin, *The Shamama Case: Contesting Citizenship across the Modern Mediterranean* (Princeton University Press: Princeton, 2022), pp. 384.

by *M'hamed Oualdi*

The Shamama Case follows the legal conflicts that erupted after the death of Nissim Shamama in the winter of 1873, in the Italian port city of Livorno and that lasted for more than a decade. This case is indeed fascinating: Shamama was a prominent official, a tax collector, the director of Tunisian finances and the head (*qâ'id*) of the Jewish community in this country. He escaped to Europe in 1864, in the context of a major uprising that spread across Ottoman Tunisia against the implementation and the increase of a new poll tax. Shamama went first to France and lived in sumptuous palaces in Paris from 1864 to 1868 and then in Livorno from 1868 to 1873. After Shamama passed away, his different lives across the Mediterranean triggered much controversy and litigation as regards his nationality and citizenship. Did Shamama remain Tunisian after he left the country? Was he more broadly an Ottoman subject? Did he belong to a Jewish nation? Did he become Italian during his stay in Livorno? Ascertaining his actual nationality would indeed determine which national law to apply to his huge estate, which was valued at between 12 million francs, according to an Italian Jewish newspaper, and 30 million francs, according to a French Jewish newspaper. It should be noted that "the average estate of the wealthiest 0,1 per cent of the population of Paris in 1872 was 4,6 million francs" (pp. 98-99).

Through this specific and major case, Marglin's ambition is to reassess the "history of law in the Modern Middle East" and North Africa. In the same vein as the historian of colonial Algeria Noureddine Amara and the historian of 19th century Tunisia Fatma Ben Slimane, Marglin succeeds in showing that citizenship and nationality, and more broadly what she defines as legal belonging (which involved "both the formal bonds that tie people to a state, as well as forms of membership that stray beyond the strict boundaries imposed by words like 'citizen' and 'national'", p. 1) were not imported from Europe to the Muslim world: this type of belonging "emerged from an entangled process of legal change across the Mediterranean"(p. 4), mostly as the outcome of "competing, overlapping and

intersecting tales" (p. 8). To explore this revised history of nationality, citizenship and legal belongings, Marglin gives a clear and concrete sense of most of these competing tales in her brilliant narrative of the life and afterlife of Shamama "with a beginning, middle, and end of sorts" (p. 8). By employing the narrative technique to the 19th century legal and other primary sources that she used, the author follows a classical historical genre in history, much echoing the literary creation of the novels and *feuilletons* of 19th-century Europe.

As regards this genre of historical narrative, the historian Francesca Trivellato has warned us that writing micro-history does not mean crafting an "elegant narrative" but that it should lead historians "to employ the micro-scale of analysis to test the validity of macro-scale explanatory paradigms."[1] However, in the case of *The Shamama Case*, such "elegant narrative" is more than useful in helping the readers to follow quite easily (which is a *tour de force*) the many versions of this story and even more so the fascinating rationales and theories that famous Italian and more broadly European legal scholars, as well as Muslim and Jewish North Africans, elaborated concerning the notions of "nationality", "citizenship" – and what Marglin coins as "legal belongings". Chapters 6, 7 and 8 are in particular very well composed and explain clearly how and why different lawyers argued that Shamama was, according to their divergent arguments, Italian, Tunisian or Jewish. Students and researchers interested in the history of North Africa, the Mediterranean and Jewish communities in these different settings will find new paths for research and historical debates in this rich and very well-researched book. As regards literacy among Tunisian and North African Jews, for instance, we learn on page 19 that Shamama knew how to write in Tunisian Judeo-Arabic but never learned to read or write standard Arabic. We also learn much about the 19th-century legal life of these communities which, in common with other Jewish communities, looked to the rabbis of Jerusalem as a major legal reference (p. 111). There are fascinating passages on Nissim Shamama's descendants, fragments of the North African Jewish diaspora in Italy and Europe, some of whom were involved in anarchism (p. 219) while others were victims of Italian fascism (p. 220).

[1] Francesca Trivellato, "Is There a Future for Italian Microhistory in the Age of Global History?," *California Italian Studies* 2, no. 1 (2011):4,9.

One remarkable thread throughout the book is its unfolding of 19th-century debates about the legal situations of Jews in Tunisia, and more broadly across the Ottoman Empire and the Muslim world. Marglin reminds us that European legal scholars believed that "states like Italy and France had emancipated their Jews, while 'backward' states like Tunisia had not." The author rightly argues that the "reality of Jews' legal belonging, though, was murkier than this binary admitted" (p. 142). The official representing the Tunisian state in this story, Husayn ibn 'Abdallah, and, to a certain extent, Elmilik, the Algerian-French Jew who assisted Husayn in the Shamama case, persisted in writing legal pamphlets that flew in the face of this Eurocentric narrative. Husayn defended the idea that Shamama and other Jews were equally subjects of the local governors of Ottoman Tunisia. He understood processes of emancipation of Jews in Europe as conditional on their "abandonment of religiosity" and that "this sort of absolute equality denied Jews their religious rights" (p. 176). Neither Husayn nor Elimilk, his ally at that time, won the legal battle over Shamama's nationality and his estate. Their perceptions of Jewish rights and Husayn's understanding of equality could not be heard. How could European legal scholars fully listen to this kind of argument while they were, as many still are to this day, shaping a Eurocentric and imperialistic position on so-called "International law"? This fascinating questioning and this critical perception of the 19th-century creation of international law can still be investigated by extending the scope to the case of other North Africans, be they Muslim or Jews, in the precolonial and colonial periods.

A related major thread in the book is its exploration of race, racism and antisemitism. On the European side, Marglin shows how Italian legal scholars such as Mancini thought that "race, religion, and language were important in the construction of a nation" in addition to the "consciousness of a nationality" (p. 130). In chapter 8, she exposes in a remarkable way divergent understandings and approaches regarding Jews as "a nation". On the Tunisian side, Marglin also tries to understand to what extent Nissim Shamama was targeted as a Jew during the 1864 revolt, "especially at a time when modernizing reforms had disrupted the social hierarchies ensuring Muslims' superiority" (p. 57). Marglin takes the case of 1864 rebels from a Berber background (*Zwâwa*) who were planning to attack Shamama's house and kill him. This episode is one of the many instances during which Jewish courtiers advising or working for Muslim sovereigns could be under

attack. But in 1864, rebels went against many officials representing the Tunisian state including prominent mamluks, the slaves of Caucasian and Greek origin who had converted to Islam. Mamluks were blamed for implementing reforms that led to the violent exploitation of common people. Building, later in the book, on a story that she heard from the owner of the last kosher restaurant in the port of La Goulette, close to Tunis, Marglin suggests as well that there was in Tunisia, a "popular image of Nissim—as a gold-hungry traitor who had profited from Tunisia's financial ruin—[that] was shot through with antisemitic stereotypes" (p. 234). While it is true—as Marglin reminds the reader—that Jean Ganiage's *Les Origines du Protectorat française en Tunisie*, was influential in spreading this antisemite perception of Shamama, one can nonetheless say with confidence that Shamama is not known by the common people in Tunisia—and as a consequence, that there is neither an "unpopular" nor "popular" image of him. Moreover, Shamama was not the only official to have been in charge of Tunisian finances and to have escaped to Europe. One considers his predecessor, Mahmûd Ibn 'Ayyad, a member of a major Muslim family of tax collectors and traders. Mahmûd Ibn 'Ayyad's departure to France was seen as a huge scandal, weakening the Tunisian administration. This crucial history of antijudaism and antisemitism in the precolonial and colonial Mediterranean still needs to be faced up to and written about, drawing on local sources – maybe along the same lines as this study of "legal belonging" as a violent byproduct of "competing, overlapping and intersecting tales", of preconceived ideas, resentment, rejection and hate.

M'hamed Oualdi, University Science Po-Paris

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