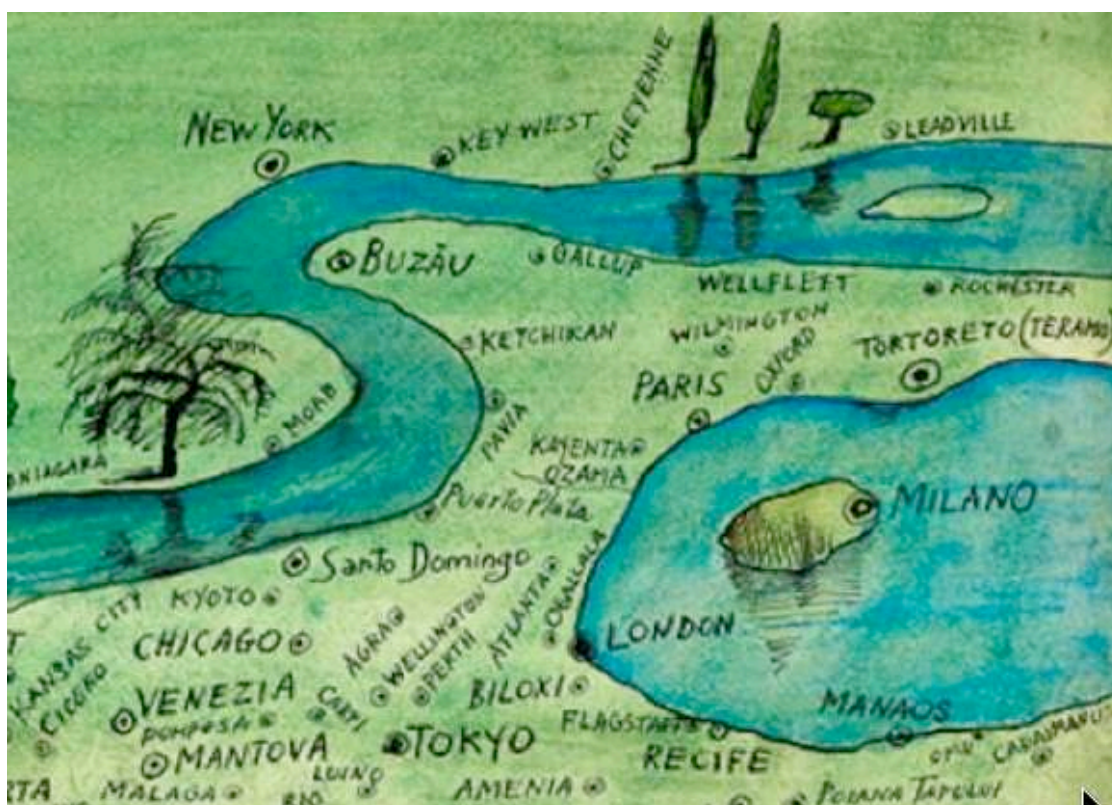


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## Modernity and the Cities of the Jews

*edited by Cristiana Facchini*

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## Modernity and the Cities of the Jews

by *Cristiana Facchini*

### Introduction

#### A journey through cities

At end of the 1920s, two brief travelogues were published, one shortly after the other. Joseph Roth's *Juden auf Wanderschaft* (Berlin, 1927) and Albert Londres' *Le Juif errant est arrivé* (Paris, 1930) both described the social, cultural and economic conditions of European Jews, particularly emphasizing the humiliating conditions of Eastern Jewry. Their gaze conveyed much of a "geography of despair," and in so doing it also attempted to promote awareness of the Jewish question among the European public.

This collection of articles is, to some extent, following in the footsteps of those travelogues, though with a different aim. First of all, our journey is meant to be a snapshot of Jewish culture through cities, but it also aims to depict a much more complicated picture of the interplay between modernity and Jewish culture. It tries to connect the perspective of time and the relevance of place in Jewish history, whilst underlining recurrent cultural patterns or significant differences amongst Jewish cultures of different periods and places. Both dimensions are relevant in order to better comprehend the response of Jews to the challenges brought about by the rise and spread of modernity. In doing so, we thought it might be enlightening to perform a sort of cultural pilgrimage through the cities that either are, or have been at some point, of great significance and relevance to the Jews.

Why cities? Because cities tell stories. Their streets and architecture are like the convolutions of a nautilus shell, a natural history of the living cultures that produced them. If modern European history is inextricably linked to the history of its cities, modern European Jewish history may also be reconstructed through the cities where Jews have dwelt.

The connection between cities and the Jewish people is deep and well documented. From ancient times, Jews found their way to the most important cities of the day. Even beyond the cities of the ancient Jewish commonwealth (the second Temple period), Jews concentrated

themselves in important cultural centers of the Mediterranean world, such as Alexandria and Rome. Their contribution to the history of Western culture is well understood, although work remains to be done on a more diverse cultural geography through the early modern period. Jews disappeared from some cities, leaving feeble traces; others bear witness to their presence through the ages.

Nevertheless, I would not underestimate the relevance of the dichotomy between town and countryside in Jewish history, especially during the modern period and with particular regards to certain areas of Europe, where urbanization was less rapid and where Jews settled predominately in small villages. Yet, whilst stressing the element of modernity, the city emerges as central and topical. Even more so when one tries to grasp the dynamics of Jewish culture, which was heavily influenced by the process of rapid or sudden change, be that of a political or an economic nature. Changes, both coercive or voluntary, affected Jewish lifestyles in visible and concrete ways, through the impact of migration and movement.

New methodological approaches have also appeared, mainly influenced by the “spatial turn,” which put more emphasis on themes and issues stemming from scholarly disciplines such as cultural geography, anthropology, urban studies, architecture and so forth.<sup>1</sup> Interest in Jews and cities had rapidly increased in the last decade, as suggested by panels and programmes in American and European universities.<sup>2</sup> In Germany, “Makom,” an interdisciplinary project launched by the University of Potsdam in 2001 and directed by Joachim Schlör, published a number of books and dissertations devoted to the relationship between space and Jewish Studies.<sup>3</sup> Urban scholars have also intensively worked, in these last years, on Jewish quarters and ghettos.<sup>4</sup>

Religious studies and theory of religions have also focused on the role of space within a specific religious system, or in comparing different contiguous religious systems. Such emphasis on space and place pays tribute to the seminal analysis of Emile Durkheim, who contributed greatly to the concept of the sacred and, therefore, of “sacred space.”

Jews and cities could have been approached through different kinds of

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<sup>1</sup> Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert, “The New Spatial Turn in Jewish History. Essay Review”, *AJS Review* 33:1 (2009), 155–164.

<sup>2</sup> Joachim Schlör, “Jews and the Big City. Exploration on an Urban State of Mind”, in *Jewish Topographies*, eds. Julia Brauch, Anna Lipphardt, Alexandra Nocke (Burlington; VT: Ashgate, 2008), loc. 3, 121 ff. (kindle edition). See also, Joachim Schlör, *Das Ich der Stadt: Debatten über Judentum und Urbanität, 1822–1938. Jüdische Religion, Geschichte und Kultur*, Vol. 1, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005).

<sup>3</sup> Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert, “The New Spatial Turn in Jewish History”, 157.

<sup>4</sup> See, works of Donatella Calabi mentioned in the article on Venice.

methodological approaches, such as the analysis of Jewish attitudes toward the organization of space, in order to understand how Jews shaped sacred and profane spaces in the cities of early modern Europe and later, after the legal Emancipation, in modern Europe.

As much evidence suggests, space and place were of primary relevance in the hierarchy of the sacred performed by the political elite of early modern cities. Ghettos and Jewish quarters were generally, though not exclusively, the result of a Christian hierarchical idea of the sacred that expressed itself through urban organization and the architecture of the city. “Spatial marginality” in early modern Europe played a pivotal role in addressing issues of religious nature. Nevertheless, even when the walls of the ghettos – which were mainly established in the Italian Catholic lands - were torn down, Jewish quarters did not disappear, they rather morphed following the path of economic modernization.

## **Modernity**

Our project focuses primarily on the relationship between Jews and modernity, using cities as a kind of lens to examine how Jews contributed to the development of modern European culture, and, conversely, how the cities of modern Europe shaped Jewish culture. We will examine cities that were pivotal in the story of modernity. Some of those cities have become landmarks in our thinking about the Jewish contributions to European culture. Others are still waiting to be rediscovered.

However, in order to grasp the idea that glues this collection of articles, it is necessary to mull over the definition and concept of “modernity.”

Modernity can be defined in philosophical, economic, social, religious, and cultural terms. In order to simplify a very complicated concept, we will tease out a few of its defining features.

1. Modernity was a process that contributed to the rise of capitalism and industrialization, which in turn led to radical shifts in the landscape. Urbanization was its watchword. Migration from villages to cities deepened the clash between center and periphery. Migration from poorly developed countries to more advanced ones served to accelerate the forces of change. By the second half of 19<sup>th</sup> century, millions of Europeans had moved to the industrial cities of northern Europe and the new world. This dynamic urbanization is central to what we mean by “modernity.”

2. Modernity describes both a geographical displacement and an intellectual one. Modernity gave a prominent new role to science, often at the expense of traditional worldviews endorsed by religion. Religious orthodoxies were challenged by a new science-based assault on sacred traditions. Religions were forced into a confrontation with modernity, and either adapted or became more rigid. This hardening of belief

systems was met with an equal hardening of the forces opposed to belief as a cultural way of life. The most extreme case of this could be the Soviet Union, which made the “murder of religion” one of its founding tenets.

3. Modernity challenged, and eventually changed, the nature of the relationship between the individual and the state. The philosophical — and practical — separation of church and state, coupled with a new politics inspired by the concept of individual freedom, led to the creation of a new political entity: the “modern rational state,” to quote Weber, as well as a new concept of “citizenship” and the advent of “new Politics,” with increasing participation of masses into politics. Finally, the mass participation into politics.

One could also approach modernity through the analysis of chronological periods of various lengths. We opted, in this context, to look at a long period, placing the rise of modernity in the early seventeenth century. It is at the outset of this epoch that a cluster of attitudes reshaped the role of traditional thought and the relationship between religion and society, religion and new science, and religion and culture. Whilst being a period of great political and religious turmoil, this era also stands out as a key moment in the development of theories of religious tolerance, the rise and spread of a new science, and the circulation of new literary forms, such as the novel and the opera. All of which would further develop in the following centuries and become trademarks of modernity.<sup>5</sup>

From an economic and political perspective, the period in question witnesses the establishment of the absolutist monarchy, to the detriment of looser politics, and the emersion of the Atlantic trade, which would slowly supersede the Mediterranean one. Within this context Western Jewry reframed itself, following the path of mercantile routes.

### Cities of the Jews

The changing face of cities all across Europe reflected the profound impact of modernity on the culture and outlook of the Jews. Emigration, whether by mass expulsion or the pursuit of economic and religious freedom, was already a well established fact of Jewish life. Nevertheless, the scale of movement that took place between the eve of modernity and the early 20<sup>th</sup> century was unique, not only in Jewish history, but also in the history of Europe.

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<sup>5</sup> “In several respects this moment in the late Renaissance can be seen as a kind of proto-Enlightenment, a foreshadowing of the cultural concerns of the eighteenth century.” See, Edward Muir, *The Culture Wars of the Late Renaissance. Sceptics, Libertines, and Opera*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), kindle editions, loc. 55-60.

The choice to include the seventeenth-century proved enlightening not only for the understanding of Jews in port cities and their growing role as a mercantile diaspora, but also for the understanding of Venetian Jewry and its contribution to modern culture. An examination of the roots of modernity in the seventeenth century suggests, of course, a focus on Amsterdam, the city that produced the most radical philosopher of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Baruch Spinoza. But the emergence of the Jewish community in Amsterdam invites to explore its links to Jewish Venice, which provided religious expertise and consultation. Jewish Venice is an especially interesting case, in part because of the prominent role of the Republic of Venice in the European imagination, which gave its Jews a broad influence beyond their ghetto walls. Furthermore Venice experienced, in the early decades of the seventeenth century, an intense period of anxiety which strongly influenced the configuration of a modern culture.<sup>6</sup> Within the background of this environment the city and its ghetto performed, as a my paper on Venice suggests, a significant cultural undertaking: the publication of two books which were destined to play a key role in the following decades and which strongly influenced new conceptions with regards to Judaism and its place in Christian society.<sup>7</sup>

One could suggest that it was in Venice, within the confines of the ghetto, that a theory of Jews as merchants, marked by utilitarian undertones was finally drafted. However, during the seventeenth-century, scholars and intellectuals from Europe, driven mainly by the interest in religion and rituals, payed a visit to the Venetian ghetto. Therefore, the paper also calls for an investigation into the ghetto both as a space and place capable of creating unique cultural and religious encounters.

In the early modern period port cities were deemed ideal for Jews. This collection of articles presents and discusses four different port cities in which the Jews played an important role in the economy.<sup>8</sup> Livorno, a port which was established at the end of the sixteenth-century and a city which soon became a special place for Jews, granting them more privilegese and autonomy then any other city within the Italian *paeninsula* one. Trieste and Odessa, port cities which were founded in the late eighteenth-century and which provided crucial services to their

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<sup>6</sup> The idea that modernity is the result of a period of deep anxiety dates back to the works of Paul Hazard and William J. Bouwmsa. See also, Muir, *The Culture Wars of the Late Renaissance*.

<sup>7</sup> The works I am referring to are: Leon Modena, *Historia de' riti hebraici*, (Venice: Calleoni, 1638); Simone Luzzatto, *Discorso circa il stato de gl'Hebrei*, (Venice, Calleoni, 1638).

<sup>8</sup> , David Cesarani ed., *Port Jews: Jewish Communities in Cosmopolitan Maritime Trading Centres, 1550-1950*, (London and Portland: Frank Cass Publishers, 2002).



respective empires. And finally Alexandria in Egypt, an interesting case-study which provides insight into the impact of modern cultural trends and the role of Jews beyond European boundaries.

With reference to scholarly debates over port cities, both Bregoli's article on Livorno and Catalan's article on Trieste offer new and critical insight, providing a more comprehensive awareness on the nexus between port Jews and the rise of modernity.

In regards to Livorno, Bregoli argues, in her accurate and detailed historical reconstruction, that "at the onset of 'modernity', the exceptional nature and economic system of Livorno, together with the long-standing conception of Livornese Jews as commercially useful, contributed to the preservation of traditional structures and norms and prevented the full application of enlightened equalizing policies championed by the Tuscan government."

Trieste is another fascinating case of a port city. The Jews of Trieste forged a peculiar cultural identity which bridged the worlds of Italy and the Habsburg empire. Trieste's port city was modelled after such cities like Venice and Livorno, where merchants with considerable trading networks were invited in order to launch and foster economic growth. These cities, especially in Catholic lands, did not exclusively host Jews, but they also were home to Armenians, Greeks, Slavs, Turks, Moors, Germans, and other "trading nations." All of these cities were somehow similar and yet very different. Their cultural outlook varied greatly: Livorno remained until the mid-nineteenth century a centre of Kabbalistic culture, both in dialogue and concert with north-African Jewish culture. Trieste's Jewish culture was definitely influenced by waves of maskilic ideals originating from Germanic lands and tinged with effects from Italian culture. As a social historian, Catalan presents a new perspective on Trieste's tolerant *entrepôt*, focusing not exclusively on "port Jews," but integrating historical evidence derived from research on other religious and ethnic groups. Furthermore, this paper also explores the dark side of Trieste, and encourages the idea of deconstructing of the well-nurtured myth of the "tolerant city."

Morphology invites the reader to the introduction of Odessa. Its history resembles the efforts applied by the Habsburgs in launching the port of Trieste. In fact, important trading networks connected the two port-cities and their Jewish inhabitants. Odessa was the city outside of the Pale of Settlement where Jews were allowed to live. Home to the most diverse Jewish population of the Russian empire, Odessa was the cradle of a new, although highly ambivalent, kind of Jewish identity. It somehow managed to be a real and a symbolic place at the same time.

Akin to Trieste, Odessa was a city of many cultural souls, deemed to become and to perpetuate an enduring "myth." Schlör's fascinating article addresses several of these questions and explores what I would like to call Odessa's cultural memories and its ability at myth-making.

The special flavour of the city's cultural memory might be related to its multi-cultural character. What is fascinating about Odessa is what Schlör calls "Odessity" – similar to the concept of "triestinità" – which might stem from a sense of nostalgia and longing. "Not only does Odessa have a Greek, an Armenian, a Jewish, a French and an Italian history, in addition to the more obvious Russian, Ukrainian, Soviet, and post-Soviet narratives, it also finds itself in more than just one place – wherever "Odessity" as a state of mind, a memory, a literary image is being celebrated and constructed."

In as far as Alexandria is concerned, Miccoli's article is aimed at reading the impact of modernity "as a dynamic blending of tensions and exchanges in-between Jews and non-Jews, Egypt and Europe, local knowledge and foreign ideas." As this case-study implicates, the tensions are more explicit because of the conflicting and ambivalent relationship bridging the city to colonial power.

In the nineteenth-century, some of the most important Jewish cities were located in the Habsburg Empire, which was home to an extremely diverse and large Jewish settlement. Cities like Vienna, Prague and Budapest contributed greatly to the development of a modern Jewish culture — and to its critique as well. Here we find ourselves in cities which were the capitals of national areas of the Empire and whose modernizing path reflected the implementation of industrialization at an abrupt pace. Immense poverty and extraordinary wealth, together with the rise of a middle class and an industrial proletariat define the landscape of this modern metropolis.

Although their history is often embedded in their respective national narratives, they all offer an important insight to Jewish modernity: Vienna became, although for a very short time, the thrilling center of Jewish modernity and modernism. Prague, was the hotbed of creative competition of rival languages and cultures; and Budapest represented a unique makeup of Jewish population, which included converts, barons, revolutionaries, and Zionists.

Much has been written about Vienna, caught in between a fascinating and impressive cultural creativity and the harshness of political conflict and anti-Semitism. Lichtblau offers a terse description of social, economic and cultural integration of Jews in Vienna, endorsing interpretations that emphasize the influence of "segregation and social isolation" as explicatory means of the city's cultural creativity. In other words, as we noted above, modernity stemmed and somehow developed, out of anxiety.

Akinsha's paper on Budapest explores one of the most intriguing, yet elusive phenomenon of modern culture, "the passion for art collecting which was in vogue amongst the representatives of the Jewish haute bourgeoisie of Budapest at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century." At the

core of his article stands the investigation into the collection of “Baron Mór Lipót Herzog who not only became one of the leading art collectors of Budapest but also influenced the development of European artistic taste,” and in addition contributed to the rediscovery and popularization of El Greco in Europe.

As far as the Russian Empire, home to a vast Jewish settlement, is concerned, we offer, after Odessa, an insight into Warsaw. Guesnet’s paper is devoted to one of the most important “Jewish metropolis,” the city of Warsaw, and offers an original insight into the relationship between modernity and traditional Judaism. In contrast to established narratives, Guesnet argues “that the acceleration of political and societal change within the Jewish community allowed observant elites to achieve political and cultural hegemony in Warsaw, and thus offers a *sui generis* pathway of Jewish metropolitan modernization.”

Another crucial dimension of Jewish modernity is the experience of Jews who emigrated and left Europe altogether. War, poverty, and violence pushed millions of European Jews, mainly from the Southern and Eastern areas, to flee the old continent. By the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, nearly two millions Jews had moved westward, many of them without any thought of coming back. New cities — New York, Chicago, and Cincinnati, just to name a few — emerged as centers of Jewish civilization. Like London, these cities shone as beacons for a better future. They became hotbeds of political activism, literary imagination, and religious response.

In his lengthy article, Raider explores the cultural and intellectual trajectory of Stephen Wise, a Hungarian born Jew whose “synthesis of liberal Judaism, American pluralism, Zionism, and Progressive-era notions of social justice anticipated the rise of a new American Jewish sensibility that would become normative in the twentieth-century.” Stephen Wise exploited to its best the immense possibilities provided both by the idea of the “American frontier” and the chances of a huge metropolis, moving from one side to the other of the continent, from the West coast back to New York City, where he finally established himself as one of the most important rabbis of the early twentieth century.

World War I was a watershed in European history: two empires fell apart, giving birth to new nation-states, the Bolsheviks Revolution and the birth of the Soviet Union. Its impact was felt by Jews in every major city. One way to examine the place of urban Jews in the new world order would be to focus on the major cities of the Soviet Union. Bemporad’s focus on Minsk, offers an original insight into patterns of Jewish modernization under Soviet rule. “The study of a ‘Jewish metropolis’ like Minsk, situated in the heart of the pre-1917 territory of

designated Jewish residence, provides a better insight into the ways in which most Jewish women adjusted to the Bolshevik rise to power, negotiated between Communism and Jewish identity, and integrated into Soviet society.”

At the same time, by the first decades of the twentieth century, a new chapter in Jewish cultural geography developed. Even as the majority of the Jews emigrated to the Americas, a minority participated in that ultimate expression of modernity: the creation of their very own nation-state. New cities like Tel Aviv were born in the “promised land,” a concrete implementation of an age-old dream, tempered by the traumatic experience of modernity. Manor’s paper contributes to shed light on Tel Aviv, as it was perceived through the eyes of Louis Miller, himself a Jewish immigrant who settled in New York. A Yiddish speaking journalist, Miller paid a visit to Tel Aviv in 1911, and managed to see in this new modest garden-city the cradle of the Zionist revolution. Furthermore, Manor stressed how urban life had already encroached at the very core of the Zionist project, even though the main body of Zionist ideologues openly rejected it.

The issue on Jewish cities concludes with a detailed account of the Italian years of Saul Steinberg, one of America’s most renown artists. The journey of Steinberg from Romania to Fascist Italy and then to America is a personal geography, or better an “autogeography” – and the title of the map we chose as cover for this issue – of many European Jews who had to flee Europe during its darkest time. Tedeschini Lalli’s long article based on this period of Steinberg’s biography takes us back to Fascist Italy and presents us with a detailed insight into the cultural environment of the time. It also suggests a different perspective on space and place, one as performed by individual experiences. Personal and individual geographies could possibly be the theme for another issue in Jewish history.

This collection of articles is an attempt to map a cultural geography of Jewish history in its broader sense, whose aim is to supersede both traditional national historiography and the dichotomy between Zionist and diaspora narratives. In trying to convey a picture of important Jewish cities through a relatively long time span, we hope to enable readers to detect, and evaluate, the persistence of early modern urban and cultural models (such as port-cities) and their transformation through time. This “geographical” perspective also enlightens on the wide range of responses to modernity that Jews were able to perform and implement with great creativity over a relatively long period of time, and invites researchers to confront with comparisons and complexity. Finally, this issue on Jewish cities and modernity should

contribute to a better understanding of the ambivalent nature of nationalism that, with its call for freedom and its ascriptive concept of citizenship, slowly cannibalized both multi-cultural cities and multi-national empires.

From Venice to Warsaw, from Prague to New York, from Berlin to Tel Aviv, the geography of Jewish modernity is a tale of many cities, as diverse as the European and American landscapes themselves. Shaping Jewish culture as much as being shaped by it, these cities offer a tour of the turbulent and fascinating journey of modernity in general, and the indelible skylines that were left in its wake.\*

\* We would like to express our gratitude to the *Saul Steinberg Foundation* in New York

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## **The City, the Ghetto and Two Books. Venice and Jewish Early Modernity**

by *Cristiana Facchini*

### **Abstract**

*In 1638 two books written by two Venitian rabbis were published in Venice. They were both destined successfully to reach wide circulation over the following decades. This article aims at exploring the intimate connection between Venice, a city which deeply influenced the imagination of European culture during the early modern period, and its Jewish ghetto, the first of its kind to be founded within Catholic lands.*

*The author suggests that it was here in Venice, within the liminal space of the ghetto, that the theory of Jews as merchants, marked by undertones of utilitarianism was finally drafted. It also suggests that, in conjunction with this well-known theory, other theories based on religious tolerance were elaborated.*

*The paper also invites the reader to view the ghetto as a space capable of enacting special religious encounters, mainly driven by an interest in religion and rituals. Therefore, the very specific local and tangible conditions of the urban environment – the city and the ghetto – performed a very important undertaking, for example, debates over the place and role of Jews in Christian society.*

### **The most Serene Republic and the ghetto**

“And amongst the cities of Europe, Rome and Venice are the most frequented for the pleasures and delights they minister to all the beholders of them. Rome for the exceeding wonderful relics of her ancient greatness, and Venice for the gloriousness of her present and magnificent estate” (Giovanni Botero)

In the midst of the seventeenth century, when the emersion of the absolutist monarchy was becoming a self-evident political reality, the republic of Venice proudly stood a remnant of an ancient and glorious republican past. Both a port city and the capital of a splendid maritime empire, Venice attracted a lot of interest, and despite the slow demise of its economic might, it was destined to be transformed into an everlasting

myth.<sup>1</sup>

Urban scholars have pointed out that Venice had developed features which at a very early stage would become a trademark for ideal city planning. The port city which arose around the Doge's *Palazzo* was composed of settlements originating on the islands. These separate units were organized around the parish, and soon evolved into autonomous polities which were provided with all the main social and political organs – church, market, charity venues, representative political bodies and government members – resembling the structure of the city's government. Every autonomous area was connected by bridges and alleys which in turn integrated each of the individual units into the wider social and economic fabric of the city. “The integration within these parishes was a foundation stone of Venice social stability. The preservation of neighborhood spirit after Venice grew more densely-populated is one reason for considering Venice a model of city planning,” states Lane,<sup>2</sup> following the suggestion of Lewis Mumford who had emphasized the role of Venice as an example of an ideal city.<sup>3</sup> Though much of that vision might sound utopian, not to say even mistaken or outdated, scholars tend to acknowledge the fact that the peculiar geography and ecological structure of the environment determined much of the urban structure and successful development of Venice. As the city developed into a maritime empire, the social and demographic structure diversified. The pertinent role attributed to trade and the mercantile character of the leading aristocracy had a significant impact on the social structure of the city and its culture. Like many other great Renaissance and late Renaissance mercantile cities, Venice was inhabited by a number of different groups. From specialized workers to merchants, Venice's urban texture was a mosaic made up of a highly diversified population. Waves of immigrants fleeing from the eastern territories flocked to the city before and after the fall of Constantinople, contributing to the creation of a “seagoing proletariat.”<sup>4</sup> The area belonging to the Greeks, which developed around the Arsenal, was home to specialized workers, and later became a safe haven for members of the Hellenic nation, which also comprised of scholars and other professionals. The permission for the establishment of a church

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<sup>1</sup> Edward Muir, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 13-61; *Venice Reconsidered: The History and Civilization of an Italian City-State, 1297–1797*, eds. John Martin, Dennis Romano (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000).

<sup>2</sup> Frederic C. Lane, *Venice. A Maritime Republic* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 12 (quoting Mumford).

<sup>3</sup> On the ideal image of Venice as was envisioned by Mumford see: Lewis Mumford, *The City in History* (Harcourt: Brace and Janovich, 1961). I quote from the Italian edition: *La città nella storia. Dal chiostro al Barocco* (Milan: Bompiani 2002): 407.

<sup>4</sup> Elisabeth Crouzet Pavan, *Venice Triumphant: the Horizon of a Myth* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 146.

according to their ethnic and religious tradition was finally accorded and inaugurated in 1565 with the approbation of the Holy See, even though in Rome this wide presence of members of the Greek Orthodox church was perceived as a threat.<sup>5</sup>

Calabi has devoted insightful research to the development of urban areas which were once inhabited by what we would call nowadays religious or ethnic “minorities”, some of which were foreign merchants.<sup>6</sup> The *fondaco* of Tedeschi (the German Quarter), inhabited by the merchants who arrived from the north of Europe and were deemed pivotal for their trading networks and their merchandise, was established around the area of the Rialto market. Though the Germans lived in many different areas, the *fondaco*, which was rebuilt after the fire of 1505, became one of the most important “ethnic enclaves” of the port city.<sup>7</sup> Venice was inhabited by Armenians, Slavs, Albanians, Turks, Persians and merchants from other Italian or European lands.<sup>8</sup> Each area or neighborhood revolved around a few structural principles: religious institutions, ethnic affiliation (defined both by language and geographical provenance) and socio-economic functions. The “ethnic enclave” contributed to the cultural life of the city: Greeks, Germans and Armenians often owned printing enterprises, had their own scholars, *literati* and artists, contributing in many different ways to the well-being of the city.

Like many European cities, Venice is able to recount a special story with regards to its Jewry.<sup>9</sup> Home to the first “ghetto” – a name derived from

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<sup>5</sup> Donatella Calabi, “Gli stranieri nella capitale della repubblica Veneta nella prima età moderna”, *Mélanges de l'Ecole Française de Rome. Italie et Méditerranée* 111/2 (1999): 721-732, esp. 723-724; H. Porfyriou, “I greci a Venezia e a Roma”, in *La città italiana e i luoghi degli stranieri, XV-XVIII secolo*, eds. Donatella Calabi, Paola Lanaro (Rome-Bari: Laterza 1998). For a negative perception of Greeks in Venice see: William Bouwsma, *Venice and the Defence of Republican Liberty. Renaissance Values in the Age of Counter-Reformation*, (Berkeley – Los Angeles: University of California Press), 259.

<sup>6</sup> Donatella Calabi, “Foreigners and the City: an Historiographical Exploration for the Early Modern Period”, *Fondazione Eni Enrico Mattei. Working Papers* 15 (2006): 1-41; *Les étrangers dans la ville: minorités et espace urbain du bas Moyen Âge à l'époque moderne*, eds. Jacques Bottin, Donatella Calabi (Paris: Editions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 1999); *Cities and Cultural Exchange in Europe, 1400-1700*, eds. Donatella Calabi, Stephen Turk Christensen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

<sup>7</sup> The term *fondaco* derives from the Arab word *funduq*, and defines a structure that worked both as a warehouse and as an hospice for merchants. See: Calabi, “Foreigners and the City”, 12; Idem, “Gli stranieri nella capitale della Repubblica Veneta”, 725-726; Crouzet Pavan, *Venice Triumphant*, 163.

<sup>8</sup> For oriental minorities in Venice see: Brunehilde Imhaus, *Le minoranze orientali a Venezia (1300-1510)*, (Venice: Il Veltro, 1997).

<sup>9</sup> Literature on the Jews of Venice is relatively vast and very specialized. The main references are: Cecil Roth, *The Jews of Venice*, (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1930); Riccardo Calimani, *Storia del ghetto di Venezia*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. (Milano: Mondadori, 1995); *Gli ebrei a Venezia*, ed. Gaetano Cozzi (Milan: Edizioni Comunità, 1987); *The Jews of Early Modern Venice*, eds. C. Davis, Benjamin Ravid (Baltimore-



a Venetian word relating to the area of the *fonderia* where copper was thrown and melted (*gittata* and therefore *geto* in Venetian) – Venice stands as the first city on the Italian peninsula to create a compulsory residential area for its Jewry.<sup>10</sup>

The establishment of the ghetto was the outcome of two cultural traits of Christian society. Scholars acknowledge that a compulsory area allotted to the Jews followed the structure and development of the city where foreigners from various provenances, largely specialized in their functions and religiously or ethnically homogenous, as stated above, were gathered in separate quarters or islands. The establishment of the ghetto was, therefore, the coherent and logical outcome of the city planning process.<sup>11</sup> Jews – at least in Venice – similarly to Greeks, Albanians and Turks were positioned on the margins of the city, away from the centre, according to the logic of “spatial marginality.”<sup>12</sup> “Spatial marginality” was implemented in order to control and discipline religious, cultural and ethnic diversity. Nevertheless, Jews were not merchants (or members of a trading nation) – even though they performed economic services, such as money-lending and the trade of used or second hands goods – and religion played a major role in the process of social and urban marginalization. The same fate occurred to the Turks, who would only be permitted an independent *fondaco* in 1621, but never succeeded in receiving permission for a public space for worship.<sup>13</sup> Protestants were seemingly deemed a political threat and were treated accordingly: worship could be performed only in private dwellings. In contrast to Protestants and Muslims, Jews were allowed a public space for their religious service, as we shall see below.

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London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001); “*Interstizi.*” *Culture ebraico-cristiane a Venezia e nei suoi domini dal medioevo all’età moderna*, eds. Uwe Israel, Robert Jütte, Reinhold C. Mueller, (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2010).

<sup>10</sup> This article will not deal with the question of the rise and meaning of Italian “ghettoes” in the sixteenth century. For an introduction to the history of the Venetian ghetto see: *La città degli Ebrei*, eds. Ennio Concina, Ugo Camerino, Donatella Calabi, (Venezia, 1991). For an historical outline, see: Benjamin Ravid, “Excursus 1: the Venetian Ghetto in Historical Perspective”, in *The Autobiography of a Seventeenth Century Venetian Rabbi. Leon Modena’s Life of Judah*, ed. Mark R. Cohen (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988 henceforth quoted as *Life of Judah*), 279-283; for a general outline on Jewish quarters and ghettoes see: Donatella Calabi, “Les quartier juifs en Italie entre 15e et 17e siècles. Quelques hypothèses de travail”, *Annales HSS* (juillet-août 1997): 777-797. On papal policy regarding the segregation of the Jews, see: Kenneth Stow, *Catholic Thought and Papal Jewry Policy, 1555-1593*, (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1977); Renata Segre, “La controriforma: espulsioni, conversioni, isolamento”, in *Gli ebrei in Italia*, 1, ed. Corrado Vivanti, *Storia d’Italia*, Annali 11, (Turin: Einaudi, 2006), 709-778.

<sup>11</sup> Calabi, “Gli stranieri nella capitale della Repubblica Veneta”, 731; Idem, “Les quartier juifs en Italie.”

<sup>12</sup> Calabi, “Gli stranieri nella capitale della Repubblica Veneta”, 729.

<sup>13</sup> Brian Pullan, *The Jews of Europe and the Inquisition of Venice, 1550-1670*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983), 154-156.

At the outset of the seventeenth-century the Jewish community of Venice had increased and developed into a relatively important settlement – an “estate of outcasts,” as Brian Pullan properly defined it – whose legacy played an important role both in the cultural debate of early modernity and the economic fabric of the city.<sup>14</sup> From 1516, when the ghetto was first established, to the end of the century, political and religious events provoked new challenges to western European Jews. As Protestant reform spread across Europe, gaining states and cities in its path, Catholic policy against the Jews was to be reformulated. The Protestant threat was not only spreading throughout many Italian states, but it contributed to the drastic change to the urban religious landscape around Europe, either radically transforming the social and institutional fabric of a city or dividing it into a religious battlefield.<sup>15</sup> Even if Catholic zeal might have predated the Reformation, as witnessed in Spanish state-building, its outbreak readdressed a number of religious questions which while aimed at “heretics” would definitely also target the new Christians (or *Conversos*) of Iberian descent which had fled from their country during the first decades of the sixteenth century.<sup>16</sup> Because religious zeal and persecution increased within Spanish domains, recurrent waves of *Conversos* fled from the Iberian Peninsula and Flanders heading toward more secure shores.<sup>17</sup> The Jewish community of Amsterdam was founded by former *Conversos* which returned to Judaism, whereas many Iberian *Conversos* (or new Christians) converted to Judaism within the

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 146.

<sup>15</sup> France is a good example of the war of religion. See Natalie Zemon Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France: Eight Essays*, (Stanford, Ca.: Stanford University Press, 1975). Religious practices survived even when certain groups became religious minorities. For the Dutch case see: Kristine Kooi, “Popish Impudence: the Perseverance of the Roman Catholic Faithful in Calvinist Holland, 1572-1620”, *Sixteenth Century Journal* 26/1 (1995): 75-85; C. Scott Dixon, “Urban Order and Religious Coexistence in the German Imperial City: Augsburg and Donauwoerth, 1548-1608”, *Central European History* 40 (2007): 1-33.

<sup>16</sup> *Conversos*, *Marranos*, or crypto-Jews are terms that define Jews from the Iberian peninsula who had been forced to convert to Christianity. Many of them were persecuted by the Spanish and Portuguese Inquisition as heretics professing hidden forms of Judaism. Some of them were committed Christians, some converted to Judaism or were asked to convert to Judaism (as in Venice, for example); some of them kept double religious identities. The term “*Sephardim*” generically defines Jews (and sometimes conversos) of Iberian descent. For introductory remarks see: Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *From Spanish Court to Italian Ghetto. Isaac Cardoso: A Study in Seventeenth-Century Marranism and Jewish Apologetics*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971); *Jews and Conversos*, ed. Yosef Kaplan, (Jerusalem, World Union of Jewish Studies, 1985); Idem, *From Christianity to Judaism. The Story of Isaac Orobio de Castro*, Engl. trans. (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2004); Francesca Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers. The Sephardic Diaspora, Livorno, and Cross-Cultural Trade in the Early Modern Period*, (New Haven – London: Yale University Press, 2009), 204 note 3.

<sup>17</sup> On the *conversos* diaspora see: Jonathan Israel, *Diasporas within a Diaspora: Jews, Crypto-Jews, and the World of Maritime Empires (1540-1740)*, (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2002).

cities of the Turkish Empire.<sup>18</sup>

Catholic politics directed at the Iberian new Christians and Jews was for the most part controversial and ambivalent. Both Popes Paul III and Julius III – together with the Grand Duke of Tuscany and Ercole II of Este Duke of Ferrara – had expressed their will to invite the Iberian Christian converts and Jews to settle in Italian cities, granting them full protection from religious persecution, especially from the Inquisition tribunals which had been introduced in every Italian state in order to avert Protestant ‘heresy’.<sup>19</sup> The first charters were so liberal that they also included the Turks and other “infidels” in so far as these groups, specialized in economic tasks, would foster trade and thereby improve the economy.<sup>20</sup> As a result of such a liberal policy, the Iberian Jews and the new Christians flocked to many Italian cities: of which Livorno, Ferrara, Ancona and Pesaro are amongst the most significant.<sup>21</sup>

The sudden decision of Pope Paul IV to reverse the liberal policy of his predecessors and align himself with the more zealous Spanish ally was inaugurated in 1555, when the papal bull *Cum nimis absurdum* was issued. As the Pope and the Spanish crown increased their means of control over religious beliefs and practices in order to contain religious dissent,<sup>22</sup> the official policy on urban and religious segregation came into place and was slowly implemented in many Italian states until the eighteenth century.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, privileges granted for sheer economic reasons to *Conversos* or Jews who had once been Christians were to be quickly revoked, causing the Iberian Jews and *Conversos* to seek new safe havens. When the privileges granted to the Iberian Jews began to be withdrawn in other Italian cities, Venice decided to welcome them and issued a few charters which granted a number of privileges.<sup>24</sup> At the outset of the

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<sup>18</sup> Miriam Bodian, *Hebrews of the Portuguese Nation. Conversos and Community in Early Modern Amsterdam*, (Bloomington-Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999); Steven Nadler, *Spinoza. A Life*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), chap. 1.

<sup>19</sup> *L'inquisizione e gli ebrei in Italia*, ed. Michele Luzzati (Rome-Bari, Laterza, 1994).

<sup>20</sup> Pullan, *The Jews of Europe*; Benjamin Ravid, “Venice, Rome, and the Reversion of New Christian to Judaism: a Study in *ragione di stato*”, in *L'identità dissimulata. Giudaizzanti iberici nell'Europa cristiana dell'età moderna*, ed. Pier Cesare Ioly Zorattini (Florence: Olschki, 2000), 151-310.

<sup>21</sup> On Livorno see the article by Francesca Bregoli in this issue. For Ferrara, see: Renata Segre, “La formazione di una comunità marrana: i portoghesi a Ferrara”, in *Gli ebrei in Italia*, 1, 781-841; Aron di Leone Leone, *La nazione ebraica spagnola e portoghese di Ferrara (1492-1559)*, (Florence: Olschki, 2011).

<sup>22</sup> The literature over Protestants in Italy is vast. See Delio Cantimori, *Eretici italiani del Cinquecento*, rev. ed. (Turin: Einaudi, 1962); Massimo Firpo, *Riforma protestante ed eresie nell'Italia del Cinquecento. Un profilo storico*, 8th ed. (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 2008).

<sup>23</sup> The ghettos of Piedmont were all established in the eighteenth century. See: Attilio Milano, *Storia degli ebrei in Italia*, (Turin: Einaudi, 1961), 286-337.

<sup>24</sup> Benjamin Ravid, “The Venitian Government and the Jews”, in *The Jews of Early Modern Venice*, 5-30.

seventeenth century, the Venetian Jewish population had visibly increased. The ghetto had expanded and its social and cultural structure had metamorphosed into a microcosm of different Jewish sub-cultures. The older layer comprised of Ashkenazi Jews and the Italian descendents specialized in money lending and small enterprises; a second layer was composed of Levantine Jews who had been subjects of the Turkish empire and had converted to Judaism in the Muslim land; and ultimately a layer of a more recent migrated population originating from Spain and Portugal, from northern Europe and other Italian states which negotiated a charter at the end of sixteenth century, and were legally recognized as Ponentini Jews.<sup>25</sup> Amongst this new immigration wave of Iberian descendents, a small number were and remained Christian converts.<sup>26</sup>

### A city and two books

Venice – like Amsterdam – had many benefits to offer to Jews. Besides the traditional occupations, there were opportunities for business and trade, the chance to attend one of the few universities open to Jews in the nearby city of Padua and partake of the thriving printing enterprise which made the city unique.<sup>27</sup> Undeniably, in the seventeenth-century, the Inquisition tribunal provoked a cultural impoverishment as its control over books and human lives increased, even if in Venice it was less intrusive than elsewhere, partly due to the fact that its structure was not wholly under Rome's control.<sup>28</sup>

The cultural creativity of Venice during the first half of the seventeenth-century reverberated through the walls of the ghetto, inhabited by a multitude of different personalities and crossed by a number of different activities. It is precisely at the intersection between the city and the ghetto that two of the most important books on Judaism were created, written and published. *Historia de' riti Hebraici* written by the renowned polymath, rabbi Leon Modena (1571–1648), and the *Discorso circa il stato*

<sup>25</sup> Pullan, *The Jews of Europe*, 149-152.

<sup>26</sup> Federica Ruspio, "Una comunità di marrani a Venezia", *Zakhor* 5 (2002): 53-85; Idem, *La nazione portoghese: ebrei ponentini e nuovi cristiani a Venezia*, (Turin: Zamorani, 2007); Idem, "La nazione portoghese a Venezia (secc. xvi-xvii secc.)", in "Interstizi", 371-404.

<sup>27</sup> On the relevance of the Studio of Padua for Venice see: David Ruderman, *Jewish Thought and Scientific Discovery in Early Modern Europe*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), chap. 3.

<sup>28</sup> Adriano Prosperi, *Tribunali della coscienza: inquisitori, confessori, missionari*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Turin: Einaudi, 2009); for censorship on books: Paul Grendler, *The Roman Inquisition and the Venetian Press, 1540-1605*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977); for the Inquisition and Jews in Venice see: Pier Cesare Ioly Zorattini, "Jews, Crypto-Jews, and the Inquisition", in *The Jews of Venice*, 97-116; Idem, *Processi del S. Uffizio di Venezia contro ebrei e giudaizzanti*, 14 vols. (Florence: Olschki, 1980-99).

*de gl'Hebrei*, composed by his younger colleague, rabbi and philosopher Simone (Simcha) Luzzatto (1583-1663), were both printed in Venice in 1638.

Leon Modena has been deemed one of the most controversial, misunderstood yet significant, rabbis of the early seventeenth century.<sup>29</sup> He was a polymath and a religious leader who wrote extensively in Italian and Hebrew. His extensive works covered all possible literary genres and answered the multifarious needs of a religious community. Although some scholars have pointed out his marginality, he played a pivotal role not only in Venice, but also for the Jewish community of Amsterdam.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, Modena's works highlight noteworthy features of religious modernity: his critique of Kabbalah, his autobiographical journal and his innovative polemical work against Christianity, to mention but a few, all indicate the achievements of one of the most brilliant Jewish scholars of the period and the wide range of his interests.<sup>31</sup>

Simone Luzzatto his younger fellow and colleague, was a renowned scientist whose works were highly praised amongst scholars of the time. His fame relied on his oral teachings, if we believe what Isaac Cantarini reported in one of the letters he sent to the Christian hebraist C. T. Unger.<sup>32</sup> Indeed, his immense erudition in natural science (especially astronomy) was praised by a number of Jewish scholars: amongst them was Joseph Shlomo Delmedigo who had studied in Padua with Galileo and Jacob Frances, the famed opponent of Sabbatai Sevi.<sup>33</sup>

Contrary to Modena, Luzzatto's printed works are few and very specific in genre, mostly written in Italian: the first and most notable was his *Discorso circa il stato de' gl'Hebrei* which has been thoroughly analysed by various scholars in Jewish history.<sup>34</sup> His second work, *Socrate*, is a

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<sup>29</sup> *The Lion Shall Roar. Leone Modena and his World*, ed. David Malkiel (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University Magnes Press and Ben Zvi, 2003).

<sup>30</sup> See: Nadler, *Baruch Spinoza*, passim.

<sup>31</sup> Modena wrote extensively on many relevant Jewish topics related to Judaism. For a biographical account see: Howard Adelman, *Failure and Success in the Seventeenth Century Ghetto of Venice: the Life and Thought of Leon Modena, 1571-1648*, PhD Dissertation, (Brandeis University, 1985).

<sup>32</sup> See the correspondence between Isaac Cantarini and Christoph Theophil Unger in *Otsar nehmud*, 3, (Vienna: 1860), 137 (Heb).

<sup>33</sup> *Sefer elim* was published in Amsterdam by Menasseh ben Israel. See Isaac Barzilay, *Yoseph Shlomo Delmedigo (Yashar of Candia): his Life, Works and Times*, (Leiden: Brill 1974), 42 and note 4; Ruderman, *Jewish Thought*, chap. 4. Benjamin Ravid, "Biblical Exegesis à la Mercantilism and Raison d'état in Seventeenth Century Venice: the Discorso of Simone Luzzatto", in *Bringing the Hidden to Light: the Process of Interpretation. Studies in Honor of Stephen A. Geller*, eds. Kathryn F. Kravitz, Diane M. Sharon, (Ann Arbor: Eisenbrauns, 2007), 169-186, 169, 170. On Jacob Frances see: Gershom Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi. The Mystical Messiah, 1626-1676*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), 516-518.

<sup>34</sup> For the purpose of this article I will always refer to: Simone Luzzatto, *Discorso circa il stato de' gl'Hebrei, et in particolare dimoranti nell'inclita città di Venetia*, facsimile dell'edizione veneziana del 1638, (Bologna: Saletta, 1976). Henceforth quoted as *Discorso*.

fascinating and yet cryptic philosophical work, the content of which has been described as mainly influenced by skeptical strains of thought.<sup>35</sup> His Hebrew works were written mainly in the form of legal *responsa*.<sup>36</sup>

Given the length and scope of this article, I would like to explore the intimate connection between the city of Venice, the ghetto and its Jewish culture and how certain special traits of Venice's early modernity defined the content of these very important Jewish works. Leone Modena and Simone Luzzatto both contributed to a new concept of the collective identity of Jews and their role within Christian society during times of religious strife and fragmentation. In order to shed some light on these questions we might follow the book whose redaction historians know in great detail: *Historia de' riti Hebraici*.<sup>37</sup>

### The rabbi and the ambassador

"When the Torah portions Tazria and Metzora were read in 5389 (April 28, 1629) I preached in the synagogue of the Sephardim, may God their Rock protect them and grant them long life. In attendance were the brother of the king of France, who was accompanied by some French noblemen and by five of the most important Christian preachers who gave sermons that Pentecost. God put such learned words into my

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<sup>35</sup> Simone Luzzatto, *Socrate, ouero dell'humano sapere*, (Venice: Tomasini, 1651); on this text see: Ruderman, *Jewish Thought*, chap. 5; Ariel Viterbo, "Socrate nel ghetto: lo scetticismo mascherato di Simone Luzzatto", *Studi veneziani* 38 (1999): 79-128.

<sup>36</sup> His works were first mentioned in: Jo. Christ. Wolf, *Bibliothecae hebraeae*, 3, (Hamburg – Leipzig: Theod. Christoph. Felgineri, 1727), 1150-1152.

<sup>37</sup> For the redaction of this article I do refer to the Paris edition: *Historia de gli riti hebraici: dove si dà breve e total relatione di tutta la vita, costumi, è riti e osserbanze de gl'Hebrei di questi tempi*, di Leon Modena, Rabi Hebreo di Venetia (Paris: 1637); and the Venitian edition of (1638): *Historia de riti hebraici, vita et osservanza de gl'Hebrei di questi tempi*, di Leon Modena Rabi Hebreo da Venetia, (Venice: Calleoni, 1638). I did use the 1678 edition (Venice: Benedetto Miloco, 1678). Henceforth quoted as *Riti*. The 1638 version was reprinted many times: Venice 1669, 1673, 1678, 1694, 1714, Modena, 1728, Rome 1932-33, Bologna, 1979. A German translation of the *Riti*, based on the two editions and the Venitian manuscript has been recently published: Leon Modena, *Juedische Riten, sitten un gebräuche*, ed. and transl. by Rafael Arnold, (Wiesbaden: Marixverlag, 2007); for the French edition see: Richard Simon, *Les juifs présentés aux chrétiens. Cérémonie et coutumes qui s'observent aujourd'hui parmi les Juifs par Léon Modène* traduit par Richard Simon, suivi de *Comparaison des cérémonies des Juifs et de la discipline de l'église*, eds. Jacques Le Brun – Guy G. Stroumsa (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1998). The title of the first manuscript copy reads *Vita, riti e costumi de gl'Hebrei – in brevissimo compendio ma amplamento raccolti et descritti*. This copy was presented in September 1628 to William Boswell and is now at St. John's College Library in Cambridge. See: Howard Adelman, "Leon Modena: the Autobiography and the Man", in *Life of Judah*, 28-29; Jacques Le Brun, *Ceremonies*, XXI; P. van Roode, "Conception of Judaism as a Religion in the Seventeenth Century Dutch Republic", in *Christianity and Judaism*, ed. Diana Wood (Cambridge: Ecclesiastical History Society by Blackwell Publishers, 1992), 307.

mouth that all were pleased, including many other Christians who were present.”<sup>38</sup>

In a fit of self-praise, while highlighting and praising his own skillful abilities as a preacher, Leon Modena recorded the visit of Gaston, Duc d’Orleans, brother of King Louis XIII, his entourage of Christian nobility and preachers. A few years later, his sermons would be also attended by Henri Duc de Rohan, an eminent Huguenot refugee who was spending his exile in Venice as a commander in chief for the Venetian Army.<sup>39</sup> Obviously, sermons were not only an important moment of ritual for Jews, but a sort of religious performance which attracted Christians from different creeds. Christian princes and nobility enjoyed attending the sermons in the synagogues of Western Europe. A short time later however, in a different yet closely related setting, the Prince of Orange, Frederick Henri, and the Queen of England, Henrietta Maria, visited the marvelous Sephardic synagogue in Amsterdam, where Manasseh ben Israel gave a moving sermon especially for the occasion.<sup>40</sup> Visiting the Venetian ghetto, in the early seventeenth-century, was a cultural experience many travellers could not miss. Starting from the end of sixteenth century, Christian travellers and scholars would seek Jewish ritual in every city they visited. The most famous depiction is provided in the beautiful travelogue by Michel de Montaigne who, contrary to many others, was not pleased with his Venetian stay. In his oft-quoted *Journal de voyage* Montaigne described with accuracy and relative neutrality certain Jewish rituals: a circumcision, a Shabbat service, and conversionary sermons in Rome.<sup>41</sup> Montaigne paid equal attention to Christian rituals as well: as a Catholic he was easily permitted to visit and attend all Roman religious performances which constituted an obvious source of interest and pleasure to him.

The most quoted account with regards to the Venetian Jewish ghetto was penned by Thomas Coryat, an English Protestant traveller who published a book in 1611 devoted to his European tour.<sup>42</sup> The *Crudities*

<sup>38</sup> Leon Modena, *Life of Judah*, 131.

<sup>39</sup> Howard Adelman, Benjamin Ravid, “Historical Notes”, in *Life of Judah*, folio 21b, 242.

<sup>40</sup> *The Dutch Republic in the Seventeenth Century: the Golden Age*, ed. by Marten Roy Prak, Diane Webb, engl. transl. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 219; Yosef Kaplan, *An Alternative Path to Modernity. The Sephardi Diaspora in Western Europe*, (Leiden: Brill 2000), 32-33.

<sup>41</sup> I generally refer to the Italian edition: Michel Montaigne, *Viaggio in Italia*, (Rome-Bari, Laterza, 1991).

<sup>42</sup> Thomas Coryat, *Coryat’s Crudities*, (1611). I refer to the following edition (Glasgow: James MacLehose and Sons, 1905). This book is often quoted, but information recorded must be taken with caution. See: Peter Burke, *The Historical Anthropology of the Early Modern Italy. Essays on Perception and Communication*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 15-24. On travelers and the ghetto see: Abraham Melamed, “English Travellers and Venetian Jewish Scholars – The Case of Simone Luzzatto and

was not only one of the most important books in English travel literature, but also a disguised form of critique on English polity in the background of the description of the Venetian political system.<sup>43</sup> Though the travelogue highlights his European tour through Switzerland, France, Savoy and certain Italian cities, most of it dwells on the details of Venice, its architecture, its social and political institutions, not to mention its religious orders and culture. Coryat's encounter with the Jews is recorded throughout his journey, but he extensively describes the Venetian ghetto, portraying its synagogues, inhabitants, the annual liturgical service, the beautiful women in magnificent dresses and ultimately a famous encounter with a rabbi with whom the Protestant traveller entertained a theological discussion. *Crudities* – like many other travelogues – blends together keen observations based on facts, precise details and fictitious tales, founded on stereotypical images produced by the culture at the time; yet it highlights why Jewish rituals were deemed interesting and significant for certain Europeans.<sup>44</sup>

Modena's private journal and his correspondence with Christian Hebraists implies that the first draft of *Riti* was penned on the behest of an English nobleman who aimed to present it to King James I.<sup>45</sup> As Cecil Roth argued, the nobleman was likely to be Sir Henry Wotton who was the ambassador for Venice representing the English king, James I, and who lived next to the ghetto. Roth also intimated that the rabbi described in Coryat's travelogue was Leon Modena, and this notion has been widely accepted and repeated by many scholars afterwards. Moreover, during his stay in Venice in the spring of 1608, Coryat described in detail the people who were attending the English embassy.

“Here againe I wil once more speake of our most worthy Ambassador Sr Henry Wotton, honoris causa, because his house was in the same street

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James Harrington”, in *Gli ebrei e Venezia*, 507-525; Benjamin Ravid, “Christian Travellers and the Ghetto of Venice: some Preliminary Observations”, in *Between History and Literature: Studies in Honor of Isaac Barzilay*, ed. Stanley Nash, (Bnei Brak, 1997), 111-150.

<sup>43</sup> See, Andrew Hadfield, *Literature Travel and Colonial Writing in the English Renaissance 1545-1625*, Oxford 1998, pp. 58-68.

<sup>44</sup> Coryat's travelogue is rich with description of religious rituals and practices, not to mention conversations with famed scholars, like Casaubon. At the same time, he is a strongly opinionated observer, very often quite flawed, as when describing Greek biblical scholarship in Venice.

<sup>45</sup> Cecil Roth, “Leone da Modena and the Christian Hebraists”, in *Jewish Studies in Memory of Israel Abrahams*, (New York: Press of the Jewish Institute of Religion, 1927), 384-401; Idem, “Leone da Modena and England”, *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England* 11 (1929): 206-27; Idem, “Leone da Modena and his English Correspondents”, *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England* 17 (1951-52): 39-43; Howard Adelman, “Rabbi Leon Modena and the Christian Kabbalists”, in *Renaissance Rereadings*, ed. Maryanne Cline Horowitz, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 271-286.



(when I was in Venice) where the Jewish Ghetto is, even in the streete called St. Hieronimo, and but a little from it. Certainly he hath greatly graced and honoured his country by that most honourable port that he hath maintayned in this noble City, by his generose carriage and most elegant and gracious behaviour amongst the greatest Senators and Clarissimoes, which like the true adamant, had that attractive vertue to winne him their love and grace in the highest measure. And the rather I am induced to make mention of him, because I received many great favours at his hands in Venice, for the which (I must confesse) I am most deservedly ingaged unto him in all due observance and obsequious respects while I live. Also those rare vertues of the minde wherewith God hath abundantly inriched him, his singular learning and exquisite knowledge in the Greeke and Latin, and the famousest languages of Christendome, which are excellently beautified with a plausible volubility of speech, have purchased him the inward friendship of all the Christian Ambassadors resident in the City; and finally his zealous conversation, (which is the principall thing of all) piety, and integrity of life, and his true worship of God in the midst of Popery, superstition, and idolatry (for he hath service and sermons in his house after the Protestant manner, which I thinke was never before permitted in Venice, that solid Divine and worthy Schollar Mr. William Bedel being his Preacher at the time of my being in Venice) will be very forcible motives (I doubt not) to winne many soules to Jesus Christ, and to draw divers of the famous Papists of the City to the true reformed religion, and profession of the Gospell.”<sup>46</sup>

The information provided in this abstract is rich in detail: above all, it stresses how, even in Venice, the embassy pertaining to a Protestant country was topographically situated near to the ghetto. This proximity might not be coincidental and it bears the logic of “spatial marginalization” as mentioned above: Jews and Protestants had been perceived as outside the Catholic fold and therefore placed, in the city, as contiguous. Second, it clearly states that Protestant worship, which was not allowed in Venice as in many Catholic cities, was performed in private usually in the house of the ambassador, Henry Wotton, whose erudition in ancient languages was highly praised by Coryat. The official preacher of this unofficial religious service was the “solid Divine and worthy Scholar” William Bedell,<sup>47</sup> an Anglican with Puritanical leanings

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<sup>46</sup> Coryat, *Coryat's Crudities*, 1, 379.

<sup>47</sup> William Bedell (1577-1644) became a Protestant bishop in Ireland and a translator the Bible into Gaelic. See: Adelman, “Leon Modena: the Autobiography and the Man”, in *Life of Judah*, 25-26. Roth, “Leone da Modena and his English Correspondents”, 41. See also: *A True Relation of the Life and Death of the Right Reverend Father in God William Bedell, Lord Bishop of Kilmore in Ireland*, ed. by Thomas Wharton Jones, (Camden Society, 1872), online text (<http://ebooks.library.cornell.edu/c/cdl/>); *Two Biographies of William Bedell*,

and chaplain for the embassy, someone who mingled with Jews and befriended Paolo Sarpi and Fulgenzio Micanzio. In 1608 Bedell wrote to an English correspondent, stating that Jewish sermons were much more refined and theologically more sound than those found in Catholic preaching. He later recalled, with great nostalgia, his time in Venice, where he had had the most interesting theological discussions with Jews from the ghetto.<sup>48</sup> It is noteworthy to say that the English embassy was also close to the monastery of the Serviti Friars, where the most famous Venetian monk and opponent of the Holy See, frà Paolo Sarpi, lived.<sup>49</sup> Gaetano Cozzi suggested that Sarpi's "golden volume" on the origins of Christianity – *Trattato delle materie beneficiarie* – might have been influenced by the dialogues he had had with Venetian Jews.<sup>50</sup>

These historical notes form a reminder that the *Riti* was written under the influence of both cultural and religious constraints, during a time when Venice went through a radical clash against Rome. In the short period of the *Interdetto* Venice became the meeting point of Protestant scholars: Anglicans were seeking Hebrew teachers and Bible advisors. It was during this time that the King James version of the Bible was to be finalized and Giovanni Diodati, the great Calvinist translator of the Bible into Italian also happened to be present whilst endeavoring to influence and implement a rapprochement between the *Serenissima* and the protestant countries.<sup>51</sup> It is worth noting that Diodati, who was in Venice during 1605 and 1608, was in cohorts with Wotton, Bedell, Sarpi and other Philo-protestant members of the Venetian elite. Modena's protestant connection is strengthened by other relationships which were to developed during this period too. For example, the scholarly friendship with Andreas Colvius, a Dutch protestant who resided in

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*Bishop of Kilmore: with a Selection of his Letters and an Unpublished Treatise*, ed. E.S. Shuckburgh, (Cambridge: The University Press, 1902).

<sup>48</sup> See: Cozzi, "Società veneziana, società ebraica", in *Gli ebrei e Venezia*, 348.

<sup>49</sup> It is also mentioned in Coryat's book. On Paolo Sarpi and his relationship with Jews of the ghetto much has been hinted at. See: Adelman, "Leon Modena: the Autobiography and the Man", in *Life of Judah*, 26; Talya Fishman, *Shaking the Pillars of Exile: 'Voice of a Fool' and Early Jewish Critique of Rabbinic Culture*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 17-21.

<sup>50</sup> The definition is given by Edward Gibbon. See: Cozzi, "Società veneziana, società ebraica", in *Gli ebrei a Venezia*, 347-348. For the English version of the book: *Treatise of Beneficiary Matters: or a History of Ecclesiastical Benefices and Revenues*, by Father Paul, of the Order of the Servites, and Consulter of State to the Republick of Venice, translated from the most Correct Copy in Italian extant, printed at Mirandola, 1676 (London – Westminster, 1727).

<sup>51</sup> Giovanni Diodati (1576-1649) was born in Geneve in a family of Protestants from Lucca (Tuscany). His translation of the Bible in Italian was published in 1607 and is deemed as important as the English version of the King James Bible. For a biography of Diodati see: Maria Betts, *Life of Giovanni Diodati: Genevese Theologian* (London: Charles J. Thynne, 1905); William A. McComish, *The Epigones: A Study of the Theology of the Genevan Academy at the Time of the Synod of Dort, with Special Reference to Giovanni Diodati*, (Allison Park, PA: Pickwith, 1989).

Venice from 1620 to 1627 together with the Dutch ambassador, Johan Berck, whose works appear to have been influenced by Sarpi.<sup>52</sup>

Modena was very proud of his Christian friends and acquaintances. His recurrent remarks about his intellectual ties with Christian scholars are reiterated topics within his own private writings. Moreover, during the course of his life he devoted some of his time to teaching Hebrew, the Bible, Rabbinics and Kabbalah to the Christians, and his fame increased over the years. Jean Plantavit de la Pause, a renowned Catholic Hebraist whom Modena had taught Hebrew in Florence, offered him a position in Paris as a lecturer in Hebrew.<sup>53</sup>

There is, though, an ironic flavor to the story. The book Modena devoted to Jewish rituals and ceremonies stands unequivocally at the centre of his learned encounter. It was composed under Protestant influences and meant for a Protestant readership. Nevertheless, it was published in Paris in 1637 sponsored by the Catholic Orientalist Jacques Gaffarel (1601-1681). Gaffarel, who wrote a quite critical preface to the book, and who had met Modena during his travels to Italy while seeking oriental manuscripts on behalf of Cardinal Richelieu.<sup>54</sup> In 1637, few years after their meeting, Modena penned a missive where he described a moment of great turmoil for the Jews and profound distress for himself:

“Afterwards, on the 7th of Adar 5397 (March 1637) sentence was handed down on all those terrified Jews, and they were ordered to be banished forever ....<sup>55</sup> About two years earlier I had given a certain Frenchman who knew the Holy tongue, M. Giacomo Gaffarel, a certain book to read. I had written it more than twenty years earlier at the request of an English nobleman, who intended to give it to the king of England. In it I relate all the laws, doctrines and customs of the Jews at the present time in their dispersion. When I wrote it I was not careful about not writing things contrary to the Inquisition, because it was only in manuscript and was meant to be read by people who were not of the Pope’s sect.<sup>56</sup> After reading it, that Frenchman asked me to leave it with

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<sup>52</sup> Adelman – Ravid, “Historical Notes”, in *Life of Judah*, folio 20b, 240. For information about Colvius see: François Secret, “Notes sur les hébraisants chrétiens, I: Léon Modène et Gisbert Voetius”, *Revue des études juives* 124 (1965): 157-177, 157-159. For Colvius’ relationship with Sarpi see: Vittorio Frajese, “La selva Arcana Papatus di proprietà di Andreas Colvius: per la storia della fortuna di Paolo Sarpi”, *Dimensione e problemi della ricerca storica* I (1992), 37-60.

<sup>53</sup> Leon Modena, *Life of Judah*, 174 and Adelman, Ravid, “Historical Notes”, in *Life of Judah*, folios 35b-36a, 267-268.

<sup>54</sup> See Guy Stroumsa, *A New Science. The Discovery of Religion in the Age of Reason*, (Cambridge-London: Harvard University Press, 2010), 62-76, 69.

<sup>55</sup> On this event see: Gaetano Cozzi, *Giustizia contaminata*, (Venice: Marsilio, 1996).

<sup>56</sup> For Modena’s attitude to the printing press, see: Jacob Dweck, *The Scandal of Kabbalah. Leon Modena, Jewish Mysticism, Early Modern Venice*, (Princeton – Oxford:

him and he would print it in France. I agreed, but did not think of editing out the things that the Inquisition in Italy might find unacceptable in a printed book. Two years later, after I had given up hope that the Frenchman might print it, on the second day of Passover 5397 (April 10, 1637), someone brought me a letter from him, in which he told me that he had printed the book in Paris. He did not divulge to whom he had made the dedication or whether he had changed anything in the book, or the like.

My heart immediately began pounding, and I went to look at a copy of it that I still had from the time I had written it. I saw four or five things of importance of which it is forbidden to speak, much less to write and needless to say to print, against the will of the Inquisition. Heartbroken, I shouted and tore at my beard until I almost lost my breath. I said to myself, 'When this book is seen in Rome, it will become a stumbling block for all the Jews and for me, in particular'. They will say, 'How insolent are they to print in the vernacular, informing the Christians not only of their laws, but also of some matters contrary to our religion and belief.'"<sup>57</sup>

If it can be said that Modena was accurate, Gaffarel met him approximately around 1634-35, therefore the first written account of the book must have been written as early as 1612-13.<sup>58</sup> Jacques Gaffarel who belonged to an influential group of Christian scholars was actively involved with Jewish mysticism, following the path of Count Giovanni Pico della Mirandola. Christian Kabbalists conceived the Jewish esoteric lore as an ancient religious source helping them shed light on Christian dogmas and beliefs. Christian Kabbalists strove to incorporate some of the teachings of the Kabbalah into the body of certain Christian doctrines. These were inspired by a utopian vision, which proved ultimately to be an elaborate concept of universal Christianity while, eventually, upholding the conversion of Jews. Gaffarel belonged to this assorted group of utopian Catholics who aimed, amongst other things, to find a viable solution to the religious divide in Europe.<sup>59</sup> Gaffarel penned a Kabbalistic work which was printed in 1625,<sup>60</sup> and another called,

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Princeton University Press, 2011), chap. 1.

<sup>57</sup> Adelman – Ravid, "Historical Notes", in *Life of Judah*, folio 25b, 146-147.

<sup>58</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, "Fame and Secrecy: Leon Modena's Life as an Early Modern Autobiography", in *Life of Judah*, 63 note 38. Other scholars offered 1633 as the year of Gaffarel stay in Venice.

<sup>59</sup> French Catholicism was distressed by religious strife and conflict. It is no surprise that theoretical and theological attempts to find a viable theory of religious tolerance were pursued in this context. See: Massimo Firpo, *Il problema della tolleranza religiosa nell'età moderna. Dalla Riforma protestante a Locke*, (Turin, Loescher: 1978); Peretz Zagorin, *How the Idea of Religious Toleration came to the West*, (Princeton – Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2003).

<sup>60</sup> *Abdita divinae Cabalae mysteria*, (Paris: Blageart, 1625); for the French translation, see:

*Curiositez inouyes sur la sculpture talismanique des Persans, horoscope des Patriarches et lecture des estoiles*, published in 1629 which was widely circulated in Europe gaining him both fame and contempt.<sup>61</sup> Even though it encountered Catholic censorship, this latter work, devoted to astrology, talismans, alphabets and the interpretation of nature, along with insight into ancient biblical and oriental religions, was translated into English by Edmund Chilmead who happened to be the first translator of the *Riti*.<sup>62</sup>

The Venetian ghetto was an ideal place for cultural exchange. A practical Kabbalah, based on a vast production, circulation and consumption of pamphlets on magic, amulets and horoscopes met the curiosity and need of both Christian and Jewish societies. Therefore the ghetto became a providential urban spot where Christians mingled with Jews in search of objects such as amulets, booklets, horoscopes or magical spells in order to be able to cope with the unpredictability and harshness of daily life.<sup>63</sup> Modena himself was not alien to these practices: he manufactured and sold amulets and strongly relied upon personal horoscopes. One of his sons, Mordecai, died, possibly poisoned by the fumes he inhaled during an alchemic experiments he conducted, when in cohorts with a priest, he tried to craft silver.<sup>64</sup> Modena's grandson, Isaac min Haleviim, (or Isaac Levi) to whom Modena left part of his collection of manuscripts as a bequest, was depicted within archival sources, as a major charlatan, and a king of the ghetto providing practical Kabbalah to be quickly used and

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*Profonde mystère de la cabale divine*, (Paris: Beaudelot, 1912) and (Milan: Sebastiani, 1975). On this work see, Saverio Campanini, "Eine späte Apologie der Kabbala. Die Abditia divinae Cabalae Mysteria des Jacques Gaffarel", in *Topik und Tradition. Prozesse der Neuordnung von Wissensüberlieferungen des 13. bis 17. Jahrhunderts*, eds. by Thomas Frank, Ursula Kocher, Ulrike Tarnow, (Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2007), 325-351. On Gaffarel and Modena see: Dweck, *The Scandal of Kabbalah*, 157-160.

<sup>61</sup> (Paris: Hervé du Mesnil, 1629). His other works might be very interesting in order to grasp the circulation of religious ideas: *Codicum Cabalisticorum manuscriptorum ...*, (Paris: H. Blageart, 1651); *Iacobi Gaffarelli theologi ...*, (Paris: Carolus du Mesnil, 1645); *In obitum illustrissimae nobilissimaeque dominae d. Annae Lescapier ...*, (Venice: Pinelliana, 1633); *Nihil, fere nihil, minus nihilo ...*, (Venice: Pinelliana, 1634).

<sup>62</sup> Both published in 1650. Jacques Gaffarel, *Unheard-of Curiosities Concerning the Talismanical Sculpture of the Persians* (London: G.D. for H. Moseley, 1650); Leon Modena, *The History of the Rites, Customs, and Manner of Life, of the Present Jews, throughout the World*, (London: J. Martin – J. Ridley, 1650).

<sup>63</sup> Federico Barbierato, *Nella stanza dei circoli. Chiave di Salomone e libri di magia a Venezia nei secoli XVII e XVIII*, (Milan: Sylvestre Bonnard, 2009), chap. 6.

<sup>64</sup> Leon Modena, *Life of Judah*, 108. For an assessment on magic and Judaism in the early modern period see: David Ruderman, *Kabbalah, Magic, and Science: the Cultural Universe of a Sixteenth-Century Jewish Physician*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988); Moshe Idel, "Jewish Magic from the Renaissance Period to Early Hasidism", in *Religion, Science and Magic*, eds. Jacob Neusner, Ernest S. Frerichs, Paul Virgil McCracken Flesher, (New York – Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 82-117.

consumed.<sup>65</sup> Even the story revolving around Sara Copia Sullam, the famed poetess from the ghetto highlights an intimacy with magic.<sup>66</sup> Kabbalah and magic appeared to permeate Jewish life within the ghetto, and more broadly, life in Venice.<sup>67</sup>

Obviously Gaffarel reached the Venetian ghetto with high expectations: during his stay in Italy, one of his main tasks was to collect the manuscripts of Count Pico della Mirandola's translations of Jewish texts. In the ghetto, he could find Kabbalistic manuscripts of any sort, buy amulets and tracts with mysterious symbolisms or any astrological works that could enlighten his knowledge on the mysteries of nature. Gaffarel left Venice with one copy of the *Riti* and a few other valuable oriental manuscripts which he allegedly purchased and illegally smuggled out of the lagoon city.<sup>68</sup> The Catholic Orientalist probably also encountered Luzzatto together with Modena: no clear evidence has been recovered, but the treatment of the Kabbalah represented in their works, suggest more than an amicable exchange of thought.

### An ethnography of Judaism?

It remains unclear why Modena decided to reprint his work on Jewish ceremonies in Venice after supervision by the Inquisition. According to the letter he sent to an English correspondent he had implied his endeavor in overcoming Catholic censorship,<sup>69</sup> but then fraught at the possibility that his book might be deemed offensive by the Catholic Church (in Rome) and terrorized by local scandal which shocked Venice in 1636, he voluntarily submitted one copy of the *Riti* into the hands of the Inquisition.<sup>70</sup> The text was revised and reprinted in 1638. Modena

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<sup>65</sup> Barbierato, *Nella stanza*, 311.

<sup>66</sup> Alberto Fortis, *La bella ebrea. Sara Copio Sullam, poetessa nel ghetto di Venezia del '600*, (Turin: Zamorani, 2003) and bibliographical references there; for the English translation of her works: Sara Copia Sullam, *Jewish Poet and Intellectual in Seventeenth-Century Venice*, ed. and transl. Don Harràn, (Chicago – London: The University of Chicago Press, 2009).

<sup>67</sup> Guido Ruggiero, *Binding Passions. Tales of Magic, Marriage and Power at the End of Renaissance*, (Oxford – New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

<sup>68</sup> According to Barbierato, Gaffarel stole three pichian manuscripts from the library of the monastery of S. Antonio di Castello. See: Barbierato, *Nella stanza*, 312. He quotes Antonella Barzazi, *Ordini religiosi e biblioteche a Venezia tra Cinque e Seicento* (Bologna: Il Mulino 1995), 216-217.

<sup>69</sup> The letter was addressed to William Boswell. See: Adelman, Ravid, "Historical Notes", in *Life of Judah*, folio 25a, 256; Roth, "Leone da Modena", 40-41.

<sup>70</sup> See Cecil Roth, "Léon de Modène, ses *Riti ebraici* et le Saint Office à Venise", *Revue des études juives* 87 (1929), 83-88; Adelman, Ravid, "Historical Notes, in *Life of Judah*, folio 25b, 257. They all refer to the archival material: "Relatione de tutti riti, costumi et vita degl'Hebrei", ASV, Santo Uffizio, busta 94, Aprile-Maggio 1637; busta 157, lettera L.

convincingly presents this explanation in his autobiography.

The other reason which might explain his anxiety could be that, that same year Luzzatto's *Discorso* was printed. Maybe Modena fancied that the younger rabbi had plagiarized him. Personal rivalry and the quest for fame might have influenced his decision.<sup>71</sup>

*Riti* is a very concise, short and yet compact manual on Jewish rituals which is designed to describe "the life, customs and beliefs of the Jews at that time."<sup>72</sup> The tract is comprised of five sections, according to the number of the books on the Torah,<sup>73</sup> and divided into 54 chapters of varying lengths, based on the weekly division of the Torah (*parashot*).<sup>74</sup> The organization of topics is not clearly defined and is rather haphazard, compared to those of other legal *compendia*, but the information provided is extremely detailed.<sup>75</sup>

Modena tried to convey an "ethnography" of Judaism from an "emic perspective": even though much of the information is derivative from textual evidence (being therefore prescriptive) there is a number of details which are taken from historical data. Modena provided many examples of Jewish practices which have been supported by historical documentation: preaching, synagogue practices, mourning rituals, charities, Jewish languages, poetry, and many other historical details which contribute to the creation of a precise picture of Italian Judaism.<sup>76</sup> His masterpiece on ritual was both an attempt to convey an image of Judaism in his lifetime and to promote an ideal vision of the Jewish religion.

Modena was cautious and introduced himself as a "neutral writer" who had endeavored to "forget he was a Jew."<sup>77</sup> Likewise, Luzzatto applied the concept of "distance" as if he were an outside observer: in his own words, the observer had to "abstain from any affection or passion" in order to not be emotionally involved in the rendering of his own

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<sup>71</sup> Benjamin Ravid, *Economics and Toleration in Seventeenth Century Venice. The Background and Context of the Discorso of Simone Luzzatto*, (Jerusalem: American Academy for Jewish Research, 1978), 17; Giuseppe Veltri, *Renaissance Philosophy in Jewish Garb*, (Leiden – Boston, Brill, 2009), 219-220.

<sup>72</sup> Leon Modena, "Proemio", *Riti* (1678): "mi fosse comandato più volte dargli in iscritto una breve, et vera relatione, della vita, costumi, et osservationi de gl'Hebrei di questi tempi, il che havendo già più anni fatto, e datola ad alcuni, hora altri m'hanno sollecitato, ampliata, e regolata, darla in luce, à commune sodisfatione."

<sup>73</sup> Modena, "Proemio", *Riti* (1678).

<sup>74</sup> Mark R. Cohen, "Leone da Modena's *Riti*: A Seventeenth-Century Plea for Social Toleration of the Jews", *Jewish Social Studies* 34/4 (1972): 287-321, 296.

<sup>75</sup> Ibidem, 296. Modena would integrate material from medieval legal codes, such as *Tur* or *Shulhan Aruk*, but their structure did not provide a model.

<sup>76</sup> For the notion of "ethnography" on works devoted to Jewish rituals and written by Christians see the recent critical appraisal in: Veltri, *Renaissance Philosophy*, 175.

<sup>77</sup> Modena, "Proemio", *Riti* (1678): "Nello scriver, in verità, che mi sono scordato d'esser Hebreo, figurandomi semplice, e neutrale relatore";

culture.<sup>78</sup> Neutrality, unbiased description and detachment – applauded by both authors – might have been modelled on the rhetorical style of ancient texts such as Josephus who incorporated the idea of neutral witness from Thucydides.

Later on, Modena recalled in one of his letters to an Italian Christian Hebraist, that *Riti* was written in order to refute the renowned German work on Jewish rituals published in 1603 by the prominent Swiss Protestant Hebraist Johannes Buxtorf under the title *Die Judenschul*, the Latin translation of which was published a year later.<sup>79</sup> The comparison between the two tracts raise a quantity of related questions, and it is undeniable that Modena's effort to assert Judaism's rational and biblical character is one of the main aims of the tract – as Mark Cohen aptly underlined.<sup>80</sup>

Nevertheless, Modena's portrayal of Jewish rituals is more than an apologetic work aimed at aggressive Christian scholars and its scope is much broader than openly admitted. Modena's Biblicism was emphasized in order to avert Catholic censorship and rabbinic sources are not openly cited but alluded to. Critical editions of the text have revealed a layer of rabbinical sources which are generically referred to within the syntagmatic phrasing “i rabbini dicono.” Stroumsa suggested that the *Riti* might be an abridged version of *Shulkan arukh*.<sup>81</sup>

Leon Modena's scholarly endeavor should be interpreted as the product of a committed religious leader: his writings are frequently marked by the immediacies of the daily problems he confronted and conveyed his ability to decrypt the many challenges which Judaism was facing. His attention to Jewish ritual is constantly apparent in his works, and despite the reasons which may have led to him to the redaction of the *Riti*, I believe that the question of relevancy of rituals in Judaism was one of his main concerns. The emphasis on rituals can be also detected in many other of his texts, most of which are in Hebrew: if rituals are extensively dealt with in his *responsa*, lengthy treatment of rituality is detectable in his polemical tract against Christianity (*Magen wa-berer*) and in *Kol sakhal*, an anti-rabbinical treatise that has recently been attributed to him.<sup>82</sup>

Why is Modena's treatment of ritual so important and extensively found

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<sup>78</sup> “Mi sono proposto nell'animo formare compendioso, ma verace racconto de suoi Ritti principali, et opinioni più comuni *dall'universale non dissonanti*, et discrepanti, nella quale applicazione ho procurato con ogni mio potere (benchè io sia della istessa natione) astenermi da qualunque affetto, et passione che dal vero deviare mi potesse.” Simone Luzzatto, *Discorso*, 4r.

<sup>79</sup> Stephen G. Burnett, *From Christian Hebraism to Jewish Studies. Johannes Buxtorf (1546-1629) and Hebrew Learning in the Seventeenth Century*, (Leiden – New York – Köln: Brill, 1996), chap. 3.

<sup>80</sup> Cohen, “Leone da Modena's *Rit*”, *passim*.

<sup>81</sup> Stroumsa, *A New Science*, 69.

<sup>82</sup> See: Fishman, *Shaking the Pillars of Exile*; for a different interpretation, see: Ellis Rivkin, *Leon da Modena and the Kol Sakhal*, (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1952).



within his works? One can only make suggestions hypothetically, which then require further investigation.

Modena was preoccupied by the challenges religion faced during his time. Judaism was endangered, not solely by conversion efforts by Christian which were renewed from time to time, but also by internal Jewish conflict over the interpretation of dogmas, rituals and beliefs. This partly explains Modena's involvement with the Jewish controversies in Amsterdam and Hamburg and his attempts to curtail Jewish "heretical" leanings. Ritual, more so than that of dogmas and beliefs, stood as a connecting thread which united all Jews in the diaspora. A portrayal of Jewish rituals and ceremonies which is as strongly rooted in the Bible would more likely convince Jews, especially those coming from Marrano or new Christian experiences, of Judaism and its unity with a biblical heritage to the detriment of Christianity. Iberian *Conversos* would therefore proudly embrace it.

As far as beliefs were concerned, their relevance was not classed as pivotal. Modena wrote extensively on beliefs, as his tract on the immortality of the soul or his anti-kabbalistic treatises indicate, and accordingly devoted the fifth part of the *Riti* to 'ideas' and 'beliefs'. In this section of the *Riti* Modena briefly described Jewish "sects" – "Karaim and other heretics" – and beliefs such as trust in Paradise, Hell and Purgatory, as being considered sufficiently orthodox for the Catholic Church. In the French edition he had also listed the 13 articles of faith according to the Maimonidean tradition,<sup>83</sup> to which he added, amongst other things, the belief in metempsychosis which had become very popular amongst Kabbalists.<sup>84</sup> The 13 articles of faith and the reference to metempsychosis would incur an angry response from the Catholic Church therefore he quickly proceeded to expunge these questions from the Venetian edition.<sup>85</sup>

Somehow, the downplaying of beliefs in relation to rituals might hint at Modena's effort to reduce conflicting polemics engendered by theological discussions over dogmas which were the core of Christian-Jewish debate. Likewise it attempted to simplify the process of a return to Judaism for Iberian new Christians, relieving some of their anxieties about the alleged inconsistencies between rabbinical law and the Bible.<sup>86</sup>

<sup>83</sup> Leon Modena, *Riti* (1637), 204-217; Idem, *Les Juifs présentés aux Chrétiens*, 109-139.

<sup>84</sup> On reincarnation and Judaism see: Brian Ogren, *Renaissance and Rebirth. Reincarnation in Early Modern Italian Kabbalah*, (Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2009); Jeffrey H. Chajes, *Between Worlds. Dybbuks, Exorcists, and Early Modern Judaism*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003).

<sup>85</sup> Cohen, "Leone da Modena's *Riti*", 296 note 47; *Les Juifs présentés aux Chrétiens*, 136-138, 267.

<sup>86</sup> Criticism of the belief of the immortality of the souls, deemed extremely dangerous by the Catholic Church, was widespread in Venice and Padua. See: Edward Muir, *The Culture War of the Late Renaissance. Skeptics, Libertines, and Opera*, (Cambridge – London: Harvard University Press, 2007); for the same problem in Amsterdam, see: Steven

Therefore, the attempt to portray Judaism as a biblical, rational and reasonable religion met the needs of the Jewish community as a whole while at the same time opposed Christian criticism of rabbinic legal tradition.<sup>87</sup>

In addition, by comparative terms, a collective representation of Judaism in rituals emphasized the unity of Judaism against the fragmentation of post-reformation Christianity, which Modena seems to suggest when describing Jewish sects or heretics.<sup>88</sup> The reality, of course, was much more complicated: seventeenth century Judaism was torn by religious dissent, and did not resemble the normative model illustrated by Modena. Indeed, beliefs were deemed to be much more important than Modena was willing to acknowledge, with the spread of Messianism or the wide adherence to Kabbalistic teachings.

### **Luzzatto and his *Discorso* – a place for the Jews in Christian society**

I would suggest that, with a different approach, Luzzatto's *Discorso* was aimed at solving a similar problem. The *Discorso* is a refined and sophisticated text, and the first request for toleration that was based on utilitarian and mercantile conceptions.<sup>89</sup> Divided into 18 chapters called the “*considerazioni*”, the *Discorso* comprises two separate sections: the first, covers the chapters from 1 to 10 and the second covers the chapters from 11 to 18.<sup>90</sup> The first part is economic in scope and deals extensively with issues such as trade, money-lending, collective wealth and the role of the Jews in the city of Venice. It has been suggested that the text was written as a response to the crisis which broke out in 1636, as also cited in Modena's journal, when the Venetian Jewish community was seriously under the threat of expulsion.<sup>91</sup> The recent discovery of a manuscript

Nadler, *Spinoza's Heresy: Immortality and the Jewish Mind*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

<sup>87</sup> The first scholar to emphasize the similarity between Jewish rabbinical and Catholic apostolic tradition as normative was Richard Simon. *Les juifs présentés aux chrétiens*, 145-146. A few remarks are to be found in: Cohen, “Leone da Modena's *Rit*”, 307. Luzzatto hints at the question in his *Discorso*, but only in passing (*Discorso*, 90v).

<sup>88</sup> Cohen, “Leone da Modena's *Rit*”, 314; see: Modena, *Riti* (1637), 204; Ibidem, (1678), 111; Luzzatto, *Discorso*, 84v-85r.

<sup>89</sup> On the historical and economic context behind the *Discorso* see: Ravid, *Economics and Toleration in Seventeenth Century Venice*.

<sup>90</sup> Benjamin Ravid, “Contra Judaeos in Seventeenth Century Italy: Two Responses to the *Discorso* of Simone Luzzatto by Melchiorre Palontrotti and Giulio Morosini”, *AJS* 7/8 (1982-1983), 302; Giuseppe Veltri, *Renaissance Philosophy*, 202.

<sup>91</sup> For this interpretation see especially, Moshe Shulvass, “Introduction” to the Hebrew translation of the *Discorso*, 22-23 as mentioned in Cohen, 312; Idem, “A Story of the Misfortunes which afflicted the Jews in Italy”, *HUCA* 22 (1949): 1-21 (Heb.); Ravid, *Economics and Toleration*, 10; Veltri, *Renaissance Philosophy*, 205.

which contains chapters of the first part supports the idea that the *Discorso* is the outcome of a combination of two separate works, patched together and published in 1638.<sup>92</sup>

In trying to put across a possible solution to an ongoing question, that being the role of Jews within Christian society, Luzzatto composed his treatise as a disguised conversation with Machiavelli and Giovanni Botero.<sup>93</sup> Riccardo Bachi was one of the first to attentively read the *Discorso* and understand the importance of Botero's tract on the wealth of cities, *Delle cause della grandezza e magnificenza delle città*, published in 1588.<sup>94</sup> Botero, whose works and loyalties were solely addressed for the Spanish monarchy, stated and wrote:

"But if the places where men are driven of necessity to fly have in them besides their safety any commodity of importance, it will be an easy thing for them to increase, both with people, and with riches, and with buildings. In this matter the cities of Levant and Barbary became great through the multitude of Jews that Ferdinand the king of Spain and Emmanuel the king of Portugal cast out of their kingdoms, as in particular Salonica and Rodhes."<sup>95</sup>

Drawing from historical experience, as mentioned above, and following

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<sup>92</sup> Giuseppe Veltri, "Economic and Social Arguments and the Doctrine of *Antiperistasis* in Simone Luzzatto's Political Thought: Venetian Reverberations of Francis Bacon's Philosophy?", *Frühneuzeit info* 23 (2011): 23-33, 29 note 8; Giuseppe Veltri – Gianfranco Miletto – Guido Bartolucci, "The Testament of Simone Luzzatto (1583?-1663) and the Only Known Manuscript of the *Discorso* (1638). Newly Discovered Manuscripts from the State Archive of Venice and the Library Marciana", *European Journal of Jewish Studies* 5 (2011), (in print).

<sup>93</sup> For the relationship between Machiavelli and the *Discorso* see: Abraham Melamed, "Simone Luzzatto on Tacitus. Apologetica and ragione di stato", in *Studies in Medieval Jewish History and Literature*, ed. Isadore Twersky, 2, (Cambridge – London: Harvard University Press, 1984), 143-170; Vasileios Syros, "Simone Luzzatto's Image of the Ideal Prince and the Italian Tradition of Reason of State", (paper presented at the Third Summer School in Comparative History on "Political Religions: from Antiquity to Postmodernity", Jerusalem 2002, online article).

<sup>94</sup> Riccardo Bachi, "La dottrina sulla dinamica delle città secondo Giovanni Botero e secondo Simone Luzzatto", *Atti dell'Accademia dei Lincei*, rend. d. classe di sc. mor., I (1946), 369-378; Idem, *Israele disperso e ricostruito*, (Rome: La Rassegna Mensile d'Israel, 1952), 95-139.

<sup>95</sup> Giovanni Botero (1544-1617) was a Jesuit and a philosopher whose works exerted an enormous influence on Italian and European political thought. The founder of the term "ragion di stato", Botero was the anti-machiavelian thinker *par excellence*. For a brief, yet detailed biographical entry, see: Luigi Firpo, "Giovanni Botero", *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, ([http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/giovanni-botero\\_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/giovanni-botero_(Dizionario-Biografico)/)). In this article I refer to: Giovanni Botero, *The Greatness of Cities. A Treatise Concerning the Causes of the Magnificency and Greatness of Cities*, now done into English by Robert Peterson, 1606. For the English version I used a kindle edition. Giovanni Botero, *The Greatness of Cities*, loc. 62-69.

the suggestion placed by Botero's, Luzzatto exploited the city of Venice – from its corporate hierarchical order to its trading and mercantile position – in order to find a plausible theory for Jewish tolerance. In a remarkable passage at end of the book (*consideration* 17) Luzzatto maintained that of all cities, port cities were the most ideal for the Jews, especially those which had a relatively large population, a conspicuous presence of foreigners and a well established trading network with foreign countries.<sup>96</sup>

This theory of economic usefulness has been thoroughly analyzed, and at its core stands a Catholic political theory of *raison d'état*. Nevertheless, one should stress once more the originality of Luzzatto's arguments. Luzzatto's concept of the extraordinary abilities which the Jews possessed in their aptitudes for producing wealth for the city were based on historical evidence, as he himself underlines when he mentioned the case of Livorno.<sup>97</sup> Trading nations, and *Sephardic* Jews being amongst them, were deemed strategically pivotal in the rise of capitalism.<sup>98</sup> Nevertheless *Sephardim* with wide and powerful trading networks were just a segment of Jewish society, and moreover, some of them remained new Christians or crossed religious boundaries more than once during their lifetime. The striking ability of Luzzatto's arguments lay in the successful attempt to present a general theory based on the assumption that the trading qualities of a minority amongst the Jews stood as a collective feature. Therefore Luzzatto transformed the increasing weakening status of the Jews within the Christian realm into a more stable status, equaling the Jews to that of foreign merchants. A second remarkable tenet in this theory was based on the conception that of all the trading nations, Jews were the best, precisely because of their collective weakness, namely their being stateless and therefore without any political protection. It proves to be striking argument and, somehow, not entirely true. Levantine Jews were often under the protection of the Turks and few new Christians continued to pledge loyalty to Spain and Portugal.<sup>99</sup>

But in addition: when arguing over the lack of a sovereign polity capable enough to protect the Jews, Luzzatto stressed how this political weakness transformed Jews into humble and loyal subjects.<sup>100</sup> John Toland, influenced by Luzzatto's *Discorso*, subscribed to similar beliefs when pleading for the naturalization of Jews at the beginning of the

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<sup>96</sup> "... che le Città che non hanno porto di mare, Popolazione numerosa, concorso di Forastieri, et Commissioni de negotij da tutte le parti del mondo, come ha la città di Venetia, conviene alli Hebrei che in esse dimorano sostenersi in uno de tre modi"; Simone Luzzatto, *Discorso*, cons. 17, 86v.

<sup>97</sup> Ibidem, cons. 4, 18v.

<sup>98</sup> This the opinion of Israel, *Diaspora within a Diaspora*.

<sup>99</sup> For Levantine Jews as Turkish subjects see: Pullan, *The Jews of Europe*, 150; for new Christians as Iberian subjects Ruspio, *La nazione portoghese*.

<sup>100</sup> Luzzatto, *Discorso*, cons. 5.

eighteenth-century.<sup>101</sup>

At the same time, this argument openly challenged Christian theology on the issue of supersession, much of which had relied on the idea that Jews had been punished by God with the loss of political sovereignty. The belief that exile was the outcome of a divine punishment was also a Jewish theological notion, partly based on the logic of certain Biblical books, especially Deuteronomy. The exile, *galut*, was at that time usually negatively perceived and contributed to the reinforcement of messianic beliefs.<sup>102</sup> Within this theological background the *Discorso* formed an original, challenging and bold attack on Christian and Jewish conceptions of exile and punishment and a positive re-evaluation, perhaps the first to be formulated, on the concept of exile within the language of modern political theory.

Moreover, in consideration 4, Luzzatto dealt extensively on the positive results engendered under duress and need. Within an ironic pun, he wondered why the Romans, who worshipped a number of gods – the protectors of Art and Invention, not to mention the personified Fortune, never established a worship of Need, under whose discipline Jews learned their way of life and their abilities within trade.<sup>103</sup> Luzzatto seemed to hint at a theory of Jews being “mercurians” – mobile middlemen, competitive, flexible because of their strength developed under unfavorable social and political conditions.<sup>104</sup>

The reconfiguration of this notion on exile can be detected in many of

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<sup>101</sup> John Toland, *Reasons for Naturalizing the Jews in Great Britain and Ireland*, (London: J. Roberts, 1714), 12-13: “Another consideration that make the Jews preferable to several sort of People, is their having no country of their own to which they might retire after having got Estates here”; and moreover: “But the Jews having no such Country to which they are ty’d by inclination or interest of their own, will never likewise enter into any political engagement, which might be prejudicial to ours, as we have known ... certain French refugees to have done, notwithstanding their protection.” On the relationship between Toland and the *Discorso* see: Isaac Barzilay, “John Toland Borrowings from Simone Luzzatto – Luzzatto’s Discourse on the Jews of Venice (1638) the Major Source of Toland’s Writing on the Naturalization of the Jews in Great Britain and Ireland (1714)”, *Jewish Social Studies* 31 (1969): 75-81; Jonathan Karp, *The Politics of Jewish Commerce, 1638-1848*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, chap. 1 (kindle edition).

<sup>102</sup> On exile and messianism see: Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi*.

<sup>103</sup> “... Et alcuna volta mi arrecò meraviglia che li Romani conforme allo loro falsa superstitione di errigere altari, e Deificare gl’inventori delle giovevoli professioni, e che infino la fortuna, stimata pure da loro cieca e temeraria, trovò in Roma particolare adoratione, et apertura di molti sontuosi Tempj, al bisogno primo stimolatore e sferzatore all’Imprese degne, e profittevoli inventioni, non si fosse giamai da essi instituito culto, ne verso di lui osservato alcun rito religioso”; Simone Luzzatto, *Discorso*, cons. 4, 19r. Karp traced a similar argument in Paolo Paruta (1540-1598). Karp, *The Politics of Jewish Commerce*, loc. 382-385. A difference source is detected in: Veltri, “Economic and Social Arguments”, 24.

<sup>104</sup> Yuri Slezkine, *The Jewish Century*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), chap.1; for criticism, see: Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers*, 11-12.

the chapters and is rhetorically connected with Luzzatto's attempt to define the collective character of the Jews. With this in mind, the first section of the work focused on many interesting issues producing relevant questions for future works, for example, a critique on the idea of a "collective guilt" or an outline on the theory of Biblical tolerance, to mention but a few.<sup>105</sup>

The second section of the tract, from considerations 11 to 18, dwells more extensively on cultural issues and appears to address a general problem, namely the role of Jews within Christian states and their collective identity, history and current condition.<sup>106</sup> This section is not wholly coherent and one might suggest that the different chapters (much lengthier than the preceding ones) though assembled, had been written during different periods. The second part of the tract covers a wide number of issues, some of which deal with pre-modern anti-Jewish hostility. Considerations 12 and 15, for example, present a detailed confutation of seventeenth-century anti-Semitism which goes beyond religious polemics, fronting a more differentiated and subtle discourse against the Jews.

As Luzzatto states on the front page of his work, the *Discorso* refers to a lost tract which he had allegedly written under the title "Trattato dell'openioni e Dogmi de gl'Hebrei dall'Universal non dissonanti, e de riti loro più principali."<sup>107</sup> Luzzatto's technical term used to introduce a collective portrayal of the Jews is "universale." In order to describe Jews "universally" it is necessary to take into consideration a number of common features applicable to them all, despite their dispersion, diversity in language, local customs, geography and professions.<sup>108</sup>

In chapter 16 Luzzatto offers his idea of Judaism. Rhetorically crafted as a historical outline of Judaism, this chapter discusses at length the collective cultural features of the Jews, endeavoring to answer the more general questions of birth, greatness and fall of the nations. It is interesting to note that Luzzatto presented a theory on nationhood which will be later resumed by nineteenth-century intellectuals, focusing

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<sup>105</sup> Luzzatto, *Discorso*, cons. 11. This theory was reworked by Isaac Viva (Isaac Cohen Cantarini). Isaac Viva (pseud.), *Vindex sanguinis*, sive Vindiciae secundum veritatem quibus Judaei ab Infanticidiis & victima humana, contra Jacobum Geusium, (Amsterdam: Adam Jongbloet, 1681), reprinted in Nuremberg. On this text see: Cristiana Facchini, "Il Vindex sanguinis di Isaac Viva. Di una polemica sull'accusa di omicidio rituale", *Annali di storia dell'esegesi* 16/2 (1999): 359-378.

<sup>106</sup> When the question of toleration became a central issue, a theory of tolerance was in need, and Luzzatto was one of the first ones to present a Jewish perspective. His attempt shall be integrated into a history of tolerance in Western society.

<sup>107</sup> Title in the front page of the 1638 edition.

<sup>108</sup> The term is used is conveying the notion of "collective." Luzzatto, "Prefazione di tutta l'opera", *Discorso*, 4r-6r and elsewhere.

on the relationship between nation and culture.<sup>109</sup> Luzzatto emphasized that the memory of the ancient nations is communicated by means of culture and war. The Greeks contribution to the culture of humankind was based on their knowledge of sciences and arts, whereas Romans gained posterity with their political systems and skillful warfare.<sup>110</sup> If a nation is defined by its antiquity, the Jews thereby, who are the remnants of Biblical Hebrews, have to be judged on the background of their ancient military might, their history and their political system. Ancient Hebrews were protected by Divine providence and were endowed with both capabilities – they were warriors, who heroically fought for their freedom against the Roman empire,<sup>111</sup> and they created a culture in the guise of the philosophical and religious doctrines which were described by Eusebius, in his *Preparatio evangelica*. Jews therefore held all the great qualities of the ancient nations. Contrary to Greeks and Romans or other ancient nations which have either disappeared or metamorphosed, Jews have survived the test of time, whilst either in captivity or exile, having preserved their essence. When the nation was shattered into small fragments, and spread all over the universe, those fragments retained the essence of its ancient identity.<sup>112</sup>

If the biblical period was praised by most scholars, a positive cultural representation of a post-biblical period was more complicated to present. Luzzatto's attempt in chapter 16 is therefore addressed in order to provide a positive image of rabbinical Judaism, a task he shared with Modena's representation of Judaisms in the *Riti*. This effort may be well received as an original and articulate attempt to counter aggressive Christian scholars on Rabbis, both Catholic and Protestant, whose aim was to despise and belittle Judaism in an attempt to finally convert the Jews.

Luzzatto, in contrast to Modena, who chose a normative model dependant on traditional legal codes, framed his description of post-biblical Judaism on Flavius Josephus' works. Posing as a modern Josephus, he stated that post-biblical Judaism consists of three main

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<sup>109</sup> This argument was especially exploited in nineteenth century by the French orientalist and polymath Ernest Renan. See, for example: Ernest Renan, *De la part de peuple sémitique dans l'histoire de la civilisation*, (Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, 1862). On this issue, see: Cristiana Facchini, *David Castelli. Ebraismo e scienze delle religioni tra Otto e Novecento*, (Brescia: Morcelliana, 2005), chap. 4.

<sup>110</sup> “Li Greci s’immortalarono con l’inuentione delle scientie, & arti più nobili [...]. Et li Romani con li trionfi, et Imperij”; Simone Luzzatto, *Discorso*, cons. 16, 73r.

<sup>111</sup> “... solamente gl’hebrei portione insensibile rispetto alla moltitudine e numerosità d’altri popoli, presero l’armi per rivendicare la loro libertà e diffendere la loro religione”; Ibidem, 73v.

<sup>112</sup> “La hebrea non li occorre simili mutationi, e cangiamenti, ma bene si spezzò e fu divisa quasi in infinite portioni, distrata, e dispersa per tutto l’universo, restandole in gran parte l’identità della sua essenzialità”; Ibidem, cons. 16, 88v-89v, esp. 89r.

schools of thought, strictly related to the interpretation of the Bible, to which Luzzatto adds a fourth one, the Karaites.<sup>113</sup> The Bible is placed at the centre of his dissertation, being the primary source of Jewish practices and philosophical speculation, exactly in the same way Modena had positioned the Bible in his *Riti*.

The first group consists of “rabbis and Talmudists”; the second one is composed by theologians who lean toward philosophical reasoning, and the third one is constituted by Kabbalists who explore the hidden meaning of the Sacred script.<sup>114</sup> Rabbis are, according to Luzzatto, those who have preserved Judaism in all its collective guises at all times and in all places (“l’universale degli Hebrei”) because they were responsible for the implementation of Jewish rituals and ceremonies. Though this line of argument may resemble Modena’s representation of Jewish rituals and ceremonies, Luzzatto stressed how rabbinical interpretations might shed light on arguments which were of great importance during the late Renaissance period, for example, time reckoning and the computation of the calendar.<sup>115</sup>

The second group of interpreters of the Bible included the philosophers who tried to read the Sacred Script through means of reason. The philosophical interpretation of the Bible, as perceived by Luzzatto, would become extremely important in the late eighteenth century. Luzzatto tied the history of this cultural undercurrent to both Philo of Alexandria and Josephus Flavius: the first, Philo of Alexandria, contributed to the development of Christian biblical exegesis (through Origenes) and was soon lost within Jewish tradition. The second interpretative tradition, represented by Josephus Flavius’ *Antiquitates*, provides with an important interpretation of obscure biblical passages.<sup>116</sup> Luzzatto emphasized the cultural encounter between the Jews and the Gentiles in ancient times, when mentioning works which were composed in either Greek or Arabic. He provided examples from the great scholars who had contributed to the history of philosophical thought and who had lived under Muslim domain, for example, Saadia Gaon and Maimonides, whose works were later translated into Latin.<sup>117</sup> Egypt, according to Luzzatto, gave birth to the most important Jewish leaders and scholars: Moses, the prophet and lawgiver, Philo of Alexandria and Maimonides, stressing the role and relevance of the culture of the

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<sup>113</sup> “E’ da sapere che in tre classi principali si riducono li loro studij circa le Sacre Scritture”; Luzzatto, *Discorso*, cons. 16, 75v. See Josephus: *Bellum*, II, 8, 2-14 (119-166); *Antiquitates*, XIII, 8, 9 (171-173); XVIII, 1, 2-6 (11-25).

<sup>114</sup> Luzzatto, *Discorso*, cons. 16, 75v.

<sup>115</sup> On the relevance of chronology and history, see: Anthony Grafton, *Joseph Scaliger. A Study in the History of Classical Scholarship*, 2, *Historical Chronology*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993); Adam Sutcliffe, *Judaism and Enlightenment*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 61-67.

<sup>116</sup> Luzzatto, *Discorso*, cons. 16, 78r.

<sup>117</sup> Ibidem, cons. 16, 78v-79r.



diaspora. Furthermore he underlines the relevance of authors such as Levi ben Gershon, commentator of Aristotle and Averroes, Hasday Crescas, a critic of Aristotle, Yoseph Albo and Ibn Ezra, all of whom contributed to the definition of the articles of faith and dogmas of Judaism.<sup>118</sup> The section devoted to the second group of interpreters of the Bible discusses concisely yet profoundly, a number of very significant issues concerning the relationship between religious philosophy and Jewish law as it developed over time. In one striking passage Luzzatto maintained that Jewish law was flexible, because it was shaped according to the culture and conditions of the times.<sup>119</sup> Elsewhere, in chapter 15, dealing with the content of the Bible, Luzzatto hinted at the same question when suggesting that the Bible was written under the influence of cultural conditions during a particular time and place (“supponendo ch’abbiano scritto come conveniva al stato e conditione di quelle genti ne quali erano dispersi”).<sup>120</sup> Luzzatto’s remarks with regards to the Bible and Jewish law portray a strong sense of what is immutable and therefore “universally” valid at all times and in all places, and what is ephemeral and what is mutable. This argument must be viewed in the context of the seventeenth-century debate over the interpretation of the Bible: it resembled much of Galileo’s biblical hermeneutics as it was developed in his *Lettera a Cristina di Lorena*,<sup>121</sup> and was further elaborated by Spinoza in his *Tractatus theologico-politicus*.<sup>122</sup>

Luzzatto then described the third school of biblical interpreters, composed by the Kabbalists, whose doctrine was – according to his rendition – mainly spread in the Levant and Poland. He stressed that Kabbalistic teachings were “not compulsory,” because they did not require the approval by the whole nation.<sup>123</sup> Luzzatto’s account of the

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<sup>118</sup> Ibidem, cons. 16, 79v.

<sup>119</sup> Ibidem, cons. 16, 79v-80r.

<sup>120</sup> Ibidem, cons. 16, 53r.

<sup>121</sup> This issue has not been adequately addressed. There is a similar attitude in the *Riti*. The question is also discussed in the Catholic context, namely by Galilei in his *Letter to Cristina of Lorena*, where he suggests that the Bible has been written under determined historical circumstances and therefore cannot be taken at face value. See: Galileo Galilei, *Lettera a Cristina di Lorena sull’uso della Bibbia nelle argomentazioni scientifiche*, ed. Franco Motta, (Genoa: Marietti, 2000); Mauro Pesce, *L’ermeneutica biblica di Galileo e le due strade della teologia cristiana*, (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2005); Alfredo Damanti, *Libertas philosophandi: teologia e filosofia nella lettera alla granduchessa Cristina di Lorena di Galileo Galilei*, (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2010).

<sup>122</sup> Spinoza will use a similar argument in his argue on a same line in order to separate what is religious from what is not religious. On Luzzatto and Spinoza see: Bernard Septimus, “Biblical Religion and Political Rationality in Simone Luzzatto, Maimonides and Spinoza”, in *Jewish Thought in the Seventeenth Century*, eds. Isadore Twersky, Bernard Septimus, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), 399-433; Giuseppe Veltri, “La dimensione politica filosofica dei *caerimonialia hebraeorum*: Baruk Spinoza e Simone Luzzatto”, *Materia giudaica* 13/1-2 (2008), 81-89.

<sup>123</sup> Luzzatto, *Discorso*, cons. 16, 80r; Modena, *Riti* (1678), 37.

Kabbalah appears as a first attempt at sketching a short historical outline of the esoteric Jewish tradition for a more general readership. This section of the chapter is lengthier than the others, and should be compared to Leon Modena's treatise on the Kabbalah (*Ari nobem*, whose final composition dates at 1639).<sup>124</sup> In order to describe the Kabbalah to his audience, Luzzatto underlined the literal meaning of the term – Kabbalah. The term itself portrays both the act of “reception” and the relationship between master and disciple.<sup>125</sup> The Kabbalists – he maintains – received a special wisdom regarding the hidden interpretation of the Holy Script (“così ad essi per la misteriosa esposizione della Scrittura.”)<sup>126</sup> Kabbalistic teachings are divided into a “practical doctrine,” associated with the permutation of the letters, the computation of its numerical meaning, mainly applicable to the names of God. A second doctrine, more theoretical and scientific (“scientifica”) is based on speculation of the nexus between the natural and the divine realms. The natural realm is connected to that of the divine by channels. The supernal world therefore infuses its energy to the natural world thanks to ten principles which in turn resemble the principles of the Pythagorean tradition.<sup>127</sup>

In my opinion Luzzatto was one of the first Jewish scholars who described the Kabbalah by utilizing a comparative approach, and following certain Christian traditions, he was able to highlight the similarities between Kabbalah and Platonism.<sup>128</sup> Moreover, he was one of the first to establish a nexus between the esoteric doctrines of the Kabbalah and early Christian heretical groups, such as Gnostics and Valentinians.<sup>129</sup>

By describing the system of the Kabbalists, Luzzatto dwells upon the belief of the transmigration of souls, which he attributed to the Pythagorean tradition. Even if only briefly mentioned, it is worth noting that Modena referred to the same belief in his first version of the *Riti* published in 1637, as mentioned above.<sup>130</sup>

The section devoted to the Kabbalah merits a more detailed analysis and

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<sup>124</sup> See: Dweck, *The Scandal of Kabbalah*.

<sup>125</sup> “Cabala significa propriamente ricevimento, & ha relatione a colui ch'apprende dal maestro, come la parola di tradizione a quello ch'insegna e infonde la dottrina”; Simone Luzzatto, *Discorso*, cons. 16, 80r.

<sup>126</sup> Luzzatto, *Discorso*, cons. 16, 80v.

<sup>127</sup> Ibidem, cons. 16, 81r. See also Dweck, *The Scandal of Kabbalah*, 140.

<sup>128</sup> Stroumsa claims that Richard Simon was the first one to highlight the relationship between Kabbalah and platonic teachings. See: Stroumsa, *A New Science*, 74; Dweck, *The Scandal of Kabbalah*, 139-141. On Kabbalah and platonism see: Moshe Idel, “Differing Conceptions of Kabbalah in the Early 17<sup>th</sup> Century”, in *Jewish Thought in Seventeenth Century*, 137-200.

<sup>129</sup> Luzzatto quotes from the works of Epiphanius and Irenaeus, historian of the early church; Luzzatto, *Discorso*, cons. 16, 83r. See also Richard Simon in his essay on comparative religion. Stroumsa, *A New Science*, 74.

<sup>130</sup> Luzzatto, *Discorso*, cons. 16, 84v; Modena, *Riti* (1637), 215.

calls for historical reconstruction which would take into consideration the standpoint of the Christians and Jews alike, noting their differences and their overlaps. There are at least two questions worth discussing within this framework: first of all, Luzzatto seemed to oppose Modena's criticism of the Kabbalah preferring instead to offer a different interpretation based upon the similarities between the Kabbalah and neo-platonic philosophical tradition, as first elaborated on by certain Christian scholars. This stance may have answered a profound cultural need which was meant to sustain and endorse the study of natural philosophy.<sup>131</sup>

The beliefs of the Kabbalah often overlapped (coincided) with magic, especially during the Renaissance period, and provoked strong criticism from ecclesiastical institutions which had been, since its inception, attentive and skeptical about this body of doctrine, as it became referred to within the Christian fold.<sup>132</sup> The presence of Gaffarel in Venice certainly indicated how the fascination of Pico's cultural enterprise reverberated into the seventeenth-century, notwithstanding the censorship around his works, which were mainly published outside the Italian territories. This specific case-study of Venice also sheds some light on the reception of certain themes revolving around Giovanni Pico della Mirandola's literary heritage amongst the Italian Jewry, a topic which requires further exploration.<sup>133</sup>

Finally the chapter ends with a short description of the "fourth class" of the Jewish interpreters of the Scripture, the Karaites who are, according to him and Modena, the descendants of old Sadducees.<sup>134</sup> At the beginning of eighteenth-century, Christian Hebraists, who were at that time collecting manuscripts and bibliographical information about the history of Judaism, claimed, on the basis of correspondences they had had with Jews in Italy, that Modena and Luzzatto had written an essay on the Karaites.<sup>135</sup> There is enough internal evidence to demonstrate that the Venetian rabbis collaborated, maybe they had discussed on a book

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<sup>131</sup> See: David Ruderman, *Jewish Thought*, chap. 5.

<sup>132</sup> On Christian Kabbalah see: François Secret, *Les kabbalistes chrétiens de la Renaissance*, (Paris: Dunod, 1964) and (Milan: Archè, 1985); Joseph Blau, *The Christian Interpretation of the Cabala in the Renaissance*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1944).

<sup>133</sup> Pico's works are extensively quoted also in Isaac Cantarini's sermons and in Isaac Cardoso, *Philosophia libera* (Venice: Bertanorum sumptibus, 1673). On this topic see my forthcoming book on Isaac Cantarini and my paper "Italian Jewish Preaching. Images of the Baroque Body and Self" delivered at the AAIS Conference, Pittsburgh (7-10 April 2011).

<sup>134</sup> On Karaites in the early modern period see: Shalom Rosenberg, "Emunat hakhamim", in *Jewish Thought in Seventeenth Century*, 285-295; Marina Rustow, "Karaites Real and Imagined: Three Cases of Jewish Heresy", *Past and Present* 197 (nov. 2007), 35-74; Stroumsa, *A New Science*, 73.

<sup>135</sup> Wolf, *Bibliotheca*, 3, 1150. The information is to be found in the correspondence between Yaacov Aboab, from Venice, and C. T. Unger.

relating to Jewish rituals and beliefs, arguing over heated topics such as the question of Karaims or the role of the Kabbalah, as observed in this short analysis. Luzzatto's characterization of the Karaites as interpreters of the Bible is very concise: the Karaites dwelled in some of the cities of the Levant and bore similarities to ancient Sadducees. By contrast, they believed in the immortality of the soul, its spiritual character, and the existence of angels as spiritual beings.<sup>136</sup>

The conclusion of chapter 16 suggests that, according to Luzzatto, rabbinic Judaism's appraisal of culture disguised as speculation on matters of natural philosophy, astronomy and natural science ("scientia") was still in practice and served religious goals in attempting to reach a better understanding of the Godhead. Contrary to Leone Modena, who definitely portrayed a situation of cultural decay amongst the Jews during his time, Luzzatto revealed a more positive attitude, one of self awareness which believed that access to philosophy and natural sciences were endangered because of Jewish religious isolationist trends. Nevertheless, his attempt to positively portray the different groups of Jewish scholars within the culture of his time, discloses his endeavor to maintain that the Jews were, even in exile and politically subjected to Christian politics, capable of producing and pursuing culture under duress.

### **Liminality and creativity**

"Take a view of the Royal Exchange in London, a place more venerable than many courts of justice, where the representatives of all nations meet for the benefit of mankind. There the Jew, the Mahometan, and the Christian transact together, as though they all professed the same religion, and give the name of infidel to none but bankrupts. There the Presbyterian confides in the Anabaptist, and the Churchman depends on the Quaker's word. At the breaking up of this pacific and free assembly, some withdraw to the synagogue, and others to take a glass. This man goes and is baptized in a great tub, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost: that man has his son's foreskin cut off, whilst a set of Hebrew words (quite unintelligible to him) are mumbled over his child. Others retire to their churches, and there wait for the inspiration of heaven with their hats on, and all are satisfied" (Voltaire, "On the Presbyterians")

It is more than appropriate to conclude this article with a famous quotation by Voltaire on religious tolerance. Voltaire's remarks are of a different kind and, though somehow they still relate to the image of

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<sup>136</sup> Luzzatto, *Discorso*, cons. 16, 85r.

Venice, the French philosopher stresses the economic element of tolerance. Voltaire's image of cultural religious toleration seemingly plays no role; religious tolerance seems, in this excerpt, to be a matter left to economy. Furthermore, Voltaire suggests that diversity in religion fosters economy and tolerance with virtuous reciprocal feedback: "If one religion only were allowed in England, the Government would very possibly become arbitrary; if there were but two, the people would cut one another's throats; but as there are such a multitude, they all live happy and in peace."<sup>137</sup>

If we look back at the end of the sixteenth-century, we intersect another French advocate of religious toleration who endorsed Venice's myth as a city of tolerance. Bodin's *Heptaplomeres*, was composed around 1588, and portrays a dialogue amongst seven fictional characters representing different religious and philosophical traditions. Solomon, the character who symbolically voices Judaism, is a portrayal of a hidden wisdom grounded in the esoteric understanding of the biblical mysteries.<sup>138</sup> Moreover, there are clues that the *Heptaplomeres* might also be related to the world of Venice, which we have tried to rediscover here and which may have in addition exerted a certain influence on our protagonists, from Sarpi to Luzzatto, from Modena to the Protestant and Catholic foreigners who roamed the Venetian ghetto.

Therefore, it is noteworthy to stress that by describing a new form of Judaism, both the *Riti* and the *Discorso* represented early attempts to offer a plea for the toleration of Jews within European Christian society. With regards to Luzzatto's *Discorso*, scholars have primarily focused on a concept of economic usefulness when referring to Jewish integration into Christian society. Given that the concept of usefulness became pivotal in discussions of the rise of modern science, it is then no surprise that Luzzatto's theory reached such a wide audience. Nevertheless, other theories of toleration in Luzzatto's *Discorso* can be traced, and are by no means less significant.

I shall briefly point to his attempt at defining a theory of religious toleration based on structural principles within the Christian state, for example Christian mercy ("carità").<sup>139</sup> This line of reasoning is the least explored and probably the most complicated argument to offer as a plausible theory in religious toleration. Furthermore, in consideration 15,

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<sup>137</sup> François-Marie Arouet Voltaire, *Letters On England*, Letter 6 (1734), (the Pennsylvania State University, Electronic Classics Series).

<sup>138</sup> Jean Bodin, *Colloquium of the Seven about Secrets of the Sublime*, ed. and trans. Marion L. Kuntz, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975).

<sup>139</sup> There is no space to develop this line of argument. Luzzatto, *Discorso*, cons. 10; Ravid, "Contra Judeos in Seventeenth century Italy", 308; Idem, *Economics and Toleration*, 92-93.

Luzzatto seems to suggest a theory of Jewish tolerance based on its interpretation of the Bible. It is of the utmost importance because it addressed issues of political and religious dissent which had been discussed in certain European countries.<sup>140</sup> Finally, Luzzatto presented a theory on toleration based on an internal historical Jewish perspective, demonstrating that Jews were still capable of producing culture, as stressed above.

In as far as it goes with reference to Leone Modena's the *Riti*, he offered a theory of toleration mainly based on the concept of Judaism as a biblical religion. Even if his work seemed to suggest more criticism aimed at the cultural position of Judaism during his time, it also expressed a portrayal of Judaism as a rational and sober religion, an idea which came to play an important role during the course of the eighteenth century. From the perspective of the sciences of religion, the *Riti* is one of the first treatises to present Judaism using a phenomenological approach meant to reconstruct religious practices from the perspective of an insider. There is no space for further development on this perspective, but this aspect might explain its immensely successful reception of the book amongst a non-Jewish readership, both Catholic and Protestant.<sup>141</sup>

The special encounters which took place in and around the ghetto during those critical yet fascinating years in the Most Serene Republic of Venice, highlighted a cultural and religious framework which was able to foster responses to the problems of the time, and in particular on the issue of religious tolerance.

The fragmentation of Christianity, torn by its dogmatic battles and its intolerant zeal, the distress and peregrinations of the Iberian Jews and new Christians contributed to the creation of a new context surmounted by conflict and quandary. Nevertheless, Venice as a city and as a myth along with the liminality of the ghetto and its protagonists – Jews, Protestants and Catholics alike – proved capable of offering a space for confrontation where, beyond control and discipline, books, manuscripts, ideas, more or less hidden and prohibited elsewhere, were circulated and discussed, leaving a lasting mark in European culture.

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<sup>140</sup> Luzzatto, *Discorso*, cons. 15. There are few issues that should be compared to Bodin's work in the text.

<sup>141</sup> The book had a wide European reception. See also: *The Book that Changed Europe. Picart & Bernard's Religious Ceremonies of the World*, eds. Lynn Hunt – Margaret C. Jacobs – Wijnand Mijnhardt, (Cambridge – London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010), chap. 7.

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## The Port of Livorno and its *Nazione Ebraica* in the Eighteenth Century: Economic Utility and Political Reforms\*

by Francesca Bregoli

### Abstract

*The port of Livorno in Tuscany was a successful example of mercantilist policy at work, from which its Jewish community reaped great benefits in the early modern period: Jews were granted special prerogatives on the grounds of their economic usefulness, gaining liberties precluded to most Jewish communities elsewhere. However, these economic privileges had conservative implications as well. In this essay, I argue that, at the onset of “modernity,” the exceptional nature and economic system of Livorno, together with the long-standing conception of Livornese Jews as commercially useful, contributed to the preservation of traditional structures and norms and prevented the full application of enlightened equalizing policies championed by the Tuscan government. Instead of furthering political integration, the deeply engrained “discourse of Jewish utility” encouraged the permanence of a widespread view of the Jews as an autonomous corporate collectivity protected by the continued benevolence of the sovereign. The article includes a comparison of the Tuscan situation with the better-known French and Prussian cases.*

“The Jews of Livorno live together in peace and safety in fine homes among the nobles of the land. Their houses are made of stone; most of its people are merchants and notables. Most of them shave their beards and style their hair, and there is no difference between their clothes and those of the rest of the people. They speak the common language correctly and fluently, like one of their orators... They dwell peacefully and quietly, and pursue every occupation and business they desire. My heart gladdens and I am proud to see my brothers living securely in the midst of their [gentile] neighbors, without enemy or troublemaker.”

With these words Isaac Euchel (1758-1804), one of the leaders of the Prussian *Haskalah* (the Jewish Enlightenment), described the Jews of Livorno in a fictional travelogue published in the journal *Ha-Me’asef* in 1790.<sup>1</sup> In Euchel’s depiction, Livorno was above all a place of freedom

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<sup>1</sup> Isaac Euchel, “Igerot meshullam ben uriyah ha-eshtemo’i” (Letters of Meshullam son



and opportunities, where Jews and gentiles coexisted peacefully as Livornese Jewry fulfilled its social potential in the pursuit of useful occupations and businesses. This image provided a symbolic model for the Prussian Jewish modernizers: Livornese Jews represented the ideal balance between Jewishness and openness to the outside world, between Hebrew learning and European culture, between religious independence and full civil integration that the *Haskalah* strove to promote among Prussian Jews.<sup>2</sup>

Although Livornese Jewry, also commonly referred to as *nazione ebrea*,<sup>3</sup> came to represent the prototypical “modern” Jews in *maskilic* ideology thanks to its unprecedented privileges and apparent integration, in reality its status as a partially outsider society did not change until well into the nineteenth century. In this article I will argue that the exceptional nature and economic system of Livorno, a bustling port on the Tyrrhenian coast of Tuscany, together with the long-standing conception of Livornese Jews as commercially useful and economically successful ensured a protracted understanding of this community as an autonomous corporate body, a factor that impeded the full application in Livorno of the enlightened project of communal reforms championed by the Tuscan government.

### The Tuscan State and Livornese Jews: A Fruitful Symbiosis

The history of Livornese Jewry and its political and institutional development are closely connected with transformations of the early modern Tuscan state and the growth of its Mediterranean maritime trade. The Medici family ruling over Tuscany actively promoted and pursued the establishment of a Jewish community in Livorno at the end of the sixteenth century as an integral part of the Tuscan state’s strategy of expansion.<sup>4</sup> The development of this Jewish community, therefore, ought to be studied in conjunction with the refashioning of the port of Livorno itself.<sup>5</sup>

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of Uriyah the Ashtmoite), *Ha-Me’asef* 6 (1790): 171-176, 245-249.

<sup>2</sup> On the image of Italian Jews in the *maskilic* imagination, see Lois Dubin, “Trieste and Berlin; the Italian role in the cultural politics of the *Haskalah*,” in *Toward Modernity. The European Jewish Model*, ed. Jacob Katz, (New Brunswick: Transaction, 1987), 189-224.

<sup>3</sup> This definition had nothing to do with modern meanings of “nation,” but rather referred to a corporate body of people, defined by specific characteristics and legally included within the early modern state. The notion was not unique to Livornese Jews (in Bordeaux for instance, the Sephardi community referred to itself as *la nation*) and the term was also applied to other merchant groups living in the Tuscan port, such as the English and the French. See below note 20.

<sup>4</sup> Furio Diaz, *Il Granducato di Toscana. I Medici*, (Turin: UTET, 1976), 188-191.

<sup>5</sup> On the development of the port of Livorno during the seventeenth and eighteenth century see the classic works by Mario Baruchello, *Livorno e il suo porto. Origini*,

The founding document of the productive synergy between Livornese Jewry and early modern Tuscany is a charter, later known as *Livornina* (1591), that was promulgated by the Grand Duke of Tuscany Ferdinand I de' Medici (ruled 1587-1609). The edict, reissued with slight changes in 1593 and routinely confirmed from then on, granted generous privileges to foreign merchants who settled in the port of Livorno.<sup>6</sup> Formally directed to “merchants of any nation, Levantine, Ponentine, Spanish, Portuguese, Greek, German and Italian, Jewish, Turkish, Moorish, Armenian, Persian and others,”<sup>7</sup> this charter was however intended to attract primarily *conversos* (that is, Jews who had been baptized in the Iberian Peninsula and their descendents) and Jews of Iberian and Levantine origin, a population reputed to be accomplished merchants, endowed with large capital, and part of well-established trading networks both within the Mediterranean basin and outside of it.<sup>8</sup>

Among other privileges, the *Livornina* granted relative protection from the Holy Office to former *conversos*, bestowed on Livornese Jews the status of Tuscan subjects, provided them with economic incentives, exempted them from wearing distinguishing signs, allowed them to buy real estate, and granted the Jewish community significant jurisdictional autonomy in both civil and criminal (for lower level charges) cases.<sup>9</sup> In many respects, Livorno proved unique, inasmuch as Jews in the rest of Italy were segregated to ghettos, forced to wear identifying signs, and barred from owning property for most of the early modern period.

The establishment of the Livornese *nazione ebrea*, it should be remembered, was a specific instance of a much broader historical phenomenon that took place between approximately 1530 and 1650, namely the return of Sephardi Jews to Western Europe and their arrival to the New World, attracted by state authorities with generous charters because of their reputed commercial usefulness.<sup>10</sup> Other Italian

*caratteristiche e vicende dei traffici livornesi*, (Livorno: Soc. An. Ed. Riviste Tecniche, 1932); Fernand Braudel and Ruggiero Romano, *Navires et marchandises à l'entrée du port de Livourne* (1547-1611), (Paris: A. Colin, 1951); Guido Sonnino, *Saggio sulle Industrie, Marina e Commercio sotto i primi due Lorenesi (1737-1790)*, (Cortona: E. Alari, 1909).

<sup>6</sup> Renzo Toaff, *La Nazione Ebraica a Livorno e a Pisa (1591-1700)*, (Florence: Olschki, 1990), 41-51 (see *ibid.*, 419-435 for the complete text of the 1591 and 1593 charters); Attilio Milano, “La Costituzione Livornina del 1593”, *La Rassegna Mensile di Israel* 34 (1968): 394-410; Bernard Cooperman, *Trade and Settlement: The Establishment and Early Development of the Jewish Communities in Leghorn and Pisa (1591-1626)*, Unpublished PhD Thesis (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1976), 248-378.

<sup>7</sup> Toaff, *La Nazione Ebraica*, 419.

<sup>8</sup> Lucia Frattarelli Fischer, “Reti toscane e reti internazionali degli ebrei di Livorno nel Seicento”, *Zakhor* 6 (2003): 93-116

<sup>9</sup> Toaff, *La Nazione Ebraica*, 421-422, 427, 428; Cooperman, *Trade and Settlement*, 341-342.

<sup>10</sup> Jonathan Israel, *European Jewry in the Age of Mercantilism, 1550-1750*, (Portland, OR: Littman, 1998); Jonathan Karp, *The Politics of Jewish Commerce. Economic Thought and Emancipation in Europe, 1638-1848*, (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University

principalities granted privileges to Iberian and Ottoman Jews and New Christians before the Tuscan state did. Papal Ancona offered charters to Jews in 1534, Ferrara attracted Jews and *conversos* in 1538, Tuscany invited Portuguese New Christians and Jews to settle in Pisa and Florence in 1548 and 1551, Savoy welcomed Jews to settle in the port of Nice in 1572 (this edict was however short lived), and Venice extended generous charters to Ottoman Jews and Iberian New Christians in 1589.<sup>11</sup> Although the Medici were not alone in vying for the attention of Sephardi merchants,<sup>12</sup> thanks to the generosity of the *Livornina* and the subsequent flourishing and demographic growth of the community, Livorno came to exemplify a particularly extraordinary “success story” of Jewish readmission in the eyes of both Jewish and non-Jewish observers. If the unprecedented liberties that the *Livornina* provided to Jews and former *conversos* rendered Livorno an emblematic center for Jewish life in Western Europe, Livorno’s exceptionality had not started in 1591. Since its very inception as a city, Livorno’s urban structure and model of governance were radically new in comparison with the rest of the Grand Duchy of Tuscany.<sup>13</sup> Livorno’s commercial activity also clearly separated it from the rest of the Tuscan state, which based its livelihood on manufacture and agriculture.

This originally small and insalubrious fortified village (Porto Pisano) had served as Pisa’s harbor up to 1421, when the Florentine republic absorbed it. In 1575, Grand Duke Francesco I de’ Medici entrusted architect Bernardo Buontalenti with a revolutionary project to design an entirely new city over the grounds of the original port, according to an efficient (though ultimately constraining and somewhat artificial) urban plan.<sup>14</sup> Its strategic position on the Tyrrhenian Sea put Livorno at an advantage vis-à-vis other centers on the Adriatic, such as Venice and

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Press, 2008), 12-16.

<sup>11</sup> Benjamin Ravid, “A Tale of Three Cities and Their “Raison d’État:” Ancona, Venice, Livorno, and the Competition for Jewish Merchants in the Sixteenth Century”, *Mediterranean Historical Review* 6 (1991): 138-162; Renata Segre, “Sephardic Settlements in Sixteenth-Century Italy: A Historical and Geographical Survey”, *Mediterranean Historical Review* 6 (1991): 112-137.

<sup>12</sup> Among the rich bibliography on Sephardi Jews in sixteenth-century Italy, see the recent important additions by Aron di Leone Leoni, *La nazione ebraica spagnola e portoghese di Ferrara (1492-1559): i suoi rapporti col governo ducale e la popolazione locale ed i suoi legami con le Nazioni Portoghesi di Ancona, Pesaro e Venezia*, 2 vols. (Florence: Olschki, 2011) and Federica Ruspio, *La nazione portoghese. Ebrei ponentini e nuovi cristiani a Venezia*, (Turin: Silvio Zamorani editore, 2007).

<sup>13</sup> Samuel Fettah, “Livourne: cité du Prince, cité marchande (XVIe-XIXe siècle)” in *Florence et la Toscane XIV<sup>e</sup>-XIX<sup>e</sup> siècles. Les dynamiques d’un État italien*, eds. Jean Boutier, Sandro Landi, Olivier Rouchen, (Rennes: PUR, 2004), 179-195: 182.

<sup>14</sup> Diaz, *I Medici*, 259-260; Id., “Prolusione”, *Atti del Convegno “Livorno e il Mediterraneo”*, 15-23: 16. See also Paolo Castignoli, “Livorno da terra murata a città”, in *Atti del Convegno “Livorno e il Mediterraneo”*, 32-39.

Ancona, because it was more convenient for ships coming into the Mediterranean from Atlantic ports to sail to the Tuscan coast rather than circumnavigate the entire Italian Peninsula.<sup>15</sup> The Medicis were determined to take advantage of this geographical opportunity. Thus, unlike ancient and medieval towns, the Tuscan government first planned the urban unit of Livorno, and only later shaped its social texture by promoting specific economic and social policies that would attract a work force and international traders.<sup>16</sup>

Because Livorno did not have a glorious past as an independent *comune* (city-state), as did other towns acquired by the Tuscan state during the early modern period, it was more easily molded into an emblem of the power and aspirations of the Medici administration.<sup>17</sup> The *Livornina* stemmed from the same governmental will to confer a privileged status on this Tuscan city, in order to increase the state's economic potential by creating a maritime trade center. The declaration of the port's neutrality in 1646 and the 1676 edict that turned Livorno into a free port reflected a similar impulse.<sup>18</sup>

The uniqueness of the port determined the city's exceptional demographic composition and institutional structures. Unlike the rest of Tuscany, Livorno's population was mostly made up of immigrants, including members of religious minorities that were unwelcome in the rest of Catholic Europe, alongside debtors, outlaws with a criminal past, and hopeful youth looking for bright economic prospects. Initially, the bulk of the immigration comprised petty merchants and craftsmen from central Italian regions and the Tyrrhenian basin (Genoa, Corsica, and Provence). When the activity of the port took off in the course of the seventeenth century, increasing numbers of international traders from the Levant and North West Europe settled in the city, contributing to its cosmopolitan character.<sup>19</sup>

It was mainly foreign groups commonly known as *nazioni* (lit. "nations," a term used in its medieval meaning to refer to colonies of international merchants) organized along corporate lines and enjoying consular representation, that handled international and internal commerce in Livorno.<sup>20</sup> Among them, the *nazione ebrea* soon became the largest and

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<sup>15</sup> Ravid, "A Tale of Three Cities", 155-156.

<sup>16</sup> Giancarlo Nuti, "Livorno, il porto e la città nell'epoca medicea", in *Atti del Convegno "Livorno e il Mediterraneo"*, 325-346.

<sup>17</sup> Diaz, "Prolusione", 15-23; Fettah, "Livourne", 179-180.

<sup>18</sup> Diaz, *I Medici*, 301-303, 395-398.

<sup>19</sup> Elena Fasano Guarini, "Esenzioni e immigrazione a Livorno tra sedicesimo e diciassettesimo secolo", in *Atti del Convegno "Livorno e il Mediterraneo"*, 56-76. On the role of the city in the early modern Mediterranean basin, see *Mediterranean Urban Culture, 1400-1700*, ed. Alexander Cowan, (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2000).

<sup>20</sup> Carlo Mangio, "'Nazioni' e tolleranza a Livorno," *Nuovi Studi Livornesi* 3 (1995), 11-22: 12, notes the ambiguity of the term "nation" in the Livornese context. Some

most influential ethnic-religious minority in the port.<sup>21</sup> The favorable conditions set by the *Livornina* encouraged the demographic, economic, and cultural flourishing of Livornese Jewry. The Jewish population of the Tuscan port increased exponentially in the first half of the seventeenth century (from 134 individuals in 1601 to 1250 in 1645).<sup>22</sup> Thanks to its continuous growth, by the mid eighteenth century Livornese Jewry became the second largest Jewish community in Western Europe, after that of Amsterdam, numbering almost 5000 souls by the Napoleonic period.<sup>23</sup> The port counted a percentage of Jewish inhabitants (between 9-12% of the entire population) perhaps unequalled in any other urban center in Western Europe throughout the early modern period.<sup>24</sup> Unlike any of the other foreign corporate groups that resided in Livorno, the *nazione ebrea* was legally recognized as a “subject nation” by the Tuscan authorities because of its economic merits. Its members were legally recognized as Tuscan subjects, and the community enjoyed the right to organize itself as a special political body, autonomous yet dependent on the government of the city.<sup>25</sup> Over time, the Jewish community's governing structures were integrated into the bureaucratic machinery of the Grand Duchy of Tuscany. In 1715, Cosimo III de’

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documents refer with this terminology to the *negozianti* (the wealthiest international traders) belonging to all the foreign corporate groups living in Livorno. Others only include English, Dutch and French *negozianti*, alongside the *nazione ebrea*.

<sup>21</sup> Although technically, in *ius commune*, a Jewish community could not be invested as a corporation, in practice in many areas of early modern Europe the Jews were regarded as forming a corporate body accepted within a hierarchical society of estates. *De facto*, the Livornese Jewish community too functioned as a corporate body. I am grateful to Kenneth Stow for pointing out this distinction to me.

<sup>22</sup> Toaff, *La Nazione Ebraica*, 63, 121.

<sup>23</sup> Jean Pierre Filippini, “La nazione ebrea di Livorno”, in *Storia d'Italia. Annali 11. Gli ebrei in Italia*, vol. 2, *Dall'emancipazione a oggi*, ed. Corrado Vivanti, (Turin: Einaudi, 1997), 1047-1066: 1054; census statistics compiled between 1737 and 1790 show that Jewish population of the port numbered 3476 souls in 1738, 3687 in 1758 and 4327 in 1784. The Jewish community of Amsterdam, which counted approximately 17,000 individuals by 1750 (including both Sephardim and Ashkenazim) was the largest in Western Europe (Israel, *European Jewry*, 198). The Sephardi communities of Bayonne and Bordeaux were both smaller than that of Livorno, counting respectively about 3500 and 3000 individuals, while the communities of Venice and Rome numbered approximately 2000 individuals each during the eighteenth century.

<sup>24</sup> On the history of Livornese Jewry in the eighteenth century see Jean Pierre Filippini, *Il porto di Livorno e la Toscana (1676-1814)*, 3 vols. (Naples: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 1998); Francesca Trivellato, “The Port Jews of Livorno and their Global Networks of Trade in the Early Modern Period”, *Jewish Culture and History* 7 (2004): 31-48, and ead., *The Familiarity of Strangers. The Sephardic Diaspora, Livorno, and Cross-Cultural Trade in the Early Modern Period*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009). For a social history of the community in the seventeenth century, see now also Lucia Frattarelli Fischer, *Vivere fuori dal Ghetto. Ebrei a Pisa e Livorno (secoli XVI-XVIII)*, (Turin: Silvio Zamorani editore, 2008).

<sup>25</sup> Toaff, *La Nazione Ebraica*, 47; Mangio, “‘Nazioni’ e tolleranza”, 12.

Medici advocated to himself the right to select the lay leaders of the Jewish community as well as other governing figures, from a list of designated names submitted by the governing board of the *nazione ebraica*. This decision, stemming from the hope that stable Jewish administration would foster the commercial potential of the port, benefited the city's Sephardi oligarchy and ensured a protracted status quo, which laid the foundation for a convergence of political goals shared by both the Grand Duchy and the Sephardi oligarchy itself. Initially composed of Iberian and Levantine Sephardim, over time the community had absorbed a steady flow of immigrants from other Italian centers, as well as from North Africa. Despite the significant transformations in the demographic composition of the *nazione ebraica*, however, the old Sephardi mercantile elite retained political control until the end of the eighteenth century.<sup>26</sup>

While the vast majority of Livornese Jewry were earning low wages or living in poverty, as was the case in any sizable early modern Jewish community, a small but visible group of wealthy *negozianti* (international merchants) came to represent the commercial success of the entire *nazione ebraica*. And commerce did indeed feature prominently among the activities pursued by Livornese Jews. About 42% of them were employed in professions related to aspects of international and local trade: this included not only actual traders, cashiers, financial intermediaries, and interpreters, but also storage, packing and shipping professionals, and porters. Another 23% of the active Jewish population supplied essential services to the community, working as petty merchants, grocers, tailors, printers, or second-hand clothes retailers, while about 6% of Livornese Jews depended directly on the community, from which they received a salary: this latest group included rabbis, preachers, teachers, and public health care professionals.<sup>27</sup>

Thanks to the economic policies of the Medici house, Livorno thrived, and Livornese Jewish merchants played a key role in Mediterranean trade throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. By the middle of the seventeenth century, at the end of the Thirty Years War (1618-1648), the port had emerged as the chief Dutch and English commercial hub in the Mediterranean and one of the most important centers for the distribution of wares from Northern Europe and the American colonies to the Maghreb and the Ottoman Empire, and from the Levant to Amsterdam or London. Despite the increasing prominence of Atlantic trade for world markets in the course of the eighteenth century, a high proportion of Dutch and English Mediterranean commerce continued to pass through the port of Livorno. The chief agents of the resale of these goods in North Africa and the Levant were Sephardi merchants based in

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<sup>26</sup> Toaff, *La Nazione Ebraica*, 178, 180-182.

<sup>27</sup> Filippini, "La nazione ebraica", 1057-1058.

Livorno.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, the Mediterranean region retained global relevance particularly for the exchange of Tyrrhenian coral and Indian diamonds. Livornese Sephardi firms dominated the commerce of these luxury goods, which led them to create trade networks with both Jews and non-Jews in the Ottoman Empire, Portugal, and as far away as the Indian subcontinent.<sup>29</sup>

### The Economic Utility of Livornese Jewry

As we have seen, the perceived usefulness of Jewish merchants was the reason why the Medici government had invited former *conversos* and Levantine Jews to settle in Livorno and granted them extensive privileges in 1591-93, in the hope that their presence would boost the port's economy. Jonathan Karp has persuasively argued that, starting in the 1630s, the wider process of Jewish readmission to Western Europe also functioned as a catalyst for moralists and philosophers to begin re-examining "virtues and defects" of the Jews in light of new economic theories and realities. Since Jews were usually invited to settle precisely because of their perceived positive economic role, "their place within the host societies came to be redefined in light of existing and ongoing debates over the political relevance of new economic phenomena."<sup>30</sup> As these debates evolved with the emergence of new economic theories over the course of the following two centuries, the changing discourses on "Jewish commerce" and Jewish status serve as a litmus test to assess not only the complexity of attitudes toward the Jewish presence in Western Europe, but more generally European approaches to commerce itself.<sup>31</sup> Considering the nature of the Livornese port, how did the perception of Jewish commercial utility evolve in Tuscany, as Medicean mercantilism came under criticism and different economic doctrines animated by free trade and physiocratic principles gained popularity? After the house of Lorraine replaced the Medici dynasty in 1737, the governmental belief in the *nazione ebrea's* usefulness did not diminish, although the special status of the city did indeed become the object of critical reconsideration in light of the physiocratic ideas informing the reformist will of the Lorraine rulers.<sup>32</sup> At this delicate dynastic passage, the new administration came to associate the alterity of Livorno, its special privileges, and its exclusively commercial nature with the decline of the Medici house, its administrative shortcomings, and the perceived

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<sup>28</sup> Israel, *European Jewry*, 144.

<sup>29</sup> Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers*, 3.

<sup>30</sup> Karp, *The Politics of Jewish Commerce*, 16.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 1-11.

<sup>32</sup> Diaz, "Prolusione", 19.

failure of its mercantilist aspirations.<sup>33</sup> Therefore, the reforms promoted by the two eighteenth-century rulers of the Lorraine house – Francis Stephen, who ruled between 1737 and 1765, the period known as *Reggenza* (i.e., Regency, as a network of ministers and collaborators governed on behalf of the absentee Grand Duke, who remained in Vienna), and his son Peter Leopold of Habsburg-Lorraine (ruled 1765-1790) – strove to incorporate the port and its now fully developed city into the broader context of the Grand Duchy in an attempt to apply homogeneous policies to the entire state and gradually curb particularistic interests.<sup>34</sup> The privileges granted to the *nazione ebrea*, however, were never abolished and Jewish commercial utility was neither doubted nor questioned.

As soon as the Prince of Craon, appointed regent by Francis Stephen, took possession of the Grand Duchy in July 1737, he wrote the Governor of Livorno reiterating his commitment to foster commerce and to protect all his subjects without distinctions, and he confirmed all privileges granted to the Jews by the *Livornina* of Ferdinand I de' Medici.<sup>35</sup> As an international hub the Livornese port entered a season of decline in the wake of the War of the Austrian Succession (1740-1747).<sup>36</sup> It did not take long for Grand Duke Francis Stephen to assess the situation, a realization bolstered also by the doctrine of physiocracy, which posited, against mercantilism, that the source of a nation's wealth rested in agricultural labor.<sup>37</sup> This notwithstanding, the international and "cosmopolitan" nature of the city was not diminished and Jewish privileges were routinely reaffirmed.

In fact, whenever the authorities were called upon to legislate on matters concerning the *nazione ebrea*, Lorraine governmental memoranda customarily reiterated the economic usefulness of the Livornese Jewish community and their long-standing prerogatives in the port.<sup>38</sup> In the

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 21-23 Fetta, "Livourne", 186-187. On the decline of Tuscany during the last decades of the Medici government see Diaz, *I Medici*, 466-545.

<sup>34</sup> On the *Reggenza* see Furio Diaz, "La Reggenza", in Furio Diaz, Luigi Mascilli Migliorini, Carlo Mangio, *Il Granducato di Toscana. I Lorena dalla Reggenza agli anni rivoluzionari*, (Turin: UTET, 1997), 3-245. On Peter Leopold, later Emperor Leopold II, see the classic work by Adam Wandruszka, *Leopold II. Erzherzog von Österreich, Grossherzog von Toskana, König von Ungarn und Böhmen, Römischer Kaiser*, 2 vols. (Wien: Verlag Herold, 1963-65); Luigi Mascilli Migliorini, "L'età delle riforme", in Diaz, Mascilli Migliorini, Mangio, *I Lorena*, 249-421.

<sup>35</sup> Lattes and Toaff, *Gli studi ebraici a Livorno*, 23.

<sup>36</sup> Diaz, "La Reggenza", 58, 108-118.

<sup>37</sup> Elizabeth Fox Genovese, *The Origins of Physiocracy. Economic Revolution and Social Order in Eighteenth-Century France*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976); for a study of Tuscan political economy, see Till Wahnbaeck, *Luxury and Public Happiness. Political Economy in the Italian Enlightenment*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 71-135.

<sup>38</sup> Important excerpts of governmental discussion of the legal status of the *nazione ebrea* in 1752 and 1772 can be found in Mangio, "Nazioni e tolleranza", 12.



1750s, at a time of general economic decline marked by the Tuscan government's desire for structural economic reforms, the notion of Jewish utility appeared prominently also in Livornese public discourse. As Tuscan economic thinkers started focusing their attention increasingly on agriculture, land reform, and the export of agricultural produce,<sup>39</sup> Livornese journals defended commerce in general and the port's economic specificities.

The two main Livornese periodicals of the middle of the eighteenth century, the *Magazzino Italiano* (1752-1754) and the *Magazzino Toscano* (1754-1757), modeled after English examples and aimed at a non-specialist public of merchants,<sup>40</sup> co-opted the figure of the Jewish merchant to bolster their argumentations in favor of trade. In the third volume of the *Magazzino Italiano*, a short note about the Purim celebrations in Livorno referred to the *nazione ebrea* as “meritorious... both because it promotes and increases trade and because it brings benefits to the common people by creating jobs.”<sup>41</sup> In the same volume, readers could also find a praise of commerce commending all trading “nations,” portrayed as bringing happiness and wealth to all layers of society.<sup>42</sup>

These positive comments about the Jewish presence in the port city exemplify a Livornese variant of the late “mercantile philosemitism,” in Jonathan Karp's words, which characterized the 1750s in England, France, and the German lands. During this decade, authors as different as Josiah Tucker (1713-1799), Dean of Gloucester, the French adventurer Ange Goudar (1708- ca. 1791), and the Berlin early *maskil* Aaron Salomon Gumpertz (1723-1769), in collaboration with playwright Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729-1781),<sup>43</sup> expressed favorable sentiments toward the Jews, inviting toleration of this minority precisely in light of its recognized economic usefulness.<sup>44</sup> Clearly influenced by arguments first promoted by the seventeenth-century Jewish apologists

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<sup>39</sup> Wahnbaeck, *Luxury and Public Happiness*, 83-88, 92.

<sup>40</sup> On the Livornese periodical press see Elena Gremigni, “Periodici e almanacchi livornesi secoli XVII-XVIII”, *Quaderni della Labronica* 69 (1996) and Giuseppe Ricuperati, “Giornali e società nell'Italia dell'Ancien Régime (1668-1789)”, in *La stampa italiana dal Cinquecento all'Ottocento*, eds. Carlo Capra, Valerio Castronovo, Giuseppe Ricuperati, (Bari: Laterza, 1976), 296.

<sup>41</sup> *Magazzino Italiano*, vol. 3, March 25, 1753, 9: “benemerita... sì per il Commercio, che promuove, ed accresce, sì per gli vantaggi che reca al minuto Popolo per mezzo del lavoro.”

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 52-53.

<sup>43</sup> Gad Freudenthal, “Aaron Salomon Gumpertz, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, and the First Call for an Improvement of the Civil Rights of Jews in Germany (1753)”, *AJS Review* 29 (2005): 299-353.

<sup>44</sup> Karp, *The Politics of Jewish Commerce*, 91-93. For a recent diachronic approach to the theme of philosemitism see *Philosemitism in History*, eds. Jonathan Karp, Adam Sutcliffe, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

Simone Luzzatto and Menasseh ben Israel, and echoed at the beginning of the eighteenth century by Joseph Addison in *The Spectator* (1712)<sup>45</sup> and by John Toland in his *Reasons for Naturalizing the Jews in Great Britain and Ireland* (1714), these pro-Jewish views did not, however, last long after the 1750s.

In central and western Europe, critical voices emerged in the second half of the eighteenth century, focusing their anxiety primarily on Ashkenazi Jews.<sup>46</sup> These critics did not view “Jewish commerce” in positive terms, but rather depicted Jewish prominence in trade as distorted, a historical accident in need of transformation.<sup>47</sup> Starting with the publication of Christian Wilhelm Dohm’s essay *On the Civil Improvement of the Jews* in 1781, and the promulgation of the Josephinian *Toleranzpatent* the following year, Jews were encouraged, by both Jewish and non-Jewish critics, to give up older modes of life stifled by centuries of restrictions and persecutions, and expected to reform their moral, physical, and above all economic condition before they could receive the same rights enjoyed by non-Jews, and fully become “happy and useful” subjects of the state.<sup>48</sup> A similar profound distaste for Jewish economic activities appears in the entry that abbé Henri Grégoire submitted to the essay contest devised by the *Société Royale des Sciences et des Artes* in Metz in 1785, on the subject of how to make the Jews more useful and happy in France.<sup>49</sup>

For non-Jewish observers such as the Prussian civil servant Dohm or the abbé Grégoire, the historically determined Jewish concentration in commerce was one of the primary causes of the degeneration of the Jewish people. If their sorry state were to change, the state should allow them to pursue activities such as crafts, manufactures, and above all agriculture.<sup>50</sup> The proponents of the *Haskalah* in Prussia, such as Isaac Euchel quoted at the beginning, fully subscribed to this notion of Jewish

<sup>45</sup>In *The Spectator* 495 (September 27, 1712), Addison likened the Jews to “the Pegs and Nails in a Great Building, which, although they are but very little valued in themselves, are absolutely necessary to keep the whole Frame together.” This analogy was later on echoed by the *Encyclopédie*, 9 (1765), 24-25 (*s.v. Juif*) and reiterated by Jewish apologists such as Israel Bernard de Valabrègue of Bordeaux in his *Réflexions d’un Milord* (1767): Ronald Schechter, *Obstinate Hebrews. Representations of Jews in France, 1715-1815*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2003), 115-119.

<sup>46</sup>These calls for Jews to abandon commerce and take up crafts and manufacture did not originate in the eighteenth century. Martin Luther advocated for this change in his *On the Jews and Their Lies* (1543), and so did exponents of German Pietism in the following century, see Karp, *The Politics of Jewish Commerce*, 110-111.

<sup>47</sup>Karp, *The Politics of Jewish Commerce*, 93.

<sup>48</sup>*Ibid.*, 94-106.

<sup>49</sup>Schechter, *Obstinate Hebrews*, 87-95. See also Alissa Goldstein Sepinwall, “L’Abbé Grégoire and the Metz Contest: The View from New Documents”, *Revue des études juives* 166 (2007): 243-258.

<sup>50</sup>Karp, *The Politics of Jewish Commerce*, 112-122, 132-134.

self-regeneration, pointing to Italian, and in particular Livornese, Jews as the ideal embodiment of the much-needed Jewish improvement.<sup>51</sup> Ironically, however, this kind of reformist ideology, posited on the notion that Jews were in need of amelioration and should, among other things, busy themselves with economic occupations other than trade, did not strike any roots in Livorno itself – nor in other parts of Italy with strong Jewish mercantile communities.<sup>52</sup> Rather, the commercial success of the Livornese Jewish community provided ample proof of its social utility to the government, not of the Jews' degeneration. This factor led the Tuscan government to continue promoting Jewish traditional economic occupations in Livorno (their extensive engagement with trade) in the second half of the eighteenth century, rather than subject them to criticism.

Francis Stephen's son Peter Leopold, one of the main proponents of Enlightened Absolutism among eighteenth-century princes, complemented attempts to turn Livorno into a center for the export of Tuscan grain with further initiatives to confirm its status of neutrality and to strengthen commercial networks with North Africa and the Levant.<sup>53</sup> Although he simplified and dismantled corporate liberties in the rest of the Grand Duchy in the 1770s and 1780s, including Christian confraternities and professional associations (*arti*), Peter Leopold endeavored to accommodate specific Livornese privileges to the principles of free market economy that his government propounded.<sup>54</sup> As for the *nazione ebrea*, Peter Leopold's rule once again upheld its prerogatives rooted in older mercantilist and protectionist principles, even as he sought through his reforms to abolish those very principles in the broader Tuscan society.

In light of the above, it is possible to advance the following suggestion. Throughout the seventeenth and the first half of the eighteenth century, Livornese Jews had enjoyed benefits unparalleled in any other Italian center and represented an avant-garde example of successful Jewish resettlement in Western Europe. When new economic and political trends challenged mercantilism, the broader framework that had allowed for the growth and flourishing of the Livornese Jewish community, the corporate *nazione ebrea's* continued existence was guaranteed, as its

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<sup>51</sup>The Alsatian Jewish leader Berr-Isaac Berr, writing after the French Revolution, also advocated a shift from commerce to manufacture and agriculture: Lawrence Scott Lerner, "Beyond Grégoire. A Third Discourse of Jews and the French", *Modern Judaism* 21 (2001), 199-215: 202-205.

<sup>52</sup>For the case of Modena, where the *Haskalah* message of Jewish amelioration did not resonate, see Federica Francesconi, "From Ghetto to Emancipation: The Role of Moisé Formiggini", *Jewish History* 24 (2010): 331-354.

<sup>53</sup> Fetta, "Livourne," 187. In 1778 the free and neutral status of the port was confirmed.

<sup>54</sup> Diaz, "Prolusione", 21-22.

usefulness to the state was not questioned or doubted, but rather emphasized. This situation safeguarded the existing status quo, to the mutual satisfaction of the Livornese authorities and of the conservative oligarchy that governed the Jewish community. At the same time, the deeply engrained “discourse of Jewish commercial utility” did not lead to the development of a discussion on the Jewish condition in Tuscany in the 1780s (the period in which the “Jewish question” was publicly “discovered” in other countries, such as France and Prussia) nor to the formulation of encompassing proposals for a transformation of Jewish status.<sup>55</sup> Rather, it encouraged the permanence of a widespread view of the Jews as a corporate collectivity protected by the continued benevolence of the sovereign.

### **Tuscan Jewish Property-Owners and the Leopoldine Communal Reformist Project**

Starting from the early 1770s, Grand Duke Peter Leopold attempted to rationalize municipal governance as part of an extensive program of administrative reforms, a project in which grand ducal advisor Francesco Maria Gianni (1728-1821) played the most significant role. Gianni championed policies shaped by new ideas of “citizenship” and political participation, informed by seventeenth-century natural law theories, based on the belief that self-interested property-owners would be ideally suited to manage the *res publica* conceived as a business (*azienda*).<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> For a different interpretation of the Jewish condition in Tuscany during the eighteenth century, see Ulrich Wyrwa, *Juden in der Toskana und in Preußen im Vergleich. Aufklärung und Emanzipation in Florenz, Livorno, Berlin und Königsberg i. Pr.* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 43-66; Id. “Berlin and Florence in the Age of Enlightenment: Jewish Experience in Comparative Perspective”, *German History* 21 (2003): 1-28; Id. ““Perché i moderni rabbini pretendono di dare ad intendere una favola chimerica...” L’illuminismo toscano e gli ebrei”, *Quaderni storici* 103 (2000): 139-161. For a discussion of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Italian approaches to the “Jewish question” see Renzo De Felice, “Per una storia del problema ebraico in Italia alla fine del XVIII secolo e all’inizio del XIX”, *Movimento Operaio* 5 (1955): 681-727 and Gadi Luzzatto Voghera, *Il prezzo dell’eguaglianza. Il dibattito sull’emancipazione degli ebrei in Italia 1781-1848*, (Milan: Franco Angeli, 1998).

<sup>56</sup> I use the term citizenship here to refer to the right of political representation enjoyed by a limited number of individuals in a hierarchical Old Regime society of estates and orders. I am not referring to the modern notion of national citizenship that emerges only in the aftermath of the French Revolution, as the institutional articulation of the relationship between equal citizens and the national state that represents them. On theories of citizenship in the pre-modern period, see Pietro Costa, *Civitas. Storia della cittadinanza in Europa. I Dalla civiltà comunale al Settecento*, (Rome and Bari: Laterza, 1999) and Id., “Il discorso della cittadinanza in Europa: ipotesi di lettura”, in *Cittadinanza. Individui, diritti sociali, collettività nella storia contemporanea*, ed. Carlotta Sorba, (Rome: Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali, 2002), 12-37.

The reform focused on the nexus between three elements: property-ownership, taxable wealth, and representation. Since all property-owners contributed to the costs of administration through their tax quota, they were viewed as interested political participants and should therefore become candidates eligible for political representation, alongside the members of the Tuscan aristocracy. The names of eligible proprietors who met the required minimum for taxable wealth were to be placed within a bag, from which a group of names (usually three) would be randomly drawn. If selected, they were to sit in the general councils and magistracies of their municipalities, next to nobles and *cittadini*, and cast their ballots to decide questions concerning public administration. The first step of this sweeping reform was limited to local administrations, but a later stage was envisioned in which ownership would become a prerequisite to contribute to state government. The role of the sovereign was also imagined to evolve from that of a protector to that of a mere supervisor of well-regulated and well-administered communities.<sup>57</sup>

This general principle challenged engrained practices of power and aristocratic oligarchies. Gianni's enlightened reformist plan met with varying degrees of opposition all over Tuscany and required several modifications. The same principle, taken to its logical conclusions, was also to be extended to eligible Tuscan Jewish proprietors, whom Gianni viewed as subjects fit to participate in the administration of the *res publica* – just as any other eligible Tuscan property owner.<sup>58</sup> As we will see, however, engrained local interests and governmental concessions to traditional political powers thwarted the revolutionary import of the Tuscan reformist plans to grant “active citizenship” to all Jewish proprietors. In Livorno, in particular, the progress toward active political inclusion experienced by members of the *nazione ebrea* in the late eighteenth century was incomplete and partial at best.

Marcello Verga has astutely pointed out that the Tuscan government's proposal to give Jews political representation in local administrations developed along unique lines that had nothing to do with the ideas underlining the projects for Jewish integration advanced in France and Prussia. Gianni's approach to Jewish proprietors did not stem from a comprehensive plan for Jewish emancipation, but rather developed *ex post facto*, as a reaction to practical questions raised by his ideal project. The results were certainly pioneering and unprecedented. As we have seen, in western and central Europe, Jews were expected first and foremost to change, either by improving their condition or by shedding

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<sup>57</sup> Bernardo Sordi, *L'amministrazione illuminata. Riforme della comunità e progetti di costituzione nella Toscana leopoldina*, (Milan: Giuffrè, 1991).

<sup>58</sup> Women who owned property were allowed to participate in the elections. If selected, they were required to indicate a male substitute or to decline the appointment after paying a standard fee.

their particularism, in order to become worthy of civic inclusion. In Tuscany, unlike France and Prussia, enlightened administrators ignored discussions on the Jewish condition. Indeed, the principle of “self-interested property ownership,” understood as a “universal” and “natural” basis for active political participation, completely bypassed the beliefs and concerns that informed the debates over Jewish emancipation in France and Prussia during the 1780s.<sup>59</sup>

Based on this principle, it was only logical for Gianni that Jewish property-owners should be included in the business of administration. His proposal did not require a prior radical transformation on the part of the Jews *à la* Dohm or Grégoire. Jewish proprietors were deemed worthy of contributing to local administration because they were subjected to taxation according to their property ownership and therefore deserved to express their interests in the public forum of the municipal administration.<sup>60</sup> Furthermore, the Tuscan administrator did not engage with the vexed question of Jewish particularism and autonomy, which was to be a crucial element in the French discussion of Jewish emancipation at the Paris National Assembly. Jewish communal and juridical autonomy did not appear as an obstacle for the application of the principle of property ownership as a basis for political representation. It seems that for Gianni the corporate, autonomous status of the Jews within the Tuscan state could coexist with the possibility for individual Jewish proprietors to hold equal rights of political representation as their non-Jewish counterparts.

### **The *Nazione Ebraica* of Livorno and the Municipal Reforms**

Gianni's ideas were not only innovative, but their import could have been truly revolutionary – in his *Ricordi*, the political advisor remarked that “equality is not a French invention, but exists among us in many parts of our government.”<sup>61</sup> There is however scant evidence concerning

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<sup>59</sup> Among the rich literature on the French and Prussian debates about Jewish emancipation, see Arthur Hertzberg, *The French Enlightenment and the Jews*, (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1968); Schechter, *Obstinate Hebrews*, 18-109; Ritchie Robertson, *'The Jewish Question' in German Literature, 1749-1939. Emancipation and Its Discontents*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); Paolo Bernardini, *La questione ebraica nel tardo illuminismo tedesco. Studi intorno allo 'Über die bürgerliche Verbesserung der Juden' di C. W. Dohm (1781)*, (Florence: Giuntina, 1992).

<sup>60</sup> Marcello Verga, “Proprietà e cittadinanza. Ebrei e riforme delle comunità nella Toscana di Pietro Leopoldo”, in *La formazione storica della alterità. Studi sulla storia della tolleranza nell'età moderna offerti a Antonio Rotondò*, eds. Henry Méchoulan, Richard H. Popkin, Giuseppe Ricuperati, Luisa Simonutti, (Florence: Olschki, 2001), vol. 3, 1047-1067: 1048, 1054-1056.

<sup>61</sup> Eric W. Cochrane, *Tradition and Enlightenment in the Tuscan Academies (1690-1800)* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1961), 53.

the practical application of his reforms to Tuscan Jews. Extant documents point to great differences depending on local circumstances and rooted power hierarchies, showing that the transition from ideal proposal to practical policy proceeded with difficulty. Eligible members of the Jewish communities of Florence and Pisa were the first Tuscan Jews to gain access to political rights as municipal office-holders in 1778; however, there is no trace of their actual political participation. In Siena, Jewish proprietors gained representation in 1786, but for a long time the legislation did not find concrete application.<sup>62</sup> In smaller centers of the Tuscan countryside, Jewish proprietors fared better. The Jews of Monte San Savino, it would seem, were elected to offices.<sup>63</sup> Recent research has also shown that the Jewish property owners of the village of Pitigliano did regularly participate in its municipal council.<sup>64</sup>

When it came to the practical application of Gianni's tolerant values in Livorno, where the *Livornina* granted Jews the right to buy real estate and there existed a large number of small and medium Jewish house-owners, alongside a few prominent Jewish proprietors,<sup>65</sup> protracted negotiations led to a final policy that reflected prejudice and fear against the Jews, rather than their full acceptance as political actors *qua* proprietors.<sup>66</sup> Livorno was a unique case in Tuscany in that, until the middle of the nineteenth-century, the authorities kept considering the large *nazione ebrea* as a collective, corporate group, whose individual members were denied the possibility to run for office within the municipality.<sup>67</sup> As I have argued elsewhere, the commercial success and privileged status of Livornese Jews may explain the Tuscan government's conservatism when it came to extending political rights to specific segments of Livornese Jewry and resulted in the arrested political emancipation of the *nazione ebrea* in the 1780s.<sup>68</sup>

On July 7, 1778 Peter Leopold asserted that if individual Jewish property-owners of Florence and Pisa were elected, they could sit in the

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<sup>62</sup> Francesca Piselli, "Giansenisti", ebrei e "giacobini" a Siena. *Dall'Accademia ecclesiastica all'Impero napoleonico (1780-1814)*, (Florence: Olschki, 2007), 99.

<sup>63</sup> Verga, "Proprietà e cittadinanza", 1061-1062.

<sup>64</sup> Davide Mano, "Towards Jewish Emancipation in the Grand-Duchy of Tuscany: the case of Pitigliano through the emblematic figure of David Consiglio", *Italia Judaica: Proceedings of the Jubilee Conference*, forthcoming. I would like to thank Davide Mano for sharing this paper with me before its publication.

<sup>65</sup> On Jewish property-ownership in early modern Livorno see Lucia Frattarelli Fischer, "Proprietà e insediamento ebraici a Livorno dalla fine del cinquecento alla seconda metà del settecento", *Quaderni storici* 54 (1983): 879-896.

<sup>66</sup> Francesca Gavi, "La disputa sull'ingresso del deputato della "Nazione" ebrea nella comunità di Livorno, lettere e memorie", *Nuovi studi livornesi* 3 (1995): 251-271; Verga, "Proprietà e cittadinanza", 1057-1058.

<sup>67</sup> Carlotta Ferrara degli Uberti, *La "Nazione Ebraica" di Livorno dai privilegi all'emancipazione (1814-1860)*, (Florence: Le Monnier, 2007).

<sup>68</sup> Bregoli, "Two Jews walk into a Coffeehouse", 317-323.

general councils of their municipalities.<sup>69</sup> In Livorno, an initial proposal drafted for the municipality in August 1779 was rejected, resulting in prolonged and complicated negotiations between the representatives of the Livornese aristocracy, the central authorities, and the Jewish community. Ultimately, the Tuscan administration promulgated a decision in March 1780 that created a fixed seat for the inclusion of a single Jewish representative into the Livornese municipal government, on behalf of the proprietary interests of the entire *nazione ebrea*, selected by the Grand Duke from a list of eligible candidates submitted by the Jewish lay leaders.<sup>70</sup> The selection of the Jewish representative mirrored the process by which the Tuscan sovereign appointed Jewish lay leaders in Livorno.

In examining the steps that led to the 1780 decision, the different perspectives championed by the representatives of the Livornese noble elite and members of the local government, on the one hand, and by those of the *nazione ebrea*, on the other, should be emphasized. The Livornese aristocracy regarded the *nazione ebrea* as a corporate community, and as such as a body, whose members could not enjoy rights of representation as individual owners of real estate, but were deemed worthy of collective representation through Catholic substitutes. For their part, Livornese Jewish proprietors considered themselves worthy of individual political rights *precisely* because of their utility to the state and their established privileged status as a corporate community, as well as because of their singular importance as property owners in town. In both cases, the innovative notion of property-ownership as the *sole* universal and natural basis for active political representation – Gianni's idea that all property-owners are equal and should therefore hold equal rights and duties, their religious and ethnic identity notwithstanding – was lost on the interested parties.

The initial proposal drafted for the municipality of Livorno in August 1779 had devised a two-tiered system, composed of a higher *magistrato comunitativo* (communal magistracy) and a lower *consiglio generale* (general council) that included sixteen members. Eligibility for the higher public offices was strictly regulated by census and social class, but everybody who owned real estate in the territory of the Commune was eligible for

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<sup>69</sup> For the text of the Grand Duke's *motuproprio* see Gavi, "La disputa sull'ingresso", 262. The 1778 edict corrected an opposite decision previously issued on December 26, 1774, which prevented Jews from sitting in either the magistracies or the general council.

<sup>70</sup> For a study of the communal reforms in Livorno see Carlo Mangio, "La riforma municipale a Livorno", in *L'ordine di Santo Stefano e la nobiltà toscana nelle riforme municipali settecentesche*, (Pisa: ETS, 1995), 85-120: 92-107. On the admission of a Jewish deputy, see Gavi, "La disputa sull'ingresso". For an English overview of the Livornese reforms, see Dubin, "Subjects into Citizens. Jewish Autonomy and Inclusion in Early Modern Livorno and Trieste", *Simon Dubnow Institute Yearbook* 5 (2006), 51-81: 65-67; Francesca Bregoli, "Two Jews walk into a Coffeehouse", 319-323.



*imborsazione* (i.e., names of candidates were placed in a bag and randomly selected) for a place in the general council.<sup>71</sup> Jewish property-owners would be included among the eligible candidates, but if their name were selected, they would not be admitted to sit in the councils. Rather, they would be offered the option to appoint a Catholic substitute to represent them, albeit without voting rights, or to refuse the office altogether, with exemption from the monetary penalty usually applied in cases of refusal. Unsatisfied with this initial plan, both the *nazione ebrea* and the representatives of the local Livornese elites, animated by different reasons, came up with correctives.

The primary goal of the Livornese aristocracy was to keep all non-Catholic and small property owners from attaining political rights, fearing that the sizable Jewish community and the petty proprietors (Catholic or not) would take control of the city's administration.<sup>72</sup> Pompeo Baldasseroni and Ferdinando Sproni, deputies of the Livornese noble governing class, recognized that there were among Jewish proprietors "rich and respectable" elements, who could honorably sit in the municipal council, though most of them were "small and miserable property-owners, who are scoundrels in their appearance, sentiments, and works."<sup>73</sup> Yet, the deputies conceded that "such a respectable body of property-owners should have an influence in the administration of those affairs that concern it," suggesting therefore that three Catholic procurators paid by the Jewish community should represent the interests of the entire *nazione ebrea* in the council and the magistracy.<sup>74</sup> If this were to be the case, however, the admission of individual Jewish proprietors to both the general council and the magistracy could not be allowed.

If the *nazione ebrea* "were to be considered as a body," the deputies remarked, and as such enjoy permanent representation, it would be "necessary to take away from individual [Jews] the right to sit" in the municipal organs.<sup>75</sup> Livornese Jews, in their view, could enjoy (indirect) rights of representation only *qua* Jews, that is as members of a protected corporate body – not as human beings in their capacity as proprietors. Baldasseroni's and Sproni's understanding countered the enlightened notion that property-ownership alone was a sufficient, universal, natural condition to access political rights. Their comment reflects well the

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<sup>71</sup> Gavi, "La disputa sull'ingresso", 252.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 254, 270-271.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 254: "il maggior numero è composto di piccoli e miserabili possessori, che sono canaglia nella figura, nei sentimenti e nelle opere."

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 264: "[I] deputati infrascritti [...] trovano giusto che un corpo di possessori così rispettabile debba avere un [sic] influenza nella amministrazione di quelli affari che lo interessano." The memorandum was dated October 11, 1779.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 264-265: "si rende necessario che venga tolto agl'individui il diritto di poter risiedere tanto in persona che per mezzo di procuratori... perché se vogliono considerarsi come corpo non possono più considerarsi come individui."

traditionally corporatist view of political activity that defined Old Regime societies. Within this tradition, originating in the medieval period, the subject does not enjoy abstract equal rights, but holds a limited set of rights and duties commensurate with his or her position within the political community, conceived as a body (*corpus*).<sup>76</sup>

The observation also evokes the well-known statement to the opposite effect, uttered by Count Clermont-Tonnerre at the French National Assembly nine years later, in December 1789: “One should deny the Jews as a nation everything and grant them everything as individuals; they must not be either a political entity or a caste in the state.”<sup>77</sup> Underlying Clermont-Tonnerre’s sentiment was the belief, widespread among the French revolutionaries intent on destroying the corporatist society of Old Regime France, that Jews should shed their juridical and communal autonomy. If they wanted to enjoy equal rights as French citizens, Jews should renounce any national distinctiveness and assimilate into the new French republican nation.<sup>78</sup>

The comment of the two Livornese aristocrats did not, however, imply that if Livornese Jews shed their particularistic, corporate identity – if the *nazione ebrea* abandoned its status as an autonomous yet integrated body, which protected the interests of its members within a society of bodies – individual Jews would become worthy of equal rights as other proprietors. To the contrary, by pitting corporate collectivity as the conceptual opposite of individual representation, the Livornese aristocrats exploited the traditional understanding of the Jewish minority in town to their advantage, in order to prevent the dreaded risk that individual Jewish proprietors gain political power. Thus, their memorandum reinforced the pre-existing, traditional notion that the *nazione ebrea* could only be treated as a corporate community enjoying special privileges because of its size and economic importance.

For their part, the representatives of the *nazione ebrea*, Jacob Aghib and [Jacob?] Nunes, championed a “mixed” approach to political representation that revealed the coexistence of older and newer worldviews, combining corporatist interests with individualist concerns. Livornese Jews insisted that the 1778 decision that granted representation to elected Jewish individual proprietors in Florence and Pisa, remain valid in Livorno as well. Remarkably, Aghib’s and Nunes’ memorandum advocated the right to Jewish individual representation based on the engrained notion that the *nazione ebrea* enjoyed a privileged,

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<sup>76</sup> Costa, “Il discorso della cittadinanza”, 30.

<sup>77</sup> Hertzberg, *The French Enlightenment and the Jews*, 360.

<sup>78</sup> When the French National Assembly emancipated the Jews of France in September 1791, the revolutionaries gave concrete affirmation to the principle proposed by Clermont-Tonnerre two years earlier. With the emancipation of individual Jews as equal French citizens came the unavoidable end of Jewish communal autonomy.

unique status in the entire Tuscan state: “[B]ecause of the [higher] number of its members and its much wider commerce the Livornese *Nazione* has always deserved the sovereign’s benefits and privileges more than the other [Jewish communities] of the Grand Duchy.” Therefore, Livornese Jewry should not be discriminated against and treated less favorably than the smaller and less prosperous communities of Florence and Pisa, where Jewish proprietors enjoyed (at least, in theory) the right to individual political representation.<sup>79</sup> Thus, Aghib and Nunes, proceeding from a corporatist understanding of rights and obligations very similar to that of Baldasseroni and Sproni, came to the opposite conclusion. In their view, the protection that the Livornese *nazione ebraica* enjoyed in Tuscany as a privileged corporate body should be reason enough for the Tuscan government to extend equal rights to its individual members *qua* property owners. In attempting to achieve individual political representation in the municipal council by reminding the Grand Duke of Jewish special privileges, Aghib and Nunes exemplify the fact that toward the end of the Old Regime various understandings of political participation could coexist without being necessarily perceived as contradictory.<sup>80</sup> This combination of concepts that may seem conflicting to us, heirs to the legal turning point of the French Revolution, demonstrates the presence of multiple ways of thinking at that time of transition.<sup>81</sup>

In many respects, this Livornese case lends itself to comparison with late eighteenth-century France, right before and during the revolutionary period. Ronald Schechter has argued that in 1789 learned representatives of both French Sephardi and Ashkenazi Jews advanced their plea for active citizenship before the Paris National Assembly not only on the basis of the “universal rights of man,” but also of historical corporatist privileges that they had obtained in the previous centuries thanks to their recognized useful services to the state.<sup>82</sup> By wishing to be “included *as Jews* in the otherwise indivisible French nation,” Sephardi and Ashkenazi representatives, despite different motivations, all championed an apparently paradoxical argument, precariously poised between the discourse of universal, abstract *rights* and that of historically determined *privileges*.<sup>83</sup> Similarly to the Jewish pleas in revolutionary France nine years

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<sup>79</sup> Gavi, “La disputa sull’ingresso”, 266; Dubin, “Subjects into Citizens”, 65.

<sup>80</sup> On the coexistence of multiple views of “citizenship” and political participation in the early modern period, see Costa, *Civitas* I, 73-80.

<sup>81</sup> On the turning point constituted by the French Revolution, where the medieval corporatist tradition of civic politics met with the tradition of unalienable, abstract, individual rights championed by seventeenth-century natural law theories, see Costa, “Il discorso della cittadinanza”, 31; Id. *Civitas, Storia della cittadinanza in Europa. Il L’età delle rivoluzioni (1789-1848)*, (Rome and Bari: Laterza, 2000), 5-94.

<sup>82</sup> Schechter, *Obstinate Hebrews*, 165-178.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 165, 169. This very paradox was at the core of the revolutionary discourse itself.

later, Aghib and Nunes combined the older, absolutist notions of their utility to the ruler, and the ruler's resulting protection of their prerogatives, with a budding discourse of abstract rights that implied a changing understanding of the Jewish role vis-à-vis the political order. In the *nazione ebrea's* memorandum, the discourse of Jewish economic utility coexisted dialectically with the discourse of property-ownership as condition for equal political rights.

The comparison with late eighteenth-century France can be extended even further when we consider the issue of Jewish communal autonomy, closely related to the preceding observations. Frances Malino has shown that in pre-revolutionary France, like Tuscany a hierarchical society of bodies and privileges, there existed a multiplicity of views relative to the continuation of Jewish autonomy vis-à-vis their civil inclusion. Claude-Antoine Thiery, a Protestant lawyer who submitted one of the winning entries in the 1785 Metz essay contest, advocated the retention of Jewish communal autonomy for the sake of stability and continued order. While Thiery was unique among French non-Jewish observers in advancing this claim, neither Sephardi nor Ashkenazi spokesmen who reacted to the 1787 Malesherbes edict, which recognized Christian non-Catholic minorities in France but prohibited them from forming a "group, community, or particular society" within the French kingdom, saw Jewish communal autonomy as incompatible with the acquisition of citizenship rights.<sup>84</sup> The attitudes toward the retention of Jewish communal autonomy changed only after the French Revolution identified nationality with citizenship, eliminating for the Jews the possibility of retaining their ancient juridical and communal autonomy. Similarly, in eighteenth-century Tuscany, Livornese Jews conceived of and desired active civic engagement beyond their *nazione*, in the broader municipal sphere, while remaining solidly inscribed within the community's boundaries.

Beside emphasizing traditional *topoi* such as community size, commercial activity, and long-standing privileges, the memorandum that Aghib and Nunes sent the Grand Duke demonstrated a keen understanding of, and support for, the burgeoning concept of political participation based on self-interest and property-ownership. Livornese Jews posited that the presence of individual Jews in the new magistracies was necessary, because the *nazione ebrea* owned not only a sizable quantity of buildings in the countryside, but more than one-quarter of the city's real estate and "except for public buildings, it own[ed] certainly more real estate than all

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<sup>84</sup> Frances Malino, "Attitudes toward Jewish Communal Autonomy in Prerevolutionary France", in *Essays in Modern Jewish History. A Tribute to Ben Halpern*, eds. Phyllis Cohen Albert, Frances Malino, (Rutherford, Madison and Teaneck: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1981), 95-117: 111-113.

other Livornese and foreign nationals together.”<sup>85</sup> Excluding Jews from voting in support of their own interests in town, thus, would mean to place them “under the perpetual care and government of the Livornese nationals and other property-owners,” tantamount to “a great prejudice to its own interest,” as well as “a cause of great dishonor.” Such a decision, the memorandum concluded, was absolutely contrary to the intentions and spirit of the new communal regulations if the Commune, conceptualized as a business, was to be administered by accountable individuals representing their interests. Since the proprietary interests of Livornese Jews were the most important issue at hand, nevertheless, they were willing to come to a compromise – either by replacing elected individual Jews with eligible candidates who held governing positions within the Jewish community (and were therefore well-known to the Grand Duke and of proven distinction), or by at least guaranteeing a yearly fixed seat in the *Magistrato* for a Jewish representative approved by the government, with full voting rights.<sup>86</sup>

The Jewish request for individual representation was rejected by a governmental resolution issued on March 20, 1780, which instead adapted restrictively one of the suggestions put forward by Aghib and Nunes. Limited Jewish representation was guaranteed in Livorno in the form of one deputy sitting in the general council of the municipality (not in the *Magistrato*), selected by the Grand Duke among ten names submitted by the Jewish lay leaders.<sup>87</sup> This conclusion strongly reinforced the notion of Livornese Jewry as a separate corporate entity. In contrast to Florentine or Pisan Jews, the Tuscan authorities decided to continue regarding Livornese Jews as a collective body and to keep relying on its oligarchic ruling class, even as Peter Leopold and his advisors attempted to dismantle the privileges of other corporate groups, such as professional associations and charitable confraternities. The final decision officially recognized the importance of Livornese property-ownership by guaranteeing a constant Jewish presence in the communal administration: in force of their strong presence in town as proprietors, the Jews *as a community* gained what could be called a “group right” for one of its members. At the same time, the Tuscan authorities allayed the fears of the old Livornese aristocracy by severely confining and controlling the extent of Jewish political participation.

Nine years later, with a *motu proprio* issued on April 20, 1789, Peter Leopold rendered non-Catholics and Jews politically equal to all other subjects in Tuscany, allowing them to hold municipal office. The Livornese case, nevertheless, proved yet again exceptional: the special regulation of March 1780 was reiterated, and remained valid with no

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<sup>85</sup> Gavi, “La disputa sull’ingresso”, 267.

<sup>86</sup> Gavi, “La disputa sull’ingresso”, 269.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 257.

modifications. Thus, while in the rest of the Grand Duchy individual Jews could gain access to existing municipal offices, in Livorno they could only rely on their single national representative chosen by the Grand Duke. This discriminatory situation persisted (with minimal variations introduced in 1845) until Tuscany was annexed to the Kingdom of Italy in 1859.<sup>88</sup>

## Conclusion

Why were the members of the largest, wealthiest and most prominent Jewish community not only in the Tuscan state, but in the entire Italian Peninsula, excluded from holding individual political office in 1780 and then again in 1789? Clearly, the fact that Livornese Jews owned a great deal of real property in town was considered enough of a threat to the engrained political prerogatives of the local Catholic governing class. The Livornese case suggests a deep disconnect between Jewish expectations and non-Jewish anxieties regarding Jewish active political participation. The *nazione ebraica* expected that its significant size, vast property holdings, and commercial success would grant eligible individual owners access to political participation. The local Christian elite feared precisely the consequences of allowing a large, deeply rooted, and reputedly powerful non-Catholic group into the seats of municipal power.

The reasons why the central Tuscan authorities supported the Livornese aristocracy against the appeal of the *nazione ebraica* should be located in engrained practices of political pragmatism. A plausible explanation for the 1780 and 1789 governmental decisions is that the notion of Livornese Jewry's commercial utility, encapsulated in the *Livornina* in 1591 and routinely reiterated in administrative memoranda over the course of almost two hundred years, reinforced the government's inclination to preserve the corporate status of the community out of concerns for social, economical, and political stability. As a result of the port's extraordinary history, the new "equalizing" notions of citizenship and political participation based solely on property-ownership that Gianni propounded and that were applicable to the rest of the Tuscan state, could not be relevant in Livorno.

In conclusion, it can be suggested that during the seventeenth and the first half of the eighteenth century the emphasis on its utility and economic worth gave the *nazione ebraica* a distinct standing among other

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 251. The Grand Duke Leopold II promulgated a new constitution (*statuto*) in 1848, guaranteeing the legal and political emancipation of all Tuscan Jews, which was however abolished in 1852. On the legal status of Jews in nineteenth-century Tuscany see also the classic work by Isacco Rignano, *Sulla attuale posizione giuridica degli israeliti in Toscana. Brevi cenni*, (Florence: Tipografia di Mariano Cecchi, 1847).

Jewish communities. These privileges, nonetheless, failed to translate into greater political rights in the 1780s, the decade when many European governments began considering in earnest how to include legally and politically their Jewish subjects, when the political opportunities of Livornese Jews fell behind those of smaller, less conspicuous, and less emblematic Jewish communities. The retention of the old corporate privileges, thus, prevented Livornese Jews from experiencing the smooth process of political integration that historians have generally associated with Jews of Sephardi or Italian origin, who during the eighteenth century lived and thrived in commerce-oriented cities on the Mediterranean or the Atlantic seaboard.<sup>89</sup>

The port of Livorno was a successful example of mercantilist policy at work, from which its Jewish community reaped great benefits in the early modern period. Similarly to other Jews living in Mediterranean ports, the Atlantic seaboard, or the New World, the *nazione ebrea* had been granted special prerogatives on the grounds of its economic usefulness, gaining liberties that most Jewish communities elsewhere could only envy in the course of the seventeenth century. At the onset of “modernity,” however, its privileged status as a mercantile community turned out to be a force for conservatism that, while preserving time-honored structures and norms, prevented the full application of reforming and equalizing policies.

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<sup>89</sup> See especially David Sorkin, “The Port Jew: Notes toward a Social Type”, *Journal of Jewish Studies* 50 (1999): 87-97; Id., “Port Jews and the Three Regions of Emancipation”, *Jewish Culture and History* 4 (2001): 31-46.

**The Ambivalence of a Port-City.  
The Jews of Trieste from the 19th to the 20th century**

*by Tullia Catalan*

**Abstract**

*This article stems from a key question: was Habsburg Trieste truly a cosmopolitan and tolerant city? Building upon the interpretative category of “port Jews”, established by David Sorkin and Lois C. Dubin, this study examines the social, economic and political behaviour of the Triestine Jews in the nineteenth- and early twentieth-centuries, and conducts a comparison with the other religious minorities present in the Adriatic port during this period: Greeks, Protestants, Serbians and Armenians. The picture which emerges allows for the proposition of a new interpretative model, that of the “port-merchant.” The second part of the article focuses on the second half of the nineteenth-century, when the model of Trieste as a tolerant city was challenged by the nationalist fights between Italians and Slovenians, and by the political antisemitism. The city lost its capacity to include the ‘Other’, and was rapidly transformed into a genuine breeding-ground of Italian racism.*

**Preface: Trieste, a multifaceted city**

For a tourist visiting Trieste today, a few minutes spent standing upon the walls of the San Giusto castle are essential. This landmark, besides being the very symbol of Trieste, also provides a prime vantage point from which to admire the historical centre of this Adriatic city, enclosed between the Karst Plateau and the sea. As he looks on from his lofty position, our tourist would notice one imposing building, of a Moorish and oriental style, which stands out from the surrounding edifices. This is the local Jewish community’s synagogue, which, with strong backing from the Triestine Jews, was designed by the architects Ruggero and Arduino Berlam and inaugurated with great pomp and ceremony amidst the presence of all the city’s authorities in 1912.<sup>1</sup> The building’s majesty is a forceful symbol in the modern-day landscape, which leads one to reflect on the role played by the Jewish community in this city’s past; a city which was the main port of the Habsburg Empire for two hundred years. If our tourist, after having admired the synagogue from afar, were to shift his view a little to the west, his gaze would fall on the shimmering blue dome which signals the ancient presence of the Serbian

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<sup>1</sup> On Trieste’s synagogue, see: Lorella Fiorot, “Il Tempio israelitico di Trieste (1903-1912)”, in *Shalom Trieste. Gli itinerari dell’ebraismo*, ed. Adriano Dugulin, (Trieste: Comune di Trieste 1998): 106-116, which has a useful bibliography on the building.



Orthodox community in the city.<sup>2</sup> If he let his gaze wander still further towards the sea, our tourist could not fail to notice yet another religious building: that of the Greek Orthodox community, build by no coincidence on the very shore itself, which was once a pulsing heart of trade and commerce.<sup>3</sup>

The alert observer will strain in vain, however, to locate cathedrals and bell-towers: in Trieste, in stark contrast to other Italian cities, there are few Catholic churches in the historic centre. Trieste has a cathedral on the castle's hills, but its most beautiful squares are dominated exclusively by secular buildings: seats of economic activity, insurance companies and government institutions, built between the eighteenth- and early twentieth-centuries, during the Habsburg period.<sup>4</sup> The modern-day cityscape thus reveals two fundamental elements of the city's past, and it is from these elements, I believe, that we must depart in order to introduce the relationship between the city and its Jewish minority.

The first element to take into consideration is that the Jewish community was not the only religious minority to reach prominent positions in the economic and social arena of Trieste during the Habsburg period; whilst a second element to be considered regards the way in which the city eluded the grip of the Catholic Church, which had, in contrast, a great following in the Slovenian population of the countryside. The Catholic Church's difficulty in penetrating Trieste would persist until the end of the First World War, thus creating a favourable social landscape and climate for non-Catholic religious minorities during the nineteenth-century and until the Great War<sup>5</sup>. This situation changed slightly during the fascist period, but it was after the

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<sup>2</sup> Giorgio Milossevich, Marisa Bianco Fiorin, *I Serbi a Trieste. Storia, religione, arte*, (Udine: Istituto per l'Enciclopedia nel Friuli Venezia Giulia, 1978); Dejan Medakovic', Giorgio Milossevich, *I serbi nella storia di Trieste*, (Beograd: Jugoslovenska revija, 1987); Marco Dogo, "Una nazione di pii mercanti. La comunità serbo-illirica di Trieste, 1748-1908", in *Storia economica e sociale di Trieste*, eds. Roberto Finzi - Giovanni Panjek, I, *La città dei gruppi 1719-1918*, (Trieste: Lint, 2001): 573-602; *Genti di San Spiridione: i serbi a Trieste, 1751-1914*, eds. Lorenza Resciniti, Michela Messina, Marisa Bianco Fiorin, (Cinisello Balsamo: Silvana 2009); Marija Mitrovic, *Cultura serba a Trieste*, (Lecce: Argo, 2009).

<sup>3</sup> On the Greeks in Trieste, see: Giuseppe Stefani, *I Greci a Trieste nel Settecento*, (Trieste: Monciatti, 1960); Olga Katsiardi-Hering, *He hellenike paroikia tes Tergestes (1751-1830)*, (Athena: Ethniko kai Kapodistriako Panepistemio Athenon, Philosophike Schole, 1986); Olga Katsiardi-Hering, "Das Habsburgerreich Anlaufpunkt für Griechen und andere Balkanvölker im 17.-19. Jahrhundert", *Österreichische Osthefte* 2 (1996): 171-188; Olga Katsiardi-Hering, "La presenza dei Greci a Trieste: tra economia e società (metà sec. XVIII-fine sec. XIX)", in *Storia economica e sociale di Trieste*, 519-546.

<sup>4</sup> See: Fulvio Caputo, Roberto Masiero, *Trieste e l'Impero: la formazione di una città europea*, (Venice: Marsilio, 1988); *Neoclassico: arte, architettura e cultura a Trieste, 1790-1840*, ed. Fulvio Caputo, (Venice: Marsilio, 1990).

<sup>5</sup> On the religious minorities in Trieste, see: Liana De Antonellis Martini, *Portofranco e comunità etnico-religiose nella Trieste settecentesca*, (Milan: Giuffrè, 1968); Anna Millo, *L'élite del potere a Trieste. Una biografia collettiva 1891-1938*, (Milan: Franco Angeli, 1987; *Storia economica e sociale di Trieste*, eds. Roberto Finzi, Giovanni Panjek.

Second World War that local Catholicism managed to gain, although still with difficulty, a certain hegemony in the territory, due to the immigration into the city of a large contingent of exiled Istrians, whose arrival caused a profound change in the composition of Triestine society.<sup>6</sup>

Until the first post-war period, therefore, the city had been characterised by an essentially secular stance with regards to religion, which provided an impetus behind the secularisation of the various religious groups present in the territory. This process took place during the nineteenth-century, and brought with it the progressive modernisation of collective customs, practices and habits. It was a process which facilitated an inclusive and assimilatory attitude towards the newcomers who arrived at the free port, and which contributed over time to create the image/myth of Trieste as a tolerant and cosmopolitan city. It is a myth which still persists in the collective imagination, even beyond the confines of the city itself, and which has almost become the city's 'brand', an epithet, however, which I believe stems from a superficial and partial reading of the city's history.

After the fall of the Habsburg Empire in the course of the twentieth-century, the city underwent difficult times, during which its 'dark side' began to emerge, identifiable in its violent and persistent racism, a product of the exasperation of opposing nationalisms in a borderland, the roots of which were firmly in place in the closing decades of the nineteenth-century. Indeed, it is in this period that the cosmopolitan city of the past became a fertile breeding ground for racism, primarily aimed at the city's Slavic population (Slovenians and Croats), but also against the Jews. These tensions grew and later exploded in the 1920s when, in the Venezia Giulia area, the fascist movement began a widespread policy of denationalisation, operating a systematic persecution of the Slovenian population, which was followed in 1938 by the attack on the Jewish community, through the meticulous implementation of the racial laws.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> On this period see: Marina Cattaruzza, *L'Italia e il confine orientale, 1866-2006*, (Bologna: il Mulino 2008); Anna Vinci, *Sentinelle della patria: il fascismo e il confine orientale 1918-1941*, (Rome - Bari: Laterza, 2011); Glenda Sluga, *The Problem of Trieste and the Italo-Yugoslav Border: Difference, Identity, and Sovereignty in Twentieth-Century Europe*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001); Rolf Wörsdörfer, *Krisenherd Adria 1915-1955. Konstruktion und Artikulation des nationalen im italienisch-jugoslawischen Grenzraum*, (Paderborn: Schöningh Verlag, 2004); Maura Hametz, *Making Trieste Italian, 1918-1954*, (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2005); Raoul Pupo, *Il lungo esodo. Istria: le persecuzioni, le foibe, l'esilio*, (Milan: Rizzoli, 2005); Raoul Pupo, *Trieste '45*, (Rome - Bari: Laterza, 2010); Pamela Ballinger, *History in Exile. Memory and Identity at the Borders of the Balkan*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

<sup>7</sup> See: Vinci, *Sentinelle della patria*; Joze Pirjevec, *Trst je naš! Boj Slovencev za morje (1848-1954)*, (Ljubljana: Nova Revija, 2008); Milica Kacin Wohinz, *Vivere al confine. Sloveni e italiani negli anni 1918-1941*, (Gorizia: Goriska Mohorjeva družba, 2004); Marta Verginella, *Il confine degli altri. La questione giuliana e la memoria slovena*, (Rome: Donzelli

Later on, the Nazi occupation, which could count on active collaborationist within the city, proved to be devastating in the *Operationszone Adriatisches Küstenland*. It saw the creation in the city of the only Italian concentration camp with a crematorium, the *Polizeihaftlager* of the Risiera di San Sabba.<sup>8</sup> Finally, in May 1945 – when war was over – the brief but violent Yugoslav occupation, lead to the elimination of thousands of political opposers, killed and thrown into the sinkholes (*foibe*).<sup>9</sup> Then came the period of the Allied Military Government's occupation, from 1945 to 1954. For the Jews of Trieste it meant a re-entry into civic life, yet one which was far from easy. Since the enactment of the racial laws in 1938, the local society had revealed itself to be hostile towards the Jewish community, more so than the rest of the country.<sup>10</sup>

From the 1990s onwards Triestine Judaism has been the subject of a profitable series of studies of international relevance, which have seen historians and literary scholars engaged, using various methodological approaches, in analysing the major events, and the economic, social, political and cultural aspects which, from the 1700s to the 1900s, characterized the history of Trieste's Jewish population.

The majority of these studies, above all those of a historical nature, focus on the eighteenth- and nineteenth- centuries, the period in which the Trieste's Jews, aided by the patents and privileges conceded by the Habsburgs, reached a level of international prestige in the financial world, due to the fundamental role the community played in the development of the free port, which enabled them to become quickly

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2008), which has a useful bibliography on the topic; Silva Bon, *Gli ebrei a Trieste, 1930-1945: identità, persecuzione, risposte*, (Gorizia: Libreria Editrice Goriziana, 2000).

<sup>8</sup> On the Risiera di San Sabba and the *Adriatisches Küstenland*, see: *San Sabba. Istruttoria e processo per il Lager della Risiera*, ed. Adolfo Scalpelli, 2 vols., (Milan: Aned, Mondadori, 1988); Karl Stuhlpfarrer, *Die Operationszonen "Alpenvorland" und "Adriatisches Küstenland" 1943-1945*, (Wien: Hollinek, 1969); Marco Coslovich, *I percorsi della sopravvivenza: storia e memoria della deportazione dall'Adriatisches Küstenland*, (Milan: Mursia, 1994); Michael Wedekind, *Nationalsozialistische Besatzungs- und Annexionspolitik in Norditalien, 1943-1945: die Operationszonen Alpenvorland und Adriatisches Küstenland*, (Munich, Oldenbourg, 2003); Stefano Di Giusto, *Operationszone Adriatisches Küstenland. Udine, Gorizia, Trieste, Pola, Fiume e Lubiana durante l'occupazione tedesca, 1945-1945*, (Udine: Istituto Friulano per la Storia del Movimento di Liberazione, 2005).

<sup>9</sup> See: Pupo, *Il lungo esodo*; Joze Pirjevec, *Foibe: una storia d'Italia*, (Turin: Einaudi, 2009). For a new approach to the topic, see: *Il perturbante nella storia. Le foibe: uno studio di psicopatologia della ricezione storica*, eds. Luisa Accati, Renate Cogoy, (Verona: QuiEdit, 2010).

<sup>10</sup> For the Allied Military Government period see: Raoul Pupo, *Guerra e dopoguerra al confine orientale d'Italia, 1938-1956*, (Udine: Del Bianco, 1999); Giampaolo Valdevit, *La questione di Trieste 1941-1954. Politica internazionale e contesto locale*, (Milan: Angeli, 1987); *Progetto Interreg. IIIA/Phare CBC Italia-Slovenia. Dopoguerra di confine/Povojni cas ob meji*, eds. Tullia Catalan, Giulio Mellinato, Pio Nodari, Raoul Pupo, Marta Verginella, (Trieste: IRSML-FVG, Università di Trieste, 2007).

and successfully integrated into the local multi-ethnic social fabric.<sup>11</sup>

Few studies, however, have focused beyond the Great War to take the fascist period into consideration. It is the period which proves, without doubt, the most difficult, to study, due to the considerable political and economic role played by the Triestine Jews in the National Fascist Party. This difficulty is also due to the fact that these decades were precisely those, before the enforcement of the racial laws, in which there was an ever-increasing orientation towards a full assimilation, via mixed marriages and conversions: a trend which had already begun in the 1870s, with proportions notably higher than the rest of the peninsula.<sup>12</sup> There are, for these years, studies regarding the organisation of Jewish emigration from the port of Trieste; studies on the role of the Jewish school before and during the years of fascist racial persecutions, and other studies concerning two controversial figures in the Triestine Jewish scene: Enrico Paolo Salem, fascist head of the town with Jewish roots, who had converted to Catholicism, and Israel Zoller, the chief rabbi of Galician origins, who would have converted to Catholicism after the Second World War.<sup>13</sup> Historians of the Holocaust have been greatly interested in the Shoah's devastating effect on the local Jewish population, which was numerically and culturally decimated.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> On the Jews in Trieste, see: Giulio Cervani, Liana Buda, *La Comunità israelitica di Trieste nel secolo XVIII*, (Udine: Del Bianco, 1973); *Gli ebrei a Gorizia e a Trieste tra ancien régime ed emancipazione*, ed. Pier Cesare Ioly Zorattini, (Udine: Del Bianco, 1984); *Il Mondo ebraico: Gli ebrei tra Italia nord-orientale e Impero Asburgico dal Medioevo all'Età Contemporanea*, eds. Giacomo Todeschini, Pier Cesare Ioly Zorattini, (Pordenone: Studio Tesi, 1991); *Shalom Trieste*, ed. Dugulin; Lois C. Dubin, *The Port Jews of Habsburg Trieste. Absolutist Politics and Enlightenment Culture*, (Stanford: University Press, 1999); Tullia Catalan, *La Comunità ebraica di Trieste, 1781-1914. Politica, società e cultura*, (Trieste: Lint, 2000); Anna Millo, *L'élite del potere*; Anna Millo, *Storia di una borghesia: la famiglia Vivante a Trieste dall'emporio alla guerra mondiale*, (Gorizia: Editrice Libreria Goriziana, 1998); Anna Millo, *Trieste, le Assicurazioni, l'Europa. Arnoldo Frigessi di Rattalma e la RAS*, (Milan: Angeli, 2004).

<sup>12</sup> On the high number of religious renunciations in Trieste from the 1800s- early 1900s, see: Catalan, *La Comunità ebraica di Trieste*, 241-244.

<sup>13</sup> On the emigration to Palestine, see: Tullia Catalan, "L'emigrazione ebraica in Palestina attraverso il porto di Trieste (1908-1938)", *Qualestoria* 2-3 (1991): 57-107; Maura Hametz, "Zionism, Emigration, and Antisemitism in Trieste: Central Europe's Gateway to Zion 1896-1943", *Jewish Social Studies* 3 (2007): 103-134; Marco Bencich, "Il Comitato di assistenza agli emigranti ebrei di Trieste (1920-1940): flussi migratori e normative", *Qualestoria* 2 (2006): 11-60. On the Jewish school in Trieste during the fascist years, see: *L'educazione spezzata. Scuole ebraiche a Trieste e Fiume durante le leggi razziali (1938-1943)*, eds. Tullia Catalan, Sanja Dukic, (Trieste: La Mongolfiera, 2006). On Salem and Zoller, see: Silva Bon, *Un fascista imperfetto. Enrico Paolo Salem, podestà ebreo di Trieste*, (Gorizia: Grafica Goriziana, 2009); Eugenio Zolli, *Before the Dawn: Autobiographical Reflections*, (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1954); Gabriele Rigano, *Il caso Zolli: l'itinerario di un intellettuale in bilico tra fedi, culture e nazioni*, (Milan: Guerini, 2006).

<sup>14</sup> On the persecutions and on antisemitism during Fascism and the Nazi occupation, see: Bon, *Gli ebrei a Trieste*; Silva Bon, *La spoliazione dei beni ebraici. Processi economici di epurazione razziale nel Friuli Venezia Giulia, 1938-1945*, (Gradisca d'Isonzo: Centro

With regards to literary studies, on the other hand, the theme of modernity has occupied the center of the stage, through the analysis of the prominent figures of Italo Svevo and Umberto Saba, and their respective works, as well of other complex and fascinating, if less famous, figures such as Giorgio Voghera and Bobi Bazlen.<sup>15</sup> What is lacking for Triestine Judaism, is a cultural history, without which it remains difficult even today to fully appreciate the full extent of the Jewish contribution to the city, as well as the influences the city itself had on the community, located as it was for many years in an ideal crossroads of exchange with the Western world, Eastern Europe, the Balkans and Levant.<sup>16</sup>

The main goal of this work is to pause and reflect, if only briefly, on two questions which remain open. The first regards the nature of the strong bonds between the Jewish community of Trieste and the other religious communities present in the city, in the light of the consolidated category of 'port Jews' which was felicitously introduced into the international historiographical scenario by David Sorkin and Lois C. Dubin; whilst also considering the relations of the Triestine Jews with other Jewish communities based in ports with similar characteristics to Trieste, and the fundamental role played by families in the formation and consolidation of these relationships, which were often of both an economic and a sentimental nature.<sup>17</sup>

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Gasparini, 2001); Liliana Picciotto Fargion, "Le deportazioni di ebrei partiti da Trieste", *Qualestoria* 1 (1989): 121-135; Silva Bon, *Testimoni della Shoah. La memoria dei salvati, una storia del Nord Est*, (Gorizia: Grafica Goriziana, 2005); Silva Bon, "La politica del consolato germanico a Trieste nei primi anni Quaranta", *Qualestoria* 1-2 (1994): 65-94; Maura Hametz, "The Ambivalence of Italian Antisemitism. Fascism, Nationalism, and Racism in Trieste", *Holocaust and Genocide studies* 3 (2002): 376-401.

<sup>15</sup> On this subject, see: Katia Pizzi, *Trieste: italianità, triestinità e male di frontiera*, (Bologna: Gedit, 2007). Fundamental are the reflections of Giorgio Voghera, *Gli anni della psicanalisi*, (Pordenone: Studio Tesi, 1985). See also: Bruno Maier, *La letteratura triestina del Novecento*, (Trieste: Lint, 1969); *Ebrei e Mitteleuropa: cultura, letteratura, società*, ed. Quirino Principe, (Brescia: Shakespeare & Company, 1984); Alberto Cavaglion, *Italo Svevo*, (Milan: Mondadori, 2000); Elizabeth Schächter, *Origin and Identity. Essays on Svevo and Trieste*, (Leeds: Northern University Press, 2000); Patrizia Lombardo, "Trieste as Frontier. From Slataper to Bazlen and Del Giudice", in *Cities, Words and Images: from Poe to Scorsese*, ed. Patrizia Lombardo, (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003): 80-95; Marina Paino, *La tentazione della leggerezza. Studio su Umberto Saba*, (Florence: Olschki, 2009).

<sup>16</sup> Little is known of the many Jews in Trieste who dedicated themselves to science such as medicine, physics and psychoanalysis. Exceptions are several studies on Edoardo Weiss, the psychoanalyst who was the student of Freud. See: Paul Roazen, *Edoardo Weiss: the House that Freud Built*, (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2005).

<sup>17</sup> For an accurate reconstruction of the origins of the debate surrounding the category of the "port Jews", see: Lois C. Dubin, "Researching Port Jews and Port Jewries: Trieste and Beyond", in *Port Jews. Jewish Communities in Cosmopolitan Maritime Trading Centres, 1550-1950*, ed. David Cesarani, (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 2002), 47-58, 57; David Sorkin, "The Port Jews: Notes Toward a Social Type", *Journal of Jewish Studies* 1 (1999): 87-97; Lois C. Dubin, *The Port Jews of Habsburg Trieste: Absolutist Politics and*

The second goal instead at providing a more in-depth analysis of the stereotype of Trieste as a “tolerant city,” in order to highlight the contradictory aspects of this notion, which were already discernible in the second half of the nineteenth-century. The route to civil inclusion for the Jews in Triestine society, so aptly described by Lois Dubin, has often been taken as an example of the inclusive character and assimilating force of the city towards other religions and cultures. Little, however, has been said about the penetration of other currents of thought, antisemitic and xenophobic in nature, originating from the troubled Habsburg world, and also from Italy. Sentiments which precisely in the closing decades of the nineteenth-century rooted themselves in the population and created a fertile breeding ground for the full deployment of the anti-Slavic racism of the 1920s and 1930s and of antisemitic persecution of the period 1938-45.

We will consider these two problems in light of the positive process of emancipation and integration of the Jewish community of Trieste in the local society, which took place from the end of the eighteenth-century until the beginning of the twentieth-century, which, however, was not the exclusive prerogative of the Jews, but also of other non-Catholic communities residing in the city.

### **General features of the Triestine Jews’ route to integration from the 1800s to the early 1900s.**

In Trieste, from 1719 (the year in which the free port was established) until the beginning First World War, the Jews were one of the most actively engaged minorities in the economic, social and cultural development of the Habsburg city. During the eighteenth-century and in the first half of the nineteenth-century, due to the Habsburg’s policy of religious tolerance and the privileges bestowed by the Habsburgs on several minorities, (with essentially utilitarian ends), Trieste grew rich due the arrival of Jews, Greeks, Armenians and Protestants, who were primarily engaged in commercial and financial activities, and who were drawn to the city as it afforded them the opportunity to both freely profess their faith and increase their assets.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, these ethnic/religious communities were able to fill the void in the local economic landscape determined by the city’s lack of guilds. The

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*Enlightenment Culture*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999); David Sorkin, “Port Jews and the Three Regions of Emancipation”, in *Port Jews*, 31-46; Lois C. Dubin, “Wings on their Feet....and Wings on their Head’: Reflections on the Study of Port Jews”, in *Jews and Port Cities 1590-1990. Commerce, Community and Cosmopolitanism*, eds. David Cesarani, Gemma Romain, (London - Portland, Or: Vallentine Mitchell, 2006), 14-30. For a more recent perspective, see: C. S. Monaco, “Port Jews or a People of the Diaspora? A Critique of the Port Jew Concept”, *Jewish Social Studies* 2 (2009): 137-166.

<sup>18</sup> See: De Antonellis Martini, “Portofranco e comunità etnico-religiose”, in *Storia economica e sociale di Trieste*, I.

minorities founded the Stock Exchange and later the Chamber of Commerce, finding an environment ideally suited to their political and economic activities. Thus a new middle class - a cosmopolitan, and religiously diverse bourgeois *milieu* - was formed in the course of the nineteenth-century. The members of this varied social group were able to overcome the inevitable differences in order to pursue a common objective: increasing the city's economic growth. This class was, until the 1870s, prepared to take political action in order to defend its freedom. It was capable to operate politically in order to protect the local municipal traditional from the pressures which emanated from Vienna.<sup>19</sup> This cooperation did not mean, however, that the various minority groups abandoned their respective identities. Indeed these identities firmly survived until the end of the century, perpetuating themselves above all in the private sphere and in networks based on kinship and economic bonds.<sup>20</sup>

From the eighteenth to the nineteenth-century, the demographic increase of the small local Jewish community was noteworthy. The economic possibilities offered by the city's thriving financial businesses attracted Jews from the nearby Italian peninsula, as well as from Levant, North Africa, Dalmatia, the Balkans and the rest of the Habsburg Empire. The Adriatic port offered them the opportunity to found

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<sup>19</sup> The formation of the multi-ethnic mercantile class in Trieste has been studied by Marina Cattaruzza, "Cittadinanza e ceto mercantile a Trieste: 1749-1850", in *Trieste, Austria, Italia tra Settecento e Novecento. Studi in onore di Elio Apib*, ed. Marina Cattaruzza, (Udine: Del Bianco Editore, 1996), 57-84; Marina Cattaruzza, *Trieste nell'Ottocento: le trasformazioni di una società civile*, (Udine: Del Bianco, 1995); Marina Cattaruzza, "Il primato dell'economia: l'egemonia politica del ceto mercantile (1814-60)", in *Storia d'Italia. Le Regioni dall'Unità a oggi. Il Friuli-Venezia Giulia*, I, eds. Roberto Finzi, Claudio Magris, Giovanni Miccoli, (Turin: Einaudi 2002), 149-179. On Triestine municipalism, see: Giorgio Negrelli, *Al di qua del mito: diritto storico e difesa nazionale nell'autonomismo della Trieste asburgica*, (Udine: Del Bianco, 1978). For a convincing illustration of the dynamics of formation and self-representation of the Triestine middle class, see: Millo, *Storia di una borghesia*.

<sup>20</sup> Several studies on port-based minorities have highlighted these strategies, typical of the various ethno-religious groups. For the Italian case, see: Francesca Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers: the Sephardic Diaspora, Livorno, and Cross-Cultural Trade in the Early Modern Period*, (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2009); Francesca Trivellato, "The Port Jews of Livorno and their Global Networks of Trade in the Early Modern Period", in *Jews and Port Cities*, 31-48; Carlotta Ferrara degli Uberti, "The 'Jewish Nation' of Livorno: a Port Jewry on the Road to Emancipation", in *Jews and Port Cities*, 157-170; Daniela Luigia Caglioti, *Vite parallele: una minoranza protestante nell'Italia dell'Ottocento*, (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2006), regarding the port of Naples. Roberta Garruccio's reflections on the subject are also useful, see: Roberta Garruccio, "Il comportamento economico delle minoranze in prospettiva storica: un'introduzione metodologica", *Archivi e Imprese* 16 (1997): 231-244; Silvia Marzagalli, "Città portuali e minoranze etniche: Amburgo, Bordeaux e Livorno tra Sette e Ottocento", *Archivi e Imprese* 16 (1997): 365-383. Also useful is: *Négoce, ports et océans: 16.-20. Siècles. Mélanges offerts à Paul Butel*, eds. Silvia Marzagalli, Hubert Bonin, (Bordeaux: Presse Universitaire de Bordeaux, 2000).

commercial firms, establish financial and insurance companies, buy property, and actively participate in the economic and social life of the city.<sup>21</sup> The city's original Jewish core, in fact, swelled in little more than a century from 103 Jews in 1735 to 4,534 in 1875, and reached 5,000 at the start of twentieth-century, to then settle at this figure until the end of the 1930s, when the racial laws, promulgated by fascism, provoked a tragic turning point in the relations between the Jews and the Italian State.<sup>22</sup>

In the final decades of the nineteenth-century the Triestine Jewish community no longer followed the demographic trend of the rest of the population. The abolition of the free port in 1891 and the transformation of the trading centre into a port of transit had changed the very demands of the labour market. Trieste no longer needed new merchants and bankers, but industrial workers, engineers, specialized technicians, workers and porters to employ in the factories, building sites and shipyards. The demographic curve of the Jewish community, which had until then been in constant ascent, suffered a sudden downturn.<sup>23</sup>

Unlike the other main European ports, where a Jewish presence was to be found in all social classes, in Trieste the Jews belonging to the working class were very few in number, whilst their presence in the lower-middle - white collar - class was significant.<sup>24</sup>

The end of the nineteenth-century also coincided with profound changes of a religious, social and political nature within the community, changes which had begun in the turbulent revolutionary years of 1848-9 and which became more evident after the civil and political emancipation of 1867. In this period an early and uncertain national Italian identity began to flourish within a restricted circle of Triestine Jewish intellectuals, for the most part young men belonging to the middle class. It was a national identity destined to assume strikingly different dimensions and characteristics in the final years of the century, during the outbreak of nationalist fights between Italians and Slovenians.

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<sup>21</sup> On economic aspects: for the 1700s, with useful tables of figures, and lists of professions, see Carlo Gatti, *Tra demografia e storia sociale. Gli ebrei di Trieste nel Settecento*, (Trieste: EUT, 2008); Tullia Catalan, "Presenza sociale ed economica degli ebrei nella Trieste asburgica tra Settecento e primo Novecento", in *Storia economica e sociale di Trieste*, I, 483-518.

<sup>22</sup> For a detailed demographic analysis see Gatti, *Tra demografia e storia sociale*, for the 1700s. For the 1800s and 1900s see: Catalan, *La Comunità ebraica di Trieste*, 59-75.

<sup>23</sup> On the economic and therefore demographic transformation of the city from the 1800s to the 1900s see: Marina Cattaruzza, *La formazione del proletariato urbano. Immigrati, operai di mestiere, donne a Trieste dalla metà del secolo XIX alla prima guerra mondiale*, (Turin: Musolini, 1979). For a general picture which also provides a comparative perspective of other ports, see: Marco Breschi, Aleksej Kalc, Elisabetta Navarra, "La nascita di una città. Storia minima della popolazione di Trieste, secc. XVIII-XIX", in *Storia economica e sociale di Trieste*, I, 69-237.

<sup>24</sup> See: Silvio G. Cusin, Giovanna De Filippo, "Nucleo ebraico e società triestina tra il 1850 e il 1900", in *Il Mondo ebraico*, 403-431.



At first this new identity was inextricably linked with the traditional Jewish identity, as was the case, for example, for some of the young patriots of 1848, such as Giacomo Venezian Senior and Cesare Norsa. This identity changed over the course of the years to become the so-called “religion of the fatherland,” to which a large number of the Triestine irredentists of Jewish origins ‘converted’.<sup>25</sup> These men, in fact, chose to abandon the community and religion of their forebears, renouncing their faith and in many cases adhering to the Free Masonry’s orders with an almost religious fervour.<sup>26</sup>

The anti-Slovenian campaign, which stimulated conflict on the Triestine political scene until the eve of the First World War, stemmed from this deeply anti-clerical local Liberal-Nationalist group, which led the municipality of Trieste from the 1880s until 1907, and which was headed by three ex-members of the Jewish community: Felice Venezian, Angelo Ara and Moisè Luzzatto.

The diversity of political stances within the community until the war must not, however, be forgotten, and it is clear that there was far from a cohesive and united stance regarding the Italian national issue. Indeed, my view, which is supported by various sources, is that the Italian issue did not involve all members of the community in the same way. The poorer social strata remained absent from the political debate and from the management of community affairs, whilst the Jewish economic elite, involved in the oligarchic management of the community, preferred to maintain a position of political neutrality, in the knowledge that the economic opportunities on offer in the Habsburg city could not be reconciled with the demands of the irredentists, who, on the eve of the world conflict fought for Trieste’s independence from Austria, and for its incorporation into Italy. In the Triestine Jewish population, as in the rest of the local population, it was the middle class (the self-employed, teachers, small-scale traders, white collar workers, commercial agents), who were most attracted to the militant political fight. It was, then, this same middle class which, in the 1920s adhered enthusiastically and in

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<sup>25</sup> See: Catalan, *La Comunità ebraica di Trieste*, 303-340. On the Triestine Jews’ participation in 1848 see: Tullia Catalan, “Il ‘48 fra Austria e Italia: le lettere alla famiglia di Giacomo Venezian”, in *‘Dolce dono graditissimo’. La lettera privata dal Settecento al Novecento*, eds. Daniela Maldini Chiarito, Luisa Betri, (Milan: Angeli, 2000), 254-270; Tullia Catalan, “‘La primavera degli Ebrei’. Ebrei italiani del Litorale e del Lombardo Veneto nel 1848-1849”, *Zakhor* VI (2003): 35-66; Tullia Catalan, “Ebrei triestini fra ribellione e lealismo all’Austria nel 1848-1849”, in *Studi in onore di Giovanni Miccoli*, ed. Liliana Ferrari, (Trieste: EUT, 2004), 229-247; Tullia Catalan, “Ebrei italiani del Litorale austriaco nella rivoluzione del 1848”, *Quaderni Giuliani di Storia* 1 (2006): 73-100.

<sup>26</sup> See: Tullia Catalan, “Massoneria ebraismo irredentismo dal 18 brumaio alla Grande Guerra”, in *Napoleone e il bonapartismo nella cultura politica italiana 1802-2005*, ed. Alceo Riosa, (Milano: Guerini e Associati, 2007), 197-214.

large numbers to Italian fascism, many Jews included.

The 'Triestine Jews' route to integration entailed the loss of the minority's ancient dimension as a collective community. This loss was then followed by the Jews' loss of their role as 'cultural and institutional mediator' with regards the rest of Trieste's society. Gradually, as the Triestine Jews spread out into the various areas of civil life, the communal body slowly lost its traditional functions, until it ultimately became an institution tasked merely with the organisation of worship, education and charity.<sup>27</sup>

From the nineteenth to the twentieth-century there was a growing disaffection with the ways of community life amongst the younger generations, which often developed into a genuine abandonment of traditions. The large numbers of individuals who renounced their faith speak for themselves, while there are fewer records for Jews converting to other religions, a trend which follows those of the city's other religious communities. A large number of these religious recantations were motivated by sentimental reasons, as the correlation between the registers for religious disavowal, and those for mixed marriages demonstrate, a trend which steadily increased during the twentieth-century, and not only in the Jewish community, but also in the other non-Catholic communities in Trieste. Alongside these figures, however, there is another aspect which ought to be highlighted: the presence of a large number of converts to Judaism (around one hundred in number), which depicts a society without strict divisions at its core: it is the litmus test of a local society, which in its actions showed itself to be essentially open towards the Jewish community until the outbreak of the world war, despite the tensions present on a political level.<sup>28</sup>

The difficulty comes in understanding up until what point this readiness to welcome, to aid the integration and assimilation of those who arrived in Trieste from afar, bringing with them different habits, customs and traditions, but also new economic know-how and new business networks, lasted. The start of the rupture, as it seems to me, can be pinpointed to the years between the nineteenth and twentieth-centuries, when the nationalist claims led to the planting within Trieste of the first invisible but profound divides between Italians and Slovenians; Italians

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<sup>27</sup> For a reconstruction of the transformation which took place in the Jewish community of Trieste during the 1800s and the start of the 1900s, see: Catalan, *La Comunità ebraica di Trieste*, 77-102. For a useful first impression of the general Italian context, see: Elizabeth Schächter, *The Jews of Italy 1848-1915. Between Tradition and Transformation*, (London, Portland: Vallentine Mitchell, 2011). For the Habsburg context, see: William O. McCagg, *A History of Habsburg Jews, 1670-1918*, (Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989).

<sup>28</sup> Catalan, *La Comunità ebraica di Trieste*, 241-244.

and Germans; Italians and Hungarians, Croatians, Poles.<sup>29</sup> The Jews, as well as the other religious communities present in the territory were no less involved, and adopted - some more, some less - these new modes of behaviour, but not without significant problems and repercussions for the internal equilibrium of their community and its relations with the other Jewish communities of the Empire.

In order to identify the moment in which the bonds of the past were broken, to understand and re-examine this phenomenon in order to use this knowledge to achieve a fuller comprehension of what happened during the fascist years, it is useful to pause and reflect, not only on the role the Jews played in the city during the period of civil inclusion and the full emancipation which followed in the golden years of the Triestine trading centre, but also on the common ground shared by the Jews with other groups present, be they Protestant, Greek, Serbian or Armenian.

To which end, the category of the “port Jews,” coined specifically with reference to the Triestine case by Lois Dubin,<sup>30</sup> can be extended to include the other non-Catholic communities, in order to create the larger category of the “port merchant.”

### **From “port Jews” to “port merchants”? The Triestine case in the nineteenth-century.**

Since the end of the 1990s, there has been great debate surrounding the historical study of port Jews, begun by David Sorkin and Lois Dubin and discussed in a wider, comparative context by David Cesarani in several international conferences; and examined in Monaco’s article in ‘Jewish Social Studies’ in 2009.<sup>31</sup>

The category of the “port Jews,” with its various applications, has offered a new insight into the study of the route to integration into the modern world of the European Jews engaged in mercantile activity and maritime trade in several large cosmopolitan ports of the Mediterranean and Atlantic from the 1700s to the 1900s. This new mode of considering the process of integration expands and complicates the interpretative hypothesis previously proposed in the works of Jakob Katz, Reinhard Rürup, Pierre Birnbaum and Ira Katznelson.<sup>32</sup> The majority of these

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<sup>29</sup> See: *Nazionalismi di frontiera: identità contrapposte sull’Adriatico nord-orientale, 1850-1950*, ed. Marina Cattaruzza, (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2003).

<sup>30</sup> Dubin, *The Port Jews of Habsburg Trieste*.

<sup>31</sup> See the bibliography in footnote 17 in this article.

<sup>32</sup> Jacob Katz, *Out of the Ghetto: the Social Background of Jewish Emancipation, 1770-1870*, (New York: Schocken, 1978); Reinhard Rürup, “Jewish Emancipation and Bourgeois Society”, *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 14 (1969): 67-91; Reinhard Rürup, “The Tortuous and Thorny Path to Legal Equality: ‘Jew Laws’ and the Emancipatory Legislation in Germany from the late Eighteenth Century”, *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 31(1986): 3-33; *Paths of Emancipation: Jews, States and Citizenship*, eds. Pierre Birnbaum, Ira Katznelson,

studies focus on the significance of the relapse of Jewish Enlightenment thought in the Jews' relationship with the wider society; on the legacy of the French Revolution in European Jewish society; and on the new routes of integration and assimilation which followed the attainment of civil and political emancipation in the 1800s.

Sorkin identifies amongst port Jews, particularly the Sephardic merchants active in the seventeenth- and eighteenth-centuries in maritime centres, including Italian ports, a new social type of Jew, with wider cultural, social and economic horizons, compared to his fellow believers. This broadened potential was facilitated by the policy of "civil inclusion"<sup>33</sup> adopted before the complete emancipation from the home nations.<sup>34</sup> In Sorkin's view, however, the term "port Jew" used to refer to a social type, should not be applied without discrimination to all the port cities, nor should it be extended to the whole community. Rather, in order to be used correctly, it necessitates the presence of precise cultural, social and economic characteristics, as well as religious and organizational criteria, to be found, in his view, only in a few individuals residing in specific ports, amongst which are Livorno and Trieste.<sup>35</sup>

Lois Dubin, however, though sharing the interpretative hypothesis of Sorkin, has opted, after an extensive analysis of the Triestine Jews of the eighteenth and early nineteenth-century, to extend - in my view, correctly- the category of the "port Jew" to also include, for example, the Ashkenazi Jews present in Trieste alongside the Sephardic Jews of Italian and Levantine origins and, unlike Sorkin, Dubin also proposes to extend the category to the entire Jewish community residing in the port, and not solely to single individuals, calling also for a comparison amongst different port-based Jewish communities, such as those at Livorno, Odessa and Thessaloniki, to cite but a few, whilst also proposing a comparison with other ethnic/religious minorities active in such maritime centres.<sup>36</sup>

Furthermore, Dubin also invites to reflect on the concept of utility,<sup>37</sup> seen as the fundamental driving force behind the formation of a port-based community of Jews, and she also dwells significantly on the

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(Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995); David Cesarani, "Port Jews: Concepts, Cases and Questions", in *Port Jews*, 1-11.

<sup>33</sup> The definition of "civil inclusion" can be ascribed to Dubin, *The Port Jews of Habsburg Trieste*, 198-225.

<sup>34</sup> See: Sorkin, "The Port Jews: Notes Toward a Social Type."

<sup>35</sup> Sorkin, "Port Jews and the Three Regions of Emancipation", 31. There are five necessary characteristics identified by Sorkin in order to define the port Jew social-type, some of which are discussed by Dubin, in her research on the Jews of Trieste: "Wings on their Feet", 16-17.

<sup>36</sup> Ibidem, 23.

<sup>37</sup> Dubin, "Researching Port Jews", 48-53.

dynamic dimensions of the maritime community, and on the roles of “cultural mediator” and the “boundary crossing” attributed to the Jews in the great trading centres of the eighteenth and early nineteenth-centuries, which rendered cultural as well as commercial exchanges possible with other states accessible by land or water.<sup>38</sup> All of the above took place within a framework of civil liberties which encouraged the adoption of the modes and customs of the local culture, which led the Jews of Trieste to a state of social inclusion before the definitive civil and political emancipation of 1867.<sup>39</sup>

Moving from Lois Dubin’s statements, and embracing some of her suggestions which invite the reader to consider the social and economic behaviour and the networks of other ethnic/religious mercantile minorities present in a single port, this work constitutes a first attempt at carrying out a comparison between the port Jews of Trieste and the other religious groups present in the city since the end of the 1700s and above all during the 1800s.

This work has been made possible by the rich collection of studies which have finally brought to light some little-known details of the history of these minorities, such as their social and economic behaviour; their relationships with state authorities and with the rest of the local community; their marital strategies and business networks.<sup>40</sup>

During the nineteenth-century residing alongside the Jews, who were one of the largest minority groups in Trieste (around 5,000 in number), there were also Greeks (more than 3,200 in the years of the Restoration, but whose numbers dropped to 1,500 after the Greek Revolution); Protestants (Swiss, Anglicans, Lutherans and later even Methodists), more than a thousand in total; Armenians, (around 100); and approximately 200 Serbian-Illyrians, referred by the Austrians as the “Illyrian community.”<sup>41</sup>

In the period during which the free port was active (1719-1891), the multi-ethnic image painted by the city for those who reached it for the

<sup>38</sup> Dubin, “Wings on their Feet”, 19, 21-22.

<sup>39</sup> On this development, see: Dubin, *The Port Jews of Habsburg Trieste*; Catalan, *La Comunità ebraica di Trieste*.

<sup>40</sup> Fundamental on a methodological level is: *Storia economica e sociale di Trieste*, I.

<sup>41</sup> For figures regarding the Greek community, see: Katsiardi-Hering, “La presenza dei Greci a Trieste”, 523-524. On the Protestants of all denominations, see: Umberto Bert, *Il protestantesimo a Trieste: spunti storici*, (Torre Pellice: Società di Studi Valdesi, 1979); Giovanni Carrari, *Protestantesimo a Trieste: dal 1700 al 2000*, (Trieste: Lint, 2002); Pierpaolo Dorsi, “La collettività di lingua tedesca”, *Storia economica e sociale di Trieste*, 547-571, 562-566; Girolamo Agapito, *Comunità e chiesa anglicana a Trieste*, (Trieste: 1844). On the Armenians, see: Tullia Catalan, “Cenni sulla presenza armena a Trieste tra fine Settecento e primo Ottocento”, in *Storia economica e sociale di Trieste*, I, 603-611; Carlo Curiel, “La fondazione della colonia armena in Trieste”, *Archeografo Triestino* 3 (1929-30): 337-379. For the demographical details of the Serbian community, see: Dogo, “La comunità serbo-illirica”, 575.

first time is epitomised, I believe, in the vivid and realistic description of the population's characteristics, recorded at the end of the 1700s by the police chief, the Baron Pietro Antonio Pittoni:

"[...] The populace has been composed of diverse nation and religions, who frequent this City and settle here. Since then the City has united these in business activities, which require knowledge and skills. This traffic in business and knowledge has made the City well-off and rich. The City has witnessed that the non-Catholic can be and is an honest man, that morality is the same, that he has learned the customs of the others. And felt their same needs. Since this brotherly sharing (*confratellanza*) of knowledge, of customs, and of reciprocally useful needs has rendered the City not only tolerant, but friendly, it has rooted out from the mind of infinity of prejudices, such that compared to other provinces, Trieste can with reason call itself an enlightened populace (*popolo filosofo*)."<sup>42</sup>

There are, it seems to me, several aspects of this definition of the population which are worth highlighting: the mutual economic collaboration between minorities and majority; the continual exchange of know-how and culture; and the way in which a peaceful cohabitation is sought and established. These factors were essentially the winning formula which made Trieste a kind of 'Promised Land' for ethnic/religious minorities who wished to improve their status and freely profess their beliefs: desires which could be met happily in the city's cosmopolitan environment, until the second half of the nineteenth-century.

In light of what I have just said, then, I would like to raise the issue of whether some of the characteristics of the "port Jew," theorised and felicitously applied by Dubin to the Triestine Jewish reality of the 1700s, could be more or less extended to the 1800s for other religious minorities present in the Adriatic port, by virtue of the same utilitarian policy adopted towards them by the Habsburgs.

This hypothesis, though clearly attractive, was checked on several fronts. The first step was to examine the economic, social and political behaviour of the specific minorities, taking note of the results reached by Italian historiography, which has focused its attention precisely on these themes.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Related by Pittoni on the 21st December 1786, in Pierpaolo Dorsi, "Libertà e 'Legislazione': Il rapporto del Barone Pittoni sullo stato della città di Trieste e del suo territorio (1786)", *Archeografo Triestino* 49 (1989): 144. The author of the English translation of this passage is Dubin, *The Port Jews of Habsburg Trieste*, 201.

<sup>43</sup> I refer to Garruccio's contribution to the study of port-based minorities: "Il comportamento economico delle minoranze"; to Marzagalli's, "Città portuali e minoranze etniche"; Caglioti, *Vite parallele*; and to the monograph M. Elisabetta Tonizzi

The next step was then to proceed in a comparison between the social and economic behaviour of the minorities present in the Adriatic port, underlining the similarities and differences, and also keeping in mind the relationships these minorities had with the rest of society. Bearing this relationship in mind was essential in order to appreciate what Roberta Garruccio refers to as the potential specificities of the economic behaviour of the so-called “favoured” minorities.<sup>44</sup>

For the chronological time frame considered here the results of several studies concerning various ports and centres of significant maritime commercial exchanges, such as Odessa and Thessaloniki, which until the second half of the nineteenth-century presented characteristics similar to those of the Habsburg Trieste, and with which there was constant contact via commercial and family ties, were also taken into consideration.<sup>45</sup>

In the future it would be valuable to reach a comparative synthesis, which examines the economic and social strategies of these three ports during the nineteenth-century, focusing on the presence of a dense network of business and family ties which decreased with the growth of nationalist movements. The most wealthy traders and financiers of Trieste, of every religion, established branches of their businesses in Odessa, Thessaloniki, Alexandria, and Constantinople, and also in Marseille and Leghorn, which were directed on site by close relatives, or by agents and trusted proxies. This was the case, for example, within the dynamic Sartorio family (Catholics), who maintained close links between Odessa and Trieste due to the stationing of one brother in the former city, and another in the latter. The Jewish Morpurgo family, who were merchants and financiers, similarly set up financial and matrimonial links with Odessa in 1848 by forming an alliance with the Raffalovich bankers, whilst also enlarging their business network with the rest of Europe, due to their close relationship with the Rothschild household.<sup>46</sup> The powerful Ralli family, which had Greek origins and was one of the

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(ed.), “Porti dell’Europa Mediterranea (secoli XIX e XX)”, *Memoria e Ricerca* 11 (2002).

<sup>44</sup> See: Garruccio, “Il comportamento economico delle minoranze.” Also see: Barbara Armani, Guri Schwarz, “Ebrei Borghesi, identità familiare, solidarietà e affari nell’età dell’emancipazione”, eds. Barbara Armani, Guri Schwarz, *Quaderni storici* 3 (2003), 636-637.

<sup>45</sup> On Thessaloniki, see: Mark Mazower, *Salonica, City of Ghosts: Christians, Muslims and Jews, 1430-1950*, (London: Harper Perennial, 2005); Mark Levene, “Port Jewry of Salonika: Between Neo-Colonialism and Nation State”, in *Port Jews*, 125-154. On Odessa: Steven J. Zipperstein, *The Jews of Odessa: a Cultural History, 1794-1881*, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1985); John D. Klier, “A Port, not a Shtetl: Reflections on the Distinctiveness of Odessa”, in *Port Jews*: 173-178.

<sup>46</sup> See: Giovanni Guglielmo Sartorio, *Memorie biografiche ai suoi figli, parenti ed amici*, (Trieste: Tipografia Lloyd Austriaco, 1863); Tullia Catalan, “Il rapporto padre-figlia in una famiglia ebraica dell’alta borghesia triestina. Elio ed Emilia Morpurgo (1845-1849)”, in *Padre e Figlia*, eds. Luisa Accati, Marina Cattaruzza, Monika Verzar-Bass (Turin: Rosenberg & Sellier, 1994), 215-235.

richest families in Trieste, continued to maintain a special link with their native island of Chios, despite the familial and commercial links from which they could also benefit in Liverpool, New York, New Orleans and Calcutta. Indeed, the family's patriarch, Ambrogio di Stefano Ralli, despite declaring that he was "among the most tolerant" of men, suggested to his descendants in the will he drew up in 1874 that they "*should not unite in marriage with anyone other than those belonging to the Eastern Greek religion and of Hellenic nationality, and if possible only with those whose families came from Chios, in order to maintain the greatest unity of customs and education.*"<sup>47</sup> Up until the 1870s one also finds a similar degree of close endogamy within the large Jewish merchant families of Trieste. For example, the testament of Joachimb Hirschel speaks clearly, even if the family then chose not to respect his last wish in terms of marriage.

"this bequeather means for the three grandchildren, Ruben, Samuel and Leone to play the lottery in order to decide who may marry the two sisters and their cousins Sara and Lea, [...] he, then, who is deprived of the opportunity to take the cousin is hereby assigned f.500 more than the assigned f.1,500 which I leave to each of the others."<sup>48</sup>

These are just two examples, but many testaments of this type could be cited, proof of an awareness which was still present, especially among the older generation, of the importance of maintaining traditions and a collective religious identity. It was an ideal, however, which would become progressively more unravelled during the second half of the nineteenth-century, leaving ever-increasing space for individual choices.<sup>49</sup> These documentary sources are fundamental in order to build a picture of such social behaviours. Wills, inheritance documents, pupillary acts, marriage registers, records of naturalisation, minutes from the Stock Exchange, records from the Chamber of Commerce, ledgers for firms, bankruptcies notices, dowries and private family correspondences are all vitally important in interpreting the past. Only through a careful paralleling and comparison of these materials is it indeed possible to establish with a degree of certainty a backdrop of common ground, against which one can measure the sons and grandsons of the merchants who were able to reach Trieste at the end of the eighteenth-century, due to the licences granted by Joseph II.

If one investigates, within the various religious communities, who the

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<sup>47</sup> Katsiardi-Hering, "La presenza dei Greci", 519.

<sup>48</sup> See: Catalan, "Presenza sociale ed economica degli ebrei", 509.

<sup>49</sup> Regarding this Jewish marriage tendency, see: Tullia Catalan, "Mediazioni matrimoniali nell'ebraismo triestino nel corso dell'Ottocento", in *La mediazione matrimoniale. Il terzo (in)comodo in Europa fra Otto e Novecento*, ed. Bruno F. P. Wanrooij, (Fiesole - Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2004), 127-156.



proxies and agents for individuals were, one finds a common pattern: Jews, Protestants, Greeks and Armenians always selected people who were of the same religion. Witnesses and executors of wills were also always fellow believers, or sometimes ex-fellow believers. This tendency was still notable in the early 1900s, despite the gradual loosening of community ties, following the process of integration which derived from the obtainment of full emancipation.<sup>50</sup>

This fact confirms that the relationship of trust within a group of fellow believers was able to transcend time and even survive mixed marriages (a very common custom in Trieste), as well as any formal abandonment of the community through conversion or the renouncement of faith, the latter made possible after 1870 and a very common occurrence in the city, particularly amongst Jews, but also amongst the Greeks.<sup>51</sup>

During the nineteenth-century, after the fall in economic activity caused by the third French occupation, Trieste's commercial dealings with the Italian peninsula, Levante and Africa all significantly increased, enlarging ever more the free port's sphere of action. The port was able to use the existing trading relationships, established by the religious minorities, in order to form new networks and connections. Thus this period in Trieste saw the creation of a climate of mutual collaboration amongst the various non-Catholic religious communities, which formed the basis of the cosmopolitan and profoundly secularized society of the 1800s. The new immigrants, in fact, adopted the "lingua franca," Italian, almost immediately upon reaching the city, and with little difficulty. Italian was used primarily to deal with contacts in the Mediterranean,<sup>52</sup> while German was used mainly for business with the Imperial territories and for bureaucracy; French, on the other hand, was the language adopted by the local elite for fashionable occasions. After the Restoration, English also came into use, given the presence of an important English colony in the city, and the links forged with the field of British insurance and with the New World. The immigrants' various original languages were, conversely, often retained exclusively for use in family settings, despite, for example, the Greek community having two different important newspapers in the Greek language: *Nea Imera* and *Cliò*.<sup>53</sup>

In this way the immigrants gradually acquired a strong sense of belonging to the "artificial city" (as it has been aptly described in the historiographical field),<sup>54</sup> where the absence of both an aristocracy and

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<sup>50</sup> See: Catalan, "Presenza sociale ed economica degli ebrei."

<sup>51</sup> On the Jews, see: Catalan, *La Comunità ebraica di Trieste*, 241-244. On the Greeks, see: Katsiardi-Hering, "La presenza dei Greci", 525.

<sup>52</sup> See: Roberto Finzi, "La base materiale dell'italofonia di Trieste", in *Storia economica e sociale di Trieste*, I, 317-331.

<sup>53</sup> Katsiardi-Hering, "La presenza dei Greci", 538.

<sup>54</sup> See: Cattaruzza, "Il primato dell'economia", 161. The term was coined by Domenico Rossetti and then taken up by the socialist Angelo Vivante

of guilds allowed the Jews and other non-Catholics to become a leading economic force. The nineteenth-century was characterized, for the local Jewish community and for the other religious groups, by incessant immigration and emigration. Arrivals were not exclusively motivated by a desire to escape intolerant states, but also by the desire to improve social conditions; while those leaving were often departing in order to formalize appealing marriage proposals or to enlarge the mercantile and financial family businesses with new branches.<sup>55</sup>

During the 1800s, due to the importance acquired by the free port on the European economic scene, one witnesses the formation, also within the non-Catholic religious communities, of a financial aristocracy composed of families of bankers and traders, whose businesses and social networks were extended to cover an extremely large area. These families occupied prestigious positions not only in the rigid and oligarchic community organization, but also within the cosmopolitan and multi-confessional local economic elite. They also enjoyed ample credit from several Austrian government circles, as is demonstrated by the high number of honors and ennoblements conceded by Franz Joseph after 1848, despite the fact that the majority of these cases were brought about by the exchange of a large 'donation' to the Imperial coffers from those aspiring to a title.<sup>56</sup>

A large number of these families reached the city at the end of the eighteenth century and we are able to follow the trails of a few of them thorough the study of naturalization queries which were sent to the Austrian government after a significant period of time had been spent in the city. The majority of individuals who requested to become naturalized Austrian subjects were Jews from the Italian states, Africa and Levante; Greeks from the Ionian islands or from the Peloponnese, though the latter were more reluctant to abandon their Ottoman citizenship; Protestants from German-speaking countries and Switzerland, as well as Armenians from nearby Venice, and finally Serbian-Illyrians.

At the time Austrian citizenship was not easily granted: in order to obtain it even the most prominent members of the minorities had to demonstrate that they had lived in Trieste for several years; that they had a moral code which mirrored the local one (usually certified by the respective leader of the religious community) and above all they needed to be able to demonstrate that they were in possession of movable goods and real estate. All of this was still insufficient if the aspiring subject

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<sup>55</sup> Catalan, "Presenza sociale ed economica degli ebrei"; Millo, *Storia di una borghesia*.

<sup>56</sup> On the titles granted to prominent figures of the religious communities, see: Millo, *L'élite di potere*, 85-92; Tullia Catalan, "Ordini cavallereschi e notabilato triestino dal 1848 al 1914", in *Le Italie dei notabili: il punto della situazione*, ed. Luigi Ponzani, (Napoli: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 2001), 189-206.

could not provide evidence which proved that he had served in some way towards the development of the free port: in short, he had to be able to show that he had been “useful” to the Habsburg rule.<sup>57</sup>

For these immigrants, the obtaining of Austrian citizenship meant adding a certain lustre to their financial and commercial activities, particularly in the eyes of the local community. It allowed them to attain a certain status within the city,<sup>58</sup> and for those whose trade involved maritime travel, citizenship meant they could fly the Austrian flag, which conferred many special advantages in the period, such as the protection from pirates.

Up until the second half of the nineteenth-century the multi-religious, cosmopolitan local economic elite placed its financial and cultural know-how, and its international network of contacts at the disposal of the city. The place initially dedicated to this discussion and tie sharing of experience was the Stock Exchange, and later the Chamber of Commerce, which was founded in 1855.<sup>59</sup> It was here that the Trieste’s economic policy took form until the second half of the nineteenth-century. It was, indeed, this institution which interacted with Vienna, and not always in a acquiescent manner, often demanding more privileges, money and attention.<sup>60</sup> For their part the bankers and traders who took part in these exchanges became valued observers and ambassadors for Trieste in far-off countries during their long business journeys.<sup>61</sup>

In this context of collaboration for a common goal - the economic development of the city - the respective knowledge of individuals and minorities became fused and interwoven, transforming itself into the basis for important business ventures such as the creation of insurance companies which still survive today. In the Trieste of the 1830s, the “Riunione Adriatica di Sicurtà” and “Assicurazioni Generali” were formed, and if one studies the names of the founding members, it

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<sup>57</sup> For a reconstruction of individuals’ routes to naturalisation, see: Catalan, “Presenza sociale ed economica degli ebrei”, 489-492; Dogo, “Una nazione di pii mercanti”, 583; Katsiardi-Hering, “La presenza dei Greci a Trieste”, 537-538.

<sup>58</sup> Dorsi, “La collettività di lingua tedesca”, 550.

<sup>59</sup> Initially there was some resistance against the acceptance of Jews as members of the Stock Exchange, see: Dubin, *The Port Jews of Habsburg Trieste*, 32-40.

<sup>60</sup> Alessio Fornasin, “La Borsa e la Camera di Commercio di Trieste (1755-1914) in *Storia economica e sociale di Trieste*, II, *La città dei traffici 1719-1918*, eds. Roberto Finzi, Loredana Panariti, Giovanni Panjek, (Trieste: Lint, 2003), 143-190. The author dwells on the behaviour of the Jews elected as *Deputati* (Members) of the Stock Exchange, demonstrating in a convincing manner that they never favoured their fellow Jews.

<sup>61</sup> These reports from the observers of the Stock Exchange and later of the Chamber of Commerce, conserved in the State archive of Trieste have never been systematically studied. They were recorded by Greeks, Jews, Dutch, Germans, Serbian-Illyrians, and the English and could constitute a new approach to the questions raised here, as they provide the possibility to interlink various views from a range of different observers of the port.

becomes apparent that almost all of the city's minorities are represented in a conspicuous way, with a prevalence of Jews and Greeks.<sup>62</sup> This positive first common experience cleared the way for a continued shared participation in all the public endeavors which took place in the following decades: the establishment of the city's gas company, the creation of the railway, and the construction of the new port at the start of the twentieth-century.<sup>63</sup>

A similar collaborative spirit can be also found in the composition of several commercial enterprises. In Trieste the reality of mixed societies, composed of members of different faiths, was widespread. This allowed the broadening of commercial activities on a geographic level, as well as a variation of the goods being handled. Greeks and Serbian-Illyrians, the former originating mostly from the Aegean islands, from the Peloponnese and Constantinople; and the latter from Castelnovo (Bay of Kotor), from Trebinje and Sarajevo, were esteemed as both good traders, and brilliant navigators. The Ashkenazi and Sephardic Triestine Jews, on the other hand, were able to take advantage of a vast network of relations with all of Levant, Central-Europe and the Italian peninsula, due to their wide-ranging origins.<sup>64</sup> For these individuals a strong bond with the sea and navigation was vital as it increased their trade and broadened their horizons, and shyly, with the support of more experienced non-Jewish individuals in the sector, they began to invest their capital in the shipping trade.

For some of the 'mixed' businesses, the commercial contracts stipulated by the partners saw a strict observance of religious holidays. Jewish partners, for example, could benefit from a contract which gave Saturday as a day of rest, and they then worked for other partners on a Sunday. The collaboration between Jews and Protestants and Jews and Greeks was particularly successful on this level, and it was no coincidence that there was a secure presence of the religious minorities at the very pinnacle of the local economic elite up until 1914.

Working relationships of this sort were, however, rare with Serbian-Illyrians, who often preferred to work exclusively within their own community or with Armenians, who - unlike the Greeks and Jews - refused to integrate their customs and habits with those of the local community, jealously guarding their traditional cultural and religious identity.<sup>65</sup> This was, in fact, the main reason for the Armenian colony's

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<sup>62</sup> For a detailed panoramic study of the role and the activities of the insurance companies in the city, see: Loredana Panariti, "Assicurazione e banca. Il sistema finanziario triestino (secc. XVIII-XIX)", in *Storia economica e sociale di Trieste*, II, 369-458.

<sup>63</sup> Anna Millo, "Un porto fra centro e periferia (1861-1918)", in *Storia d'Italia. Le Regioni. Il Friuli-Venezia Giulia*, 181-235; Anna Millo, "Il capitalismo triestino e l'Impero", in *Storia economica e sociale di Trieste*, II, 125-142.

<sup>64</sup> For examples of the "mixed" businesses, already present in Trieste at the end of the eighteenth-century, see: Catalan, "Presenza sociale ed economica degli ebrei", 492.

<sup>65</sup> See: Catalan, "Cenni sulla presenza armena a Trieste." Due to their highly closed

lack of development in Trieste. The colony survived, despite registering a unstoppable decline throughout the nineteenth-century, but unlike the other ethnic/religious communities present in the city, it never managed to start a process of mass-migration.

The end-result of this intense collaboration between minorities and the local community in such a strongly cosmopolitan context, was a rather lukewarm sense of religion within the population: a population which was little inclined to be harnessed by the reigns of religious observance. At the end of the eighteenth-century, the local ecclesiastic authorities protested in vain against the excessive disinterest demonstrated by several Catholics, who went to hear sermons in the Protestant and Calvinist churches.<sup>66</sup> Another important indication of this lack of religious control is that the church in Trieste was never able to construct houses of catechumens – intended as instruments for conversion – due to the strong action taken by the Habsburgs in order to protect the religious freedom of the “useful” religious minorities present in the city. Living in a cosmopolitan society, where philanthropy and fashionable events such as theatre-going, balls and musical, cultural and sporting activities were extended to include all of the financial elite, without regards to religion, gave many individuals the opportunity to encounter men and women of other religious faiths.<sup>67</sup> This led, in the second half of the nineteenth-century, to a crisis in the traditional practice of marrying exclusively within one’s own faith, a practice which increasingly came to be abandoned in favour of an individual’s free choice to inter-marry between faiths. It is no coincidence, given this relatively free interaction between members of different religions, that the rate of mixed marriages was significantly higher in Trieste than in the rest of the Empire. Catholics married Jews, Greeks married Protestants, Jews married Greeks and so on. After 1870 the majority of couples chose a civil marriage, abandoning the religious community to which they belonged for the love of their partner,<sup>68</sup> though the education of children often followed the desires of one or other of the spouses in terms of religion.

Particular attention has also been paid to the educative models adopted for younger generations, who, due to Giuseppe II’s patents of tolerance, had the opportunity, by the end of the eighteenth-century, to study in

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behaviour with regards to the city, they do not enter into the Triestine model of the port merchant.

<sup>66</sup> See: Catalan, *La Comunità ebraica di Trieste*, 198-199.

<sup>67</sup> See: Ariella Verrocchio, “Borghesia ebraica triestina tra culto della mondanità e culto della patria. Presenza e ruoli nella Società Filarmonico-Drammatica e nella Alpina delle Giulie”, in *Shalom Trieste*, 284-296.

<sup>68</sup> The registers of mixed marriages conserved in the Historical Archives of the Commune, and the State Archive of Trieste are both particularly useful, and a quantitative study of the other religious faiths ought to be conducted

public schools alongside other youngsters of different faiths.<sup>69</sup> During the nineteenth-century the progressive politicization and widespread rebellion of new generations of Jews, Greeks and Protestants against the desires of their parents, who would have liked them to follow in the family businesses was (with great evidence by 1848) one of the biggest destabilizing elements for the traditional collective identities of the various groups, which began from that period to transform, eventually even acquiring nationalist characteristics.

The disruptive process of nationalization in the second half of the nineteenth-century, present from the outset in Trieste, had strong repercussions for the internal equilibriums of the religious minorities in the Adriatic port. Their traditional function as mediators was in crisis due to the new nature of the relationship between citizens and nation-State. The fact that young Greeks, Protestants, Jews, and Serbian-Illyrians could freely frequent the city's public schools meant the schools themselves became authentic arenas, in the second half of the nineteenth-century, for the construction of the nation.<sup>70</sup>

The last decades of the nineteenth-century saw the final death-throes of cosmopolitanism, which was replaced by the end of the 1870s with national conflicts, destined to escalate until the break out of the First World War. It was in this way that the delicate equilibrium between the ethnic/religious groups, created in the city more than a century before, was broken.

The unique formation and articulation of the Triestine middle class during the Imperial period of Trieste seems to validate the hypothesis of the collective model of the "port merchants." Its salient features were inextricably linked to the city's cosmopolitan context; to the financial and mercantile activities of the port; and to the common ground connecting the behavior of various religious communities on a social and cultural level, though with some necessary distinctions at their core, linked above all to the perception of the "other" and the stereotypes adopted from the local society.

From tolerance to racism: the downward spiral from the nineteenth- to the twentieth-century.

During the second half of the nineteenth-century, due to Trieste's involvement in the nationalist struggles which in that era hit all of the Habsburg empire, the city's finely balanced social equilibrium fell into great crisis. This social fabric which had survived until that point due to the cohabitation and constructive collaboration of the city's inhabitants, supported by the city's cosmopolitan outlook, was ruptured. In the

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<sup>69</sup> On the importance of school and education in the eighteenth-century, see: Dubin, *The Port Jews of Habsburg Trieste*, 95-117.

<sup>70</sup> For the nineteenth-century and the role of education for a new generation of Jews, see: Catalan, *La Comunità ebraica di Trieste*, 147-177.

course of a few decades the Habsburgs' favoured port, which changed from a trading centre to a transit port in the final years of the century, was transformed into a city filled with fierce nationalist clashes. The fights were mainly between Italians, who supported the irredentist movement, and Slovenians. This fighting poisoned the city's air and laid the basis for the violent anti-Slavic racism, which was determinately perpetuated in the city during the years of fascism, and which was aimed at all the citizens of Slovenian origins.<sup>71</sup>

Adding to this shift in attitude towards the city's minorities, was the Habsburgs' rejection, at the end of nineteenth-century, of their utilitarian policy towards the ethnic/religious minorities they had consistently protected in the eighteenth and early nineteenth-centuries, defending them from bouts of intolerance.<sup>72</sup> One must also remember that the economic and financial markets had changed and no longer gravitated towards Trieste, which, by no coincidence, was converted by the Austrian government into a modern port with cutting-edge facilities for the transit of people and products.

Political antisemitism took advantage of this change in Habsburg policy, and the city's rupture with its past, notable for its great capacity for inclusion and tolerance, allowed prejudices to spread. This antisemitism manifested itself in two distinct phases, which in turn can be subdivided into three currents of thought between the nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries.

Up until the 1880s the city had seen sporadic anti-Jewish incidents, mostly during Jewish funerals, or following the arrival of Jewish teachers in the public schools<sup>73</sup>. The origin of this intolerance can be traced back to the traditional Catholic anti-Judaism. Catholic agents never missed an opportunity, even in a secular city like Trieste, to encourage the poorest members of society into anti-Jewish beliefs. All the incidents of which we know, however, were firmly stamped out by the local police authorities, and did not succeed in disturbing the community's tranquility, or in denting its faith in progress and liberal society.

The following phases, however, revealed themselves to be of a somewhat different nature. During the first, which began in the 1880s, a

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<sup>71</sup> See: *Nazionalismi di frontiera*, ed. Marina Cattaruzza; Marina Cattaruzza, "I conflitti nazionali a Trieste nell'ambito della questione nazionale dell'Impero Asburgico: 1850-1914", *Quaderni Giuliani di Storia* 1 (1989): 131-148; Cattaruzza, *L'Italia e il confine orientale*; Marina Cattaruzza, *Trieste nell'Ottocento. Le trasformazioni di una società civile*, (Udine: Del Bianco, 1995), 119-165; Marta Verginella, "Sloveni a Trieste tra Sette e Ottocento. Da comunità etnica a minoranza nazionale", in *Storia economica e sociale di Trieste*, I, 441-481. On the fascist period and the persecution of the Slovenians, see: Vinci, *Sentinelle della patria*; Maura Hametz, "The Nefarious Former Authorities: Name Change in Trieste. 1918-22", *Austrian History Yearbook* 35 (2004): 233-252.

<sup>72</sup> See: Catalan, *La Comunità ebraica di Trieste*, 251-252.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 253-257; Catalan, "Società e sionismo a Trieste fra XIX e XX secolo", in *Il Mondo ebraico*, 457-489, 469-470.

small and fierce group of Catholics, politically close to the stance of the Austrian Christian-Social movement, laid the basis for a widespread antisemitic propaganda in the local Catholic press. The two most read newspapers of the movement, *L'Amico* and *L'Avvenire*, quickly followed in the antisemitic footsteps of the Italian Catholic magazine, *Civiltà Cattolica*, which in turn looked to the example emanating from nearby Austria. In Austria, the Christian-Social party, led by Karl Lueger, who was elected as Mayor of Vienna in 1895, planted the seeds of political antisemitism in the capital, as well as in the country's provinces.<sup>74</sup> The attacks and accusations made against the Triestine Jews regarding their supposed control of local politics via the Liberal-National party, and the accusations that they controlled all sources of information and acted as a corrupting force, were repeating themes in the antisemitic discourse of the period in the Habsburg world. The outbreak of the Dreyfus Affair in France provided additional ammunition with which to hit the Jewish population. The height of the political instrumentation of antisemitism in Trieste came, however, during the third phase, which lasted from 1897-1904. In this period, alongside the Christian-Socials – who, by this time, had formed a party in Trieste – other two non-religious groups, also loyal to the Empire, also adopted anti-Jewish positions, with the objective of opposing the election of Liberal-Nationals and pro-Italian politicians of Jewish origins.

What is vital to note, for the purpose of our argument, is that one of the two aforementioned groups counted individuals from the Greek minority amongst its members, who chose to parade under the flag of antisemitism in order to wound the Jews on a political level. The Socialist party of Trieste impeded a further growth of these groups. The party, which in 1903 feared a bloody and violent reaction to the local elections in the streets of Trieste, made its voice heard and was ready to interpose, even on a physical level, between the two sides in the case of public demonstrations. In defense of the Triestine Jews, Wilhelm Ellenbogen, a Socialist MP, concerned by the *laissez-faire* attitude of the Triestine police forces in the face of the antisemitic fights taking place in the city's streets, made an interpellation to the Viennese parliament.<sup>75</sup> The Austrian government, however, supported one of these groups, which was headed by the journalists Riccardo Camber and Vittorio Cuttin, and secretly financed *Il Sole*, one of the antisemitic movement's newspapers. This non-Catholic based antisemitic current, which was reinforced in the early twentieth-century by groups of Slovenians who hoped to form a

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<sup>74</sup> On Trieste, see: Catalan, *La Comunità ebraica di Trieste*, 273-291. On Austria, see: John W. Boyer, *Political Radicalism in Late Imperial Vienna: Origins of the Christian Social Movement, 1848-1897*, (Chicago: University of Chicago press, 1981); on political antisemitism, see: Peter Pulzer, *The Rise of Political Antisemitism in Germany and Austria*, (London: P. Halban, 1988, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1964).

<sup>75</sup> Catalan, *La Comunità ebraica di Trieste*, 287.



cohesive unit, greatly worried Trieste's Jewish community. Undoubtedly the climate was very different to that of fifty years earlier, and even the Jews of Trieste began to feel a definite insecurity for their future, an insecurity fuelled by the propaganda and accusations with which the Jews were confronted on a daily basis in the antisemitic press. A definite setback for political antisemitism came in 1907 with the clear victory of the Socialist party in the local elections, who, replacing the Liberal-Nationals, took control of the area.<sup>76</sup>

In the same years in which the presence of antisemitism began to be felt in various sectors of the local population, the nationalist fights between Slovenians and Italians ignited a violent anti-Slovenian press campaign in the newspapers associated with the Liberal-National and irredentist parties. Within the City Council, meanwhile, the political fight swiftly changed into the reciprocal exchange of grave insults between Jews and Slovenians. Upon reading *L'Indipendente* and *Il Piccolo*, two openly pro-Italian newspapers, one is shocked by the articulation of the anti-Slovenian discourse, and by the disquieting similarities it presents with the strategies of dissemination used in the antisemitic campaign.

My opinion, after a thorough study of antisemitism and the initial results of a study still underway into the course of anti-Slavism at the end of the nineteenth and start of the twentieth-centuries, is that these forms of intolerance fed one another, despite being opposed to each other. One notices this when analyzing the themes and methods used in the antisemitic and anti-Slovenian propaganda in the local press, and when examining the language and stereotypes brought into the field by proponents of such racist thoughts.

We find, at the very forefront of the movement, amongst the most fierce proponents of anti-Slavism, a group made up of individuals of Jewish origins who were politically orientated towards the irredentist, pro-Italian Liberal-National party. Similar prejudices, no longer hushed up, but publicly expressed, can also be witnessed within the same Jewish community, with its decision in the 1890s that it no longer wanted the Jews of Ljubljana to fall under its jurisdiction, as it considered them, as Slavs, to be on a different cultural and linguistic level. In 1913 similar grievances were found with a small group of Polish Jews present in the city, despite Chief Rabbi Zvi Perez Chajes's attempts at mediation in the name of Jewish solidarity.<sup>77</sup> This demonstrates on the one hand the high level of integration that the Triestine Jews had reached within the society of Trieste, from which it borrowed its nationalist prejudices; whilst simultaneously highlighting the fracture taking place within the traditional Jewish world and its values.

An analysis of the period from 1880 - 1915 is fundamental in order to

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<sup>76</sup> For a detailed reconstruction of the whole period described here, see Ibid., 251-302.

<sup>77</sup> Catalan, *La Comunità ebraica di Trieste*, 189-191.

understand the roots of the anti-Slavic racism, and the origins of several prejudices and stereotypes, which, primarily during the fascist period, but also in the years following the secondo World War, were largely elaborated and disseminated in a context vastly different to that of the late nineteenth and early the twentieth-century.<sup>78</sup>

Indeed, it is necessary on a methodological level to distinguish between the various periods and relative contexts in which the proponents of the anti-Slavic racist discourse acted, because despite being offshoots of a common root, the prejudices and stereotypes tended to transform and adapt themselves over time to the context and language used, until they formed a sort of repertoire.

Anti-Slavism grew in Trieste during the 1880s in the irredentist ranks of the Liberal-national party and in those of the Democratic-Republican Irredentism. To give an idea of the span of these events: the first phase was from 1880-1907, the second - and most virulent - from 1908 to the outbreak of World War I.

It is not, indeed, a coincidence that in the 1880s one witnesses a sudden increase in anti-Slavic discourses in the pages of the clandestine irredentist publications, smuggled to Trieste from the nearby Italian kingdom. During the 1880s and until 1907, the year of the electoral defeat of the Liberal-Nationals, the anti-Slavic discourse in Trieste was prevalently centred on the idea that the Slavs and above all the Slovenians, were an inferior population with respect to the Italians, in that they were not civil, lacked culture and were incapable of creating a ruling class.<sup>79</sup> It is precisely in this period, indeed, as Marta Verginella has demonstrated,<sup>80</sup> that the establishment of a new Slovenian middle-class was consolidated, a class which was active on economic and financial levels, and quickly able to build an important business and cultural network, which reinforced its position and identity in the territory, thus cementing the Slovenian presence in the city. This process brought a halt to the Slovenians' assimilation into Italian culture and society, a process which had been growing from the birth of the free-port. Also in the course of the 1880s and 1890s, the exchange between the Italians and Slovenians became increasingly ignited by the nationalist claims: the Liberal-National Italians, who led the municipality, obstructed all initiatives of a nationalist nature proposed by Slovenian representatives

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<sup>78</sup> On this first phase, see the considerations of Cattaruzza, *L'Italia e il confine orientale*, 48 and following. The author dedicates several paragraphs to the genesis of the irredentist discourse, dwelling on the anti-Slavism.

<sup>79</sup> See the pioneering work of Enzo Collotti, "Sul razzismo antislavo", in *Nel nome della razza. Il razzismo nella storia d'Italia, 1870-1945*, ed. Alberto Burgio, (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1999); and also the brilliant work of Marta Verginella, "Il postcoloniale in Italia: antislavismo, razzismo di frontiera?", *Aut Aut* 349 (2011): 30-49. Also useful for a wider contextualisation of the phenomenon are the considerations of Alberto Burgio, *Nonostante Auschwitz. Il "ritorno" del razzismo in Europa*, (Roma: Derive e Approdi, 2010).

<sup>80</sup> See: Verginella, "Sloveni a Trieste tra Sette e Ottocento."

in the City Council. They were, of course, unfailingly supported in their actions by the Italian press.

After 1910, and following the foundation of the nationalist movement in Italy, Trieste entered a new phase in the articulation of the anti-Slavic discourse, which became increasingly inflamed by the nationalist irredentism, promoted by Ruggero Timeus. The latter was the most active representative of this current of thought. Fiercely opposed to the politics of the Liberal-Nationals, he forcefully introduced several new elements into the discourse, amongst which was the concept of race, which had, up until that point, been extraneous to the polemic.<sup>81</sup>

The reiterated use of the collective single “the Slovenian”; the repeated metaphors which focused on race, and the continued dehumanisation of the so-called “enemy” found in many texts drawn up by supporters of the nationalist and xenophobic current of Triestine irredentism, amongst whom the figure of the anti-Semite Vittorio Cuttin also looms large, allow us to identify the common discursive elements between political antisemitism and antislavism, on which there is still much study to be done.

The aforementioned Ruggero Timeus, who is still today remembered as a hero of the fatherland for his death in the First World War, and to whom the Museo del Risorgimento di Trieste dedicates a significant space, was not an outsider to anti-Jewish prejudices.

In his *Scritti politici* (1911-1915), whilst commenting on Virgino Gayda's text on Austria<sup>82</sup>, he dedicates an entire paragraph to the Jewish presence in the Habsburg territories. Timeus' description of the Jews is a classical conglomeration of conventional stereotypes: first he refers to their cosmopolitan ways, and extrapolates from this their presumed lack of loyalty to the fatherland. Next he dwells upon the stereotypes of Jewish intelligence, their attachment to money, the practice of usury, and the idea of a conspiracy for their domination of society, etc.

Amongst the many populations who fight a passionate and bloody war, there is one social group who has its own distinctive characteristics, and which does not belong to any of the nations who fight, while simultaneously belonging to all of them. This social group is the Jews. [...] They are distinguished from the rest of us by their rapacious avidity, and their great and vivid intelligence. [...] the Jewish merchant in Vienna who deals with Trieste leaves the Austrian capital as an Austrian and arrives after twelve hours on the train in the irredentist capital of Italy as

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<sup>81</sup> On Timeus, see: Diego Redivo, *Ruggero Timeus: la via imperialista dell'irredentismo triestino*, (Trieste: Italo Svevo, 1996), where, however, this perspective is not addressed. On the anti-Slavism of Timeus, see: Collotti, “Sul razzismo antislabo” and Verginella, “Il postcoloniale in Italia.”

<sup>82</sup> Virgino Gayda, *La crisi di un Impero: pagine sull'Austria contemporanea*, (Turin: Fratelli Bocca, 1913).

an irredentist.<sup>83</sup>

In 'Timeus' statements, a profound break emerges between the new nationalist and xenophobic irredentists and the Liberal-National irredentism, where there was a significant Jewish presence, particularly in the group's leadership. It seems to me that this develops as a paradigm of intolerance towards the 'other' emerges. In the decades following World War I Trieste would change from the hospitable and inclusive city it had been until the 1880s, to an authentic breeding ground for Italian racist nationalism.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, I retain that for the case of Imperial Trieste until the second half of the nineteenth-century, beside the well-defined figure of the "port Jews" another model may also function, that of the "port-merchants," which included the various ethnic/religious communities. This figure, protected by laws for the defense of civil and religious rights, in the private sphere was linked to the family and place of origin; whilst on a public level would work alongside individuals of the same religion, as well as of other religions, in economic and social activities useful to the growth and development of the financial and mercantile market of the free port. Readiness to collaborate with partners from other religious faiths in order to pursue a common objective was one of this figure's key traits. This mechanism for the progressive inclusion of the 'other', and of the latter's acculturation and integration without excessive trauma into the rest of the Triestine society was, however, interrupted in the second half of the nineteenth-century, when the Adriatic city was involved in nationalist fights, political antisemitism and nationalist xenophobia. The roots of the fascist racism, which was already raging in the 1920s against the Slovenian population, and which from 1938 also turned on the Jewish population, can be seen in the final years of the nineteenth-century: a period during which the city began to show its 'dark side', quickly becoming an authentic breeding ground of racism for the rest of Italy.

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<sup>83</sup> Ruggero Timeus, *Scritti Politici (1911-1915)*, (Trieste: Tip. Swl Lloyd Triestino, 1929), 173-175, 173. See other antisemitic affirmations of Ruggero Timeus in: *Trieste. Italiani e slavi. Il governo austriaco. L'irredentismo*, (Rome: Gaetano Garzoni Provenzano Editore, 1914), 99, 105.

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**Odessity: In Search of Transnational Odessa  
(or “Odessa the best city in the world: All about Odessa and a  
great many jokes”)<sup>1</sup>**

*by Joachim Schlör*

**Abstract**

*This article presents a research into, and a very personal approach to, the “Odessa myth.” It traces the emergence and development of an idea – that Odessa is different from all other cities. One main element of this mythical or legendary representation is the multi-cultural and transnational character of the city: Not only does Odessa have a Greek, an Armenian, a Jewish, a French and an Italian history, in addition to the more obvious Russian, Ukrainian, Soviet, and post-Soviet narratives, it also finds itself in more than just one place – wherever “Odessity” as a state of mind, a memory, a literary image is being celebrated and constructed.*

In recent years I have become more and more concerned with the notion of “Self and the City”, the idea of a personal relationship between the researcher/writer and the city he/she is looking at and walking through. So what I present here is part of an ongoing project – a building site of sorts – that connects me with the city of Odessa. One could say that I have been trying to write a book about Odessa since the end of 1993, and part of the reason for my difficulty in completing the task (or even beginning it) is the tenuous and ephemeral nature of the place itself. Where is Odessa? Or even: Does Odessa really exist? I would like to take you on a journey to and through a place of whose existence (in history and in the present) we cannot really be sure.

Of course there is enough historical evidence to suggest that in 1794, after the Russian Empire conquered the land in the south from the Ottoman Empire, a city had been founded near the ruins of the fortress of *hadshi-bey*, and that its name referred to the existence of an ancient Greek settlement called “Odessos.” We also know that the German girl

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<sup>1</sup> This text was written as a presentation for several research seminars in Southampton and Oxford. I have decided to leave its partly improvised and colloquial character and not force it into what German colleagues call the “wissenschaftliche Korsett” – but I do hope it can still live up to the usual academic standards. Many thanks to Cristiana Facchini for her useful comments. The subtitle has been borrowed from “Welcome to Spirit of Odessa”: <http://www.odessit.com/zhenya/> (accessed 16/06/2010).

who ruled Russia at that time (Catherine the Great) took an interest in the new territory – insisting even on a female ending to the name. Catherine invited merchants and craftsmen from all over Europe to come to Odessa to build the port and the city. Both grew rapidly, and by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Odessa was the fourth largest city in the Russian Empire, after Moscow, St. Petersburg, and Warsaw, and “an interface,” as Patricia Herlihy has called it, “between Russia and the outside world.”<sup>2</sup> The 5<sup>th</sup> Duke of Richelieu, a refugee from the French Revolution, was the first governor of *Novorussija*; he fostered internal migration of Russians and Ukrainians but also encouraged the settlement of Jews (who had been living scattered throughout the region before 1794). Further, his multi-cultural growth initiatives were extended to Bulgarian immigrants and other subjects of the Ottoman Empire as well as Germans and Swiss settlers who developed agriculture in the hinterlands. Grain trade made Odessa grow, the city received the status of a free port in 1817 but lost it again in 1859. After the 1860s, some observers saw the city in decline, but it maintained an important economic role within the empire.<sup>3</sup> However, Anti-Jewish violence, pogroms, the revolution of 1905, and the subsequent wave of emigration eventually destroyed the unique cultural balance that had once existed there.

Thus the idea of Odessa has an anchor in history. But although the “Odessa myth” refers to the historical existence of the city, it also goes beyond that. One of the products of my relationship with Odessa is a small booklet published for the “Days of Jewish Culture” in Berlin in 1999. Thanks to this festival, we were able to invite our friends from Odessa – painters, singers, photographers – and we all discussed, celebrated, saw movies and plays (and swam through a sea of Vodka) for two weeks. A second product is an article published in the Yearbook for Jewish Studies at the Central European University in Budapest.<sup>4</sup> In both cases, I have widely used the virtual space of the Internet for my research into the “virtual” city of Odessa. Surfing the web can lead you to Odessa, Texas, and their football team, or to Odessa, Delaware, or indeed to a lady film star with the name of Odessa Munroe. You might

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<sup>2</sup> Patricia Herlihy, *Odessa. A History 1794-1914*, (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press 1986), preface, VII.

<sup>3</sup> Frederick W. Skinner, “Trends in Planning Practices: The Building of Odessa, 1794-1917”, in *The City in Russian History*, ed. Michael F. Hamm, (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press 1976), 139-159.

<sup>4</sup> Joachim Schlör, “Sieben Werst von der Hölle. Jüdisches Leben in Odessa”, in *Odessa Odessa. Die Stadt und ihr Traum. Eine universale Liebeserklärung aus Berlin*, ed. Shelly Kupferberg, (Berlin 1999) 23-45; Id., “‘On the Third Hand...’ News from a Rediscovered Civilization in Memories of Odessa”, CEU Jewish Studies Yearbook 2003, <http://web.ceu.hu/jewishstudies/yb03/15schlor.pdf> accessed 16/06/2010.

also find the picture of a hat called “Odessa” but in the end, you will find your way to the countless places Odessites (which is how they call themselves, rather than “Odessians”) have made their home in the last two decades. One description/definition of Odessa that I found (presumably written by nostalgic transplants) goes like this:

Odessa, located in Ukraine. According to the people who were born there, the city is the capital of the world. And since the world doesn’t know it yet, the many odessites immigrated to other countries to spread the word.<sup>5</sup>

A second entry “urban dictionary”-style entry reads:

1. A large port-city in **Ukraine**, located on the **Black sea**. Has borders with **Romania**, **Moldova**, and a sea-border with **Turkey**.
2. The cultural capital of Eastern Europe.
3. The crime capital of Eastern Europe.
4. Probably the only city in the world where **thievery** and **deception** are not only seen as normal jobs, but actually seen as kinds of art.
5. A city where presumably 40% of the population are Jews, though they would not admit it.
6. Half of the Russian humour books’ stories takes place in this city.
7. Some of the greatest thieves and robbers of all times grew-up in this city.
8. A city, whose criminals could probably buy the police of the city if they wanted to, but they shouldn’t since the police respects them.
9. A city that before the **Revolution** was tax-free, and was a center of attention for tourists, merchants, and cultural experts from all around Europe, but under the **Soviet government** lost it’s beauty and liveliness. Hopefully will rise again in the future and regain its’ greatness.
10. If you visit the city, and by the time you return nothing was stolen from you, or you still have more than half the money you came with, nobody will believe you was in Odessa.

### *Ab, Odessa... The pearl of the seas<sup>6</sup>*

And this is not an isolated document. There are indeed hundreds of them, mostly found on the personal homepages of people who miss their city. Zhenya Rozinskiy headlines his homepage with – “*I came to the United States of America in 1991. I was born in Odessa in 1973.*” Likewise,

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=odessa> accessed 24/06/10.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. (spelling as in original).



Dima Fischer from Israel writes “*that’s where I lived before: Odessa.*”<sup>7</sup> What emerges from these many personal testimonies may be summed up as ‘Odessity’. The accidental echo of the word ‘city’ provides the first clue. It refers to an urban element: it means being part of an entity that is called Odessa and that exists somewhere – somewhere far away, and yet, wherever you are, you have taken a piece of it along with you, to Tel-Aviv – “*am I the only Odessite here? Please mail!*” – or to New York, Berlin, and Sydney. It is special, it distinguishes you. Its very foreign-ness does that. Obviously, Odessa is not the only city in the world to evoke such uncanny feelings of nostalgia and belonging. Perhaps we might show that it has much in common with other multi-cultural melting pots – border cities and port cities such as Trieste (Triestinità?)<sup>8</sup> and New York (the “New York state of mind” Billy Joel sings about). An Odessa Web Guest Book gathers together messages from representatives of ‘Odessity’ all over the world. Here are some of them:

- “We were impressed by the presentation of Odessa page. We are the former Odessa citizens, now living in Melbourne, would like to maintain contacts odessitami.”
- “I found the Odessa page in the internet. It is great. Thank you very much from all the Odessits abroad.”
- “A couple days ago I typed ‘Odessa’ just for fun in the Netscape’s Netsearch and came across odessit.com site. This is really great that you have the pictures of our beautiful city there.”
- “As Odessit, I like your homepage very much, it appealed to me.”
- “You have a very cool homepage. I’m from Odessa as well!”
- “I’ve stumbled upon your web page, and wanted to thank you. What a tribute to my favorite city! Your Odessa page made me feel so nostalgic...”
- “I like your page very much and I’m proud of us, people from Odessa.”
- “This stuff is great. I feel at home!!! Thank you for this, and good luck!!! God bless Odessa!!! (I esli vru tak shab ya zdoh!)”
- “You actually warmed up hearts of many of us who left Odessa. For the rest of my ZEMLYAKI! Dear odessits, let’s stay in touch and even reunite more often, we all share the same love to ODESSA.”

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<sup>7</sup> “Welcome to Spirit of Odessa”: <http://www.odessit.com/zhenya/> accessed 16/06/2010.

<sup>8</sup> See Katia Pizzi, “‘Quale Triestinità?’ Voices and Echoes from Italian Trieste”, in *Kosovelova Poetika/ Kosovel’s Poetics*, special issue of *Primerjalna književnost* 28 (2005), 239-249; University of London, Institute for Germanic and Romance Studies, IGRS Staff Papers (<http://sas-space.sas.ac.uk/658/>); Angelo Ara, Claudio Magris, *Triest. Eine literarische Hauptstadt in Mitteleuropa*, (München : Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag), 2007.

- “I can’t thank you enough for this little piece of home away from home. I now reside in Kansas City and miss Odessa too much.”
  - “I loved the pictures. I suddenly felt a rush of nostalgia. We definitely used to live in one of the most beautiful cities in the world. Too bad we couldn’t take it with us. But the memories are always with us.”
  - “Finally there is a page to meet old friends and hear native language.”
  - “Spasiba! It is so good to feel that your past is not so away and maybe not away at all.”
  - “Greetings to surfers in Odessa from the Pearl of the Orient!” [from Hong Kong]
  - “Oh boy! Let me hold my tears there. [...] I consider it being a gift to be from Odessa. And here you are as proud as I am. We have a lot in common (who knows maybe relatives or enemies at least).”
  - “There is no one in the whole entire world like a true Odessit!
- I am very glad that such site does exist, the site where you can become young again.”<sup>9</sup>

And so on. “*Too bad we couldn’t take it with us!*” – some people even exclaim. Quite reasonably, what constitutes the charm and allure of Odessa – and the historically positive image of the city (particularly in Jewish contexts) – has perhaps less to do with the 19<sup>th</sup> century reality of the place than the with *mythos* evoked by certain émigré writers and publicists in Palestine beginning in the 1920s.<sup>10</sup> Of course, ‘Odessa’ is an invention, an image, a longing – just like that ‘certain Berlin’ of the 1920s, the ‘Paris de lumière,’ or any other image of a city that has been remoulded in literature.<sup>11</sup> As a cultural historian I am of course interested in the ‘reality’, and I have the deepest respect for archives, and especially for the work of the wonderful Lilia Belausova in the State Region Archives of Odessa (housed in the former Brody Synagogue). But I also know that ‘historical’ realities, reconstructed from archival sources, especially when they concern whole cities, are no less ‘invented’ than the personal memories found in autobiographies or the testimony given in literary depictions by authors from Pushkin to Babel, Katayev and even more contemporary writers.<sup>12</sup> Portraits and the literary imaginings of

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<sup>9</sup> <http://odessa.lk.net/english/forum/geobook.html> accessed 16/06/2010.

<sup>10</sup> See Nicolas V. Iljine ed., *Odessa Memories* (Samuel and Althea Stroum Book, Seattle, Wash.: University of Washington Press, 2003).

<sup>11</sup> For Berlin, see publications by Michael Bienert, *Die eingebildete Metropole. Berlin im Feuilleton der Weimarer Republik*, (Stuttgart: Metzler 1992) and his very impressive website <http://www.text-der-stadt.de/> (accessed May 4, 2011); for Paris, cf. Karlheinz Stierle, *Der Mythos von Paris. Zeichen und Bewußtsein der Stadt*, (München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag 1998).

<sup>12</sup> There is no complete literary history of Odessa as yet, but the homepage of the State Museum of Literature provides very useful information: <http://museum.odessa.net/litmuseum/english/> (accessed May 4, 2011).

Odessa may even prove to be more powerful as evidence and ultimately more reliable than motivated selections and historical re-constructions. This is why I would like to present not yet another history of the city, but a different conceptual approach that attempts to integrate the various temporal and spatial layers.

In any case, there *is* something different about Odessa. I couldn't – and I guess I wouldn't – start the introduction to any other (serious) city – Berlin, London, Jerusalem – in this way. But this difference in perception brings us closer to the heart of our question. Yes, this has been a multi-ethnic city from the outset, with Jewish, Greek, Armenian, French, Italian, German and Russian communities, and I will discuss this point more in detail in a few pages. But the dynamic ideal and lasting impression of the city is that it – she, rather – managed to turn each of these communities into “Odessites.” Although in reality this harmonious diversity is long gone, the ideal, the dream survived, and lives on today, in the coffeehouses of Tel-Aviv, on the banks of Brighton Beach in Brooklyn, or in the “Odessa Club” on Berlin's Mulackstraße.

Indeed, I had my first experience with this special nostalgia for Odessa in a café in Tel-Aviv. You ask people where they immigrated from, and the usual reaction might be interest, or disdain, or pity, when they say “Berlin” or “Warsaw” or maybe “Baghdad.” But when they say “Odessa,” then somehow everyone at the table leans back, smiling, and says: “Ach, Odessa. That's different.”

Amos Elon has described Jerusalem as a “City of Mirrors” where all inhabitants see themselves in the eyes of the other, where all religions confront each other only to injure themselves, where Israelis and Palestinians fight for the same piece of earth, whereas Tel-Aviv has been compared to a white canvas on which all newcomers would paint their

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This is how “Odessa Tourism” presents the place: “The two hundred year history of Odessa has included about 300 distinguished writers, all represented in the 24 halls of Odessa Literature Museum, established in 1977. Located near Deribasovskaya Street and the Odessa Opera House this magnificent palace with luxuriant halls was designed by L. Otton. The former mansion of Prince Gagarin now exists as part of the city's cultural life. The building itself has belonged to the Odessa Literature and Artistic Society since the beginning of the XX century. Pushkin, Gogol, Mitskevich, Babel, Franko, Lesya Ukrainka, Korolenko, Bunin, Katayev, Kotsyubinskyy, Bagritskyy, Olesha, Ilf & Petrov... This list of the most eminent writers can be continued, and one can see personal belongings, autographs of the writers, first editions of their books, engravings, age-old placards, and rare issues of Odessa newspapers in the museum... Visitors can smile at the sight of a funny drawing of Yuriy Olesha and see a cap that once belonged to Ilya Ilf. The Literature Museum is finely decorated and each hall has its peculiar characteristics.”

(<http://www.odessatourism.in.ua/en/dostoprimechatelnosti/muzeynayaprogulka/literaturnymuzeyktoblkogdavodesseplnoy/default.aspx?full=1>)

own colours.<sup>13</sup> What, then, could be a fitting metaphor for Odessa? It is a stage. It is a market place. It is a spa. It is a ride on a bus with twelve different passengers, or maybe it is also a phone directory. But first the bus:

“One of the most striking features of ‘homo odessiensis’ is a sense of humor, paired with a weirdly laid-back attitude to situations which most Western Europeans would find unbearable. A quick sample. It is hot and sticky on the eight-seated minibus service running past Privoz [the market], in the middle of rush hour. Constantly, passengers of varying sizes and circumferences push past each other, trying to get in and out. There is an average of twelve passengers on the bus at any one time. The driver makes little jokes and warns every new arrival that due to a closed road he is going to have to make a detour and that traveling with him means taking part in an experiment. Every hundred meters he has to stop to fill up the water in the radiator. An ancient tram wobbles up to the back bumper and impatiently rings its bell. Two young girls on the back seat giggle away like a pair of hens, an old woman constantly shoves everyone, the airlessness on the bus increases, outside, the temperature is above 30°C – but everyone stays calm. Only one elderly gentleman fidgets in his seat and gets off the bus at the earliest possible stop. Upon which the driver dryly comments, ‘That one has failed the experiment!’ The comment is greeted with great hilarity.”<sup>14</sup>

The internationality of Odessa today – spread over the whole world – reflects, I would say, its former *internal* internationality. And we can, for the purpose of this paper, imagine the six or eight or twelve people on the bus as the different minorities in the city, the southern outlet and outpost of the Empire. The drivers change, from Catherine the Great and her first governor, the duc de Richelieu, through the long list of governors and mayors in the 19<sup>th</sup> century up to the prominent figures of the Revolution, of Soviet Odessa and the post-Soviet period in the Ukraine with mayor Eduard Gurwitz (who is Jewish in fact, but wants to be called an “Odessit” first). I went to Odessa for the first time in 1993, with the idea that it would help me to better understand Tel-Aviv.

#### *1993 Diary*

*Anyone coming here with an old map of the town has been dealt a good hand. The streets have been given back their old names, which evoke the history that has gone*

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<sup>13</sup> Amos Elon, *Jerusalem: City of Mirrors*, (Boston: Little, Brown 1989); Joachim Schlör, *Tel-Aviv: From Dream to City*, (London: Reaktion Books 1999).

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.odessaglobe.com/english/books/odessa-facetten-einer-stadt-im-wandel.html> accessed 16/06/2010.

*before, that may return, that is certainly longed for. The ethnic groups, Greeks, Armenians, Jews, who were responsible for Odessa's economic rise, unparalleled elsewhere in Europe, are once again represented on the street maps, though they are hardly visible as segments of the population – but that may change. Anything may change. The names of the city's founders, of Catherine and her first governor, Count Richelieu, are back. The Café Richelieu at the top of the great Steps has gone, but the desire for a new café in the city centre was voiced soon after the collapse of communism [and has now been fulfilled, in a peculiar way, by a restaurant calling itself 'Déjà-Vu' which uses Soviet and American memorabilia to recreate the Cold War, something I would not have expected in 1993]. Walking (or riding on a bus) like this, hesitantly, associatively, in circles, down one street, back up another, is the only way to explore this Odessa, for the guidebooks are even more confused than anyone else.*

This is, quite obviously, an effect of the long period of time that has passed since the Odessa's heyday and the immense gap in memory that has resulted. There is no living memory – we have to search for evidence in old books and memoirs. In terms of Jewish history and memory, this is quite a common sight in many European cities: People trying to “read” a former presence into derelict houses, or even celebrating “Jewish culture” in places where Jews no longer live, in Berlin's Scheunenviertel, in the former ghetto of Venice, in Krakow's Kazimierz district.

Metaphors can only take you so far. But still, let us try to formulate some questions. How did the passengers on our bus interact with each other? How did they communicate? What were the languages spoken among them? What were the fields of co-operation between them, and which were the areas of conflict? Maria Vassilikou, in her very important study on Greek-Jewish inter-ethnic relations in Odessa,<sup>15</sup> shows us the two sides of this coin quite clearly. Yes, there was a great deal of fruitful collaboration between Jewish and Greek merchants at port, but there was also an important complicity between the two rising national movements. Jews learned from Greeks; when the Greek community built a girls' school, so did the Jewish community soon afterwards. At the same time however – and in spite of so many productive and amicable relationships - anti-Jewish violence was still known to flare up around Greek orthodox holidays.

What were the differences of use of the city's space? Did Moldovians live in Moldavanka, Greeks on Greckaja Street, Jews on Evreskaja Street, and Germans in Lustdorf or Friedrichsruhe? Was there intermarriage

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<sup>15</sup> Maria Vassilikou, “Greeks and Jews in Salonika and Odessa: Inter-ethnic Relations in Cosmopolitan Port Cities”, in *Port Jews: Jewish Communities in Cosmopolitan Maritime Trading Centres, 1550–1950*, ed. David Cesarani, (London: Frank Cass Publishers 2002), 155-172.

and conversion, and in which way did these developments help to shape and inform the cosmopolitan “odessit” (for whom identity was not necessarily derived from nationality)? Does the fact that the passengers on our bus make up such a diverse crowd have a positive or rather a negative impact on the development of the city? Most of the sources I (and others<sup>16</sup>) have found tend toward the former. But there are some critical voices as well, assembled by Patricia Herlihy in her groundbreaking *Odessa: A History, 1794-1914*, published in 1986. She quotes a Russian émigré from 1854: “I cannot say that the society of Odessa was the most agreeable. Through this mixture of nationalities, there were a great many closed circles and coteries, and no extensive society.”<sup>17</sup> And Herlihy comments:

All the ethnic communities resisted assimilation, but all were touched by the city’s cultural ferment. Odessa, for example, was an early home to reform movements within Judaism and of Zionism. The Greek society for national liberation, the *Hetairia*, also found a supportive atmosphere in the city. Nationalists – Bulgarians, Poles, Ukrainians – as well as Decembrists formed conspirational groups in the city. Italian stores exhibited signs such as ‘Evviva Garibaldi’ or ‘Evviva l’Unità d’Italia’. When, for example, a Masonic lodge was founded in Odessa in 1817, its membership included several government officials – even Langeron! [Count Louis Alexandre Andrault de Langéron, governor of New Russia, 1815-1823] A German doctor declared that Odessa was the freest city in Russia. [...] But there were disadvantages in the cultural mix as well. The ethnic communities, looking inward, never formed a united and effective political front. As the German Dr. Kohl observed, ‘the heterogeneous character of the population may perhaps account for its more than common deficiency in public spirit.’ The cosmopolitan composition of the city, which charmed so many visitors, hampered but did not halt the city’s physical and cultural development.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> See Alexis Hofmeister, *Selbstorganisation und Bürgerlichkeit. Jüdisches Vereinswesen in Odessa um 1900* (Schriften des Simon-Dubnow-Instituts, Bd. 8), Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2007); Tanja Penter, *Odessa 1917. Revolution an der Peripherie*, (Cologne and Weimar: Böhlau 2000); Karl Schlögel, “The Sidewalk. Pavement. Surfaces. Hieroglyphics”, in his *Rendering Time according to Space. Geopolitics and the History of Civilization*, translated by Nedra E. Bickham, <http://www.litrix.de/mmo/priv/10952-WEB.pdf> accessed 24/06/10.

<sup>17</sup> Patricia Herlihy, *Odessa. A history 1794-1914*, (Cambridge, Mass.: distributed by Harvard University Press for the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute 1986), 129.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 130.

Such debates about the positive and negative aspects of the “cultural mix” can be found in other port cities of the period.<sup>19</sup> They can be seen as early laboratories for cosmopolitanism, a concept usually ascribed to later periods. But this kind of cosmopolitanism – which seemed to work well in terms of business arrangements, trading, and even inter-cultural connections, was not strong enough to create a lasting atmosphere of tolerance and freedom. As we will see with the following examples, “Odessity” became stuck in the struggles between nationalities and nationalism.

### On Evrejskaja Street

The first street on our bus tour is Evreskaja, the Jewish Street, and I will stay here much longer than in the other places.<sup>20</sup> Steven Zipperstein was the first (in 1985) to research the history of “The Jews of Odessa” and I can only point every reader to this valid and incredibly relevant book that traces the history and development of the Odessian Jewry from the earliest settlements to the Enlightenment period (beginning around 1840), to the building of the Brody synagogue and the succession of rabbis (Rabbi Schwabacher most memorable among them), to the pogroms of 1871 and 1881 and the emergence of Zionism with Leon Pinsker’s *Auto-Emancipation*, 14 years before Theodor Herzl’s *Der Judenstaat*. The “Odessa Committee,” part of the Zionist “Hovevei Zion” group founded in Odessa in 1882, was partly responsible for the foundation of the city of Tel-Aviv in 1909, and supported the famous Herzlija High School, the first public building in the young Hebrew city. Important political and cultural figures – from Mayor Meir Dizengoff to the thinker Ahad Ha’am, the poet Chaim Nachman Bialik and the city’s historian Asher Drujanow – had come from Odessa. What is today a street name in Tel-Aviv, had once been a home a house in Odessa.<sup>21</sup>

### 1993 Diary

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<sup>19</sup> *Jewish Culture and History*, vol. 4.2, Special Issue: *Port Jews. Jewish Communities in Cosmopolitan Maritime Trading Centres*, ed. David Cesarani; David Cesarani, Gemma Romain, eds., *Jews and Port Cities 1590-1990. Commerce, Community and Cosmopolitanism*, (London: Valentine Mitchell 2006).

<sup>20</sup> See for an overview Steven M. Zipperstein, *The Jews of Odessa. A Cultural History, 1794-1881*, (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press 1985); Id. *Elusive Prophet. Ahad Ha’am and the Origins of Zionism*, (Los Angeles: University of California Press 1993); Id., “Remapping Odessa, Rewriting Cultural History”, *Jewish Social Studies* New series 2/2 (1996): 21-37; for the early reform period see Alexander Orbach, *New Voices of Russian Jewry: A Study of the Russian-Jewish Press of Odessa in the Era of Great Reforms, 1860-1871*, (Leiden: Brill 1980).

<sup>21</sup> This is very well documented at

<http://www.moria.farlep.net/vjodessa/en/palest.html> accessed 16/06/2010.



*The texts in my luggage are mainly by Jewish authors. My idea, as I walk around Odessa, is that the literature and history of the city's Jews might be appropriate keys to an understanding of the place.*

*The houses themselves have little to tell; the numerous memorial plaques give a false picture. I have with me the memoirs of the Jewish historian Shimon Dubnow, who in 1942 was murdered by the National Socialists in Riga. In his flat in Odessa, "in a large room looking out onto the sea", representatives of a Jewish-nationalist, Zionist-orientated movement used to meet together, by no means united on all points but certainly united in the struggle against rising anti-Semitism. There was Abad Ha'am, "striding up and down the long room, holding his usual cigarette or a glass of tea"; the advocate of a cultural, spiritual form of Zionism; he went to Tel-Aviv in the early 1920s, where his house, close to the Hebrew Gymnasium, became a meeting-place and his library was to form the basis of today's city library, Beit Ariela. There was "the energetic Dizengoff," who came to Jaffa on the Ruslan in 1904, became the spokesman of a group calling itself Achusath Bayit which, with a loan from the Jewish National Fund, built the first sixty houses of the settlement that was named Tel-Aviv, and was mayor of his city until his death in 1936. And there was, "furthermore, the secretary of the Palestine Committee, the lively and active Druyananov," who was to write, in the 1940s, the first book about the new city, Sefer Tel-Aviv. "I believe," writes Dubnow, "that among those who attended those meetings of ours I first saw the young Chaim Nachman Bialik." Bialik came to the old-new land in 1924 after first spending three years in Berlin, and his house was to be the first and most important meeting place for the Hebrew culture that was developing in Tel-Aviv, and a place of pilgrimage for all visitors to Palestine.<sup>22</sup>*

*What all this indicates is that Odessa was a vital staging-post on the Jewish road to Israel. Here I discover how much more is to be found in Odessa than mere pre-history. On the front of Bialik's house at number 9, Vorovskogo Street (previously and now once again called Malaya Arnautskaya) is the bust of a bald man wearing glasses, but surely that cannot be Bialik? No, it is Lenin's brother. A woman coming out of the vehicle entrance to the courtyard looks at me with surprise and slight amusement as I take a picture, apparently photographing the bust but really thinking of the house and of another man whose bust is not here and about whom she knows nothing. She tells her neighbour about me. On my next visit the memorial to Lenin's brother has been ripped out with symbolic violence and the hole roughly filled in.*

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<sup>22</sup> The quotations are from Dubnow's autobiography "My Life" (Kniga zhizni, Russian edition Wilna 1930-1937) which has been published, in German, in a critical edition in three volumes: Verena Dohrn ed., *Shimon Dubnow. Buch meines Lebens. Bände 1-3*, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2005).





*In the afternoon, on the fringes of central Odessa, at the very foot of the hill on which the inner city stands, beyond a railway underpass and past a dreary market, I found the ruined old synagogue. I had heard about it, but when I saw the collapsed walls I was so shaken that the man who had guided me the last part of the way quickly made himself scarce. Only the wall that once held the ark containing the Torah is still standing, and an inscription is partly legible, but the rest, which collapsed simply from weakness, without any external cause, is mere rubble. In the front section, formerly a vestibule, the old Odessa community still has a small synagogue; an old man was asking, in Yiddish, for donations. Beside the synagogue is a matzah bakery, selling much better matzah than the matzah sent from America: after all, this comes from Odessa. A Ukrainian family, lodged in another part of the building, begrudgingly allows me to take photographs.*

*On that occasion I went back up the hill feeling discouraged, but there was little time to dwell on my disappointment. From this point on, things were to happen in rapid succession, meetings and conversations with different individuals one after the other at a such a breath-taking speed that I want to take the time now, in retrospect, to recall that moment of doubt and disillusionment, that feeling which accompanies every journey and is as much a part of it as the anticipation. It will be no good, what's the point of coming here, you're chasing a shadow, to find out anything about the Jews of Odessa you need to go to Brooklyn or Tel-Aviv, here everything is dead and fallen into ruins, it's cold and there's a long road ahead of you. This mood lasted only for a few minutes, but it is an important part of the story.*

*I had arranged to meet an interpreter in front of the Museum of Literature. With Galina, I went into the museum and paid 120 kupyony for the two of us to take the*

*guided tour. Then the door opened and Lena appeared and a whole new world opened up. I listed all the things I wanted to hear about: Odessa in literature, descriptions of Odessa, the city whose image was inseparable from water, the city as a trading port, the Jewish city, the pre-history of Tel-Aviv – this last above all. It seemed and still seems to me most improbable that I should find out precisely what interested me most, but at that point Lena moved her scarf to one side, revealing a Star of David hanging on the chain around her neck, and said: “You’ve come to the right place.” After two minutes we were speaking English to one another. It was difficult for Galina, but she came with us all the same. The museum has twenty galleries, and we saw seventeen of them. The earliest texts about Odessa, accounts by French travellers, the first book printed in Odessa, the first book about Odessa to be published in Odessa. The museum was erected in 1984, at the start of the Gorbachev’s administration; it was the result of a private initiative – the first of many such initiatives in an era which saw the dismantling of many state-sponsored institutions. From the beginning it contained some elements of criticism, but they were small and timid and in those early years any critic faced the threat of KGB censorship. The creator of the collection wanted to follow in the tradition of the city’s literary salons, to present Odessa as a city of literature, a city of books, and to use this building to show the way. The twenty rooms are dedicated to particular themes, and so we walked through salons, debating societies, bookshops and libraries. We walked through a city and it was like reading the chapters in a book, a chronicle of the descriptions and journeys and also a chronicle of wonder: what a city!*

*Lena’s commentary on the museum often ran counter to protocol, adding here, omitting there. Isaak Babel had been accorded only a meagre display cabinet, but Lena’s account of that room was devoted solely to him. She showed a similar deference to Bagritsky, Ilf and Petrov. The heroes of socialist literature in their big glass cases seemed to shrivel up, growing smaller and smaller in the face of the literary truth catching up with them, overtaking them, banishing them to their corners. One small case contains Isaak Babel’s spectacles. Apparently when his wife brought the glasses to him in prison, the NKVD told her he won’t be needing them anymore.*

We met with Anja Misjuk and her husband Mark Naidorf. (In the meantime, Anja has become an expert on Jewish life and history in Odessa.) As we talked, the four of us probed ever deeper into the idea (and the soul) of Odessa. What does literature tell us about the essence of the city? According to Roshanna P. Sylvester, “In his 1913 guide to the city, Grigorii Moskvich wrote that the dream of the ‘essential Odessan’ was to strike it rich and immediately acquire a house, a carriage, and everything else he needed to ‘transform himself (by appearance, of course) into an impeccable British gentleman or blue-blooded Viennese aristocrat’”. She comments further that “Odessans are proud of themselves (not without foundation), flaunting their ability to dress as well as any purebred Parisian or Viennese.” Some places only become real cities when they acquire nicknames that refer to other cities:

this was the case with Tel-Aviv, which some people in the 1920s called ‘Lodz-sur-Mer,’ while others said: “Tel-Aviv? Jeszcze piękniejsze od Paryża!” [Even more beautiful than Paris!] The mirror, no matter how pale or artificially gilded, still reflects the image. “The Odessan was obsessed with appearances giving little regard to ‘spiritual development’ or ‘the inner content of public life,’ the writer complained.” They were “capricious,” “fickle,” preoccupied with fashion, interested only in profit, defined – Sylvester quotes Moskvich’s words once more – by “the passion for quick enrichment, the spirit of enterprise and a rare resourcefulness and shrewdness in business.”<sup>23</sup>

“Obsessed with image” – this was, of course, meant to indicate the superficiality and preoccupation with externals of an urban culture that was spiritually and intellectually inferior to that of St Petersburg, Moscow, Kiev, Warsaw “or even Khar’kov.” Sylvester’s study of the popular press gives ample confirmation of that picture. But in one of the passages she quotes, which are of course intended as criticisms, there lurks an idea which may help us to understand why, despite all these negative judgements, memory has preserved such a positive image of Odessa. One columnist complained that Odessa’s civil society was dominated by the “middle class *meshchanstvo*,” aspirants to what Jeffrey Brooks has called the “new” intelligentsia, people with “cultural pretensions” who “wanted their tastes to be recognized as legitimate [...], wanted to be included in the cultural life largely dominated by the old intelligentsia.” Noting the growing ‘prosperity’ of a new middle class, these journalists felt that they had a pedagogic duty to foster the necessary ‘spiritual development’ to go with it. This was an honourable aim and it is, as I have said, well documented by Sylvester, with a wealth of examples. But here, inspired by no less an authority than Theodor Herzl and his defence of the petty bourgeoisie as the “yeast” of the city,<sup>24</sup> I would like to speak up for “cultural pretensions.” The operative word is “wanted”: “people who wanted their tastes to be recognised.” To me this suggests intention, energy, ambition. What was about to be pedagogically taken in hand and improved was a kind of raw state, something unfinished, still in the making, expectant. Pretension there

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<sup>23</sup> R. P. Sylvester, “Making an Appearance: Urban ‘Types’ and the Creation of Respectability in Odessa’s Popular Press, 1912–1914”, *Slavic Review* 59 (Winter 2000): 802–24, 802.

<sup>24</sup> In a feuilleton titled “The Exhibition of the ‘Treasure’” Theodor Herzl writes about Paris: “You don’t know France if you’re not familiar with her magnificent petty bourgeois. They are the true wealth, the courage, the greatness, the future of this country [...]. They are joyous, diligent and enlightened.” Quoted in the “structured overview” (38) of Theodor Herzl, *Journalistic Stories. Feuilletons*, Edited, selected, translated and with notes by Henry Regensteiner, (Cranbury NJ: Rosemont 2002).

was, certainly, but also a kind of innocence.<sup>25</sup> That civilising mission (which incidentally, with a strange parallelism, has reappeared today among those who seek to protect their image of Odessa from its current immigrants and their ignorance of the city's past) aimed to overcome that innocence, and it cannot be criticised for that. But I would like to argue that that sense of innocence, of expectancy, of hope, has survived as an 'Odessa feeling' among those who emigrated.

The accusation of false pretension, an attitude of mind which according to Ahad Ha'am, for instance, was characteristic of the city's Jews, was not unjustified. But perhaps such criticism failed to recognise what energy, what potential lies in this apparent 'falseness'. Jewish Palestine, born in Odessa, was animated by similar notions of perfectibility, ideas about the 'new man' and the 'new Jew' who would build up a perfect society of farmers and warriors and forget about life in the Diaspora. But History cunningly ensured that the experiences of impatience, of starting afresh, of pretension, of life in the Diaspora, came in with the immigrants and turned Israel into the multi-faceted society it is today.

Vladimir Ze'ev Jabotinsky celebrated this heritage. Politically correct persons cringe when they hear the name. Jabotinsky? Isn't he the spiritual father of Begin, Sharon and the Etzel – terrorists, dreamers of a Greater Israel? But political correctness, I am sorry to say, has no place in Odessa. For my guides in Odessa, Anja and Lena, and maybe for the entire city, he is the most important journalist and writer of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. His book *Paterno*, [The Five] – originally published in Russian in 1936 – was only recently translated into English by Michael Katz, with the assistance of Anja Misjuk. Writing about the "springtime" of his life and of his city, "our carefree Black Sea capital with acacias growing along its steep banks," Jabotinsky chronicles the lives of five children in the Milgrom family and their different orientations, choices, and fates. In the background, Odessa gleams. Their stories are intimately related to the city of their birth and experience. All this is set before the background of a beloved city:

"To the present day, if I squint, I can recall, albeit through a mist that obscures the details, that large square, a monument to the noble architecture of foreign masters of the first third of the nineteenth century, and witness to the serene elegance of the old-fashioned taste of the first builders of our town – Richelieu, de Ribas, Vorontsov, and the

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<sup>25</sup> For the cultural interpretation of the "gangster" images, see also Matthias Stadelman, "Von jüdischen Ganoven zu sowjetischen Helden: Odessas Wandlungen in den Liedern Leonid Utesovs", *Jahrbuch des Simon-Dubnow-Instituts* 2 (2003): 333-358.

entire pioneering generation of merchants and smugglers with their Italian and Greek surnames. Ahead of me – the front staircase to the municipal library and, on the left, against the background of a broad, almost boundless bay, is the peristyle of the Duma: neither would disgrace Corinth or Pisa. To the right, I see the first houses on Italian Street, in my time known as Pushkin Street, since it was there the poet wrote *Onegin*; turning around, there is the English Club, and farther off in the distance, the left façade of the municipal theatre: these were built at different times but all with one and the same love of *the foreign spirit of the city* (Roman and Hellenistic) with its incomprehensible name, as if borrowed from the legend of a kingdom ‘to the east of the sun and west of the moon.’”<sup>26</sup>

In the next citation Jabotinsky describes a meeting with the other members of the literary circle in Odessa, and he notes something very important for our question:

“Looking back at all this some thirty years later, I think that the most curious thing about it was the good-natured fraternization of nationalities. All eight or ten tribes of old Odessa met in that club, and in fact it never occurred to anyone, even in silence, to note who was who. All this changed a few years later, but at the dawn of the last century we genuinely got along.”<sup>27</sup>

It is not really important whether or not this account is true. This is the image he had in mind – of a city (and a youth, an innocence) lost. The “foreign spirit” of the city made it a possible home for everyone who was foreign. In 1897 – one year before Jabotinsky left Odessa for the first time – one counted circa 17 babies and 123 children between the ages of one and nine years for every one hundred Jewish mothers, 13 and 96 for the Russian mothers, 12 and 75 for Ukrainians, 10 and 55 for the Poles, 8 and 62 for the Germans. Let’s return to our bus and see what happened in other parts of the city.

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<sup>26</sup> Vladimir Jabotinsky, *The Five. A Novel of Jewish Life in Turn-of-the-Century Odessa*, Translated from the Russian by Michael R. Katz, (Ithaca and London: Cornell UP 2005), 14-15 [my italics, JS].

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 15.

### On Puschkinskaja and Greckaja Streets

With enlightenment and modernisation, Odessa became more of a Russian-speaking city. Although the Chief Rabbi of Odessa, Schwabacher, who came from a black forest town in Germany, never gave up his tradition of delivering sermons in German, his community moved towards the Russian language. One product of this development is the emergence of a Russian-Jewish literature, or a Jewish literature in Russian, with its main exponent in Isaac Babel. Although he is one of the most important Jewish writers of his generation, and although the stories such as “How it was done in Odessa” have their Jewish heroes, gangsters and thieves, Babel insists on Odessa's inherent *Russianness*,” as Janneke van de Stadt has put it. In Babel’s own words:

“Aside from the gentlemen who bring [to Petersburg] a little sun and many sardines in exotic wrapping, I believe we shall soon see the fecund, vital influence of the Russian South, the Russian Odessa--perhaps (*qui sait?*), the only city in Russia where a Russian Maupassant whom need so much may be born. Small signs are tickling in already auguring the future: I have in mind the Odessa singers (Iza Kremer in particular), with their small voice but full of joy, beautifully expressed joy, with their vigor, lightness of touch, and their charming – now melancholy, now touching – feeling for life – good, mean and extraordinarily – *quand même et malgré tout* – interesting ...”<sup>28</sup>

Next to Babel, there is Anna Akhmatova, pseudonym of Anna Andreyevna Gorenko, born 1889 in Bolshoy Fontan. She died in 1966 in Domodedovo, near Moscow, and is considered the greatest female poet in Russian literature. In August 1946, she was harshly denounced by the Central Committee of the Communist Party for her ‘eroticism, mysticism, and political indifference’ – another way of interpreting these remarks is to see the influence of the Odessa myth on her style. Today Moscow seems far away since the whole political geography of the region changed so dramatically after the fall of the Soviet Union.

But “far away” is a somewhat unfitting qualification for Odessa. In geographical terms, Athens is quite far away – but for a while (like Tel-Aviv which didn’t even exist yet) the Greek capital seems to have been part of the Odessa matrix. Historically, the opening of the Black Sea grain trade to Western Europe and the Near East during the early nineteenth century “gave impetus to a large Greek immigration to the

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<sup>28</sup> Isaac Babel, *Odessa. My Notes* (1916); see also Janneke van de Stadt, “A Question of Place: Situating Old Shloime in Isaac Babel’s Oeuvre”, *The Russian Review* 66/1 (2007): 36-54.

Black Sea coast. One can get a good picture of the Greeks for whom change was attractive by looking at the members of the conspiracy of 1821. The original instigators of the uprising were members of a secret society called the *Philike Hetairia* or ‘friendly society.’<sup>29</sup> Like other lodges that were fraternal groups or self-help associations made up of merchants, writes Steven W. Sowards, “the society copied the Freemasons in its elaborate rituals, ranks and secrecy, but its true purpose was revolt. The three founders of *Philike Hetairia* are representative. One was the son of a Greek fur dealer living in Moscow, who already had been a member of a Greek society while living in Paris. The second was a Greek merchant from Odessa, another veteran of an anti-Turkish secret lodge. The third was a merchant from the Ionian Islands, a member of a Masonic lodge there who had contacts in the National Guard created by the British provisional government. In their merchant associations and their connections to the outside world, these three were typical of the members who put together the plot.”<sup>30</sup> In 1819, out of 452 members, 153 identified themselves as merchants and shippers, 60 as notables, 36 as soldiers, 24 as priests, 23 as minor officials, 22 as teachers or students, 10 as doctors, 4 as lawyers and 16 as men with other professions. These people formed part of a movement for Greek independence from the Ottoman Empire which was finally granted in 1832.

According to Patricia Herlihy, although the Ukrainian population in Odessa was small, the city played a significant role in the Ukrainian national movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In the 1860s, a branch of “Hromada” (Society) was founded in Odessa, on the model of an earlier one founded in Kiev. The repressions of 1875 and 1876 and especially the ban on the use of the Ukrainian language in publications put an end to their political agitation. It was only after 1905 that the movement’s popular appeal was strengthened by the foundation of a library and a bookstore. Also in 1860, a Bulgarian presence made itself known when “120 deputies of the people petitioned the Apostolic Delegate to receive them into the Roman Church on condition of the recognition of their language and liturgy, and the appointment of a bishop of their own nationality; almost 60,000 of their fellow-countrymen joined in the request. Pius IX himself, 21 January, 1861, consecrated a priest named Solkowski its first Vicar Apostolic of Uniat Bulgaria. This movement, however, did not win the support of Catholic Europe, while the greatest obstacles were placed in its way by Russia and

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<sup>29</sup> Steven W. Sowards (Michigan State University), *Twenty-Five Lectures on Modern Balkan History*, Lecture 6: The Greek Revolution and the Greek State. <http://staff.lib.msu.edu/sowards/balkan/lecture6.html> accessed 16/06/2010.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

the patriarchate of Constantinople. Sokolski lapsed back into schism in June, 1861, and embarked for Odessa on a Russian vessel; the majority of the Bulgarian priests and laymen attached themselves to the recently founded national exarchate.”<sup>31</sup> In Sofia we find the statues of Evlogi and Hristo Georgievi. The Georgiev brothers made their fortunes in the nineteenth-century in Odessa, then used their wealth to fund the establishment of Bulgarian-language schools. Their place in the country’s cultural pantheon assured, they now bask on the steps of Bulgaria’s biggest university like a pair of contented walruses. Onward from here (not Sofia, but Odessa, remember we’re still on that bus...) to a very surprising place in the city.

### The Italian Club

Anna Makolkin’s study *A History of Odessa, the Last Italian Black Sea Colony* reconstructs – in the publisher’s words – “the Italian protohistory of Odessa.” This is a different version of our story:

“Odessa, founded in 1794 by the immigrants from Genoa and Naples, Venice and Palermo. For the first time and upon the lengthy and elaborate archival research in Italy and Ukraine, the Odessa of Alexander Pushkin and Anna Akhmatova, battleship Potemkin and Eisenstein, Babel and Kandinsky enters European historiography as a world of the dynasties of De Ribas and Frapoliies, Rossies and Bubbass, Bernadazzies and Riznich, Molinaries, Iorini *et al.* Having revised the narratives of the tzarist, Soviet, pre-perestroika and post-Communist past, the monograph not only reclaims the first Italian settlers, but examines the process of forging Europeanness, a cultural identity, beyond the traditional East and West, nation and people. European culture has been notably influenced by Italian civilization, and Odessa is one of the important manifestations of this phenomenon. The book places this 18th century Italian migration to the Black Sea into various contexts- the ancient porto-franco, the 12th-14th century Crimea, the persecution of Jesuits and Jews, Risorgimento and Romantic Europe. It challenges the post-modern concept of colonialism by presenting the colonial Other through history and philosophy, semiotics and architecture, history of art and musicology. This history of Odessa not only reveals the neglected European past but imagines the future of the European continent, explaining the role of migration and mechanism of cultural transport.”<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03046a.htm> (Catholic Encyclopedia)

<sup>32</sup> Anna Makolkin, *A History of Odessa, the Last Italian Black Sea Colony*, (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press 2004);



Michael Ukas writes in a review of the book: "The materials about this obscure migration have been scattered in archives of Italy and Ukraine, and most 19th and 20th century historians, intimidated by radical nationalism, politics and geopolitics of Europe, and post-colonial trends did not have sufficient courage to address the topic. Italians were not just another wave of Odessa immigrants, not just another part of her multicultural mosaic, they were her founders and colonizers of the region." Makolkin's research "fills the gap in the European historiography about the unknown, atypical and underestimated Italian migration which was instrumental in Europeanizing rural and backward Russia, at the time of mass migration from Europe to North America. Reconstructing the early history of the port and reclaiming Odessa's Italianness, the author not simply restores the misrepresented past, but it places this little known 18th century Italian migration into the wide context of the general cultural role of Italians in Europe. The Odessa Italian colony adds to the other Italian European cultural contributions." European urbanism is described as "a universal cultural sign," crossing traditional East/West borders through the notion and reconstruction of the transfer "of Italian cultural traditions, their art, music, sculpture, painting, architecture and civic governance, next to banking, supervision of customs and foreign trade." And the review concludes: Historians of music and theatre will be interested in Odessa's Italian operatic tradition, the legacy of Rossini and Cimarosa, performances by Tati and Brambilla, Fabbri and Guerini, Salvini and Duse, Ristori and Di Grasso and the lasting impact of Italian music on the cultural ethos of Odessa. The Italianness has forever shaped the Odesseans, imparting the aesthetic sensibility, the elegance, taste in music, attitude to life, their wit and specific speech."<sup>33</sup>

Quite amazing, isn't it? Odessa is an Italian city! Obviously this "Italianness" is a cultural invention, maybe even an attempt to construct Odessa as a Mediterranean and Western city and remove it from its Russian and Ukrainian context. But we do find interesting connections beyond such spatial fantasies. One very interesting Italian who came from Odessa is Leone Ginzburg. Born 1909 in Odessa, Ginzburg was an Italian editor, writer, journalist and teacher. He died 1944 in Rome, after having established himself as an important anti-fascist political activist and a hero of the resistance movement. He was married to the renowned author Natalia Ginzburg and is the father of the historian Carlo

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<http://www.mellenpress.com/mellenpress.cfm?bookid=6095&pc=9> for publisher's information.

<sup>33</sup> Review by Michael Ukas, University of Toronto, quoted at <http://www.mellenpress.com/mellenpress.cfm?bookid=6095&pc=9> accessed 16/06/2010.

Ginzburg. Arrested by the Gestapo, Leone Ginzburg was tortured and killed during the German occupation of Italy.

And there are so many more we might find along our route, for example the Odessa Armenian Community – “The basic aim of the activity of the Odessa Armenian Community is to promote rightful national, cultural and religious interests of Armenians residing in Odessa. According to preliminary data, the Armenian Diaspora in Odessa currently numbers from 20 to 40 thousand”<sup>34</sup> or the German heritage in the villages surrounding Odessa, and in the beer-garden of the “Bavarski dom” of today.<sup>35</sup> As I said, this whole project is still a huge building site, and it will take more research, more participants, and more knowledge to complete it. For today, we have to hurry to meet Vladimir Jabotinsky once more.

“I’ll probably never get to see Odessa again. It’s a pity because I love the place. I was indifferent to Russia even in my youth: I recall that I always got pleasantly agitated when leaving for Europe and would return only reluctantly. But Odessa – that’s another matter: arriving at the Razdelnaya Station, I would always begin to be joyfully excited. If I arrived today, my hands would probably tremble. I’m not indifferent only to Russia; in general I’m not really ‘attached’ to any country; at one time I was in love with Rome, and it lasted a long time, but even that passed. Odessa’s a different matter: it hasn’t ever passed and it won’t. If it were possible, I’d like to arrive not at the Razdelnaya Station but on a steamship, in summer, of course, and early in the morning. I’d rise before dawn, while the lighthouse on Bolshoi Fontan was still shining, and I’d stand all alone on deck and look at the shore.”<sup>36</sup>

### *Diary 1993*

*Those who have written about Odessa in recent years have had one main theme: the emigration which is remorselessly killing the city. Life is abandoning it bit by bit. And today, too, emigration is still the dominant topic. All the people I meet have sisters in Israel, cousins in New York, aunts in Canada. Though they still live in Odessa, a part of them has already left. And anyone who thinks constantly – every day, Lena says – of what it would be like somewhere else, anyone who draws sustenance from the letters and parcels sent from that somewhere else, is already lost to his own city. Emigration has other consequences too. Those who move into the city,*

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<sup>34</sup> Odessa Armenian Community, <http://www.odessaglobe.com/english/institutions/armenian-community.htm> accessed 24/06/10.

<sup>35</sup> Centre de management et d’entraînement ukrainien-bavière: <http://www.ruslanguage.odessa.ua/fr/page2.htm> accessed 24/06/10.

<sup>36</sup> Jabotinsky, *The Five*, 197.

*filling the vacant spaces (and positions in the queue), come from the Ukrainian provinces. "They are concerned only with the next moment," Lena says, not with anything beyond that, and they certainly have no concern for the city. They are interested in Odessa because they may find a job there. But was it any different in the past? I ask her later. Yes, it was, Lena says: in the past people came in order to make their mark, to embark on new initiatives and to improve the functioning of the city, to place themselves at its disposal.*

The bus has lost most of its passengers. Have they all "failed the experiment?" Many images of Odessa are connected to people standing aboard boats and looking – as in Meir Shalev's *Russian Novel*<sup>37</sup> – either back or ahead, as if somehow our looking at things might still be able to affect what has already happened. Jabotinsky reminisces about Odessa, the Fontan, Langeron, Arkadija, the black column of Alexander II – "well, they've probably removed it by now, but I'm talking about old Odessa" –, the Quarantine Harbor, the piers, the "buildings high on the hill," the palaces, the grand staircase, the statue of Duke de Richelieu. In this way, he returns to the topic of the diversity of cultures and ethnicities within Odessa, "just remember how many different peoples had gathered here from all corners of Europe to build this one city." What then follows is something only someone from Odessa could have written:

"They say that people regard even the name Odessa as something of an amusing joke. To tell the truth, I'm not offended, it isn't really worth revealing one's own sorrows, but I don't take offense for a risible relationship to my homeland. Perhaps it really was an amusing city; perhaps it was so because it laughed so readily. Ten tribes converged, each and every one so fascinating, one more interesting than the next: it all began when these tribes started laughing at one another, then they learned to laugh at themselves, and then at everything on earth, even at what hurt and at what they loved. Gradually their customs rubbed up against each other and they ceased regarding their own sacred altars in such a serious manner; they gradually discovered a very important secret in this world: that what you hold sacred your neighbour thinks is rubbish, and that your neighbour isn't a thief or a vagrant; perhaps he's right, perhaps not, but it's not worth grieving over."<sup>38</sup>

All this has changed in the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Tanya Richardson sums it up: "The distinctiveness of Odessa – Ukraine's Black Sea port - vis à vis other cities in Ukraine and Russia is attributed to qualities

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<sup>37</sup> Meir Shalev, *The Blue Mountain* (hebr. "Roman Russi"), (New York: Harper Collins 1991).

<sup>38</sup> Jabotinsky, *The Five*, 108.

identifiable as ‘cosmopolitan’. Today residents and non-residents alike insist that Odessa is ‘international’, ‘multi-ethnic’, ‘Jewish’, ‘tolerant’ but ‘not Ukrainian’. Yet, the 19th century ‘cosmopolitan’ Odessa documented by historians was radically transformed by the cataclysms of 20th century history. The city lost half its population as a result of revolution and civil war. The establishment of the Soviet Union drastically curtailed Odessa’s economic importance and links with the world. World War II annihilated the Jewish population that remained in occupied Odessa while subsequent Soviet policies deported Germans and Tatars for collaboration with the Nazis. Meanwhile Stalin’s post-war campaign against cosmopolitanism targeted Jews and explicitly negated contact with, and orientation to, the outside world as a result of which Odessa’s cosmopolitan past was, at least officially, denigrated and repressed.”<sup>39</sup> The processes of “othering” began soon, and as in so many other parts of the Empire Jews were the ones to be isolated, outcast, at least as long as they tried to maintain their Jewishness or to give it a new form in the Zionist movement. In the end, these processes destroyed the precarious balance between the communities that had once made up Odessa and characterized “Odessity.” A very sad joke plays on this idea:

“A visitor to Odessa discovered that all the phone books were missing. He enquired at the Communist Party headquarters as to where they had gone.

The Party secretary told him ‘We discovered that they contained a list of all the Zionist spies in Odessa. Then, to disguise the fact, the Zionists had added the names of all the other people in Odessa.’”<sup>40</sup>

In the last decades “Odessity” has survived mostly outside of Odessa, in the Little Odessas of Tel-Aviv, New York City, Buenos Aires, or Berlin. In some ways, it has been depicted as a lost city, not so unlike New Orleans, a city of the American South with which Odessa has been compared in a recent study.<sup>41</sup> The very promising title of one of the contributions is “How Jewish was Odessa?”<sup>42</sup> It turns out that Brian Horowitz, in a useful effort to redirect the attention away from Zionism

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<sup>39</sup> Tanya Richardson, “Odessa’s Cosmopolitanisms and the Afterlives of Empire”, (EASA Panel, “The Loss of Cosmopolitanism”, September 18-21, 2006); see also her *Kaleidoscopic Odessa: History and Place in Contemporary Ukraine*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 2008), 215.

<sup>40</sup> For the Soviet era, see also Maurice Friedberg, *How Things were done in Odessa: Cultural and Intellectual Pursuits in a Soviet City*, (Boulder, CO: Westview Press 1991).

<sup>41</sup> *Place, Identity, and Urban Culture: Odesa and New Orleans*, eds. Samuel C. Ramer, Blair A. Rubie, (Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Occasional Paper # 301. Washington, D.C. 2008). The missing “s” in “Odesa” is a politically correct reference to the fact that the city today is part of Ukraine.

<sup>42</sup> Brian Horowitz, “How Jewish was Odessa?”, *Ibid.*, 9-18.

(on which much of the research about Odessa has been focused), tells the history of the Odessa branch of the Society for the Promotion of Enlightenment among the Jews of Russia. His work, which chronicles the successes of the “Society” during the reform period under Alexander II and its educative and philanthropic work, is very interesting, but obviously not an answer to the question. Maybe this question cannot be answered. Odessa might have been – or maybe even still is – “Jewish” insofar as the city reflected Jewish ambivalences (Jewish “phantasies”, Lena would say) about longing and belonging, home and exile, Israel and the Diaspora. For many decades, the idea of Odessa had been turned into a memory, a book, a poem, a song:

*Adesa Mame (Odessa Mama)*

*Ikh hob gehert fil lider zingen gute,  
men zingt zey ale mit groys interes.  
fun Slutsk, fun Belz, fun Zlutkiv un fun Lite,  
nor nisht gehert hob ikh fun mayn Ades.  
vi ken men gor fargesn aza shtot a sheyne,  
vu oyfgevakezn bin ikh, vu s'iz dort mayn heym.  
s'iz in der gantser velt Adesa do nor eyne,  
dermonen vel ikh aykh atzind in dem.*

*Akh Adesa, mayn Adesa tayer bistu mir,  
vu ikh gey un vu ikh shtey trakht ikh nor fun dir.  
dayne gasn, dayne masn vu ikh bin farbrakht,  
ikh benk nokh dir bay tog un oykh ba nakht.*<sup>43</sup>

Today, many things have changed again. Odessa is a Ukrainian city,<sup>44</sup> but a new consciousness of the city's past can be found among some of its inhabitants. There is a new Jewish museum (to which, among others, Lena Karakina and Anja Misjuk have contributed), international languages are being taught at the “Bavarski dom”, there is a Greek cultural club, and tourism has brought members of many and varied groups for visits to the city. Some of those who emigrated to Israel or Germany in the early 1990s are returning or at least commuting between places. So, where is Odessa? For many years, clubs and *landsmanshaftn* all over the world and in the virtual world of the Internet were the only places where “Odessity” could be remembered and celebrated. Today, the

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<sup>43</sup> [http://www.klesmer-musik.de/adesa\\_mame.htm](http://www.klesmer-musik.de/adesa_mame.htm)

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Patricia Herlihy, “How Ukrainian is Odessa?”, in *Place, Identity, and Urban Culture*, 19-26.

diversity, multi-culturalism and enterprising spirit which made Odessa an object of fame and of nostalgia can once again be found in the city that bears its name.

### Notes

For a musical illustration, see:

**Russian Music / Group: Rapka - Song: Odessiti**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cL8cWlgCZI4>

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## Moving histories. The Jews and Modernity in Alexandria 1881-1919

by *Dario Miccoli*

### Abstract

*This essay will investigate the history of Alexandria from 1881 to 1919, proposing a re-definition of modernity vis-à-vis the city's Jews. In the first part I will introduce a case of blood libel that occurred in 1881, the Fornaraki affair, and the consequences it had for the making of an urban (Jewish) bourgeoisie and the spreading of a modern social imaginary in-between Egypt and Europe. I will then consider the École des filles founded in Alexandria in 1900 by the Alliance Israélite Universelle, exploring how French secularism, bourgeois femininity, and Jewish religiosity coalesced in this school – as exemplified by the history surrounding the 1901 initiation des jeunes filles. Lastly, I will look at World War One and the philanthropic activities and public commemorations this event engendered in Alexandria, especially following the arrival of Jewish refugees from Palestine in 1914. Focusing upon these historical narrations, I will attempt to interpret modernity as a dynamic blending of tensions and exchanges in-between Jews and non-Jews, Egypt and Europe, local knowledge and foreign ideas.*

### Modern Alexandria and the Jews

From the second half of the nineteenth century, Alexandria underwent a period of great social and economic expansion due to a boom in cotton exports and to the growing importance of the city in trade routes after the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869. It was during those years that Alexandria and its harbour became integrated into “the country’s external economic orientation,” becoming one of the most vibrant cities in the Mediterranean region.<sup>1</sup> This is also clarified by looking at its heterogeneous population and the important presence of minority groups and foreign communities in local commerce and business from the second half of the nineteenth century.

At the same time, various waves of migrations to the city from all over the Mediterranean also aggravated social tensions and inter-ethnic conflicts. The misrule of *Khedive* Tawfiq (1879-1892) and the growing interference of the European powers further increased social and political unrest, culminating in the so-called ‘Urabi uprising in 1882. The

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<sup>1</sup> Malcom J. Reimer, “Colonial Bridgehead: Social and Spatial Change in Alexandria, 1850-1882”, *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 20/4 (1988): 539.

revolt, which began with Muslim rioters attacking foreigners and Copts, was eventually quelled by British bombs.<sup>2</sup>

The Jews were surely an important component of the city's socio-economic and cultural life. Beginning in the second half of the nineteenth century, thousands of Jews had migrated from Southern Europe – mainly Greece and, to a lesser extent, Italy – and the Ottoman Near East to Alexandria. The most visible consequence of these migrations was of course the rapid growth of the local Jewish population: from 9,831 Jews in 1897, to 14,475 in 1907 and 24,858 in 1917.<sup>3</sup> This led to the birth of a heterogeneous milieu and a great deal of diversity among those leading the city's commercial and entrepreneurial activities.<sup>4</sup>

The growing Jewish community of Alexandria should be located within the much larger Eastern Mediterranean bourgeoisie – deeply influenced by colonialism – and which also included Muslims and members of other minority groups.<sup>5</sup> With the term *bourgeoisie* I intend a social reality whose identity is based not only upon economic status, but also on “an attributed quality [...], a form of social status or prestige” that *distinguishes* its members from the rest of society.<sup>6</sup>

From the second half of the nineteenth century, Egypt – and Alexandria in particular – witnessed the shift from a traditional elite of urban notables to one deeply influenced by the Western educational system and

<sup>2</sup> This goes beyond the scope of my analysis. A brilliant study of the 'Urabi uprising is: Juan R. Cole, *Colonialism and Revolution in the Middle East: Social and Cultural Origins of Egypt's 'Urabi Movement*, (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 1999). See also: Ottavia Schmidt di Friedberg, “Il processo di Arabi Pascià e le fonti italiane”, in *Islam, culture, migrazioni*, ed. Annalisa Frisina, (Bologna: Il Ponte, 2007), 13-35.

<sup>3</sup> The figures are taken from: Jacob Landau, “Changing Patterns of Community Structure, with Special Reference to Ottoman Egypt”, in *Jews, Turks, Ottomans, A Shared History Fifteenth through the Twentieth Century*, ed. Avigdor Lévy, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2002), 80.

<sup>4</sup> I here refer to the three fundamental studies on Egyptian Jews: Jacob Landau, *Jews in Nineteenth-Century Egypt*, (New York: New York University Press, 1969); Gudrun Kraemer, *The Jews in Modern Egypt 1914-1952*, (London: IB Tauris, 1989) and Joel Beinin, *The Dispersion of Egyptian Jewry. Culture, Politics and The Formation of A Modern Diaspora*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).

<sup>5</sup> It should be noted that forms of exchange and interaction between Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean region already existed before the colonial era. Consider for instance: Daniel Goffman, *The Ottoman Empire and Early Modern Europe*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); *Living in The Ottoman Ecumenical Community*, eds. Vera Costantini, Markus Koller, (Leiden: Brill, 2008).

<sup>6</sup> Fred Ringer, “Education, the Middle Classes and the Intellectuals: the Social Field in Modern France and Germany”, in *Fields of Knowledge. French Academic Culture in Comparative Perspective, 1890-1920*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 88. The notion of *distinction* clearly refers to Pierre Bourdieu's study of the French bourgeoisie and his *La distinction*, (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1979). An introduction to the notion of *bourgeoisie*, in European perspective, is given by Raffaele Romanelli, “Borghesia/Buerkertum/Bourgeoisie. Itinerari europei di un concetto”, in *Borghesie europee dell'Ottocento*, ed. Jurgen Kocka, (Venice: Marsilio, 1989), 69-94.



willing to *westernize* especially those aspects of everyday life (e.g. clothing, housing, leisure activities etc.) that seemed to be crucial symbols of modernity.<sup>7</sup> However, despite the fact that early twentieth century Alexandria has often been portrayed as a modern urban centre and the cosmopolitan city *par excellence*, historians are still debating the meaning(s) of these concepts. According to Gekas, *modernity* in the Eastern Mediterranean meant, first and foremost, “commercialization, bureaucracy, industrialization [...], fiscal and legal reform and the adoption of Western cultural practices, filtered as they were by the local societies.”<sup>8</sup> In addition to this, Watenpaugh argued that these processes – although based upon a presumed universal notion of *being modern* – implied the adoption of a mutable corpus of (Western) ideas and practices that were often utilized “for their own ends and in a way that went far beyond resistance or collaboration with the West.”<sup>9</sup> Alexandria and its inhabitants, in fact, did not experience a single and uniform understanding of modernity, but rather a plurality of dynamic *modernities* connected to many factors, such as gender, ethno-religious identity, and social status.<sup>10</sup>

The Jews seem to be a particularly relevant case study, not only because of their close business relationships with many European powers and the privileges that they often enjoyed under the system of the Capitulations<sup>11</sup> and as foreign *protégés* – but also because of the social and educational efforts undertaken by Western Jewish philanthropic institutions such as

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<sup>7</sup> Fatma Goecek, *Rise of the Bourgeoisie, Demise of Empire. Ottoman Westernization and Social Change*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996). More specifically on Alexandria: *Alexandrie 1830-1930. Une modèle éphémère de convivialité*, eds. Robert Ilbert, Ilios Yannakis, (Paris: Autrement, 1992); Robert Ilbert, *Alexandrie 1830-1930: histoire d'une communauté citadine*, (Cairo: Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1996).

<sup>8</sup> Anastasios Gekas, “Class and Cosmopolitanism: the Historiographical Fortunes of Merchants in Eastern Mediterranean Ports”, *Mediterranean Historical Review* 24/2 (2008): 96.

<sup>9</sup> Keith D. Watenpaugh, *Being Modern in the Middle East. Revolution, Nationalism, Colonialism and the Arab Middle Class*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 17, my emphasis.

<sup>10</sup> This is why even though my essay will mostly deal with the middle and upper strata of Alexandrian Jewish society, I will try to include the lower and lower middle class, keeping in mind how modernity and cosmopolitanism can be interpreted also *from below*. See: Will Hanley, “Foreignness and Localness in Alexandria, 1880-1914”, unpublished PhD dissertation, (Princeton: Princeton University, 2007); Id., “Grieving Cosmopolitanism in Middle East Studies”, *History Compass* 6/5 (2008): 1346-1367.

<sup>11</sup> The system of the Capitulations was the Ottoman legal framework thanks to which members of certain minority groups and of foreign communities could enjoy particular economic and juridical rights, such as being judged by their communities' courts. In Egypt, the Capitulations were abolished in 1937 after the signature of the Anglo-Egyptian treaty, whilst the *tribunaux mixtes* lasted until 1949. See: Nathan J. Brown, “The Precarious Life and Slow Death of the Mixed Courts of Egypt”, *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 25/1 (1993): 33-52.

the *Alliance Israélite Universelle* (henceforth AIU) and the *Hilfsverein der deutschen Juden*.<sup>12</sup> Aside from this, one should keep in mind that the history of Jews in the Mediterranean was characterized by the ability to live *in-between* several worlds, languages, and cultures.<sup>13</sup> Many of them managed to be at once *insular* and *cosmopolitan*, *local* and *foreign*, thereby avoiding long-standing dichotomies such as traditional/modern and religious/secular.<sup>14</sup>

In this essay, I will reconstruct the Jewish encounter with modernity in Alexandria from 1881 to 1919, focusing on three different moments and reconstructing three specific *histories*. Using sources from the *Archives de l'AIU* of Paris, I will first look at a case of blood libel that occurred in Alexandria in 1881 – the so-called *Fornaraki affair* – showing how this event shed light on inter-ethnic urban rivalries and class differences, and ultimately allowed for the consolidation of a shared view of what being modern meant for upper class Alexandrian Jews and non-Jews alike.

I will then investigate the AIU's *École des filles* of Alexandria (1900-1919), looking at the interweaving of class, gender, and Judaism which informed the teachers' educational efforts and their attempts to forge modern Jewish girls, and thus regenerate the Jewish population in Alexandria on the whole. The difficult quest for modernity, and for a viable balance between past and present Jewish models of identity and acculturation, can also be seen in the last event I will analyze: the arrival of Jewish refugees from Palestine during World War One (henceforth WWI) and the reactions of Alexandrian Jews in terms of philanthropic activities and public commemorations.

My aim is to clarify how the adoption of modern practices and habits by Alexandrian Jews was not always easy or smooth, although it was often characterized by episodes of fruitful exchange and interaction. By acknowledging such inner complexity, it might be possible to reach novel definitions of what being modern, and living in cosmopolitan Alexandria, meant.

## **Jews, non-Jews, and the perils of modernity in 1881 Alexandria**

Among the thousands of migrants who arrived in Alexandria in the late

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<sup>12</sup> I will return to the AIU in the next pages. On these two institutions consider: Eli Bar-Chen, (with a comment by Aron Rodrigue), "Two Communities with a Sense of Mission: the Alliance Israélite Universelle and the Hilfsverein der deutschen Juden", in *Jewish Emancipation Reconsidered*, eds. Michael Brenner, Vicki Caron, Uri R. Kaufmann, (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 111-128.

<sup>13</sup> On *in-betweenness* I obviously refer to: Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, (London: Routledge, 1994).

<sup>14</sup> I take these oppositions respectively from: 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), 270 and Hanley, "Foreignness".

nineteenth century, were two families who lived in the *okella Muro*,<sup>15</sup> a modest building situated between the headquarters of the city's *şaptieh* (in Ottoman Turkish: “police”) and *rue de la Douane*. These were the Baruks, Jews from Corfu – most of them Greek nationals – and the Fornarakis, a Greek Orthodox family from Crete with Ottoman citizenship. On March 18th, 1881, a nine year-old boy named Vangelis Fornaraki, “fatherless and whose mother was said to have been morally objectionable, disappeared from his house; after the due research, a rumour had it that the boy had been sacrificed by the Jews for recondite religious purposes.”<sup>16</sup> Soon after the disappearance of Vangelis, the police – based on accusations by the child’s grandfather – interrogated and arrested several of the Baruks: “Jacoub, his wife Stella, their daughter Nina, their son-in-law Elia René, the former’s stepdaughter Consola Betteli, Diamantina e Josué René (these last two were minors), a two year-old daughter named René, the sons of Jacoub Baruk, Guilia [*sic!*] and Vita Baruk.”

The Baruks were accused of ritual murder, an old anti-Semitic denunciation according to which Jews killed Christian children in order to use their blood for ritual purposes – namely to make the *matzot*, the unleavened bread eaten during *Pesach*, the Jewish Passover.<sup>17</sup>

Although the first newsworthy case of blood libel in the Middle East in modern times – the *Damascus affair* – dated from 1840,<sup>18</sup> ritual murder accusations in Egypt started to spread in the 1880s, mainly in Alexandria and in cities such as Damanhur and Port Said. The principal reason

<sup>15</sup> The *okella* (from the Arabic *wikala*, lit. “agency”: a traditional Islamic building which included a hostel for merchants and warehouses) were modern multi-storey buildings, which usually hosted shops at the ground level and residential flats on the other floors. See: M. F. Awad, “Le modèle européen: l’évolution urbaine de 1807 à 1958”, *Revue de l’Occident Musulman et de la Méditerranée* 46 (1987): 97.

<sup>16</sup> The Jewish Community of Alexandria to the AIU President, “Succinto dei fatti e circostanze referentesi al processo intentato nel 1881 contro una famiglia israelita imputata d’aver immolato un ragazzo greco, per nome Vangeli Fornaraki, con recondito scopo religioso”, 15 September 1881, file (henceforth f.) Egypte I.C.3, Archives of the Alliance Israélite Universelle, Paris (henceforth AIU). All citations from AIU sources are my translation from the French or Italian original version.

<sup>17</sup> See as an introduction: Ronnie Po-Chia Hsia, *The Myth of Ritual Murder. Jews and Magic in Reformation Germany*, (Newhaven: Yale University Press, 1988); R. Taradel, *L’accusa del sangue. Storia politica di un mito antisemita*, (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 2002).

<sup>18</sup> Jonathan Frankel, *The Damascus Affaire, “Ritual Murder”, Politics, and the Jews in 1840*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Julie Kalman, “Sensuality, Depravity, and Ritual Murder: The Damascus Blood Libel and Jews in France”, *Jewish Social Studies* 13/3 (2007), 35-58. It should be noted that cases of ritual murder accusation had occurred in the Ottoman Empire already in the sixteenth century, however none of them had the resonance or the consequences of the *Damascus affair*, see: Amnon Cohen, “Ritual Murder Accusations Against the Jews during The Days of Suleiman the Magnificent”, *Journal of Turkish Studies* 10 (1986): 73-78; Yaron Ben-Naeh, *Jews in The Realm of the Sultans*, (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 131-132.

behind the Egyptian blood libels is found in the critical socio-political atmosphere of 1880s Egypt, especially in the aftermath of the 'Urabi uprising. Secondly, the fact that the majority of these complaints occurred in Alexandria underlines a possible connection to the Greek and Syrian Christians that had also migrated to the city in those years. These two groups were most often the propagators of such allegations and perhaps not coincidentally, they were also the economic and commercial rivals of the Jews.<sup>19</sup>

The day before Vangelis' disappearance, rumours started to spread that strange noises had been heard coming from the Baruks' house, where the child had allegedly been invited to eat. Both before and after the Baruks' arrest, many Jews – almost all of foreign (mainly British, French and Italian) nationalities – were attacked by Greek and Muslim rioters. This provoked formal protestations on the part of various consular authorities to the Governor of Alexandria.<sup>20</sup> Finally, five days later “according to what a boatman called Di Palma had said, the corpse of [Vangelis] Fornaraki – who had apparently drowned [...] – was found by Mahmoud Capitan, one of the harbour masters.” This caused more unrest between the Greeks and the Jews, and the situation was brought under control by the arrival of two infantry battalions from Cairo – as suggested by the British consul.<sup>21</sup>

Moreover, the Italian consul in Alexandria, Machiavelli, explained to the Italian ambassador in Cairo that the death of Vangelis provoked many hostile reactions, among which were some “rascals, amongst which are a number of jobless Greek smugglers [...] ready to fish in troubled waters,” suggesting the idea that (some of) the attacks against the Jews might have not been directly linked to the accusation of ritual murder, but to the actions of petty criminals and robbers. The Greek consul admitted to Machiavelli that even “the family of the Cretan boy is trying to take advantage of this tragedy” and “[the Greek consul] wants to make a collection among his fellow nationals in order to pacify [the family of Vangelis].”<sup>22</sup> Members of some upper class Greek families were also accused of inciting the crowd against the Jews and, last but not least,

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<sup>19</sup> To the best of my knowledge the only studies dedicated to Egyptian blood libels are: Jacob Landau, “Ritual Murder Accusations in Nineteenth-Century Egypt”, *Middle Eastern Themes*, (London: Frank Cass, 1973), 99-142 and Robert Ilbert, “L'exclusion du voisin: pouvoirs et relations intercommunautaires, 1870-1900”, *Revue de l'Occident musulman et de la Méditerranée* 46 (1987): 177-186 – which deals with the *Fornaraki affair*, although basing on different sources.

<sup>20</sup> The Jewish Community of Alexandria to the AIU President, “Succinto”, 15 September 1881, f. Egypte I.C.3, AIU.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> From a letter of the Italian consul in Alexandria cited in Landau, “Ritual Murder”, 120 and 122.

anti-Semitic articles had begun to appear in local Greek newspapers.<sup>23</sup>

As the affair was causing such great distress, the Egyptian authorities decided to create a commission formed by several local and foreign doctors in order to investigate the incident and the causes of the child's death. After twenty-three autopsies on the corpse of Vangelis, the commission concluded that the child had died after drowning at sea.<sup>24</sup>

Only the two Greek members of the commission contested this final statement and decided to resign. This led to more riots during Vangelis' funeral, which was attended by four thousand people and officiated by the Greek Orthodox patriarch of Alexandria, His Beatitude Sophronius IV.<sup>25</sup> The crowd moved from the house where the child lived with his mother, now "terribly sorrowful," and her second husband. The woman was depicted by local newspapers as on the verge of hysteria, and incapable of being a *proper* mother for her children.

According to a local newspaper, the house where the Fornarakis lived was situated in "a damp and dark alley where no ray of sunshine ever arrives [...], one cannot help but ask how human beings can live in such a place."<sup>26</sup> In this same *okella* the Baruks also lived, and Vangelis was frequently seen playing with young Diamantina Baruk. This Jewish family was, according to some of their Greek neighbours, "scrupulously pious" and "there had often been violent fights [amongst members of the family] during which knives had been thrown."<sup>27</sup> Further, the journalist seemed to link the unfortunate affair to the perils of the city of Alexandria, where children should not be left "wandering in the street or by the sea at such a young age."<sup>28</sup> The article concluded with an appeal to parents – that they keep a watchful eye over their sons, especially considering the dramatic changes that life in Alexandria was undergoing in the fin-de-siècle, and the dangers hidden in its streets.<sup>29</sup>

Soon after the beginning of the anti-Semitic riots, the Alexandrian Jewish leaders petitioned local authorities and the municipality complaining about the former's inability to protect them.<sup>30</sup> Secondly, the Jewish

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<sup>23</sup> For example: "O Alithis – Fanatismos" (in Greek: "The truth – Fanaticism"), *Tilegrafos* ("Telegraph"), 15 March 1881, f. Egypte I.C.3, AIU.

<sup>24</sup> *L'affaire Fornaraki à Alexandrie. Rapport de la commission d'enquête publié par l'Alliance Israélite Universelle*, (Paris: Maréchal & Montorier, 1881), 42.

<sup>25</sup> The Jewish Community of Alexandria to the AIU President, "Succinto", 15 September 1881, f. Egypte I.C.3, AIU.

<sup>26</sup> "Alexandrie. La disparition d'un enfant", clipping from an unnamed newspaper, around 3 April 1881, f. Egypte I.C.3, AIU.

<sup>27</sup> *L'affaire Fornaraki*, 82.

<sup>28</sup> "Alexandrie. La disparition...", f. Egypte I.C.3, AIU.

<sup>29</sup> Consider: On Barak, "Scraping the Surface: the Techno-Politics of Modern Streets In Turn-of-Twentieth-Century Alexandria", *Mediterranean Historical Review* 24/2 (2009): 187-205.

<sup>30</sup> On the role of the *municipalité* in Alexandria and its relevance for local elites, consider: Steve Rosenthal, "Urban Elites and the Foundation of Municipalities in Alexandria and

notables of foreign nationalities asked for the help from their consular authorities, provoking a chaotic exchange of letters and a frenzy of meetings between almost all the foreign consuls present in Alexandria, their national governments, and the khedivial representatives.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, the Jewish communal leaders sought the support and solidarity of a larger network of allies, including the chief rabbi of Corfu, the AIU, and various European Jewish newspapers.

The AIU was already following the event publishing articles in its *Bulletin*, including relevant correspondence between the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, His Sanctity Joachim III, and a well-known Jewish doctor and philanthropist, Moïse Allatini of Salonika.<sup>32</sup> The *Jewish Chronicle*, the most important Jewish newspaper in Great Britain, published dozens of articles on the affair and followed the event in great detail, from the first attacks on the Baruk family through January 1882.<sup>33</sup> This is an indicator not only of the impact that the *Fornaraki affair* had on European Jews, but it also shows the extended network to which the Alexandrian Jews belonged. In this way, the scandal and the outrage it provoked reveals a transnational community that extended from Alexandria to Salonika and beyond, within which not only goods and money, but also ideas and news could easily circulate.<sup>34</sup> Finally, one can see how more *traditional* forms of (Jewish) communication, such as letters written to coreligionists in other cities around the Mediterranean, fruitfully interacted with a modern press system that allowed for this event to be followed by a much larger audience.

Despite the social and economic contingencies that – as we have seen –

Istanbul”, *Middle Eastern Studies* 16/2 (1980): 125-133.

<sup>31</sup> The consuls involved were Greek, Italian, French, British and Swedish – the former being the doyen of the consular body in Alexandria. All of them wrote to their colleagues in Cairo and also to their foreign ministries. They met several times with the Governor of Alexandria and once with the Egyptian Minister of War, who had come to the city along with the infantry troops. See the documents reproduced in: Landau, “Ritual Murder”, 111-124.

<sup>32</sup> “Israélites d’Egypte”, *Bulletin de l’AIU*, January 1881, 66. On Allatini: Henri Nahum, “Charisme et pouvoir d’un médecin juif. Moïse Allatini (1809-1882), ‘le père de Salonique’”, *Médecins et ingénieurs ottomans à l’âge des nationalismes*, eds. Meropi Anastassiadou-Dumont, (Paris : Maisonneuve & Larose, 2003), 49-62.

<sup>33</sup> See the articles appeared on the *Jewish Chronicle* on 9 September 1881, 14 October 1881, 18 November 1881, 9 December 1881, and 6 January 1882, available online at *The Jewish Chronicle Archives*: <http://www.thejc.com/> [accessed 24 February 2011].

<sup>34</sup> A similar capacity to engage in trans-national (intellectual) networks and public debates was shared by sectors of Egyptian non-Jewish society in the fin-de-siècle. See: Ziad Fahmy, “Francophone Egyptian Nationalists, Anti-British Discourse, and European Public Opinion, 1885-1910: The Case of Mustafa Kamil and Ya’qub Sannu’”, *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 28/1 (2008): 170-183. While acknowledging this, one should also note that the Egyptian nationalist and journalist Ya’qub Sannu’ was himself a Jew, whose paternal family migrated from Leghorn to Cairo in the first half of the nineteenth century.

lay behind the affair, the letters sent by the Jewish Community to the AIU and to various Jewish personalities make no reference to them. In a letter sent to the chief rabbi of Corfu – the island the Baruks came from and where the two members of the family holding Greek passports had been temporarily jailed<sup>35</sup> – the leaders of the Alexandria Jewish Community talked instead about the emotional and irrational behaviour of many Greeks. The former were described as having attacked the Jews with an age-old anti-Semitic slander, even after evidence of the Baruks' innocence had been corroborated by some of the “most distinguished Egyptian doctors.”<sup>36</sup> The response – which was for the *British Medical Journal* “a victory of science” against ignorance and religious prejudices – was also endorsed by “M. Brouardel, the well known professor of medical jurisprudence,” to whose arbitration the Jews had appealed after the two Greek doctors' contestation.<sup>37</sup>

Summarizing the history of blood libels and citing its most famous case, that of Simon of Trent (1475), the Alexandrian Jewish leaders underlined their proud belonging to a modern world where “advancing civilization [*progrediente civiltà*] and true justice [*buona giustizia*]” would in the end prevail over “a silly yet unfortunately baneful calumny.” The authors of the letter wished to demonstrate the Baruks' innocence through a critical discussion of biblical sources and religious prohibitions, underlining that “abhorring blood is not just a biblical obligation but [...] a deep feeling among the Jews.” Secondly, they emphasized their faith in modern science fully embracing the findings of the inquiry commission.<sup>38</sup>

It is arguable that the various images and discourses assembled by the different actors – as in almost all cases of blood libel – allowed for “the *fabrication* of the event [...] out of diverse fragments of social reality.”<sup>39</sup> The scandal was the product of a series of attitudes, emotions and phenomena: the poverty of migrant families and their fears over their children's fate; the socioeconomic rivalries between Greeks and Jews; the resilience of age-old anti-Semitic prejudice and so on. As in other cases of blood libels, the reasons beneath this accusation depended both on local contingencies and more general anti-Jewish sentiments. However, in this specific case the prompt reactions of the Jews, of the local and foreign authorities, and of many newspapers, showed that this allegation could be circumscribed and finally rejected. The affair thus underlined

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<sup>35</sup> The Greek consular authority had ordained the arrest of the two Baruks who were *sudditi elleni*. The two were jailed in Corfu and finally released on 4 January 1882. See: “Divers – Affaire Fornaraki”, *Bulletin de l'AIU*, January 1882, 28-29.

<sup>36</sup> The Vice-President of the Jewish Community of Alexandria to the Chief Rabbi and Jewish Community Council of Corfu, 9 August 1881, f. Egypte I.C.3, AIU.

<sup>37</sup> “A Victory of Science”, *British Medical Journal*, January 1882, 128.

<sup>38</sup> The Vice-President of the Jewish Community of Alexandria to the Chief Rabbi and Jewish Community Council of Corfu, 9 August 1881, f. Egypte I.C.3, AIU.

<sup>39</sup> Po-chia Hsia, *The Myth*, 22.

the precarious and delicate balance of ethnic, national and religious communities in Alexandria, but at the same time, it also showed the willingness of the aforementioned actors to behave as *rational* and modern individuals – a sort of *bourgeoisie éclairée*, to use Ilbert's term. In the end, the greater community of Alexandria preferred to make amends with the Jewish population – so crucial to the commercial prosperity of the city – and to reject slander and schism for the sake of economic and diplomatic relations.<sup>40</sup>

### Modern “women of valour”: the École des filles of the Alliance Israélite Universelle 1900-1919

In fact, the socio-economic centrality of the Jews in Alexandria continued to grow in the last decades of the nineteenth century. This is evident if one looks at the advancements in the fields of education and charity. In 1885, a few years after the *Fornaraki affair*, the de Menasce – one of the most renowned Jewish families of the city – founded a school for boys: the *École Fondation de Menasce*.<sup>41</sup> In those same years, a few charitable associations were established, soon followed by hospitals and, later on, by a variety of cultural and literary circles. In addition to these institutions and associations, a more efficient communal structure resembling European models – which limited the rabbis' power while increasing that of the communal council – was created in 1872.<sup>42</sup>

These changes reflected the double legacy of the local Jewish upper class, *in-between* the Ottoman *millet* and European bourgeois ideals and practices. In fact, the communal and philanthropic associations were not created *ex nihilo*, consisting in a renewal of traditional values and obligations – for example education, welfare, and caring for the poor.<sup>43</sup> Moreover, it was also through the AIU and its educational and social activities that Alexandrian Jews could express their *in-between* positioning in more obvious ways.

The AIU is a philanthropic association founded in 1860 by a group of French Jews, with the aim of educating and emancipating non-European Jews, bringing to them French civilization and the positive effects it was thought to engender. An institution coming out of nineteenth century

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<sup>40</sup> Robert Ilbert, “Le pouvoir”, 184 and onwards.

<sup>41</sup> Kraemer, *The Jews*, 76-77.

<sup>42</sup> Landau, “Changing Patterns”, 82-84 and Id., *Jews*, 54-57. For Landau, the European influx was possibly due to the fact that amongst the compilers were Jews of European – namely French – descent, and/or because the Jewish statutes imitated those of the Egyptian Italian community.

<sup>43</sup> On this: Esther Benbassa, “Associational Strategies in Ottoman Jewish Society in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries”, in *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Avigdor Lévy, (Princeton: The Darwin Press, 1994), 457-484.



French Jewish milieu, the AIU greatly underlined its universal *and* distinctly Jewish character, promoting a French articulation of the *Haskalah* – the Jewish Enlightenment.<sup>44</sup> According to Narcisse Leven, president of the AIU from 1898 to 1915, the AIU not only aimed to improve the education of North African and Middle Eastern Jews but also and more broadly, to transform the Jewish community as a whole.<sup>45</sup> In fact, through its numerous schools – the first of which was founded in 1862 – the AIU contributed greatly to the reshaping of North African and Middle Eastern Jewish identities, leading to a reorganization of the *qahal* (in Hebrew: “community”). The efforts of the AIU also produced changes in the self-perception of Middle Eastern Jews vis-à-vis Arab Muslim societies, ultimately spreading the French republican model of identity all over the territories of the former Ottoman Empire and the Maghreb.<sup>46</sup>

The AIU initially opened a co-ed school in Alexandria in 1897, following an appeal launched by a few local Jewish families that lamented being obliged to send their children to congregational schools. The school of the Jewish Community – which also resembled European models of education – in fact could not host more than 300-400 students and therefore those who could not attend it or other private Jewish schools, such as the *École Fondation de Menasce*, had to opt for Christian missionary schools.<sup>47</sup> Potentially this posed a serious threat to the children’s Jewish upbringing, even though it appears that cases of

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<sup>44</sup> See: André Chouraqui, *L’Alliance Israélite Universelle et la renaissance juive contemporaine. Cent ans d’histoire*, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1965); Aron Rodrigue, *Images of Sephardi and Eastern Jewries in Transition. The Teachers of the Alliance Israélite Universelle*, (Portland: University of Washington Press, 2003); *Histoire de l’Alliance Israélite Universelle de 1860 à nos jours*, ed. André Kaspi, (Paris: Armand Colin, 2010).

<sup>45</sup> Narcisse Leven, *Cinquante ans d’histoire. L’Alliance Israélite Universelle, 1860-1910*, vol. 2, (Paris : Alcan, 1920), 38.

<sup>46</sup> Aron Rodrigue, “L’exportation du paradigme révolutionnaire. Son influence sur le judaïsme sépharade et orientale”, in *Histoire politique des juifs de France*, ed. Pierre Birnbaum, (Paris: Presses de la Fondation nationale des sciences politiques, 1990), 191.

<sup>47</sup> Bension Taragan, *Les communautés israélites d’Alexandrie. Aperçu historique depuis les temps des Ptolémées jusqu’à nos jours*, (Alexandria: Les Editions Juives d’Egypte, 1932), 103. Taragan talks about an appeal published in the French Jewish newspaper *L’Univers Israélite* on 12 September 1896. In the AIU archives I found two earlier letters sent to the AIU President by a group of Jewish families of various descent, “Russes, Polonais, Espagnols, Corfiotes, et autres” calling for the AIU intervention in Alexandria. See: Israélites d’Alexandrie to the AIU President, 3 June (?) 1896, f. Egypte I.C.3, AIU and La Colonie Israélite d’Alexandrie to the AIU President, 21 June 1896, f. Egypte I.C.7, AIU (this document also talks about a letter sent to the chief rabbi of France). On the history of education in turn-of-the-century Egypt: James Heyworth-Dunne, *An Introduction to the History of Education in Modern Egypt*, (London: Frank Cass), 1968; Mona Russell, “Competing, Overlapping, and Contradictory Agendas: Egyptian Education Under British Occupation, 1882-1922”, *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* XXI/1-2 (2001): 50-60; Catherine Mayeur, “Le Collège de la Sainte-Famille dans la société égyptienne”, *Annales Islamologiques* 23 (1987): 117-130.

proselytism, conversion, and anti-Jewish propaganda by congregational schoolteachers were quite rare.<sup>48</sup>

The school for girls of the AIU was inaugurated in 1900 with 56 girls. Looking at the statistics published in the annual *Bulletin de l'AIU*, one can see that within only a few years there was a remarkable increase in the students' population: from 56 students in 1900 to 158 in 1903, then stabilizing at around 130 girls per year. The majority of the families could afford the tuition – even though the teachers' reports give the impression that the girls mainly came from middle and lower-middle class families, and very rarely from the upper strata of the community.<sup>49</sup>

In fact, when Madame Rachel Danon – headmistress of the school from its foundation until its closure in 1919 – took up her post in Alexandria where her husband Joseph headed the boys' school,<sup>50</sup> she soon realized that Jewish notables and families such as the de Menasce, Rolo and Aghion generally opted for private tutors or for prestigious congregational schools such as the *Mères de Dieu* and the *Notre Dame de Sion*. According to Madame Danon, these schools – which combined the usual subjects in French, mathematics, and history with leisure activities such as drama and tennis – aimed to form “worldly women, that would learn how to shine in a salon, and to receive guests in a very graceful manner,” rather than to inculcate basic moral principles or to give pupils an elementary education.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> The most relevant cases of missionary anti-Jewish propaganda seem to have occurred at a later epoch. Consider for example the incident at the *Ecole Sainte-Catherine* of Alexandria in 1925, when a teacher accused the Jews of practicing ritual murder. In this case, the protests of many Alexandrians, both Jews and non-Jews, led to the firing of the teacher. A few days later the school also officially apologized with the leaders of the Jewish Community (see: E. Antebi, “A Alexandrie”, *Le Bulletin. Organe de l'Association Amicale des Anciens Elèves de l'Ecole de Menasce*, 8/50 (1925): 382; Bension Taragan, *Les communautés*, 105; Gudrun Kraemer, *The Jews*, 81). For the case of a Jewish girl attending a missionary school and converting to Christianity in 1930s Cairo: Frédéric Abécassis, “Conversion religieuse et identités nationales en Egypte dans la première moitié du XX siècle”, in *Conversions islamiques, identités religieuses en Islam méditerranéen*, ed. Mercedes Garcia-Arenal, (Paris: Maisonneuve & Larose, 2002), 259-299.

<sup>49</sup> See the *Bulletin de l'AIU* for the period 1900-1913. The bulletin ceased its publication when World War One broke out, and because of this reason I could not find reliable figures for the period 1913-1919.

<sup>50</sup> Rachel Danon, née Braun, (1875-?), educated at the *Ecole Bischoffsheim*, started her career as *adjointe* (“assistant”) at the AIU school for girls of Tunis in 1891, then moving to Baghdad, Alexandria and Beirut where she ended her career in 1923 (Fiches du personnel Moscou (henceforth Fiches) 100-1-46/15, AIU). Her husband Joseph Danon was born in Smyrna in 1864. His father and brother were also AIU headmasters and teachers. After attending the *Ecole Normale Israélite Orientale*, he started teaching in Bulgaria, then Sousse, Tunis and Baghdad. He married Rachel in 1894, moving to Alexandria in 1900 to become headmaster of the school for boys (Fiches 100-1-46/14, AIU).

<sup>51</sup> Rachel Danon to the AIU President, 7 February 1902, f. Alex III.E.36, AIU.

The headmistress's perception of Alexandrian Jews was largely based upon the patronizing gaze of a French Jew who wished to improve the status of her *Oriental* coreligionists. However, Madame Danon was also quite surprised to find how bourgeois and secularized Alexandrian Jews were. Alexandrian women were – in her view – frivolous and snobbish, very attentive to their beauty and physical appearance. These impressions were not unique to Madame Danon; by that time they had become a something of a commonplace in the AIU teachers' reports from Salonika to Constantinople and Tunis.<sup>52</sup> In her earliest observations and comments, Madame Danon lamented a lack of discipline among the students and great disorganization within the school itself. Her feelings are echoed in many of the teachers' letters dating from this period and even prior to it. Moreover the *fillettes*, coming from families that had not instilled in them even a single drop of Jewish morality, and brought up by mothers who had often attended congregational schools, were ignorant of the maternal role for which they should be prepared. Madame Danon remarked, "all that concerns marriage and the family is not taken into consideration [...]. With this kind of upbringing, would you think the mothers are willing to send their daughters to our school? No! Firstly, because we are not, frankly speaking, chic enough for them...."<sup>53</sup>

It was mainly through the innovative *initiation des jeunes filles* – first organized in 1901 – that Madame Danon hoped to improve the status of her school by attracting upper class girls and their families. The history surrounding this ceremony is surely a fascinating one, as it underlines the commingling of cultures that characterized the Alexandrian Jewish community at the time. It also shows how local Jewish religious authorities mediated between traditional knowledge and practices and the effects of processes of modernization on society.

It was Elie (Eliyahu) Hazan (1846-1908), a prominent Sephardi scholar and Chief Rabbi of Alexandria from 1888 until his death, who first proposed transplanting the ceremony to the city. His desire was mainly driven by the fact that many girls "are unfortunately obliged to attend schools where they do not learn our holy language, our history, and the

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<sup>52</sup> Annie Benveniste, "Le rôle des institutrices de l'Alliance Israélite à Salonique", *Combat pour la Diaspora* 8 (1982): 21. Schools for girls and the AIU women teachers have been the object of quite a few studies. I shall here confine myself to: Esther Benbassa, "L'éducation féminine en Orient: l'école des filles de l'Alliance Israélite Universelle à Galata (1879-1912)", *Histoire, Économie et Société* 4/4 (1991): 529-599 and for a general overview: Frances Malino, "The Women Teachers of the Alliance Israélite Universelle, 1872-1940", in *Jewish Women in Historical Perspective*, ed. Judith R. Baskin, (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1991), 248-269.

<sup>53</sup> Rachel Danon to the AIU President, 7 February 1902, f. Alex III.E.36, AIU. Danon herself underlined the word 'chic' in her manuscript letter.

principles of our holy faith” and were therefore not prepared for the “beautiful role of the Jewish woman: *’Eshet chayil* [in Hebrew: “woman of valour”].<sup>54</sup>

In actuality, the AIU school was one of the few in Alexandria that could offer a proper Jewish education, including the teaching of Hebrew. The girls who attended the congregational schools, to the rabbi’s despair, were largely ignorant of Judaism and could not utter a single word in Hebrew. The ceremony was designed so as to attract these girls in particular, and was organized as a religious and social event that would endow Alexandria with a Parisian-style *initiation*, as Madame Danon wrote in her report.

The ceremony mimicked the *bat mitzvah* many European Jewish girls had begun to celebrate in the nineteenth century. Like the boys’ *bar mitzvah*, which is centred on the reading of a portion of the Torah from the pulpit, the girls’ newly invented ceremony consisted in the recitation of some prayers and a few questions dealing with religious issues.<sup>55</sup> The ceremony was a symbol of these girls’ emancipation and, in the Alexandrian case, it underlined the desire of local religious leaders to promote the idea that Judaism was a traditional belief system which could also play a central role in modern times.

Madame Danon was asked by Rabbi Hazan to help organize the

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<sup>54</sup> Appeal of Rabbi Elie Hazan to the Jewish Community of Alexandria, May 1901, f. Alex III.E.36, AIU. Rabbi Elie Hazan, born in Smyrna from a prominent Sephardic rabbinic family, had already faced the very same issue while chief rabbi of Tripoli from 1874 up to 1888. Hazan’s *responsum* to the problems of secular vs. religious education had then been that “the study of secular knowledge should take place under religious auspices,” Jews had to study the language of the country they lived in, so that “the nations of the world would be impressed with the great wisdom of the people of Israel” (David Angel, *Voices in Exile. A Study in Sephardic Intellectual History*, (New York: Hoboken – Ktav, 1991), 184-186). On Rabbi Hazan see also: Landau, *Jews*, 97-99. The expression *’eshet chayil* comes from the Bible, see *Proverbs* 31, 10-11: “A woman of valour who can find? For her price is far above rubies. The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, and he hath no lack of gain.”

<sup>55</sup> The *bar mitzvah* (in Hebrew/Aramaic: “son of the commandment”) indicates “both the attainment of religious and legal maturity as well as the occasion at which this status is formally assumed for boys at the age of 13 plus one day [...]. Upon reaching this age a Jew is obliged to fulfil all the commandments.” As far as *bat mitzvah* (“daughter of the commandment”) is concerned, “it is not until the 19<sup>th</sup> century that indications of ceremony or public recognition come from Italy, Eastern and Western Europe, Egypt, and Baghdad. These acknowledgements of female religious adulthood include a private blessing, a father’s *aliyah* to the Torah, a rabbi’s sermon and/or a girl’s public examination on Judaic matters” (Zvi Kaplan and Norma Joseph, “Bar mitzvah, bat mitzvah”, *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, vol. 3, ed. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolkin (Detroit: MacMillan, 2007), 164-167). The *Encyclopaedia Judaica* also states that rabbi Hazan held a celebration for Alexandrian *bat mitzvah* girls in 1907, whereas all the documents I found in the AIU archives refer to 1901 as the year in which the ceremony was firstly performed.

ceremony, and soon after his request the woman started working on this engaging project: “I was at his complete disposal, and I gave him the programme of the ceremony as it is performed in Paris, as well as the text of all the various prayers....” Madame Danon’s enthusiasm convinced her entire *première classe* – attended by girls who were around ten or eleven-years-old<sup>56</sup> – to take part in the ceremony which, as the teacher noted, not only implied learning the required prayers but also being able to afford the outfit the girls were to wear during the celebration. Among the required elements were a white dress, a veil, and a pair of gloves – all fitted for the occasion.<sup>57</sup> Despite her efforts, the ceremony was for Madame Danon a complete disaster: “no flowers, no carpets, despite what we had decided, no reserved seats, and nobody to greet the notables, the synagogue was assaulted.” Luckily, Madame Danon’s *fillettes* were among the few praised for their conduct, clearly inspired by “our methodical instruction [...] given by European teachers.”<sup>58</sup>

Although Madame Danon’s criticism of the event may have been exaggerated, the ceremony failed to gain the popularity expected by the AIU and Rabbi Hazan. Such scarce success underlines the AIU’s failure to garner the support of the local Jewish elite which, in turn, viewed this school as an institution for the lower classes. As for the ceremony itself, the rabbi’s appeal did little to persuade those parents who saw a woman’s religious role as exclusively domestic.<sup>59</sup>

Despite its initial lukewarm reception, the *initiation* was thereafter incorporated into local Jewish religious rites. Its adoption may signify a less reluctant attitude on the part of Jewish families in subsequent years, but more likely the ceremony’s resilience was due to the emphasis placed on Jewish education by Rabbi Hazan and his successors, the two Italian chief rabbis Raffaello Della Pergola (from 1910 to 1923) and David Prato

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<sup>56</sup> The AIU schools started with the *quatrième* – attended by pupils around six-years-old – and generally ended with the *première*, although in some cases additional classes were added. On the structure of the schools, see: *Instructions générales pour les professeurs*, Paris, Siège de l’Alliance Israélite Universelle, 1903, esp. 26 onwards.

<sup>57</sup> Rachel Danon to the AIU President, 31 May 1901, f. Alex III.E.36, AIU. The obligatory white dress is also mentioned in a footnote of the appeal by Rabbi Hazan: “N.B. Les initiées doivent être vêtues de blanc.”

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> On the *domesticity* of women’s Judaism, consider the seminal study by Paula Hyman, *Gender and Assimilation in Modern Jewish History. The Roles and Representations of Women*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995). For an introduction to Middle Eastern Jewish women’s roles: Rachel Simon, “Between the Family and the Outside World: Jewish Girls in the Modern Middle East and North Africa”, *Jewish Social Studies* 7/1 (2000): 81-108.

(from 1927 to 1936).<sup>60</sup> This hypothesis is supported by Prato's own words, when in a speech given at the 1929 *initiation des jeunes filles*, he lamented that "a few laudable exceptions notwithstanding, the upper class Jewish families keep their distance [from the *initiation*] and the ceremony is attended almost exclusively by the pupils of the communal school, *le figlie del popolo*."<sup>61</sup>

Local processes of social and cultural change that preceded the arrival of the AIU in Egypt surely underscored the model the AIU wished to instil in its female students and the appeal it might have on the girls' families. At the same time, the AIU faced very practical problems such as competition from numerous other schools, and an ever-increasing financial deficit.<sup>62</sup> Nonetheless this institution helped to circulate and diffuse new approaches to female religiosity, as the case of the *initiation des jeunes filles* exemplified. Finally, the AIU also contributed to the re-organization of the local Jewish social arena by helping to construct a network of relationships that extended from local authorities to foreign powers. This last contribution would become particularly evident during WWI, as I will now show.

### Philanthropists, refugees, and the quest for (Jewish) modernity in World War One Alexandria

Although WWI would eventually lead – together with other factors – to the closure of the Alexandrian branch of the AIU, the war proved to be an event during which the Jews had to confront the novel problems that their being *in-between* Europe and the Middle East posed. In order to investigate these issues, I will look at the arrival of Jewish refugees in Alexandria in 1914 and the reaction of local Jews to this event.

As one can read in the *compte-rendu* of the *Comité d'Assistance aux Réfugiés Israélites*, "on 18 December 1914 a telegram to Mr. A. PETROFF, Consul of Russia, announced the arrival of about 700 Jews expelled from Palestine. This first group was soon to be followed by many others."<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Rabbi Della Pergola was also the author of the volume *Chag chinukh dati le-banot-Isra'el: ne'erakh 'al-yedei chevrat-'amalei-Torah, chovert makbilah me-'amarei-musar ve-roshit darkei-ha-dat, ne'esfu 'al-yedei ha-rav ha-gadol Rafael D. Della Pergola/Recueil pour l'initiation religieuse des jeunes filles israélites fait par S.E. le Prof. R. Della Pergola Grand Rabbin*, (No' 'Amon/Alexandria: Va'ad ha-'edah ha-isra'elit, 5682/1922), [Hebrew].

<sup>61</sup> David Prato, *Cinque anni di rabbinato*, (Alexandria, 1933), 160, my translation.

<sup>62</sup> This, together with the financial constraints that the AIU suffered in the aftermath of WWI, led to the closure of the Alexandrian branch of the AIU in 1919. See: Joseph Danon to the AIU President, 8 October 1919, f. Alex IV.E.35.m, AIU.

<sup>63</sup> *Compte-rendu du Comité d'Assistance aux Réfugiés Israélites de Syrie et Palestine*, (Alexandria: Société des Publications Egyptiennes, 1916), 2, f. Alex IV.E.35.m, AIU.

By the end of 1915 a total of 11,277 refugees arrived in the city from Syria and Palestine: most of them were Zionist Ashkenazi Jews with Russian passports that had been expelled from the Ottoman Empire, which was at war with Russia.<sup>64</sup>

Upon arrival in Alexandria, the refugees were first lodged in the area of Hamamil and subsequently, in the more spacious buildings of the *Ancien Gouvernorat*. A group of Jewish women headed by Madame Danon, together with the wives of foreign diplomats and other prominent Alexandrians, immediately organized a drive for the distribution of clothes and food. Their main concern was naturally the children and the improvement of their living conditions during this “forced exile” in Alexandria.<sup>65</sup> Rabbi Della Pergola’s wife, for example, “is as devout as her husband” and spent all her time “comforting the refugees and giving them some relief.” The Baroness de Menasce “showed a special predilection for educational issues,” whilst Mademoiselle Rolo was said to visit the refugees every day, “giving them her own money when the Committee could not help them.”<sup>66</sup>

The *compte-rendu* and the letters sent by Madame Danon highlighted the willingness of the local Jewish elite to present itself as a highly responsive social group, easily mobilized for the sake of their less fortunate coreligionists, and especially in times of crisis. The *compte-rendu* also proffered a rather different image of local Jewish women from the one previously given by Madame Danon, which had depicted them as snobbish and frivolous. Alexandrian Jewish women were now seen in a very positive light, as exemplified by the work of the Baroness de Menasce and Mademoiselle Rolo. This underlines the importance that the AIU assigned to such philanthropic endeavours, something that did not however depend directly, or at least not exclusively, on the institution’s efforts. In fact the prompt reaction of Alexandrian Jews and their active involvement in various philanthropic activities was due to a shift from traditional forms of communal charity to a more modern philanthropy, that had been cultivated among the Egyptian urban elite since the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> On this understudied episode of Egyptian Jewish history see: Nurit Govrin, “The Encounter of Exiles from Palestine with the Jewish Community of Egypt During World War I, As Reflected in Their Writings”, in *The Jews of Egypt. A Mediterranean Society in Modern Times*, ed. Simon Shamir, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1987), 177-191 and Deborah A. Starr, *Remembering Cosmopolitan Egypt. Literature, Culture and Empire*, (London: Routledge, 2009), 114-119.

<sup>65</sup> Rachel Danon, “Rapport sur l’Ecole des Réfugiés de l’Ancien Gouvernorat”, November 1916, f. Alex I.E.33, AIU.

<sup>66</sup> *Compte-rendu*, 51-52, f. Alex IV.E.35.m, AIU.

<sup>67</sup> See: Mine Ener, *Managing Egypt’s Poor and the Politics of Benevolence, 1800-1952*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 2003. Consider also: Tomer Levi, “Qavim

Not only women but also men played a significant role in the war relief efforts. For example, Jack Mosseri – scion of a renowned Jewish family from Cairo – presided over a *comité scolaire* that opened a school in the area of Wardian around November 1915, mainly supported by the *Anglo-Jewish Association* and the British government. A Jewish woman of English origin, Miss Landau, was asked to head this school, which counted around four hundred students from ages four to twelve. Classes were held in both Hebrew and English, with additional lessons of Arabic and sewing.<sup>68</sup> Madame Danon established a second school in the *Ancien Gouvernorat* funded by the French government and the Egyptian authorities. A hundred and twenty-six students attended this school, which – since classes were in French and Hebrew – was less popular among refugees who in most cases could not speak French.<sup>69</sup>

Although the arrival of the refugees undoubtedly brought about a consistent wave of charitable operations in Alexandria, the local Jewish bourgeoisie seemed willing to fulfil its social and *Jewish* duties only insofar as the presence of the refugees did not interfere with their socio-economic positioning in Alexandria, thus partly dismissing the AIU Talmudic motto *Kol Isra'el 'arevim zeh-la-zeh* (in Hebrew: “All Israel is responsible for one another”).<sup>70</sup> On the other hand, the refugees were not just the weak and sick children depicted in the leaflets of the *Comité d'assistance*. Among them were combative Zionists, very critical of the Egyptian Jews' attitude towards Zionism and Judaism in general, and willing to take advantage of the months they had to spend in Alexandria to spread Zionist ideas through the newspapers,<sup>71</sup> and – on a more practical level – to organize small trade and commercial activities inside and outside the refugee camps.<sup>72</sup>

The most significant conflict between the refugees and local Jews, known as the *affaire des azyms*, occurred in April 1916, shortly before *Pesach*. In

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rishonim la-dmutah shel-filantropiah yehudit mizrach tikhonit: yehudei-'Aleksandriah 1840-1914” (“The beginnings of a Mediterranean Jewish philanthropy: the Jews of Alexandria 1840-1914”), in *History and Culture of the Jews of Egypt in Modern Times*, eds. Ada Aharoni, Aimée Israel-Pelletier, Levana Zamir, (Haifa: WCJE, 2007), 99-109 [Hebrew].

<sup>68</sup> “Procès-verbal de la séance du Comité scolaire tenue le lundi 15 Novembre 1915, au Rabbinat, à 4 heures pm, sous la présidence de M. Jack Mosseri, président”, f. Alex IV.E.35.e, AIU.

<sup>69</sup> Rachel Danon, “Rapport”, November 1916, f. Alex I.E.33, AIU.

<sup>70</sup> *Talmud*, tractate *Shavuot* 39a.

<sup>71</sup> Govrin, “The Encounter”, 183-186. For example Yosef Aronowitz founded in 1917 *Ba-Nekhar* (in Hebrew: “In Foreign Land”), a short-lived Hebrew newspaper, aiming at *revivifying* local Jewry.

<sup>72</sup> Horace C. Hornblower, British delegate for the Administration of Refugees in Egypt, “Avis/Moda'ah”, no date (1916?), f. Alex IV.E.35.e, AIU.



the weeks preceding the holiday, an American charitable organization had sent 20,000 kilos of *matzot* to be distributed to the Jewish refugees from Syria and Palestine. However, the communal council initially gave the *matzot* to Alexandrian Jews, even though “the needs of the Community had already been satisfied.” The refugees thus protested and assaulted the office of Joseph Picciotto, the member of the Jewish Community Council in charge of the distribution of the *matzot*. This affair led to the publication of articles in local newspapers, lamenting the greed of upper-class Alexandrian Jews and of the Community Council in particular, which since the day the refugees landed in the city “showed animosity” towards them and had been unwilling to utilize much of its funding to help them. The articles emphasized that Jewish leaders should not differentiate between local and foreign Jews, since “the *raison d’être* of the Jewish Community is to help the poor,” whether they be Alexandrian Jews or refugees from Palestine.<sup>73</sup>

Apart from these clashes, WWI also strengthened the connections between Alexandrian Jews, their Jewish brothers and sisters in other areas of the Middle East and Europe, and world politics. Even though Alexandria had long been a crucial *nodal city* where goods, men, and ideas could easily circulate, the war accelerated this trend and projected Alexandria definitively into the global arena.<sup>74</sup> This is clear when considering the city’s Jewish leaders, their attitude toward WWI, and the role they determined Jews could play in it. In addition, the *Zion Mule Corps* (henceforth ZMC) – a Jewish auxiliary unit of the British army – was founded in Alexandria in March 1915. In this Jewish military brigade were the 562 Jews – including a few Egyptian Jews – that fought vigorously in the battle of Gallipoli in 1915.<sup>75</sup>

The local chief rabbi Raffaello Della Pergola – who was also an ardent Zionist supporter – actively encouraged the ZMC.<sup>76</sup> According to John Henry Patterson, a non-Jewish member of the ZMC, a few days before the soldiers’ departure in April 1915, they all “had a last big parade, and marched from Wardian Camp [...] to the Synagogue, to receive the final

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<sup>73</sup> “L’affaire des azymes. Une sérieuse bagarre”, clipping from an unnamed and undated newspaper (Spring 1916?), f. Alex IV.E.35.m, AIU.

<sup>74</sup> On the notion of *nodal city*: Ilham Khuri-Makdisi, *The Eastern Mediterranean and the Making of Global Radicalism, 1860-1914*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 26-29.

<sup>75</sup> This topic obviously goes beyond the scope of my essay. As an introduction, see: T. Preschel, “Zion Mule Corps”, in R. Patai (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Zionism and Israel*, (New York: Herzl Press, 1971), 1282.

<sup>76</sup> Raffaello Della Pergola was born in 1876 and studied at the rabbinical college of Florence. He was chief rabbi of Gorizia from 1903 to 1910. He then moved to Alexandria where he acted as chief rabbi until his sudden death in Gorizia in 1923. For a brief biographical sketch: Bension Taragan, *Les communautés*, 59.

blessing of the Grand Rabbi. The spacious Temple, in the street of the Prophet Daniel, was on this occasion filled to its utmost capacity.”<sup>77</sup>

A few months later, on Yom Kippur 5676 (18 September 1915), Della Pergola organized a collective *Prière pour la paix/Tefillah be‘ad-ha-shalom* at the *Temple Eliabou Hanabi*. The text of the prayer is an interesting example of how Rabbi Della Pergola responded to a *side effect* of modernity such as WWI. Further, the text can also help us to grasp the emotional effect that this event generated in those attending the ceremony. The Hebrew *incipit* included the usual Jewish formulas: “Oh Lord of the World we are Your people the House of Israel, the people You created so that Your glory could be praised, Your sons and sons of Your companion, the seed of Your beloved Abraham.”<sup>78</sup> The prayer incorporated several biblical citations, for instance Leviticus 26: 6: “And I will give peace in the land, and ye shall lie down, and none shall make you afraid: and I will rid evil beasts out of the land, neither shall the sword go through your land.”<sup>79</sup> The French text was even more explicit and directly connected to the reality of WWI: “A terrible war broke out [...]. Civilization is regressing. [...] Oh Lord, may you grant wisdom to those who lead the nations....”<sup>80</sup>

This prayer – when compared with previous events such as the 1881 calls for “the advancement of civilization and true justice” during the *Fornaraki affair*, or the 1901 *initiation des jeunes filles* – can be considered as another example of how Alexandrian Jews and their leaders tried to address the problems the modern world imposed on them. It shows their response to necessity and their willingness to adjust their religious practices to historical contingencies. As I have already said, the European influence was crucial – a fact that, in this case, was emphasized by Della Pergola’s having been Italian. It is noteworthy that this kind of commemorative activity had gained popularity first among European Jews, signalling their very active involvement in the war.<sup>81</sup>

Edgard Suarés, member of a family of Jewish bankers and businessmen and president of the city’s Jewish Community Council from 1914 to 1917, shared the rabbi’s compassionate response to WWI.<sup>82</sup> Suarés gave a

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<sup>77</sup> John H. Patterson, *With the Zionists in Gallipoli*, (London: Hutchinson, 1916), 45.

<sup>78</sup> *Prière pour la paix/Tefillah be‘ad ha-shalom*, (Alexandria: Mizrahi, 5676/1915), **N**, f. Alex IV.E.35.e, AIU.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, **1**

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 3-4.

<sup>81</sup> For the Italian case see: Mario Toscano, “Religione, patriottismo, sionismo: il rabbinato militare nell’Italia della Grande Guerra (1915-1918)”, *Zakhor* 8/8 (2005) and Ilaria Pavan, “‘Cingi al fianco, o prode, la spada’. I rabbini italiani di fronte alla Grande Guerra”, *Rivista di Storia del Cristianesimo* 2/2 (2006): 335-358.

<sup>82</sup> On Suarés: Kraemer, *The Jews*, 41.

speech – probably around June or July 1916<sup>83</sup> – in front of a monument erected by the ZMC with the support of the Jewish Community Council and the *municipalité*, to commemorate Jewish soldiers enlisted in European armies and killed in combat. “Here rest the heroes of the world’s independence,” men who fought “with great enthusiasm, [...] to defend the shared heritage of humanity: freedom. [...] Brothers, may you rest in peace. [...] We will soon come and tell you that the glorious dawn of justice has risen.”<sup>84</sup>

Surely such a ceremony, with its connections to Western bourgeois rituals, could be utilized by Suarés to clarify what *being modern* meant, but it was also a way of asserting his position and authority within local society.<sup>85</sup> Moreover, the blessing of the ZMC by Rabbi Della Pergola, the commemoration of the dead soldiers by Suarés, and the mixture of biblical citations and patriotic motifs, all show how dichotomies such as tradition/modernity, religious/secular, local/foreign are often too narrow and misleading when applied to modern Mediterranean Jewish societies.<sup>86</sup> What we need then is to map the trans-Mediterranean interplay between all these categories, opting for a broader definition of modernity that underlines its changing and unfinished character.<sup>87</sup>

WWI in Alexandria can be seen to encompass multiple rivalries and conflicts. The opposition between *localness* and *foreignness* – which, as shown by recent studies, was understood in multiple ways in early twentieth century Alexandria<sup>88</sup> – implied contrasting feelings of Egyptianness and Alexandrianness, class consciousness and, last but not least, a supra-national Jewish ethno-religious belonging which the AIU took pains to reinforce.

### Moving histories: a conclusion

This paper aimed to illustrate the multiple encounters between the Jews of Alexandria and the onset of modernity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. I first examined the *Fornaraki affair*, a case of blood libel that occurred in 1881, which shed light on how modern practices and habits were reframed and adjusted to resolve local inter-ethnic

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<sup>83</sup> See the brief article on the ZMC available at: <http://www.bassatine.net/bassa11.php>, *Bassatine News – Jewish Community of Cairo* [accessed 27 June 2011].

<sup>84</sup> “Une pieuse cérémonie”, clipping from an unnamed newspaper, 5 March 1915, f. Alex IV.E.35.e, AIU.

<sup>85</sup> Watenpaugh, *Being Modern*, 22.

<sup>86</sup> See: Julia Philips Cohen and Sarah Abrevaya Stein, “Sephardic Scholarly Worlds: Towards a Novel Geography of Modern Jewish History”, *Jewish Quarterly Review* 100/3 (2010): 349-384.

<sup>87</sup> On this consider: Khuri-Makdisi, *The Eastern Mediterranean*, 161-171.

<sup>88</sup> Hanley, “Foreignness”.

rivalries and class conflicts. In the subsequent pages I looked at the AIU's *École des filles* and its activities, such as the 1901 *initiation des jeunes filles*, in which ideas of femininity, Judaism, and class interacted. Finally, I considered WWI and the response of Alexandrian Jews, arguing that the war enabled the diffusion of a more modern, global consciousness of what living in this city meant.

I deliberately chose to narrate three rather different *histories*, as it is only by considering such a broad context of cultural practices and historical events that one can begin to acknowledge the complexity of turn-of-the-century Alexandria and its modernity. The former should be intended as a kind of toolbox Alexandrian Jews employed “for their own ends and in a way that went far beyond resistance or collaboration with the West.”<sup>89</sup> The Jews – together with other sectors of local society – tried to construct alternative paths towards their socio-economic and cultural emancipation, without renouncing to their fruitful history of Mediterranean trans-communalism, mixing Jewish traditional knowledge and secularist ideas, economic realities and a diverse *social imaginary*.<sup>90</sup>

I would argue that there was no clear-cut *Jewish* approach to modernity in Alexandria, but rather we find histories and events that distinguished most of the Jews from their surroundings and highlighted possible specificities in terms of social practices, religiosity, and so on. The events I looked at can also illuminate hitherto underscored meanings of cosmopolitanism in colonial Alexandria, going beyond nostalgic and static understandings of the term and interpreting it in a more flexible manner, which includes upper and lower class individuals, external actors such as the AIU teachers, migrant workers and refugees. Finally, what all this suggests is that we consider the encounter(s) between the Jews and modernity in Alexandria as a set of *moving histories*,<sup>91</sup> by which I intend historical narrations entailing a strong emotional and imaginative connotation, destabilizing national and ethno-religious boundaries, reframing class and its distinctions, and finally showing the diversity of

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<sup>89</sup> Watenpugh, *Being Modern*, 17, my emphasis.

<sup>90</sup> On the notion of social imaginary: Sarah Maza, *The Myth of the French Bourgeoisie. An Essay on the Social Imaginary, 1750-1850*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003); Cornelius Castoriadis, “The Imaginary: Creation in The Social-Historical Domain”, in *World in Fragments. Writings on Politics, Society, Psychoanalysis, and The Imagination*, ed. David Ames Curtis, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 3-18 and Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).

<sup>91</sup> See: Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette Burton, “Introduction: The Politics of Intimacy in an Age of Empire”, in *Moving Subjects: Gender, Mobility, and Intimacy in an Age of Global Empire*, eds. Tony Ballantyne, Antoinette Burton, (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 1-28. Consider also the seminal essay by James Clifford, “Traveling Cultures”, *Cultural Studies*, eds. Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, Paula A. Treichler, (New York: Routledge, 1992), 96-112.

modern Alexandria and its Jewish population.

In conclusion, this essay aimed to re-imagine the history of Alexandrian Jews vis-à-vis the concept of modernity – which was and still is “easy to inhabit but difficult to define.”<sup>92</sup> Modernity should not be viewed as a linear corpus of practices and ideas, but rather, as a blending of fragments and events connecting the past with the present, and vice versa: a mobile *itinerary* through which Alexandrian Jews could find a space of their own in a rapidly changing city. Furthermore, although Europe had a crucial role in the making of modern Alexandria, one should remember that the former was not a *tabula rasa* but a vibrant and dynamic milieu, full of *histories* that “[had] already been imbibed [...] through certain shared dispositions, skills, competencies, and sentiments” by those who inhabited it.<sup>93</sup> The histories that I reconstructed might then help to deepen our understanding of modernity in the Eastern Mediterranean. In addition, with regard to the Jews, I have tried to show their encounter – sometimes a *clash* – with modernity, and their mediation between different traditions and ideas, highlighting the dialogic and dynamic nature of local societies and shedding light on possible disruptions in the hierarchical relations between Europe and the *Orient*.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Habitations of Modernity. Essays in the Wake of Subaltern Studies*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002), XIX.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIII.

<sup>94</sup> On this: Ballantyne and Burton, “Introduction”, 3 and onwards.

## Ambivalent Modernity: the Jewish Population in Vienna

by Albert Lichtblau

### Abstract

*Vienna is regarded as an outstanding city for Jewish protagonists of modernity as the lives of Sigmund Freud and Theodor Herzl illustrate. Most of these individuals were migrants or had to escape Nazi persecution. Creative Jews were confronted with aggressive anti-Semites, who created the prejudice of Jews as initiators of "unwanted change."*

*This article reflects that modernity was ambiguous for the Jewish population in Vienna in a socio-historical context such as population growth after 1848, migration and urbanisation, segregation, secularisation.*

Modernity is a term full of ambivalence. It refers to modernisation, which means change. Many change processes leave losers and winners and are therefore accompanied by fears and hopes.

The economy of industrialisation forced European states to change their population policies, which eventually lead to the removal of discriminating mobility restrictions that existed for particular sections of the population. This also concerned the Jewish population. In terms of mobility, Modernity did not begin legally for them in the Habsburg Monarchy until 1848 or 1867, when equal rights were accorded to them. One might contradict this by pointing out that modernity had long before been firmly rooted in the Jewish population.

The Enlightenment had contributed a great variety of impulses that found their socio-political expression during the revolution of 1848.<sup>1</sup> At that time, mainly Jewish students stood up for the revolution. At a joint funeral service for Christian and Jewish followers of the revolution that had been killed, the most eminent preacher of Vienna's Jewish community, the Isaac Noah Mannheimer, appealed for the interdenominational support for equality:

"Allow me another word to my Christian brothers! It was your wish that these dead Jews rest with you in your, in one soil. They fought for you, bled for you! They rest in your soil! Do not begrudge those who have fought the same fight, and the harder fight, namely to live with you on the same earth, free and light-heartedly as yourselves. ... Accept us too as

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph Karniel, *Die Toleranzpolitik Kaiser Josephs II.*, (Schriftenreihe des Instituts für Deutsche Geschichte Universität Tel-Aviv, 9) Gerlinger: Bleicher Verlag 1985); Wolfgang Häusler, "Demokratie und Emanzipation 1848", *Studia Judaica Austriaca* 1 (1974): 92-111.

free men, and God may bless you!”<sup>2</sup>

This speech expresses the dilemma of the political modernity, which was announcing itself through democratic participation, from the perspective of a minority: When the majority possesses the power, minorities depend on their goodwill and on them having respect for how minorities express their loyalty and participation.

As the capital of a multinational state, Vienna not only was a city of multiculturalism until 1918, but also the first European metropolis under an anti-Semitic government. Community politics were dominated by the anti-Semitic Christian Social Party from 1895 until the end of World War I. It is no coincidence that Adolf Hitler from the town of Braunau am Inn learned from anti-Semitic politicians of all hues and adapted their propagandistic successes based on demagogic attacks as well as their racist ideology.<sup>3</sup>

### Nation, politics & exposure

The tension specific to Vienna was not only characterised by a tradition of distance between the Jewish and non-Jewish population, which was deeply rooted in the Catholic faith, but also by the grave burden caused by a shift of pressure through economic as well as social and political crises. The short phase of relief for the Jewish population, as a result of the emancipation of 1867, was shattered by a massive economic crisis, which was followed by a fundamentally political one. The Austrian half of the Habsburg Monarchy skidded into a conflict of nationalities that eroded the foundations of the state’s structure. The legal system of the state did not consider the Jewish population a nation, but a religious community.<sup>4</sup> As a result, the Jewish population was exploited in the struggle for national rights, on the one hand – for instance in the case of the Polish in Galicia, or the Germans in Bukovina – but not regarded as serious opponents, on the other. In the Czech countries, German and Czech national groups alike declined to cooperate with the Jewish population.

Vienna was a reflection of these conflicts. After decades, the supremacy of the Liberal Party in Vienna was broken by the anti-Semitic Christian Social Party under Karl Lueger in 1895.<sup>5</sup> The Liberals had little to put

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<sup>2</sup> M. Rosenmann, *Isak Noa Mannheimer. Sein Leben und Wirken*, (Wien-Berlin: R. Löwit Verlag, 1922), 138-139.

<sup>3</sup> Brigitte Hamann, *Hitlers Wien. Lehrjahre eines Diktators*, (München: Piper, 1996).

<sup>4</sup> Gerald Stourzh, “Galten die Juden als Nationalität Altösterreichs?”, *Studia Judaica Austriaca* 10 (1984): 73-117.

<sup>5</sup> John W. Boyer, *Karl Lueger (1844-1910). Christlichsoziale Politik als Beruf*, (Wien-Köln-Weimar: Böhlau, 2010).

forward against the powerful nationalistic arguments. Owing to the work of Theodor Herzl (1869–1904), Vienna gained lasting significance for Jewish policy. The lawyer, writer and journalist was by all means a typical Jewish intellectual striving for recognition through culture. Because of his own exposure to a new kind of hostility against the Jewish people, which he experienced especially as a correspondent for the daily newspaper *Neue Freie Presse* in Paris when observing the Dreyfuss trial, he understood the crisis of assimilated Jewish identity. Utopia is often dreamed up in a situation of fundamental crisis. This also applies to Theodor Herzl's programmatic Zionist concept as published in his book *Der Judenstaat* (The Jewish State) in 1896, which he developed intuitively quasi overnight.<sup>6</sup> The clarity of Herzl's utopia was striking: other nations would only respect the Jewish population as equal if it considered itself an independent people and established its own Jewish state. The Zionist movement has Herzl's efforts to thank for a consistent ideological concept. In addition, he managed to establish the discourse on the "Jewish question" at a diplomatic and international level, within the last years of his life. Theodor Herzl and being home to the seat of the world Zionist General Council until 1905 made Vienna the centre of Zionism. However, the majority in Vienna remained reserved towards Zionism at first. Initially, neither the liberal nor the religiously oriented Jewish population of Vienna seemed to think much of this Jewish nationalism.<sup>7</sup> In terms of national self-esteem, the Austrian First Republic, proclaimed in 1918, clearly suffered from inferiority feelings, as the new state represented merely the bankruptcy estate of a centuries-old, dynastic, multinational system. Only few believed in the viability of the First Republic. The majority of its population considered itself German. However, the victorious powers forbade them to unify with their German neighbour country. This was precisely what the Nazis used to their advantage. The German nationalists had lost their former opponents under the Habsburg Monarchy such as the Czechs or Hungarians. Therefore, they focused their aggressive energy all the more on the Jewish population, which represented a familiar "enemy within."<sup>8</sup> The introduction of the universal and equal suffrage for men and women in the First Republic changed the political landscape in Vienna. From that time on, the Social Democratic Party was in power, steering community politics until the party was banned under the Christian Social Party in February 1934 as a result of the civil war and the Austro-fascist

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<sup>6</sup> See Felix Weltsch, "Der Zionismus als Reaktion auf den Antisemitismus", *Jüdischer National-Kalender für die Tschechoslowakei 1923-24* (1923): 32-38.

<sup>7</sup> Adolf Gaisbauer, *Davidstern und Doppeladler. Zionismus und jüdischer Nationalismus in Österreich 1882-1918*, (Wien-Köln-Graz: Böhlau, 1988).

<sup>8</sup> Bruce F. Pauley, *From Prejudice to Persecution. A History of Austrian Anti-Semitism*, (Chapel Hill-London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1992).



seizure of power. After 1918, Vienna became a proving ground for social democratic reformist politics.

With the Liberals having slumped to a level of insignificance and Zionist parties having failed, the Social Democratic Workers' Party was more or less the only electable option for the Jewish voters, as all other parties tended towards anti-Semitism.<sup>9</sup> In addition, the workers' movement was a stronghold for politicians of Jewish birth who were prepared to assimilate, but were hardly willing to take a stand for the rights of the Jewish population, because the experience of abandoning their Jewish identity was still too new.<sup>10</sup> The most important Austro-Marxist theorist, Otto Bauer, was one of them, but did not go as far as many others as he did not leave the Israelitische Kultusgemeinde (Jewish Community).<sup>11</sup> Hugo Breitner, the highly controversial – for levying communal taxes in order to fund council housing – councillor, for example, had already renounced his Jewish faith around the turn of the century.<sup>12</sup> In simpler words, the Social Democrats expected socialism to “solve the Jewish question,” or, as the party's founder Viktor Adler, who had also renounced his Jewish religion, put it: “The socialist society will carry Ahasver, the Wandering Jew, to his final rest!”<sup>13</sup> Shortly before the turn of the century his optimism had changed to resignation. He wrote: “The last anti-Semite will only die with the last Jew.”<sup>14</sup>

With all attempts to conform taking no noticeable effect, it must have been difficult for this minority to try and find its place amongst a majority population that was unsure of its nationality. Considering this situation, the modernisation-oriented ‘Red Vienna’ was the only liveable oasis appealing to Jews in a country otherwise dominated by Christian-conservative, German-national powers. Upon the seizure of power by the Christian Social Party, which was characterised by anti-Semitism, in 1934, Vienna lost this specific quality. The last four years before the seizure of power by the NS were bizarre, as the Jewish population found itself under the protectorate of a regime infiltrated with anti-Semitic ideology.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> On Jewish national parties in Austria see *Chilufim. Zeitschrift für Jüdische Kulturgeschichte* 7 (2009).

<sup>10</sup> Robert S. Wistrich, *Socialism and the Jews. The Dilemma of Assimilation in Germany and Austria-Hungary*, (London: Associated University Presses, 1982).

<sup>11</sup> Ernst Hanisch, *Der große Illusionist Otto Bauer (1881-1938)*, (Wien-Köln-Weimar: Böhlau, 2011), 40-57.

<sup>12</sup> Wolfgang Fritz, “Der Kopf des Asiaten Breitner”. *Politik und Ökonomie im Roten Wien. Hugo Breitner – Leben und Werk*, (Wien: Löcker, 2000).

<sup>13</sup> Victor Adler, “Über die Judenfrage”, *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, May 22, 1932.

<sup>14</sup> Norbert Leser, “Jüdische Persönlichkeiten in der österreichischen Politik”, *Österreichisch-jüdisches Geistes- und Kulturleben* 1 (1988): 25.

<sup>15</sup> Sylvia Maderegger, *Die Juden im österreichischen Ständestaat 1934 – 1938*, (Wien-Salzburg: Geyer-Edition, 1973).

## Metropolisation

In the following chapters various aspects including urbanisation, culture and the answers to modernity provided by religion will be dealt with. The fact that the Jewish population played an important role in the period between 1848 and 1938 was based on the influx of Jews that continued until 1918. Vienna benefitted from the sheer size of the Habsburg Monarchy and the largely unrestricted mobility across its regions covering the territories of today's Poland, Ukraine, Romania, Hungary, Slovakia, and many others until 1918. The year of the revolution, 1848, could in fact be marked as the actual beginning of modernity, as only from then onwards, were Jews – other than a small privileged class of so-called Court Jews and their employees – permitted to settle permanently in Vienna.<sup>16</sup>

The influx of migrants to the cities, which can generally be described as a 'go west' movement, brought about a considerable increase in the size of the Jewish population in the cities of the Habsburg Monarchy; above all, its capitals Vienna and Budapest. Following the collapse of the Habsburg Monarchy, the Jewish population of the now diminished Austrian state was concentrated in Vienna, where 92 percent of the country's Jews lived.<sup>17</sup>

In the course of time the native countries of Jewish immigrants were changing. Whereas immigrants from Hungary, which included the neighbouring country of Slovakia, dominated up to 1880, more and more people later arrived from Bohemia and Moravia, and eventually from Galicia and Bukovina. Apart from religious diversity, the different cultures of their native regions were responsible for the heterogeneity of Vienna's Jewish population. The dissociation from people from the 'East', who were considered inferior, was the most obvious intra-Jewish conflict. It was directed against their language, Yiddish, as well as their habitual manners in everyday life.

To measure integration within the Jewish community of a city, one can, for example, analyse marriage patterns. Marsha L. Rozenblit's study indicates that Galicians preferred to marry partners from the same area. One may turn this argument around; for instance, consider the fact that 72.1 percent of Galician-born brides who married between 1870 and 1910 wed men from the same crown land. This also could mean that they had little choice in the matter. Gender had a very strong impact on partner decisions, since the endogamy-marriage pattern of Galician bridegrooms was lower: 49.7 percent. There was only one other group

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<sup>16</sup> Löw Akos, *Die soziale Zusammensetzung der Wiener Juden nach den Trauungs- und Geburtsmatrikeln 1784 - 1848*, unpublished dissertation, (Wien: 1952).

<sup>17</sup> "Die Ergebnisse der österreichischen Volkszählung vom 22. März 1934", *Statistik des Bundesstaates Österreich* 1 (1935): 45.

that stands out: The majority of Viennese-born men refused partnerships with women born somewhere else; they preferred to marry Viennese-born women. Because many ‘Western’ Jews looked down on the *Ostjuden*, why would they marry one of them?

*Table: Percentage of bridegrooms and brides who married partners who were born in the same crown land (1870–1910)*

	Bridegrooms	Brides	Bridegrooms	Brides
	1870–1910		1918–1938	
Vienna	62.4%	33.6%	59.5%	42.6%
Bohemia	15.4%	25.8%	15.8%	18.2%
Moravia, Silesia	27.7%	34.2%	23.4%	25.5%
Galicja & Bukovina	49.7%	72.1%	55.7%	70.7%
Hungary	34.2%	47.9%	23.4%	34.9%

Source: Marsha L. Rozenblit, *The Jews of Vienna 1867-1914. Assimilation and Identity*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983), 44; records Jewish Community Vienna, data bank Lichtblau.

Mobility is considered an indicator of a modern way of life. Looking at population census results linking religious affiliation and birthplace data, it is evident that the ancestral structure of Vienna’s Jewish population differed greatly from that of its non-Jewish inhabitants. In 1923, Vienna’s Jewish population reached its peak, amounting to 200,000 members of the Jewish faith and approximately 11 percent of the city’s total population. Scarcely more than one third was born in Vienna, which meant that the vast majority was marked by the experience of immigration. Many illustrious citizens such as Gustav Mahler, Sigmund Freud or Karl Kraus were not born in Vienna. Many famous creative artists native to Vienna, such as Stefan Zweig and Arnold Schoenberg, had parents whose biographies indicate diverse places of origin. Their biographies illustrate the brevity of the period of cultural blossoming abruptly cut short by National Socialism. It is no coincidence that, with the exception of writer Arthur Schnitzler, next to none of these celebrities were both born and died in this city.

*Table: Birthplace of Viennese population 1923*

Region	Jewish population		Non-Jewish population	
	Absolute number	%	Absolute number	%
Vienna	77,260	38.3	927,041	55.7
Austria	7,967	4	296,770	17.8
Abroad	116,286	57.7	440,456	26.5
Total	201,513	100	1,664,267	100

Source: Leo Goldhammer, *Die Juden Wiens. Eine statistische Studie*, (Wien-Leipzig: R. Löwit Verlag, 1927).

Vienna also harboured a second minority group of considerable size, which had likewise drawn the displeasure of nationalist groups: the Czech-speaking population. Due to the sovereignty of the Czech Republic, however, its status changed considerably in the First Republic. A bilateral agreement safeguarded the minority rights of this demographic group. It dropped out of the nationalists' primary line of fire, after greatly decreasing in size due to emigration to the Czechoslovak Republic following its foundation in 1918.<sup>18</sup>

During the First World War, Vienna's Jewish population once again experienced a large influx of Jews from the East of the Habsburg Empire, particularly from Galicia and Bukovina, fleeing Russian troops into the heart of the country. The refugees were targets of anti-Semitic agitation that played upon the image of the foreign-looking, orthodox and impoverished Jew and regularly called for the expulsion of these former asylum seekers. When the members of the former Habsburg monarchy in Austria were obliged to choose a nationality, an Interior Minister of the German National faction succeeded in interpreting the law in such a manner that the Eastern-Jewish immigrants scarcely had a chance of obtaining Austrian nationality.<sup>19</sup>

In comparison to the second large minority group in Vienna, the Czechs, the Jewish population was much more compact and concentrated. It is easiest to measure the differing concentration of ethnic groups in urban environments using the segregation index, which can have a value between 0 and 100. Zero signifies that two groups are evenly distributed

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<sup>18</sup> Albert Lichtblau, "Zwischen den Mühlsteinen. Der Einfluß der Politik auf die Dimension von Minderheiten am Beispiel der Tschechen und Juden im Wien des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts", in *Un-Verständnis der Kulturen. Multikulturalismus in Mitteleuropa in historischer Perspektive*, eds. Michael John, Oto Luthar, (Klagenfurt/Celovec-Ljubljana/Laibach-Wien/Dunaj: Hermagoras, 1997) 87-113.

<sup>19</sup> Beatrix Hoffmann-Holter, "Abreisendmachung". *Jüdische Kriegsflüchtlinge in Wien 1914 bis 1923*, (Wien-Köln-Weimar: Böhlau, 1995) 248-257.

in terms of housing. A value of 100 signifies that both groups have entirely separate residencies. The segregation index for Jews and non-Jews, respectively amounting to more than 42 percent across the districts of Vienna, indicates that both groups had distinct preferences regarding the selection of residential districts. It appears that both male and female Jews preferred to live near other Jews. What can be interpreted as advantageous to the minority group – providing cohesion due to tight networks such as associations, self-regulation, protection, supply etc. – can also lead to a segregation of social contacts.

*Table: The spatial distribution of Vienna's Jewish and non-Jewish population, as measured by the segregation indexes, 1880–1934*

Census	Segregation index Jewish – non-Jewish population
1880	43.1
1890	43.7
1900	45.0
1910	44.2
1923	42.3
1934	42.6

Source: Albert Lichtblau, *Antisemitismus und soziale Spannung in Berlin und Wien 1867 - 1914*, (Berlin: Metropol, 1994), 26-30.

### **Outstanding cultural achievements?**

Immigration, diversity and segregation created a structural foundation for the way in which the Jewish population, marked by growth, participated in society. When studying the history of the Jewish population prior to the National Socialist era, the fascination with outstanding achievements by individuals such as Sigmund Freud, Gustav Mahler, Arnold Schoenberg or Stefan Zweig is grating. Minority policy harbours the pitfall of lauding minorities to such an extent that they pass into an exotic otherworld that is met with bipolar idealisation or rejection. Such a perspective ignores people who led average lives or even failed. For xenophobes and anti-Semites, outstanding achievements and reality, respectively, are irrelevant anyhow; they stand by their opinion that people they define as “others” are inappropriate, foreign and, consequently, dangerous. They feared successful people in particular.

One of the main problems facing modernity was the inability to determine otherness. The reduction of differences specified by law no

longer permitted a differentiation between population groups, making affiliation seemingly fluid instead.<sup>20</sup> Xenophobes reacted with a wide range of fantasies pertaining to appearance or character shaped by one's ethnic, national or even "racial" affiliation. This was clearly irrational and ludicrous, but anti-Semitic speeches possessed political entertainment value. It is no coincidence that Vienna played an important role in the emergence of so-called "self-loathing." Otto Weininger's book *Sex and Character*, published in 1903, is a much-discussed attempt at breaking out of the dead-end of assimilation and animosity.<sup>21</sup> After 1918, anti-Semitism celebrated greater and greater success on the political stage in terms of the discourse of exclusion, as numerous associations barred Jewish members; the campaigns now also became violent and criminal.<sup>22</sup> Nevertheless, how is one to explain the outstanding cultural achievements of individual Jewish creative artists? It is helpful to picture the history of the Jewish population as a sequence of generations. People who experienced the revolution of 1848, the initial euphoria about common interests and the disillusionment about the mobilisation of reactionary anti-Jewish lines of thought were shaped by the ambivalence of their experience. Due to the suppression of democratic activities, this period was followed by a calm interval, which raised hope for the assimilatory way of life. People socialised during this period had to believe integration was possible via inconspicuousness. It was not until everyday speech was imbued with nationalist and racist language as a result of anti-Semitic propaganda from 1880 onwards that it was made plain to the generation raised during this period that the assimilatory model had failed. This period saw the beginning of escape from religion by means of secession. Leon Botstein viewed the secessions as one of the possible reactions to emancipation, but as always, an interplay of various factors was at work.<sup>23</sup> Many famous creative artists such as Gustav Mahler, Arnold Schoenberg – who would later return – or Karl Kraus took this path. Religious secession was an expression of the fact that the binding force of religion was vanishing, on one hand, and that secession continued to be seen as an entry card into non-Jewish society, on the other.

In his autobiography titled *The World of Yesterday*, writer Stefan Zweig, born in Vienna in 1881, created a three-generation model that is undeniably plausible for people who turned to culture. He wrote,

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<sup>20</sup> Laws attempted to group people into clearly defined national categories.

<sup>21</sup> Jaques Le Rider, *Das Ende der Illusion. Die Wiener Moderne und die Krisen der Identität*, (Wien: ÖBV, 1990), 29-30.

<sup>22</sup> Regarding anti-Semitism in Alpine associations, see Rainer Amstädter, *Der Alpinismus. Kultur, Organisation, Politik*, (Wien: WUV-Universitätsverlag, 1996).

<sup>23</sup> Leon Botstein, *Judentum und Modernität. Essays zur Rolle der Juden in der deutschen und österreichischen Kultur 1848 bis 1938*, (Wien-Köln: Böhlau, 1991), 44.

“It is generally accepted that getting rich is the only and typical goal of the Jew. Nothing could be further from the truth. Riches are to him merely a stepping stone, a means to the true end, and in no sense the real goal. The real determination of the Jew is to rise to a higher cultural plane in the intellectual world. [...] And that is why among Jews the impulse to wealth is exhausted in two, or at most three, generations within one family, and the mightiest dynasties find their sons unwilling to take over the banks, the factories, the established and secure businesses of their fathers.”<sup>24</sup>

Naturally, the rise to a higher intellectual plane was also pursued by important non-Jewish Viennese artists such as Oskar Kokoschka, Gustav Klimt, Adolf Loos or Egon Schiele, to name but a few. It was a period of fluidity, in which old paradigms were questioned, overturned, modernised, adapted. This dissonance was reflected in cultural expression. In his study on fin-de-siècle Vienna, Carl E. Schorschke states that Arnold Schoenberg was laying the powder for the explosion in music.”<sup>25</sup> The tension present in society was reflected in culture, foreshadowing what would become the horrific reality of the First World War.

One approach for the description of the unusual situation that enabled a disproportionally high number of Jewish artists to engage in innovative creativity is relatively banal, being socio-historically justified. It involves more favourable preconditions for social mobility. Until the onset of the First World War, Vienna was characterised by expansion as a result of immigration. Rural exodus and urbanisation went hand in hand, as people who were unable to find employment in their region of origin tried their luck in the city. The majority of non-Jewish immigrant groups hailed from rural origins and agricultural professions, and were mostly employed as workers or craftsmen in the city. Innovation and creativity are for the most part linked to education, thus affording the Jewish population a much better starting position due to the traditional dominance of trading professions. To give an example: the census of 1880 reveals that nearly half of the Jewish population in Vienna was employed in a trading profession. Non-Jewish employed persons were predominantly workers, whereas the Jewish share of self-employed persons and salaried employees were significantly higher than that of non-Jews.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Stefan Zweig, *Die Welt von Gestern. Erinnerungen eines Europäers*, (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1970), 25-26.

<sup>25</sup> Carl E. Schorschke, *Fin-De-Siècle Vienna. Politics and Culture*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1980), 144.

<sup>26</sup> Verifiable by means of the census of 1910. See *Österreichische Statistik* NF 3/2 (1914): 132.

Table: Non-Jewish and Jewish population based on economic class in Vienna 1880

	Non-Jewish population		Jewish population		Share of Jewish population
	Absolute number	%	Absolute number	%	%
Primary production	2,161	0.6	103	0.3	4.5
Industry, trade	161,561	43.6	7,213	24.9	4.3
Commerce	44,986	12.1	14,430	49.8	24.3
Transportation	17,203	4.6	700	2.4	3.9
Services	145,184	39.1	6,551	22.6	4.3
Total	371,095	100.0	28,997	100.0	7.2

Source: Stephan Sedlaczek, Die k.k. Reichshaupt- und Residenzstadt Wien. *Ergebnisse der Volkszählung vom 31. December 1880*, 3 (1882), 241.

University statistics illustrate the extent to which Jewish adolescents took advantage of educational opportunities. In the academic year of 1912/13, just over one fifth of total students at Austrian universities were Jews. By comparison, their share of the total population amounted to 4.7 percent.<sup>27</sup> The University of Chernivtsi stood out with a share of 44 percent, whereas the percentage of Jewish students at the University of Vienna in the same academic year amounted to 27.9 percent.<sup>28</sup>

As few of them were able to pursue careers as high officials, university graduates sought alternatives in other professions; for example, as physicians, lawyers or journalists. It is no coincidence that several Jewish creative artists exhibited such career patterns. Writer Arthur Schnitzler and the inventor of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud, had studied medicine; Theodor Herzl, the founder of Zionism, had studied law. He did not practice the profession, creating literary works and becoming a journalist instead. Herzl serves as a fitting example for intellectual orientation that was not guided by Jewish tradition in the sense of

<sup>27</sup> *Oesterreichische Statistik*, LXIII/1 (1902): 130-131.

<sup>28</sup> *Österreichische Statistik*, NF 14/3 (1917); Jakob Thon, "Anteil der Juden am Hochschulstudium in Oesterreich seit dem Jahre 1851", in *Zeitschrift für Demografie und Statistik der Juden* 3/3 (1907): 33-37.



traditional religious values, but rather by secular “German” mainstream culture. He adapted the nationalism and colonialism of European societies for his vision of a “Jewish state” and viewed mono-national sovereignty as a solution to the “Jewish question.” His thinking was inherently as nationalistic as the anti-Semitic environment that he thought to understand. “There is little doubt that the birth of political Zionism, most certainly in its most consequential, Herzl’s vision was the product of the disintegration of assimilatory efforts, rather than a fruition of the Judaist tradition and the resurrection of the love of Zion.”<sup>29</sup>

One could exaggerate and argue that many achievements of Jewish creative artists were based on the failure of the willingness to assimilate. Conscious of being able to expect little thanks from society at large, they were forced to seek alternative solutions in their respective fields, as illustrated in Sigmund Freud’s biography, running counter to the mainstream. The founder of psychoanalysis is cited time and again as follows, in a letter to his fellow masons of B’nai B’rith: “Because I was a Jew, I found myself free from many prejudices that restricted others in the use of their intellect; as a Jew I was prepared to join the Opposition and do without agreement with the ‘compact majority.’”<sup>30</sup>

In his book *Modernity and Ambivalence*, Zygmunt Bauman speaks of the “dimension of loneliness,” a continued segregation and social isolation which deeply impressed creative minds such as Franz Kafka. The above quote by Sigmund Freud is part of this context, showing that isolation in non-Jewish milieus left its mark. Looking back on his joining of B’nai B’rith in 1897, Freud remarked, “In my loneliness I was seized with a longing to find a circle of select men of high character who would receive me in a friendly spirit in spite of my temerity.”<sup>31</sup>

Nevertheless, assimilation did prove a success story in the entertainment sector that was modern at the time. It is a remarkable phenomenon of this time period that many Jewish creative artists played a large part in the success of two profoundly Austrian genres of music: the operetta and the *Wienerlied*.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, successful Jewish cabaret artists created a uniquely Austrian form of expression. Was this an expression of utmost assimilation and total absorption into a kind of local Austrian culture?

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<sup>29</sup> Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), 148.

<sup>30</sup> Quoted in: Ernst H. Gombrich, *Jüdische Identität und jüdisches Schicksal. Eine Diskussionsbemerkung*, (Wien: Passagen Verlag, 1997), 26 ff. Peter Gay, *Freud. Eine Biographie für unsere Zeit*, (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1989), 676.

<sup>31</sup> Klaus Hödl, *Wiener Juden – jüdische Wiener. Identität, Gedächtnis und Performanz im 19. Jahrhundert*, (Innsbruck-Wien-Bozen: Studienverlag, 2006), 16.

<sup>32</sup> Sara Trampuz u. Wolfgang Dosch, “Ein singendes, klingendes Märchen”. Die Verherrlichung Wiens in der Werken jüdischer Operettenkomponisten und – librettisten”, in *Quasi una fantasia. Juden und die Musikstadt Wien*, ed. Leon Botstein, Werner Hanak, (Wien: Wolke Verlag, 2003), 115-121.

Stefan Zweig suggests as much, writing in his autobiography, “Adapting themselves to the milieu of the people or country where they live is not only an external protective measure for Jews, but a deep internal desire. Their longing for a homeland, for rest, for security, for friendliness, urges them to attach themselves passionately to the culture of the world around them.”

Almost nowhere else had it been “happier and more fruitful than in Austria.”<sup>33</sup> Several Jewish creative artists evidently developed a particular sensibility for the emotional preoccupations of the people of their time. This may stem from their experience of being a minority and outsiders, as well as their striving for recognition.<sup>34</sup> The most popular cabaret artist of the interwar period, Fritz Grünbaum, was murdered by the Nazis.<sup>35</sup> For him and others, success spelled doom.

### Religious life

Looking at religious life leads us back to taking a look at everyday life. In Austria, laws divided the Jewish religious community by regions, not by the various religious groups. Members of the Jewish religion who were eligible to vote elected their own representation, which formed the organisation of the Israelitische Kultusgemeinde. The results of the Kultusgemeinde elections show the weakness of orthodox groups in Vienna. After 1918, they received as little as eight to ten percent of the votes at elections. It is no wonder they felt cheated and wanted to break free from this compulsory organisation, which they failed to achieve. The dignitaries initially steering the Kultusgemeinde were gradually replaced by political groups. Until 1933 a liberal, anti-Zionist group dominated Vienna’s Kultusgemeinde. This became a paradox after 1918, as the Liberals had become completely insignificant in Austria’s politics by that time. Only the polarisation in Europe enabled Zionist groups to reach a slight majority within the Israelitische Kultusgemeinde for the first time in 1933.<sup>36</sup>

The spiritual crisis concerned the Jewish religion too. As a result of the secularisation after 1848, it lost much of its function as a connecting link in Vienna. The attempt of the modernisers to adapt to the changes was undermined by the traditionalists, which lead to compromises such as the ‘Wiener Ritus’. Apart from that, diverse religious forms were practiced

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<sup>33</sup> Zweig, *Die Welt von Gestern*, 35.

<sup>34</sup> On operetta and the *Wienerlied*, see Hans Tietze, *Die Juden Wiens. Geschichte - Wirtschaft - Kultur*, (Wien: Edition Atelier, 1987), 234-235.

<sup>35</sup> Marie-Theres Arnbom and Christoph Wagner-Trenkwitz, *Grüß mich Gott! Fritz Grünbaum. Eine Biographie 1880-1941*, (Wien: Christoph Brandstätter Verlag, 2005).

<sup>36</sup> Harriet Pass Freidenreich, *Jewish Politics in Vienna 1918 – 1938*, (Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991).

in many smaller houses of prayer. After the preacher Isaac Noah Mannheimer (1793–1865), the Jewish community had no visionary spiritual leaders for a long time. It was not until 1918 that Rabbi Zwi Perez Chajes (1876–1927) with his Zionist-friendly attitude and many activities brought a breath of fresh air to Vienna's Jewish community.<sup>37</sup> Reports of survivors of the Nazi regime showed, however, what little effect religious life had on most Jews and how little religious tradition could be passed on for everyday life, which is why the group of practising Jews remained a minority. This drain caused by people leaving the Jewish religion posed a threat to its continuation after the collapse of the Habsburg Monarchy. Even during the monarchy, Vienna was renowned for its high number of baptisms. The restrictive matrimonial laws concerning marriages between Jews and Catholics added to the number of secessions.<sup>38</sup> While in the decade between 1890 and 1900 just under 400 people left the Jewish religion per year, the number had gone up to over 1,000 per year 30 years later. These figures show how rapidly the change of identity was spreading. Then, no one would have imagined that National Socialism would take this form of identity change to absurd lengths by using genealogy tables going back many generations to make decisions over life and death.

In religious life, the integration efforts took place at various different levels; for example, in architecture. In the face of a growing Jewish community, new synagogues were built according to the architectural trends of the time – Classicism, neo-Gothic and neo-Romanesque style, Historicism, Art Nouveau, Eclecticism – on the one hand, and the tradition of synagogue architecture on the other. The adjustment to the surroundings sometimes even went so far as to make synagogues virtually indistinguishable from other buildings; for example, the synagogue erected in Hubergasse in Vienna's Ottakring district in 1885/86. Only the two tablets of the Ten Commandments and two Stars of David on its roof revealed the fact that it was a Jewish house of worship.<sup>39</sup>

At large, the attempts of religious Jews to adapt to contemporary trends failed, or only worked for members of particular social environments that cut themselves off any secular ways of life. However, as an alternative, a remarkable 'scene of associations' developed within Vienna's Jewish community. The all-round athletic club Hakoah, founded in 1909, became the most famous example of the endeavour to live a positive, *du jour* Jewish identity. The successes of its athletes, both male and female, whose strips featured the Star of David, thus openly

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<sup>37</sup> Moritz Rosenfeld, *H.P. Chajes. Reden und Vorträge*, (Wien: Selbstverlag, 1993).

<sup>38</sup> Evan Burr Bukey, *Jews and Inter-marriage in Nazi Austria*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

<sup>39</sup> Pierre Genée, *Wiener Synagogen 1825-1938*, (Wien: Löcker, 1987).

showing their Jewish affiliation, gave Jewish fans something positive to identify with. That way, Hakoah offered an alternative to a lifestyle characterised by segregation and privacy, chosen in response to the anti-Jewish atmosphere in the country and in an attempt not to attract any attention. It was a sensation that Hakoah's Jewish football club managed to become Austrian champions in the season of 1924/25 and strengthened the reputation of the Viennese club in the world of Jewish sports.<sup>40</sup>

## Summary

Modernity was ambiguous for the Jewish population in Vienna. It enabled them to advance into various segments of economy as well as into the educational and cultural elite. Individual representatives of this class wrote themselves into Austrian history in such manner that they cannot be ignored. They are therefore considered eminent representatives of a cultural modernity beyond Austrian borders. The other side of the coin was that political reactionaries sought to fight modernity by using its methods – including democracy, agitation and propaganda in assemblies and through the media – which exposed the Jewish population as a threatening factor. The end result of the history is clear: displacement and destruction. Modernity eventually turned into a trap for those who were repeatedly named for their outstanding achievements. The practice of fluid identities or hybrid affiliation provoked those who believed in the clearly identifiable identity in order to identify individuals. Racists did not care about the usual overlapping and multiple identities.

Although the Jewish population first appeared to emerge as winners, it became their undoing, because they were accused of acting as the representatives of modernity, which was perceived as a threatening change. In fact, it was irrelevant whether these reproaches did correspond with any social reality; this made no difference to anti-Semites, in whose scenarios of fear the Jewish population always had to serve as exponents of the threatening modernisation. Vienna was no exception to this. The historian Klaus Hödl wrote that the term 'Jew' was regarded as a "metaphor for unwanted change."<sup>41</sup> Anti-Semites claimed that Jews were shaking old values with no regard to traditions, and that they had 'lodged' themselves in the centres of power in politics and the media like parasites. In speeches on the Jewish population, anti-Semitic racists talked about themselves, because, in fact, it was they who wanted

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<sup>40</sup> Arthur Baar, *50 Jahre Hakoah 1909 – 1959*, (Tel-Aviv: Verlagskomitee Hakoah, 1959); *Hoppanf Hakoah. Jüdischer Sport in Österreich. Von den Anfängen bis in die Gegenwart*, ed. John Bunzl, (Wien: Junius, 1987).

<sup>41</sup> Hödl, *Wiener Juden*, 22.

many of the things that they accused the Jewish population of: power, wealth, pure national identities, solidarity. The fact that many Jews tried to avoid this can be interpreted as an attempt to handle the latent threat. Gaining recognition through exceptional achievement, through adaptation and/or contradiction was one of the many ways of trying to cope with the situation.

In the face of an easily identifiable beginning of the experiment, the year 1848, and its end, the year 1938, Vienna is in some way a historical laboratory, in which the influence of the various forces can be analysed over and over again.<sup>42</sup> This story will remain full of mysteries, as it can be turned around and regarded from many angles. Creative people are very deft in concealing the roots of their creativity, and rightly so. This also applied to Jewish cultural professionals, who were formative for cultural life in Vienna until 1938. This article mainly deals with local issues, but creative people are also always concerned with the global views and creation from a deep historic dimension.

History could also be written differently. For instance, if the question were: How anti-modernist was modernity in fact?

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<sup>42</sup> Steven Beller has repeatedly questioned prevalent ways of thinking. *Rethinking Vienna 1900*, ed. Steven Beller (New York-Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2001); Steven Beller, *Vienna and the Jews 1867-1938. A Cultural History*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

## Lunching under the Goya. Jewish Art Collector during Budapest's Golden Age

by *Konstantin Akinsha*

### Abstract

*The article is dedicated to the passion for art collecting which was in vogue among the representatives of the Jewish haute bourgeoisie of Budapest in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the center of investigation is the collection of Baron Mór Lipót Herzog who not only became one of the leading art collectors of Budapest but influenced the development of the European artistic taste. The Jewish industrialist and banker played instrumental role in the rediscovery and popularization of El Greco.*

In 1930 Hungarian painter Lipót Herman paid a visit to the Munich residence of Marcel Nemes, the legendary art collector, dealer and the fellow Hungarian. The opulent dwellings of the aged Nemes situated in the center of the city on the snobbish Leopold Strasse. The apartment, which looked more like a palace impressed the painter. Herman noted in his diary, "Extraordinary rarities which you can hardly see in any apartment. Lunch under the Goya, black coffee in the shadow of Rembrandt and Titian."<sup>1</sup>

In the 1930s the star of Nemes was setting. He belonged to a different epoch. The treasures accumulated by him were sold, then accumulated again just to be sent yet again to the auction room. Nemes began his career as a coal trader in Transylvania, finally became an art collector, dealer and international celebrity rubbing shoulders with art critics such as Julius Meier-Graefe, and such European museum directors like Hugo von Tschudi and financial tycoons in Budapest, Vienna, Munich and Berlin. Not over scrupulous and eager for luxury Nemes was constantly pursued by financial troubles, by overspending on art works and luxurious residences. He loved publicity and mercilessly courted the press, understanding the power the fourth estate, which he gained by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Nemes often exhibited his newly acquired treasures in the Museum of Fine Arts in Budapest attracting the public's attention to his finds and those finds were worthy of attention. Nemes collected old masters, French impressionist and contemporary Hungarian painting. He was especially fond of El Greco and Goya and helped to establish the fashion for the collecting of Spanish art in Hungary, in

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Molnos, "Passion and Knowledge. The Bedo Collection and its Place in the History of Hungarian Art Collecting", *Rudolf Bedő's Art Collection*, (Budapest: Kiesbach Gallery, 2010), 319-320.

particular within Central Europe in general. In 1911 with the help of von Tschudi he organized an exhibition of the canvases in his possession of El Greco in the *Alte Pinakothek* in Munich.<sup>2</sup>

His most important accomplishment was the ability to establish close a relationship with Baron Mór Lipót Herzog, the fantastically rich industrialist and banker, whom Nemes succeeded in transforming into a fanatical art collector.

A Jew from Transylvania, who quit coal trade for the glitzy world of art dealing, converted the scion of the Jewish family, which started its businesses in 1830s in southern eastern Baranya County by consigning wool and tobacco, and was able to establish by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century this huge financial empire, into a religion of art.

Nemes was a prophet, who heralded the beginning of so called Golden Age in the Budapest Jewish art collecting, which coincided with the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In no time the Budapest Jewry amassed impressive art riches turning the villas on the Buda hills and palaces on the tree-lined Pest avenues into private museums. The intensity of the Hungarian-Jewish art collecting had no equivalent in other countries in Central Europe, where the Jewish bourgeoisie also fell victim to the idolatry of art.

This collecting frenzy coincided with a peak the assimilation of the Hungarian Jewry and manifested the transformation of heirs to provincial Jewish merchants into industrialists and bankers – the last aristocracy of the Dual Monarchy.

At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Jews of Budapest were probably the best assimilated Jews in Central Europe.<sup>3</sup> As bankers and lawyers, doctors and entrepreneurs they constituted the core of the urban bourgeoisie within the dual monarchy's second capital. They dominated the financial elite and many were knighted by the emperor Franz-Joseph<sup>4</sup>. They were members of parliament and habitués of elite clubs, patrons of art and literature societies and very often better Hungarians than ethnic Hungarians themselves. As patriotic citizens of their country, the Jews of Budapest spoke and thought in Hungarian. They felt more at home in Budapest than the Jews of Prague or Vienna did in their respective cities. In fact, many of them did not want to be Jews any more. For long period it was possible, all that was required was loyalty to the Kaiser and King and they were loyal subjects indeed. By 1900, many members of the Jewish elite in Budapest had already spent two generations decorating their stationary with the baronial coats of arms and decorating their splendid mansions with Christmas trees in

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<sup>2</sup> *Katalog der aus der Sammlung des Kgl. Rates Marczell von Nemes - Budapest ausgestellten Gemälde*, ed. Hugo von Tschudi, (Munich: Alte Pinakothek, 1911).

<sup>3</sup> William McCagg Jr., *Jewish Nobles and Geniuses in Modern Hungary*, (Boulder, CO: East European Quarterly, 1972.)

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 131 – 158.

December. The Hatvanys, Herzogs, Weisses, Chorins and Kornfelds were converted Christians and would inspire the young native of Budapest Herzl Tivadar – better known as Theodor Herzl – to believe that the mass conversion of the Viennese Jews in St. Stephen's Cathedral would solve all their problems.<sup>5</sup>

Yet, this seemingly successful assimilation showed signs of cracking, as at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century those who did not want to be Jews were increasingly reminded that they were Jews despite their coats of arms and Catholic rosaries. The growth of German, Hungarian and Czech nationalism and populist political movements heralded the coming of a storm. Karl Luger, the notorious Austrian anti-Semite and able mayor of Vienna, invariably referred to the Hungarian capital as "Judapest."<sup>6</sup> But at this early stage both Luger's rhetoric and the anti-Semitic escapades of some homegrown Hungarian Luger appeared to be merely demonstrations of vulgarity and not the forecast of potential danger.<sup>7</sup> It was as foreign to the attitudes of true Hungarian nobility (the provincial gentry would behave differently) as to the bourgeois "bildung." Jewish aristocrats continued to run their financial empires and were invited to the palace on the days of the emperor's visits. Most importantly, they served culture, which was their true religion. It appears that money, conversion and knighthood were not in themselves sufficient enough for the Jewish elites of Budapest to feel as if they were true nobles. Art and literature became even more important mechanisms for social legitimization of the "last aristocracy" than that of mentioning their Austro-Hungarian knighthood. As a result, it seems today as though every representative of the Jewish elite in fin de siècle Budapest poured energy and resources into collecting art.

This accumulation in art manifested the new stage in the difficult relationship of European Jewry with visual arts. The ritual prohibition of imagery in Judaism and the practical absence of the tradition of figurative art for centuries excluded Jews from the development of artistic culture in Europe. The violation of the prohibition coincided with the development in the assimilation process. The first Jew to become a professional painter of note was only in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, but he remained the exception proving the rule. Only the 19<sup>th</sup> century tentatively set ajar the doors of art schools for those people who before were only destined for the education in yeshiva. During the second part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century two main types of European Jewish artists were formed. The first group would be represented by the Russian Jew – landscape painter Isaak Levitan, who created extremely nationalistic art

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<sup>5</sup> Jacques Kornberg, *Theodor Herzl: From Assimilation to Zionism*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 118-120.

<sup>6</sup> Ivan T. Berend, *Decades of Crisis: Central and Eastern Europe before World War II*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 35.

<sup>7</sup> McCagg Jr., *Jewish Nobles and Geniuses in Modern Hungary*, 129.



deprived of even the slightest Jewish references, the second by the German Max Libermann, the modernist painter who produced cosmopolitan art foreign to both nationalism and Jewishness.<sup>8</sup> (It is interesting that introduction of the Jewish topicality into art produced by Jews from the symbolist illustrations of Ephraim Moses Lilien to the ‘*shtetl* cubo-futurism’ of Marc Chagall was bound to both the rise of modernism and Zionism).<sup>9</sup>

But if the transformation of a Jew into a painter heralded the arrival of assimilation, then the metamorphosis which turned a rich merchant-industrialist into an important art collector, coincided with its focal point. In Berlin “James Simon and Eduard Arnold, two of imperial Germany’s richest men – both known as *Kaiserjuden*, Jews on fairly close terms with Wilhelm II – were important collectors, with Arnold graduating to Renoirs and Cézannes after casting off safer, more traditional art, and Simon specializing in painters of the Italian Renaissance.”<sup>10</sup> In Vienna while Bloch-Bauers were commissioning paintings by Klimt, Rudolf Gutmann amassed Rembrandt prints and Oskar Bondy was hunting for Renaissance and mediaeval art. The art treasures from the regal Rothschilds of Vienna were strengthening their wealth and influence.<sup>11</sup>

Why did Jews begin to collect art with such intensity? Was it just an instrument of legitimization in this gentile society, the *noblesse oblige* behavior of *nouveau riche parvenus*? Obviously such factors played an important role, but it appears that this genesis in Jewish art collecting was more complicated. The prohibited fruit of visual art finally became available to the people of the book, who for centuries had resisted temptation of an image. Jewish art collections were essentially different to the traditional aristocratic collections usually assembled not just by one person, but by generations of the same family. It was marked by history, because it represented a continuous flow of it. The material world from the noble estates by definition was multilayered and embodied temporal change in tastes – the old fashioned could not easily be excluded, because even if it could be interpreted as ‘bad taste’ it was the taste of predecessors. Every Central European castle and palace unavoidably housed a portrait gallery. Such gallery mirrored changes of art styles through the epochs, but in this case art history simply mirrored in the family’s visual chronicle were the great grandfather in the

<sup>8</sup> See Igor’ Grabar’, *Isaak Ilich Levitan. Zbizn i tvorcestvo*, (Moscow: Knebel’, 1912). See also, Lothar Brauner, *Max Libermann*, (Berlin: Henschelverlag, 1986).

<sup>9</sup> On Lilien see Michael Stanislawski, *Zionism and the Fin de Siècle: Cosmopolitanism and Nationalism from Nordau to Jabotinsky*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 98-112. On Chagall, see Aleksandr Kamensky, *Chagall: The Russian Years, 1907- 1922*, (New York: Rizzoli, 1989).

<sup>10</sup> Peter Gay, *Modernism. The Lure of Heresy From Baudelaire to Beckett and Beyond*, (New York, Norton: 2007), 86.

<sup>11</sup> See Sophie Lillie, *Was Einmal War*, (Vienna: Czernin Verlag, 2003).

powdered wig, painted by a provincial Austrian painter, was first of all an ancestor and only in the second place a masterpiece of the provincial baroque.

Jews were deprived of their ancestors – the wise rabbis and shrewd merchants existed mainly as legends sometimes reflected on the pages of manuscripts and rarely existing as unskillful portraits or engravings of the late 18<sup>th</sup>- early 19<sup>th</sup> century. They would not fill the spacious galleries in the newly acquired baronial castle in Htavan or of the lofty palace on Andrássy Avenue in Budapest. The attitude of the new aristocracy to the ancestors was ambivalent - on the one hand the ancient legends about the distant relationship to the legendary Judah Loew ben Bezalel, known as the Maharal of Prague, the creator of Golem who advised Emperor Rudolf II on the secrets of Kabbalah, were flattering, yet on the other hand the succession of the less illustrious predecessors - merchants spread around provincial Hungarian towns, working hard to establish the foundations of future success, were less exciting.<sup>12</sup> Those people knew how to count money, but lived before the emancipation, out of the bounds of 'civilization and culture'. They were not introduced to the *bon ton*, which according to the definition of Lajos Hatvany, the son of the Jewish industrialist Sandor Htavan-Deutsch, who became a writer and a literary patron, included conversion to Christianity which was as socially obligatory as dressing up for an evening in a tuxedo.<sup>13</sup>

In the context of the Jewish art collection the portrait gallery was filled with the canvases, which were selected not because they depicted the great-grandfather, but because they were representing Baroque, Renaissance, or any other period in the history of art. The principle of such gallery was opposite to the traditional visual chronicle of the noble clan – it was also about history, but such history was much broader even than that from the artistic annals of the respected European royal houses. If in the traditional aristocratic portrait collection an incidental masterpiece could be found among the numerous images of ancestor in the Jewish portrait gallery an incidental portrait of a predecessor might be lost among numerous masterpieces. The owner of such a portrait gallery was not only entitled to select the faces he wanted to see on his walls, but was becoming an heir to history as such. This historical cosmopolitanism permitted a combination on one interior, a portrait of a Venetian nobleman by Tintoretto, an image of a woman with prayer

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<sup>12</sup> According to the family legend Hatvany family was related to Rabbi Loew. The history of the Hungarian Jewish family from Emancipation to the knighthood was described in the novel of Lajos Hatvany, *Lords and People*. The first volume of the unfinished trilogy was translated into English. See Lajos Hatvany, *Bondy Jr.*, (London: Hutchinson, 1931).

<sup>13</sup> Janet Elizabeth Kerekes, *Masked Ball at the White Cross Cafe: the Failure of Jewish Assimilation*, (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2005), 140.

book by Andrea Solario with that of a portrait by the painter Louis-Alexis Jamar by Theodor Gericault or a self-portrait of Hans von Mare.<sup>14</sup> Faces, which were looking down from the walls of the collector's house were belonging to the family of mankind and did not illustrate a private history of kin, but a history of development of art - an illustration of progress as such.

In a certain sense, the composition of the grand Jewish collections of Budapest were manifested from a notion that the ownership of history and cultures, the borders of which were extended much broader than that of a family chronicle or history of a nation. Such collections reflected perfectly the taste and tendencies of the time. One of the leading predispositions was the secularization of art conception, which on one hand permitted the newly converted Jewish collectors to amass art works on Christian topicality including devotional medieval images and on the other hand, gave opportunity to a few pious collectors who did not compromise the faith of their fathers in order to transform collections of Judaic liturgical objects into an aesthetic exercise.

Mór Lipót Herzog and Ferenz Hatvany decorated the walls of their palaces and villas with the images of Catholic saints, the canvases were important for them not because of who was depicted, but by whom that person had been depicted by. The passions of Christ or images of evangelists and apostles were codified by the names of El Greco or Cranach. Such a definition of a religious image by means of its creator's name helped to remove it from an ecclesiastical context and to root it firmly in the history of world art, interpreted as a succession of illustrations in human progress. However the transformation of religion into art which led to a sacralisation of art and culture in general was not less powerfully reflected in the stockpiling of Dr. Ignac Friedmann who gathered more than 200 Torah scrolls, more than 300 Torah crowns and hundreds of silver liturgical objects mostly dated to the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Etrog containers, menorahs, and Seder plates were collected by him not only because they were Jewish, but because they were beautiful and their silverwork was exclusive. Friedmann applied to Judaica the aesthetic approach, not fully relieved of a certain notion of exoticism. Trying to keep himself in the framework of such strictly Jewish accumulations Friedmann couldn't escape unexpected lapses into buying Japanese prints, Donatello marbles or an incidental Paul Signac pastel.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> All the mentioned paintings belonged to the collection of Ferenz Hatvany. See Laslo Mravik, *The "Sacco di Budapest" and Depredation of Hungary, 1938-1949: Works of Art Missing from Hungary as a Result of the Second World War: Looted, Smuggled, Captured, Lost and Destroyed Art Works, Books and Archival Documents: Preliminary and Provisional Catalog*, (Budapest: Published by the Hungarian National Gallery for the Joint Restitution Committee at the Hungarian Ministry of Culture and Education, 1998), 223-275.

<sup>15</sup> Mravik, *The "Sacco di Budapest" and Depredation of Hungary*, 196-208.

The Jewishness of the Ignac Friedmann's collection was more of an exception than the rule. Despite of its demonstrative character it belonged to that type of specialized collections amassed by numerous representatives within the Budapest Jewish haute bourgeoisie. In its principle it was not too different to those collections of Berthalan Hatvany, who being a self-taught Orientalist gathered objects of Chinese, Japanese, Indian and Persian art or those in the private museum of porcelain created by Baroness Joseph Hatvany.<sup>16</sup>

Such specialized collections were dwindling in comparison to the grand private museums, which usually had a special focus on certain art movements or artists, but at the same time laid claim for a universal approach. The universalism of the Budapest Jewish collectors corresponded to that of another trend at the time. Remaining Euro-centrist they were expanding the borders of art by including Oriental accents into their private museums, for example, the famous assortment of rugs created by Ferenc Hatvany.<sup>17</sup> However such inflections were secondary decorations compared to the main historical narratives in the progress of European art from the middle ages (sometimes with the inclusion of a few Egyptian and Greek and Roman objects) to the Hungarian paintings of the *Belle Époque*. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century this very category of universal art collections formed in the 1880s became a bit old fashioned, too linked to the positivist model of progress in arts i.e. civilization.

Unavoidable Gothic sculpture was followed by Flemish primitives, Italian Renaissance paintings, works of Cranach, and the occasional examples of Austrian 19<sup>th</sup> century art. The end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was richly represented by French impressionism and Hungarian painting.

If the Herzog and Hatvany collection followed in general such a historical narrative, both of them still had strong specific focuses. Such deviation from the positivist model of a collection as illustrations to the history of art, manifested by the inclusion of groups of art works which reflected the trends in typical artistic tastes at the end of the century. The record of the development of art through time was destroyed by the excessive attention to one historical period, which overshadowed other works of art reducing them to the role of frames for the epoch/artist chosen to become a paramount manifestation of the collector's taste.

Baron Mór Lipót Herzog (1869-1934) belonged to a family, the destiny of which perfectly reflected the speedy enrichment and emancipation of Hungarian Jews in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. His grandfather Adolf relocated to Budapest from Baranya County in about 1836. He established a solid involvement in tobacco and wool consignments, but did not achieve any

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<sup>16</sup> On Berthalan Hatvany see Mravik, *The "Sacco di Budapest" and Depredation of Hungary*, 213-222; on Baroness Joseph Hatvany see, *Ibid.*, 276-301.

<sup>17</sup> Mravik, *The "Sacco di Budapest" and Depredation of Hungary*, *Ibid.*, 269-272.

striking financial success. The situation changed after 1862 when his son Peter took over the company. A shrewd investor, he was able to make a profit during the economic crisis of 1873. The tobacco consigner became the owner of the biggest flour mill in Pest and received nobility by the end of 1886. By the end of the century Herzog monopolized trade of Balkan and Turkish tobacco in Central Europe. The family company diversified assets investing in the chemical and coal industries. After the Austro-Hungarian occupation of Bosnia in 1878 Herzog constructed chemical plants and invested in tobacco fields in the new protectorate. After the 1900's the family business made another turn –Herzogs established one of the biggest commercial banks in Hungary. In 1906 Herzogs became barons.<sup>18</sup> Financial wealth and political power was then to be converted into cultural capital. Such conversion was realized by Mór Lipót, who having been seduced into collecting art by Nemes soon became, not only a successful businessman, but professional collector. Herzog established a universal art collection, which was typical for the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. His interests were numerous. The baron was taken by applied arts – his selection of Gothic and Renaissance goldsmith objet d'art was the best in Hungary. He also collected sculpture, but the larger portion of the Herzog treasures was undoubtedly the picture gallery. Paintings from the Early Renaissance, Flemish primitives, and canvases by Bassano and Tiepolo, and Dutch painters of the 17<sup>th</sup> century formed the core of the collection. As true son of his time, Herzog was not able to escape the French revolution in art; on the advice of his friend and mentor Marcell Nemes, he began purchasing works by French artists. Paintings of Corot and Renoir, Manet, Cezanne and Gauguin appeared on the walls of Herzog's palace.<sup>19</sup> Herzog's appetite for collecting was insatiable. By the beginning of the 20th century, the Andrassy Street palace had no space left for living - the collection actually exiled its owner. The family mansion had turned into the family museum. Only two habitable rooms remained in the gigantic palace; the collector's sister occupied one of them. Another room served as the Herzog study which was destined to become the sanctuary for those favorite artists of the Budapest collector. The walls of the room were covered by El Greco canvases. It was the best private collection of El Greco outside of Spain.

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<sup>18</sup> William McCagg Jr., *Jewish Nobles and Geniuses in Modern Hungary*, 152-154.

<sup>19</sup> Laslo Mravik, "Princess, Counts, Idlers and Bourgeois' - A Hundred Years of Hungarian Collecting", *Modern Hungarian Painting 1892-1919*, (Budapest: Tamás Kieselbach, 2003), 19-20.



Fig. 1, Study of Baron Mór Lipót Herzog decorated by canvases of El Greco, 1910s. Courtesy of the Commission for Art Recovery of the World Jewish Congress

Amongst the masterpieces amassed by Herzog were: *The Virgin of the Immaculate Conception*,<sup>20</sup> *The Agony in the Garden*,<sup>21</sup> *Holy Family with St. Anne*,<sup>22</sup> *The Disrobing of Christ*,<sup>23</sup> *Study of a male head (St. Paul)*,<sup>24</sup> *Saint Andrew the Apostle*,<sup>25</sup> *Annunciation*,<sup>26</sup> and *Apostle St. James*.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Now in the collection of Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza in Madrid:

<http://www.lib-art.com/artgallery/11755-the-virgin-of-the-immaculate-concep-el-greco.html>

<sup>21</sup> Now in the collection of the Museum of Fine Arts in Budapest:

"<http://www.szepmuveszeti.hu/web/guest/gyujtemenykereso?themeId=navigation.4.layout.id.29.21>"<http://www.szepmuveszeti.hu/web/guest/gyujtemenykereso?themeId=navigation.4.layout.id.29.21>

<sup>22</sup> Now in the collection of the Museum of Fine Arts in Budapest:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/menesje/3841624337/in/set-72157622052260292>

<sup>23</sup> Now in the collection of the Museum of Fine Arts in Budapest:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/menesje/3844303067/in/set-72157622052260292>

<sup>24</sup> Now in the collection of the Museum of Fine Arts in Budapest:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/menesje/3841624553/in/set-72157622052260292/>

<sup>25</sup> Now in the collection of the Museum of Fine Arts in Budapest:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/menesje/4364531749/in/set-72157622052260292>

<sup>26</sup> The painting was in collection of the Toledo Museum of Art in Ohio. It was auctioned by Sotheby's in 2007:

[http://invertirenarte.es/mercadodearte/imagenes/Enero%2013/sothebys\\_greco\\_la\\_anunciacion.jpg](http://invertirenarte.es/mercadodearte/imagenes/Enero%2013/sothebys_greco_la_anunciacion.jpg)

<sup>27</sup> The painting now is held in the Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts in Moscow:

<http://www.heraldofeurope.co.uk/Article.aspx?ArticleID=1111518266>

Such an obsession for El Greco was initially provoked by the influence of Nemes - one of the first Central European collectors, who rediscovered the Spanish school. However the fascination of Herzog with the distorted images produced by the champion for Catholic exaltation was typical for that time. The mannerist excesses of the Spanish painter were in rhythm to the irrational trend of the European modernism. The rejection of rationality in 19<sup>th</sup> century academic art in particular and a positivist project provoked the search for the new idols. El Greco undoubtedly was one of them. Despite the fact that his paintings were included in the French Gallery in the Louvre which opened in 1838, the real rediscovery of the legacy left by the native Cretan, who was destined to become the quintessential Spanish painter, took place only at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Thanks to the efforts of the Basque artist Ignacio Zuloaga El Greco attracted the attention of cultural figures at that time, such as, the art critic Julius Meire-Graefe and the poet Rainer Maria Rilke.<sup>28</sup> Meire-Graefe, who in 1910 published his *Spanische Reise* – the exalted eulogy of El Greco – saw in the painter the precursor of European modernism.<sup>29</sup>

In 1920 Max Dvořák, the professor for the History of Art at Vienna University and the person who created the conception of *Kunstgeschichte als Geistesgeschichte* in his lecture dedicated to the Spanish master stated:

“It is not difficult to see why, over the next two hundred years, El Greco was to become more and more neglected; these were years dominated by the natural science, by mathematical thought and superstitious regard for causality, for technical development and the mechanization of culture – years dominated by the eye and the mind but demonstrating an almost complete disregard for the heart. Today, this materialistic culture is approaching its end. I am thinking not so much of its external demise as of its inner collapse which, for over a generation now, we have been able to observe affecting every sphere of cultural life, especially our philosophical and scientific thinking [...] We have seen how both in literature and art there has been a turning towards a spirituality freed from all dependence on naturalism, a tendency similar to that of the Middle Ages and the mannerist period. [...] It is thanks to this turn of events that we have come to recognize in El Greco a great artist and

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<sup>28</sup> Michael Scholz-Hänsel, *El Greco: Domenikos Theotokopoulos, 1541-1614* (Cologne: Taschen, 2004), 89-90.

<sup>29</sup> Julius Meire-Graefe, *Spanische Reise*, (Berlin: Fischer Verlag, 1910). On the Meire-Graefe's discovery of El Greco see Eric Storm, “Julius Meier-Graefe, El Greco and the Rise of Modern Art”, *Mitteilungen der Carl-Justi-Vereinigung*, 20. Jahrgang 2008, (Münster: Nodus Publikationen, 2009), 113-133.  
<https://openaccess.leidenuniv.nl/bitstream/handle/1887/14812/Meier-Graefe.pdf;sessionid=82D41A4A23D169AF1DF17F578BDE520F?sequence=1>

prophetic spirit, one whose fame assured for all the time.”<sup>30</sup>

What Dvořák saw as the desired return to spirituality and rejection of naturalism – “a tendency similar to that of the Middle Ages”, heralded in reality the collapse of the European cultural model of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The newly formed fashion on the ‘prophetic spirit’ of El Greco became a prophecy in itself. According to the sharp observations made by Francis Haskell directed at the Viennese art historian, “El Greco fulfilled the more mystical requirements of a prophetic role by almost unconsciously incarnating and expressing those aspects of the spirit of his time – so Dvořák hoped [...] were about to prevail in the wake of the World War.”<sup>31</sup>

On the part of Herzog El Greco was also the sign of the times, the genius, whose art was in tune with the *fin de siècle* stance. However it is difficult not to notice the irony of the situation. The grandfather of Mór Lipót Herzog was a petit businessman able to escape from the provinces to that of urban life and whose main success was to remain solvent, his father thanks to his commercial attributes became the Baron of the Dual Monarchy and one of the richest people in Hungary. They succeeded within the term of two generations to turn the family of poor Jews into a clan of rich barons, mostly due to the ‘materialistic culture’ of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which believed both in the development of an individual and the progress of industry. The grandson of a pious Jew from Baranya County, baptized and obviously dressing up for an evening in his tuxedo, found his life’s mission in collecting images of the Catholic saints, produced by the Spanish painter, who was seen as the precursor of modernism inspiring both Expressionists and Cubists.<sup>32</sup> Herzog embraced the courage of that time, by becoming one of the major collector of the works by the artist who, in turn left strong imprint not only on the avant-

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<sup>30</sup> Max Dvořák, *The History of Art as the History of Ideas*, (Routledge: London, 1984), 108.

<sup>31</sup> Francis Haskell, *History and its Images. Art and the Interpretation of the Past*, (New Haven - London: Yale University Press, 1995), 413.

<sup>32</sup> Viennese art historian Hans Tietze, who was closed to the expressionists circles wrote, “El Greco aroused an enormous interest at about the beginning of this century: he seemed to have anticipated everything at which expressionism aimed, as the problems of the generation of impressionists found parallels in Velasquez.” Hans Tietze, “The Spanish Classics in Their Connection with the General Evolution of Art”, *Parnassus* 4/2 (Feb. 1932): 8. He was right – such participants of the expressionist movement as Franz Marc many times expressed their fascination with the Spanish painter. See: Veronika Schroeder, *El Greco im frühen deutschen Expressionismus. Von der Kunstgeschichte als Stilgeschichte zur Kunstgeschichte als Geistesgeschichte*, (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1998). Picasso was under strong influence of El Greco and often re-worked motives of his paintings, for example, in the scandalous *Les Femmes d'Alger* the artist relied on *The Vision of St. John*. (The Opening of the Fifth Seal), Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York), the canvas of El Greco, which was in possession of Ignacio Zuloaga. Scholz-Hänsel, *El Greco*, 90.



guard of the 1900s but on the entire culture of the 20<sup>th</sup> century from the theory of film by Sergei Eisenstein<sup>33</sup> to the Abstract Expressionism of Jackson Pollock.<sup>34</sup>

However being open to the ‘shock of the old’, Herzog remained jammed at the shock of the new. His taste in contemporary art was limited by that of the Impressionists and such Post-Impressionists like Gauguin and Cézanne (it was only the last artist who fell under the spell of El Greco). In the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century such a choice was respected and common. The Hungarian collector remained immune to both French Cubism and German Expressionism. In a sense his approach to the great Spaniard was reminiscent of the passion of Rainer Maria Rilke, the great Austro-Hungarian poet, who discovered El Greco during his trip to Spain in 1912. According to Fatima Naqvi-Peters, “The allegiance with El Greco, who is appropriated by critics and art dealers to legitimize – and sell – the Impressionists and Secessionists to a skeptical public, also allows Rilke to situate himself in a modernist context while avoiding a problematic alliance with the radical avant-garde.”<sup>35</sup> Both the poet and the collector preferred to remain on the threshold of modernism of the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but never to cross it.

The Spanish collection of Mór Lipót Herzog was not limited to El Greco. Another favorite of the Budapest industrialist was Francisco Goya, the artist, who like El Greco was consonant with modernism. Contrary to El Greco, Goya, who during the 20<sup>th</sup> century was nicknamed “the father of the modernism” and “the first modern artist,”<sup>36</sup> was not forgotten. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century his fame was unwavering in both admiration and rejection of his art. If the likes of the late Romantics such as Eugène Delacroix and Théodor Géricault admired Goya’s images, John Ruskin in 1872 burned a set of Goya’s *Caprichos* because of their “immorality.”<sup>37</sup> Édouard Manet used the famous scene of execution *Third of May* painted by Goya as the model for his *Execution of*

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<sup>33</sup> See Sergei Eizenshtein, “Vertikal’nyi montazh”, in Sergei Eizenshtein, *Montazh*, (Moscow: VGIK, 1998), 102 – 191.

<sup>34</sup> James T. Valliere, “The El Greco Influence on Jackson Pollock’s Early Works”, *Art Journal* 24/1 (Autumn 1964): 6-9.

<sup>35</sup> Fatima Naqvi-Peters, “A Turning Point in Rilke’s Evolution: The Experience of El Greco”, *The Germanic Review* 72/4 (Fall, 1997): 345.

<sup>36</sup> Arthur C. Danto correctly noticed, “It is an art history truism that Francisco de Goya is the Father of Modern Painting, and a truth of art history that later painters, in fact associated with modernism as a style, acknowledge him as an influence. But one may stand in a paternal relationship to modernists without being modern oneself – after all, Velázquez inspired Manet without anyone caring to push the origins of modernism back to the time of Philip IV. And Goya’s philosophy of painting stands far closer to Velázquez and Rembrandt than to Manet.” Arthur C. Danto, “Shock of the Old: Arthur C. Danto on Three Goya Biographies”, *Art Forum* 7 (March 2004): 49.

<sup>37</sup> Robert Hughes, *Goya*, (New York: Knopf, 2003), 202.

*Maximilian*.<sup>38</sup> Cézanne too fell under the influence of the Spanish artist, which was especially visible in his self-portraits.<sup>39</sup> Contrary to El Greco, who appeared as the shooting star on the European horizon after the 1900's, Goya was around, he was addressed and studied, used as a model and collected. Hundreds of copies of *Caprichos* circulated around Europe. Goya indeed was present, but not all of him. The macabre later paintings, expressionist in manner and full of the dark grotesque were not known to the connoisseurs of Spanish art. They resurfaced only in 1878. In 1873 Baron Frederic-Emil d'Erlanger bought the Goya's house in Madrid - *Quinta del Sordo* (House of the Deaf Man) - for the development purposes. On the walls of *Quinta del Sordo* were so called Black Paintings – the most powerful creations by the late Goya. Amongst them were such known masterpieces as *Saturn devouring one of his sons*, *The great he-goat (Witches Sabbath)*, *A pilgrimage to San Isidro*, and *Asmodea*. The Baron paid for the paintings to be transferred to canvas and sent them to France, where they were exhibited at the *Exposition Universelle* in Paris in 1878. It was too early for any appreciation of Goya's nightmares in France. The industrious Baron d'Erlanger showed the Spaniard's latest creations, with the aim of selling them, but did not find any buyers. Three years later he donated the Black Paintings to Prado in Madrid.<sup>40</sup>

The visitors to the Paris Exposition, in addition to the macabre paintings of Goya, could also enjoy the head of the Statue of Liberty exhibited in the park of Trocadero, the telephone of Alexander Graham Bell, Yablochkov's candles (arc lamps) illuminating Avenue de l'Opéra, and Thomas Edison's phonograph.<sup>41</sup> Such a neighborhood transformed the creations of the deaf painter into the unmistakable signature of modernity. The re-interpretation of Goya's legacy over the last few decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century turned the artist into the “father of modernism.” However this new interpretation of his old art was only possible because of its initial unconventionality. The first European artist to make a fetish of images of violence succeeded in touching a hidden cord under the elegant frock-coat of the *Belle Époque*. Goya was drafted

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<sup>38</sup> Kathryn L. Brush, “Manet's Execution and the Tradition of the Histoire”, in *Edouard Manet and the Execution of Maximilian: An Exhibition by the Department of Art*, (Providence, Rhode Island: Department of Art, Brown University, 1981), 34-49.

<sup>39</sup> Steven Platzman, *Paul Cézanne: The Self-Portraits*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 55-57.

<sup>40</sup> Nigel Glendinning, “The Strange Translation of Goya's ‘Black Paintings’”, *The Burlington Magazine* 117/868 (July 1975): 466; Barry Lord, Gail Dexter Lord, *Artists, Patrons, and the Public: Why Culture Changes*, (Lanham, Maryland: AltaMira Press, 2010), 76-78.

<sup>41</sup> See Arthur Chandler, “The Paris Exposition Universelle of 1878: Heroism in Defeat”, *World's Fair* VI/4 (1986): 9-16; On the illumination of Avenue de l'Opéra, Fabienne Cardot, *La France des électriciens, 1880-1980: actes du 2e colloque de l'Association pour l'histoire de l'électricité en France, Paris, 16-18 avril 1985*, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1986), 242.

in to legitimize modern art – in 1902 the famous German art dealer Paul Cassirer organized an exhibition, which included the works of Goya, Degas, Monet, Manet, Pissarro, Rodin, Libermann, Whistler and Sisley.<sup>42</sup> Twenty four years after the show at the *Exposition Universelle*, paintings by the great Spaniard were again exhibited surrounded by the symbols of modernity. However the symbols were different – the electric bulbs and gramophones were replaced by the canvases of the Impressionists. After the ‘rediscovery’ of El Greco he, like Goya joined the rows of contemporary artists on the walls of the Cassirer gallery at Victoriastrasse 35 in Berlin. In October of 1907 the canvases by El Greco were exhibited surrounded by the creations of Édouard Manet Claude Monet and Ferdinand Hodler.<sup>43</sup>

Among the Goya canvases owned by Herzog were such paintings, the *Picadors and Bulls Before a Tower*,<sup>44</sup> the expressive *Carnival*,<sup>45</sup> and *The Topers*<sup>46</sup> (downgraded during the second part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century by museum curators to be a painting “in the style of Goya”).

This Spanish focus of the private museum of Mór Lipót Herzog emphasized the difference between the collection of the Budapest banker, to that pertaining to the European universal collections of 1880s. El Greco, the visionary of Catholic ecstasy, was rediscovered at the beginning of the 20th century thanks to the efforts of the Hungarian (Marcel Nemes, Mór Lipót Herzog) and the German (Julius Meire-Graefe, Paul Cassirer) Jews. By the same time Francisco Goya, being re-interpreted as the first artist of modernity, attracted attention of the same circle of collectors and connoisseurs, including Mór Lipót Herzog. For him the history of art transformed into a prelude for spiritual investigation into contemporania.

The palace of Herzog family on the Andrassy Avenue looked at first sight as a simulacrum of aristocratic dwellings – carpets, antique furniture, tapestries on the walls and gilded frames of expensive paintings all obviously created a reference to the past. But this mimicked a noble palace to the same extent a museum hall was mimicking it too. Within the Herzog collection the past was predominantly talking with regards to contemporary tastes and even hinted at the future. The collector was not radical enough in order to embrace the new art boiling

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<sup>42</sup> Jay A. Clark, “Space as Metaphor”, in *Of ‘truths impossible to put in words’: Max Beckmann contextualized*, (Oxford, Bern, Berlin, Bruxelles, Frankfurt am Main, New York, Wien: Peter Lang Publishing, 2009), 60.

<sup>43</sup> Peter Paret, “Modernism and the ‘Alien Element’ in German Art”, in *Berlin Metropolis: Jews and the New Culture, 1890-1918*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, Berkeley, 1999), 45.

<sup>44</sup> Location unknown.

<sup>45</sup> Now is in Moscow in Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts:

[http://www.newpaintart.ru/artists/g/goya\\_f/carnival.php](http://www.newpaintart.ru/artists/g/goya_f/carnival.php)

<sup>46</sup> Now is in the North Carolina Museum of Art (Style of Goya):

<http://collection.ncartmuseum.org/collection11/view/objects/asitem/id/1110>

in neighbouring Vienna, France and Germany. Even the choice of Hungarian art was conservative: in addition to the unavoidable 19<sup>th</sup> century realist Mihály Munkácsy, who had become an international star by 1880s, Herzog collected the works of József Rippl-Rónai, the most Parisian of Hungarian artists in the Fin de Siècle.<sup>47</sup>

The artistic taste of Mór Lipót Herzog was the taste of the enlightened European from the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He was not sufficiently radical in embracing the avant-garde and remained on a similar level of taste as that of the Cassirer exhibitions mixing the canvases of Goya and El Greco with the Impressionists, being that the only difference was that in his house he did not hang them in the same rooms. As was stated above, Herzog remained on the threshold of modernism, but he embraced the transformation in understanding the history of art which was a sign of a tectonic change in European culture. This change preceded and heralded the historical upheaval which was destined to ruin the Herzog collection and many other private museums around Europe.

### Epilog: Goya and Goyim

The first of the Duino Elegies, which reflected the fascination of Rainer Maria Rilke with the Spanish painting, began with the verses:

*Wer, wenn ich schrie, hörte mich denn aus der Engel  
Ordnungen? und gesetzt selbst, es nähme  
einer mich plötzlich ans Herz: ich verginge von seinem  
stärkeren Dasein. Denn das Schöne ist nichts  
als des Schrecklichen Anfang, den wir noch grade ertragen,  
und wir bewundern es so, weil es gelassen verschmäh,  
uns zu zerstören.*<sup>48</sup>

The 20<sup>th</sup> century proved that the beauty rarely spared people, especially if they had the misfortune to own it.

In 1919, young Jewish intellectuals from well-to-do Budapest bourgeois families became the commissars of the short-lived red republic, which would be only in existence for less than five months. Amongst the leaders of the republic, Baron Georg Bernhard Lukács von Szegedin – better known to future generations as the most important and independent-minded Marxist philosopher Georg (György) Lukács – was

<sup>47</sup> Mravik, *The "Sacco di Budapest" and Depredation of Hungary*, 329.

<sup>48</sup> "Who, if I cried out, might hear me – among the ranked Angels?

Even if One suddenly clasped me to his heart. /I would die of the force of his being. For Beauty is only/the infant of scarcely endurable Terror, and we are amazed when it casually spares us." Translation of Stephen Cohn. Rainer Maria Rilke, *Duino Elegies*, (Chicago: North Western University Press, 1989), 22.

responsible for an untraditional exhibition which undoubtedly became the main event in the cultural life of the republic.

The Lukács family history is very reminiscent to that of the Herzog family. Lukács's father, the wealthy Jewish investment banker József Löwinger, was knighted and received a baronial title.<sup>49</sup> Returning to Budapest from his studies in Germany, Lukács was at first interested in Symbolism and Dostoevsky but, following the October Revolution in Russia, his interests turned to politics, and he became a devoted, indeed fanatical Marxist. The installation of the Hungarian Soviet Republic gave him the opportunity to explore his newfound taste for revolutionary violence. On his orders, soldiers and sailors broke into the palaces of the Hungarian aristocrats and Jewish collectors, stripping them of their art treasures. An impressive exhibition of the newly nationalized masterpieces was subsequently organized at the Budapest Palace of Exhibitions.<sup>50</sup>

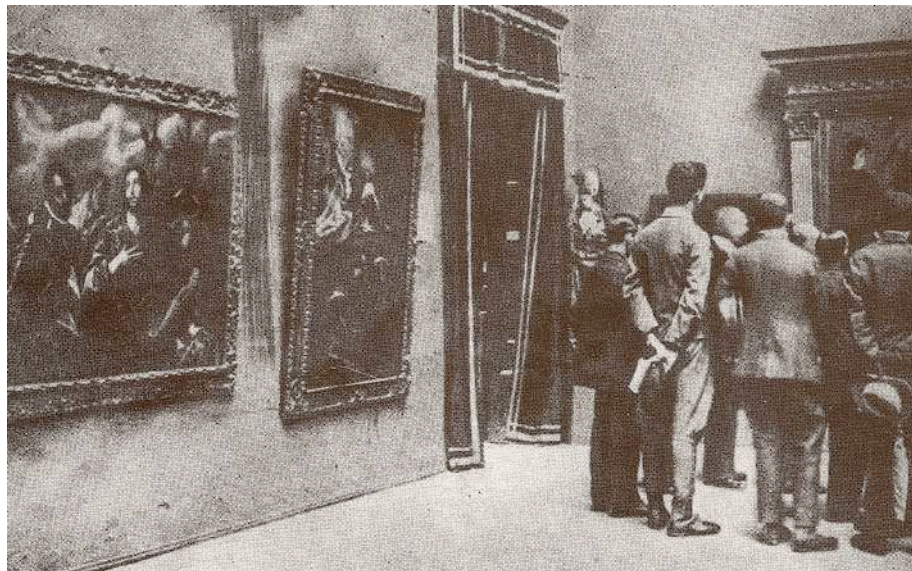


Fig. 2, Exposition of the confiscated paintings belonging to the Budapest bourgeoisie in the Place of Exhibitions, 1919. Hungarian News Agency)

Herzog's El Greco's and Goyas for the first time left the palace on Andrassy Avenue under a military convoy.

After 133 days under a revolutionary regime marked by the "Red Terror" – the random killing of over 500 political opponents – Budapest was occupied by the Romanian army.

In November 1919, the troops of Admiral Miklós Horthy entered the city after it was vacated by the Romanians. The following year, the

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<sup>49</sup> McCagg Jr., *Jewish Nobles and Geniuses in Modern Hungary*, 106-108.

<sup>50</sup> Arpad Kadarkay, *Georg Lukács: Life, Thought, and Politics*, (Cambridge, Ma. - Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991), 220-221.

Admiral became “His Serene Highness, the Regent of the Kingdom of Hungary.” In 1921, the Regent preempted two unsuccessful attempts by Charles, the last emperor of Austro-Hungary, to seize the Hungarian throne. The unfortunate Charles was exiled, and Horthy became the regent of this kingless kingdom. Horthy presided over succeeding waves of the “White Terror” – which were no less bloody than that of the “Red,” and were, in addition openly anti-Semitic – which finally subsided in the mid-1920s.<sup>51</sup> However the canvases confiscated by the revolutionaries from the mansions of the Jewish bourgeoisie were eventually returned to their rightful owners.

The 1919 confiscation was just a prelude to further upheavals during the century, which would destroy practically every Jewish private collection around Europe. Fortunately for Mór Lipót Herzog he did not have to witness the ruin of his museum. The Baron died in 1934. The collection was inherited by his widow and after her death in 1940 by the three children of Baron – Erzsébet, István and András. Even before the beginning of the Second World War the family had foreseen the upcoming storm. András unsuccessfully tried to send the art treasures abroad hoping to give them on loan to the National Gallery in London. In spite of the support given by Kenneth Clark, who was the director of the gallery at that time, the Hungarian government prohibited the loan agreement.<sup>52</sup> In 1942, András Herzog as a Jew was drafted for service in a forced labor battalion on the Eastern front, where he perished in 1943.<sup>53</sup> In 1944 when Hungary was occupied by the Nazis, Erzsébet and her daughter were sent to Portugal as a result of the notorious deal made by her husband and a group of Hungarian Jewish industrialists with SS *Standartenführer* Kurt Beher, who was sent to Hungary not to eliminate the Jews, but to extort money from them, and who offered to save their lives in exchange for all of their assets. Erzsébet’s husband Alfonz Weiss remained as an SS hostage and was liberated only after the end of the war.<sup>54</sup> István, arrested and already thrown on the train bound to Auschwitz was saved at the last possible moment by his wife and spent months in hiding.<sup>55</sup>

The fate of the collection which, during the interwar period became the jewel of Budapest attracting visiting international celebrities such as Thomas Mann, was not different to the fate of the family.

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<sup>51</sup> Ignác Romsics, *Hungary in the Twentieth Century*, (Budapest: Corvina Osiris, 1999), 108-116.

<sup>52</sup> Mravik, *The “Sacco di Budapest” and depredation of Hungary*, 72.

<sup>53</sup> See ‘Family History’ in *Hungary on Trial*

[http://www.hungarylootedart.com/?page\\_id=30](http://www.hungarylootedart.com/?page_id=30)

<sup>54</sup> Szabolcs Szita, Sean Lambert, *Trading in Lives? Operations of the Jewish Relief and Rescue Committee in Budapest, 1944-1945*, (Budapest - New York: Central European University Press, 2005), 125-135.

<sup>55</sup> See note 53.



On May 31, 1944 the Hungarian magazine *Magyar Futár* published an untraditional photo reportage, which had no parallels within the Axis press during the Second World War – Nazis and their allies seized art works belonging to Jews all around Europe, but they never searched for publicity and nor did they try to turn their robbery into a news scoop<sup>56</sup>. It seems that in Hungary the quest for depriving Jews of their property was seen in much different light. The reportage which appeared in the *Magyar Futár* was dedicated to the confiscation of the Herzog art collection. The collection was hidden in the cellars in Budafok on the outskirts of Budapest. It is difficult to say were the paintings secreted to save them from the Hungarian Nazis or to protect them from Allied bombardments, which from 1943 became a greater threat within the Hungarian capital. The photographs exhibited the excited members of the State Security Surveillance, nicknamed the “Hungarian Gestapo” posing with the canvases of El Greco and other old masters found in the cellars.



Fig. 3, Paintings from the Herzog collection discovered by the Hungarian secret police in the yard in Budafok, 1944. Photograph from the Anti-Semitic magazine *Magyar Futár*. Courtesy of the Commission for Art Recovery of the World Jewish Congress.

The confiscation of the paintings was led by Inspector Péter Hain, the notorious Hungarian Nazi, head of Security Surveillance, and a secret agent for the German Gestapo. The discovery of the Herzog collection was conceived as a PR event – photographers and journalists were

<sup>56</sup> “Zsidó kincsesláda a napfényen”, *Magyar Futár*, May 31, 1944, 12 -13.

invited to the scene to observe the policemen breaking the heavy chests containing art works. Dénes Csányi, the Director of the Museum of Fine Arts and Government Commissioner for the Registration and Safekeeping of Art Works Sequestered from Jews was at the scene compiling an inventory of the unpacked paintings. He gave interview stating that, “The Mór Herzog collection contains treasure, the artistic value of which exceeds any collection in the country. The former banker obtained these Goyas, Greco’s and other pictures from his fellow-Jew Marcel Nemes and after his death his immediate relatives inherited them. If the state now takes over these treasures, the Museum of Fine Arts will become a collection ranking only just after that in Madrid.”<sup>57</sup>



Fig. 4, Hungarian secret policemen enjoying painting by Goya *The Topers*. Photograph from the Anti-Semitic magazine *Magyar Futár*. Courtesy of the Commission for Art Recovery of the World Jewish Congress.

The newly discovered Jewish treasures were first taken to the Hotel Majestic, the Bauhaus style building situated on the Sváb Hill in Buda, which was home not only to the “Hungarian Gestapo,” but also the Sonderkommando Eichmann, a special group of SS personnel under the command of Adolf Eichmann, which arrived in Budapest on March 19, 1944 to conduct “the final solution to the Jewish question.” According to some sources the notorious SS henchman not only enjoyed the confiscated paintings, but pocketed some of the Hain’s loot.<sup>58</sup> It seems

<sup>57</sup> Mravik, *The “Sacco di Budapest” and depredation of Hungary*, 69.

<sup>58</sup> Jenő Lévai, *Eichmann in Hungary: Documents*, (New York: H. Fertig, 1987), 199.



that the “banality of evil,” did not prevent its main perpetrator who, according to common belief, was only obeying orders, and was not considering his own self-interest.

After this ‘pre-selection’ the canvases found in Budafok were sent to the Museum of Fine Arts. The Hungarian press excelled itself in its proud reporting with regards to these art treasures salvaged from the “Jewish profiteers.” One of the anti-Semitic rags published a cartoon of *The Toppers*. The caption of the cartoon called “The Joy of the Drinkers” stated, “It was Goya who created us, but only now do we find ourselves among the goys. Let’s drink to this.”<sup>59</sup>



Fig. 5, Cartoon published in *Magyar Futár* depicting the painting of Goya *The Toppers*. Courtesy of the Commission for Art Recovery of the World Jewish Congress.

The collection, which was once the pride of Budapest, was now ‘liberated’ from its Jewish owners.

The confiscated Herzog El Greco’s and Goyas were inventoried by the Government Commission for Registration and Safekeeping of Art Works Sequestered from Jews. Its emblem was decorated by the Hungarian coat of arms, held by two angels.<sup>60</sup> Their schematic images were not as refined as those angels depicted in El Greco paintings. However they undoubtedly were the angels of modernity, whose embrace led to the inevitable death.

<sup>59</sup> *Magyar Futár*, May 31, 1944, 20.

<sup>60</sup> Reproduced in Mravik, *The “Sacco di Budapest” and Depredation of Hungary*, 64.

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## Thinking Globally, Acting Locally: Joel Wegmeister and Modern Hasidic Politics in Warsaw

by *François Guesnet*

### Abstract

*This contribution investigates how the emergence of the first modern Jewish metropolis in Warsaw in the second half of the 19th century challenged traditional visions of community cohesion. It argues that the acceleration of political and societal change within the Jewish community allowed observant elites to achieve political and cultural hegemony in Warsaw, and thus offers a sui generis pathway of Jewish metropolitan modernization. This claim is substantiated by following the communal and political involvement of a leading Hasidic civil leader, Joel Wegmeister (1837-1919), co-founder of the first outlets of the Agudat Israel in the Kingdom of Poland before World War One.*

### Introduction

For several decades in the 19th century, Warsaw was the largest Jewish community in the world. Already in the 1870s, it counted more than one hundred thousand registered Jewish inhabitants.<sup>1</sup> After many decades of steady growth, the number of Jews moving to the capital of the Kingdom of Poland, part of the Tsarist Empire, grew much more rapidly after the emancipation legislation of 1862, abolishing all settlement restrictions. The registered Jewish population doubled between the mid-1850s and the mid-1860s, from slightly above forty thousand to almost eighty thousand Jews. At the turn of the century, this number had reached more than a quarter million. The highest percentage of Jews in Warsaw was reached shortly before World War One, when around forty percent of Varsovians identified as Jews. The largest number in times of peace was reached shortly before World War Two, when around three hundred seventy five thousand Jews lived in the capital of the Second Polish Republic.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The actual number of Jews in Warsaw is difficult to establish for any period prior to the 20th century. Contemporary observers assumed that the factual number of inhabitants would exceed the number of registered inhabitants by at least a quarter.

<sup>2</sup> For a survey of the history of Jewish Warsaw see Antony Polonsky, "Warsaw", *YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*, vol. 2 (New Haven, Conn., London: Yale University

In contrast to most other Jewish metropolises of the early 20th century, Jewish Warsaw was not created by immigration from afar - the Jews living in Warsaw were mostly from Polish provinces. Also, since the expulsion of 1527, Warsaw was off limits for any chartered Jewish settlement, and only a few thousand lived, often on noble grounds, the so-called *jurydiki*, or without permit. This smallish early settlement grew by the first group of Jewish immigrants from outside the historical territory of the Polish Commonwealth: a small group of Jewish entrepreneurs accompanying the new Prussian administration after the third partition in 1795, quickly joining the local Jewish commercial and banking elite. These enlightened entrepreneurs would have a relatively strong cultural impact by establishing a small but influential network, clustered around a reform-friendly and integrationist congregation.<sup>3</sup> Two generations later, commercial opportunities as well as the improved legal status of Jews introduced in 1862 lead to a steady influx of Jews from a variety of Russian provinces.<sup>4</sup> These so-called *litvaks* were highly successful in establishing commercial relations between the emerging Polish textile industry and the Russian markets. They identified with Russian and Russian culture to a higher degree than Polish Jews would relate to Polish and Polish culture. Later cohorts, arriving after the deterioration of the legal, political and social situation of Jews in the Russian Empire after the pogrom wave of 1881-82, would have a considerable impact in mobilizing and radicalizing the mass-based political movements in the Kingdom of Poland.<sup>5</sup> The fact that autochthonous Jews would form the vast majority of Warsaw Jewry does not mean they were culturally homogenous. Besides the ubiquitous impact of social stratification, the conflict between traditional rabbinical Judaism (the so-called *misnagdim*) and Hasidic communities constituted a major religious rift within the community. The affiliation with one of the numerous Hasidic communities would have a strong societal impact on an individual and his or her family, beginning

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Press, 2008), 1993-2004.

<sup>3</sup> For the most compelling discussion of this often overlooked elite of Warsaw Jewry see Cornelia Aust, "Commercial Cosmopolitans: Networks of Jewish Merchants Between Warsaw and Amsterdam, 1750-1820", (PhD dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, 2010), 178-256.

<sup>4</sup> François Guesnet, "Migration and Stereotype: The Case of Russian Jews in the Polish Kingdom at the End of the Nineteenth Century", *Cahiers du Monde Russe* 41/4 (2004): 505-518; François Guesnet, "'Wir müssen Warschau unbedingt russisch machen.' Die Mythologisierung der russisch-jüdischen Zuwanderung ins Königreich Polen zu Beginn unseres Jahrhunderts am Beispiel eines polnischen Trivialromans", in *Geschichtliche Mythen in den Literaturen Ostmittel- und Südosteuropas*, ed. E. Behring, (Stuttgart, München: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2000), 99-116.

<sup>5</sup> François Guesnet, "Khevres and Akhdes: the Change in Jewish Self-Organization in the Kingdom of Poland before 1900 and the Bund", in *Jewish politics in Eastern Europe: The Bund at 100*, ed. Jack Jacobs, (Basingstoke: Palgrave 2001), 3-13.

with the membership in specific congregations and voluntary associations, and shaping kinship and commercial relationships.<sup>6</sup>

The consequences of a rapidly emerging large Jewish community is at the centre of this contribution. A process of accelerated demographic growth constituted a serious challenge to traditional visions of communal life. Communal consensus as informal, non-institutional glue holding smaller communities together would have been achieved with much less ease. Neither communal nor private institutions were able to cope with the administrative and material requirements of a rapidly growing and impoverished Jewish population. As will be argued later in this contribution, the formal Jewish community board, the *Zarząd Gminy*, was far from coping with these requirements, undermining its political and social standing. As a result, and in a unique process of societal adaptation and political modernization, misnagdic and Hasidic networks would establish a solid grip on significant segments of communal responsibility, above all in the realms of education and charity, securing also political clout. This cultural hegemony was established both in the wake of Russian legislation on voluntary associations, in the context of international orthodox cooperation, and due to the reactionary crack-down against revolutionary trends in Tsarist Russia after the revolution of 1905.

This argument shall be developed by looking at a specific personality, Joel Wegmeister (1837-1919). As a member of the Hasidim of Ger, one of the most significant Hasidic communities in Polish lands in general and in Warsaw in particular, Wegmeister was active in many spheres of communal activities. Despite his huge popularity in his lifetime, he has almost completely escaped the attention of historians.<sup>7</sup> The basic information contained in the few sources available about him and his family will allow for a brief overview on the life of this Hasidic civil leader. He attained a position of influence in Warsaw and Polish Jewry between the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the resurrection of independent Poland after World War One. Due to the scarcity of sources, this presentation has

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<sup>6</sup> For a description of the impact of the rise of Hasidism on Warsaw Jewry see Glenn Dynner, *Men of Silk: the Hasidic Conquest of Polish Jewish Society*, (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), passim.

<sup>7</sup> Jacob Szacki, *Geshikhte fun yidn in varshe*, 3 vols. (New York: Yivo 1948-53), mentions Joel Wegmeisters' activities in welfare organisations (vol. II, 182) without giving further details, as well as his function as co-administrator for the Warsaw funds for the Jewish communities in Palestine (vol. III, 372). He is mentioned in passing by Gershon Bacon, *The Politics of Tradition. Agudat Yisrael in Poland, 1916-1939*, (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1996) and by Marian Fuks, *Żydzi w Warszawie*, Warszawa 1992, 266 f. Most recently François Guesnet, "Joel Wegmeister", *YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*, vol. 2 (New Haven, Conn., London: Yale University Press, 2008), 2009-2010.

to refrain from formulating far reaching assumptions about Wegmeister's convictions and his value system.

Although the overwhelming share of entrepreneurs in civil leadership of Jewish communities is obvious, we have only partial investigations in their societal and political role in Eastern European Jewish history. An important starting point is the seminal essay by Arcadius Kahan about Russian Jewish entrepreneurs.<sup>8</sup> The works of Jan Kosim<sup>9</sup> and Ryszard Kołodziejczyk<sup>10</sup> present important elements of analysis, but do not focus on the role of Jewish entrepreneurs on Jewish communal issues. In attempt to argue from a point of view of institutional genealogy, this contribution focuses in a first step on a central feature of the traditional Jewish community in Eastern Europe, the so-called *qlal-tuer*, or communal activist.<sup>11</sup> The *qlal-tuer* was a prominent community member taking it upon himself to react *ad hoc* in case of an emergency of any kind and on all level, be it communal or individual, out of a feeling of individual responsibility. This function would be typical for the rapidly growing intermediate and large Eastern European Jewish communities of the 19th century, and reflect the flexible response from within a community to the gap opening between its traditional institutional set-up and the rapidly growing requirements of an ever larger urban Jewish population.

### The *qlal-tuer*: A preliminary definition

Who or what was a *qlal-tuer*? Literally someone who felt responsible for the whole of Israel within his home town, his community, and acted on its behalf. Basically, the *qlal-tuer* kept the wide range of tasks of the autonomous Jewish community alive when it ceased to exist, that is, beginning with the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The *qlal-tuer* thus assumed important elements of the community board's responsibility and authority. The following analysis will propose, as a first step, a preliminary definition of the *qlal-tuer*. The activities of Joel Wegmeister will serve as illustration for this function. It will be argued that one has to differentiate between his activities on behalf of the Warsaw community as a whole and his partisanship for the Rebbe of Ger, independently of the fact, that

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<sup>8</sup> Arcadius Kahan, "Notes on Jewish Entrepreneurship in Tsarist Russia", in *Entrepreneurship in Imperial Russia and the Soviet Union*, eds. Gregory Guroff, Fred V. Carstensen, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983), 104-24.

<sup>9</sup> Jan Kosim, *Losy pewnej fortuny. Z dziejów burżuazji warszawskiej 1807-1830*, (Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1972).

<sup>10</sup> Ryszard Kołodziejczyk, *Miasta, mieszczaństwo, burżuazja w Polsce w XIX w. Szkice i rozprawy historyczne*, (Warszawa: PWN, 1979).

<sup>11</sup> Isaac Levitats, *The Jewish Community in Russia, 1772-1844*, (New York 1943, reprint 1970), 164, and François Guesnet, *Polnische Juden im 19. Jahrhundert. Lebensbedingungen, Rechtsnormen und Organisation im Wandel*, (Köln, Wien: Böhlau, 1998), 127-28, 263-80.

Wegmeister himself would not have accepted any difference between responsibility for the community as a whole and acting for the best of the Gerer *hasidim*. The following attempt for a definition is based not only on the example of Wegmeister himself, but on many others, studied with the help of communal and administrative records.<sup>12</sup>

The *qlal-tuer* had to be a leading community member, and not a paid communal functionary. Certainly we know of many rabbis being active on behalf of their communities, functioning for example as intercessors (Hebr. *shtadlan*) or initiating philanthropic activities. There can be no doubt that in many cases the spiritual authority of a rabbi could purvey him with a far reaching freedom for communal or charitable action. On the other hand, although their dignity did not exclude all kinds of philanthropic generosity, it was not compatible with the tasks of a *qlal-tuer* with all kinds of high and low duties. The *qlal-tuer* definitely had to be a man, and not a woman. We know of a broad range of charitable activities from pious or secular female members of a Jewish community. These activities aimed sometimes at the requirements of a community as a whole and sometimes at specific needs of women, like funds for destitute young mothers. In many instances, the women involved in these initiatives were *gabetes*, the wives of the leaders of voluntary associations (Hebr. *gabaim*).<sup>13</sup> But the function of the *qlal-tuer* went far beyond exclusively philanthropic initiatives. It involved responsibilities within religious and formal bodies of the local community, inaccessible to women. Only a community member of a certain wealth could pretend to the informal dignity of a *qlal-tuer*. His community expected him to be a member of a number of voluntary associations or *herrot*, paying his dues on a regular basis. But his main vocation was to *be there*, to be able to help in an emergency of an individual community member or for the community as a whole. In this respect, the *qlal-tuer* was no different from other distinguished members of his community, but these could more easily retreat from this kind of obligation.

The *qlal-tuer* had to be a learned and observant Jew, taking upon himself the task of preserving the tradition of the Law. Jewish law or *halakha* was the only binding value system which served as guideline in his activities and defined his responsibilities towards the community. In 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century Eastern Europe, such a spiritual responsibility could only be based on religious observance. Furthermore, a *qlal-tuer* had to be not only active, but *engagé*. All descriptions of *qlal-tuer* we dispose of underline the readiness of these people to help, to intervene, to give money. They arose admiration for the scope of this involvement. There was an acute

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<sup>12</sup> Guesnet, *Polnische Juden*, 231-32.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 418, 423, 433 f., 441.

understanding of the difference between a basic level of philanthropic activities, a basic requirement of a responsible community member, and the kind of personal involvement in all relevant religious, philanthropic and political activities of a given community characteristic of a *qlal-tuer*. This involvement led to the status of being respected not only within a specific Jewish milieu, for example Hasidic, but within most or all large religious segments within the community, and by rich and poor. All of Israel constituted the *qlal*, not just the milieu of a given person. In the words of the contemporaries of Joel Wegmeister, a *qlal-tuer* acted on behalf of the public or general matters (Hebr. *davar ha-tsibur* or *enyane ha-qlal*). This was qualified as work on behalf of the whole of Israel (Yidd. *qlal arbet*).<sup>14</sup>

The *qlal arbet* included several distinct fields of activity. First, it should be stressed that a *qlal-tuer* took upon himself communal political responsibilities. They served as members in the officially sanctioned community boards (called synagogue overseers or *dozór bóżniczy* in the Kingdom of Poland), were active within the local burial society (Hebr. *hevra kadisha*), and, in the case of Hasidic *qlal-tuers*, prominent followers of a rebbe. They naturally were members of pious fraternities for the study of the holy scriptures (*hevrot shas*) or for some specific liturgic purpose (*hevrot ner tamid*, for the illumination in the synagogues, and others). The pauperization of many Jewish communities in Eastern Europe, and more specifically the Jewish metropolises like Warsaw or Lodz in phases of recession represented a serious challenge for the functioning of the community as a subsidiary organism.<sup>15</sup> Without a leading role in philanthropy, one could not claim to the informal status of *qlal-tuer*. This was indeed an extremely well developed and vaste field of social action. This is certainly not only true for Jewish communities of Eastern Europe. But nowhere else, Jewish philanthropy featured such a living, dense and complex structure of traditional and more modern forms of self organization.<sup>16</sup> Help for the needy covered many spheres of every day life: health services and institutions, educational associations and school boards, as well as more specified types of help. As already has been pointed out, the contemporaries made a very clear distinction between someone who as a member of a traditional society avoided personal involvement in its activities, and those who devoted personal resources on

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<sup>14</sup> Other terms used were *davar tsiburi* and *enyane ha-tsibur* (public matters) in Hebrew and *qlal sakh* (public issue) in Yiddish. These terms were used in the obituaries on Wegmeister in the Warsaw Yiddish and Hebrew daily press, *Haynt* (Warsaw), 20<sup>th</sup> February, 1919 and *Moment* (Warsaw), 21 February, 1919.

<sup>15</sup> François Guesnet, "Jüdische Armut und ihre Bekämpfung im Königreich Polen: Grundzüge und Entwicklungen im 19. Jahrhundert", in *Juden und Armut*, eds. Stefi Jersch-Wenzel *et al.*, (Köln, Wien: Böhlau, 2000), 185-208.

<sup>16</sup> Guesnet, *Polnische Juden*, 229-250, 413-446.



its behalf. The commitment of the *qlal-tuer* included political responsibilities as well. More specifically, to be a *qlal-tuer* meant to go to the gentile authorities and to intervene on behalf of the community or Jewish individuals if necessary.<sup>17</sup> This responsibility was normally limited to a specific town. It included a wide range of matters. A necrologue for one of the *qlal-tuers* in the Polish town of Lublin, Natan Müller, reads: “When some peddler, who out of ignorance broke some police instruction, was arrested and led away with all her belongings - some herrings or baskets of apples - to the police station, some family member hurried to Reb Nute, who arrived on the spot to help the unfortunate one.”<sup>18</sup> It seems noteworthy, that one of the obituaries for Joel Wegmeister used a parallel formula: “Whereever the was the need of an intercession, or some generous help, people hurried to see Reb Joel. In Reb Joel’s home one always met rabbis and business men for all kinds of public matters.”<sup>19</sup> As will be shown later, these “public matters” could reach far beyond the limits of the Warsaw community.

### Joel Wegmeister

When Wegmeister was born in 1837, Warsaw had approximately one hundred forty thousand inhabitants, a quarter of whom, around thirty six thousand, were Jews. When he died in 1919, the Polish capital counted almost one million inhabitants with a third of its population Jews. Wegmeister thus saw Warsaw grow from the largest Jewish community in the Kingdom of Poland to one of the most important in the world. Information concerning the economic activity of Wegmeister is scarce. In Hebrew and Yiddish contemporary texts, he is mostly referred to as *esken*, business man, who was owner of several houses in Warsaw.<sup>20</sup> He was member of the First Guild of merchants, and as such disposed of an important income.<sup>21</sup> His wealth was a prerequisite for his function as one of the administrators for the funds collected to benefit the four Jewish communities in Palestine. These funds, called *haluka gelt* throughout Ashkenasic communities in Europe, were administered regionally. These

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<sup>17</sup> For a definition of the *shtadlan*, see Israel Bartal, “Moses Montefiore: Nationalist Before His Time, or Belated Shtadlan?”, *Studies in Zionism* 11 (1990): 2, 111-125, 116.

<sup>18</sup> *Izraelita* (Warsaw), Nekrolog, vol. 31 (1896), December 22, 1895/January 3, 1896, 113.

<sup>19</sup> *Haynt* (Warsaw), February 20, 1919.

<sup>20</sup> See references in fn. 14. Wegmeister lived on 8, Prosta Street.

<sup>21</sup> State Archive Lublin, Lublin Government’s Administration RGL A I, 1913:9 (no pagination), circular letter from the Chancellery of the General Governor, Warsaw, July 13, 1913 (N° 3196/6), to all governors in the Kingdom of Poland. In this letter, Wegmeister is referred to as First Guild’s merchant. The chancellery comments positively on the by-laws of a voluntary charitable association founded by Joel Wegmeister and his brother Josef. For a more detailed discussion of this association, the *Shlome Emune Yisroel*, see below.

funds, collected in hundreds of synagoges and other Jewish places of worship, was brought to Warsaw, where the administration responsible for these funds was called *Erets yisroel kase* or *Kupat r' meir baal-nes*. Around the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the *Erets yisroel kase* had more or less the same budget as the official Warsaw Jewish community administration.<sup>22</sup>

Wegmeister was a layman and married, thus fulfilling already two important, though not overly rare prerequisites to become a *qlal-tuer*. He was no doubt an observant Jew and very active in supporting traditional religious learning. He founded a *hevra shas* devoted to the study of the mishna on Twarda street<sup>23</sup> and sponsored the main building for a *yeshiva* on Mila Street 63.<sup>24</sup> Beyond supporting higher Jewish learning, he also functioned for a long time as head of the *hevrat talmud-tora baqlalit* of Warsaw, the charitable communal Talmud-Tora-School.<sup>25</sup> Joel Wegmeister was member of the inner circle of laymen surrounding the Gerer Rebbe, Abraham Mordechai Alter (1866-1948). Alter sent him together with Lejb Weingott to the international gathering of Jewish orthodoxy in Kattowitz in May 1912 “as most trusted followers to discuss organizational matters.”<sup>26</sup> After the founding of the *Agudat Israel* as a result of this conference, Wegmeister was the most prominent civil leader of the formal organisations representing its Polish branch. His closeness to the Gerer Rebbe becomes especially clear during the German occupation in the years of World War One. During these years, and with the help of Wegmeister, the Gerer Rebbe successfully broadened his influence among Polish Jewry, as will be shown later.

The scope and the variety of his activities demonstrate that Joel Wegmeister was personally deeply involved Jewish public affairs. One of the obituaries reads that “until the last day of his busy life Wegmeister never lost his juvenile energy and his interest in *qlal-arbet*”, and the Hajnt wrote: “During a whole generation Joel Wegmeister was one of the most active community members in matters of philanthropy. He stood at the head of the most important public institutions in Warsaw. Through decades there was almost no public matter that was not resolved with the help of Reb Joel.”<sup>27</sup> As example for this dedication may serve a call for help that Wegmeister published during the severe depression in 1904, which hit - partly due to the war against Japan – Russia, including the Polish territories. Unemployment and starvation among Jewish craftsmen

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<sup>22</sup> Guesnet, *Polnische Juden*, 236, 244, 326, 372.

<sup>23</sup> Szacki, *Geshikhte fun yidn*, vol. III, 372.

<sup>24</sup> Shaul Stampfer, “Hasidic Yeshivot in Inter War Poland”, *Polin. Studies in Polish Jewry*, vol. 11 (1998): 5-24, does not mention this institution.

<sup>25</sup> *Moment* (Warsaw) 21 February 1919 (see also footnote 14).

<sup>26</sup> Gershon Bacon, *The Politics of Tradition*, 36.

<sup>27</sup> See references footnote 14.

increased dramatically. In October, Wegmeister as the head of the philanthropic society *Ezra* (hebr. help) issued a call for help, published in the Jewish press: “One who has not seen the extent of the misery with his own eyes and how rapidly it spreads cannot imagine it. I am used to Jewish poverty; I am not young anymore and all of my life, I see this poverty. But I have not seen before what I am witnessing now [...] As our fathers had it that the hungry should be fed, I did not calculate the costs. Now, we have to suspend our activity, if not large circles of our society come to our help.”<sup>28</sup> It should be underlined that such a personal statement was quite unusual at the time. It expresses more than an emergency. Like many others involved in charity at that period, Wegmeister states that his traditional concepts of philanthropy are overwhelmed by the sheer quantity of fellow Jews in a need.<sup>29</sup>

An broad recognition as *qlal-tuer* constituted a central feature of this function. How to establish if Joel Wegmeister indeed benefitted of such a reputation? For our purposes, suffice is to consider those specific institutions and associations of Jewish Warsaw based on cooperation of the three socio-religious factions within the community: the Hasidic and Misnagdic Jews, as well as the integrationists. One of these institutions was the above mentioned *Erets yisroel kase*. Though a rabbi formally functioned as head of this fund, civil leaders like Wegmeister were its administrators. Another instance is the *ad hoc* committee formed in 1892, when the cholera threatened Warsaw, and representatives of all segments of Jewish Warsaw (among them Joel Wegmeister) cooperated to secure emergency medical services.<sup>30</sup> Finally, the broad alliance formed in Warsaw to help the victims of pogroms against Jewish communities in Western Russia in the fall of 1905 included Zionists, integrationists, as well as Hasidic leading community members, among them Wegmeister.<sup>31</sup>

Wegmeister has not left a specifically interesting trace as member of the Warsaw community administration, the *Zarẓqd Gminy*, to which he belonged for several election periods.<sup>32</sup> This corresponds to the purely instrumental relationship Warsaw Hasidic Jews had to this representative body. Since 1871 functioned what Szacki has called the ‘unholy alliance’, uniting the *hasidim* and the *maskilim* (literally: enlighteners) against the *misnagdim*.<sup>33</sup> Whereas for the integrationists, the community administration

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<sup>28</sup> *Izraelita* 35 (1904), 13/26.8.1904, Odgłosy [Echoes], 410.

<sup>29</sup> For concepts and developments of Jewish charity in Poland see Guesnet: *Jüdische Armut*, 185-208, and Guesnet, *Polnische Juden*, 146-160, 413-446.

<sup>30</sup> *Izraelita* 40 (1892), 25.9/7.10.1892, Kronika, 344.

<sup>31</sup> Szacki, *Geshikhte fun yidn*, vol. III, 385.

<sup>32</sup> *Moment*, as referred in footnote 14.

<sup>33</sup> Izaak Grynbaum, “Bor’ba za vlast’ v Varshavskoj evrejskoj obshchine”, *Vestnik evrejskoj obshchiny* 1 (1913): 4, 3-12, 5, 10-26, and Szacki, *Geshikhte fun yidn*, 118-130.

was the sole representative of Warsaw Jewry, the Hasidic Jews regarded it rather as a necessary evil required by state law. They left the leadership to the group around the Natanson family and claimed for themselves the supervision over most of Jewish schools, except for a small number of elementary schools for the poor, left to the *maskilim* as their experimental field.

Joel Wegmeister developed his philanthropic activities within the institutionalized framework of fraternities and associations of diverse character. His most important achievement was probably the establishment of *Ezra*, a philanthropic association which has already been mentioned. Its establishment was announced in the spring of 1901. It was supposed to function all over Jewish Warsaw and was founded by a large group of well-to-do Hasidic house owners, among them prominent families of Warsaw community life like the Braudes, the Ulrichs and Prywes. Within the first weeks of existence, four thousand silver rubles were collected to be distributed among the destitute.<sup>34</sup> The founders defined specific fields of activity for *Ezra*, including an agency for jobless craftsmen, financial help for sick, old and handicapped Jews, day care and schooling for orphans and children from destitute families as well as financial help for travelling Jews.<sup>35</sup> In 1902, a section was added to provide destitute young women with a dowry.<sup>36</sup> Confronted with the already mentioned job crisis in 1904, *Ezra* initialized a campaign to help the families of jobless craftsmen.<sup>37</sup> As the *Zarząd Gminy* did not dispose of any funds for this specific need, *Ezra* and another philanthropic society, *Achiezer*, founded mainly by Russian Jews in 1902,<sup>38</sup> were the sole Jewish institutions to cope with this crisis.<sup>39</sup> Wegmeister's society could rely on the steady financial support of two thousand members, as well as additional contributions of Jewish inhabitants of Warsaw. Before the crisis of 1904, the contributions amounted to ten thousand silver rubles annually, but rose to thirty six thousand silver rubles during the crisis. This significant rise in general support demonstrates the high standing of *Ezra* among Warsaw Jewry.<sup>40</sup> Another illustration for this excellent reputation can be cited for the year of 1905. The magistrate of Warsaw assigned the sum of 15.000 silver rubles for poor Jews. Of this sum, *Ezra* received by far the largest sum (8.000 silver rubles). Next in line was *Achiezer* with

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<sup>34</sup> *Izraelita* 15 (1901) 6/19.4.1901, Kronika, 180, and *ibid.*, 22 (1901) 25.5/7.6.1901, Kronika, 261.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 27 (1901), 29.6/12.7.1901, Kronika, 314.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 21 (1903), 16/29.5.1901, Kronika, 250.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 24 (1904), 28.5/10.6.1904, Kronika, 287.

<sup>38</sup> Guesnet, *Polnische Juden*, 42.

<sup>39</sup> *Izraelita* 31 (1904) 16/27.7.1904, Kronika, 366.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 35 (1904), 13/26.8.1904, Ogdłosy, 410.

5.000 silver rubles. In contrast, the *Zarząd Gminy* could dispose of just 2.000 silver rubles.<sup>41</sup> Between May 1904 and January 1905, Wegmeister's society distributed more than one million portions or approximately 1.800 tons of bread - a very important achievement indeed.<sup>42</sup> As the above quoted call for help of Wegmeister illustrates, the crisis overwhelmed *Ezra* as the other charitable institutions.<sup>43</sup> Some rudimentary information is available regarding other philanthropic activities of Joel Wegmeister – thus during World War One, he sponsored a kitchen to feed children from destitute families.<sup>44</sup>

Another aspect of Wegmeister's and his fellow founders' philanthropic activity seems noteworthy. The registration of *Ezra* represented a successful attempt of observant Warsaw Jews to apply recent Russian legislation of 1897 on charitable associations (Russ. *obshchestva posobiia bednym*). The significance of this legislation for Jewish social organisation in Russia and Poland has been widely ignored until today.<sup>45</sup> What was at the core of these regulations? Theoretically any private person was allowed to initiate such an association. It needed a certain amount of members and the approval for the statutes issued by the governor of the respective district. Unlike all other kinds of private associations introduced between 1897 and 1906 (sport, education, culture) the charitable associations were the only to have the right to restrict their activity to one religious community.<sup>46</sup> In all district capitals of former Congress Poland, Jews founded societies of this type on behalf of Jewish philanthropy. In contrast to the existing traditional fraternities, outlawed in 1821, they were not hampered by a lack of legal status.<sup>47</sup> Even more important, they seemed able to avoid the fierce battling within Jewish community administrations. In all cases Jewish notables demanded the establishment of a Jewish *obshchestvo posobiya bednym*, the district's administration approved of it.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 7 (1905), 11/24.2.1905, Kronika, 80.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 9 (1905), 25.2/10.3.1905, Kronika, 105.

<sup>43</sup> Guesnet, *Jüdische Armut*, 207-08.

<sup>44</sup> *Jüdische Rundschau* (Berlin), 3 May 1918, n. 18.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 204-6.

<sup>46</sup> Guesnet, *Polnische Juden*, 231-32.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 223-29.

<sup>48</sup> The above mentioned society *Achiezer* was founded following the outline of the *obshchestva posobiya bednym*, too. The Russian Jewish community in Warsaw, striving for independent organisation, founded it in 1901. After a first period with exclusively philanthropic activities, it opened a loan department, another for orphans, then a department for sick care. In 1904 a department for jobless help was founded, then an ambulance and a rehabilitation centre in Ciechocinek. Two years after its founding, *Achiezer* had 4.500 members, two years later 6.340. It constituted thus one of the largest private associations in the whole of the Russian Empire, see Guesnet, *Jüdische Armut*, 207.

Another philanthropic initiative of Joel Wegmeister encapsulates the tension between the available institutional resources and the requirements of the emerging Jewish metropolis of Warsaw, and illustrates how an observant civil leader could consolidate his role in the larger community. Since the 1870s it was clear that the Jewish hospital opened in 1834 was far too small for the requirements of the fast growing Jewish population. The doctors as well as the *Zarząd Gminy* very much wished to mark the transition from old to new not only by transferring the hospital to the new buildings in Wola, but by changing the traditional functioning, too. Thus, in 1899, the hospital's *hevra bikur cholim* (Society for Visiting the Sick), taking care for the patients since decades, was banned from the site. This society consisted in the eyes of the doctors largely "of the lowest stratum of our society, coming to the hospital in working clothes not washing their hands, distributing wine and vodka to all patients indiscriminately."<sup>49</sup> The attempt of the hospital administration to found a new 'Philanthropic Society for Auxiliary Services for Patients of the Jewish Hospital' failed, because nobody signed up. The new hospital was opened in 1902. Its capacity rose by fifty percent, but at the moment of the opening, no external charitable association existed to provide the essential sick care services. Very soon the hospital administration had to admit not to be able to pay for nurses and food for the poor patients, often originating from other towns. As the conditions reached scandalous proportions, the administration decided to give in. In 1905, it asked Joel Wegmeister to step in and to call for the establishment of a traditional society. He suggested the name *Hevrat achim rachmonim* (Society of charitable brothers). At the founding meeting, over two hundred active members signed up.<sup>50</sup>

### Political dimensions of *qlal-arbet*

The function of a *qlal-tuer* necessarily included contacts with gentile authorities. Up until World War One, we are not well informed on how Wegmeister fulfilled this task on behalf of the Warsaw community. We read in the obituary, published in the *Haynt*: "Not considering his important economic activities, he took responsibilities in matters of *enyane ha-tsibur* not only for the Warsaw community but for the Jews of all Poland. Wherever an intercession was necessary, people turned to R' Joel (...) More than once he travelled to St. Petersburg or even abroad [sic!] in *enyane ha-qlal*."<sup>51</sup> Unfortunately, no more detailed information concerning these missions of intercession has come to our knowledge.

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<sup>49</sup> Guesnet, *Polnische Juden*, 444.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 446.

<sup>51</sup> See reference as in footnote 14.

Despite the scarcity of detailed sources, the image of an extremely active and respected community member emerges. Two specific features of Wegmeister's activity should be underlined. It does seem probable that he developed the core of his *qlal arbet* in the last three decades of his life, as we do not find a trace of him in earlier overviews concerning the activities of notables on behalf of the community. The *Moment* expressis verbis mentions that fact in his obituary: "At an advanced age, Reb Joel Wegmeister has founded several health care societies, in which he played the role of an (...) energetic leader." The *Haynt* notes that "the deceased almost for a whole generation was one of the first members of the community in all matters of philanthropy." This article equally features a significant description of the *qlal-tuer* as a historically determined social function: "Warsaw has lost with Wegmeister one of the oldest representatives of a special kind of Jew, a kind that disappears and there is nobody to replace it."<sup>52</sup> These lines echo the obituary of yet another *qlal-tuer* of Warsaw, Liber Korngold, deceased in 1897. One of the acutest observers of Jewish Warsaw of his time, Nahum Sokolow, combined his praise of Korngold with a generic description of the *qlal-tuer*: "His was a highly developed sense of community belonging, a deep knowlegde of the people and their relationships, an unparalleled fervour and courage in thought as well as in his deeds." As has been shown for the philanthropic activities of Wegmeister, the traditional value of help for the indigent was combined with the ability to adapt to the developing social or legal framework: "Korngold represented the perfect image of a noble orthodox in harmony with the spirit of the time." In this praise of Korngold, Sokolow praised the *qlal-tuer* as such. He underlined the significance of the *qlal-tuer* for the local community, defining his attachment to it as 'hereness' (Pol. *swojszczyzna*), the equivalent to the Yiddish *dojkejt*: "Another sympathetic characteristic of these old representatives is their exceptional bond to the city and to the community, their specific 'hereness', their ambition of belonging here, to this place, which creates their measure for everything – cives romanus sum! (...) This creates a spiritual bond and care for local needs, without which the community just could not exist."<sup>53</sup> Underlining the existential significance of this bond, Sokolow thus qualifies Korngold, Wegmeister and other *qlal-tuer* of his time as dear, but outdated features of a traditional community.

Joel Wegmeister felt responsible for the whole of Warsaw or even Polish Jewry to the same degree as he was a partisan of the *Gerer Rebbe*. We only can ask the question here, if he was willing to make any difference between both. For the purpose of the present analysis, we assume that the interests of Abraham Mordekhai Alter and Joel Wegmeister were not

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> *Izraelita* 1 (1897), 20.12.1896/1.1.1897, Z tygodnia, 6.

identical with the interest of Polish Jewry as a whole, and discuss what we know about Wegmeisters' political activities for Hasidism and the Gerer Rebbe more specifically. The basis for this analysis will be the period prior and during World War One.

As already mentioned, Wegmeister served as leading lay person at the head of the Polish branch of the *Agudat Israel*. Most studies pertaining to the organisational history of Polish Jewish orthodoxy claim that the *Agudas Ho-orthodoxim*, founded in 1916 in cooperation with the German occupying administration constituted the first formal and registered organisation of this type.<sup>54</sup> In fact, chronology has it the other way round: After the conference of Kattowitz, Joel Wegmeister established at the end of 1912 or early in 1913 and without any doubt in close cooperation with Alter an association called *Shlome Emune Yisroel*. The basic concept as it appears in the statute of this society with the full title "Society for the Mutual Help of Orthodox Jews in the Town of Warsaw Shlome Emune Yisroel" is identical with the basic principles of the later *Agudat Israel*, to assure "the improvement of the material and moral living conditions of its members in the spirit of the Jewish religious law as well as the preservation of the traditional principles among them."<sup>55</sup> As a matter of fact, the new society guaranteed material help like help for the jobless, medical care, education and others. But there were two very important differences between the *Shlome Emune Yisroel* and a charitable society like *Ezra*. First, the pre-*Aguda* association limited these benefits to the members of the society and did not intend to distribute them indiscriminately. Second, they were distributed on the condition that "the member leads a life in accordance with the principles formulated in the statutes."<sup>56</sup>

The *Shlome Emune Yisroel* can thus be regarded as the first attempt to legally organize in Congress Poland an association that can be labelled as a political organisation of the local orthodoxy. It thus followed the Galician forerunners of orthodox political organisation in particular, where

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<sup>54</sup> Isaac Lewin, *The Jewish Community in Poland*, (New York: Philosophical Library, 1985), passim; Bacon, *Politics of Tradition*, 36, Matthias Morgenstern, *Von Frankfurt nach Jerusalem. Isaac Breuer und die Geschichte des 'Austrittsstreits' in der deutsch-jüdischen Orthodoxie*, (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1995), 65-81, especially 72-74, with whose claim of German Jews founding the Shlome Emune Yisroel I disagree, see below. The most recent and most detailed analysis of these issues by Tobias Grill, "The Politicisation of Traditional Polish Jewry: Orthodox German Rabbis and the Founding of 'Agudas Ho-Ortodoksım' and 'Dos yidishe vort' in Gouvernement-General Warsaw 1916-18", *East European Jewish Affairs* 39/2 (2009), 227-247.

<sup>55</sup> Chancellery of the Governor General (Circular letter as in footnote 21), and *Encyclopædia Judaica*, Berlin 1928, vol. 1, 'Agudas Yisroel'.

<sup>56</sup> Chancellery of the Governor General (Circular letter as in footnote 21).



organisations of this type were introduced to fight against tendencies of secularization among Jews around 1870.<sup>57</sup> The statutes of the *Sblome Emune Yisroel* were proposed for confirmation to the General Governor in the summer of 1913. It could not be established whether or not the General Governor finally approved the statutes before the outbreak of the World War.

The development of the orthodox political strategies in occupied Poland has been studied in depth by more than one scholar.<sup>58</sup> The German occupation during World War One allowed the *Gerer Hasidim* to significantly expand their influence among Polish Jewry. Unintentionally assisted by two German-Jewish advisors to the military administration, Pinchas Kohn and Emanuel Carlebach, the Gerer Hasidim were allowed to found the representative body of Polish orthodoxy, the *Agudas Ho-ortodoxim*. The president of this association was no other but Joel Wegmeister. Contrasting our knowledge about the far reaching influence of the Gerer Rebbe in general and the significant power of his faithful follower Joel Wegmeister in Warsaw in particular, it seems that the influence of the German rabbis on Polish Jewry has been overrated. It rather seems that they were not aware to what degree the Hasidim of Ger were able to take advantage of the German Rabbi's standing within the German military administration to expand their own position. Reading the letters by Emanuel Carlebach sent to his wife from Warsaw to Cologne between 1916 and 1918 one cannot but admire the skill with which the Gerer Hasidim prevented Carlebach and Kohn to get in close contact with other Jewish milieus than theirs.<sup>59</sup> Carlebach arrived in January 1916 and gets invited to the home of the Gerer Rebbe himself: "You cannot imagine the wealth of Tora learning, the extent of *kedusha* [pious atmosphere, FG] and knowledge that were gathered in the Rebbe's refuge. (...) All we rabbis danced for half an hour, the beautiful cantor held one of my hands, the Gerer Rebbe the other (...) An unforgettable experience indeed."<sup>60</sup> Several times, he is guest in the house of the brother of the Rebbe<sup>61</sup> and gets invited to the homes of numerous of his followers,<sup>62</sup> among them Joel Wegmeister. Carlebach is deeply impressed by the splendour and spiritual wealth of the evenings spent in the Rebbe's house

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<sup>57</sup> Guesnet, *Polnische Juden* (cf. fn. 5), 279 f.

<sup>58</sup> Further to the studies mentioned in footnote 51 see Egmont Zechlin, *Die deutsche Politik und die Juden im Ersten Weltkrieg*, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1969) and Mordehai Breuer, "Rabanim-doktorim bepolin-lita byame ha-khivush ha-germani 1914-18", *Bar Ilan* 24-25 (1989): 117-153.

<sup>59</sup> Alexander Carlebach, "A German Rabbi Goes East", *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* VI (1961): 60-121.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 71, 89.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

as well as in Wegmeister's home.<sup>63</sup> Carlebach's description of one of these evenings portrays Joel Wegmeister in a very positive way: "We will be guests of Joel Wegmeister until Sunday. It is marvellous how we get spoiled here, how splendidly the meals are prepared even on the days without meat (for our sake, I guess), and how everybody is pleased with us and shows it. It would require much time to describe the nobleness, the wealth, the Jewishness and the solemnity of the Sabbath meal (...) Wegmeister himself is a beautiful *lamdom* (learned person, FG), thus the conversation never turns dreary; for sure I never had more grateful and understanding listeners for my Tora."<sup>64</sup> On the other side, Carlebach is much less pleased with the maskilic notables of Warsaw and does not accept their invitations.<sup>65</sup> He devotes much of his time for the introduction of religious schools for Jewish girls from indigent families, which at that time still interfered with Hasidic concepts of learning. After the Gerer Rebbe sent a delegation insisting on the traditional training methods, he quickly abandons his ambitious projects and limits himself to one school for Jewish girls.<sup>66</sup> A seemingly insignificant fact illustrates the degree of influence exerted by the Gerer Rebbe on the *rabanim-doktorim*. As the Hasidic leader does not accept the fact that a woman is doing the cooking for the German rabbis, Carlebach fires her. Not surprisingly, the new cook had his previous position in the Gerer Rebbe's house.<sup>67</sup> In July 1916, the German administration approves the *Agudas Ho-orthodoxim* under the leadership of Joel Wegmeister. At moment of its founding, the *Aguda* counts already two thousand members. When Gershon Bacon describes the importance of the German rabbis as "helping organize the official founding conference" of the *Agudas Ho-ortodoksım* in Warsaw, he is probably quite close to the truth.<sup>68</sup>

With the so-called Polenproklamation (5 November 1916), defining Polish independence as one of the German war objectives, the German government hoped to win over Polish public opinion.<sup>69</sup> Shortly after, it nominated the members of a State Council. Among them and suggested by Carlebach, Joel Wegmeister is one out of three Jewish representatives. The others were Kazimierz Natanson from Warsaw, an integrationist, and

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 86.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 92.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 78.

<sup>66</sup> Ibidem, *passim*. This negative attitude should change after World War One, which sees growing support for Jewish girls' religious education among Hasidic leaders; see Agnieszka Oleszak, "The Beit Ya'akov School in Kraków as an Encounter between East and West", *Polin. Studies in Polish Jewry vol. 23: Jews in Kraków*, (Oxford, Portland, Or.: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2010); 277-290, 279.

<sup>67</sup> Carlebach, "A German Rabbi", 80.

<sup>68</sup> Bacon, *Politics of Tradition*, 37.

<sup>69</sup> Zechlin, *Deutsche Politik*, 205-220.

Mojżesz Pfeffer from Kielce, another Hasidic civil leader. Soon after, the *Varschoyer Tagblatt*, a newspaper of national-autonomist tendency, is closed. A German Zionist newspaper accused the Gerer Hasidim of inspiring the ban. This seems plausible, as the German administration handed over the license to publish a newspaper to the Gerer Hasidim, who from then on published *Das yidische vort*.<sup>70</sup>

Even if Carlebach himself supposes to be the inspirer of some political steps taken by Wegmeister and others, we do have reason to consider the political traditions of Polish Jewish orthodoxy as well to be the source of these measures. In January 1917, Wegmeister and a representative of the Warsaw rabbinate sent a declaration of loyalty to the Crown marshal. Wegmeister writes: “We expect with good hope that following to the best and brightest examples of the Polish past all measures of the State council will express the feeling of justice and that wisdom in stateguidance, which allow us and our children to serve the God of our fathers in the way we consider holy.”<sup>71</sup> The wording in this letter may seem surprisingly assertive. The authors do not ask for favours or mercy, they ask for respect: respect of the law and respect of their dignity as Jews. This emphasis on the secure status granted to Jews in Poland is, however, characteristic or a specific political tradition of Polish Jewry.<sup>72</sup>

## Conclusion

The encounter of Jews with modernity and metropolis offers unique features in each case we investigate. In the case of Warsaw, the community grew very rapidly throughout the 19th century and had to adjust to the institutional needs of a large number of members very quickly. With a less well established and thus weaker institutional core, the community board mustered less authority over its constituency, or, to put it differently, the community board disposed of less political legitimacy than in the case of older communities. As a consequence, the diverse religious and cultural identifications in the community developed a higher degree of independence, the community was more compartmentalized. There is no doubt that the vast majority of the community was observant, but this in itself constitutes only a partial

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 217, and *Jüdische Rundschau*, 3 May 1918, n. 18, as in footnote 44, and Grill, *Politicization*, passim.

<sup>71</sup> Carlebach, “A German Rabbi”, 107-08.

<sup>72</sup> It is amazing to compare the wording of this letter to a protest, voiced by a group of Jewish orthodox house owners from Warsaw in 1855 in matters of the community election system, see Guesnet, *Polnische Juden*, 407, and François Guesnet, “Political Culture of Polish Jewry: A Tour d’Horizon”, *Report of the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies* (2007-2008), 61-76.

description of religious or cultural loyalties, as the rift between *Misnagdim* on the one side and various Hasidic communities on the other side created a complex landscape of observance. The integrationists struggled to maintain their influence in the later decades of the 19th century and the early 20th century, but nonetheless established quite stable clusters with congregations, educational and charitable institutions, publications, and informal networks, just as the ever growing number of Jews from within the Russian Empire did. Political clout depended on a strategic and efficient use of the evolving legal and administrative framework, and on a strong demographic basis. Based on the description of one influential individual, Joel Wegmeister, this contribution contends that among the various cultural and religious identifications among Warsaw Jews, the Gerer Hasidim proved highly skilful in taking advantage of the institutional void resulting from the inadequacy of communal institutions confronted with a rapid demographic growth. It would be inadequate to describe this strategy in terms of a more or less rigid attitude towards processes of societal or cultural modernization. As has been shown, the communal ethos demonstrated by Wegmeister and others allowed for a very modern institution like a new hospital to be run, despite financial constraints. In return, the ubiquitous Joel Wegmeister would very efficiently expand the political reach of his community. It was in the two decades before World War One that the basis of the lasting impact of observant culture and politics in the interwar period was established.

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**Stephen S. Wise and the Urban Frontier:  
American Jewish Life in New York and the Pacific Northwest at  
the Dawn of the 20th Century**

by Mark A. Raider

**Abstract**

*The case of Stephen S. Wise provides a lens through which to examine American Jewry's transformation at the dawn of the 20th century. Not only were New York City and Portland, Oregon – places Wise called home – two geographic poles of America's urban frontier, they also highlight a spectrum of possibilities available to the New World's fledgling Jewish community. Viewed in tandem, they illustrate American society's raw, open, and pliable terrain as it emerged from a rural pre-industrial past. Moreover, by placing Wise in the context of the metropolitan growth that reshaped the Atlantic and Pacific frontiers in the late 19th century, we gain a better understanding of the relationship between the country's dynamic environmental conditions and the phenomenon of Jewish immigrant absorption, acculturation, and Americanization.*

*In withdrawing to the wilderness, Wise exposed himself to new possibilities for thinking about the place of Jews in American society and the future of American Judaism. He also honed the role of which he was to become a superlative exemplar – a 20th-century American rabbi at home in the worlds of religion and politics. Furthermore, his synthesis of liberal Judaism, American pluralism, Zionism, and Progressive-era notions of social justice anticipated the rise of a new American Jewish sensibility that would become normative in the 20th century.<sup>1</sup>*

Stephen S. Wise was arguably one of the two or three most important American Jewish leaders of the 20th century. He was brought from Budapest to the United States as a young child and grew up in the bustling metropolis of late 19th-century New York. He came to maturity in the years that marked America's shift from the Gilded Age to the Progressive Era. This was a period that witnessed the explosive power of industrialization and urbanization as well as waves of mass European

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<sup>1</sup> This article is dedicated to the memory of Saadia Gelb (1913-2010), a Habonim and Haganah activist, founder of Kibbutz Kfar Blum, and kibbutz movement leader. In 1946, before settling in Palestine, Gelb received his rabbinic ordination from Stephen S. Wise's Jewish Institute of Religion. I would also like to thank Drs. Michael A. Meyer, Jonathan D. Sarna, and Robert M. Seltzer for reading drafts of this essay and offering many valuable and constructive suggestions.

migration to the United States, forces that radically reshaped American society and transformed American Jewry. Formerly, only a handful of Jewish communities of any considerable size could be found on North American soil. Now, in the turbulent decades that spanned the 19th and 20th centuries, what had previously been an outpost of the global Jewish diaspora emerged as a vital, distinctive, and powerful new center of Jewish life. In the post-Civil War era, a talented and determined cohort of German-speaking central European Jewish immigrants established a foothold in New York City, supplanted the remnants of the extant local Sephardi Jewish community dating back to the colonial era, and arose as American Jewry's new wealthy and influential vanguard.<sup>2</sup> For a brief period, roughly from the 1870s through World War I, much of the tenor and infrastructure of American Jewish scene was stamped by this central European Jewish sensibility, even as modern Jewish history's vast and dynamic social, cultural, and geographic landscape continued to shift and change.<sup>3</sup>

The case of Stephen S. Wise provides a lens through which to examine American Jewry's transformation at the dawn of the 20th century. Not only were New York City and Portland, Oregon – places Wise called home – two geographic poles of America's urban frontier, they also highlight a spectrum of possibilities available to the New World's fledgling Jewish community. Viewed in tandem, they illustrate American society's raw, open, and pliable terrain as it emerged from a rural pre-industrial past. Moreover, by placing Wise in the context of the metropolitan growth that reshaped the Atlantic and Pacific frontiers in the late 19th century, we gain a better understanding of the relationship between the country's dynamic environmental conditions and the phenomenon of Jewish immigrant absorption, acculturation, and Americanization.

Wise's formative years also unfold against the backdrop of his courtship of Louise Waterman, a New York Jewish heiress of central European ancestry from a distinguished liberal family. Stephen and Louise met in 1898 and were engaged shortly thereafter. In the meanwhile, Wise was approached by Portland's Congregation Beth Israel and offered its pulpit. In 1899 Stephen and Louise opted to delay their wedding until

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<sup>2</sup> There is a vast literature on the "German period" in American Jewish history. For useful studies of the context noted here see Naomi W. Cohen, *Encounter With Emancipation: The German Jews in the United States, 1830-1914*, (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1984); Barry Supple, "A Business Elite: German-Jewish Financiers in 19th-Century New York", in *The American Jewish Experience*, ed. Jonathan D. Sarna, (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1997), 99-112.

<sup>3</sup> See Ezra Mendelsohn, *On Modern Jewish Politics*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

reaching a decision about whether or not to leave New York. When in 1900, on the eve of their marriage, Wise left the eastern seaboard for Portland in advance of Louise, he had only a vague idea of what awaited them in the Pacific Northwest. He traveled as far away as he could (literally and figuratively) on a journey of personal, professional, and spiritual discovery. Louise soon followed and assumed the role of the rabbi's devoted wife and close confidant, and they started to raise a family of their own.

In withdrawing to the wilderness, Wise exposed himself to new possibilities for thinking about the place of Jews in American society and the future of American Judaism. He also honed the role of which he was to become a superlative exemplar – a 20th-century American rabbi at home in the worlds of religion and politics. Furthermore, his synthesis of liberal Judaism, American pluralism, Zionism, and Progressive-era notions of social justice anticipated the rise of a new American Jewish sensibility that would become normative in the 20th century. This development can be traced to the *fin-de-siècle* and the intersection of America's burgeoning urban scene, the displacement of America's central European Jewish elite by eastern European Jewry, and Wise's considerable reservoir of energy, talent, and ego.

### Early Years

The Wise family's pre-America history can be traced to 18th-century Hungary. Stephen's father, Aaron (Weisz) Wise (1844-1896), was descended from a distinguished line of Hungarian rabbis, and his grandfather, Josef Hirsch Weisz (1800-1881), was chief rabbi of Erlau (also known as Eger), a small town near Budapest. His mother, Sabine (Farkashazy) de Fischer (1838-1917), was previously married to Ignac Totvarosi Fischer, with whom she had two children, Emil and Vilma. After Fischer's death, Sabine married Aaron in 1870, a union that produced Otto (1871-1919) and Stephen (1874-1949).<sup>4</sup> In 1875, the Weiszs quit Budapest, Hungary's capital, and emigrated to the United States with their four children. They left behind a Jewish community some 70,000 strong and which, at the time, was split between fractious traditionalists and non-observant reformers.<sup>5</sup> Armed with rabbinic

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<sup>4</sup> The *New York Times* announcement about Aaron Wise's death indicates he and Sabine de Fischer (Farkashazy), the widow of Ignac Totvarosi Fischer, were married in 1864, but this appears to be an error. See "Rabbi Aaron Wise Dead", *New York Times*, March 31, 1896, 1.

<sup>5</sup> Karl Baedeker, *Southern Germany and Austria, including Hungary, Dalmatia and Bosnia*, (London: Dulau, 1891), 340; Jacob Katz, *A House Divided: Orthodoxy and Schism in Nineteenth-Century Central European Jewry*, (Hanover: Brandeis University Press, 1998), 220-221.

training and a doctorate from the University of Halle-Wittenberg, Aaron, upon arriving in America, changed the spelling of the family name to “Wise.” He initially assumed the post of rabbi of Congregation Beth Israel, an Orthodox community in Brooklyn, New York. A year later, he assumed the pulpit of Congregation Rodeph Sholom, an Orthodox synagogue located on the Lower East Side of Manhattan.

Young Stephen grew up in a world where memories of the American Civil War were still fresh and New York’s urban landscape was undergoing rapid change. The Jewish community of Wise’s childhood numbered roughly 18,000 while the city’s overall population grew between 1870 and 1880 from roughly 940,000 to over 1.2 million.<sup>6</sup> Raised in a traditionalist environment, Wise’s early years were shaped by what he called “the Lexington Avenue, rather than the Park Avenue, ghetto of German-born and German-descended Jews of New York.”<sup>7</sup> His neighborhood included a mix of ethnic groups of varying social and economic status. The area’s townhouses, mostly brownstones, were home to respectable middle-class families like the Wises, while more affluent families resided in the stately households of the Murray Hill district, located between Lexington and Park Avenues. The wealthiest New Yorkers of this period built splendid mansions along Fifth Avenue.<sup>8</sup> As a child, Wise took a keen interest in the colorful secular world around him. His autobiography opens with lively and rich descriptions of “civic affairs,” beginning with the Hancock-Garfield and Cleveland-Blaine presidential contests of, respectively, 1880 and 1884, and the rough-and-tumble of municipal politics.<sup>9</sup>

Immigration was an especially powerful force in the New York setting of Wise’s youth. “Night after night as a child,” Wise recalled in his memoir, “I heard from my father’s lips the tale of cureless suffering inflicted on [the Jews of eastern Europe]... the unhappy exiles who were then landing at Castle Garden...”<sup>10</sup> Between 1880 and 1890, New York’s population grew to over 1.5 million residents, and by 1900 this number had surged

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<sup>6</sup> Campbell Gibson, *Population of the 100 Largest Cities and Other Urban Places in the United States: 1790 to 1990*, (Washington, DC: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1998), see: Table 10. Population of the 100 Largest Urban Places: 1870 (<http://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0027/tab10.txt>) and Table 11. Population of the 100 Largest Urban Places: 1880 (<http://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0027/tab11.txt>).

<sup>7</sup> Stephen S. Wise, *Challenging Years: The Autobiography of Stephen Wise* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1949), 26-27.

<sup>8</sup> Norval White, Elliot Willensky, Fran Leadon, *ALA Guide to New York City*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 279-280; Edwin G. Burrows, Mike Wallace, *Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 959-960.

<sup>9</sup> Wise, *Challenging Years*, 3-7.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, xxiii.



to over 3.4 million.<sup>11</sup> In tandem, waves of eastern European Jewish immigration rocked the local Jewish community and the wider American Jewish scene. A combination of push and pull factors – anti-Jewish hostility in tsarist Russia, particularly the pogroms of 1881-82 and 1903-05, and the attraction of economic opportunity in the Golden Land – prompted some 2.5 million Jews to flee eastern Europe for the haven and opportunity of the United States.<sup>12</sup> As a result, American Jewry grew by a stunning 300 percent in just a couple decades. The late-19th century American Jewish community of approximately 230,000 souls (or .5 percent of the total American population) quadrupled to 938,000 in the late 1880s (or 1.3 percent of the population). This number would double yet again in the coming decade, reaching 1,777,000 (or approximately 2 percent of the American population) by the close of the century. In parallel, New York’s Jewish community grew to an unprecedented 417,000 strong. The net result was that it swiftly rivaled and then exceeded the six most populous Jewish centers in Europe. By 1900 New York’s Jewish community was twice the size of Warsaw (219,128), and three and four times larger than Budapest (166,198), Vienna (146,926), Odessa (138,935), Lodz (96,671) and Berlin (92,206).<sup>13</sup>

Despite these seismic changes, young Stephen had curiously little contact with or understanding of the Yiddish-speaking immigrant milieu until he reached adulthood. “I have always regretted and have been not a little ashamed,” he would later write, “that I barely knew or even touched the life of... the eastern European Jews... My contacts with these as a child and youth were few and limited, though I came to know their children in connection with the work of the Hebrew Free School Association and the Educational Alliance... My personal relationships with Jews had been largely limited... to the middle-class ghetto of New York.”<sup>14</sup> Protected by the comforts and relative insularity of the central European Jewish orbit, Wise was deeply influenced by Rodeph Sholom’s traditionalist German-speaking Jewish culture.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Campbell Gibson, *Population of the 100 Largest Cities and Other Urban Places in the United States: 1790 to 1990*, (Washington, DC: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1998), see: Table 12. Population of the 100 Largest Urban Places: 1890 (<http://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0027/tab12.txt>) and Table 13. Population of the 100 Largest Urban Places: 1900 (<http://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0027/tab13.txt>).

<sup>12</sup> Jonathan D. Sarna, *American Judaism: A History*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 151-152.

<sup>13</sup> Data compiled from (1) Nathan Goldberg, “The Jewish Population in the United States”, *The Jewish People Past and Present*, vol. 2 (New York: Central Yiddish Culture Organization, 1948), 25; (2) *American Jewish Year Book*, vol. 1 (1899), 283-284; and (3) *The Jew in the Modern World: A Documentary History*, eds. Paul Mendes-Flohr, Jehuda Reinharz, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 884.

<sup>14</sup> Wise, *Challenging Years*, 27.

<sup>15</sup> Letter of Stephen S. Wise to Benjamin Blumenthal, November 24, 1896, in *Stephen S. Wise: Servant of the People*, ed. Carl Hermann Voss, (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication

Wise was clearly the product of a new American reality, one in which the forces of modernity reached into every corner of Jewish life, giving rise to new non-traditional and secular forms of Jewish expression.<sup>16</sup> While it is clear he felt a strong sense of privilege and responsibility when it came to the rabbinic mantle of his forebears, he was also comfortable with different streams of Judaism from a very young age. His personal growth coincided with Rodeph Sholom's gradual shift in the 1870s and 1880s away from Orthodoxy and toward Reform Judaism. This was an incremental process rather than an abrupt break, and even after Rodeph Sholom formally joined the Union of American Hebrew Congregations it remained one of several synagogue affiliates that were "quite traditional in character."<sup>17</sup> Meanwhile, Wise, who in 1890 entered City College at age 15, shortly thereafter commenced his rabbinic studies under the Talmud scholar Alexander Kohut and Reform theologian Gustav Gottheil, two distinguished scholar-rabbis shaped by liberal Judaism and Wissenschaft des Judentums in 19th-century central Europe. By the spring 1893, the precocious young Wise – not yet ordained – was installed as "assistant preacher" to Henry F. Jacobs of Congregation Bnai Jeshurun (also known as the Madison Avenue Synagogue), one of New York City's leading synagogues.<sup>18</sup>

Like Rodeph Sholom, Bnai Jeshurun's institutional culture was shaped by the late-19th century intracommunal debate over tradition and modernity. In 1884 Bnai Jeshurun abandoned the Reform movement and in 1889, like dozens of other congregations in this period, it published its own prayer book.<sup>19</sup> Shortly after Wise assumed his post at Bnai Jeshurun, he considered finishing his rabbinic studies at Hebrew Union College (HUC) in Cincinnati. He even corresponded with Isaac Mayer Wise, HUC's venerable founder and first president, who encouraged him. Studying at HUC would have been a natural step for Wise. It was the path followed by most of his native-born and immigrant

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Society, 1970), 6.

<sup>16</sup> Lucy S. Dawidowicz, *On Equal Terms: Jews in America, 1881-1981*, (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1982), chs. 2-3; Irving Howe, *World of Our Fathers: The Journey of the East European Jews to America and the Life They Found and Made*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1976), 101-118, 225-235.

<sup>17</sup> Michael A. Meyer, "A Centennial History", in *Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion at One Hundred Years*, ed. Samuel E. Karff, (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1976), 39; Jeffrey S. Gurock, "The Winnowing of American Orthodoxy", in *American Jewish History*, ed. Jeffrey S. Gurock, (New York: Routledge, 1998), 1148-1151. Aaron Wise is listed a member of the Central Conference of American Rabbis in 1895; see *Year Book of the Central Conference of American Rabbis*, vol. 6 (1895), 149. Stephen S. Wise is first listed as a CCAR member in 1896; see *Year Book of the Central Conference of American Rabbis*, vol. 7 (1896), 177.

<sup>18</sup> *Servant of the People*, ed. Voss, 6.

<sup>19</sup> Gary P. Zola, *The Americanization of the Jewish Prayer Book and the Liturgical Development of Congregation Abanath Chesed, New York City*, (New York: Central Synagogue, 2008), 9.

peers, including Samuel Goldenson, Maximilian Heller, and Judah L. Magnes. (In time, they too emerged as major Jewish public figures. Goldenson and Heller would each serve as president of the Central Conference of American Rabbis and Magnes would become the founding chancellor of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.)<sup>20</sup> These young men and others simultaneously pursued rabbinic training at HUC while studying for their baccalaureate degrees at the University of Cincinnati. By contrast, in a striking display of Wise's maverick spirit, he decided against Cincinnati, a place he later asserted "offered its students an inadequate experimental station" and had "ceased to be the large and vital Jewish center it had been in [its] earliest days."<sup>21</sup> If he was going to leave New York even temporarily, he explained, he would do so "with a view to obtaining a *hatarah* (authorization as rabbi) [sic] from some European scholar."<sup>22</sup>

That European scholar-rabbi proved to be Vienna's renowned preacher, Adolph Jellinek. Jellinek's liberal outlook, engagement in Jewish-Christian dialogue, and talents as an institution builder all bear a striking resemblance to Wise's trajectory. The older man's impact on Wise is, however, hard to define, especially when one considers that Wise spent only the summer of 1893 in Vienna. Moreover, the difference between Jellinek's rejection of the idea of Jewish nationhood and Wise's proto-Zionism is stark. What does seem plausible is that Wise's exposure to Jellinek influenced his developing interest in the nexus between liberal Judaism and the craft of Jewish preaching, particularly the model of edifying sermons that combined secular and religious themes. In an abstract sense, Wise seems to have been receptive to Jellinek's embrace of Jewry's diasporic condition *and* insistence on the Jewish people's "distinctiveness" and possession of special "*Stammeseigenthümlichkeiten*" (ethical qualities).<sup>23</sup> This sensibility certainly meshed with Wise's dual attraction to *klal yisrael*, the traditional Jewish notion that "all Israel is one," and Reform Judaism's social justice mission. Wise later claimed to

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<sup>20</sup> For a discussion of the atmosphere at Hebrew Union College in this period, see Daniel P. Kotzin, *Judah L. Magnes: An American Jewish Nonconformist*, (Syracus: Syracuse University Press, 2010), ch. 2. See also *Reform Judaism in America: A Biographical Dictionary and Sourcebook*, eds. Kerry M. Olitzky, Lance J. Sussman, Malcolm H. Stern, (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1993), 72-74, 86-87, 135-137.

<sup>21</sup> Wise, *Challenging Years*, 130.

<sup>22</sup> "Congregation B'ne Jeshurun", *American Hebrew*, 1893, 825, 5/9, Stephen S. Wise Papers, MS-49, The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio [hereafter "Wise Papers"].

<sup>23</sup> Marsha L. Rozenblit, *Reconstructing a National Identity: The Jews of Habsburg Austria during World War 1*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 34-35; Marsha L. Rozenblit, "Jewish Identity and the Modern Rabbi: The Cases of Isak Noa Mannheimer, Adolph Jellinek, and Moritz Gudemann in Nineteenth-Century Vienna", *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 35 (1990), 103-131.

have been ordained by Jellinek. This account is consistent with the rationale he offered prior to his European sojourn, although the various accounts of Wise's rabbinic training are vague. If the extent of Jellinek's tutelage remains unclear, the matter seems not to have posed a problem in Wise's lifetime.<sup>24</sup> It is ironic that Wise's uncertain credentials place him in the company of Isaac Mayer Wise, arguably the 19th century's most significant American Jewish leader, whose rabbinic training and ordination is likewise enveloped in mystery. In America, with its longstanding culture of self-invention, individual talent and force of personality were important traits in the success of both "self-made" ministers.<sup>25</sup>

In the fall 1893, Wise's rabbinic career took an unexpected turn when Jacobs suddenly died. Shortly thereafter, Wise was elevated to the position of senior minister. There was apparently no concern about his ordination or abilities. At age 20, though still relatively unknown, he was now the spiritual leader of one of New York Jewry's flagship institutions. In short order, owing to his considerable oratorical and organizational skills, he developed a strong rapport with his congregation. He also began to establish a reputation as an outspoken advocate of rights for women and immigrants. To this end, he supported the creation of Bnai Jeshurun's Sisterhood for Personal Service, a women's group affiliated with a network of likeminded activists at other synagogues.<sup>26</sup> The group in turn opened a religious school and cared for impoverished eastern European Jewish immigrant families on the Lower East Side.

Wise reached another pivotal juncture in 1896, with the death of his father, Aaron Wise. Rodeph Sholom now invited the younger man to take up his late father's pulpit, but he declined, professing it would be impossible to "forsake Bnai Jeshurun who are in every sense become 'my own people.'"<sup>27</sup> Though Wise does not dwell on these years in his memoir and the historical record is sparse, the curious mixture of his traditional upbringing, liberal religious views, and non-conformist attitudes made Wise was something of an iconoclast. His determination

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<sup>24</sup> Interestingly, the biographical entry for Stephen S. Wise in the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, which was published during his years in Portland, makes no mention of his rabbinic training with Jellinek. See "Wise, Stephen Samuel", *Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. 12 (1905), 543.

<sup>25</sup> Jacob Rader Marcus, *United States Jewry, 1776-1985*, vol. 1 (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989), 676; Sefton D. Temkin, *Isaac Mayer Wise: Shaping American Judaism*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 22-24.

<sup>26</sup> Felicia Herman, "From Priestess to Hostess: Sisterhoods of Personal Service in New York City, 1887-1936", in *Women and American Judaism: Historical Perspectives*, (Hanover: Brandeis University Press, 2001), 153.

<sup>27</sup> Letter of Stephen S. Wise to Benjamin Blumenthal, November 24, 1896, in *Servant of the People*, ed. Voss, 6.

to remain at Bnai Jeshurun may also reflect a strong desire to forge his own professional path. He could not imagine returning to Rodeph Sholem, but neither did he squarely adhere squarely to Bnai Jeshurun's proto-Conservative and anti-establishment sensibility. In fact, at this juncture Wise joined the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR), the Reform movement's countrywide rabbinic association and authoritative religious body.<sup>28</sup> On the one hand, his CCAR affiliation was surprising, particularly given his public visibility as the rabbi of a major non-Reform congregation in Manhattan. On the other, viewed in the context of his generational profile Wise's decision might be understood as natural and strategic. As his contemporary Maximilian Heller explained in a private letter: "I don't think that we young rabbis are in any way separated by differences of theological education; the American influences and present-day tasks which are common to us result, in spite of ourselves, in making us feel at one. I am sure, were we two, e.g., to meet, it would not take five minutes for us to find a common level of cordiality."<sup>29</sup> In short, Wise identified generally with the liberal views of Reform Judaism and likely prized the CCAR imprimatur and its elevated sense of rabbinic authority.

In the 19th century, the notion that rabbis should acquire rigorous academic and "scientific" training, with an eye toward modernizing the rabbinic profession as a whole, became a hallmark of central European Judaism.<sup>30</sup> The premium in this regard was carried over to the American setting by German-speaking Jewish immigrants. In the New World, however, attaining a secular education was invariably informed by American opportunities and mores. Among the most salient figures in Wise's development was Thomas Davidson, a charismatic Scottish-American philosopher. Dubbed the "knight errant of the intellectual life" by William James, Davidson was a central figure in the late 19th-century "transatlantic community of discourse" with respect to questions of religion and society, ethical socialism, and Transcendentalism.<sup>31</sup> In 1889, Davidson founded Glenmore in upstate New York, a popular "Summer School for the Cultural Sciences" located in the Adirondacks.<sup>32</sup> An

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<sup>28</sup> Stephen S. Wise is first listed a member of the Central Conference of American Rabbis in 1896; see *Year Book of the Central Conference of American Rabbis*, vol. 7 (1897), 177.

<sup>29</sup> Letter of Maximilian Heller to Stephen S. Wise, December 9, 1896, 3/9, Wise Papers. Ironically, despite their shared Zionist views, Wise and Heller would later become rivals; see Gary P. Zola, "Reform Judaism's Pioneer Zionist: Maximilian Heller", *American Jewish History* 73: 1-4 (September 1983-June 1984), 384-386.

<sup>30</sup> Rozenblitt, "Jewish Identity and the Modern Rabbi," 103.

<sup>31</sup> Michael H. DeArney, "Thomas Davidson's Apeirotheism and its Influence on William James and John Dewey", *Journal of the History of Ideas* 48:4 (October-December 1987), 691-707.

<sup>32</sup> James A. Good, "The Development of Thomas Davidson's Religious and Social

inspirational and eloquent champion of this-worldly social action, Davidson's teachings drew on classical thought, religious sources, and humanism to create a philosophy he called Apeirotheism. For a few weeks each summer in the 1890s, Wise, joined with dozens other young men who resided at or near Glenmore and attended lectures given by scholars drawn from "the faculties of the great universities," including the philosophers William James and John Dewey, the psychological theorist J. Clark Murray, the philologist Max Margolis, and the ethicist Josiah Royce.<sup>33</sup> In sum, while not a place of rigorous study, Glenmore brought together many of the country's best minds. Wise, an eager participant hungry for intellectual and social camaraderie, found the environment intoxicating.<sup>34</sup>

Wise's contact with Davidson continued on the Lower East Side. The older man was something of a celebrity at the People's Institute, an adult education offshoot of Cooper Union that aimed to be "a laboratory for working out the practical problems of democratizing intellectual life," and the Educational Alliance, a vibrant Americanization project sponsored by "uptown" central European Jewish philanthropists.<sup>35</sup> Here Davidson came into close personal contact with New York Jewry's left-leaning eastern European immigrant intellectuals. His efforts garnered the support of Joseph Pulitzer, the publisher of the *New York World*, who was himself a Hungarian Jewish immigrant.<sup>36</sup> With Pulitzer's backing, the People's Institute and the Educational Alliance sponsored Davidson's other major initiative, Breadwinner's College, which aimed to "raise laborers to a higher level of intellectual and spiritual power by exposing

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Thought", *The Autodidact Project* (August 2004), 1, 5  
[www.autodidactproject.org/other.TD.html](http://www.autodidactproject.org/other.TD.html).

<sup>33</sup> "A Course in Culture Science", *New York Times*, July 10, 1892, 17.

<sup>34</sup> "Prolonging Summer Studies: Thomas Davidson's School at Glenmore and its Work", *New York Times*, September 18, 1892. See also: Douglas R. Anderson, "Philosophy as Teaching: James's 'Knight Errant,' Thomas Davidson", *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 18:3 (2004), 239-247; *Memorial of Thomas Davidson, The Wandering Scholar*, ed. William Knight, (Boston: Ginn, 1907), 31.

<sup>35</sup> "If we will but lay aside prejudice and superstition," Davidson asserted, "truth is not so hard find... Every great change in individual and social ideals – and we are on the verge of such a change – begins small... Money is but means, and economic justice can never come till men are just through and through"; "Open Letter from Thomas Davidson to the Class in History and Social Science in the Educational Alliance", May 4, 1899, in Thomas Davidson, *The Education of the Wage-Earners: A Contribution toward the Solution of the Educational Problem of Democracy*, ed. Charles M. Bakewell, (New York: Burt Franklin, 1904), 125-126. See also Tim Lacy, "Fostering Unity Amidst Diversity: The People's Institute and Great Books Idea, 1897-1930" (2008), 2, unpublished paper, [www.bu.edu/historic/conference08/Lacy.pdf](http://www.bu.edu/historic/conference08/Lacy.pdf). My thanks to Dr. Lacy for allowing me to cite this paper.

<sup>36</sup> Pulitzer's relationship with Davidson is explored in James McGrath Morris, *Pulitzer: A Life in Politics, Print, and Power*, (New York: Harper Collins, 2010), 40-42, 243-244, 483-484.

them to the best culture of the ages.”<sup>37</sup> Wise followed Davidson’s efforts closely and, partly as a result, his own attachments to the Educational Alliance deepened. He developed a strong affinity for the lively and left-leaning sensibility of the Yiddish-speaking milieu, including the Zionist preacher Zvi Hirsch Masliansky.<sup>38</sup> Above all, Wise revered Davidson as both a mentor and “Heaven’s own soldier, [who] wielded the sword of the Spirit.”<sup>39</sup> “...Judaism, like all living things, changes as it grows...” Davidson instructed Wise, “while the letter killeth, the spirit keepeth alive.” He called on Wise to “diffuse a twentieth-century Judaism, fitted to meet the needs of the present day.”<sup>40</sup>

Wise’s receptivity to Davidson’s views reflected the younger man’s developing appreciation for the ethical teachings of Christianity and the work of Christian-inspired socialists. “How readily disposed are a number of Jewish teachers, including myself, in this country,” he stated, “to recognize the place of Jesus in Jewish life...”<sup>41</sup> In subsequent decades, he was to articulate this theme most fully in a series of highly controversial sermons about Jesus.<sup>42</sup> At this early juncture, however, his views reflect his growing identification with the social gospel movement, a loose coalition of reform-minded Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish activists who imagined “a future social order based on spiritual ideals heretofore unattained” and envisioned the United States “as a redeemed nation dedicated to a just society for all its citizens.”<sup>43</sup> He was particularly drawn to the hopeful notion that “religious unity” and “the true spirit of fellowship” were “haltingly” gaining ground on the eve of the 20th century. Owing to an array of social, scientific, and industrial advances and innovations, Wise asserted, “the world is coming to believe in the

<sup>37</sup> Good, “The Development of Thomas Davidson’s Religious and Social Thought”, 6.

<sup>38</sup> See: Mark A. Raider, *The Emergence of American Zionism*, (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 14-15; Gary P. Zola, “The People’s Preacher: A Study of the Life and Writings of Zvi Hirsch Masliansky, 1856-1942”, ordination thesis, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, 1982, 36-37, 42-43, 47, 75-77, 92, 98, 106; Moshe D. Sherman, *Orthodox Judaism in America: A Biographical Dictionary and Sourcebook*, (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996), 147-149.

<sup>39</sup> Wise, *Personal Letters*, 74-75.

<sup>40</sup> Letter of Thomas Davidson to Stephen S. Wise, June 7, 1900, in *ibid.*, 74.

<sup>41</sup> Wise, *Personal Letters*, 32.

<sup>42</sup> In a widely publicized 1925 sermon, Wise asserted “Jesus was a great moral leader, whose faith and life are ‘a part of the Jewish possessions and of the very fiber of our Jewish heritage’”; quoted in Marc Saperstein, “Changes in the Modern Sermon”, *Encyclopedia of Judaism*, vol. 5, eds. Jacob Neusner, Alan J. Avery-Peck, William Scott Green, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2004), 2265-2283. See also Melvin I. Urofsky, “Stephen S. Wise and the ‘Jesus Controversy’”, *Midstream* 36:6 (June/July 1980), 36-40; Harold Brackman, “Jesus, Spinoza, and Jewish Modernity”, <http://www.thefreelibrary.com/Jesus,+Spinoza,+and+Jewish+modernity>.

<sup>43</sup> Frank Lambert, *Religion in American Politics: A Short History*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 94; Jeffrey S. Gurock, *American Jewish Orthodoxy in Historical Perspective*, (Hoboken: KTAV Publishing House, 1996), 411, n. 5.

power of fellowship and the value of fraternity.”<sup>44</sup> For Wise, Judaism and Christianity were rooted in compatible ethical systems, and he believed they could be fashioned into a modern American idiom. Asserting his own version of the social gospel, Wise declaimed he would “make [his] religious work a moral force, an ethical compulsion standing for something in civic life, in education, in all things that make for the higher life of the individual and the community alike.”<sup>45</sup>

We now turn to a curious chapter in Wise’s profile, namely the accusation that he plagiarized his doctoral thesis. As with Wise’s rabbinic credentials, the issue is blurred by the haze of time and a sparse historical record. My limited aim here is not to engage in or resolve this controversy, but rather to consider its implications. What is certain is that from 1894 to 1900 Wise pursued his doctorate under Columbia University’s Richard J. Gottheil (the son of Gustav Gottheil), a well known Semitics scholar and Zionist leader. He completed a dissertation, later issued by the Jewish Publication Society of America (JPS) under the title *The Improvement of the Moral Qualities: An Ethical Treatise of the Eleventh Century by Solomon Ibn Gabirol* (1902), which combined a translation and brief analysis of the medieval Andalusian Jewish philosopher’s famous work. Wise’s study utilized a variety of primary and critical materials in Arabic, Syriac, Sanskrit, Hebrew, Latin, German, and English. Such a theoretical and linguistic achievement was, of course, no mean feat. The rub here is the allegation that one of Wise’s tutors, the scholar Henry Gersoni – who worked for JPS as a translator and is known to have been a complex, embittered, and “none-too-reliable” personality – may have improved upon or produced some aspects of the translation Wise later claimed as his own.<sup>46</sup>

There seems little doubt Wise wrote the lengthy introductory essay that accompanies the published dissertation. In fact, it is this component that offers a glimpse of the young man’s emerging *Weltanschauung*. “The doctrine that the world was created by Deity,” Wise explains, “has purely ethical significance... The idea that one man was the progenitor of the whole human race, implies the loftiest humanitarian principles that can be conceived. ...Almost all the narratives of the Bible, and, certainly, a

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<sup>44</sup> Quoted in “Christian Unity Discussed by Eminent Men”, *New York Times*, April 4, 1909, SM4. Wise was the only rabbi among the group of seven prominent New York City religious leaders whose views were solicited by the newspaper. The other six men were Christian ministers.

<sup>45</sup> Wise, *Personal Letters*, 41.

<sup>46</sup> For a discussion of the allegation that Wise plagiarized his doctorate, which rests on assertions by the Hebrew scholar Jacob Kabakoff, see Melvin I. Urofsky, *A Voice That Spoke for Justice: The Life and Times of Stephen S. Wise*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1982), 12-15. See also Jonathan D. Sarna, *JPS: The Americanization of Jewish Culture, 1888-1988*, (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 74, 320, n. 65.



large number of passages in the Pentateuch, the Prophets, and the Hagiographa, are of clear and unmistakable ethical bearing and import...”<sup>47</sup> The connections and distinctions Wise makes here are significant. He esteems God’s awesome power and the authority of Scripture, but emphasizes a this-worldly and humanity-centered understanding of divine will. The oral and written traditions of Judaism, he suggests, commend a life based on goodness and virtue. Next, he points to Gabirol’s “new stand,” which he describes as “an attempt to systematize the principles of ethics, independently of religious dogma or belief...”<sup>48</sup> Wise links Gabirol’s expositions to a rational understanding of individual and collective behavior. Part of Gabirol’s innovation, he suggests, was his capacity to stretch the boundaries of homiletic discourse from within the context of rabbinic tradition. In this manner, Wise argues, despite the opposition of Gabirol’s contemporaries, he enhanced the ideational framework of Jewish life in its evolving temporal context and strengthened the bonds among God’s human creations. It is hard to ignore what seems to be the self-reflective dimension of the foregoing disquisition. Was Wise, in his intellectual and spiritual quest, searching for an authoritative framework to support his own liberal views and activity? In time, of course, he would play an outsized role in challenging and enlarging the edifice of the American rabbinate.

Even if we assume the rumors about Wise’s alleged dishonesty to be false, there nevertheless remains a curious gap between his doctoral performance and his subsequent career trajectory. Beyond the dissertation Wise did not display a penchant for academic work and his Hebrew language skills were known to be weak. Where other rabbis like Solomon Schechter, Mordecai M. Kaplan, and Abba Hillel Silver were scholars, intellectuals, and Hebraists, Wise was a gifted and talented impresario. Moreover, though prolific, thoughtful, and deeply intelligent, he was not an original thinker or systematic theologian. He may have relished the status of “Reverend Dr.,” but he appears to have been ill-fitted to the contemplative life of a scholar. Rather, one historian aptly notes, Wise was “a young man in a hurry.”<sup>49</sup> Perhaps the salient question to be raised – as in the case of Martin Luther King, Jr., who is known to have plagiarized portions of his doctorate – is what this episode might reveal about his psychology. Though we can only speculate, it may be useful to consider the following tentative hypotheses. First, against the backdrop of his Aaron Wise’s advanced degree, Stephen likely viewed

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<sup>47</sup> Stephen S. Wise, *The Improvement of the Moral Qualities: An Ethical Treatise of the Eleventh Century by Solomon Ibn Gabirol, Printed from an Unique Arabic Manuscript, Together with a Translation and an Essay on the Place of Gabirol in the History of the Development of Jewish Ethics*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1902), 1.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 4-5.

<sup>49</sup> Marcus, *United States Jewry*, 676.

attaining a doctorate as a matter of family honor. Second, given the mix of Wise's middle-class upbringing, his ambitious strivings, and American society's general openness, he probably understood intellectual achievement (as opposed to commercial or political success) to be the ticket of entry into the leadership circle to which he aspired. Third, that he sought to burnish his personal status and professional identity with a PhD from an American university was, paradoxically, consistent with realizing German Jewish cultural expectations even as he and other "new" Americans defied the prevailing European view of American Judaism as spiritually and intellectually barren.<sup>50</sup>

Another striking illustration of Wise's maverick predisposition was his decision in 1897 to help launch the Federation of American Zionists (FAZ). Stepping into the limelight, he became the FAZ's secretary and, with Richard J. Gottheil, he served as an American representative to the fledgling Zionist Organization's Vienna-based executive committee.<sup>51</sup> At first blush, Wise's attraction to the Jewish nationalist movement appears quite natural, especially given his family's traditionalist attitudes and his paternal grandmother's immigration to Ottoman Palestine. His earliest memories, he later recalled, included collecting funds at age nine with "a little red tin box, labeled 'Jerusalem.'" In another instance, he was commissioned by the *New York Sun* to write a series of letters from Palestine during a planned (but aborted) 1892 trip.<sup>52</sup> But the politicization of Wise's proto-Zionist views came in 1896, when Theodor Herzl, a Viennese journalist and the founder of modern political Zionism, burst on the scene with his political treatise, *The Jews' State: An Attempt at a Modern Solution of the Jewish Question*. Thereafter, Wise – in stark contrast the prevailing American Jewish sensibility – became an ardent and outspoken Zionist advocate. In 1898 he traveled to the Zionist Congress in Europe where "thrilled and grateful, I caught then a first glimpse of the power and the pride and the nobleness of the Jewish people, which my American upbringing and even service to New York Jewry had not in any degree given me."<sup>53</sup> It was at this juncture that Herzlian Zionism was fully grafted on to Wise's worldview. His expansive view of liberal Judaism and *klal yisrael* now merged with a heightened sense of ethnic national identity.

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<sup>50</sup> Arthur Hertzberg, *The Jews in America: Four Centuries of an Uneasy Encounter*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989), 156-159; Shuly Rubin Schwartz, *The Emergence of Jewish Scholarship in America: The Publication of the Jewish Encyclopedia*, (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1991), 5-8, 168-172.

<sup>51</sup> *American Jewish Year Book*, vol. 1 (1899), 36.

<sup>52</sup> Wise, *Challenging Years*, 39.

<sup>53</sup> Stephen S. Wise, "The Beginning of American Zionism", *Jewish Frontier* (August 1947), 7.

Had Wise contented himself with playing a nominal role in Zionist affairs, his behavior might have seemed a bit quixotic but unremarkable. To be sure, other rabbis from the left and center of American Jewish life were sympathetic to Jewish nationalism, albeit in a muted fashion. What distinguished Wise was the way he openly challenged the dominant anti-Zionist trope of American Jewry's communal and institutional leadership. He not only championed the Zionist cause but emphatically positioned himself as one of Herzl's New World lieutenants.<sup>54</sup> It is hard to overstate the extent to which Wise's brand of Zionism – albeit at odds with much of the Jewish scene around him – anticipated changes in American Jewish culture that would become normative two or three decades hence.<sup>55</sup> In the meanwhile, Zionism at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries was but one of many competing ideas about the Jewish future. Like other cultural and political trends that flourished in this era (e.g., Jewish socialism, territorialism, Yiddishism, diaspora nationalism, and neo-Orthodoxy), the cause of Jewish nationalism gained traction with the waves of eastern European Jewish migration to the United States and was buoyed by communal responses to the pogroms and the gradual implosion of the tsarist Russian empire.<sup>56</sup>

In practical terms, New York City, with its highly concentrated and fast growing Jewish community, provided the scope and inducement for a variety of competing Zionist groups that cut across all social, economic, and religious boundaries and produced an efflorescence of cultural, political, and artistic expression. By 1900, the FAZ, headquartered in Manhattan, claimed to have 8000 members countrywide in 135 affiliated societies. New York City and Brooklyn were themselves home to twenty Zionist societies, including one unaffiliated group.<sup>57</sup> The FAZ, noted observer Charles S. Bernheimer, “contains a goodly number of societies in various cities, with an especially large contingent in New York City. These societies are being made centers of educational effort, particularly among the recent immigrant populations, and may become an important factor in the promotion of local intellectual and religious activity, apart from the Zionist propaganda.”<sup>58</sup> Henrietta Szold, who in 1912 founded

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<sup>54</sup> Shapiro, *A Reform Rabbi in the Progressive Era*, 63-64; Urofsky, *A Voice That Spoke for Justice*, 23-24.

<sup>55</sup> Evyatar Friesel, “The Meaning of Zionism and Its Influence among the American Jewish Religious Movements”, in *Zionism and Religion*, eds. Shmuel Almog, Jehuda Reinharz, Anita Shapira, (Hanover: Brandeis University Press, 1998), 180-181; Jonathan D. Sarna, “Converts to Zionism in the American Reform Movement”, in *ibid.*, 188-203; Zola, “Reform Judaism's Pioneer Zionist”, 378-379.

<sup>56</sup> Jonathan Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics: Socialism, Nationalism, and the Russian Jews, 1862-1917*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 463-464, 473-484.

<sup>57</sup> *American Jewish Year Book*, vol. 2 (1900), 170, 176-177, 183.

<sup>58</sup> Charles S. Bernheimer, “Summary of Jewish Organizations in the United States”, *American Jewish Year Book*, vol. 2 (1900), 499.

the Hadassah Women's Zionist Organization, went a step further and speculated that Zionism's potential as a unifying force portended the rise and future dominance of eastern European Jewry in American Jewish life. "Under its influence," she predicted, "the Russian Jews will give up their separate, somewhat distrustful existence, and the separate institutions... which they are creating by the score in all larger cities... They will use the institutions created by [their central European predecessors] as the stock upon which to engraft their intenser fervor, their broader Jewish scholarship, a more enlightened conception of Jewish ideals, and a more inclusive interest in Jewish world questions."<sup>59</sup>

As Bernheimer's and Szold's observations suggest, Zionism in the United States was characterized early on by the way it appealed to and permeated a broad swath of American Jewry, especially eastern European Jewish immigrants, their offspring, and first-generation Jews. Both a romantic vision of the fledgling Jewish nationalist enterprise in Palestine and a projection of American society as it ought to be, Zionism played a special role in the melding of Jewish and American traditions of cultural innovation, social planning, and imagining the future.<sup>60</sup> Such thinking was reinforced at the regional level by the rapid development of American Jewry's countrywide communal infrastructure. Never before in Jewish history had a host society provided the scope and inducement for so many Jewish communities to arise and expand so swiftly and achieve such dramatic social, economic, and political success. The meteoric growth of Jewish life in New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, and elsewhere demonstrated, in concrete terms, the possibility and practicality of establishing new and modern forms of Jewish expression in the American urban setting. If industry, commerce, and other secular instruments of the New World could be harnessed by America's Jews, why not also by the Jews of Palestine? Against this backdrop, Wise argued, Zionism in its Americanized form, was something of a meta-philosophy to unite American Jews of all persuasions.

### Withdrawal to the Pacific Northwest

In 1898, following his return from the Second Zionist Congress in Basle, Switzerland, Wise undertook an active campaign to "win new recruits for Zionism." "We have a hard, uphill fight for Zionism in this

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<sup>59</sup> Henrietta Szold, "Introductory", in *The Russian Jew in the United States: Studies of Social Conditions in New York, Philadelphia and Chicago, with a Description of Rural Settlements*, ed. Charles S. Bernheimer, (Philadelphia: John C. Winston, 1905), 16-17.

<sup>60</sup> Jonathan D. Sarna, "A Projection of America as It Ought to Be: Zion in the Mind's Eye of American Jews", in *Envisioning Israel: The Changing Ideals and Images of North American Jews*, ed. Allon Gal, (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1996), 41-59; Raider, *The Emergence of American Zionism*, ch. 3.

country,” Wise wrote to Herzl. “The Jewish press is almost unanimous in its opposition, and I am ashamed to state that the fewest of the American Jewish ministers... are lending it any support whatever.”<sup>61</sup> He gave public lectures up and down the eastern seaboard, committed himself to editing a news update about “Zion and Zionism” for the influential English-language weekly, the *American Hebrew*, and served as a correspondent for the Zionist Organization’s German-language organ, *Die Welt*, as well as London’s *Jewish World*.<sup>62</sup> With each step, he further isolated himself from the mainstream of American Jewry.

Against the backdrop of his budding courtship of Louise Waterman, Wise now traveled to the Pacific Northwest as an emissary of the Zionist movement. He benefited particularly from the sympathetic stance of Solomon Hirsch. A generation older than Wise, Hirsch’s rise to prominence in Portland, Oregon, first in wholesale trade and imports, then in manufacturing, and finally in politics, made him one of the region’s most influential figures. He was active in the Republican party and served under President Benjamin Harrison as U.S. minister to the Ottoman Empire from 1889 to 1892. He was also willing to use his contacts to assist the Zionist Organization.<sup>63</sup>

It is important to point out that until the establishment of railway transport between Seattle and points east in the 1890s, Portland, located at the confluence of the Willamette and Columbia Rivers, served as America’s northwest’s maritime hub. The small city, “a unique combination of the inland town and the seaport,” retained much of its frontier village character well into the early 20th century.”<sup>64</sup> Known as “mudtown” and “stumptown” owing to its unpaved roads and the remains of trees left in the wake of rapid municipal development, “iron-shod horses clattered along [Portland’s streets] at a good speed with light wagons and buggies.”<sup>65</sup> At the same time, according to the Oregon chronicler and Methodist minister H.K. Hines, the city was fast becoming a “a great commercial emporium.” He noted the “long rows of stores and hotels, rising six or ten stories, of massive form and splendid architecture... the ceaseless stream of comers and goers, the flashing of hundreds of electric cars... the ceaseless roar of business...”<sup>66</sup> In short,

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<sup>61</sup> Letter of Stephen S. Wise to Theodor Herzl, June 26, 1898, in *Servant of the People*, ed. Voss, 6.

<sup>62</sup> Letter of Stephen S. Wise to Theodor Herzl, October 26, 1898, in *ibid.*, 8-9.

<sup>63</sup> Joseph Gaston, *Portland, Oregon, its History and Builders: In Connection with the Antecedent Explorations, Discoveries, and Movements of the Pioneers that Selected the Site for the Great City of the Pacific*, vol. 2 (Chicago: S.J. Clarke, 1911), 144-149.

<sup>64</sup> E. Kimbark MacColl, *The Shaping of a City: Business and Politics in Portland, Oregon, 1885 to 1915*, (Portland, OR: Georgian Press, 1976), 224.

<sup>65</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, 222.

<sup>66</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, 4.

Portland as a whole contrasted starkly with the infrastructure and fixed social hierarchies of the eastern seaboard.

The 1890 U.S. census noted that Portland's population was "nearly an even 70,000 inhabitants."<sup>67</sup> Oregon's total Jewish population in this period was estimated at 4500 to 5500, while Portland itself was home to perhaps 500 or more Jews.<sup>68</sup> The cultural context, social status, and dynamic situation of Portland Jewry was not lost on Wise. Largely devoid of the divisions and tensions that accompanied rapid industrialization in other cities, Portland's financial and commercial scene benefited "the persistent power of the merchant class," including a small cohort of elite Jewish figures.<sup>69</sup> By the 1890s, the Fleischners, Lowengarts, Sellings, and other successful entrepreneurs of central European ancestry grouped around Solomon Hirsch had emerged as the local Jewish establishment, insiders who negotiated and defined the social and economic relations between Jew and gentile in the Pacific Northwest. The Jewish community also produced a handful of notable politicians, including Bernard Goldsmith and Philip Wasserman, "worthy" central European immigrants of "business ability" and "energetic character."<sup>70</sup> That Goldsmith was a conservative Democrat and Wasserman a liberal Republican illustrates the relatively moderate political profile of Oregon's Jews. This is also evident in the case of Joseph Simon, who became one of the region's most powerful lawyers, real estate speculators, and politicians.<sup>71</sup> Like his gentile law partner Joseph N. Dolph, Simon was among "the foremost Republican leaders of the state," and in 1898 he was elected to the U.S. senate, where he served as chairman of the Committee on Irrigation and Reclamation of Arid Lands in the 56th and 57th U.S. Congresses.<sup>72</sup> In this capacity, Simon presided over the federal appropriation of Indian tribal lands and the expansion of the railways into the Pacific Northwest, including legislation "by which railroad companies could receive blanket approval from the secretary of the interior for rights-of-way through Indian lands."<sup>73</sup> The net result was the

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<sup>67</sup> Reported in "Three Cities in One", *New York Times*, June 14, 1891, 12.

<sup>68</sup> "Statistical Summary by States", *American Jewish Year Book*, vol. 3 (1901), 147; "Table 2. Jewish Population of Selected Western Towns, 1880", in *Jews of the Pacific Coast: Reinventing Community on America's Edge*, eds. Ellen Eisenberg, Ava F. Kahn William Toll, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009), 59.

<sup>69</sup> William Toll, *The Making of an Ethnic Middle Class: Portland Jewry over Four Generations*, (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1982), 88.

<sup>70</sup> H.W. Scott, *History of Portland, Oregon with Illustrations and Biographical Sketches of Prominent Citizens and Pioneers*, (Syracuse: D. Mason, 1890), 196.

<sup>71</sup> Toll, *The Making of an Ethnic Middle Class*, 85-86.

<sup>72</sup> Scott, *History of Portland*, 199-200.

<sup>73</sup> Robert H. Ruby and John A. Brown, *Indians of the Pacific Northwest*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988), 263. See also: 25 USC chapter 8, "Rights-of-Way Through Indian Lands", <http://uscode.house.gov/download/pls/25C8.txt>.

realization of decades of efforts by the U.S. government, the railroad industry, and various business and legal interests to disenfranchise the region's native American population and complete the area's transportation system. Like the gentile "frontier merchants who laid the business-political foundations of late 19th-century Portland," the city's Jewish elite stood to benefit considerably from these developments.<sup>74</sup>

Despite their economic and political achievements, Portland's Jewish "plutocrats" remained parvenus in a Christian milieu.<sup>75</sup> Talented entrepreneurs, businessmen, and civic leaders, their successes brought them public approbation, but not social acceptance.<sup>76</sup> A useful illustration in this regard was the Arlington Club, created shortly after the Civil War as a "social club" for the WASP upper crust to "fraternize for mutual enjoyment and relation and to provide a meeting place for discussing their own and Portland's destiny." Jews could not join this "prestigious men's club" until nearly a century later. Meanwhile, they created the Concordia Club, established in 1879 as a German Jewish gentlemen's "counterpart to the gentile Arlington Club."<sup>77</sup> Nonetheless, anti-Jewish hostility in the Pacific Northwest was far less potent than other parts of the country.<sup>78</sup>

The Jewish community's foothold in Portland, combined with the Oregon's open social and economic environment, helped to attract eastern European Yiddish-speaking immigrants at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. The newcomers, many of whom were dispersed to the Northwest by the Baron de Hirsch Fund's Industrial Removal Office and supported by the Hebrew Sheltering and Immigrant Aid Society, were totally unlike their central European predecessors.<sup>79</sup> A low-level clash of cultures ensued between Jews of central European ancestry, acculturated, refined, and largely settled in Portland for at least a generation, and the new Yiddish-speaking arrivals. In all, Portland Jewry grew rapidly, absorbing wave after wave of newcomers in little over a decade, until by 1905 the community numbered approximately 4000 persons.<sup>80</sup> On the whole, unlike New York, Philadelphia, and Chicago and other eastern metropolitan centers, where intra-ethnic tensions ran

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<sup>74</sup> MacColl, *The Shaping of a City*, 32.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>76</sup> Eric L. Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness: Jews, Race, and American Diversity*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 48-50.

<sup>77</sup> E. Kimbark MacColl, "Eight Unique Contributions to Oregon Public Life", unpublished paper (July 23, 1992), 6-7, Oregon Historical Society, MSS 2441-1.

<sup>78</sup> Steven Lowenstein, *The Jews of Oregon, 1850-1950*, (Portland, OR: Jewish Historical Society of Oregon, 1987), 66-67; Toll, *The Making of an Ethnic Middle Class*, 87-88, 96-97.

<sup>79</sup> Eisenberg, Kahn and Toll, *Jews of the Pacific Coast*, 79-83.

<sup>80</sup> *Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. 12 (1909), 373.

high, the situation in Portland was fairly benign.<sup>81</sup>

This was the environment Wise encountered when he arrived in the Pacific Northwest as a Zionist emissary. On the one hand, Portland's Jewish leaders were almost all immigrants to the New World, most of whom hailed from German-speaking lands and possessed a cultural orientation akin to his own. On the other, they were pioneers whose hardscrabble origins and economic successes were bound up with the raw and unfettered openness of the American West. The combination of a familiar central European sensibility and the example of successful self-made men must have appealed greatly to Wise, especially at this juncture as he endeavored to distinguish himself and forge his own path.

By chance, Wise's speaking tour coincided with an effort by Portland Jewry's elite to recruit a new rabbi for Congregation Beth Israel. Established in 1854, Beth Israel was Portland's leading synagogue – “the preserve of the old south German families,” including the elite business cohort grouped around Hirsch, Simon, Benjamin Selling, and others.<sup>82</sup> “It has been our good fortune to hear Rabbi Stephen Wise,” Selling reported in July 1899, “and we consider him in every way the most available rabbi in the United States.”<sup>83</sup> Next, Beth Israel's trustees, “being desirous of [securing] the services of Rabbi Stephen Wise and realizing that [this] will require financial aid” pledged to pay subscriptions “annually in advance, during a period of five years” in order to generate an attractive salary.<sup>84</sup> Consequently, Wise was offered a contract to assume the post of “Minister, Reader and Teacher” for a period of five years at a salary of \$5000 per year.<sup>85</sup> The sum was more than double the salary of Beth Israel's outgoing senior rabbi, Dr. Jacob Bloch, who had served the congregation since 1883.<sup>86</sup>

In the negotiations with Beth Israel, Wise made clear his demand for a “free” pulpit and the right to speak openly on issues of the day. That he sought such assurances suggests he may have felt somewhat constrained at Bnai Jeshurun and a little apprehensive about the expectations of Beth

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<sup>81</sup> Lowenstein, *The Jews of Oregon*, 77-79.

<sup>82</sup> Toll, *The Making of an Ethnic Middle Class*, 34.

<sup>83</sup> Letter of Ben Selling to Simon Blumauer, July 22, 1899, entered into Beth Israel Log Book, 363. Special thanks to Ms. Gerel Blauer of Portland, Oregon for providing me with photocopies of these original documents in her personal possession [hereafter “Beth Israel Log Book”].

<sup>84</sup> Testimonial, July 18, 1899, entered into Beth Israel Log Book, 364.

<sup>85</sup> Minutes of a Special Meeting of Congregation Beth Israel, July 30, 1899, Beth Israel Log Book, 362.

<sup>86</sup> The Beth Israel Log Book notes that Bloch received a salary of \$175 per month; *ibid.*, 363. See also “Jewish Churches” at [www.accessgenealogy.com/oregon/multnomah/jewish-churches.htm](http://www.accessgenealogy.com/oregon/multnomah/jewish-churches.htm).



Israel's trustees. He also let his Portland contacts know that Bnai Jeshurun was ready to offer him a 5- to 10-year contract at \$6000 per year. In due course, Beth Israel's leadership acceded to Wise's conditions and Hirsch sent him a telegram stating "Board trustees unanimously agreed your terms. Commence September... Everything all right here."<sup>87</sup> Wise's acceptance of Beth Israel's "call" was accompanied by an additional request he be excused from signing a contract. The reply from Portland was courteous but firm.

Our people look forward to your coming with more than ordinary interest and will certainly cooperate with you in every move looking toward the advancement of Judaism in this Northwest Country. While we are very desirous indeed of meeting your views in every possible way, we fear circumstances prevent us from relieving either you or the congregation from signing the formal contract for your engagement. It has been the custom since the reorganization of the congregation to have a contract with the officiating rabbi, and we deem it best not to invite either criticism or questions... Another consideration influenced the board... namely, that the subscription which was made up here among the members of our congregation and which enabled us to extend you the call, contained a clause binding the subscribers... While we have not consulted any lawyer, yet as practical men of affairs, the Trustees felt that they should give no subscriber a chance of refusing his payment through a legal quibble...<sup>88</sup>

The negotiations between Beth Israel and Wise reflected a new reality in urban Jewish life that surfaced at the turn on the 19th and 20th centuries, namely the professionalization of the synagogue and the rabbinate. As with any other civic institution, the community's lay leadership expected to run the synagogue's affairs like a business. The Portlanders were certainly eager to recruit Wise, even to the point of offering him a highly remunerative package, but they also clearly delineated the nature of his employment. Unlike Europe, where rabbinic authority was sanctioned by the state, in America, owing to the principled separation of church and state, religion was a strictly private affair. The rabbi's authority derived from the consent of the worshippers and the synagogue's stability, like that of any business, depended on its financial solvency. In practice, this meant lay leaders wielded the power to hire rabbis best suited to their community's needs and tastes, the terms of which were codified in the rabbi's employment contract. In the case of Wise, the Portlanders found an attractive modern rabbi, capable of entertaining and enlightening oratory, and possessed of strong organizational skills. He would satisfy Beth Israel's spiritual and

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<sup>87</sup> Telegram of Solomon Hirsch to Stephen S. Wise, October 1, 1899, 4/11, Wise Papers.

<sup>88</sup> Letter of J. Strauss to Stephen S. Wise, November 3, 1899, 4/11, Wise Papers.

educational needs while shoring up the congregation's longterm plans to recruit and retain affluent Jewish families whose resources, largesse, and connections would cement Beth Israel as the hub of Oregon's Jewish scene. Furthermore, Wise's growing professional stature promised to elevate the congregation in the eyes of the region's gentile population. They expected such developments would benefit the institution, enhance the congregation's national standing, and be good business for the Jewish community as a whole.<sup>89</sup>

Wise was savvy enough to recognize that once Beth Israel extended its offer, he, too, possessed a measure of leverage in the negotiating process. Secure in the knowledge that Beth Israel wanted him and Bnai Jeshurun did not wish to lose him, he now pressed the terms of his future employment. He may have appeared resolute to those around him, but his private correspondence betrays more than a hint of anxiety and ambivalence. On the one hand, he wrote to his fiancée, Louis Waterman, about the "great field of labor and opportunity that awaits me in the Northwest."<sup>90</sup> He apparently viewed Beth Israel's "call" as a way to gracefully withdraw from New York, where he toiled in his father's shadow. It was also a chance to break loose of the Jewish community's emerging Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox spheres, which did not wholly suit him and made it difficult to be his own person. Meanwhile, he surely appreciated his good fortune, at age 26, to serve as Bnai Jeshurun's senior rabbi. New York City's dynamic social and political scene, including "the good will of [his eastern European] downtown brethren," portended an upward professional trajectory for one like himself who was "afflicted with an unrighteous ambition... love of fame, applause, and popularity."<sup>91</sup> In the final analysis, Wise's decision to leave Bnai Jeshurun for Beth Israel, which was accompanied by his and Louise's joint decision to postpone their wedding, was a little impulsive but not entirely unreasonable. Their strategy combined a spirit of adventure, youthful ardor, and romance with Wise's deep-seated need to break away from New York, prove himself, and expand his horizons. Though ambivalent and at times even remorseful about taking leave of the east coast, he was buoyed by Beth Israel's contractual assurances and the promise of economic security. Possessing deep reserves of confidence and optimism – what Wise called "over-ambitiousness" – he ultimately persuaded himself his "religious work" in the Northwest would be "a moral force, an ethical compulsion standing for something in civic life, in education, in all things that make for the higher life of the individual and community alike."<sup>92</sup> If the latter statement hints, albeit

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<sup>89</sup> Toll, *The Making of an Ethnic Middle Class*, 97.

<sup>90</sup> Wise, *Personal Letters*, 20.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 20, 25-26.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 33, 41.

obliquely, at the personal and professional risk inherent in his Portland move it also highlights his unabashed ego, the allure of the Western frontier, and his ambition to stake a claim for himself in the Jewish public arena.

In November 1900, Wise was installed as Beth Israel's new senior rabbi. He was also the first candidate selected for the position who was not from the Northwest. The relatively untamed and open regional environment provided fertile soil for his vigorous ambitions and activity. His first order of business was to build up Beth Israel's constituency, enhance its position in the region, and assert a visible communal leadership role for himself. Much of Wise's spade work began with organizing the congregation's internal affairs, developing its religious school, and enhancing the worship services. "The services are very different from those of the Madison Avenue Synagogue, mainly in English," he reported, "but the English is mouthed and badly pronounced. I shall introduce the *Union Prayer Book*."<sup>93</sup> In doing so, he sought to bring Beth Israel squarely into alignment with the Union of American Hebrew Congregations while driving forward the Portland Jewish community's Americanization process.

He now assumed the title of "minister" – a standard designation used by American Reform rabbis. He no longer wore a prayer shawl or head covering, but instead donned dignified clerical attire, including a high white collar. In adopting the *Union Prayer Book*, first published in 1892 as the new Reform "standard," Wise established a baseline for unifying Beth Israel's ritual affairs. Opting for the *Union Prayer Book*, which contained "more Hebrew than other American Reform prayerbooks" (albeit less than a competing text by Benjamin Szold and Marcus M. Jastrow), Wise sanctioned some key theological and linguistic innovations.<sup>94</sup> First, he helped to propel the shift in American Judaism "from congregationalism to denominationalism," particularly the strategy of "replacing the divergent congregational rituals with one denominational prayer book."<sup>95</sup> Second, he embraced the rite codified in the *Union Prayer Book*, which trimmed the traditional service, introduced a modified the liturgy, featured silent devotions, and jettisoned the *musaf* service, an "additional" liturgy traditionally recited on Sabbath and holidays.<sup>96</sup> Wise also introduced the practice of voluntary dues – a novel idea that was to become a hallmark of his rabbinic leadership and, in time, a central element of the Free Synagogue in New York City. In

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 70.

<sup>94</sup> See the entry on "Temple Oheb Shalom, Reform", *Reform Judaism in America*, eds. Olitzky, Sussman, Stern, 165-166.

<sup>95</sup> Zola, *The Americanization of the Jewish Prayer Book*, 10, 17-18.

<sup>96</sup> *Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. 10 (1905), 180.

Portland, he also established special worship services for families and children, and began to regularly publish and distribute his sermons.

Wise applied himself with equal vigor to secular affairs in Portland and Oregon as a whole, particularly areas where he believed he could exercise his moral authority. Three issues at the regional level engaged the lion's share of his attention. The first was the question of gambling and prostitution, long countenanced by the city's political establishment, a few of whom were Wise's congregants and owned property that housed brothels.<sup>97</sup> In fact, Portland's city council debated the relative advantages of declaring Portland a "wide-open city," legalizing such activities, with an eye to generating additional municipal revenue. Determined to "register [his] very earnest protest against bar-room ideals and nickel-in-the-slot-machine tendencies," Wise flatly challenged Portland's Jewish community in an address titled "Shall the City Be 'Wide Open'?" "The Temple was filled and there was an impressive silence throughout the whole of my address..." he later recalled. "There were moments in the address when my hearers almost rose to me, thus when I referred to the horrors of a city sharing the profits of gambling and prostitution and said, 'This cannot be, this must not be'; when I said, 'There will always be scarlet women, that is just as long as there are scarlet men; and, 'Not to safeguard ourselves is to be overwhelmed.'"<sup>98</sup>

Inveighing against society's ills, Wise made common cause with the social gospel, the liberal religious movement of the late 19th and early 20th centuries that sought to solve American society's problems through "the politics of morality" and good government initiatives. "The political culture of progressive reform," it has been argued, "gave ministers of the social gospel hope they could 'Christianize the social order' and thus save the nation."<sup>99</sup> For Wise, who saw no conflict between the moral teachings of Judaism and Christianity, the social gospel was, at its core, an extension of Judaism's prophetic tradition of social justice.<sup>100</sup> Quoting the Hebrew prophet Micah, Wise asserted the maxim "to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God" as Judaism's foundational belief.<sup>101</sup> In due course, Wise gravitated to a cohort of likeminded liberal religious and citizen activists in Portland, including David Solis Cohen, a liberal Jewish lawyer, Joseph Teal, a steam boating

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<sup>97</sup> Shapiro, *A Rabbi in the Progressive Era*, 91.

<sup>98</sup> Wise, *Personal Letters*, 94-96.

<sup>99</sup> Susan Curtis, *A Consuming Faith: The Social Gospel and Modern American Culture*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), 130.

<sup>100</sup> On Wise's attitude to Christianity, including the relation between the prophets of Israel and Jesus, see Wise, *Personal Letters*, 35, 87, 103; Wise, *Challenging Years*, especially ch. 18 ("A Jew Speaks to Christians").

<sup>101</sup> The quote is from the Book of Micah 6:8. For a discussion of Wise's understanding of Micah's teachings, see Shapiro, *A Rabbi in the Progressive Era*, 87-88.

and livestock entrepreneur renowned for his “legitimate” business conduct, Edgar P. Hill of the First Presbyterian Church, Albert Alexander Morrison of Trinity Protestant Episcopal Church, and the group’s unofficial leader Thomas Eliot of the Unitarian Church.<sup>102</sup> In particular, Wise was heartened by his clerical colleagues’ forthright public statements, despite “veiled threat[s],” “intimidation,” and the possibility of retribution from unsavory and powerful local commercial and political forces.<sup>103</sup> “I may change my plans and tackle the municipal situation after all,” he wrote to his wife Louise. “There is an opinion about that [Mayor George A.] Williams will yield to pressure and ‘open wide the town’... I cannot keep silent any longer, I must speak... I should despise myself as a coward if I remained silent... Morrison and Hill have spoken bravely and well.”<sup>104</sup> Though Portland’s brothels remained a scourge until the World War I era, Wise now joined the battle against prostitution and human trafficking, a national crusade that eventually crystallized in the Mann Act of 1910, which prohibited white slavery and sought to stamp out prostitution.<sup>105</sup>

Wise’s personal friendship with key community leaders and his broad and constructive interactions with Portland’s Christian community made him a pioneer of interfaith relations in the Pacific Northwest. He opened Beth Israel’s doors to the general community, making the most of his oratorical talents and, in the process, garnering a devoted following of Jewish and gentile admirers. He also proved to be a welcome guest speaker in churches throughout the West. Without a doubt, the message was as significant as the messenger himself. In these years, Wise turned the sermon into an art form – inspired, edifying, and entertaining. The numerous communities in Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and California where he spoke were hungry for his brand of cultural theater, and he earned a reputation as one who knew how to build bridges among Jews and Christians from all walks of life. Wise did not seek to proselytize. “I care so much for what men are and do,” he explained, “and so little for what they call themselves, that I abhor the conversionist zeal which oftener effects a change of name rather than of the heart.”<sup>106</sup> But neither was he unconcerned about Christian misperceptions of Judaism, most especially when age-old antisemitic canards stoked the fires of anti-Jewish sentiment and pogroms flared in tsarist Russia. He felt it his duty

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<sup>102</sup> Gaston, *Portland, Oregon*, 623.

<sup>103</sup> Wise, *Personal Letters*, 95.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.

<sup>105</sup> Edward J. Bristow, *Prostitution and Prejudice: The Fight Against White Slavery, 1870-1939*, (New York: Schocken, 1983), 161, 178; MacColl, *The Shaping of a City*, 408-412; David J. Langum, *Crossing Over the Line: Legislating Morality and the Mann Act*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), chs. 2-3.

<sup>106</sup> Wise, *Personal Letters*, 93.

as a modern American rabbi to explain Judaism to Christians, noting, “To those who think that Judaism means license to commit usurious practice, is it not sacred duty to tell of the nobleness which our faith asks?”<sup>107</sup>

By contrast, where Wise’s pioneering interfaith efforts foundered, such instances generally illustrate his predicament as an ethnic leader in a land dominated by a Protestant worldview. That he recognized the implications in this regard was evident, for example, when in 1900 he participated in a public debate about the National Federation of Churches and Christian Workers (NFCCW). The new organization professed that “no one Church is the sole custodian of Christian grace,” but meanwhile explicitly limited its membership to Protestant and Catholic ministers.<sup>108</sup> Wise, who did not seek to join the NFCCW, was appalled by its lack of ecumenicism, especially its repudiation of many liberal Christian groups with whom he shared a strong affinity. “Alas, if it be possible,” he publicly despaired, “for a Church Federation today deliberately to exclude Unitarians and Universalists how are the hopes of toleration shattered – of us who are of the Jewish bond!”<sup>109</sup> In another instance, he challenged the Ministers Association of Portland, a framework that restricted its membership and generally reflected the stance of Portland’s Protestant elite. Here especially, where Wise would have welcomed the opportunity to stand shoulder to shoulder with his gentile colleagues, the sting of exclusion rankled. His response, on the eve of municipal elections in 1905, was to seize the moral high ground. He publicly chastised the Ministers Association for its exclusivism. “Is It Possible to Have a Fellowship of Churches?” he thundered.

Tens of thousands of children of eight and ten and twelve years are in the factories and in the mills of the South and North, the East and West. What are the churches doing to free these little white slaves? ..What in the last years have the churches of this city done together in order to suppress the boxes and stalls in the drinking places which are the nurseries of immorality? What will the churches of our city do in the impending civic contest in order that righteousness may be at the helm of our civic affairs? What have the churches in our state been doing to avert the shame and infamy that blotted our escutcheon? What are the churches in the land doing to call a halt to the lowering of the tone of

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>108</sup> The National Federation of Churches and Christian Workers was later renamed the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America. See the constitutional documents and organizational reports in Elias B. Sanford, *Origin and History of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America*, (Hartford: S.S. Scranton, 1916), 429, 443, 449; also: “Union of Christian Workers”, *New York Times*, February 7, 1901, 9; Robert T. Handy, *A History of the Churches in the United States and Canada*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 305-306.

<sup>109</sup> Quoted in Shapiro, *A Rabbi in the Progressive Era*, 104-105.

ideals of our nation?<sup>110</sup>

In a region lacking in dynamic Jewish communal leaders, Wise stood out as an especially attractive figure. With his maverick tendencies and special talents, he gradually shook loose of the rabbi-as-employee mold. Instead, he styled himself as a minister-cum-frontiersman, a champion of morality steeped in the life lessons and harsh reality of the Pacific Northwest. The appeal of such an image, even for a rabbi, was well suited to an era punctuated by Theodore Roosevelt's mantra of rugged individualism, historian Frederick Jackson Turner's frontier thesis, and the glorification of the West by artists like Frederic Remington and Charles Marion Russell. Wise, meanwhile, emerged as the Western spokesman of a new American Jewish agenda. His distinctive profile was brought into sharp relief by a meeting with Roosevelt in 1903, in the midst of a presidential tour, when the two men met privately to discuss Jewish colonization in Palestine and the potential for U.S. intervention on behalf of persecuted Jews in Rumania.<sup>111</sup>

Wise's multifaceted sensibility aligned with the idealism of the Progressive era, and his embrace of liberal religious value resonated with region's diverse and fast growing social and cultural landscape.<sup>112</sup> He also obliquely challenged America's religious hierarchies by taking his message directly to communities and groups in the West with which Jews had otherwise strikingly little contact. He went anywhere he wished and spoke out about issues of the day he deemed vital and important. He showed little, if any, concern for the interests of the region's powerful entrepreneurs and political establishment, and paid virtually no heed to religious bodies (in and out of the Jewish community) that sought to press claims of superior authority.<sup>113</sup>

Wise certainly raised the bar of expectations by insisting on a comprehensive approach to combatting American society's ills. He unabashedly and energetically applied his talents as an activist rabbi to Portland's and Oregon's unfolding political environment. In the space of just a few years, he garnered a reputation as a vocal proponent of women's suffrage, a reformer of the region's juvenile punishment system, which led him to cofound the Oregon Conference of Charities and Corrections, and a defender of the rights of workers in the shipyard, timber, fishing, and railway industries.<sup>114</sup> He also aroused the ire of

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<sup>110</sup> Quoted in Urofsky, *A Voice That Spoke for Justice*, 44.

<sup>111</sup> Toll, *The Making of an Ethnic Middle Class*, 97.

<sup>112</sup> MacColl, *The Shaping of a City*, 221-226

<sup>113</sup> Meyer, "A Centennial History", 141.

<sup>114</sup> For example, see: Stephen S. Wise, "Statement on Suffrage" (1907), in *Against the Tide: Pro-Feminist Men in the United States, 1776-1990, A Documentary History*, eds. Michael

conservative forces by steadfastly opposing the exploitative treatment of Chinese immigrant workers in the region, which, as elsewhere in the country, was bolstered by the U.S. Congress' passage of the racist Chinese Exclusion Act.<sup>115</sup> He joined with Unitarian leader Thomas Eliot to investigate the local fishing industry and, after witnessing first-hand the exploitation of children in canneries along the Columbia River, became a fierce advocate of child labor protections. In the event, Governor George E. Chamberlain appointed Wise to the state's Board of Child Labor Commissioners. The commission did not succeed in eradicating child labor – a cause in which Wise would continue to be active for many decades to come – but it did help to secure legislation aimed at improving working conditions and eliminating the fishing industry's worst abuses. Wise's political talents, including his willingness to engage elected officials at all levels, caught the attention of the state's Democratic party establishment. On the municipal front, he was invited by Mayor Harry Lane, one of the region's outstanding Progressive figures, to serve in his city cabinet. At the state level, he was pressed to run “as a reform candidate for the United States Senate against the entrenched Republican machine.”<sup>116</sup> It is not clear how seriously Wise entertained these possibilities, but we do know he declined both. What the historical record does highlight, however, is that rather than the allure of elective office, Wise became ever more firmly convinced of religion's potentiality for good in American politics and the singular role he might play as a minister. His abiding belief in the alloy of prophetic Judaism, liberalism, and political activism was elemental to his rabbinic calling. As his reputation grew and he became increasingly influential, so, too, the stakes rose with respect to his position in American Jewish life and the public arena.

Wise's resolute liberalism drew from the wellspring of the European Enlightenment, particularly its American variant, and fused with the optimistic spirit of the new century.<sup>117</sup> As a member of an ethnic minority, he celebrated and venerated the legal and civic guarantees that upheld individual rights and liberties in America – even as he was forced to confront the fragility and powerlessness of Jewish life in the *fin-de-siècle*. As an American clergyman, he embraced the Jeffersonian notion of a “wall of separation” between state and religion and the republic's

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S. Kimmel, Thomas E. Mosmiller (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), 260-261.

<sup>115</sup> Jewel Lansing, *Portland: People, Politics, and Power, 1851-2001*, (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2005), 221. On the Chinese Exclusion Act, see Daniel J. Tichenor, *Dividing Lines: The Politics of Immigration Control in America*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), ch. 4.

<sup>116</sup> Urofsky, *A Voice That Spoke for Justice*, 45.

<sup>117</sup> Salo W. Baron, “The Emancipation Movement and American Jewry”, in Salo W. Baron, *Steeled by Adversity: Essays and Addresses on American Jewish Life*, (New York: Jewish Publication Society, 1971), 80-105.



protection of free exercise of religion – even as he sought to use his synagogue pulpit to influence the course of contemporary events. As a Jewish communal leader, seeking to participate fully in the country’s moral leadership, he fought against retrograde forces that threatened to curtail American Judaism’s participation in the public arena – even as he toiled at the margins of society. In sum, Wise believed the promise and future growth of Judaism and Jewish life in America to be inextricably linked to the vitality and integrity of society’s liberal, moral, and democratic character. “The standards in a democracy,” he intoned at the Lewis and Clark Exposition in 1905, “are to be based not on money, but manhood, not dissent but assent, not acquisition but aspiration, not color but character. Caste and class cannot be suffered to endure in a democracy which must needs fall as these triumph... The American democracy is a democracy of brotherhood and brotherliness.”<sup>118</sup>

### To the Jewish Cosmos

In retrospect, it appears evident Wise’s sojourn in Portland would not last. Despite his plentiful activity in the Northwest, his longing for New York continued unabated. From early on, Temple Emanu-El, the city’s flagship Reform congregation, loomed large in his imagination – a tantalizing possibility fueled by episodic contact with several of Emanu-El’s key leaders. Interestingly, being “called” to Emanu-El seems to have been both an enticing and frightening prospect for Wise. The idea, which punctuates his private correspondence with Louise, is everywhere underscored by ambivalence. For example, upon learning that Emanu-El’s president, the New York banker James Seligman, desired to read his published Beth Israel sermons, Wise caustically noted he had “been in Portland long enough to know that a man can save and lead his people well only if they honor and love him.” He added: “Emanu-El will never get a man in its pulpit until the snobs forget the millionaredom long enough to acquire some respect for a man who is not rich, but is some other things. They must learn that a ‘call’ to Emanu-El is not an ‘honor’ but a burden and responsibility, and that if ‘honor’ there be, it belongs to God whom congregation and minister should serve.”<sup>119</sup> In another instance, however, Wise told his in-laws he might opt to unilaterally quit Portland and return to New York: “...There are no more than five or six positions in the whole country that I would take... Louise thinks I ought to seek a broader sphere of activity... Still it will not be an easy matter to make an announcement so far in advance [of the end of the Beth Israel contract] which will involve a considerable loss to me. I am too far away

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<sup>118</sup> Quoted in Urofsky, *A Voice That Spoke for Justice*, 44-45.

<sup>119</sup> Wise, *Personal Letters*, 76.

from the center of things now...”<sup>120</sup> In sum, Wise was apprehensive about the idea of giving up a secure position – not an insignificant concern for young man building a family. He relished his hard won status as a significant communal figure in the Pacific Northwest and disdained New York’s dominant central European Jewish elite. Meanwhile, there are many indications he longed for the east coast. He was frustrated by being geographically remote, and he wished to play a major role in American religious life. He recognized that New York Jewry was swiftly emerging as the country’s most influential Jewish community and his own advancement would be circumscribed in the West. Last but not least, there are instances of studied self-reflection in Wise’s private correspondence, especially insofar as he contemplates his capacity to manage the stress of a bold professional move. He even hints at the physical and emotional toll such an undertaking might exact. “I shall never shirk any task in life and I would be willing to give every bit of my strength to the task of *serving* and *leading* the Jewish community of New York,” he states. “I know that physically I could never prove equal to the strain, but the only situation that could bring me to accept such a task would be feeling that some one man is needed for it, and that I am he...”<sup>121</sup> All of these dimensions seem linked in one way or another to Wise’s complex relationship to New York’s Jewish scene, especially his inextinguishable desire for “a call and summons to duty.” “To be the rabbi of such a community as Emanu-El,” he stated, “is the highest of privileges and responsibilities.”<sup>122</sup>

The tipping point in Wise’s decision-making occurred in 1904, several months after he suffered a physical breakdown in September 1903, apparently due to overwork and nervous exhaustion. At his doctor’s recommendation, he spent an extended period of convalescence on the east coast and traveled to Europe in the summer. The degree to which Wise’s breakdown and subsequent sojourn prompted a wholesale reevaluation of his future is unclear. Did he take counsel with close friends and colleagues about new job prospects? Did his collapse prompt thoughts about his mortality and legacy? Some evidence in the historical record supports these possibilities. What is certain, however, is that by 1903 he was feeling restless in Portland and thwarted in his larger ambitions. Though he may not have possessed much, if anything, in the way of a strategy for returning to New York, a few indications of his shifting priorities are evident. First, in this period he resigned from his positions in the World Zionist Organization and American Zionist movement. The impediments of geography and the movement’s

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<sup>120</sup> *Servant of the People*, ed. Voss, 20-21.

<sup>121</sup> Wise, *Personal Letters*, 88-89, emphasis in original.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

hierarchy, he complained, had relegated him to an inconsequential role.<sup>123</sup> Second, as discussed above, he found himself in a paradoxical situation as one of the region's leading clergy. He was highly esteemed and much in demand as a public speaker. His natural constituency, however, was limited and the opportunities for interfaith activity ebbed and flowed depending upon the good will of his Christian counterparts. Third, he had discounted the idea of serving as a public official; he even declined the invitation to run as the Democratic party's standard bearer for the U.S. senate. In short, Wise's Portland years confirmed and bolstered his belief in the unity of religion and politics in America. But he meanwhile reached what he felt were the limits of his potential in the Pacific Northwest. He had also grown and matured as a result of the rough-and-tumble of the Oregon setting. In the process, he gained confidence in his own leadership abilities and positioned himself for a national role in American Jewry. He had proven himself to be an effective spokesman for a God-inspired vision of this-worldly social and economic justice. He had learned how to engage in the heat of political discourse without allowing others to diminish him. And he had honed his skills as an orator of the first rank. Finally, he was prepared on a personal level (once again) to risk the known for the unknown. It is easy to imagine how someone less adventurous and self-assured might have put down roots in Portland, yielded to the force of inertia, and made peace with his surroundings. Wise, however, was built differently and whatever he lacked in longterm planning, he made up in spades of boundless ambition, dogged determination, and peripatetic energy. As would prove characteristic of Wise for years to come, he optimistically believed that new opportunities would emerge in the fullness of time.

In 1905, the moment Wise had long been waiting for finally emerged. "I was still the youngish rabbi of Temple Beth Israel of Portland, Oregon," he wrote years later in his memoir, when "out of a clear sky came the lightning of an invitation to give a number of sermons and addresses at Temple Emanu-El of New York, known as the Cathedral Synagogue of the country... Leaving Oregon, I said to intimate friends... 'I am going to New York to preach some trial sermons at the Cathedral Synagogue. They will call me to be their rabbi. I somehow feel that I will have to decline their call. If I decline it... I will go back to New York from Oregon to found a Free Synagogue.'"<sup>124</sup> Despite its exaggerated quality, this was indeed "an accurate prediction of what was to happen," but the full historical picture was far more complex, colorful, and revealing.<sup>125</sup>

In fact, what began as a courtship quickly morphed into preliminary

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<sup>123</sup> Shapiro, *A Reform Rabbi in the Progressive Era*, 60-63.

<sup>124</sup> Wise, *Challenging Years*, 82.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

negotiations and then, quite suddenly, flared to become a battle royal between two willful personalities – Wise, now age 32, a rising star of the American rabbinate, and Louis Marshall, the venerable New York lawyer and dominant Jewish communal leader who personified the eastern seaboard’s Jewish establishment. In courting Wise, Marshall and the Emanu-El trustees were hopeful they could install a minister who would adorn their congregation, someone whose oratory would reflect well on the congregants and serve to uplift if not ennoble their distinctive cultural sensibility, a curious mixture of imperious elitism, economic privilege, and noblesse oblige. The new rabbi, they hoped, would solidify Emanu-El’s position as the eastern seaboard’s Reform flagship and chief rival to Cincinnati’s authority. Wise’s distinctive potentiality in this regard was not lost on Marshall and his colleagues. He possessed excellent credentials. He was neither a product of nor beholden to Cincinnati. His family hailed from central Europe (albeit Hungary rather than Bohemia), he understood the “German” culture of New York’s elite Jews. He had earned his stripes as the leader of Beth Israel, one of Reform Judaism’s significant western outposts, where his organizational, fundraising, and leadership skills had bolstered the congregation’s membership, transformed it into a visible regional presence, and increased its purse to the point of erasing its debt.<sup>126</sup> What the Emanu-El leaders did not realize, however, was that the youthful and independent-minded Wise – irrespective of his interest in Emanu-El’s pulpit – was constitutionally incapable of accepting their terms, namely, in Marshall’s words, that “the pulpit should always be subject to and under the control of the Board of Trustees.”<sup>127</sup> This was partly a matter of personality. Wise bristled at the idea of submitting himself to someone else’s authority. But it was also a matter of philosophy. Like other Progressive-era spiritual leaders and social gospel advocates, Wise believed in the mission of the minister as activist. His views about the nexus between religion and politics were bolstered by his Portland experience, where he fought for women’s suffrage, workers’ rights, child labor laws, immigrant protections, railed against prostitution and local brothels, and asserted himself as a tribune of good government.

But whereas the Pacific Northwest was relatively isolated from the public eye, New York City offered a strikingly visible and voluble contrast. Indeed, the ensuing Emanu-El controversy virtually assured Wise of garnering countrywide attention. Against the backdrop of a lively turn-of-the-century debate over freedom of the pulpit in American religious life, including a decades-old parallel discussion in the Jewish

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<sup>126</sup> Toll, *The Making of an Ethnic Middle Class*, 97-98.

<sup>127</sup> Letter of Louis Marshall to Stephen S. Wise, December 1, 1905, in *Louis Marshall: Champion of Liberty. Selected Papers and Addresses*, ed. Charles Reznikoff, vol. 2 (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1957), 831.

public arena, Wise defiantly characterized his stance as a matter of “duty” and “conscience.”<sup>128</sup> In an open letter to Marshall and the Emanu-El’s trustees he declaimed: “I write you because I believe that a question of super-eminent importance has been raised, the question of whether the pulpit shall be free or whether the pulpit shall not be free, and, by reason of its loss of freedom, reft of its power for good. The whole position of the church is involved in this question, for the steadily waning influence of church and synagogue is due in no small part, I hold, to the widespread belief that the pulpit is not free and ‘subject to the control’ of those officers and members of church or synagogue who for any reason are powerful in its councils.”<sup>129</sup>

The public feud between Wise and Marshall is important for several reasons. It was, as noted above, a significant instance of the debate over freedom of the pulpit in American society. And for the first time, millions of Americans caught a glimpse not only of American Jewry’s interior landscape but also of Wise, who cast himself as a modern-day Roger Williams singlehandedly defying the Emanu-El oligarchy. Reportage of the controversy was carried by major American newspapers across the country. In an editorial, the *New York Times*, no doubt with the approval of its publisher Adolph S. Ochs, a member of Temple Emanu-El, upbraided Wise. “The rabbi speaks of ‘my pulpit,’” the *Times* stated, “but primarily it is not his pulpit; it is that of the congregation, whose affairs are in the charge of the Trustees... It appears to us that the liberty of preaching is no more sacred than the liberty of listening... Clergymen who are by temperament incapable of forming and maintaining [harmony with their congregants] appear to fall below the true standard of their calling. They are not necessarily martyrs to the cause of freedom of speech.”<sup>130</sup> The *Times*’ rebuke was grist for Wise’s mill. It gave Wise’s views a full public hearing and enhanced his growing national reputation as a champion of America’s clergy and the principle of absolute liberty of conscience.

Wise skillfully pressed his “plea for pulpit freedom” to full advantage.<sup>131</sup> “As a Jewish minister,” he argued, “I claim the right to follow the example of the Hebrew prophets, and stand and battle in New York, as I

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<sup>128</sup> Naomi W. Cohen, *What the Rabbis Said. The Public Discourse of Nineteenth-Century American Rabbis*, (New York: New York University Press, 2008), ch. 1; Debby Applegate, *The Most Famous Man in America: The Biography of Henry Ward Beecher*, (New York: Doubleday, 2006), 132-135, 232-264, 354-356; Edwin Scott Gaustad, *Dissent in American Religion*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), 55-58.

<sup>129</sup> Letter of Stephen S. Wise to Louis Marshall, January 5, 1906, in *Louis Marshall*, ed. Reznikoff, 833.

<sup>130</sup> “Pulpit and Pews” (editorial), *New York Times*, January 11, 1906, 8.

<sup>131</sup> Wise, *Challenging Years*, 87.

have stood and battled in Portland, for civic righteousness.”<sup>132</sup> His defiant stance, much to the chagrin of the Emanu-El trustees, was echoed in media outlets across the country. In fact, Wise may have cited Jewish tradition to buttress his claims, but he was also self-consciously modeling himself on the Congregationalist Henry Ward Beecher and Unitarian Theodore Parker, two iconic preachers of the generation preceding his own who were among the 19th-century’s most important activist Christian ministers, social reformers, and abolitionists.<sup>133</sup> He was, moreover, an admirer of William Jennings Bryan, whose populist blend of political and religious idealism held sway at the turn of the century.<sup>134</sup> For years thereafter, not without some justification, Wise characterized the Emanu-El contretemps as a contest between David and Goliath. His crusade was a matter of conviction, but it was also equal parts strategy and spectacle.

The question to be asked in reflecting on this curious episode is not only how it benefited Wise directly but what it illustrates about the American Jewish scene. To be sure, the Emanu-El pulpit debate, which quickly spun beyond the control of Marshall, Ochs, and others – and from which Wise emerged unscathed – underscored the contrast between the dynamic young rabbi’s Progressive-era theological and political views and the fading star of New York’s Jewish elites. The affair left Wise and Marshall permanently estranged. It also strained Wise’s personal attachments to the group he disparaged as the “Fifth Avenue aristocracy,” though the young rabbi, who was married to the heiress Louise Waterman, hardly seems to have been in any real danger of sundering his ties to the German Jewish “oligarchs.” As a visible and deliberate challenge to American Jewry’s establishment, the controversy garnered Wise a national reputation as a champion of democracy. It also ushered him closer to becoming a power broker in his own right. He now gained the support of several important uptown *yahudim* as well as the general acclaim of New York City’s “downtown” Jews – the *yidn* who identified with Wise’s outsider status and his “unshakable” liberalism,

<sup>132</sup> “Rabbi Wise on Jerome”, *New York Times*, January 10, 1906, 2.

<sup>133</sup> See: Debby Applegate, *The Most Famous Man in America*; Dean Grodzins, *American Heretic: Theodore Parker and Transcendentalism*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Wise, *Personal Letters*, 99.

<sup>134</sup> Michael Kazin, *A Godly Hero: The Life of William Jennings Bryan*, (New York: Alfred Knopf, 2006), 116. Wise’s favorable and admiring view of Bryan, evident in his autobiography *Challenging Years*, is curious. Most American Jews were repelled by Bryan’s famous “Cross of Gold” speech at the 1896 Democratic convention, which included oblique allusions to anti-Jewish themes. See Leonard Dinnerstein, *Antisemitism in America*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 49-50; Dennis O’Neill, “1896 – Anti-Semitic Cartoon,” *Presidential Campaign Rhetoric*, <http://campaignrhetoric.wordpress.com/2011/05/01/1896-anti-semitic-cartoon-dennis-oneill/>.

forthright ethnic pride, fervent Zionism, and general embrace of left-leaning Jewish social and political movements.<sup>135</sup>

In staking a claim for the minister's autonomy, Wise trumpeted an anti-establishment stance central to the American tradition of religious dissent and grassroots politics, a phenomenon with roots stretching back to the colonial era.<sup>136</sup> He also proved to be spectacularly effective and successful in the art of public relations – a personal talent he would exploit time and again throughout his lifetime. Meanwhile, the controversy reflected another long-established American practice, namely the desire to prevent clericalism in the New World. Inspired by a synthesis of Protestant and Jeffersonian notions of anti-clericalism, Marshall and the Emanu-El trustees were, in fact, upholding and guarding “the free exercise and enjoyment of religious profession and worship” enshrined in the U.S. constitution.<sup>137</sup> In the final analysis, though Marshall, as was his wont, treated Wise with a heavy hand, a close review of the historical record reveals he was not so much interested in “muzzling” the young rabbi as he was in ensuring the “dignity” and “co-equal importance” of both the pulpit and the congregation.<sup>138</sup>

The Emanu-El episode was like a flare that suddenly and intensely shone on the waning “German” era in American Jewish life. On the horizon, the luminous and rising tide of eastern European Jewry was about to lift Wise's fortunes. The stage was now set for Wise's triumphal return to New York in 1906 and the founding of the Free Synagogue in 1907, around which Wise rallied broad support for his vision of social justice, liberal Judaism, and Zionism. His entry into the fray as American Jewry's 20th-century urban frontiersman *par excellence* and his ensuing religious, civic, and political activity would leave an indelible mark on the rabbinate, the Jewish public arena, and American society.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Wise, *Challenging Years*, xxii, xxiii.

<sup>136</sup> Gaustad, *Dissent in American Religion*, 142.

<sup>137</sup> Louis Marshall, “Religious Freedom: Is Ours a Christian Government?” (January 1896), in *Louis Marshall*, ed. Reznikoff, 948. In this essay, Marshall makes repeated reference to Jefferson's writings on religious toleration and individual liberties. See also Sarna, *American Judaism*, 250-251; Lambert, *Religion in American Politics*, 34-40.

<sup>138</sup> Letter of Louis Marshall to Stephen S. Wise, December 1, 1905, in *Louis Marshall*, ed. Reznikoff, 832.

<sup>139</sup> The term “urban frontiersmen *par excellence*” was coined by Jacob Rader Marcus in an essay titled “The American Colonial Jew”; see *The American Jewish Experience*, ed. Sarna, 14.

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**“A source of satisfaction to all Jews, wherever they may be living”  
Louis Miller between New York and Tel Aviv, 1911**

by *Ehud Manor*

**Abstract**

*Although throughout the middle-ages Jews used to live in urban environment more than non-Jews, urbanization process in the 19th century was as critical to Jewish modern history as in other cases. Modernization, in all aspects, had a deep impact on Jewish demography, socio-economic life and self understanding. On the same time Jews were immigrating by the millions to the “new world” (mainly to the United States), a small current of Jews was heading to Palestine (Eretz Israel if to use their specific term). As opposed to a common understanding of Zionism, the future city and the neo-urbanization of the Jews – and not only the new villages (Moshavot, Kibbutzim, Moshavim) – was a main Zionist goal. This article describes one of the first comprehensive observations of these issues, as seen from the eyes of Louis Miller, himself a Jewish immigrant that settled in the outmost city of the modern world: New York. In 1911 he paid a visit to the one-year-old Tel Aviv, and managed to see in this new modest garden-city the cradle of the Zionist revolution. Not less important: Miller understood as early as 1911, the crucial role Jewish settlements in Palestine would have in the crystallization of modern Jewish peoplehood. Tel Aviv took major part in this development. It still does.*

**The New Jewish Politics: *Klal Yisrael* – thoughtful policy or after-the-fact phenomenon?**

In his *From Periphery to Center* the historian Michael Graetz delineated the model that characterized politics in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, both Jewish and non-Jewish. In the dynamic reality of modern times, traditional leadership has retreated, and new problems/ considerations/ constituents? From the periphery have taken center stage. These new forces are derived from either – ‘charisma’ or ‘rationality’ – to use Max Weber’s terminology – and most often a combination of the two.<sup>1</sup>

In his magnum opus *Prophecy and Politics – Socialism, Nationalism and the Jews of Russia, 1862-1917*, the historian Jonathan Frankel examines

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Graetz, *From Periphery to Center – Chapters in 19<sup>th</sup> Century History of French Jewry – From Saint-Simon to the Foundation of the Alliance Israelite Universelle*, (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1982 [Heb]).

Russian-Jewish politics and the framework of its terminology in a crucial period of history.<sup>2</sup> His research focuses on Russian Jews, wherever they were living at the time, including those in the new world, the U.S., and those in the old-new world, *Eretz Israel*. The goal was the consolidation of a Jewish national consciousness [a similar term was *Klal Yisrael*], or a Jewish-Socialist consciousness, or some combination of the two ideologies, Nationalism and Socialism, born of the French Revolution. This included the concept that ‘prophecy’ is the legitimate business of the modern leader, even when such prophecy rests on the shifting sands of politics. Politics in the 19<sup>th</sup> century articulated the essence of man’s new understanding of himself as the master of his fate, as a demiurge of the human condition. One of the most powerful expressions of this ideology was Max Weber’s call for the intellectual elite to understand the word ‘vocation’ in the slogan “politics as a vocation” in the sense of ‘mission’.<sup>4</sup>

### Migration, the Press and Politics

All of this took place during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but reached full expression during the time of the great Jewish immigration, which paralleled the period of classical Zionism, the period of the first and second *aliyot* and the period of political integration in Western Europe. While in *Eretz Israel* the norms regulating settlement and the first organizational campaigns were being established – largely by Eastern European Jews, the Eastern European Jews in the U.S. were doing the same thing with nearly equal zeal and commitment. In other words, historically speaking, this was a time in which Eastern European Jews, in particular, saw the founding of a new Jewish society in *Eretz Israel* as a mission. While in *Eretz Israel*, the re-building was a slow, gradual and multi-faceted endeavor, encompassing the economy, language, culture, institutions, etc., in the U.S.A., the Jewish immigrants found a ready-made civilization, albeit one in constant flux. They were very quickly assimilated into that culture, at least on an economic level, but Jewish institutions, such as social clubs, fraternities, unions, political party branches and newspapers, drew on the familiar, or the old world, as well as the “new world” understanding and lessons gleaned from recent immigrants.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Jonathan Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics. Socialism, Nationalism and the Russian Jews, 1862-1917*, (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1989).

<sup>3</sup> Joseph Gorney, “‘Klal Israel’ bemivchan hahistoria”, *eyunim betkumat Israel*, vol. 12 (2002): 1-9.

<sup>4</sup> Max Weber, *Politics als Beruf*, (Tel Aviv: Schocken, 1962).

<sup>5</sup> Irving Howe, *World of our Fathers*, (New York: Touchstone, 1976).

This difference is clearly reflected in at least one example. In *Eretz Israel*, a unique Jewish entity was slowly being established and expressed in several areas of the culture?, while the development in New York was mostly one-dimensional – with a focus on identity, consciousness, ideology. It is no coincidence that any discussion regarding the traditions of the first *aliyot* involves the concepts of a “return to the land,” settlement, the Baron’s network of offices and clerks, the *haluka*, political parties, and so forth, terms that reflect the multi-dimensional character mentioned above. In contrast, historians of Jewish immigration in the U.S. generally rely heavily on immigrant newspapers which were written mainly in Yiddish, as a reflection of the fact that almost all Jewish immigrants came from Eastern-Europe, where Yiddish dominated the Jewish public sphere. From among the tens of newspapers printed in Yiddish during that period of immigration, a special place is reserved for *The Forward*, the most widely circulated Yiddish newspaper of all time. Established in 1897, this paper suffered difficult birth pangs, like most if not all its colleagues, but by the end of the first decade of its existence it reached a position of enormous influence in the life of Jewish New-Yorkers and beyond.<sup>6</sup>

This influence was first evident in the remarkable number of papers sold; more than one hundred thousand copies per day in 1908. That number doubled with the outbreak of WWI. The increase in sales is explained in part by a dramatic increase in the population of Yiddish readers – in 1906 alone, more than 150,000 Jews arrived from Eastern Europe. - It was not only a matter of quantity however, *The Forward* also had a special quality, a message. Under the leadership of Abraham Cahan whose ‘rational charisma’ brought him from a small town in Lithuania, all the way to New York City. *The Forward* succeeded in creating a secular Jewish, old-new world identity, derived from a re-interpretation of the long history of Jewish segregation and alienation. One specific consequence of this was Cahan’s explicit, sustained and determined hostility towards Zionism in general and towards the Zionist endeavors in *Eretz Israel* in particular. Cahan understood very well that the essence of the Zionist idea was that Jews embrace their history, relinquish their feelings of alienation and re-define their identity in the modern world.<sup>7</sup>

Cahan’s position and intransigence exposed him to criticism. The Orthodox regarded socialism as a modern fruit, rotten to the core, and

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<sup>6</sup> Moses Rischin, *The Promised City*, (New York: Harper, 1962).

<sup>7</sup> About Cahan, see: Ehud Manor, *Forward – The Jewish Daily Forward (Forverts) Newspaper: Immigrants, Socialism and Jewish Politics in New York, 1890-1917*, (Beighton & Portland: Sussex Academic Press, 2009).

Zionism (at least in the early stages), as a barricade against assimilation.<sup>8</sup> There was also the opposition of the Jewish socialists, who regarded the relentless coverage of *Klal Yisrael* subjects by *The Forward* as a perversion of their ideology, a deceitful consciousness. What is most surprising and significant in this context was the determined opposition and incisive criticism from Louis Miller. Miller, one of *The Forward*'s founders who also edited and managed the paper for a number of years, was a friend and cohort of Cahan's. As we will attempt to demonstrate in this article, just as Cahan regarded Zionism and especially the Zionist endeavors taking place in *Eretz Israel*, as a threat to the new Jewish politics that he desired to promote, so Miller viewed these as the very essence of the new Jewish politics that he envisioned. Consider the matter well: Miller did not identify himself as a Zionist, he was not a member of the movement and he did not pay the annual fees [the *Shekel*]. He never even considered immigrating to *Eretz Israel*. Miller, Cahan and others of their generation dealt with the question of organizing the American Jewry, the Jewish immigrants from Eastern-Europe and especially the proletarian population among these. In other words, the political goal that had brought them from the periphery to the 'capital'? Was to lead the Jewish immigrant community from the margins of society to the heart and center of the political sphere/ active political life?

This was no small task: an immigrant is by definition an outsider, marginalized by virtue of his "new-ness" and by his linguistic, cultural and economic differences. Further, in the case of the Eastern-European Jewish immigrant, there were additional obstacles to assimilation and political empowerment in along history of oppression within Russian society and in the backwardness of Russia even generally speaking. When the Eastern European immigrant arrived in the U.S., he was confronted with a veteran American Jewish elite -, different from him in every aspect - economic status, religious affiliation, life style, class status, residential neighborhood, and perception of self. Of course there were exceptions (not all American Jews were part of the Reform denomination and some of them were staunch social reformers), but for the most part, this elite regarded the immigrant as malleable clay – to be shaped into a virtuous "American," a Reform Jew, a Republican, someone who lived a conservative lifestyle. As in any typical immigrant story, Miller and Cahan, both together and separately, and against all odds, strove to realize their goals.

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<sup>8</sup> Jeffrey Gurock, *Orthodox Jews In America*, (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2009).

## Louis Miller

Louis Miller was born as Leon or Levy Bandes in Vilna in 1866 and died in New York in 1927. Miller arrived in the U.S.A. in 1884, in the midst of one of the most significant periods of the development of socialism and progressivism. America at the time was either blessed or cursed, depending on the eye of the beholder, by its image as the cradle of capitalism and an impenetrable fortress. At that time, the U.S. was undergoing a process of rapid industrialization, urbanization as well as a giant wave of immigration; in 1886, the American Federation of Labor (AFL) was founded, the “8-hour work day” movement was expanding, and Henry George was a candidate for the office of Mayor of New York. George tried to pave his way to one of the most important political posts in the country under the “single tax” slogan. Miller was a witness to this period of great hope, and it can be said with a measure of certainty that the profound impressions this period made on him remained with him until his final days.<sup>9</sup>

Between his arrival in the U.S.A. and his death, Miller’s public career took many twists and turns. In 1888, together with his older brother and mentor, he founded a Russian language workers’ newspaper. His brother’s untimely death from tuberculosis was a terrible blow and publication ceased. A year after that he represented the *United Hebrew Trades*<sup>10</sup> at the first International Socialist Convention in Paris. In 1890 he played a major role in the founding of the *Arbeiter Zeitung*, the first socialist daily in Yiddish. The paper’s goal was to serve as a home for all of the leftist movements active in the Jewish community. In reality however, it became a battleground for opposing forces and it was fraught with infighting between hard-liners and those in favor of a more open and flexible approach. Miller himself led the moderates and for a time he was able to hold things together. But when things reached a crisis in 1897, the moderates, under his leadership, founded another Yiddish socialist workers’ daily – *The Forward*. In 1905, Miller resigned from *The Forward* and founded *The Warheit – The Truth*. This paper was a commercial success from the beginning, due not only to the aforementioned increase in the number of Yiddish readers during that period, but also due to Miller’s way of addressing Jewish issues from a progressive, socialist point of view. This was evidenced in his coverage of a long list of community milestones beginning with the establishment of the Jewish *Kehila* in New York in 1909. At the same

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<sup>9</sup> *Lexicon fun der nayer Yiddisher literatur*, vol. V (New York, Ziko, 1960): 628-630.

<sup>10</sup> This was the umbrella organization of all of the Jewish unions. In Yiddish, it was called *Di Fareinigkte Yiddishe Gewerkschaften*. The term ‘Hebrew’ in the English version is evidence of the “purity” of language used by the regime in the U.S.A. at that time when referring to Jews. Of course, no one in those unions spoke Hebrew...

time, and against the background of on-going issues, *The Warheit* served as a forum from which Miller attacked his ex-friend and colleague, attacks that in time were interpreted as stemming from purely mercenary motives.<sup>11</sup> Even if those motives undoubtedly played some kind of role, the true reasons went much deeper.

It is in this light that Miller's 1911 trip to Europe and *Eretz Israel* should be understood. Certainly, the motivation for this trip involved his personal drives and commercial interests, but as we shall see, the deeper motivations were more significant by far. At the end of 1914, about four months after the outbreak of "The Great War," he was fired from his position as the editor of *The Warheit* – which at the time had a circulation of 100,000 copies a day<sup>12</sup> – due to either his 'courageous' or 'opportunistic' public stands, depending again, on the eye of the beholder. Miller advised the immigrant population to overcome the anti-Russian sentiments that rightfully characterized them, and to give their support to the Allies, including Russia. If his 1911 journey to *Eretz Israel* signified the height of his influence, his dismissal in 1914 represented the beginning of his fall from power. Miller tried to return to the public arena three times via journalism, the method he knew best. He founded an unsuccessful paper in 1915, a weekly that was relatively successful between 1917-1918, and the third opened and closed in 1925.

### The Journey to *Eretz Israel*

Towards the end of 1910, a headline on the first page of *The Warheit* announced Miller's proposed visit to Europe, and from there, to the "main goal" of his journey, Palestine.<sup>13</sup>

*The Warheit* reported that Miller had "a letter of recommendation from the Minister of State, Knox" and added details about the goal of the trip: "to study the Jewish situation in general, especially with regard to immigration." "I am not a Zionist," Miller insisted, "but Zionism must be part of the larger question of Jewish immigration." Miller's statements were meant to pave the way for his upcoming trip and to lend it a *Klal Yisrael* sensibility. There was a general consensus as to the significance of the state of European Jewry but the future of immigration to the U.S. and *Eretz Israel*, or Palestine, was a somewhat less important factor, prompting Miller to emphasize the "non-Zionist" facet of his persona – known as he was as a Jewish socialist.

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<sup>11</sup> Tali Tadmor-Shimoni, "The Newspaper Wars of Louis Miller", *Kesher*, vol. VIII (1990): 23-33 [Heb.].

<sup>12</sup> *Warheit*, April 17, 1914, 4.

<sup>13</sup> *Warheit*, December 28, 1910, 1.

The seemingly anti-Zionist statements were meant to “kosherize” Miller in popular opinion during a period in which organized Zionism was viewed with tremendous skepticism.<sup>14</sup>

In spite of the controversy, at the end of December 1910, Miller crossed the Atlantic Ocean on his way to visit Palestine. He visited Europe first, and in Berlin met Isaac Leib Peretz, obtaining a promise from this celebrated author to write for *The Warheit*. A picture of the famous writer appeared on the front page of the paper.<sup>15</sup> Miller spent three weeks in Russia and the reports of his visit, which started in the north, were bleak, although alongside an article entitled “Covert and Overt Political, Social and Economic Anti-Semitism,”<sup>16</sup> Miller reported with wonder on “Jews who wanted to be soldiers.”<sup>17</sup> The condition of the French Republic made a very poor impression on him, as did the hatred of “Jews and talented people” which he found there.<sup>18</sup> In Paris, Miller met Max Nordau, one of those “talented Jews” and was so favorably impressed by their conversation that he gave Nordau the title of “Prophet and Propagandizer.”<sup>19</sup> From Paris, Miller traveled to England to meet with Israel Zangwill, who also made a very good impression on him.<sup>20</sup> These meetings intensified Miller’s *Klal Yisrael* frustrations – he lamented “the old, old, old history” of the Jews which, in his opinion, was characterized by the difficulty they had “in organizing themselves for a common endeavor.”<sup>21</sup>

All of this was written just before he boarded the ship “Portugal” on his way east from Marseille. While he was on his way from New York to Europe, an editorial was published in *The Warheit* which sharply and clearly summarized the anticipated role of Zionism in connection to the “old, old history.” The title of the editorial posed this question: “Why should the Jews of America be Zionists?” And the answer was: because it makes them more patriotic. The notion that they have one center, one place that belongs to them, makes the Jews everywhere more patriotic.”<sup>22</sup> By suggesting this idea, Miller was in fact expressing a common understanding among Zionists of this period. No one of them really believed that most – let alone all – Jews would eventually immigrate to their old-new homeland. Hence, for them it was no less important to promote a ‘real-politic’ approach among Jewish citizens all

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<sup>14</sup> Mark A. Raider, *The Emergence of American Zionism*, (New York & London: New York University Press, 1998).

<sup>15</sup> *Warheit*, February 4, 1911, 1.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, February 28, 1911, 4.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, March 3, 1911, 4.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, March 19, 1911, 4.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, March 19, 1911, 4.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, April 1, 1911, 4.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, March 18, 1911, 4.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, January 8, 1911, 4.

over the world, especially in the emancipated countries in Europe and America. They supposed and expected that the fact that Jews are running their own state, would foster a deeper and more mature political consciousness among Jews elsewhere as well.

For Miller this claim was a sort of anti-dot counterpoint to? Against the sterile debates between anti-Diaspora and pro-Diaspora factions, or between “political” and “spiritual” Zionists, or between “assimilationists” and “keepers of Jewish tradition.” It was also significant as the link in a long chain of similar claims and actions proving that Zionism was meant not only to unite the Jewish people in the Diasporas, but was also a factor in making the Jew a loyal citizen in whatever country he lived. This loyalty itself was a positive value, and also preparation for *aliyah*, when and if the Jew decided on that course. This was the principle motivation (at least consciously speaking) for Miller’s journey to *Eretz Israel*. In other words, the editor of *The Wahrheit* meant to see to what extent the new *yishuv* in *Eretz Israel* had managed to transcend the boundaries of, in his terms, “the old, old, old, history” of the Jewish people.

His voyage across the Mediterranean lasted for ten days. The ship sailed from eastward from Marseille, and as was customary in those days, it stopped in Alexandria on its way to Jaffa. Miller spent a short time in Jaffa, and on the 13<sup>th</sup> of the month reached Jerusalem, where he stayed for two and a half weeks. On April 3<sup>rd</sup>, he sailed west, stopping at several Mediterranean seaports on his way to France where he boarded the “Mauritania” which brought him back to New York on April 28<sup>th</sup>. In all his voyage lasted about four months; he spent about three weeks of this time in Palestine.

His initial reactions were emotional. Miller shared with his readers his strange feeling of closeness to “the dirty, half-barbaric Arab and Egyptian” passengers, but not towards the others, who were “people ethnically closer to himself.”<sup>23</sup> He also wrote that although he knew he should be writing about his impressions of Jerusalem, Jaffa and the *moshavot*, he could not resist describing his impressions of the hurried visit to Alexandria, where he witnessed from up close, what he called “the new generation of “*avadim hayiinu* – slaves we were...” – (as he wrote in Hebrew, without vowelizing).”<sup>24</sup> He was most impressed by the poorest of the 25,000 Jews living in the city, even though he noted the degree of assimilation of the middle and upper classes and the accelerated modernization of the port city in the wake of the British conquest. He also noted the fact that despite the British presence, the

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., April 6, 1911, 4.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., April 8, 1911, 6.



language of the middle classes was French, which was also the official language of study in the Jewish school that had opened in the city and that served 1350 pupils.<sup>25</sup>

And the pyramids caused him to write from Jerusalem: “I find I cannot organize my feelings, impressions and thoughts.” His feelings had to do with his Forefathers – “buried beneath them” –, and he was deeply impressed by the degree of construction and development. His thoughts concerned the necessity of the pyramids as opposed to the “disappearance of Napoleon” who, as did Miller, stood and gazed at them.<sup>26</sup>

Miller was aware of his stormy emotions and therefore refrained from commenting on what was happening in *Eretz Israel*, writing instead about Egypt. He was suspicious of “first impressions,” which he described as similar to a dangerous “falling in love,” and promised to concentrate on his “last impressions” on the journey westward.<sup>27</sup> As to his first impressions of Jaffa, his account of disembarkation at the modest port of the main city of Palestine was not very different from other descriptions written by people in that period, such as Shmuel Yosef Agnon. Louis Miller, exactly like Yitzchak Kumar, the main character in one of Agnon’s novels, was not pleased after his first encounter with the Holy Land and also like Kumar, lost his way on one of the city’s filthiest streets.<sup>28</sup> As imaginary as it might sound – after all Agnon was writing literature – this description echoes the memoirs of many new comers in that period. However, as opposed to Kumar, Miller quickly reminded himself of the purpose of his visit:

“Jaffa the vibrant, which connects Jerusalem to the rest of the world by way of railroad tracks, Jaffa of the new Jewish settlement, Jaffa as the center of Zionism, Jaffa of the newly opened gymnasia, Jaffa, the neighbor of the new area called Tel Aviv...”<sup>29</sup>

“Nature Itself has Cast a Spell on *Eretz Israel*.” This was the title of the opening article of the series that dealt with current happenings in Palestine.<sup>30</sup> It is perhaps necessary to explain that Miller, and not only Miller, needed to use both terms – *Eretz Israel* and Palestine. Miller

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., April 13, 1911, 6.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., April 14, 1911, 6.

<sup>28</sup> Shai Agnon, *Tmol Shilshom*, (Tel Aviv: Shoken, 1945). This novel deals with the “Second Aliyah”, namely the flow of Jewish immigration in the years 1904-1914. *Tmol-Shilshom* is a Hebrew expression meaning ‘yesterday’ or ‘heretofore’ [see *Book of Ruth*, 2:11].

<sup>29</sup> *Warbeit*, April 14, 1911, 6.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., April 15, 1911, 6.

clarified that “when he said Palestine, he was referring neither to its Biblical meaning nor to its Utopian- Zionist connotations. He intended “Palestine” as an existing and concrete political and social reality.”<sup>31</sup> As to a spellbound “Nature,” Miller claimed that no one could ever visit the country without similar feelings, even if he didn’t believe in Zion, [sic], *Eretz Israel* [sic] or the redemption of the Land.” He was especially enchanted by the starry nights. “Even if you believe in nothing,” he wrote, “you must come here and take in the star studded skies [...] then you will understand why this people relied on the stars in the past [...] and why dreams are so important for human beings [...]”<sup>32</sup> These emotional words from the socialist and rationalist Miller about the stars and dreams must be taken in context, as Miller was certainly moved from his first encounter with this land. In his second article he again promised his readers “to discuss his trip to *Eretz Israel* in the context of the larger Jewish question.” Until then, there was no choice but to come down from the “sky and stars” to the “vulgar” reality of Jerusalem.<sup>33</sup>

Miller wrote “And between the sky and the earth stands the Bezalel Institute.” *The Warheit* editor lavished warm words on the Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design. In other articles, he mentioned it in the same breath as other educational institutions founded by “the new *yishuv*”: the Tel Aviv Gymnasia, the Polytechnic [Technion], whose goals were to educate “**Jewish children**” [bold in the original], who would be capable of devoting their lives to the service of the Jewish people.”<sup>34</sup>

As for Bezalel, alongside his description of the activities of “150 workers between the ages of 12 to 60,” including “widows and orphans,” Miller described his meeting with Boris Schatz “under the apple tree in the Bronx,” six years earlier. Schatz and Miller shared their dreams; Miller dreamt of “founding a free newspaper, not beholden to any political party,” while Schatz “dreamt of an academy of art for the Jewish nation [...] Schatz’s idea was to provide an economic base and also to foster the spirit of the nation by nurturing the creation of a unique culture [...]” Miller summarized by saying: “Dreams are not only possible, they are necessary.”<sup>35</sup>

Miller contrasted the impossible aspirations and the reality of what Schatz had created at Bezalel with what he termed “the fall of the new

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid, May 12, 1911, 4.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., April 16, 1911, 4.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., May 2, 1911, 4.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

Jerusalem.”<sup>36</sup> The city suffered socially and economically, as noted, and the situation could be summed up in three words “the *Haluka* system,” or as Miller defined it – “the religious industry of the miserable,” “the holy-business enterprise” or “the shnorr industry run by the beggars and the psalm readers.”<sup>37</sup> Miller apologized to his readers for these harsh descriptions and confessed that he hadn’t wanted to write about Jerusalem’s poverty, depression and misery. He wanted to talk about the “new yishuv in Palestine, how the communities built by our brethren had flourished and been transformed in a few years from arid deserts to flowering gardens and had transformed a people from helpless cripples to a proud, competent nation.” However, the sights he saw in the holy city “broke his heart.”<sup>38</sup>

But Miller also saw another Jerusalem, that of “the quiet martyrs of *Eretz Israel*” [sic], of “the Jewish Narodniks” - in short, the Jerusalem of the pioneers of the Second *Aliyah*. For example, he told the story of a doctor who earned less than a dollar for a hard day’s work. When he asked how she managed, she replied that she “hadn’t come to *Eretz Israel* to find personal happiness, but to help others.” Miller added “You find others like her in the fields, in the villages, in the settlements and in the schools, and they represent the new spirit of the people.” Miller talked about “a small pioneer army, soldiers and generals, doing their best hour by hour, day by day, with a shovel, a hoe, as teachers, settlers or small businessman, working to transform this country into the land of milk and honey and to make Palestine a symbol of a progress.”<sup>39</sup> Miller wrote that “when you meet them you understand how rich in its poverty and strong in its weakness this nation truly is.”<sup>40</sup>

“Jews who, until 10 years ago were traders in grain, peddled used underwear or sat behind the counter, within a year became the flag bearers of agriculture and teachers of the economics of the land [...] and this fact itself should be a source of satisfaction to all Jews, wherever they may be living and regardless of their opinions about the yishuv.”<sup>41</sup>

And from Jerusalem to the “Berg Fun Friling” or Tel Aviv, Miller could not contain his emotions when writing,

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., April 19, 1911, 4.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., April 20, 1911, 4.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., April 30, 1911, 4.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., April 29, 1911, 4.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., May 4, 1911, 4.

“Within a year, a neighborhood, yishuv, city, town - whatever you want to call it – has emerged from nothing. Not a tree stood, there was only sand, and now? Beautiful homes, clean streets, shade trees, truly a miracle - and all of it the fruits of Jewish labor. Tel Aviv is a tribute not only to those who built it, but to the entire nation. [...]. It matters not what you think or feel about Palestine – one feels pride and exaltation knowing that it was Jews who built Tel Aviv [...] it’s not the beautiful streets or the graceful houses that make Tel Aviv so important, but the power it gets from the people who pass through it, who create the very soul of this wonderful town.”<sup>42</sup>

Miller devoted two long articles to his impressions of Tel Aviv. After all, this was in his opinion, “the most beautiful and interesting creation in all of Palestine.” Doubtless Miller was expressing his own subjective perceptions. Even staunch Zionists such as the writer Yosef Haim Brenner was skeptical about those “sixty houses” built near Yaffo.<sup>43</sup> However for Brenner, Tel-Aviv was another dimension of reality, whereas for Miller it played a major role in his campaign to foster Zionism within his New York crowd (among his fellow new-yorkers?). Nevertheless, Miller also considered the practical aspects of the issue. While describing Tel Aviv he related the particulars of how the city was built, that is by “Loans from the Anglo-Palestine Company, the Zionist Bank, which have to be returned within 18 years at the rate of one dollar a week.” And also how it was governed - by a “seven member committee responsible to the Ottoman regime, authorized to collect taxes and distribute funds, led by a ‘Lord Mayor’ [sic]... there is no police force, just three night guards who patrol the streets and search for the robbers who come only from the Arab areas.” As for the people, his chronicle revealed a light-hearted citizenry: “they walk quietly in the streets, in no hurry to get anywhere, singing and making music.”<sup>44</sup> Like many who preceded and followed him, Miller compared Tel Aviv to Jerusalem,

“Just as the sky and the blinding sun are the soul of Jerusalem, and the soul of *Eretz Israel*, so the singing is the heart of Tel Aviv, and the continual happy laughter of the people there in that place near Jaffa is the very essence, heart and soul of the settlement.”<sup>45</sup>

“It is not a utopia,” Miller noted, and also “not a commune or a cooperative, but a place that has created life from a barren land and a

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., April 30, 1911, 4.

<sup>43</sup> Yosef Haim Brenner, *Reshafim*, February 1910.

<sup>44</sup> *Warbeit*, May 1, 1911, 4.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

desert of death [...] we can neither expect nor wish for anything more [...].” Again, Miller’s excitement should be understood as part of his effort to depict Zionism as a unquestionable promise for the Jewish people.

Miller confessed that “he himself couldn’t live in such a quiet place” and assumed that this would be true of most of his readers. And more than a few of the people in Tel Aviv failed to get used to the “calm, quiet and monotony, and returned to Russia where there were petty quarrels aplenty.”<sup>46</sup>

Miller left open the question of what constitutes a better life: “a dynamic, stormy life, in New York, or a small, worry-free, removed-from-global-politics life in Tel Aviv,” a place where “people read the paper three weeks after it was published” and therefore were exempt from the “troubles of the world.” Miller declined to answer the question himself but he did point out that there was more sorrow and pain in one block in New York than in all of Tel Aviv and more sorrow and pain in one day in one block in New York than in all of Tel Aviv in an entire year.”<sup>47</sup> And from Tel Aviv and Jerusalem to other places. “Jerusalem’s name is great and so is her significance,” wrote Miller stating the obvious, and great are “the Wailing Wall, the tombs and Bezalel.”<sup>48</sup>

“Tel Aviv, with its gymnasia, is beautiful, and we can expect the Polytechnic of Haifa, now being built, to be even more beautiful and have even greater influence, but the future of Palestine lies mainly with the settlements.”<sup>49</sup>

Miller emphasized the idea that the settlements were “the hope of Zionism”, and the basis for “the incredulity of anti-Zionists.” After all, Jerusalem was “a large, historical cemetery”; for the ground-breaking institutions such as “Bezalel, the Gymnasia and the Polytechnic and others not yet built” there was a chance “to enhance the cultural glory of the nation” but even that,

“...depended on the flesh and blood of the people. On the Jewish people, who will build the nation with their heart and blood, and not with donations from the Haluka [...] that is the goal of the yishuv, and that goal must totally encompass all of *Eretz Israel*.”<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., May 3, 1911, 4.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, May 5, 1911, 4.

Miller also visited Rehovot, Rishon LeTzion and the Herzl Forest. He described his visit to the Judean *moshavot* more than a month later, while his ship was crossing the Sea of Marmara on its way to the Black Sea. By then *The Warheit* had managed to insert a picture of Rishon LeTzion above the article. A stopover in Athens, and a tour of the archeological sites caused Miller to wonder whether “the end of the Jews will be like the end of Greek civilization where the only things remaining are tourist sites.” What he had seen in Rehovot and Rishon had convinced him that the chances of that happening to the Jewish civilization were very slim. Miller wrote: “The Jews are building their future by themselves, rather than exploiting slave labor,” and that is the difference between the civilization being built in *Eretz Israel* and the Greek and Roman cultures that fell.<sup>51</sup> No doubt Miller was referring to the past of Greek and Roman civilizations, because at the same time there was modern Greek and Italian nationalism, that inspired among many other nationalist movements throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century also the Zionist movement. The idea was that as much as ancient Greek and Rome were part of History, so was ancient Judaism. Likewise, just as the Greek and the Italian peoples managed to create modern Greek and Italian nation-states, so would the Jews, through Zionism.

The innovative and highly scientific agricultural practices being developed by the Jews strengthened his conviction. In the 600 acre Herzl Forrest (some 2400 *dunam*, Miller met the agronomist Williakovski, “who had studied agriculture in Paris, Berlin and other places, and who could have earned at least \$4000 a year in the U.S.A., yet was willing to come here for only \$700 – about half the salary of a Jewish tailor in New York.” The methods employed in agriculture on this farm were gaining recognition, and even the Arabs, who knew the soil well, came to learn. Miller estimated that “it was only a matter of time before the Arabs worked the land as well as the Jews [...].”<sup>52</sup>

As part of his discussion of the establishment of the new settlement, Miller noted the contributions made by Baron Rothschild. Under the paradoxical title, “Baron Rothschild’s Socialism in Palestine,” Miller once again told the story of the Baron’s settlements (*moshavot*). And in what sense was this “socialism”? In the sense that Rothschild “gave millions,” not for his own profit, but rather to a relatively large number of people, who took it upon themselves to do the hard work. In other words, Miller saw Rothschild’s philanthropy as a democratization of capital, or expansionary policy. In any case, Miller quoted settlers as saying, “There was no other way to save the yishuv.” Miller found

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., May 7, 1911, 4.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., May 4, 1911, 4.

himself torn between the practical and the progressive elements of his political philosophy and concluded that although he did not see “these things in such a positive light,” he was willing to defer final judgment until he had the chance to study the issue in depth.”<sup>53</sup>

Miller’s opinion about the *yishuv* was based not only on what he saw with his own eyes, but also on David Trietsch’s *Handbook of Palestine*, first published in 1907. Miller summarized Trietsch’s main argument as a combination of the problem of human resources; the difficulty “of transforming the urban Jew into a farmer” and the financial problem, since “without a large sum of money, it would be impossible to enrich the soil and create the necessary conditions.” Although Miller maintained that “the farmers in Palestine were not only happier than those in Russia, but they were also happier than the Jewish farmers in America” - it would be impossible to have American-style farmers in Palestine.”<sup>54</sup> It is important to note that Trietsch who supported “maximalistic” Zionism, criticized what he described as the overly conservative approach of Arthur Ruppin. Trietsch’s influence on Miller was as great, if not greater, than that of Ahad Haam.<sup>55</sup>

These observations were the beginning of the discussion that Miller had promised his readers when he landed in Jaffa, but which he delivered many days later, on his journey westward. His enthusiasm for *Eretz Israel* was one thing, his passion for “that small army of pioneers” was another, and the *moshavot*, especially Tel Aviv, was another still - and all of these were “sources of pride and surging emotions.” However, the situation in Palestine as a factor of the larger “Jewish question” and it demanded a more critical discussion. Miller was especially troubled by the question of the political future of the country. For him, a political future was a necessary condition for the development of an economy on a scale that would allow masses of Jews to immigrate there in the future – whether of their own free will or by necessity, in the event that his dire predictions as to American immigration policy came true. When Miller addressed the economic future of *Eretz Israel*, which he claimed was dependent on the political situation, he prefaced his remarks with the unequivocal declaration of his own “non-Zionism.”

In an article entitled “The Dark Sides of Palestine,” Miller apologized to those among his readers who, because of his enthusiastic reports from *Eretz Israel*, had received a mistaken impression:

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., May 14, 1911, 4.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., May 3, 1911, 4.

<sup>55</sup> *Encyclopedia Judaica*, s.v. “Trietsch, Davis”.

“I have never been further from what people understand by the term ‘Zionist’[...], the editor of *The Warheit* asserted, referring to the political dimensions of the movement, namely ‘The Charter’. Yet in spite of his disavowal, he also repeated his praise for the commitment of the *Eretz Israeli* Jews in the moshavot, the schools and other institutions, which had inspired in him feelings of national pride and honor “such as no others of any of his brethren, in any other place, had ever done.”

However, the limited list of agricultural crops grown in *Eretz Israel* – oranges, grapes and olives – no corn, wheat or other grains – proved that agriculture alone could not support an economy worthy of the name. Miller claimed that “the fundamental problem is the high cost of the land as opposed to its poor quality. And the Jews were buying the worst land, as far as soil quality went.”<sup>56</sup> But the high cost of land was only one problem. Another fundamental problem was “the advantage of the Arab proletariat.”<sup>57</sup> But, as noted, the greatest obstacle was the political problem.

“The development of agriculture and an economy requires natural resources, rivers, ports, water, and a central location. The people in Palestine are convinced that the land is rich and their location central, that they have natural resources, and that ports and roads can be constructed. The problem is that most of the land is under Arab control [...] it is not likely that the world will allow the Jews to control it [...] and the Turkish regime is not the only obstacle to the old political Zionism. All of the world powers involved in Palestine, such as Austria, France, Russia or Germany, oppose the establishment of a ‘Jewish state’ [...]”<sup>58</sup>

Behind the political problem was the question of “anti-Semitism in Palestine.” Miller wondered if perhaps it might not exist, not only in light of the fact that other “Semitic people lived there,” and not only because “public opinion and a popular press” didn’t exist there, but mainly because the Muslims didn’t accuse the Jews of killing their god. In any case, Miller avoided passing judgment, due to his difficulty in understanding the issues directly, as he termed it “the problem of language.” His discussion of anti-Semitism was based on talks with Jewish and Turkish public figures. Miller eventually proposed a distinction between industrial-economic anti-Semitism, and a hatred of the Jews for religious reasons. He explained that the hatred many Arabs

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<sup>56</sup> *Warheit*, May 8, 1911, 4.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, May 9, 1911, 4.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, May 10, 1911, 4.



felt towards the Jews in Palestine was the result of the “weakness of the Jews” and he added that “hatred of the weak is prevalent in the East.” Even if it could be assumed that the Jews themselves would change as a result of building their society, economy, and politics, Miller predicted that, “in any case, the Arab population has a problem with the regime [namely the Ottoman Empire. E.M], and the Jews will have to align themselves with the Arabs against the regime, or with the regime against the Arabs.”<sup>59</sup>

All of this caused Miller to believe that it would take “the largest order miracle” to say the least, for the Jews to achieve “ownership of the land and political power” for themselves in *Eretz Israel*. Due to his reliance on the fact that, “the most enthusiastic Zionists” (as he defined them) had already “admitted that the dream of a sovereign Jewish state in Palestine was something that could not be achieved,” Miller concluded by saying that “political Zionism was a hopeless Don Quixotic cause.” From his meetings with Zionists in *Eretz Israel*, Miller already knew that they “were searching for a new ideological foundation, and following that, a new practice for the children of Zion”; in other words, “a new Zionism of practical work.”<sup>60</sup> And what does this ‘practical Zionism’ consist of? “Two elements: economic strength and a cultural center.” Under a picture of two women harvesting grapes, Miller wrote “this is what the Jews in Palestine want and aspire to after realizing that there is no hope for statehood.”<sup>61</sup>

“In the same way that Paris is a global cultural center, Italy a center for opera, and England for industry, the Jews of Palestine want to be the cultural center for the Jewish people. This is where the language of the Jews will be cultivated, as well their art and literature [...]. They will be satisfied if a **certain number** [bold in original] of Jews establish settlements in this land and live in them. And alongside of them, schools and universities will arise, where Hebrew will be the language of education, the humanities and the arts. This is both the minimum and the maximum plan of the new Zionism.”<sup>62</sup>

Miller called for an open discussion of the question of whether “this plan was viable,” based on the assumption that it was clear that “settling in Palestine is a solution for the few.” Miller advised any Jew who had amassed between six to seven thousand dollars and who was fed up with “the hell of the slums of New York,” to purchase “a farm

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., May 13, 1911, 4.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., May 10, 1911, 4.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., May 11, 1911, 4.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

in Palestine, rather than a farm in the Catskills,” since he would immediately profit from it.”

“His Christian neighbors will not make fun of him and his children will receive a Jewish education, [...] it was only there that I saw how the young are changing, with my own eyes I saw a Jewish lad with a rifle on a horse ‘taking care of’ an Arab who tried to steal one of his flock. This new spirit can only be nurtured in Palestine.”<sup>63</sup>

Alongside farmers with small but significant fortunes, Miller was convinced that it would be possible to encourage “Jews with certain occupations and those with the means to establish new industries”<sup>64</sup> to make a life in *Eretz Israel*. As for the cultural factor, Miller opened with praise and ended with denunciation: on the one hand, he was awed by the education system in *Eretz Israel*, but on the other hand, he was furious with the *yishuv*’s attitude toward Yiddish. For him, as for many others, including many Zionists, Yiddish was an important element of Jewish history - not only for understanding or respecting the Jewish past in Europe, but also, and even more importantly, for the revival of Jewish national present. For Miller and his New York based public, Yiddish was a defining characteristic of Jewish culture and he fiercely opposed its derogation for the benefit of Hebrew.

As for the praise, Miller lavished enthusiastic words on what he had seen at the Gymnasia in Tel Aviv. He proposed that it be regarded “not only as belonging to Tel Aviv and *Eretz Israel*, but to the entire Jewish nation,” since its goal was “to educate Jewish children so that they would be capable of committing their lives and their blood to serve the Jewish people.”<sup>65</sup> Miller supplied the following edifying details: “the school opened with 17 pupils, and today has 253, including 95 girls [...], Jacob Schiff donated \$1,000, as did the Odessa Committee, but most of the budget of \$25,000 was funded by Lord Bedford.” However, in Miller’s opinion, the greatest contribution came from “the excellent teachers, who came to the Gymnasia from the finest colleges and universities of Europe, and were paid \$10 a week.”<sup>66</sup>

The graduates could continue their education at the Polytechnic in Haifa or at institutes of higher learning in Europe, since their curriculum contained not only the natural sciences and Hebrew, but also Arabic, Turkish and French and gymnastics, music and drawing. The higher classes studied classical literature and Latin. The students came from many countries, such as Russia, South Africa, and others.

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., May 2, 1911, 4.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

All of the above engendered in Miller great expectations for the next generation:

“[...] the hope, here in *Eretz Israel*, is the children. The children growing up here, the children whose hearts are developing together with the new culture, which is being nurtured today.”<sup>67</sup>

And in the meantime, till those children grew up, there was the “intelligentsia”, that same group of people who wanted to “transform Palestine into a national cultural center.” Miller offered his readers a “material foundation’ for debate on the subject.”

“As in nature, where the large fish swallows the smaller one, so it is with the relationship between the cultures of different nations. When a nation is a minority, its culture is influenced by that of the majority, as is evidenced by the bearers of our culture in Russia, Germany and even France [...] and in America. The situation is different in Palestine. Here, the few Jews determine the spiritual developments. And they are liberated not only from cultural influences, but religious, ethical, social and political ones as well. Yes, from political ones. Because the regime in Palestine is weak, they are even freer of political pressures than the Jews of America, much to the dismay of those American Jews.”<sup>68</sup>

Miller didn’t ignore the fact that Jews in Palestine were also a minority. He took the weakness of the ottoman regime as an advantage because it would not interfere with the cultural development of the Jews. His good intentions and positivism notwithstanding, Miller was no doubt exaggerating as to the possibilities for cultural development in the other places he mentioned. Judaism was also developing also in the United States, albeit her regime was stronger. At the same time, he also deplored certain political and cultural ‘policies’ and in this Miller was caught in a seeming contradiction. He emphasized (as he would continue to do throughout his life) that “in that [freedom from political pressure] there is no solution to the Jewish question. A million times no.”<sup>69</sup> As for the “condemnation” of cultural policy, Miller deplored the fact that in *Eretz Israel*, a “ban had been imposed on Yiddish.” Miller couldn’t understand how Jews could call Yiddish by the derogatory term ‘jargon’ and in this express “disdain for those writers such as Peretz, Jacob Gordon, Sholem Aleichem and others,” and he added that “the schools teach Turkish and French, but not Yiddish [...]” Miller tried to get to the root of the issue:

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., May 12, 1911, 4.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

“I asked the Hebrew fanatics in Palestine, who of course speak Yiddish, why a child in Jerusalem or Tel Aviv shouldn’t be able to read Peretz. Why deny the young access to what is happening in the Jewish world, on the Jewish street, in the press, in literature, when this knowledge is readily available to the older generation? Why? Why not? I got no reply to my question.”<sup>70</sup>

Yiddish aside, it was clear to Miller as well as to the Zionists, and to other supporters and dissenters alike, that in the immediate and even middle range future, a Jewish state could provide no solution to the “Jewish question,” which involved over 14 million Jews, a number that was only growing. As far as Miller was concerned, this “larger question” remained unanswered. “What to do with the Jews? What to do with this people, who have been wandering not 40 years in the desert, but wandering back and forth in the Diaspora for 2000 years?”<sup>71</sup>

### **Back Home**

Miller returned to New York near the end of April 1911. The first page of *The Warheit* informed its readers of a “great thanksgiving dinner” to be held in honor of his return, where Miller would deliver a speech about “his voyage to the heart of the Jewish world, a journey that may enable him to found a movement to unite the Jewish people.”<sup>72</sup> And in fact, Miller would later participate in establishing a movement in this spirit: The Jewish Congress Movement, organized during WWI.<sup>73</sup> The American Jewish Congress was founded in spite of the determined and coordinated opposition of the Jewish economic elite and the left, under the leadership of *The Forward* Miller, a devoted Jewish socialist and an ex-*Forward* leader himself only a until a decade earlier, was putting into political practice his seems-to-be remote and detached statements, by which “*Eretz Israel* was the only place where Jewish culture and ethics was being developed.”<sup>74</sup> The idea was that Jewish nationalism should play a decisive role not “only” in the middle-east, but also in the lower side of New Yorks’ east.

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., May 21, 1911, 4.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., April 28, 1911, 1.

<sup>73</sup> Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics*, 504-611.

<sup>74</sup> *Warheit*, May 18, 1911, 1.

In 1913, Miller's play, "*The Mo'ser*",<sup>75</sup> debuted on stages throughout the city. The story takes place in four typical apartments: on the border between Eastern and Western Europe, in a "*cheder*", at the home of an apostate, and in a *moshava* in *Eretz Israel*. The main characters are simple people arriving at a crossroads in their lives: either in their relationships with family members or in the location of their future homes. Most of the action takes place in Eastern Europe, but America and Palestine are always present. It is a simple drama, typical of those staged by the Jewish theatre during the period when folk art comprised what today is provided by commercial television.<sup>76</sup> The subject that concerned Miller from the start of his public career – the Jewish question – also led him to this type of artistic expression. As in similar works, the dilemmas remained unresolved, and in the event that some sort of resolution is achieved, it comes at a very high price. In this case, most of the main characters are contending with dilemmas such as whether to immigrate to the west or to Palestine; whether to be loyal to "the revolution" or to their beloved families. Other questions include whether a father should be more loyal to tradition or to freedom of choice for his daughter and what must a young woman do when saving the life of her sick child entails the apostasy inherent in getting treatment from the missionary hospital. The gentiles in the drama also find themselves faced difficult choices - ethnic loyalty versus loyalty to their professed liberal and enlightened beliefs. Even god himself appears in a small supporting role.

However, throughout these struggles and unanswered questions, it seems that Miller's own position is quite clear and ultimately, compatible with his conviction that *Eretz Israel* was the only place where a life of culture and ethics was developing, which, in retrospect, seems even more controversial. The play ends in a *moshava* in *Eretz Israel*. The scenery is beautiful; people eat, drink and make merry. They are celebrating Purim, and they take the opportunity to sing '*Hatikva*'. The conflicted heroine, called by the symbolic and diasporic name *Esther*, is a beloved and much admired teacher. In the very moving conclusion, she reconciles with her father, *Moshe*, who had betrayed her by informing on her revolutionary fiancé and handing him over to the authorities.. Esther manages to move on from her previous love and considers the possibility of giving her

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<sup>75</sup> Yiddishized Hebrew word meaning "shtinker" or "informer." Literally 'limsor' in Hebrew means 'to give' or 'to hand over'. In Jewish tradition this term bears a deep negative significance. According to some Halachic interpretations such a person who "hand over" his brothers [by giving others, mainly gentiles, incriminating information about them] merits capital punishment.

<sup>76</sup> Stefan Kanfer, *Stardust Lost. The Triumphs Tragedies and Misbegas of the Yiddish theatre in America*, (New York: Knopf, 2006).

heart to her cousin Ben-Zion, who had immigrated to *Eretz Israel* alongside her.

Happy ending or not, the play undoubtedly illuminates several familiar aspects of the Jewish question which concerned Miller and others of his generation. In hindsight, it is clear that in the completion of the circle – from anxious waiting at an unknown site, in an inn at the border, to a secure vineyard haven with fig trees in the *moshava* in *Eretz Israel* – there is something of a prophecy, because it contains the ideals of a Jew whose feelings of belonging and responsibility to “Klal-Yisrael” do not come at the expense of his socialist ideals.

Miller could not have predicted the transformation of the *moshava* to a teeming city, or of *Eretz Israel*, at least some aspects of it, to a suburb of America. In 1914 he traveled again to Europe, in order “to assess the situation [...] and ensure a larger network of foreign correspondents for *The Wahrheit* than that of any other paper.” At that time, when Miller was an ailing 58 year-old, his output waned, even though his keen insight into the Jewish question was undiminished. Before he boarded the *Lusitania* in New York, Miller traveled to Washington and met with President Wilson, both to convey and receive encouragement in the struggle over free immigration – Wilson himself was a supporter. According to the President, “the law against immigration will die,” promised a front page *Wahrheit* headline, one day before Miller sailed to Europe. It was not only the transformation of the *moshava* into a city, and the transformation of at least a part of the culture and ethics of *Eretz Israel* into something American that Miller failed to foresee, but also the intransigence of the Jewish question. Despite various reformulations. In any case, he, before and more clearly than any of his contemporaries in the proletarian camp, especially those swayed by Cahan’s magical rhetoric and by *The Forward*, discerned the significance of *Klal Yisrael* organization as a means of protecting the interests of the Jews. This was especially true with regard to free immigration and the right to organize and become citizens wherever they chose to live. Further, Miller’s ideas highlighted the importance of the settlements in *Eretz Israel*, both as a goal unto itself and as a point of reference for Jewish life in the Diasporas.

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*Politics, 1890-1917*. (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad Publishing House, 2008) [Heb.]; *The Jewish Daily Forward (Forverts) Newspaper – Immigrants, Socialism and Jewish Politics, 1890-1917*. (Brighton & Portland: Sussex Academic Press, 2009); *Berl Locker – a Zionist Diplomat, Socialist and Optimist*. (Jerusalem: Hasifria Hazionit, 2010) [Heb.]; *Un Estado Judío y Democrático – Aproximación al sistema constitucional en Israel*, (Lleida, Editorial Milenio, 2010) co-authored with Jaume Renyer.

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## Issues of Gender, Sovietization and Modernization in the Jewish Metropolis of Minsk

by *Elissa Bemporad*

### Abstract

*By using the case study of Minsk - a historic Jewish center in pre-revolutionary Russia, and capital of the Belorussian Soviet Socialist Republic after 1917 - this article explores the Sovietization and modernization of Jewish women in an urban setting of the former Pale of Settlement during the 1920s. The study of a "Jewish metropolis" like Minsk, situated in the heart of the pre-1917 territory of designated Jewish residence, provides a better insight into the ways in which most Jewish women adjusted to the Bolshevik rise to power, negotiated between Communism and Jewish identity, and integrated into Soviet society. By focusing in particular on the Minsk branch of the Women's Department of the Communist Party (Zhenotdel), this article reveals the evolution of the gender discourse on the Jewish street, the changing roles of Jewish women in the new revolutionary society, as well as the challenges they faced when attempting to modernize according to Bolshevik guidelines.*

### From Russian Jews to Soviet Jews

Beginning in February and October 1917, a small, but fiercely committed and highly organized group of Bolsheviks gradually took over the territories that had once formed the core of the Tsarist dominion. Under the leadership of Lenin, the revolutionary vanguard of the Bolshevik Party began to create a one-party political system, a state-controlled economy and an official atheistic culture.<sup>1</sup> In doing so, it brought about many changes in the lives of its residents, including the Jews. With a population of more than 3,000,000, the Jews who lived on the territories of the newly established Soviet Union constituted one of the largest demographic concentrations of Jews in the world. Before the Bolsheviks came to power, nineteenth and early-twentieth

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<sup>1</sup> The literature on the Bolshevik Revolution is vast, but see Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution*, (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); Orlando Figes, *A People's Tragedy: The Russian Revolution, 1891-1924*, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1996); Richard Pipes, *The Russian Revolution*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1991); and Leonard Scapiro, *Russian Revolutions of 1917: The Origins of Modern Communism*, (New York: Basic Books, 1984).



century Russian Jewry was, with few exceptions, largely excluded from Russian society. Legal restrictions on the admission of Jews in military and state services, education and local administration, were complemented by the compulsory residence within the boundaries of the Pale of Permanent Jewish Settlement.<sup>2</sup> The yearning to belong to the society of their residence was voiced time and again by the leaders of the Russian Jewish intelligentsia, and was frustrated on a number of occasions, first in the 1860s at the time of the failed reforms of Alexander II and later in 1905, following the abortive First Russian Revolution. With the dissolution of the Tsarist Empire, the Provisional Government - brought into power by the Revolution of February 1917 - introduced freedom of speech, press and assembly for all citizens, thereby granting Russian Jews an array of political and civil rights and ending their decades-long social segregation. The Soviet regime confirmed the legal emancipation of its Jewish residents, allowing Russian Jews to join the political system, become citizens of the state and participate in the newly established socialist society without quotas or discrimination. Upward mobility was the most striking consequence of the shift to full-fledged citizenship. The number of Jews employed in the offices of the Soviet government was so remarkable that it gave the impression, mostly at the popular level, of Jewish domination of the new regime. By the mid-1920s, the Jews constituted six percent of the Soviet ruling elite and ten percent of the leadership of all Soviet economic agencies; a number of Jews held important posts in the high echelons of the Communist Party and the Red Army command.<sup>3</sup> Institutions of secondary and higher learning were open to young Jews, who were no longer forced to travel abroad to evade the existing *numerus clausus* or take a high-school equivalent exam as *externs*, as the Jewish historian Simon Dubnow and the Russian Jewish writer Isaac Babel had done.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> In Tsarist legislation, Jews belonged to the legal category of *inorodtsy* and were subject to special laws. This category also included indigenous ethnic groups such as the native tribes of Siberia, Central Asia and Trans-Caspia, the nomadic Kalmyks and Kirghizes of the steppes and the Samoeds of the region of Archangel. See Hans Rogger, *Jewish Policies and Right-Wing Politics in Imperial Russia*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 26. On the influence that Russia's lack of law and arbitrariness had on the plight of the Jews under the Tsar, see Michael Stanislawski, "Russian Jewry, the Russian State, and the Dynamics of Jewish Emancipation," in Pierre Birnbaum, Ira Katznelson (eds.), *Paths of Emancipation: Jews, States, and Citizenship*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995), 262-283. The Pale of Settlement included much of present day Poland, Lithuania, Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine and parts of Western Ukraine. Jewish residence beyond the Pale was generally prohibited.

<sup>3</sup> Benjamin Pinkus, *The Jews of the Soviet Union: The History of a National Minority*, (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 83.

<sup>4</sup> See Simon Dubnow, *Kniga zhizni: vospominaniia i razmysleniia dlia istorii moego vremeni*, St. Petersburg, 1998. Isaac Babel tells about the exam he took as an *extern* in Odessa in the short story "My father's dovecoat," see *The Complete Works of Isaac Babel*, (New York:

While opening its doors to Russian Jewry, the Soviet regime banned Jewish political organizations outside the Communist party, denied religious Jews and their institutions the right to continue playing an important role in the Jewish community, and destroyed a wide range of autonomous Jewish organizations. The Soviet leadership conveyed to its citizenry a clear message: those who did not conform, politically, culturally and socially to the new tenets of the Soviet regime would be severely punished. As early as December 1917, Lenin had called for “a purge of the Russian land from all vermin, by which he meant the idle rich, priests, bureaucrats and slovenly and hysterical intellectuals.” On August 31, 1918, *Pravda* wrote “The towns must be cleansed of this bourgeois putrefaction... All who are dangerous to the cause of the revolution must be exterminated.”<sup>5</sup> Lenin confirmed his intention by imprisoning, deporting and sentencing to death thousands of potential or real opponents. According to historian Robert Conquest, from 1917 to 1923 200,000 persons were killed by the Cheka and 300,000 as a result of repressive measures, such as the containment of risings and mutinies.<sup>6</sup> Summary trials against Jewish political, religious and cultural leaders who did not succeed in fleeing the country were followed by mock ones against religious Judaism, held responsible for perpetuating “bourgeois” and anti-Soviet behaviour among Soviet Jewish citizens. With the exception of Soviet Yiddish culture, most forms of Jewish particularity, be it allegiance to the Zionist or Bundist parties, observance of religious rituals, or commitment to Hebrew language and culture, were delegitimized as part of the general drive to get rid of political opposition and to wipe out clericalism. Supporters of political parties, members of religious communities and owners of non-Soviet businesses or enterprises were pushed to the margins of the new society. This also was an expression of Lenin’s intent to establish power with no concession to and compromise with the “bourgeois enemy.” In the early phase of the Revolution, this intent found its high point in the bloody suppression of the Kronstadt Rebellion of March 1921.<sup>7</sup>

### Soviet Jewish Women

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Norton, 2002).

<sup>5</sup> Both quotes are from Geoffrey Hosking, *The First Socialist Society: A History of the Soviet Union from Within*, (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1997), 70. Instituted in December 1917, and later renamed GPU, the Cheka, or the Extraordinary Commission for Struggle with Counterrevolution and Sabotage, was the Soviet state security organization.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 71.

<sup>7</sup> On the Kronstadt rebellion, see Paul Avrich, *Kronstadt 1921*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1970); and Israel Getzler, *Kronstadt 1917-1921: The Fate of a Soviet Democracy*, (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

While several studies have examined different aspects of Soviet Jewish life, the specific ways in which Jewish women confronted the Bolshevik experiment remain largely unknown to historians.<sup>8</sup> The study of the roles and representations of Jewish women in the cultural, social and political settings of modern Eastern Europe has been confined to Tsarist Russia and interwar Poland.<sup>9</sup> Writing about Jewish women in the Soviet context is challenging not only due to the lack of preexistent scholarly work on the subject, but also because of the absence of institutions specifically created for and/or by Jewish women to address educational, legal, economic or social questions related to their lives. Institutions such as schools for Jewish girls or philanthropic associations run by Jewish women, which existed elsewhere in Eastern Europe, and which could serve as a starting point in evaluating Jewish women's integration into the political, economic and cultural life created by the Bolsheviks, no longer existed under the Soviet regime. The Bolsheviks wiped out most separate spheres of public activity for Jewish women, such as the religious, cultural and welfare societies established in late Imperial Russia. Deemed as bourgeois institutions, these societies for Jewish women posed a threat to the unity of the Bolshevik cause, which indeed advocated fighting for the equality of sexes but not based on women's specific national, ethnic or religious identity.

Using the case study of Minsk - a historic Jewish demographic, religious and political center in pre-revolutionary Russia, and capital of the Belorussian Soviet Socialist Republic (BSSR) after 1919<sup>10</sup> - this article

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<sup>8</sup> See, for example, Zvi Y. Gitelman, *Jewish Nationality and Soviet Politics: The Jewish Sections of the CPSU 1917-1930*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972); Mordechai Altshuler, *Ha-yensektsiya bi-vrit ha-mo'atsot: beyn komuniẓm ve-leumiyyut*, (Tel Aviv: Sifriyat po'alim, 1981); Jeffrey Veidlinger, *The Moscow State Yiddish Theater: Jewish Culture on the Soviet Stage*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000); David Shneer, *Yiddish and the Creation of Soviet Jewish Culture, 1918-1930*, (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Anna Shternshis, *Soviet and Kosher: Jewish Popular Culture in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006); Arkadi Zeltser, *Evrei v sovetskoi provintsii: Vitebsk i mestechki, 1917-1941*, (Moscow: Rosspen, 2006).

<sup>9</sup> No mention of Soviet Jewish women appears in the collection of essays edited by Judith Baskin, *Jewish Women in Historical Perspective*, in Paula Hyman's pioneering work *Gender and Assimilation in Modern Jewish History*, or in the most recent volume of *Polin*, devoted to Jewish women in Eastern Europe. See Baskin, R. Judith (ed.), *Jewish Women in Historical Perspective*, (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1999); Paula Hyman, *Gender and Assimilation in Modern Jewish History: The Roles and Representations of Women*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995); and Chaeran Freeze, Paula Hyman and Antony Polonsky (eds.), "Jewish Women in Eastern Europe", *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, 18 (2005).

<sup>10</sup> In 1897, 47,562 Jews lived in Minsk, or 52, 3% of the city population; in 1923, the Jews numbered 48,312 and made up for 43.6% of the city population; in 1926, they amounted to 53,686, or 41% (Belorussians were 43% of the city population, Russians 10%, and Poles over 3%). "Minsk," *Bolsheia Sovetskaia Entsiklopediia*, vol. 39, Moscow, (1926): 465-468. For more information on the demographics of the city, see also Arn

explores some of the ways in which Jewish women adjusted to the Bolshevik rise to power and integrated into Soviet society. The setting of Minsk (located in the heart of the dense Jewish population of the former Pale of Settlement) provides a better insight into the ways in which most Soviet Jewish women reacted to the Bolshevik experiment, and attempted to negotiate between Communism and Jewish identity.<sup>11</sup> Like so many other middle-to-large cities in the former Pale, Minsk remains a most valuable source of information about “the gender revolution” on the Jewish street primarily by virtue of its demographic nature: throughout the interwar period Jews constituted the single largest national group in the city after the Belorussians, maintaining a proportion of approximately 40% of the local population.<sup>12</sup> The analysis of general Soviet agencies and organizations where Jews, and particularly Jewish women, represented a large percentage – such as the Minsk branch of the Zhenotdel (Zhenskii otdel Kommunisticheskoi Partii Sovetskogo Soiuza, or Women’s Department of the Communist Party) are essential for the study of the challenges Jewish women faced when attempting to modernize according to Bolshevik guidelines. By exploring the *modus operandi* of the Minsk Communist agencies responsible for drawing Jewish women into the Revolution, and the strategies they envisioned to solve “the women’s question” on the Jewish street, this article begins to recreate the composite picture of the lives of “the other 50% of Soviet Jewish *his-story*.”<sup>13</sup>

### The Women’s Question on the Jewish Street: An Overview

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Rozin, “Ha-yeshuv ha-yehudi be-Minsk beshanim 1917-1941,” in Shlomo Even-Shoshan (ed.), *Minsk, ir va-em: korot, maasim, ishim, havai*, (Tel Aviv: Irgun yotse Minsk u-venotecha be-Yisrael, vol. 2, 1985) 23.

<sup>11</sup> On the “Moscow-Leningrad Jewish path to acculturation” into the Soviet system, see Yuri Slezkine, *The Jewish Century*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004); see, in particular, chapter 3 and 4.

<sup>12</sup> In Minsk, Jews came to play a special role not only by virtue of the city’s demographic nature, but also as a result of the ambivalent, uncertain and in-process-of-formation character of Belorussian nationalism and identity. See for example, Nicholas P. Vakar, *Belorussia: The Making of a Nation*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1956); B. K. Markiiianov, *Borba kommunisticheskoi partii Belorussii za ukreplenie edinstva svoikh riadov v 1921-1925 gg.*, (Minsk, 1961); S. Khrushinsky, “Belorussian Communism and Nationalism: Personal Recollections,” (New York: Research Program on the USSR, n. 34, 1953); K. P. Buslova (ed.), *Iz istorii borby za rasprostranenie marksizma v Belorussii (1893-1917 gg.)*, (Minsk: Akademiia Nauk BSSR, 1958); and E. Bugaev, *Voznikovenie bolshevistskikh organizatsii i obrazovanie kompartii Belorussii*, (Moscow: Gospolitizdat, 1959); and *V borbe za Oktiabr v Belorussii i na zapadnom fronte*, (Minsk: Gosizdat BSSR, 1957).

<sup>13</sup> For a more extensive analysis of the Sovietization of Jewish women and gender tensions on the Jewish street, see my forthcoming *Becoming Soviet Jews: The Bolshevik Experiment in the City of Minsk, 1917-1939*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012); in particular see chapter 6.

During the nineteenth century a growing preoccupation with the social condition of women emerged on the agenda of the Jewish intelligentsia. Maskilic writers, such as Y. L. Gordon, Joseph Perl and Mendele Mocher Sforim, harshly condemned the submissive role to which the Jewish religion had confined women, both in public and private spaces.<sup>14</sup> In the 1850s and 1860s, the concern of the *Haskalah* movement for the plight of Jewish women resulted in efforts to make secular education available to young women. *Maskilim* believed that a modern educational system for women would eventually free them from the overriding socio-economical restraints imposed by the patriarchal religious society in which they lived, and transform them into enlightened mothers responsible for the reformation of future generations of Jews. At the same time, however, enlightened Jewish men also feared the “dangers” of urban, middle-class Jewish women entering general secular educational institutions, and straying from Judaism altogether. The main concern of most *maskilim* remained therefore to balance Jewish values with enlightened education, thereby guaranteeing that “Jewish daughters” remained Jewish enough while freeing themselves from Medieval traditionalism.<sup>15</sup>

In a speech delivered in 1867 to mark the tenth anniversary of the founding of his private school for Jewish girls in Minsk, Chayim Funt spoke about the need to train the future modern Jewish mother, explaining that, “she must be reborn; she must prepare herself for this modest, but great mission; she must renounce superstition, improve her taste, ennoble her understanding, attach her soul to general human need”<sup>16</sup> More than 100 private Jewish schools for girls were established across the Pale of Settlement between 1844 and 1881.<sup>17</sup> With the

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<sup>14</sup> On Y. L. Gordon, see Michael Stanislawski, *For Whom Do I Toil? Judah Leib Gordon and the Crisis of Russian Jewry*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988). On Joseph Perl and Jewish women, see Nancy Sinkoff, “The Maskil, the Convert, and the *Agunah*: Joseph Perl as a Historian of Jewish Divorce Law,” *AJS Review*, 27/2 (Nov. 2003): 281-299. On the *Haskalah* movement’s criticism of traditional family relations, see, for example, David Biale, *Eros and the Jews: From Biblical Israel to Contemporary America*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); on representation of women in *Haskalah* writings and women’s roles in the *Haskalah* movement, see Tova Cohen, *Ha’ahat abuvah veba’ahat senuah: Bein metsint lebidyon bete’urei ha’ishah besifrut habaskalah*, (Jerusalem, 2002); and on Jewish women’s reading habits, see Iris Parush, *Nashim korot: Yitronah shel shuliyut babevrah hayehudit bemizrah eiropah bame’ab hatesha-esreh*, (Tel Aviv, 2001).

<sup>15</sup> For many *maskilim* like Y. L. Gordon, “women were both the problem and the solution to the preservation of Judaism.” See Olga Litvak, *Conscription and the Search for Modern Russian Jewry*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006); see in particular chapter 3.

<sup>16</sup> Eliyana R. Adler, “Women’s Education in the Pages of the Russian Jewish Press,” *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry* 18 (2005): 123.

<sup>17</sup> Adler, “Women’s Education”, 126. On education among Jewish girls in Eastern

encouragement of their parents, who found a curriculum composed of Russian, German, French, arithmetic and religious courses attractive, many middle-class girls (indeed a small minority of Jewish girls) flocked to these new institutions.

By the time of the First Revolution of 1905, Russian Jewish politics had produced a remarkable number of multifaceted movements and parties. Most of these – especially, but not exclusively, general Zionists – did not try to attract women to politics. The un-receptiveness towards women and the so-called "women's question" is reflected in the absence of Jewish women in the movements' rank-and-file and leadership, as well as in the content of the parties' programmatic platforms; these generally avoided clauses on women's political mobilization and gender social inequities. A notable exception to the tendency of neglecting the "fair sex" occurred during the elections to the Russian Constituent Assembly, organized following the events of the 1917 Russian Revolution and held in November 1917. At this time, Jewish parties across the political spectrum, specifically addressed women in order to attract them to the polls and win over their support. The left - Jewish and non-Jewish alike - helped disrupt patriarchal social traditions and liberate women from family despotism, thus attracting a significant number of female members, who often joined the movement more out of commitment to their selfhood than to the general cause. Women made up one third of the terrorist movement of the 1870s and 1880s, and by World War I they comprised 15 percent of the underground political movements of Tsarist Russia.<sup>18</sup> Reacting against their parents' political beliefs, and the very foundation of Jewish society (namely, their own role as women in the family), many Jewish women joined the Socialist Revolutionary Party, the SRs.<sup>19</sup> However, the radical leadership clearly stated that there was no separate women's question and that the emancipation of the proletariat would automatically solve gender discrimination.<sup>20</sup>

The Jewish labor party Bund, and to some degree the Marxist Zionist Jewish workers movement Poale-Tsion - both established at the end of

Europe, see Shaul Shtampfer, "Gender Differentiation and Education of the Jewish Woman in Nineteenth-Century Eastern Europe," *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry* 7 (1992): 63-87.

<sup>18</sup> As a comparison it is interesting to consider that by World War I, females comprised 16.1 percent of the membership in the German Social Democratic Party (some 175,000 women), and 2-3 percent in France (probably no more than 1,000). Marilyn J. Boxer, Jean H. Quataert, *Socialist Women, European Socialist Feminism in the 19<sup>th</sup> and Early 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries*, (New York: Elsevier, 1978), 2.

<sup>19</sup> See Amy Knight, "Female Terrorists in the Russian Socialist Revolutionary Party," *Russian Review*, 38/2 (April 1979): 139-159; see in particular, 141-142.

<sup>20</sup> On the role of women in the Russian radical movement and on the relationship between feminism and socialism in the 1870s, see Barbara Engel, "From Separatism to Socialism: Women in the Russian Revolutionary Movement of the 1870s," in Boxer, Quataert, *Socialist Women, European Socialist Feminism*, 51-74.

the nineteenth century - attracted a sizable female constituency, numerically more than any other Jewish or Russian socialist party did. In 1905, at the height of the Bund's influence on the Jewish public, Jewish women made up a third of the party's membership.<sup>21</sup> Actively engaged in the class struggle on the Jewish street, some women even came to play a leading role in the high party echelons. Two women (out of a total of thirteen founding delegates) participated in the 1897 clandestine meeting on the outskirts of Vilna, which resulted in the establishment of the Bund. Historian Henry Tobias mentions 6 women out of the 48 most important early Bundist leaders, and J. Sh. Hertz includes 55 women in his biographical profiles of the 320 most prominent Bundist leaders in the history of the party.<sup>22</sup> A Jewish woman worker by the name of Elke was the author of "Oh You, Working Masses" (*O ir arbets-masn*), considered by Bundist leader Shakhne Epshteyn the first "Yiddish marseillaise" and widely sang in Jewish revolutionary circles long before the official Bundist hymn "The Promise" (*Di shvue*).<sup>23</sup> And in 1917, a woman served on the party's Central Committee, the Minsk-born Malka Lifschitz, better known by her nome-de-guerre Ester Frumkin.<sup>24</sup>

Despite the remarkable presence of women in the Bund's leadership, as well as in the general party membership, hardly any Bundist activist openly addressed questions related to women. Ester Frumkin described her early propaganda work among Jewish women factory workers in Minsk, stressing their enthusiasm and interest in the cause:

I see them now, crate makers... soap workers, sugar workers... pale, thin, red eyed beaten, terribly tired. They would gather late in the evening. We would sit until one in the morning in a stuffy room, with only a little gas lamp burning... The girls would listen to the leader's talk and would ask questions, completely forgetting the dangers, forgetting that it would take three quarters of an hour to get home... through deep snow... With what rapt attention they listened to the talks on cultural history, on surplus value, commodity, wages, life in other lands.<sup>25</sup>

But despite the young women's dedication, with the exception of grievance over low female wages and competition between female and

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<sup>21</sup> Paula Hyman, *Gender and Assimilation in Modern Jewish History: The Roles and Representation of Women*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995), 78.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Shakhne Epshteyn, "Di yidishe kemferin," *Der froyen tog*, March 8, (1921): 2.

<sup>24</sup> On Ester Frumkin, see Naomi Shepherd, *A Price Below Rubies: Jewish Women as Rebels and radicals*, (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993); and Rochelle Goldberg Ruthchild, "Ester Frumkin: Jewish Woman Radical in Early Soviet Russia," in *Di froyen: Women and Yiddish*, (New York: National Council of Jewish Women New York Section, 1997), 58-63.

<sup>25</sup> Quoted Gitelman, *Jewish Nationality and Soviet Politics*, n. 2, 30.

male workers, Bund party conferences nearly ignored questions related to the status of women. As Yelena Gelfand stated as early as 1892, at a May Day celebration of Jewish workers in Vilna, “The women’s question is not a separate issue, but part of the great socialist question.”<sup>26</sup> The Bolshevik Revolution brought the “women’s question” to the table making it a political priority for the Communist Party. After all, theorists of classical socialism and communism had concurred long before the revolution that women’s liberation, along with the liberation of the proletariat, was a necessary precondition to create a more just and equal society. In a private letter, Marx paraphrased the words of the founding father of utopian socialism Charles Fourier, saying that “social progress can be measured exactly by the social position of the fair sex (the ugly ones included)”<sup>27</sup> The new Soviet system intended to transform the lives of women, liberating them from the “dark forces” of religion, drawing them to the Party and enticing them into playing an active role in the newly established Soviet institutions.<sup>28</sup>

### Communist Agencies Discuss Jewish Women

In the city of Minsk, capital of the Belorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, two political agencies dealt with the status of Jewish women, envisioning for them a new role to play in Soviet society. The first was the Evseksiia, or the Jewish Section of the Communist Party of Belorussia, CPB, (Evreiskie seksii Kommunisticheskoi Partii KP(b)B), established in Minsk in 1920 to Sovietize the Jewish population through Yiddish, the language accessible to most Jews, and “vanquish” all pre-revolutionary Jewish parties and communal organizations.<sup>29</sup> Besides destroying the foundations of pre-revolutionary Jewish life, the Evseksiia also strove to create new educational, political and cultural institutions that would – so it hoped – replace the role that Judaism, Hebrew culture and Zionism had played for Minsk Jews. The second Communist agency in the city that dealt with Jewish (as well as non-Jewish) women was the Zhenotdel

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<sup>26</sup> Quoted Shepherd, *A Price Below Rubies*, 146-147

<sup>27</sup> Quoted in Boxer, Quataert, *Socialist Women, European Socialist Feminism*, 8.

<sup>28</sup> On the birth of the women’s movement in Russia, see Richard Stites, *The Women’s Liberation Movement in Russia: Feminism, Nihilism, and Bolshevism, 1860-1930*, (Princeton N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1978). On gender politics in Soviet Russia, see Elizabeth Wood, *The Baba and the Comrade: Gender and Politics in Revolutionary Russia*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997).

<sup>29</sup> On the establishment and goals of the Evseksiia, see Zvi Gitelman, *Jewish Nationality and Soviet Politics*; and Mordechai Altshuler, *Ha-yevseksiyah bi-vrit ha-mo’atsot*. The first Evseksiia in Minsk was organized in 1919, but as the Polish army neared the border with Soviet Russia all its members were drafted into the Red Army and the section collapsed.



CPB, or the Women's Department of the Communist Party of Belorussia.<sup>30</sup> Besides the pre-revolutionary Bund's meetings, most of which took place underground, this was the first time that Jewish women participated in a political forum, publicly debating questions related to the status of women. With the creation in Minsk of the *Evseksiia* and the *Zhenotdel*, the "women's question" made its appearance in what had traditionally been a male-dominated and oriented world.

Established in the second half of August 1920, the *Zhenotdel* CPB intended to eradicate women's illiteracy, attract them to the social and political life of the new Soviet system, and provide them with a firm knowledge of Communism. Equating their "ignorance" with danger to the cause, the *Zhenotdel* contended that only by virtue of their Communist education could they fulfill the important role of caretakers of the younger generation, and ensure "a Communist... imprint on the children."<sup>31</sup> In standard bourgeois spirit women's education was justified by reference to their maternity. On the eve of March 8, 1922, on International Women's Day, the Women's Department As the Women's Department of the CPB stated on the eve of March 8, 1922, on Women's International Day,

One of the crucial tasks of the Communist Party is to increase the level of consciousness of the whole working class, develop its class consciousness and turn [the working class] into an active combatant for Communism...But... the level of consciousness of the working masses is not identical. Because of the conditions in which she lived under the bourgeois system, because of centuries without equal rights, ...the female worker is more backward, ignorant, downtrodden, both at home and at work. Apathetic, backward women workers represent a great danger for the Revolution [emphasis added], it is necessary... to raise the level of their consciousness, draw them into the ranks of the struggling proletariat and turn them into active participants in the building of the Soviet Union.<sup>32</sup>

In accord with Party guidelines, the *Evseksiia* approached the "women's question" as a political priority, organizing propaganda work, meetings and concerts in Yiddish for Jewish women workers and wives of Jewish

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<sup>30</sup> The Central Bureau of the *Zhenotdel* was located in Moscow; each Soviet Republic had its own branch of the Women's Department of the Communist Party.

<sup>31</sup> In February 1921, the *Zhenotdel* organized pedagogical courses for women instructors in pre-school and kindergarten institutions. The courses were intended to provide young Belorussian and Jewish women with the necessary "proletarian consciousness." See *Natsional'niy Arkhiv Respubliki Belarusi* (Hereafter NARB), f. 4 (Central Committee of the Communist Party of Belorussia), op. 1, d. 569, l. 3.

<sup>32</sup> NARB, f. 4, op. 1, d. 570, l. 43.

Red Army soldiers.<sup>33</sup> Women made their appearance in the protocols of the Jewish Section of the Communist Party of Belorussia immediately after its creation, following the defeat of the Polish military and the consolidation of Soviet power in the city. On August 15, 1920, a Jewish woman by the name of Zlata (her last name is not mentioned) was appointed responsible for carrying out propaganda work among Jewish and non-Jewish women alike. More specifically, her work involved coordinating the so-called *zhenские странички*, or women's pages, in the two early Communist periodicals published in the city, the Yiddish *Shtern* (The Star) and the Russian *Kommuna* (Commune), and in organizing performances and political meetings specifically for women.<sup>34</sup>

On September 13, 1920, the Jewish Section called for the organization of four large concert-meetings in the city. While three would be devoted, respectively, to the Red Army, elections in the Minsk City Soviet and Jewish parties, a fourth one would deal with the role of women in building the Soviet system.<sup>35</sup> Less than a year later, on July 30, 1921, the Evseksiia passed a proposal to publish in the Yiddish daily *Der veker* (The Alarm) a weekly one-page column entitled *The Woman-Worker*.<sup>36</sup> The name of the column was changed to *Froyen zaytl* (Women's Page) and later to *Froyen vinkel* (Women's Corner). At the end of 1924, the Minsk Sewing Industry Workers Party-cell decided to address women in the Yiddish wall-newspapers of the city's sewing factories and in the union's organ, *Royte Nodl* (The Red Needle). Party-cell publications also expected women to contribute as correspondents.<sup>37</sup>

The Evseksiia collaborated closely with the Zhenotdel. In a circular letter dated June 15, 1921, the Minsk Bureau of the Evseksiia addressed the Jewish Sections of the district Party committees and included women as part of the agency's political priorities:

The Jewish section must concentrate its efforts on: 1. Communist education for party members who speak primarily Yiddish; 2. Recruitment of new party members from *peredovik* workers (politically educated factory workers); 3. Communist propaganda among non-Party

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<sup>33</sup> On different strategies to attract Jewish women to political life, see Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Sotsial'no-politicheskoi Istorii (Hereafter RGASPI), f. 445 (Central Bureau of the Jewish Section of the Communist Party), op. 1, d. 9, l. 96 and NARB, f. 4, op. 1, d. 225, l. 22.

<sup>34</sup> RGASPI, f. 445, op. 1, d. 9, l. 1.

<sup>35</sup> RGASPI, f. 445, op. 1, d. 9, l. 3. One of the earlier activities coordinated by the Evseksiia was the organization of courses related to the history of the Party, in Yiddish. Within this context, comrade Zlata taught the course "The History of the Worker's Movement."

<sup>36</sup> RGASPI, f. 445, op. 1, d. 64, l. 121.

<sup>37</sup> Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Minskoi Oblasti (Hereafter GAMO), f. 1260 (Primary Organizations of the CP(b)B), op. 1, d. 2, ll. 49-50.

Jewish workers...; 4. Work among youth and women-workers; 5. Systematic control over the activity of Soviet agencies that attend the special needs of Jewish workers, such as the Jewish Section of the People's Commissariat for Education... In conducting systematic work among Jewish women workers and workers' wives, the bureau of the Evseksiia must appoint an experienced secretary to work in the Zhenotdel. [emphasis added.]<sup>38</sup>

Usually a former Bundist, the Jewish secretary of the local Zhenotdel was in charge of organizing Jewish women workers and holding speeches in Yiddish at women's meetings. She worked primarily in the Minsk professional unions with a large percentage of Jewish workers, including the unions of Industry Sewing Workers, Food Industry Workers, and Construction Workers.<sup>39</sup> In June 1921, the Minsk Bureau of the Evseksiia nominated R. Melikhovitskaia as Jewish secretary to the Zhenotdel. A former Bundist and member of the Communist Party, she gave speeches in the Union of Tobacco Workers and the city garment workshops. Melikhovitskaia also helped organize the so-called *ustnye gazety* (or readings of newspapers for illiterate women) and Yiddish concerts.<sup>40</sup>

### Gender Tensions on the Jewish Street

While acknowledging the theoretical importance of drawing Jewish women to the Party, the Evseksiia encountered difficulties on the practical level. In July 1921, the Minsk Bureau of the Evseksiia pointed out that the District Jewish Sections did not give sufficient consideration to the "women's question." "Since conducting political educational work among women is one of the priorities of each Communist agency," the Minsk Bureau invited the District sections to appoint an instructor to the Zhenotdel responsible for coordinating propaganda work in Yiddish in each factory and workshop with a significant proportion of Jewish women.<sup>41</sup> The invitation fell on deaf ears and the Evseksiia had to reiterate the order to nominate comrades suitable for the position.<sup>42</sup> Meanwhile, the publication of the women's column in the Yiddish daily

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<sup>38</sup> NARB, f. 4, op. 1, d. 225, l. 9.

<sup>39</sup> NARB, f. 4, op. 1, d. 103, l. 88. See, also, GAMO, f. 12 (Minsk District Committee of the CP(b)B), op. 1, d. 164, ll. 36-39.

<sup>40</sup> RGASPI, f. 445, op. 1, d. 64, l. 161. For examples on how the Zhenotdel and the Evseksiia collaborated in organizing both Jewish and general women's conferences, see GAMO, f. 591 (Records of the Local Offices of the Communist Party of Belorussia, Minsk Province and City, 1922-1925), op. 1, d. 22, ll. 3-5, 12.

<sup>41</sup> RGASPI, f. 445, op. 1, d. 64, ll. 38, 139.

<sup>42</sup> RGASPI, f. 445, op. 1, d. 64, l. 9.

had been discontinued.<sup>43</sup> In May 1922, it was the turn of the Central Committee of the Minsk Zhenotdel to complain about the lack of continuity in the publication of women's pages in *Veker* as well as in the Russian-language *Zvezda* (The Star), the organ of the CPB. Not satisfied with the attention given to the "women's question," the Zhenotdel accused the editors of both newspapers (most likely men) of disregarding Party instructions.<sup>44</sup>

The tension between theory and practice (so inherent in the Bolshevik experiment) plays out in a particularly vibrant way in the history of Jewish women under the Soviets. Many men viewed with resentment, or at least with indifference, the work of the Zhenotdel and in fact believed that women should carry on raising children, cooking and housekeeping. Therefore, the attempt to transform women into "agents of Revolution" and channels of Sovietization often jarred with the way in which men imagined Jewish women. Party men in particular pictured women-wives-mothers as home-actors rather than participants in the public arena.

On March 8, 1923, for example, the Minsk Party agencies organized lectures, meetings and concerts throughout the city to celebrate International Women's Day. During the program held in the Minsk Club Profintern (Internatsional Profsoiuzov, or International of Labor Unions), the Food Industry Workers' Union nominated Fruma Shteiman "hero of labor" (*geroina truda*). The congratulatory speech described her as a "devoted and productive worker." Employed in the tobacco industry for over 35 years, Fruma had been arrested twice by the Tsarist police because of her political activities and had served on the Executive Committee of the tobacco workers union from 1905 to 1918.<sup>45</sup> Her work experience, her devotion to the trade union and the revolutionary cause, and the degree of her political awareness prompted this laudatory tribute. And while the speech gave absolute priority to Fruma's accomplishment as a worker and committed revolutionary, it made no mention of the private sphere of the home, more specifically her marital status and possible role of mother.

This idealization of Fruma's behavior was part of the attempt to create role models for Jewish women, expand their contribution to the building of socialism and boost their commitment to Communism. This ideal image, however, strongly clashed with the widespread attitude that Communist men showed vis-à-vis the "women's question." Party-men, Jews and non-Jews alike, viewed the existence of the Zhenotdel with scorn. Communists often referred to the Zhenotdel as the "*bab-kom*" or "*tsentro-baba*,"<sup>46</sup> baba being a derogatory Russian term for woman. In

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<sup>43</sup> RGASPI, f. 445, op. 1, d. 64, ll. 38, 139.

<sup>44</sup> NARB, f. 4, op. 1, d. 569, ll. 9-10.

<sup>45</sup> NARB, f. 4, op. 1, d. 799, l. 2.

<sup>46</sup> See Wendy Z. Goldman, *Women, the State, and Revolution: Soviet Family Policy and Social*

1926, at a meeting of Jewish women in Minsk, Shmuel Agursky, member of the Minsk Jewish Communist elite, praised the Women's Department and snidely concluded, "You see how much we Communist men have done for you - we even have an organ designed especially for women!"<sup>47</sup> Agursky's sexual remark was a joke at the expense of the Zhenotdel.

### The New Female Political Elite

The Soviet political system created a new category for all women interested in participating in the political arena.<sup>48</sup> The so-called "*delegatka*," or delegate, was a woman who, elected by other women, coordinated propaganda work on behalf of the Zhenotdel among the women of a specific agency or factory in which she worked. Because of the specific demographic profile of Minsk, and the higher level of literacy of the Jewish population compared to the Belorussians and Russians in the city, most delegates were Jewish. Ideally, the *delegatka* participated in the social and political life of the factory and became a member of one of the two Central Workers' Clubs in Minsk, the Jewish Bronislaw Grosser Club<sup>49</sup> or the general Profintern Club. The woman delegate also held a card, or *delegatskaia kartochka*, considered an official Party document, that was supposed to be with her at all times.<sup>50</sup> Delegates met on a regular basis to discuss topics related to women's everyday life: hygiene, children, wedding laws, orphaned children, unemployment, religion, nationality policy and, in the case of Jewish women, the significance of Yiddish schools.<sup>51</sup>

Delegates were also responsible for monitoring the social conditions of other women. In 1925, two delegates investigated the case of a petition submitted to the Zhenotdel against a *melamed*, or religious teacher, accused of mistreating his mother. As it turned out, the *melamed* had never abused the mother. Rather, because of his occupation as a Hebrew teacher (virtually banned by the Soviets in their hounding of religion) he lived with the family, including his mother, in abject poverty. The 63-year-old woman had turned to the delegates asking them to help her get social security.<sup>52</sup> Finally, delegates were expected to collaborate in

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*Life, 1917-1936*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) 111.

<sup>47</sup> Quoted Gitelman, *Jewish Nationality and Soviet Politics*, 135.

<sup>48</sup> NARB, f. 4, op. 1, d. 578, ll. 13-15; NARB, f. 4, op. 1, d. 580, l. 1. See also, NARB, f. 4, op. 1, d. 572, l. 5.

<sup>49</sup> Named Grosser after the legendary Bundist leader from Warsaw, the Central Jewish club in Minsk was renamed Lenin in 1925. It held a library and organized cultural and political activities (primarily in Yiddish). The club was liquidated in the mid-1930s.

<sup>50</sup> NARB, f. 4, op. 1, d. 692, l. 87.

<sup>51</sup> GAMO, f. 162 (Records of the Local Offices of the Communist Party of Belorussia, Minsk Province, Oktiabr' District, 1921-1930), op. 1, d. 201, l. 7.

<sup>52</sup> GAMO, f. 162, op. 1, d. 356, ll. 226, 229.

producing special literature for women, such as political brochures and wall-newspapers, and participate in the literary and political circles organized for women in the city clubs.<sup>53</sup>

Born in 1897 to a stove setter and a housewife with a small shop on the outskirts of the city, Dina Rubin had never had the opportunity to study or be politically involved, spending most of her time at home taking care of her younger siblings. As she admitted, “the Revolution of 1917 found me completely ignorant about political life.” During the Polish occupation of Minsk, from mid-1919 to mid-1920, Dina began to attend political meetings.<sup>54</sup> Having joined the communist military organization in Ukraine, and then the Red Army back in Minsk, she eventually became “politically mature” (*politycheski razvita*). In 1924, the wives of the office workers in the Finance Department that employed her husband, elected Dina delegate to the Zhenotdel. As a delegate she became a member of the City Soviet, where she was active in the cooperative and juridical section, the director of a wall-newspaper, and secretary of a local factory’s committee.<sup>55</sup> Dina’s status of delegate spurred her to take on new political and social responsibilities.

Like Dina, many other Jewish women served prominently as delegates in Party cells and agencies throughout the city.<sup>56</sup> In April 1920, four of the five delegates elected in the Food Industry Union were Jewish: they were young - their ages ranging from 19 to 25, - most of them had no party affiliation and two were illiterate.<sup>57</sup> At the meeting of women workers members of the Union of Public Food Provision and Lodging (*Narodnoe pitanie i obshcheshchite*), held on April 20 of the same year, three of the four delegates elected were Jewish: Fonia Perelman (28), a member of the Bund, Chaia Pinkavskaia (30), a member of Poale-Tsion (or the Labor Zionist Party), and Zlata Mladinova (23), a candidate in the Communist Party; all three were semi-literate.<sup>58</sup> In December 1920, at the meeting of women workers in the Printing Industry, at least five of the six delegates

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<sup>53</sup> On wall-newspapers and women delegates, see GAMO, f. 162, op. 1, d. 227, ll. 1, 13. For a delegate meeting in Minsk, see GAMO, f. 12, op. 1, d. 537, ll. 1-5. On initiatives addressing specifically Jewish women, see GAMO, f. 12 (Minsk District Committee of the CP(b)B), op. 1, d. 164, l. 4. On the struggle against illiteracy in Yiddish, see GAMO, f. 12, op. 1, d. 361, ll. 49-51.

<sup>54</sup> During the Polish-Soviet war, the Polish Army occupied Minsk from August 1919 to July 1920. In the process of taking over the Northwestern region it carried out anti-Jewish pogroms. On Jewish life in Minsk under Polish occupation, see Arn Rozin, “Hayeshuv ha-yehudi be-Minsk, 1917-1941,” in *Minsk, ir va-em*, 15-17.

<sup>55</sup> GAMO, f. 12, op. 1, d. 758, l. 238.

<sup>56</sup> NARB, f. 4, op. 1, d. 578, l. 44.

<sup>57</sup> NARB, f. 4, op. 1, d. 103, ll. 69, 70-73. Delegates were often women who had not necessarily received a formal education. At the 1927 Minsk Conference of Jewish Delegates, of the 35 delegates three were illiterate and the rest semi-literate; GAMO, f. 12, op. 1, d. 558, ll. 6-14.

<sup>58</sup> NARB, f. 4, op. 1, d. 103, ll. 83-87.

elected were Jewish.<sup>59</sup> In December 1920, at the meeting of women workers in the Printing Industry, at least five of the six delegates elected were Jewish.<sup>60</sup> In October 1924, 200 women delegates participated in the Minsk District Committee. Of these, 89 were Jewish, 34 Belorussian, and 63 Russian.<sup>61</sup> At the General City Women Delegates' Meeting, held on February 27, 1926, of the 353 delegates who participated, Jewish women were 170, Belorussian women were 125, Russian women 41, and Polish women 8.<sup>62</sup> These statistics are both a reflection of the Jewish demographics of the city as well as of the higher degree of urbanization, literacy and tradition of political activism among Jewish women compared to Belorussian women. It is therefore not surprising that in the earlier stages of the Zhenotdel in the city of Minsk, Jewish women exceeded the number of Belorussian women who engaged in Party work.<sup>63</sup>

### **Yiddish, Russian or Belorussian?**

In some organizations the only women who participated in Zhenotdel initiatives were Jewish. At the general meeting of the Construction Workers Union Party-cell, held on October 21, 1924, comrade Grebenchik pointed out that, "as far as the work among women goes, there is one problem in our union. And the problem is that work is conducted only among Jewish women..." Comrade Vasserman explained the shortcoming by underlining the absence of women of other nationalities (i.e. non-Jewish) in leadership positions in the Construction Workers' Union. For this reason, most women's meetings were held in Yiddish.<sup>64</sup> In order to attract non-Jewish women to propaganda work, the Party-cell decided to divide the delegates of the Construction Workers' Union into two groups. One would operate in

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<sup>59</sup> NARB, f. 4, op. 1, d. 103, ll. 117.

<sup>60</sup> NARB, f. 4, op. 1, d. 103, ll. 117.

<sup>61</sup> One delegate was Polish and three were of unspecified nationality; see NARB, f. 42 (Narkompros BSSR), op. 1, d. 228, l. 90. According to another document, during that same month Jewish women were 100 out of 200; see GAMO, f. 12, op. 1, d. 166, ll. 11-14. At the 1924 conference, of the 275 delegates elected in the City district, 129 were Jewish, 94 Belorussian, 32 Russian, 18 Polish and 2 Ukrainian; see GAMO, f. 12, op. 1, d. 334, l. 27. In 1928, at the Delegates' City Assembly, of the 257 delegates elected, 106 were Jewish and 11 were Belorussian (there were also 14 Poles, 17 Russians, two Letts and two Lithuanians); see GAMO, f. 12, op. 1, d. 1006, l. 82.

<sup>62</sup> Of the Jewish women delegates, 85 were workers and 47 workers' wives; of the Belorussian women delegates, 44 were workers and 25 workers' wives. GAMO, f. 12, op. 1, d. 321, ll. 2-4.

<sup>63</sup> In 1928-1929, Belorussian women constituted the majority of the delegates in the Minsk District, but not in the city. See GAMO, f. 12, op. 1, d. 1123, ll. 1, 10.

<sup>64</sup> Jews were a little over 50% of the members of the Construction Workers' Union; GAMO, f. 42, op. 1, d. 228, ll. 90, 95-98.

Yiddish and the other in Russian (interestingly, Yiddish is mentioned as the first language.) This plan was not implemented until the following year.

In October 1925, bi-monthly meetings for women took place in Yiddish and in Russian on rotation. But Jewish women were still more active than Belorussian and Russian women: women's meetings had an average attendance of 200 women; of these, 150 were Jewish. Of the eighteen Zhenotdel delegates elected in the union, fourteen were Jewish women.<sup>65</sup> Six of the eighteen delegates worked in the Russian language group, and twelve in the Yiddish group. In spite of the organization of Russian-language circles to liquidate illiteracy and teach politics to Russian women, and despite the Belorussianization campaign,<sup>66</sup> in December 1926, the Construction Workers' Union conducted propaganda work among women entirely in Yiddish.<sup>67</sup> In February 1927, the Party-cell of the same union still criticized the weak involvement in propaganda work of Belorussian and Russian women, emphasizing that throughout 1926 only Jewish women attended women's yearly meetings.<sup>68</sup> At the Party-cell meeting of September 6, 1927, three delegates for the Zhenotdel read their reports. Two out of three were in Yiddish: comrade Grilman spoke about health issues and comrade Forin about excursions to local factories, activities of women's *kruzhki* (circles) and issues related to children's playgrounds.<sup>69</sup>

The debate on whether Yiddish or Russian and Belorussian should be used to enlighten Jewish women accompanied the Zhenotdel activities from the very beginning. At the Evseksiia meeting of June 10, 1921, the

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<sup>65</sup> See GAMO, f. 12, op. 1, d. 359, l. 10; GAMO, f. 37 (Minsk Municipal District Committee CP(b)B, 1920-1932), op. 1, d. 229, ll. 3-4, 16.

<sup>66</sup> The Belorussianization campaign, or *Belorusizatsiia*, was part of the general Soviet nationality policy and the *korenizatsiia* – or indigenization – campaign to favour the use of Belorussian and Ukrainian (over Russian) in the political agencies and cultural institutions of the Belorussian and Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republics. The campaign to neutralize the authority of Russian, which had come to symbolize the oppressive nationalism of the Tsarist Empire, the political foe of the Bolshevik regime, and to gain the support of non-Russian national minorities was launched in the first half of the 1920s. For more on the Soviet nationality policy and the *korenizatsiia* campaign, see Gerhard Simon, *Nationalism and Policy Toward the Nationalities in the Soviet Union: From Totalitarian Dictatorship to Post-Stalinist Society*, Westview Press: Boulder - San Francisco - Oxford, 1991; and Tedd Martin, *The Affirmative action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939*, Cornell University Press, 2001. For an assessment of the achievements and failures of the Belorusizatsiia campaign in the 1920s, see Arkady Zeltser, "Belorusizatsiia 1920-kh gg.: dostizheniia i neudachi," in *Evrei Belarusi: istoriia i kul'tura*, III-IV, (Minsk, 1998), 60-92.

<sup>67</sup> According to one document, for every 100 Jewish women active in political life, there were about 5-6 Russian women politically active. GAMO, f. 37, op. 1, d. 229, ll. 50-52, 202, 242-244.

<sup>68</sup> GAMO, f. 37, op. 1, d. 229, l. 289.

<sup>69</sup> GAMO, f. 37, op. 1, d. 229, ll. 384-385.



Zhenotdel instructor responsible for work among Jewish women complained about the use of Russian in unions with a large percentage of women who did not understand the Russian language. This had a negative effect on the participation of Jewish women in the delegates' meetings, argued the instructor. As a solution, she proposed holding meetings of Jewish women separately. While initially rejected, her proposal was reviewed and shortly thereafter accepted.<sup>70</sup> The Zhenotdel winter schedule for 1923 included as its first point the division of general delegates meeting into two groups: one would operate in Yiddish, the other one in Russian.<sup>71</sup>

In some instances, Yiddish received a greater prominence in general women's conferences, as language and ethnicity became closely intertwined. On August 17, 1924, the City District coordinators of women's work debated the "painful" (*boleznennyi*) question of conducting propaganda work in Yiddish only, the implication being that the exclusive use of the Jewish language left out Belorussian and Russian women. The head of the Zhenotdel justified the situation explaining that in the beginning meetings had been held in two languages, Yiddish and Russian. But this turned out to be impractical in so far as each lecture had to be read twice, even when "there were only ten Russian [women present]." As a result, the meetings were now held in Yiddish only.<sup>72</sup>

With the gradual implementation of the Belorussianization campaign, a new language of propaganda emerged in women's activities, Belorussian. In the work plan for September 1927-May 1928, the City District women's meeting resolved to divide the delegates into three distinct groups that would operate in Belorussian, Russian and Yiddish, respectively. General meetings would be held in Russian, with the intention to eventually shift them to Belorussian, once the Jewish and Russian delegates had become more familiar with the Belorussian language. When the City District *zhen-organizatory*, or organizers of women's work, met in December 1927 to debate the status of the bi-weekly *Belorusskaia rabotnitsa i selianka*, or *The Belorussian Woman Worker and Peasant*, one Rivkina argued that the journal should be published in Russian, and not in Belorussian, as a large segment of women (mostly Jewish and Russian) did not understand the Belorussian language.<sup>73</sup> In compliance with the Soviet nationality policy in the BSSR however, the bi-weekly's language eventually shifted to Belorussian, and by the end of

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<sup>70</sup> NARB, f. 4, op. 1, d. 430, l. 45. For debates over the use of Yiddish at Jewish women's conferences, see GAMO, f. 12, op. 1, d. 166, ll. 24-25. On the use of Yiddish for activities organized by the heavily Jewish Sewing Industry Workers Union, see GAMO, f. 12, op. 1, d. 322, ll. 4-5.

<sup>71</sup> NARB, f. 4, op. 1, d. 692, ll. 87, 145-146, 161.

<sup>72</sup> GAMO, f. 37, op. 1, d. 22, ll. 25-26, 34-36. On Yiddish and delegates' meetings, see also NARB, f. 4, op. 1, d. 799, ll. 37-40.

<sup>73</sup> GAMO, f. 12, op. 1, d. 828, ll. 79-81.

the 1920s most general women's conference were no longer held in Yiddish.

### A Soviet Jewish Institution

In many ways, the Women's Department of the Belorussian Communist Party acted as a Jewish institution, especially during the early part of the 1920s. First, most of the women who played a key role in the agency were Jewish. On February 16, 1921, the secretary of the Zhenotdel was Vainer.<sup>74</sup> At the end of that same month, Sonia Kremer took on the chairmanship of the Women's Department. In May 1921, Kremer was replaced by Mariia Reiser; Efroimskaia was appointed secretary, while Meliakhovitskaia, Chaia Kramnik and Sara Braze became instructors, or responsible for educating women workers employed in city factories and Soviet organizations.<sup>75</sup> When looking through the protocols of the 1922 and 1923 meetings of the Central Committee of the Zhenotdel of BSSR, it is difficult to find a non-Jewish name,<sup>76</sup> so much so that from a demographic vantage point, the Minsk Zhenotdel bore a stronger resemblance with the Evseksiia and other Jewish agencies operating in Yiddish in the city than with general Party organizations.

While it is hard to trace the cultural background of the Jewish women who became prominent in the Zhenotdel, it is possible to assume that most of them had been active in the Bund before the Revolution. By attracting hundreds of young Jewish women to its ranks, the Jewish party served as an important venue for the politicization of Jewish women, most of whom would have hardly considered so quickly and eagerly to participate in political and social life without their previous Bundist experience. In other words, the Bund served as a stepping stone into Soviet society and political work for Jewish women, perhaps even more than it did for Jewish men. After all, women active in socialist politics were atypical and stood out from the masses of womankind by virtue of their commitment to socialism, as well as their political and

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<sup>74</sup> NARB, f. 4, op. 1, d. 219, l. 2.

<sup>75</sup> NARB, f. 4, op. 1, d. 171, ll. 1. In 1922, there were four members in the Central Committee of the Zhenotdel: the chairperson, the agency's secretary, the instructor responsible for the district, and the instructor responsible for propaganda work in Yiddish. About the structure of the Moscow Zhenotdel, see Stites, *The Women's Liberation Movement in Russia*, 334-335.

<sup>76</sup> The women who attended the meeting of the Women's Department Central Committee on September 15, 1922, were Shabashova, Kontorovich, Galperin, Begun, Matses, Kreindel, Jakubovich, Kitaichik and Meliakhovitskaia. The one non-Jewish name was that of comrade Shabashova; see NARB, f. 4, op. 1, d. 568, ll. 1-3, 10. Jewish women leaders were also in charge of the Women's Section of the District Committee, which had a smaller percentage of Jewish women-workers and workers' wives; see NARB, f. 4, op. 1, d. 508, ll. 22-23, 51-52.

organizational activities. The high percentage of Jewish women active in the Zhenotdel persisted throughout the 1920s and up until 1930 when the Party deemed the women's question solved and liquidated the Department.<sup>77</sup>

Second, the Zhenotdel often voiced specifically Jewish concerns and interests. At the General Meeting of the Zhenotdel of the Minsk Tobacco Factory, held on August 15, 1921, to argue in favor of the struggle against clericalism Meliakhovitskaia referred to a trial organized against a Minsk rabbi. In a fusion of feminism and anti-Judaism, she stated that "the Holy Scriptures contain all kinds of... prohibitions for women... But the trial showed that in a proletarian state there will no longer be any limitations for women, as women will also be free... and... equal to men."<sup>78</sup> Following the General Meeting of the Women Workers of the EPO Bakery, organized by the Zhenotdel and held on September 19, 1921, comrade Gordon, (a woman), read a few chapters from Sholem Aleichem's work *Fun Yarid* (From the Market).<sup>79</sup> To celebrate March 8, the Zhenotdel organized in 1922, in collaboration with the Central Bureau of the CPB and the Communist Youth League, or Komsomol, a delegates' meeting devoted to the historical importance of International Women's Day and an evening with a concert-meeting in Yiddish.<sup>80</sup> On the occasion of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the First Russian Revolution of 1905, at the ceremonial delegates' meeting held on December 18, 1925, one of the two speakers was comrade Orman, wife of a construction worker. In remembering 1905, she described the dramatic events of a pogrom. She was a worker at the time. As she left the factory and ran into the street, scenes of horror passed before her eyes: she recalled the panic, the destruction, the dead children and the burial of the victims.<sup>81</sup> Together with the above-mentioned examples, the case of Orman is indicative of how prominently Jewish themes loomed in the activities of the Zhenotdel in the 1920s, especially when compared to the absence of a specific Russian or Belorussian focus.

Third, the places in which the agency convened its general meetings were often Jewish or formerly Jewish, as in the case of the Choral

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<sup>77</sup> For some statistical information about the role of Jewish women in the Minsk Zhenotdel in 1927, see NARB, f. 4, op. 9, d. 93, ll. 1, 4-5. On the reasons that led to the dissolution of the Zhenotdel see Richard Stites, *The Women's Liberation Movement in Russia. Feminism, Nihilism and Bolshevism*. See, in particular, 341-345. As Stites points out, the Zhenotdel, which by the end of the decade had lost much of its influence, was weakened by the lack of financial support.

<sup>78</sup> During this meeting, Meliakhovitskaia also spoke about the Heder, the Jewish religious school. NARB, f. 4, op. 1, d. 417, l. 101.

<sup>79</sup> NARB, f. 4, op. 1, d. 417, ll. 28, 35.

<sup>80</sup> NARB, f. 4, op. 1, d. 570, l. 17. On Jewish concerns in general women meetings see also NARB, f. 4, op. 1, d. 692, l. 87.

<sup>81</sup> GAMO, f. 12, op. 1, d. 321, ll. 45-46.

Synagogue/House of Culture. On June 8, 1924, which was also the first day of the Jewish holiday of Shavuot, the Second City Conference of Women Workers and Workers' Wives took place in the former synagogue. Besides general political questions, debates about the creation of a new Communist life-style and the protection of the health of mothers and children, the organizers read two reports at the conference; one of the reports concerned the activities of the Jewish Section of the City Department of Education (GORONO).<sup>82</sup> To celebrate the anniversary of the founding of the Minsk periodical *Belorusskaia rabotnitsa i selianka*, in September 1925, the Zhenotdel arranged the screening of a propaganda film about the use of chemical weapons in war. The event took place in the former synagogue on October 31.<sup>83</sup> On March 29, 1926, during Passover, Zhenotdel organizers held the Fourth Conference of Women Workers and Workers' Wives in the Jewish Workers' Club.<sup>84</sup> The Zhenotdel leadership convened general women conferences in Jewish places precisely because of their Jewish identity and the Jewishness of a large segment of the audience.

The topics debated at the women conferences and delegates' meetings also reflected the political concerns of the day. Together with the war-scare and the fear of an imminent attack on the USSR, which took hold of Soviet society in 1927 and lead to the organization of militarization courses also for women, in the second half of the 1920s the issue of anti-Semitism and chauvinism emerged regularly in women's meetings and conferences. In 1926, the Minsk Zhenotdel warned against the ethnic tensions existing among delegates of the Education Workers' Union and the Food Industry Union. This animosity took the shape of a linguistic strife. During the general city conferences, some Food Industry workers accused all Jews of "being rich and exploiting workers," and when Jewish delegates took the floor in Yiddish some workers hailed them with bellows, demanding that they speak Russian.<sup>85</sup> At a 1928 delegates' meeting eight women spoke, six in Russian and two in Yiddish (the national identity of the women who addressed the meeting in Russian is unknown). As a worker's wife took the floor in Yiddish, part of the audience welcomed her speech with great excitement and enthusiasm. The official Party-line viewed this reaction as the unhealthy expression of anti-Soviet Jewish chauvinism.<sup>86</sup> In late 1928, the Minshvei Party-cell resolved to include debates on anti-Semitism and Jewish

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<sup>82</sup> GAMO, f. 591 (Records of the Local Offices of the Communist Party of Belorussia, Minsk Province and City, 1922-1925), op. 1, d. 13, l. 19.

<sup>83</sup> NARB, f. 4, op. 9, d. 14, l. 252.

<sup>84</sup> GAMO, f. 12, op. 1, d. 376, ll. 24-25; GAMO, f. 12, op. 1, d. 321, ll. 56-58, 63, 65. About general women meetings held in the Jewish club see, also, GAMO, f. 1260, op. 1, d. 1, ll. 62-63.

<sup>85</sup> GAMO, f. 12, op. 1, d. 537, ll. 1-5.

<sup>86</sup> GAMO, f. 12, op. 1, d. 539, ll. 69; see, also, GAMO, f. 12, op. 1, d. 1013, ll. 5-10.

chauvinism during its women's meetings. On March 18, 1929, the same Party-cell considered expelling from the Party comrade Zusina because her conduct at the work-plant was unbecoming a Communist. One Party-cell member argued that refusing to work together with Osipova, a Russian woman, Zusina had behaved as a Jewish chauvinist. A second Party-cell member justified Zusina's behavior and accused the Russian woman worker of making anti-Semitic remarks. Following a lengthy debate, the Party-cell resolved that Zusina had neglected to renounce her Bundist past, which affected her behavior and misled her from being a good communist.<sup>87</sup> She was expelled from the Party.

### Women Against Tradition

While the Jewish political establishment scorned the archetypal image of female backwardness, it also celebrated women's leading voices in the Jewish Cultural Revolution of the late 1920s. After all, if the most unenlightened element on the Jewish street managed to reject the old ways and served as a vanguard force in the struggle against the previous order then every Jew still devoted to religious practice could do the same. Dated February 22, 1928 and entitled "Jewish Working Women against the *Yarmulke* [Traditional Jewish male covering]" the first public petition addressed to the Minsk City Soviet to boycott the production of kosher meat in Minsk was read at a women's conference and signed by Jewish women delegates. The petition stated the following:

In the course of many years, rabbis and *shobtim* [ritual slaughterers]... enslaved women workers and lived at the expense of their last earned kopek. The October Revolution...guided women towards a new way of life (*byt*). But remains of the old mold, such as the rabbi and the *shobet*, are still trying to fool the working woman, forcing her to buy kosher meat... We, working women...are appalled by the fact that the Minsk City Soviet has not taken, until today, any measures against this evil. We, working women, declare that we do not need kosher meat and we ask the City Soviet to take the necessary steps and help us liberate our proletarian way of life from the remains of the old mold as quickly as possible.<sup>88</sup>

The women delegates who signed this petition were members of an elite Soviet organization, and one can presume that their anti-religious, anti-kosher sentiments were sincere. A member of the *Evseksiia* may have suggested to the conference that it adopt the resolution, but this group of women would have eagerly agreed to such a suggestion. Indeed,

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<sup>87</sup> GAMO, f. 1260, op. 1, d. 7, ll. 43-44, 80.

<sup>88</sup> GAMO, f. 12, op. 1, d. 1016, ll. 43-44.

activist Soviet Jewish women were ashamed of the widespread image of Jewish women as bearers of backwardness and superstition, and were eager to dissociate themselves from it. To a certain extent, they may have accepted and internalized the negative image of their own group, and compensated for their “guilt” with Communist zeal.

In a similar petition dated December 1928, women served again as pioneers in the war against the vestiges of Jewish traditional life. At the Oktiaber district women’s meeting, the Zhenotdel delegates appealed to the Minsk City Soviet asking to requisition the synagogue on Liakhovskii Street. This was the first of a long sequence of public appeals by Soviet citizens to confiscate synagogues and houses of prayer in Minsk. The petition stated that, “[we] mothers, women workers and housewives need rooms for the establishment of nurseries ...we ask the City Soviet to...seize the synagogue building from the union of believers and hand it over to the nurseries.” The director of the Zhenotdel CPB, Shnaider, signed the appeal.<sup>89</sup> It is worth mentioning that this petition was embellished by the use of social categories that do not usually appear in Soviet documents of the time. While generally defined as “women workers,” “workers’ wives” or even “artisans’ wives,” here women also identified themselves through the more traditional “bourgeois” categories of “mother” and “housewife,” which described only their marital status and not their socio-economic background. In February 1930, for example, a group of Jewish women addressed the City Soviet soliciting the confiscation of the Nemiga house of prayer and *mikvah* and their conversion into a communal kitchen, a nursery and a reading room. They identified themselves only as “women workers” and “workers’ wives.”<sup>90</sup>

Encouraged to be part of the vanguard of the Cultural Revolution on the Jewish street, women were called on to participate in the campaign to collect gold, silver, iron and copper, thus supporting the industrialization and collectivization campaign and fulfilling the First Five Year Plan.<sup>91</sup> The Soviet Union launched its gold-campaign in 1930, five years before Mussolini urged the female citizens of Fascist Italy to donate their golden wedding bands to the motherland in order to boost the country’s economy.<sup>92</sup> In the early months of that year, the Minsk Jewish daily *Oktiaber* published several articles praising Jewish women who donated

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<sup>89</sup> GAMO, f. 48 (Administrative Department, Executive Committee of the Minsk Area Council of Workers, Peasants and Red Army Deputies, 1922-1930), op. 1, d. 63, l. 21.

<sup>90</sup> Lisa Eydlberg, “Di mikve makht kalye di luft,” *Oktiaber*, n. 43, 21 February (1930): 3.

<sup>91</sup> The First Five Year Plan was launched by Stalin in 1928 to strengthen the country’s economy. Also known as the Great Turn, or *Velikii perelom*, this economic policy consisted in abandoning the New Economic Policy (NEP) and introducing collectivization in the countryside and industrialization in the cities.

<sup>92</sup> See, for example, Petra Terhoeven, *Oro alla patria. Donne, guerra e propaganda nella giornata della fede fascista*, (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2006).

their Sabbath silver candle-sticks and goblets to the Revolution. So that in February 1930, the workers' wives of the Minsk shoemakers' collective bequeathed their religious objects and samovars to the Industrialization Fund, openly stating that they wished to serve as an example for the workers' wives of other shoe factories in Minsk.<sup>93</sup> During the campaign, brigades of women and school-children would go from house to house and collect religious objects to donate to the socialist cause. The Yiddish poet Sore Kahan celebrated Jewish women who supported the industrialization process by donating their jewelry and ceremonial objects to the Party, and wrote: "Ear-rings and rings, candle-sticks, samovars, the Kiddush-goblet and the fish pan, take them, remove them, comrades, may it be a contribution to brace our country."<sup>94</sup>

## Conclusion

By the end of the NEP era (the New Economic Policy inaugurated by Lenin in 1921, with somewhat less stifling political and economic restrictions for Soviet citizens) communist work among women lost its momentum and became relegated to the margins of the Party's political initiatives. Questions about women all but disappeared from the protocols of the Evseksiia meetings. While articles related to Jewish women continued to appear in the Yiddish press, the number of women's columns declined steadily and appeared only on rare occasions. In June 1928, to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the establishment of a women's organization in the Union of the Belorussian Crafts Industry, the Evseksiia planned to issue wall-newspapers in women's cooperatives of Minsk and publish a woman's column in *Oktiaber*, the Yiddish organ of the CPB.<sup>95</sup> This plan was never realized. At the general Party meeting of the heavily Jewish factory *Oktiaber*, held on February 22-23, 1930, comrade Berchanskaia, a woman, probably Jewish, complained about the absence of political activities among women at a time when the number of women workers and workers' wives, who participated in the life of the factory, was growing. To her disappointment, the conclusions of the Control Committee (*Proverkom*) of the Party-cell included almost no reference to future Party work among women.<sup>96</sup> This might have been

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<sup>93</sup> See "Bentsh-laykhter far der industrializatsye," *Oktiaber*, n. 48, 27 February (1930): 3. See also "Di kustarke: tsuhilf der sotsialistisher boyung," *Oktiaber*, n. 37, 16 January (1930): 3; "Arbeter un arbetndike zamlen mesh, kuper, tsirung farn industrializatsye-fond," *Oktiaber*, n. 41, 18 February (1930): 3; Idltshika, "A 66-yorike horepashnitse git op ire laykhter, menoyre in industrializatsye-fond," *Oktiaber*, n. 71, 27 March (1930): 3.

<sup>94</sup> Sore Kahan, "Tsum 8tn Mart," *Oktiaber*, n. 56, 8 March (1930): 4.

<sup>95</sup> GAMO, f. 12, op. 1, d. 1010, l. 13.

<sup>96</sup> GAMO, f. 1260, op. 1, d. 9, ll. 87-89. See also GAMO, f. 1260, op. 1, d. 11, ll. 69-70. During the 1928 Party-cell meeting of *Minsbvei* for the election of women delegates, of the 64 delegates elected 55 were Jewish (six Belorussian and one German); see GAMO,

an indication of the imminent liquidation of the Zhenotdel in Minsk, a process initiated by the Secretariat of the Central Committee in Moscow in late 1929, primarily, but not exclusively, for lack of funds. Launched in 1929, Stalin's Great Turn confirmed the Bolshevik' original intention to ban every form of separatism within the Party that could impinge upon the united proletarian cause. At the end of 1930, the Party closed down the Jewish Section of the Communist Party as well as the Women's Department of the Communist Party, deeming both agencies a useless threat to Communist harmony. And in the spirit of grandiose Soviet mythmaking Stalin declared the Jewish question solved and women's liberation achieved. For all intents and purposes, the abolishment of the Zhenotdel marked the end of political and educational work among women conducted by an official body devoted specifically to that goal. The alleged solution to the woman's question led to the virtual disappearance in post-1930 Party documents of the category "woman," which had always been included in statistical data collected during the 1920s.<sup>97</sup>

The most remarkable achievement of the Zhenotdel on the Jewish street of Minsk resulted in the creation of a new elite of Jewish women eager to partake in the building of the socialist system and educate other women in the spirit of Communism and equality with men. Mostly untouched by politics in the past, they now learned the basics of political and cultural organization, monitoring factory conditions, fighting against female unemployment and prostitution, and teaching literacy classes. Moreover, Jewish women who became active in the Zhenotdel could act simultaneously as communists, Jews and women, interweaving these three identities in a new distinctive unity, harmonious and contentious at the same time. Finally, for the first time Jewish women were able to attain social mobility through the Party and not through their fathers or husbands. For many Jewish women, becoming a delegate and joining the Women's Department was the first stage in their rise to high positions of responsibility and power in society. But female empowerment eventually met and collided with male empowerment, as Jewish men who found Bolshevism exhilarating also viewed Jewish women as dangerous competitors for power.

The clash between the theory of idealizing women as selfless warriors for the socialist cause, and the practice of confining – or wishing to confine them – to the realm of the home, considerably affected their lives and experiences. Perhaps in no other Jewish community in the world at the time do we find such a fierce tension between a violent push for women's emancipation espoused by Soviet discourse and the

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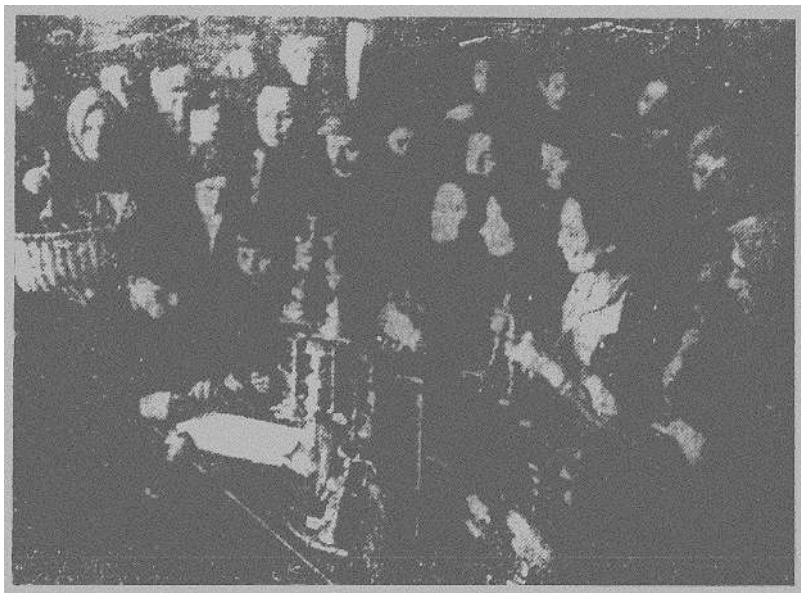
f. 12, op. 1, d. 1006, ll. 74-75, 83.

<sup>97</sup> In a similar way, the category "Jewish," always included in the statistical data available for the 1920s, disappeared after the dissolution of the Evseksiia, in 1930.



conservative thrust to keep them out of the public sphere as we do in the case of Soviet Jewish women. The tension between theory and practice was exacerbated by the encounter between the Bolshevik experiment, or the most revolutionary and brutal attempt to implement social engineering from above, and Russian Jewry, a traditional and patriarchal Jewry when compared to other Jewish communities in Western and Central Europe at the time. While modernization of Russian Jewish women took place in pre-revolutionary times, the Soviet regime's insistence on equality accelerated changes to a dizzying speed.






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## Descent from Paradise: Saul Steinberg's Italian Years, 1933-1941

by Mario Tedeschini Lalli

### Abstract

*The aesthetic persona of Saul Steinberg (1914-1999), who became one of America's most beloved artists, began to take shape in Milan during the 1930s. Steinberg arrived there in 1933 to study architecture, having left his native Romania and its virulent anti-Semitism. In 1936, while still an architecture student, he started contributing gag cartoons to popular Italian humor newspapers and soon became renowned for his clever visual wit. These first years in Italy, which he would later remember as a "paradise," turned rapidly into "hell" in 1938, with the institution of racial laws that deprived him of income, a profession, and a legal residence. Forced to live as an unwanted "foreign Jew" and unable to obtain the visas necessary to leave Italy, by late 1940 he was under threat of imminent arrest; a few months later, he spent several weeks in an internment camp before finally managing to flee the country.*

*This crucial period in Steinberg's biography has until now remained largely unknown because of Steinberg's own reluctance to discuss it. The present essay, building on an earlier study by the same author and using several unpublished archival sources, sheds light on these fraught years, while also examining Steinberg's sometimes contradictory attitudes to political events as well as art. The essay is illustrated by photographs, documents, and Steinberg's drawings, many of them from a journal he kept during his last nine months in Italy. The text of this journal is also published here in English for the first time.<sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> The point of departure for this essay was my earlier "Fuga d'artista: L'internamento di Saul Steinberg in Italia attraverso il suo diario e i suoi disegni," *Mondo Contemporaneo*, n. 2 (2008): 91-127. I am grateful for assistance received from many quarters. First, to The Saul Steinberg Foundation, New York, and its executive director, Sheila Schwartz, who was constantly available to explain nuances of Steinberg's life and art, shared artistic and archival material, and authorized the publication of the journal entries and drawings. Aldo Buzzi, Steinberg's friend and confidant for sixty years, generously welcomed me to his home on many occasions to speak about his friend; Buzzi died on October 9, 2009. Cristiana Facchini and Michele Sarfatti helped me fine tune this edition by offering additional information and asking probing questions. Thanks also to Mario Toscano for bibliographical and archival suggestions. For graciously providing information and assistance, I am indebted to Piervaleriano Angelini, Emanuele Ascarelli, Bruno Coen Sacerdotti, Carlo Di Cave, Luca Dello Iacovo, Domenico Frassinetti, Susanna Gadd, Italia Iacoponi, Verena Kustatscher, Margareta Latis, Bruno Monguzzi, Pasquale Rasicci, Francesca Pellicciari, and Paula Weber. Andi Casson ably translated the original essay into English. The present version – expanded, updated, and largely rewritten – could not have been realized without the enthusiasm and substantive

“I didn’t want to accept the reality, the betrayal—the way dearest Italy turned into Romania, hellish homeland.”<sup>2</sup>

### Life as Art

For most of his adult life, Saul Steinberg (1914-1999) drew maps—maps of real or imaginary locations, maps of words and of concepts. Often the maps are of actual places refracted through the artist’s mental constructs, as in *View of the World from 9th Avenue*, his famous March 29, 1976 *New Yorker* cover, which, reprinted as a poster, copied, and appropriated for many other cities of the world, became his personal nightmare; even today, it remains the icon that most easily identifies him.<sup>3</sup> There is, however, another splendid map, completed ten years earlier; although intended for *The New Yorker*, it was never fully published in Steinberg’s lifetime (Fig. 1).<sup>4</sup> Entitled *Autogeography*, it is a bird’s-eye view of a green territory dotted with the names of many locales, large and small, from every corner of the world. A very blue, winding river flows through the territory, and on the bottom right it skirts a small lake with an island. On the island is the word “Milano,” while on the shore northeast of the island we find a locality named “Tortoreto (Teramo).”

Young Steinberg lived for more than seven years in Milan (1933-41), arriving from his native Bucharest to enroll in architecture school. In Milan, he studied, loved, began to draw and publish, and formed enduring friendships. By mid-1938, however, the institution of the Fascist racial laws made his Italian sojourn perilous, and he began to seek safe haven elsewhere. In late April 1941, he was arrested as a Romanian Jew and sent to an internment camp in the small Abruzzi town of Tortoreto in the province of Teramo. The experience would continue to

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editorial input of Sheila Schwartz. I am also indebted to Iain Topliss and Deirdre Bair for their suggestions and corrections.

<sup>2</sup> Saul Steinberg to Aldo Buzzi, June 26, 1995, in Saul Steinberg, *Lettere a Aldo Buzzi 1945-1999*, ed. Aldo Buzzi (Milan: Adelphi, 2002), 278. The English translations of letters cited from this volume are by John Shepley (through 1978) and James Marcus (1979-99). An English edition is being planned by The Saul Steinberg Foundation, New York (SSF). The originals of Steinberg’s complete correspondence with Aldo Buzzi, in Italian, are in the archives of The Saul Steinberg Foundation. Those that were not included in the book are here referred to as “*Lettere*, unpublished.”

<sup>3</sup> The drawing for the cover can be found on the website of The Saul Steinberg Foundation, [http://www.saulsteinbergfoundation.org/gallery\\_24\\_viewofworld.html](http://www.saulsteinbergfoundation.org/gallery_24_viewofworld.html). All hyperlinks cited in this essay were active in May 2011.

<sup>4</sup> Reproduced and discussed in Joel Smith, *Steinberg at The New Yorker*, (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2005), 220-21.

haunt him and to punctuate his correspondence. But never—at least not during his lifetime — did it translate into a coherent and conscious narrative. Steinberg feared “autobiography — the last refuge of the scoundrel.”<sup>5</sup>

Nevertheless, in the mid-1970s, Steinberg’s friend Aldo Buzzi convinced him to tape record memories of his life, which Buzzi planned to edit for publication. However fascinated Steinberg was by this exercise, as well as admiring of Buzzi’s editing skills, he never allowed the book to be published. As late as 1995, four years before his death, Steinberg thanked the Italian publishing house Adelphi for its willingness to print the book, but rejected the idea of seeing “a tragic part of my life treated with *allegria*!”<sup>6</sup> He was especially hostile to a public airing of his Italian period, including the cartoons he published in the later 1930s in *Bertoldo* and *Settebello*, humorous satirical newspapers (Figs. 4, 5). Such works represented a moment in his past too much involved with “jokes.” But he could also be more vehement on the subject of publishing these cartoons. To one proposal he responded angrily, ‘what a bad idea! Blackmail!’; he feared that “dark horrors” might be exposed.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> “Temo sempre l’autobiografia — l’ultimo rifugio del furfante,” an obvious reference to Samuel Johnson’s aphorism, “Patriotism is the last refuge of the scoundrel”; Steinberg to Buzzi, November 24, 1978, *Lettere*, unpublished. And again on December 23, 1978: “Direi che la parte pericolosa, *Le Memorie*, sono un po’ come la Bandiera, the last refuge of the scoundrel” — “I would say the risky part, *The Memoirs*, they are somewhat like The Flag, the last refuge of the scoundrel”; *ibid.*, December 23, 1978, discussing his discontent with a typescript of the autobiographical book that would be posthumously published as *Reflections and Shadows* (see note 10).

<sup>6</sup> Steinberg to Roberto Calasso, May 15, 1995, copy to Buzzi, in *Lettere*, unpublished: “I was very pleased that Adelphi was willing to publish my booklet [*sic*], first 20 years ago and now again. Aldo Buzzi, my colleague...who remains a dear friend who stays in touch with visits & letters, taped my monologue 1975 ca. Translated & edited sounded charming, a prank, and after enjoying the pleasure of acceptance I wisely said no.

Recently the sight of Gadda’s *Lasciatemi nell’ombra*, a perfect booklet, red soft covers, good type, many virtues. I was envious. I asked Buzzi who generously prepared a shorter version [of the Steinberg transcript].

Again I read it with pleasure. But I immediately realized that I had no desire to read it again. A true test. It’s NO again.

In conclusion: (and I have the duty to explain my teaser act) the tragic part of my life treated with *allegria*! I’m glad to discover I made some evolution during my old age, a surprise....”

<sup>7</sup> Steinberg’s comment about “jokes” (*barzellette* in Italian) is from my interviews with Aldo Buzzi, May 24, 2007 and January 18, 2008. See also Francesca Pellicciari, *Critic Without Words: Saul Steinberg e l’architettura*, thesis (Istituto universitario di Architettura di Venezia: 2004-05), 27 [copy at SSF]; and Joel Smith, *Saul Steinberg: Illuminations*, exh. cat. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 82, 242 note 3, citing 1961-62 correspondence from Rizzoli, which had wanted to publish a book on Steinberg’s *Bertoldo* work. For Steinberg’s angry remarks about “blackmail” and “dark horrors,” see p. 324 and note 39 below.

Even in calmer moments, Steinberg remained averse to biographical inquiries, so that until his death, only fragments of his life story have surfaced. Some things he told to interviewers, others in the chronology he dictated for the catalogue of his 1978 retrospective at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.<sup>8</sup> Such autobiographical comments, however, were often designed to be more provocative and concealing than informative. Other hints about Steinberg's life could be found in his art, where he hid clues (as in *Autogeography*), but these clues are incomprehensible without biographical facts.<sup>9</sup>

Only after the death of his friend did Buzzi publish the short book entitled *Reflections and Shadows*, an edited version of Steinberg's taped narrative of the 1970s, followed by a selection of the letters Steinberg wrote to him over a fifty-year period.<sup>10</sup> Since then, the work of Joel Smith has greatly expanded our store of biographical data.<sup>11</sup> Yet the Italian period of Steinberg's life remains the least known.

The present essay seeks to shed light on that time, from Steinberg's enrollment in 1933 as an architecture student in Milan to his imprisonment and flight from Italy in 1941. What happened during that seven-year sojourn is both a personal history – Steinberg's happy embrace of Western culture and the beginning of his career as a draftsman – and, with the imposition of racial laws in 1938, part of a collective history of Fascist anti-Semitism. His was one case among

<sup>8</sup> Harold Rosenberg, *Saul Steinberg*, exh. cat. (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art: 1978), 234-45. For interviews with Steinberg, see the list in Smith, *Saul Steinberg: Illuminations*, 276. In 1960, Steinberg agreed to be interviewed by Raimond Rosenthal and Moishe Ducovny for the American Jewish Committee's Oral History Library; the long interview was never published. The original transcript, now at The New York Public Library, was made from five tapes and runs to 180 pages long; it offers interesting biographical details, although many were later published elsewhere. The transcript is undated, but can be dated by internal evidence to the summer of 1960, with a possible follow up in October of that year. Henceforth cited as "Steinberg, AJC-OHL."

<sup>9</sup> Pellicciari, *Critic Without Words*, 25, notes that in another famous map, *Looking East*, 1986, a view of the world from his worktable, Steinberg includes a fragment of Milanese topography from the area around his neighborhood of Piazza Carlo Erba. But if you look lower in the sketch of Italy, Tortoreto is noted as well, the only area on the map south of Modena. For another example of autobiographical clues in a drawing, see below, note 105.

<sup>10</sup> Saul Steinberg, with Aldo Buzzi, *Reflections and Shadows*, translated by John Shepley (New York: Random House, 2002). Originally published as *Riflessi e ombre* (Milan: Adelphi, 2001). The book is divided into four parts: the first concerns Steinberg's youth and family; the second, the war period in Milan and Tortoreto; the third, Washington, D.C. and America; and the fourth, reflections on art.

<sup>11</sup> Smith, *Steinberg at The New Yorker*, and Smith, *Saul Steinberg: Illuminations*. Both books introduce scholarly analysis to the study of Steinberg's life and work, including Bertoldo and his art from the war years.

thousands in the most widespread and dramatic historical event that befell foreign Jews living in Italy at the beginning of World War II. Steinberg's arrest and internment, his struggle to obtain the necessary papers, and his final escape are recorded in the journal he kept from late 1940, which is published here, along with some of the drawings that illustrate it. Enlivening the entries are the constant shifts between the pleasures or irritations of daily life and the dread of being entrapped in Mussolini's racial policies.

### A Romanian Jew in Italy

Saul was the son of Moritz Steinberg, a printer-bookbinder who had a small business manufacturing boxes and cardboard wrapping materials. His birth certificate says he was born on June 15, 1914 (Julian calendar), in Râmnicul Sărat, Romania (100 miles north of Bucharest; on the great river of life in *Autogeography*, the town is located near the river's narrow source at left).<sup>12</sup> But he was to grow up in the Romanian capital, attending elementary school, then high school, and spending one year as a philosophy student at the university, before seeking admission to the School of Architecture at the University of Bucharest. Decades later, speaking to his former schoolmate Eugen Campus, he explained his decision to study architecture and his failed attempt at the admission exam:

"If I had declared that I wanted to dedicate myself to art, my parents would have not supported me in school. So I declared that I wanted to study architecture. My parents agreed to this serious and prestigious profession, almost on the same level with medicine. Matchmakers started to show up at our house, offering rich partners for the future architect, even agreeing to sponsor my studies for a prolonged duration. Fortunately, I did not pass the admission examination, and so I left for Milan."<sup>13</sup>

He left in November 1933. Steinberg's Jewishness may have had something to do with his failure to pass the entrance examination. Since

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<sup>12</sup> The birth certificate is reproduced in Steinberg, *Lettere a Aldo Buzzzi*, 175. An official copy is in his personal student file at the Politecnico di Milano, Archivio generale d'Ateneo, Fondo Fascicoli studenti e Registri carriera scolastica, folder "Steinberg, Saul" (AGA, copy at SSF).

<sup>13</sup> Quoted in Iosef Eugen Campus, "Afinitati elective (Convorbire cu Saul Steinberg)" ("Elective Affinities – Conversations with Saul Steinberg"), *Descibizând noi orizonturi: Întermedieri critice, Israel, 1960-2001* (*Opening New Horizons: Critical Notes, Israel, 1960-2001*), vol. II (Libra: Bucharest, 2002), 368-69; unpublished English translation by Emil Niculescu, at SSF.



the early 1920s, anti-Semitic groups in Romania had been clamoring for the institution of *numerus clausus* in universities: a limit to “foreign” (e.g., mostly Jewish) students to further the “Romanization” of professions. *Numerus clausus* was not introduced until 1938, but in 1933 – the very year Steinberg’s application was rejected – “special entrance examinations were introduced and Jewish candidates were deliberately failed.”<sup>14</sup> Even the few Jewish students who managed to get admitted (four out of 160 at the School of Medicine in 1935) were subject to physical attack by fellow students and militants and were hardly able to attend classes. That was Steinberg’s own experience: “I was a college student for a year,” he would recall later, “but I hardly went to school because there was an atmosphere of brutality.” More and more young Romanian Jews thus emigrated to France or Italy for their studies.<sup>15</sup>

This increasingly anti-Semitic climate of Romania was something Steinberg would remember all his life; coupled with an occasional expression of nostalgia for a childhood home was a vehement rejection of the society, culture, and language of the country.

“My childhood, my adolescence in Romania were a little like being a black in the state of Mississippi.

It will be difficult...to understand – especially for a child – life in an anti-Semitic country such as Romania....The country is a cesspool.

In [the Romanian] language I have been humiliated, beaten, cursed and worse – for being Jewish, the only satisfaction those savages had....

I have what they call phantom pain, that is, strong and specific pain in the big toe of a leg amputated years before. It’s the pain of the Romanian patriot I was until the age of 8 or 10, when the anti-Semitism of the place made me renounce that fucking nation forever, remaining faithful only to the landscape, the smell, the house on Strada Palas.

I was embarrassed to be part of a primitive civilization, and pledged that I would save myself from it – [by 1933], in fact, I was in Italy, and in

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<sup>14</sup> Theodor Lavi, “Romania,” in entry “Numerus Clausus,” *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, ed. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik, 2nd ed. Vol. 15 (Detroit: Macmillan Reference, 2007), 341-42. *Gale Virtual Reference Library* (<http://go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CCX2587514969&v=2.1&u=imcpl111&it=r&p=GVRL&sw=w>).

<sup>15</sup> Carol Iancu, *Les Juifs en Roumanie (1919-1938): De l’émancipation à la marginalization*, (Paris-Louvain: E. Peeters, 1996), 292 and 390; Steinberg, AJC-OHL, T1 7 (tape 1, page 7). For a history of the policies of persecution and annihilation in Greater Romania during World War II, see Radu Ioanid, *The Holocaust in Romania: The Destruction of Jews and Gypsies Under the Antonescu Regime, 1940-1944*, (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1999).



America by '42."<sup>16</sup>

So the nineteen-year-old Saul abandoned Bucharest for Milan; in his valise were "a pink, green and blue box of sugary treats, and some drawings."<sup>17</sup> On December 16, 1933, he enrolled in the Regio Politecnico as an architecture student, ID number 33-34/81.<sup>18</sup> Steinberg was later to speak of the Milan period as his middle years, in which he carried out his transformation from "Easterner" to "Westerner."<sup>19</sup> He lived in a series of rented rooms, then in a student residence, and finally in a room on the top floor of the Bar del Grillo, a little place once at 64, Via Pascoli, a short distance from the Politecnico (Figs. 2, 3).

In some of Steinberg's recollections, these first years in Milan have a nostalgic, bohemian tone: "I don't recall if I even had plates or flatware. During my first year, at the *pensione*, I ate gigantic portions of *rigatoni al sugo* with sage twigs and all the bread you could eat, followed by goulash or stew drowned in red sauce, which you mopped up with the endless bread."<sup>20</sup> But in more candid reflections, he remembered 1934 and 1935 as unhappy years of loneliness and poverty. He had to wait until 1936 to have a good year, indeed an "excellent" one, a "paradise" year.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Sources for the five quoted passages: Steinberg, *Reflections and Shadows*, 3; Steinberg to Buzzi, May 31, 1982, *Lettere*, unpublished; Ibid., May 24, 1996 (the words are an emotional reaction to an invitation just received from the Romanian Academy, described elsewhere in the letter. The Academy had proposed awarding a medal to Steinberg and erecting a statue in his honor); Steinberg to Buzzi, January 4, 1990, in Steinberg, *Lettere a Aldo Buzzzi*, 188 (the Steinberg family lived on Strada Palas); Ibid., November 20, 1987, 165.

<sup>17</sup> See Aldo Buzzi, "L'Architetto Steinberg," *Domus*, n. 214 (October 1946), 20.

<sup>18</sup> Steinberg's student identification card is among the Saul Steinberg Papers, Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, Uncat. Mss. 126 (YCAL), box 73, folder "SS Biography."

The papers remain uncatalogued; box and folder numbers cited were current as of May 2011.

<sup>19</sup> See Steinberg to Buzzi, January 8, 1959, in Steinberg, *Lettere a Aldo Buzzzi*, 50, referring to the later transformation of his sister and family, who had recently emigrated to France from Romania: "In Paris I saw sister & children. The poor things are making the transformation from Easterners to Westerners.... It's an experience that I know...." In an unpublished transcript of his tape-recorded memoirs of the 1970s, SSF, Steinberg speaks of his train journey from Bucharest to Milan in 1933. Arriving in Vincovici (Croatia), he saw "a scruffy dance hall with music and dancing all night long: a farewell party for the Orient. The West began with Carso [the border plateau between Slovenia and northeast Italy], a rather lugubrious landscape. Next the train passed the castle of Miramare [Trieste], complete with reflections in the sea, which was already a fantasy of Western kitsch. Then came Venice, the more convincing thing."

<sup>20</sup> November 26, 1992, Steinberg, *Lettere a Aldo Buzzzi*, 219. For Steinberg's own list of his Milan residences, see note 115 below.

<sup>21</sup> Steinberg to Buzzi, February 15, 1986, *Lettere*, unpublished: "I remember that 1935 was not very good, or rather, sad, whereas 1936 was excellent." Ibid., July 6, 1991:

In July 1936, the first issue of *Bertoldo* came out, a satirical humor newspaper published by Rizzoli that brought together some of the best young writers and artists of the time and was to have tremendous success.<sup>22</sup> One of the paper's writers, Carlo Manzoni, recalls that one day there appeared at the office

"a young man with a blond mustache and glasses. He has a large portfolio under one arm. He puts the portfolio on the table and pulls out a paper with a drawing of a little man, a cartoon cloud exiting from his mouth: "I would like to illustrate a short story by [Giovanni] Mosca," says the cloud. He pulls out more drawings and [Giovannino] Guareschi looks at them and places them aside. "O.K." he says, "when Mosca arrives I will show them to him. Give me your address." The young blond man says that he's studying architecture, that he lives in the student residence, and that his name is Saul Steinberg."<sup>23</sup>

Steinberg, continues Manzoni, "is immediately taken in by the group of

"Writing about 1934 seems like writing about antiquity. It was an ugly year of loneliness and poverty for me. I was in paradise in '36. Then as we know the worst and worse yet happened in '39,'40,'41,'42!"

<sup>22</sup> Italy had an active tradition of humor and satirical newspapers, which used a mix of cartoons and articles with strong, even radical political tones. After the advent of Fascism in 1922, most of them were forced to close, and in their footsteps followed new, more pliant newspapers; the most popular was *Marc'Aurelio*, published in Rome. For the government's control of such newspapers, see below, pp. 321-322 and note 31. *Marc'Aurelio* achieved notable success, so much so that Angelo Rizzoli decided to publish a similar newspaper himself, luring to Milan two of the best young writers of *Marc'Aurelio* – Giovanni Mosca and Vittorio Metz, who were to become the coeditors of *Bertoldo*. Andrea Rizzoli, the son of Angelo, managed to assemble at *Bertoldo* a team of talented young writers and artists, with Giovannino Guareschi as managing editor. For a recent survey of Italian humor newspapers before and during the Fascist years, see Guido Conti and Giorgio Casamatti, *Giovannino Guareschi al "Bertoldo": Ridere delle dittature, 1936-1943*, exh. cat. (Brescia: Museo di Santa Giulia; Parma: MUP Editore, 2008), 16-40.

<sup>23</sup> Carlo Manzoni, *Gli anni verdi del Bertoldo* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1964), 28. On *Bertoldo*, see also Cinzia Mangini and Paola Pallottino, *Bertoldo e i suoi illustratori* (Nuoro: Glisso Edizioni, 1994), and Carlotta e Alberto Guareschi, *Milano 1936-1943: Guareschi e il Bertoldo* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1994). Carlo ("Carletto") Manzoni (1909-1975) was a humorist writer, who worked for newspapers and was an author of books and radio and television programs. Giovanni ("Giovannino") Guareschi (1908-1968), journalist, humorist writer and cartoonist. As its managing editor, he was the real power behind *Bertoldo*. After the war, he would try to resuscitate the *Bertoldo* experience by creating *Candido*. He wrote many books and gained international fame for his *Don Camillo* series. Giovanni Mosca (1908-1983), journalist, humorist writer and cartoonist. He was co-editor of *Bertoldo* and later worked with Guareschi at *Candido*. He edited and wrote for different newspapers; through the 1970s he kept drawing and publishing his distinctive editorial cartoons.

friends.” His first drawing appeared in the newspaper on October 27, 1936 (signed with the pseudonym “Xavier”).<sup>24</sup> From that moment to the end of his official collaboration with the newspaper on March 19, 1938, Steinberg was to publish at least 204 cartoons in both *Bertoldo* and its supplement, *Arribertoldo* (Fig. 4).<sup>25</sup> The number he actually created, however, may have been higher if the figure of “250 or more a year” later cited by the artist is correct.<sup>26</sup> The lonesome, cash-strapped student was no more: “For those years and for my conditions,” he said twenty-two years later, “we were always very well paid. I could make a living, I could eat and sleep, buy neckties...”.<sup>27</sup> These were years of intense activity – twice-weekly newspaper deadlines, summer visits to Romania, and participation in a rich and lively intellectual ambiance.<sup>28</sup> By the spring of 1938, Steinberg was a star in his field: he quit *Bertoldo* for its competitor, *Settebello*, published by Mondadori, where he was officially part of the editorial committee (*comitato di redazione*), working not only as an artist but as the intermediary in managerial matters between the newspaper’s two editors, Achille Campanile in Rome and Cesare Zavattini in Milan. He drew the ad for the renovated newspaper, and his

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<sup>24</sup> Reproduced in Mangini and Pallottino, *Bertoldo e i suoi illustratori*, fig. 138. Of this drawing, Steinberg later recalled: “I only discovered my talent when my first drawing was published in Milan. It took me ten minutes to do, but when it appeared in the paper, I looked at it for hours and was mesmerized”; quoted in Pierre Baudson, introduction to Steinberg, *“The Americans,” Panneaux de l’Exposition universelle de Bruxelles, 1958*, exh. cat. (Brussels: Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, 1967), 1-2.

<sup>25</sup> Piervaleriano Angelini, *L’attività italiana di Saul Steinberg*, thesis (Università degli Studi di Pavia: 1981), 58 (copy at SSF), *Bertoldo* was published from July 1936 through the beginning of September 1943. Until issue n. 9, 1939, it was published twice a week; from issue 10/1939 through 27/1939, it became a weekly; from issue 28/1939 through 54/1939 again twice a week (but one of the two weekly editions was dubbed the “Edizione letteraria,” or literary edition); from issue 55/1939, it went back to weekly publication until the final issue on September 10, 1943. *Arribertoldo* was a yearly supplement. See Carlotta and Alberto Guareschi, *Milano 1936-1943: Guareschi e il Bertoldo*, 10.

<sup>26</sup> “The good American press has the advantage of having the material possibility (money) to choose quality over quantity, and thus I make about 35 drawings a year for *The New Yorker* instead of the 250 or more that I did in one year for *Bertoldo*”; Steinberg to Buzzi, July 23, 1947, *Lettere*, unpublished.

<sup>27</sup> Steinberg, AJC-OHL, T2 36.

<sup>28</sup> Besides the men at *Bertoldo*, Steinberg mingled with, among others, Leo Longanesi (journalist, and maverick publisher) and Indro Montanelli, who would become Italy’s best known and most widely read journalist after the war. Teachers, of course, among them Piero Portaluppi, Tommaso Buzzi, Gio Ponti, formed part of his milieu, as did his classmates such as Aldo Buzzi, Luigi Comencini, and Alberto Lattuada; the latter two would become famous film directors. Before long he was introduced to Cesare Zavattini, who became a leading figure in postwar Italian literature and cinema, humorist Achille Campanile and designer Bruno Munari (Zavattini and Campanile co-edited *Settebello*, to which Munari contributed).

first cartoon appeared on April 23.<sup>29</sup>

These years of “paradise” for Saul Steinberg were also the years of popular consensus in Italy for the Fascist regime, a consensus that peaked with the invasion and conquest of Ethiopia (October 1935-May 1936) and the consequent diplomatic isolation of Italy.<sup>30</sup> The first issue of *Bertoldo*, July 14, 1936, carried on the front page a large cartoon against the League of Nations, and the second issue mocked the ousted emperor of Ethiopia, Haile Selassie. Likewise, the front page of the October 27, 1936 issue, where page 3 had Steinberg’s first cartoon, printed a huge reproduction of a telegram to Benito Mussolini: “44 MILLION ITALIANS EXPRESS THEIR GRATITUDE” (for the anniversary of the founding of the Fascist party). One should remember that all newspapers in Italy had to be authorized by the government and remained under the strict control of the propaganda authorities, which periodically sent out very detailed guidelines about what to stress and what to omit in order to conform to the official political line.<sup>31</sup> Most

<sup>29</sup> The weekly *Settebello*, founded in 1933 in Rome by Oberdan Cotone, was bought by the Mondadori publishing house in 1938, with Zavattini and Campanile appointed co-editors.

By that time Cotone had become the editor of *Il Giornalissimo*, among the most vocal mouthpieces of the anti-Semitic campaign that was already in full swing; see Michele Sarfatti, *Gli ebrei nell’Italia fascista: Vicende, identità, persecuzione*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Turin, 2007), 159. English edition: *The Jews in Mussolini’s Italy: From Equality to Persecution*, trans. John and Anne C. Tedeschi (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006). In June 1938, Alberto Mondadori joined the *Settebello* editorial committee. A year later, by order of Dino Alfieri, the Minister of Popular Culture (propaganda), the newspaper changed its name to *Ecco* (sometimes known as *Ecco-Settebello*). Zavattini still edited it, but only until September 1939, when he moved to Rome to work mainly in the film industry. At the end of 1940, Rizzoli bought the paper. See Arnoldo and Alberto Mondadori-Aldo Palazzeschi, *Carteggio 1934-1974*, ed. Laura Diafani (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2007), xxvi-xxvii, notes 65, 66; Enrico Decleva, *Mondadori* (Milan: Garzanti, 1998), 243. Steinberg mentions Rizzoli’s purchase of the paper in his journal entry for December 12. Steinberg’s role in *Settebello* is noted in five letters exchanged by Campanile and Zavattini in those early months; see letters 166, 167, 168, 170, 174 in *Urgentissime da evadere. Viaggio nel ‘900 attraverso la corrispondenza di Achille Campanile*, Silvio Moretti and Angelo Cannatà editors (Turin: Nino Aragno Editore, 2010).

<sup>30</sup> The idea that in the 1930s, Fascism enjoyed a large consensus in Italy was first broached by Renzo De Felice in his monumental biography of Benito Mussolini, *Mussolini il Duce: Gli anni del consenso (1929-1936)*, (Turin: Einaudi, 1974), and it has been since largely accepted.

<sup>31</sup> The governmental propaganda structure of Fascist Italy was first organized as an Undersecretariat for Press and Propaganda, which became a full-fledged ministry in June 1936 and changed its name a year later to Ministry of Popular Culture. Dino Alfieri, minister of the department, wrote a memo in January 1937 to the editors of humor publications, “...V. It is advisable to continue to satirize attitudes and political mentalities that go against Fascism, like bolshevism, liberalism, societarianism [from the Société des Nations/League of Nations], parliamentarianism, and so on. VI. The humor press can and must fight racial hybridism, by showing colored races as physically and morally inferior....It is the duty of the humor press to target all attitudes that do not

often, the largest illustration on page 1 of *Bertoldo* was devoted to a political cartoon. Cartoons exploiting traditional anti-Semitic stereotypes also appeared, even before the enactment of the 1938 racial laws. Afterwards, however, such cartoons acquired a particular nastiness.<sup>32</sup> Still, the newspaper and its authors managed to walk the thin line between compliance and satire and succeeded in sometimes mocking, albeit with highly cautious indirectness, the pomp and pretentiousness of some features of the Fascist regime. Over and over, for example, *Bertoldo* artists would poke fun at monuments, drawing horses riding humans or triumphal arches too small for the passage of a military procession. Also, writers mocked the rhetoric of some patriotic literature for boys and girls as well as the Fascist directive to Italianize all foreign words; this latter policy the *Bertoldo* editors pushed to the extreme, with hilarious results.

How Steinberg felt at this time about working in such a political environment is not publicly recorded, except in a discussion he had with Eugen Campus in Bucharest during the summer of 1937. As Campus later recalled, Steinberg said that artists living under a dictator such as Mussolini were free from the need for “demagoguery.” It was, Campus thought, as if Steinberg were advocating a sort of “truce” in the fight

harmonize with the way of life taught by Fascism...”; quoted in Mangini and Pallottino, *Bertoldo e i suoi illustratori*, 178 note 1. For the general political restraints under which such newspapers operated, see Oreste del Buono, introduction to *Bertoldo 1936* (Milan: Rizzoli 1993), n. p., a facsimile reprint of the 1936 issues of *Bertoldo*.

<sup>32</sup> From the very beginning, two years before the racial laws, *Bertoldo* was running cartoons playing on traditional anti-Semitic stereotypes: Jews were usually characters with big noses, curly black hair, and an excessive love of money. Three cartoons appeared in 1936, and five more in 1937. The first two, for example, showed a stereotypically ugly Jew called “Abramo” trying to sell his goods (ice cream and a salve for burns) even in hell. Another one had a boy identified as “Son of Samuel” bargaining hard with his teacher about a homework assignment, as if it were a piece of merchandise (July 29, September 15, and November 11, 1936). But by 1938 not only had the number of anti-Semitic jokes increased fivefold (see the list in Guareschi, *Milano 1936-1943: Guareschi e il Bertoldo*, 480), but it had spread from cartoons to short stories and mock “Jewish” newspapers (see “Il Samuelino” by Guareschi, reproduced in Conti and Casamatti, *Giovannino Guareschi al “Bertoldo,”* 90). And some *Bertoldo* authors transformed their standard productions into overtly “political” themes. Thus Giovanni Mosca in the September 6, 1938 issue – the very same period when the government was announcing the first discrimination laws – used one of his usually very funny strips in the “Charo Paolino” series (which pretended to be letters written by a young boy, illustrated and badly misspelled) to peddle the new party line: “In the governing body of the University of Milan,” little Mario informs his friend Paolino, “there are four Jews out of seven members, while Dad says that according to the proportion of one in a thousand [the proportion of Jews to the total Italian population] the Jews in the governing body should be only 0,007, that is, only a foot and a little piece of a Jew’s leg.” The strip is reproduced in Guareschi, *Milano 1936-1943: Guareschi e il Bertoldo*, 80; pages 78-81 offer other examples, though the book downplays the meaning of the anti-Semitic cartoons.

against Fascism, albeit as a “paradox.”<sup>33</sup> Steinberg would privately admit that at that time he lived in a “political vacuum,” while “there were other people who saw better than I did – who participated, who understood” what was happening.<sup>34</sup>

A few years later, however, newly arrived in America, Steinberg had to explain to government officials how a young Jewish artist had lived happily and worked so successfully for newspapers in Fascist Italy – newspapers which, in 1941, even used some of his drawings (unsigned) in the propaganda war (Fig. 5)<sup>35</sup> While his later refusal to make public his *Bertoldo* and *Settebello* cartoons had, he claimed, a cultural basis (their concern with “jokes” being implicitly too lowbrow), the aversion may be also rooted in the fraught and nuanced politics of the 1930s – a complex situation unlikely to be understood by wartime American authorities or even by later generations. In 1942, impatiently awaiting a visa to enter the United States, Steinberg asked his cousin Henrietta Danson, who was in New York working on his behalf, not to mention “any my work [*sic*] in

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<sup>33</sup> Campus recalls that the conversation took place during a long walk in Bucharest, after Steinberg had begun publishing his drawings in *Bertoldo*; it was the last time they met before the war (Campus fixes the date as the summer of 1934 or 1935, but it must have been the summer of 1937, the only summer during his Italian sojourn that Steinberg visited Bucharest after beginning to publish in *Bertoldo*): “During this long walk, you talked openly, as usual, about your life in Milan. You were beginning to publish drawings in Italian magazines....You made a paradoxical argument, which you held maybe for the sake of being paradoxical, but also because it justified your exclusive undertaking, namely the quest for your true path in art. You would argue that in a democratic or pseudo-democratic regime, everyone has access to politics. Everyone feels it’s their duty to have a political opinion. In the fascist Italian regime, politics was available exclusively only to Mussolini. Thus, if you refuse to do politics, if you limit yourself to domains that have remained neutral, you can practice art that has not been vulgarized by the demagoguery of the present political struggle. I never forgot that discussion. I understood your argument, but I didn’t agree. I couldn’t accept this indirect truce. Like you, I wanted to maintain the freedom of personal integrity at any cost, to maintain a certain distance that was necessary to objective judgment. But that didn’t imply giving up on fighting fascism”; Campus, “Afinitati elective,” 369. Steinberg was evidently embarrassed that Eugen Campus remembered his remarks about Fascism and art in the 1930s and pretended that he suffered a “terrible amnesia, which covers the entire first, unpleasant part of my life”; Campus, “Afinitati elective,” 369.

<sup>34</sup> Steinberg, AJC-OHL, T3 75-76.

<sup>35</sup> The Churchill sendup in Fig. 5 makes a pointed Napoleonic gesture, while a small British flag waves from the top of his paper hat. Through the window on the back wall one can see an urban landscape in flames and four Tommies marching in a line. Another line of British soldiers, wearing their typical flat helmets, as well as flower pots over their lower bodies, marches in a later cartoon entitled “Prudenza del nemico” (“The Enemy’s Caution”), with the caption: “Hush! We are camouflaged.” In the background sky, an airplane with RAF insignia on its wings is tumbling to earth (*Bertoldo*, April 11, 1941, reprod. in Guareschi, *Milano 1936-1943: Guareschi e il Bertoldo*, 364).

wartime Italy” to the authorities.<sup>36</sup> By 1944, a politically correct spin – not to mention a promotion – had been put on his Italian newspaper activities. An officer in U.S. Naval Intelligence and the OSS for almost a year, he was introduced to new superiors as one who in Italy had been “editor and publisher of a well known paper violently opposed to Fascism.”<sup>37</sup> As late as 1978, in the chronology of the Whitney Museum retrospective catalogue, he still felt it necessary to explain his employment in the 1930s: “In Fascist Italy, where the controlled press was predictable and extremely boring, the humor magazines were a way of knowing other aspects of life, which, by the nature of humor itself, seemed subversive.”<sup>38</sup> Just two years later, recalling the pressure he put on Sandro Angelini to keep Angelini’s son Piervaleriano from publishing a thesis on the *Bertoldo* and *Settebello* work, he would privately use strong language that may have been provoked by more than mere aesthetics – “Who knows what dark horrors will surface?” “The horrible work...which uncovered my past... Blackmail!”<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Cited in Lawrence Danson, “An Heroic Decision”, *Ontario Review*, n. 53 (Fall-Winter 2000-01), 66.

<sup>37</sup> Typewritten copy of a letter from Commander R. Davis Halliwell to Morton Bodfish, January 27, 1944, National Archives, Washington (NARA), RG 226, OSS Personnel Files 1941-45, Box 742, Entry 224, folder “Saul Steinberg.” Both the political and the personal “upgrading” may have been the work of Harold Ross, founder and editor of *The New Yorker*, who helped him get his commission in the Navy and then a posting back to Washington in late 1944. For Ross’s behind-the-scenes machinations on Steinberg’s behalf through his friend and head of the OSS, General William Donovan, see Smith, *Saul Steinberg: Illuminations*, 30, 237, notes 42 and 52.

<sup>38</sup> Steinberg, “Chronology,” in Rosenberg, *Saul Steinberg*, 235. Smith, *Saul Steinberg: Illuminations*, 27, suggests that “Zia Elena,” the powerful matron with the square jaw who in the pages of *Bertoldo* ordered around little lost men, could also be seen as a “veiled caricature of Mussolini.” In the collection of original Steinberg drawings for *Bertoldo* and *Settebello* (some unpublished) owned by Bruno Coen Sacerdotti (see note 60 below), there is a Roman emperor strutting forward with a militaristic air. His face bears so many Mussolini-like traits that, in the Sacerdotti family tradition, the figure was always considered a sendup of Il Duce; emails from Bruno Coen Sacerdotti to the author, March 12 and 30, 2008.

<sup>39</sup> *L’attività italiana di Saul Steinberg* (see note 25) was a dissertation for a history of art degree that consisted of two volumes: one gave some biographical detail of Steinberg’s life in Italy and catalogued his work at *Bertoldo* and *Settebello*; the other was a photocopied collection of all Steinberg’s cartoons published by the two papers until September 1938. The unsigned works published in 1940-41 were not known at the time. Steinberg’s effort to prevent publication of the thesis is recounted in two unpublished letters to Buzzi. In the first, July 11, 1980, reporting on a planned visit by the two Angelinis, Steinberg wrote that “the idea of a work on my past in Italy now seems wrong to me. Who knows what dark horrors he may have dug up? ” Then, on March 28, 1983, after the thesis had been completed: “Speaking of *Bertoldo*, the horrible work of Angelini’s son which uncovered my past, what a bad idea! Blackmail! It certainly contributed to my melancholy. A two-volume thesis of Revelations, the humble past of Saul. I interrupted [this letter] to call you up, got Angelini’s number and I immediately talked to him, and made him promise that his son wouldn’t publish the work.” To the

Steinberg's only other public response to his experience in Fascist Italy came three decades after his flight, in a series of memory drawings of Milan. Some of them have a pretense of objectivity, with the streets and the buildings of the city rendered in postcard-like fashion, urban perspectives that seem to capture the architectural style of the times. But in other Steinberg drawings that very style became a retrospective political statement. He consolidated the different modes of architectural modernism practiced in Italy between the wars into what he would mockingly call "Milanese Bauhaus": perspectives are exaggerated, churches and apartment buildings are transformed into monstrous caricatures, all portholes, balconies, cantilevers, curved corners, and jutting verticals. "Milanese Bauhaus" often seasoned by Steinberg with Art Deco elements, symbolizes the whole of modernist architecture prevalent during his Italian years – Bauhaus, rationalism, Novecento, monumentalism.<sup>40</sup> Such symbolic reductionism – a typical Steinbergian device – omitted the often complex and opposing realities of the Italian architectural scene of those years, not to mention the different artistic as well as political choices of some of the participants. Many architects coming of age in the 1920s, who wanted to transform an ossified cultural environment, did adhere to Fascism, hoping that its claim to revolution would help modernize Italian architecture. But as the regime evolved, academic design morphed into a rhetorical monumentalism that invaded Italian cities. Rationalist architecture managed to express some interesting – indeed, beautiful – examples, but was definitely on the losing side. By the end of the Fascist period, with the war ravaging the country and Nazi Germany ruling half of it, abetted by Mussolini's republic in the North, some of these people would chose to fight against Fascism – and would die in the struggle.<sup>41</sup>

In the 1970s, however, Steinberg consolidated the stylistic realities of prewar Italian architecture (not to mention aesthetic links with similar

continued detriment of Steinberg scholarship, that promise was kept.

<sup>40</sup> Mocking modern architecture as nonsensical was a common pastime with the *Bertoldo* and *Settebello* staff, who did not distinguish among the different styles or schools. "Case Novecento" (houses built in the twentieth-century style) became a stereotype in itself, and many cartoons used the expression as a common slur. Typical is a detail in one of Steinberg's "Il Milione" drawings for *Settebello* (June 4, 1938; Angelini, *L'attività italiana di Saul Steinberg*, no. 210), where a building with some Bauhaus elements is dubbed both "Casa razionale" ("Rationalist house") and "900" (a reference to the Novecento movement, which was actually opposed to the rationalist movement). For Steinberg jabs at modernist architecture in the pages of *Bertoldo*, see Conti and Casamatti, *Giovannino Guareschi al "Bertoldo,"* 191, 194; parodies by other artists are reproduced on pages 72-78, and 190-95.

<sup>41</sup> For a general artistic/political assessment of Italian architecture in the interwar period, see Carlo Melograni, *Architettura italiana sotto il fascismo. L'orgoglio e la modestia contro la retorica monumentale 1925-1945* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 2008). For the participation in the Resistance movement see pages 310-317.



movements in other countries) to create an architecture that stood for Fascism.

To stress his rejection of an architecture that he linked to a pompous and repressive political regime – which may not have been evident to his public in the 1970s – Steinberg populates the drawings with telling figures (Fig. 6, 7, 8): powerful soldiers marching, somber men of mystery (usually rubber-stamped), mustachioed men in black shirts and fez who leap to exchange Roman salutes and, in one drawing, goose-step in front of a building resembling the Palace of Justice in Milan, from which flies, for good measure, an Italian flag imprinted with the fasces.<sup>42</sup>

### Paradise Lost

The above paragraphs measure Steinberg's prospective and retrospective response to Fascism. In real time, however, his situation was neither coolly theoretical, as he averred in 1937, nor politically activist, as his wartime statements and later images imply. His was most probably just the good life of a young student, who eventually managed to have money to spend and mingle with interesting intellectuals in a large European city, a city whose anti-Semitic currents were not yet as evident or as aggressive as those of the intra-war Bucharest he had escaped from. His future seemed Italian, and he even began using an Italian name: Paolo, instead of Saul.<sup>43</sup> Whether this was also a conscious effort to underplay

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<sup>42</sup> For examples of such goose-stepping, saluting figures, including Fig. 6, see Steinberg's portfolio "Italy – 1938," *The New Yorker*, October 7, 1974. Some drawings are reprinted in Rosenberg, *Saul Steinberg*, 186-88, Steinberg, *Reflections and Shadows*, 28-31, and Smith, *Steinberg at The New Yorker*, 112, 192. In a variant of the last image in this portfolio, which depicts the same street corner (Rosenberg, *Saul Steinberg*, 130, there titled *Via Pascoli*), the trees have grown to building height, black and ominous; three specters with gaping maws give the Fascist salute, as does a civilian cartoon couple. In other contexts, Steinberg could render Milan and its modernist architecture without political overtones; thus in his "Postcards" portfolio for *The New Yorker*, February 25, 1980; Smith, *Steinberg at The New Yorker*, 112.

<sup>43</sup> Steinberg never used his first name in signing his works, either in *Bertoldo* or later in life. Paolo (Paul in English) has an obvious assonance with Saul, but it is of course also the name by which Saul of Tarsus became known after his conversion. The Italianization of Steinberg's name was not known until recently. He mentioned it in a private letter to Cesare Zavattini, datable to 1949 on internal evidence: "The name Saul had such a solemn sound in Italy that for my friends I changed it to Paolo. But biblical or historical names are common here [in New York] and my name is pronounced SOL, I am therefore not disturbed by its sound"; copy of letter at SSF. The name Paolo was also mentioned in the memoir of a young girl living near the Tortoreto camp in 1941 (see note 126) and in the book that Benedetto Mosca wrote in memory of his father Giovanni: "Steinberg could barely manage with Italian; he practically lived with us. Do you remember, *papà*? Mispronouncing his name, Saul, I used to call him 'uncle Paolo...'; Benedetto Mosca, *Caro Papà* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1984), 27, my translation.

his Jewish roots, or just a way to feel and sound “like everyone else” is impossible to know. In either case, this good life would not last. With the imposition of racial laws in the middle of 1938, the world of “Steinberg Saul of Moritz – Romanian Jew” changed radically, and the “paradise” he found in Italy began to topple. “It was horrible,” he recalled two decades later, “you had the stupid society turning against you.”<sup>44</sup>

By the fall of 1938, foreign Jews were told to leave the country within six months. But, as in Steinberg’s case, refuge elsewhere was increasingly difficult to find. And Steinberg watched with growing panic as the situation of even Italian Jews (37,000 by the 1938 official census<sup>45</sup>) deteriorated. After the legal emancipation of Jews in the mid-nineteenth century, the Italian Jewish community had become arguably one of the most assimilated in Europe – which must have given the young Romanian immigrant a welcome sense of belonging and reassurance when he arrived in 1933. All the more shocking, then, when the Mussolini regime began its racial discrimination and persecution campaign, a campaign that culminated in the Italian role in the Shoah. There were at the time Jews in the army, the judiciary, throughout the state administration, and in the Fascist party itself. Even though discriminatory measures against Jews had begun much earlier, and a racist campaign appeared in the press months before it became official policy, many Jews were caught by surprise when they found themselves

“Paolo” can also help explain the nicknames that Steinberg’s girlfriend Ada Ongari used for him in her correspondence: “Olo” and “Olino” as abbreviations of [Pa]Olo and [Pa]Olino (letters at YCAL and copies at SSF), (see note 104). The use of Paolo was not unknown in Jewish families in Italy; see Elio Salmon, *Diario di un ebreo fiorentino 1943-1944* (Florence: 2002), 15-18.

<sup>44</sup> Steinberg, AJC-OHL, T3 74-75; “Steinberg Saul of Moritz – Romanian Jew” is the heading on Steinberg’s file in the papers of the Italian police in the Italian State Archives, the Archivio Centrale dello Stato, (ACS). Steinberg’s dossier is in the papers of the Ministero dell’interno (Ministry of Interior papers, MI), Direzione generale di Pubblica sicurezza (Directorate for Public Security, PS), Divisione Affari generali e riservati (General and Covert Affairs Division, AG), Categoria (Category, Cat.) A16 Ebrei stranieri (Foreign Jews) busta (folder, b.) 270, fascicolo (file, f.) “Steinberg Saul di Moritz.” Note: Originally (March 1941), Steinberg’s records were filed under the A4bis category, which included the personal files of people interned in Italy as a consequence of the declaration of war. But the file was moved on July 1, 1941 to category A16, “Ebrei stranieri” (foreign Jews), after he left Italy. In the initial archival position (ACS, MI, PS – AG, cat. A4bis, b. 38, f. “Steinberg Saul di Moritz”), there is now only the empty cover of the original file, with a note pointing to the new position. Copies of the entire Steinberg ACS file are at SSF.

<sup>45</sup> Michele Sarfatti, *Gli ebrei nell’Italia fascista*, 33-34. The number of Jews in Italy then is not easy to calculate, since there were different legal and administrative definition of who was considered a “Jew,” but in August 1938 there were 46,656 “actual” Jews who were enrolled in the community or at least declared themselves in the census; 37,241 were Italians and 9,415 were foreigners.

demoted to second-class citizens, or worse.<sup>46</sup> The *Manifesto fascista della razza* ("Fascist Manifesto on Race," also known as the *Manifesto degli scienziati razzisti* or "Manifesto of Racist Scientists"), was published on July 14, 1938 in *Il Giornale d'Italia* (issue dated July 15) and then reprinted in the other major newspapers. It claimed a pseudo-scientific justification for the Aryan purity of Italians; Jews were not Italians because they had non-European racial elements.

The restrictive laws against Italian Jews came thick and fast. By June 1939 Jews in all professions were banned from working for non-Jewish clients. Of course, Steinberg, as a foreign Jew, could not work at all, since foreign Jews were under an expulsion order. But in fact he was already out of business. His last signed drawings had been published in the September 10, 1938 issue of *Settebello*, just a few days after the meeting of the Council of Ministers that resulted in the first anti-Semitic law.<sup>47</sup>

That summer, it seemed possible that Steinberg would not even be able to complete his studies. On August 6, a month before foreign Jews were ordered out, Giuseppe Bottai, the Minister of National Education, had closed university courses to all foreign Jewish students, "even those who had enrolled in previous years," starting with the academic year 1938-39. This draconian rule, however, had diplomatic repercussions since it affected foreign citizens studying in Italy, and the Italian government feared similar restrictions on Italian students abroad. Thus, a month later, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs intervened, announcing that foreign Jewish students who had already begun their university studies and had been properly enrolled for the 1937-38 academic year could "carry on with their studies until they finished their degree." It took until January 16, 1939 for the Ministry of National Education to issue an official clarification, but Steinberg had clearly gotten a reprieve: he could remain in Italy until he completed his degree, so long as he met one condition of

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<sup>46</sup> Sarfatti explains that the "Attacks on Jewish Rights" began roughly with the Italo-Ethiopian war of 1935-35, but they were preceded, beginning in the early 1920s, by "Attacks on Jewish Equality" by the Fascist government; see the chapters by these names in Sarfatti, *Gli ebrei nell'Italia fascista*. For a list of the different laws and decrees, and links to the original texts, see Michele Sarfatti and Irene De Francesco, eds., *Le leggi antiebraiche nell'Italia fascista*, Fondazione Centro di Documentazione Ebraica Contemporanea (CDEC), Milano ([http://www.cdec.it/home2\\_2.asp?idtesto=589&idtesto1=558&son=1&figlio=877&level=4](http://www.cdec.it/home2_2.asp?idtesto=589&idtesto1=558&son=1&figlio=877&level=4))

For a general discussion of the issues, see also Joshua D. Zimmerman, ed., *Jews in Italy under Fascist and Nazi Rule, 1922-1945* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

<sup>47</sup> For Steinberg's four September 10, 1938 drawings in *Settebello*, see Angelini, *L'attività italiana di Saul Steinberg*, nos. 264-267; also Smith, *Saul Steinberg: Illuminations*, 236, note 30.

the Ministry: that those behind in their coursework had to catch up within the academic year 1938-39.<sup>48</sup>

At this point, Steinberg was in the fifth year of a five-year program for a degree in architecture – and he had a lot of catching up to do. From the day his first drawing appeared on the pages of *Bertoldo* in October 1936, he had essentially stopped studying: from that moment through January 1939 he had managed to take only one of his seventeen scheduled exams, even though his student ID card shows stamps for six academic years, 1933-34 to 1938-39.<sup>49</sup> 1938-39 was, therefore, his first year beyond the official five-year program, and the last year in which the new rules allowed him to enroll at the Politecnico and thereby maintain his legal residence in Italy. From the moment the January 16 ruling was issued, Steinberg was in a race against time – to complete his degree and, at the same time, find some part of the world willing to welcome him.

Steinberg's forced departure from the pages of *Settebello* after September 1938 left him seriously short of funds. Documentary confirmation of his impecunious state only begins in early 1939, but his circumstances in the previous months could not have been any different. His parents in Romania had been sending him money, but in the last couple of years he had depended on income from his cartoon work.<sup>50</sup> Friends now occasionally lent him money, while others secured him work, most of it

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<sup>48</sup> Sources for the documents cited in this paragraph: *Circolare* (written instructions to subsidiary offices) no. 19153, August 6, 1938, by Giuseppe Bottai in ACS, MI, PS – AG, cat. A16, Ebrei stranieri, b. 3, f. B/1 “Ebrei stranieri – Disposizioni in genere.” Ibid. for the *circolare* no. 8 from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, signed by Minister Galeazzo Ciano (Mussolini's son-in-law), September 9, 1938, sent to all Italian embassies, with copies to the Ministry of the Interior and to other central administrative offices. (German-Jewish students, however were excluded from this concession and could not continue their studies.) Ibid. for *circolare* 6408, signed by Bottai, October 6, 1938, confirming that foreign Jewish students could enroll for the new academic year. Ibid. for *circolare* no. 532 of 16 January 1939, signed by Bottai.

<sup>49</sup> Author's count of the scheduled exams, based on the original transcript of Steinberg's years at the Politecnico, AGA. For the ID card, see note 18.

<sup>50</sup> Three of the few surviving letters Steinberg wrote to his parents in Bucharest during this period concern their financial support. January 29, 1939: “I still haven't received anything from you. But there was a message from the bank so that in 4-5 days I will receive the money.” January 6, 1940: “I hope to get some money on time from you through the National Bank. Send me more than usual.” February 9, 1940: “Today I finally received the notice from the Bank and in 5 days I can get the money. It arrived in time because if they had been late a few more days, I would have lived pretty badly. Please make sure to send me the rest as soon as possible.” Both letters at YCAL, box 12, folder “Letters from Milano and Santo Domingo.” Steinberg family correspondence, most of it written in Romanian, is at YCAL. Iain Topliss provided scans of the letters to The Saul Steinberg Foundation. They were translated by Emil Niculescu; translations and copies of the originals at SSF. Henceforth cited as “Romanian letters.”

more closely tied to his studies in architecture.<sup>51</sup> He was, he reported to his parents, “picking up some architecture or interior design jobs together with a colleague of mine,” although he didn’t like it.<sup>52</sup> In a resumé compiled for the US Navy in 1945, he describes himself also as a “designer” and adds: “Occasionally I made designs for interior decorations.”<sup>53</sup> Little was known about such activities until a few years ago, when Francesca Pellicciari found an original sketch by Steinberg in the archives of the celebrated graphic design-advertising agency Studio Boggeri (Fig. 9).<sup>54</sup> Pellicciari, who published the sketch for the first time, makes the plausible suggestion that it must have been Erberto Carboni, a famous member of the agency, who brought Steinberg in. Steinberg later remembered him with gratitude: “A true aristocratic man, even in his appearance. During a rough time he gave me work.”<sup>55</sup> Another one of

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<sup>51</sup> The evidence of loans from friends or acquaintances can be documented through a number of sources. A “Statement account” for Steinberg by Cesare Civita up to March 1, 1942 (YCAL, box 1, folder “1942 Correspondence”) shows that at least three people advanced money to Steinberg and were reimbursed by Civita on Steinberg’s behalf: Cesare’s brother Arturo and Aldo Buzzi lent him two thousand lire each (\$66.66), while 2,214 lire (\$73.80) were provided by “Miss Finzi.” In a letter to Buzzi, Steinberg recalls a “Signorina Finzi” among the people who helped him get out of Italy (June 26, 1996, in Steinberg, *Lettere a Aldo Buzzi*, 294). Matilde Finzi worked as secretary to the publisher Arnoldo Mondadori. As a Jew subject to the racial laws, she could not keep her official employment, but continued to work for Mondadori from her apartment (see the biographical information about literary agent Erich Linder on the Mondadori Foundation site: <http://www.fondazionemondadori.it/linder/Sogg1.htm>). Financial assistance from Aldo Buzzi can also be inferred from Steinberg’s early postwar correspondence, in which he discusses regular transfers of money to Buzzi, as help for a friend then in need, but also in memory of an “old debt”; see, for example, the letters of September 12, 1945 and August 22, 1946; *Lettere*, unpublished. The former includes this passage: “When I get your correct address I want to send you some money. Apart from the old debt, I hope you will feel we are good enough friends for you to tell me frankly what’s your situation, and if you need any sum. Feel free.” On August 22: “the money I sent you is part of the debt from 1942” [*sic* – for 1940 or 1941]. The journal mentions a small sum (50 lire) sent by his girlfriend Ada while Steinberg was in Tortoreto (May 23, 1941). Cesare Zavattini also lent him at least 300 lire; Steinberg acknowledged the debt in a short letter sent to Zavattini from New York (copy at SSF); the letter is headed “New York 4 July 1941,” thus written from Ellis Island, en route to Santo Domingo.

<sup>52</sup> Romanian Letters, August 12, 1940. In his interview for the AJC’s Oral History Project, he would explain: “I even practiced architecture for a while – but I gave it up right away, I didn’t like it. It’s a horrible thing to be an architect...it has to do with a lack of privacy, lack of independence”; Steinberg, AJC-OHL, T2 34.

<sup>53</sup> Officer Qualifications Questionnaire, YCAL, box 20, folder “Navy 2 of 2.”

<sup>54</sup> Pellicciari, *Critic Without Words*, 123-25, 471. Pellicciari points out the close relationship between this drawing and the one published, anonymously, in *Bertoldo*, March 28, 1941, her fig. 69. Pellicciari has now found eight other Steinberg sketches in the Boggeri archive, all in a similar style, which she plans to publish.

<sup>55</sup> Steinberg to Buzzi, October 31, 1997, in Steinberg, *Lettere a Aldo Buzzi*, 304-05: “Carboni: a true aristocratic man, even in his appearance. *During a rough time, he gave me*

these drawings, until now unpublished, can be found among the Steinberg papers at Yale: a clipping from the newspaper *La Stampa*, containing an advertisement for gas, “Dynamamin, the Super Shell” (Fig. 10). It shows an urban street with a car stopped at an intersection. The print advertisement is signed at lower left with Carboni’s name, but attached to the clipping is a sketch on thin cardboard with a similar theme definitely executed in Steinberg’s hand (Fig. 11). The clipping is of the advertisement published in the June 24, 1939 issue of *La Stampa* (Fig. 12); Steinberg’s drawing was the basis for another ad published on August 5. Of the four other Dynamamin ads signed by Carboni, most, if not all, are equally Steinbergian.<sup>56</sup>

The journal recounts at least two other jobs. In one case, it clears up repeated references in his postwar correspondence to a “colored panel” made “for Latis,” possibly “for a house in Viareggio.”<sup>57</sup> Vito Latis was an architect who found employment for Steinberg at this critical moment.<sup>58</sup> The journal entry for May 7, 1941 (which briefly summarizes the events between January and April) informs us that shortly before being arrested by the police, Steinberg had finished a “panel for Rappallo” [*sic*] and, further on, that it has to do with “a panel for Sacerdoti [*sic*]. Drawing for a shutter door for a bar. Thanks to Lattis [*sic*].” The archives of the Latis Studio confirm the existence of a contract for furnishings in a Villa Sacerdoti in Rapallo (which Steinberg later misremembered as Viareggio, another seaside resort).<sup>59</sup> The heir of the villa’s owner now

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*work*. I saw him again, I can’t remember when, it was the era of my arrogance. It wasn’t clear from your letter, but if he’s still alive, give him my most cordial greetings and regards”; the italicized passage was edited out of the published volume but appears in Steinberg, *Lettere*, unpublished. In a footnote to a letter of November 30, 1979, where Steinberg again recalls Carboni, Buzzi explains: “As a friendly gesture, he had commissioned Steinberg to make drawings for advertisements”; Steinberg, *Lettere a Aldo Buzzi*, 106, note 1.

<sup>56</sup> Steinberg’s drawing and the clipping are in YCAL, box 39, folder “Vecchi disegni SS.” The other four Dynamamin ads appeared on June 16, June 20, July 1, July 22 (a repeat of June 20) and July 29. See the online archives of *La Stampa*: <http://www.archiviolaStampa.it>

<sup>57</sup> Letter to Buzzi, January 26, 1946, Steinberg, *Lettere*, unpublished. A year and a half later Steinberg asks again: “do you know whatever happened to the big painting I did for Latis (for a house in Viareggio, I think) in 1941? *I am curious to know if it exists*”; Steinberg, *Lettere a Aldo Buzzi*, May 26 and 29, 1947, and, for the italicized passage, *Lettere*, unpublished.

<sup>58</sup> Conversation with Aldo Buzzi, January 8, 2008.

<sup>59</sup> Confirmed by Margareta Latis, widow of Vito Latis, conversation with the author, spring 2008. Vito Latis, born only two years before Steinberg, had graduated from the Politecnico by 1935. He was active in a group of students and young professionals who advocated a modern approach to Italian architecture. His first important building, a villa on the Ligurian coast, was built in the style that Steinberg would later call “Milanese Bauhaus.” As a Jew, he could only keep a very low professional profile after

possesses the painting Steinberg refers to (132 x 117 cm). It depicts a resort town (maybe Rapallo itself, in Liguria), seen from the sea, with bathers in the Mediterranean and conversational couples strolling the streets.<sup>60</sup> In the same summation of May 7, 1941, Steinberg tells us that he made a “beautiful drawing with bottles and flowers for a bar for [Pietro] Chiesa (Fontana Arte).”<sup>61</sup>

Help also came from another professional source, Cesare Civita, briefly alluded to in the journal entry for May 20, 1940. Civita had been the co-director of the Mondadori periodicals (which published, among other magazines and newspapers, the Walt Disney cartoons in Italian), as well as a friend and collaborator of Alberto Mondadori. A Jew, he had fled Italy in 1938; a year later he was in New York, where he established himself as an illustrator’s agent.<sup>62</sup> From across the Atlantic, he worked hard to get Steinberg published in the pages of American journals. And he succeeded: thanks to Civita’s advocacy, Steinberg’s work appeared in *Harper’s Bazaar* (March 15, 1940), *Life* (September 27, 1940), and *Town & Country* (October 1940), as well as in South American magazines.<sup>63</sup>

the racial laws came into effect, working mainly for other Jews, like the Sacerdottis. In the autumn of 1943, when Northern Italy was occupied by the Germans, he fled to Switzerland, where he remained until the end of the war. Latis was also a painter. See Maria Vittoria Capitanucci, *Vito e Gustavo Latis: Frammenti di città* (Geneva and Milan: Skira, 2007), 37-47, 181; the Sacerdotti commission is mentioned on page 188.

<sup>60</sup> Photos sent to the author by Bruno Coen Sacerdotti, who explains: “My father used to tell me that he was a great friend of Steinberg, and that this painting...was a gift from Steinberg in thanks for his boat ticket to the United States that my father (who was also Jewish) paid for”; email from Bruno Coen Sacerdotti to the author, March 12, 2008. We shall see that the reference to the “ticket” must be understood loosely.

<sup>61</sup> Pietro Chiesa was the artistic director of the famous interior design house Fontana Arte, which to this day produces home accessories and lighting. A pencil drawing of a similar subject (bottles, flowers and clocks), given by Steinberg to Latis, is now in possession of Margareta Latis. It may have been a study for the Fontana Arte work.

<sup>62</sup> See “Cesare Civita 1905-2005,” *Fondazione Franco Fossati-Museo del Fumetto e della comunicazione* (<http://www.lfb.it/fff/fumetto/edit/c/civita.htm>); the entry on Civita in *The Internet Movie Database* (<http://www.imdb.com/name/nm2635965/>); and the email from his daughter, Barbara Civita to SSF, February 6, 2007. Among other projects, in 1935 he had collaborated with Alberto Mondadori and Mario Monicelli on a film adaptation of *The Paul Street Boys*, the novel for adolescents by Ferenc Molnár. Civita left for Argentina in 1941, where he established a publishing house; after the war, it became the hive of many talented cartoonists – and the publisher of the Spanish-language edition of Steinberg’s first book, *All in Line*. His New York office continued to represent Steinberg into the 1950s. In Argentina, he was known as “César,” and the stationery of his New York office at this time bore the imprint Cesar Civita. Victor Civita, Cesar’s brother, ran the New York agency after Cesar left for Argentina; in the postwar years he moved to Brazil, where he founded the publishing company Abril.

<sup>63</sup> See the feature on Steinberg’s drawings in the first issue of the Brazilian journal *Sombra*, December 1940-January 1941, for which Civita was the American correspondent. Steinberg’s work made *Sombra*’s cover – five years before his first cover for *The New Yorker*; the *Sombra* cover is reproduced in *Serrote*, no. 1, 2009, 66.

There was one other source of income from publications. Steinberg's friends at *Bertoldo* and *Settebello* were able to resume publishing his cartoons in November 1940 by concealing his authorship, as Erberto Carboni had done – in this case, by printing them without signature (though readers of the newspapers no doubt recognized Steinberg's hand). The journal speaks of such cartoons, which he was making up until the day before his arrest in April 1941. The entry for December 18, 1940, for example, notes: "five of my gags in an issue of *Bertoldo*" – the same entry where he announces, "I'm broke."<sup>64</sup>

## No Exit

Forced by the decree of the Ministry of Education to bring his coursework up to date during 1938-39, Steinberg crammed sixteen exams into one year and managed to graduate with the presentation of a theater project. The project has not turned up in the archives, but Vittorio Metz, *Bertoldo*'s co-editor, remembered that next to the building's entry, Steinberg drew a stick figure with a lance in its hand, straddling a cow – "to indicate the proportions," he claimed.<sup>65</sup> It was March 4, 1940, probably the last possible thesis examination date for the academic year 1938-39, thus still on time according to the university rules established by the racial laws.

Graduation, however, meant that Steinberg's legal residence in Italy was officially over, and he became more anxious than ever to get out. His diploma (Fig. 13) was inscribed to Saul Steinberg, "of the Hebrew race," "printed," he commented later, "in excellent taste, handsomely set in

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Steinberg's drawings also appeared in the Argentine satirical magazine *Cascabel*, though none have yet been documented during his Italian years. For these North and South American publications, see also Smith, *Saul Steinberg: Illuminations*, pp. 27 and 237, note 34, and the "Features and Illustrations" section in Smith's chronological bibliography, pages 269-70. Some of the money Steinberg earned was paid to him directly, some used to purchase his passage out of Italy; see note 71.

<sup>64</sup> See the entries transcribed below for December 6, 12, 18, 23, and 30, 1940; April 26 and 27, 1941. Fig. 5, unsigned, may be one of those, though it also may have been pulled out of files in the *Bertoldo* office. Fifty-four unsigned *Bertoldo* drawings are listed in an appendix to Guareschi, *Milano 1936-1943: Guareschi e il Bertoldo*, 491-92. Those for *Settebello* and the other newspapers Steinberg mentions have not yet been documented. Some sketches and original drawings can be found in the Giovannino Guareschi archives at Roncole Verdi (Parma); see Pellicciari, *Critic Without Words*, 84, note 1.

<sup>65</sup> Metz's account appears in Domenico Frassinetti, *Steinberg*, thesis (Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia, Università di Roma, 1966-67), 7, 34 note; copies at SSF and YCAL, box 37, folder "Steinberg's a dissertation by Domenico Frassinetti." Steinberg's thesis project is not preserved in the Politecnico archives, but his personal file notes the topic he was supposed to address in his *esame di laurea*: "Architectural and urbanistic organization of an urban center. Development of a representative building." The building may have been the theatre Metz referred to.



Bodoni, which rendered it even more sinister.”<sup>66</sup> These words transformed the traditional language of such degrees – “for all legal purposes” – into a condemnation and a bureaucratic oxymoron: in the Italy of racial discrimination, the effect was to negate the diploma’s validity. It became a diploma for working in a profession that was not open to Steinberg. Forty years later, he would wax ironic about that piece of paper. Since he never worked as an architect, and since “Vittorio Emanuele III, King of Italy and Albania, Emperor of Ethiopia,” under whose power the degree was granted, no longer ruled these lands, nothing of the diploma remained valid except for the reference to the “Hebrew race.” So it was, in sum, a “diploma of Jewishness.”<sup>67</sup>

Accounts of Steinberg’s efforts to leave Italy have occasionally been hampered by fiction. The Italian journalist Indro Montanelli reports an encounter in this period with Steinberg and Ugo Stille, the late editor of *Corriere della Sera*. The place was the newsroom of *Omnibus*, the first modern illustrated magazine in Italy, edited by Leo Longanesi. With brilliant but mean-spirited phrasing, Montanelli recounts:

“With [Stille], another Jewish boy began to poke his head into the newsroom occasionally, a refugee from Bucovina, and one destined to be talked about as the greatest caricaturist and cartoonist of the century: Steinberg. Together they had so much affection for Italy that they didn’t want to leave, not even when Italy joined the war as a German ally. “But what sort of Jews are these two?” yelled Longanesi, “Jews are, by definition, wanderers, and these don’t want to wander, not even if you kick their a.....!” Finally we succeeded in persuading them to seek American visas just in time to escape the Gestapo’s raids.”<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Letter to Buzzi, August 12, 1985, in Steinberg, *Lettere a Aldo Buzzi*, 141.

<sup>67</sup> See Steinberg’s recollections quoted by Robert Hughes, “The World of Steinberg,” *Time*, April 17, 1978. In 1985, Steinberg and Primo Levi exchanged copies of their equally useless diplomas; letter to Buzzi, August 12, 1985, in Steinberg *Lettere a Aldo Buzzi*, 141, which contains similar concepts and uses the same phrase, “diploma di Ebreo” – “diploma of Jewishness.” In Italian, the phrase alludes to the standard description “diploma di Architetto,” “diploma di Ingegnere,” etc. – i.e., the paper that declares the recipient an official member of the stated profession.

<sup>68</sup> Indro Montanelli, “Un russo in Usa: Cremlinologo alla Casa Bianca,” *Il Corriere della Sera*, June 3, 1995, ([http://archiviostorico.corriere.it/1995/giugno/03/russo\\_Usa\\_cremlino\\_logo\\_alla\\_co\\_0\\_95060310610.shtml](http://archiviostorico.corriere.it/1995/giugno/03/russo_Usa_cremlino_logo_alla_co_0_95060310610.shtml)). The same story, with Longanesi’s words slightly modified, was repeated by Montanelli a few months later in the answer to a reader in the Letters to the Editor column (“Per favore mi parli di Stille,” *Il Corriere della Sera*, October 10, 1995, ([http://archiviostorico.corriere.it/1995/ottobre/10/Per\\_favore\\_parli\\_Stille\\_co\\_0\\_9510104406.shtml](http://archiviostorico.corriere.it/1995/ottobre/10/Per_favore_parli_Stille_co_0_9510104406.shtml))). Regarding Steinberg’s alleged visit to the newsroom of *Omnibus*, although such a visit would have been possible, we have no confirmation, and no

Well told, like all of Montanelli's stories, but untrue – at least with regard to Saul Steinberg.<sup>69</sup> We know, in fact, that in late 1939, Steinberg had begun contacting relatives and friends in an attempt to leave Italy. Harry Steinberg, a paternal uncle who had emigrated to America in the 1890s, received a phone call from an Italian claiming he had news of Harry's nephew, whom the uncle had last seen as a twelve-year-old boy. The man was Cesare Civita, who soon visited the Steinberg family in the Bronx with the news that he had been sent by Saul to ask their help in emigrating to America. Young Steinberg would find great success as an illustrator and cartoonist, he assured them.<sup>70</sup> Civita's visit mobilized

drawing that could be attributed to him appeared in its pages in the first two years of the weekly (1937-38). Indro Montanelli (1909-2001) was arguably one of the most renowned Italian journalists, from his beginnings in the 1930s until his death. A political conservative, he began writing for newspapers while serving during the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in 1935. He was imprisoned in 1944 during the German occupation of Northern Italy, and after the war he kept reporting from many different places. He was also victim of a terrorist attack by the Red Brigades group in the 1970s. Late in life, he founded his own newspaper (*Il Giornale Nuovo*) as a conservative response to what he perceived as a tilt to the left of *Il Corriere della Sera*. When Silvio Berlusconi entered politics in 1994, Montanelli left the editorship of *Il Giornale*, which Berlusconi at that point owned. He then, paradoxically, became an icon of liberal journalists. See, among others, John Francis Lane, "Indro Montanelli", *The Guardian*, July 24, 2001 (obituary: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/2001/jul/24/guardianobituaries1>). Ugo Stille (1919-1995) was the pseudonym of Mikhail "Micha" Kamenetzky. A Russian Jew, he emigrated with his family to Italy in 1921. He began his career in the 1930s, writing with friend Giaime Pintor under the pen name "Ugo Stille." As a consequence of the Italian racial laws, the family emigrated to the US. Stille came back to Italy as a sergeant in the US Army's Psychological Warfare Branch in 1944. In 1946, he became the New York correspondent for *Il Corriere della Sera*, becoming its editor-in-chief in 1987, serving until 1992. See, among others, Wolfgang Achtnr, "Obituary: Ugo Stille," *The Independent*, June 12, 1995. (<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/obituaryugo-stille-1586103.html>)

<sup>69</sup>Every reference to Steinberg in Montanelli's article seems – to say the least – poorly remembered: from the little things like his supposed birth in Bucovina or the visa for the United States, to the tale of his (and Longanesi's) encounter with both Stille and Steinberg in Milan after the war: "One day shortly after Liberation," goes Montanelli's account, "I was walking with Longanesi in the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele [in Milan], which was filled with more or less self-declared partisans, agit prop, and Anglo-American military, when two of the latter appear in front of us, blocking our way: they were Stille and Steinberg, wrapped in the most shabby and crumpled uniforms imaginable. 'What a great country, America!' shouted Longanesi, 'if it won the war with soldiers like you!'; Montanelli, "Un russo in USA." In fact, Steinberg had left the Italian theater in September 1944, long before Milan was liberated on April 25, 1945; he did not return to Italy until 1946, and certainly not in uniform.

<sup>70</sup>These events were reconstructed by the son of Henrietta, Lawrence Danson ("An Heroic Decision", *Ontario Review*, no. 53 [Fall-Winter 2000-01], 58-62), on the basis of family memories and on correspondence in his possession, copies of which are at SSF.

Steinberg's cousin Henrietta, her husband, Harold Danson, as well as other relatives in Colorado, all of whom worked, along with Civita, to obtain a visa for Saul and pay for his passage.<sup>71</sup> From the moment Civita first contacted the Steinberg-Danson family, however, almost two years would pass before Saul managed to actually leave Italy, and more than year after that before he arrived in the United States.

In those two years, Steinberg was one of thousands of foreign Jews who found themselves stranded in Italy. In the autumn of 1938, about 3,100 of them were permitted to remain in the country, while about 8,800 were ordered to leave; some five to six thousand still managed to enter Italy from Germany or German-dominated countries on a "transit" or a temporary "tourist" visa. By June 1940, when Italy joined the war, about ten to eleven thousand had managed to leave, but close to 4,000 were left behind.<sup>72</sup>

Many of these Jews, along with Italian Jews deprived of citizenship by the racial laws, wanted to leave – for their own safety and in compliance with the laws – but they lacked the money or the papers to do so. And the outbreak of war in September 1939 made things all the more difficult, even if Italy had not yet joined the battle. Only those few who made the immigration quota for their country of birth were able to gain entry to the United States, while a handful of visas were obtained for some Latin American countries. In the meantime, international transportation – especially across the Atlantic – became more complicated. When Italy entered the war, on June 10, 1940, transatlantic passenger ships ceased departing from Italy, so instead of sailing from Genoa, it became necessary to pass through Portugal to reach a ship bound for America. But this indirect route required transit visas – visas that were sometimes dependant on other visas, which often expired before the whole journey was completed. Furthermore, the available boat

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<sup>71</sup> See note 76 for the family's contribution to the cost of Steinberg's passage. But Steinberg himself helped pay for his ticket, albeit indirectly. Civita's "Statement Account Steinberg up to March 1, 1942" (YCAL, box 1, folder "1942 Correspondence") has a "Debits" column, which records \$63.10 cabled to Steinberg in Italy in April 1940 and a total of \$358.18 "Paid to Mr. Danson for ticket."

<sup>72</sup> Michele Sarfatti, *Gli ebrei nell'Italia fascista*, 187. See also the reference book on the matter: Klaus Voigt, *Il rifugio precario: Gli esuli in Italia dal 1933 al 1945*, 2 vols. (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1993, 1996). Voigt's comprehensive study was originally published as *Zuflucht auf Widerruf: Exil in Italien 1933-1945* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1989-93). The seemingly paradoxical granting of temporary entry visas to a country trying to get rid of its foreign Jews was the result of bureaucratic entanglements and economic pressure. On the one hand, the Foreign Ministry feared possible reprisals against Italian citizens abroad, according to the well-established law of "reciprocity" in diplomacy. On the other hand, the tourism industry tried successfully to defend its business: many refugees, for example, lived in Merano in the Alps and in Abbazia on the Adriatic coast, while navigation companies struggled to keep the flow of passengers from going to foreign competitors; see Voigt, *Il rifugio precario*, vol. I, 312.

passages were few and expensive.<sup>73</sup>

Many Jews were aided by DELASEM, the Delegation for the Assistance of Jewish Emigrants (Delegazione per l'assistenza agli emigranti ebrei), founded in December 1939, with headquarters in Genoa and offices throughout Italy. It was an official organization created with government authorization, under the auspices of the Union of Italian Jewish Communities (then "Unione delle comunità israelitiche italiane," now "Unione delle comunità ebraiche italiane"). DELASEM's aim was to give foreign Jews in Italy financial and administrative assistance with the emigration process.<sup>74</sup> In the first seven months of its existence, DELASEM aided approximately 9,000 Jews – residents or those in transit – and about 2,000 managed to leave with its help, the majority of them on Italian ships. However, when Italy declared war in June 1940, there were still about 3,800 foreign Jews in Italy, among them Saul Steinberg.<sup>75</sup>

Steinberg apparently did without financial aid from DELASEM.<sup>76</sup> But the organization lent crucial assistance at the very end of his internment in June 1941, which suggests that he had been in touch with them earlier about his paperwork. The practical matters of dealing with consulates and the Italian authorities could be frustrating and complex, all the more so after Steinberg's graduation from the Politecnico, which marked the

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<sup>73</sup> Voigt, *Il rifugio precario*, vol. I, 44-51.

<sup>74</sup> The organization had contacts with the Italian authorities and with international humanitarian groups, such as the American Joint Distribution Committee, which provided funds to assist Jews within Italy, and the Hias Ica Emigration Association (HICEM), which funded the voyage out of Italy; Voigt, *Il rifugio precario*, 335-50, and, for DELASEM, 336, note 1. As for the DELASEM archives, they were unfortunately dispersed and could not be found after the war. Some papers relating to general and administrative problems are gathered in the Archives of the Unione delle Comunità ebraiche italiane (AUCEI) in Rome. For the organization's budget and date of founding, see a copy of the long report from DELASEM to the Ministry of the Interior, July 22, 1940 in AUCEI, "Attività dell'Unione delle comunità israelitiche italiane dal 1934," b. 45B, f., "Rapporti col ministero." For a more detailed history of DELASEM, see Sandro Antonini, *DelAsEm: Storia della più grande organizzazione ebraica italiana di soccorso durante la seconda guerra mondiale* (Genoa: De Ferrari, 2000).

<sup>75</sup> DELASEM, "Attività dell'Unione...", report cited in note 74. For the estimate of foreign Jews in Italy in June 1940, see Voigt, *Il rifugio precario*, vol. II, 30.

<sup>76</sup> As mentioned above (note 71), the air and boat tickets were partly paid for by Steinberg himself out of earnings from drawings published in America. The rest was covered by his family members; see Danson, "An Heroic Decision", 61-62. Danson also tells of an angry exchange of letters between his father and the Colorado branch of the family in April 1941: with Saul's arrival constantly postponed, the latter demanded the return of the money they had contributed for the voyage. The money was originally collected and sent – with great warmth and enthusiasm – by various Colorado family members in August 1940; see the letter from Lucy (Mrs. Martin) Steinberg to Henrietta Danson, August 16, 1940, YCAL, box 22, first folder, "Lica Correspondence 1975." Martin Steinberg was another of Saul's uncles.

end of his legal residence. Now the young Romanian Jew anticipated being stopped and expelled from one moment to the next: “In the spring of 1940, shortly before Italy entered the war, I expected to be arrested.”<sup>77</sup> And surely the prospect of being forced back to that “fucking nation,” where the anti-Semitic measures were doubling daily, and which was soon to be marshalling its troops with Nazi Germany, added fear to bureaucratic tangles. So much so that Steinberg began to regret having stayed in Italy through graduation, instead of leaving before the war “when everything was simple. Now,” he added, “it’s too late, it’s impossible to leave and I don’t know if the degree of architecture will be useful to me in the present or future situation.”<sup>78</sup> An attempt in April 1940 to get a visa for the United States failed. So did an attempt to get to Portugal in May, when the authorities denied him a tourist visa because he was a Romanian Jew.<sup>79</sup> Thus, in the weeks preceding and following Italy’s declaration of war, Steinberg’s American supporters came up with the idea of having him emigrate to Santo Domingo, bringing him one step closer to the United States. He tried unsuccessfully

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<sup>77</sup> Steinberg, *Reflections and Shadows*, 26. In a letter to his family announcing that he would soon graduate, Steinberg is aware that he might have to return to Romania: “In a month I’m completely done with school.... I may come home after February”; Saul Steinberg to Moritz and Roza Steinberg, January 6, 1940, “Romanian Letters.”

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., Saul Steinberg to Moritz and Roza Steinberg, August 12, 1940.

<sup>79</sup> The April 1940 effort to secure a US visa is documented by a letter, dated April 23, 1940, written on Steinberg’s behalf by Cornelius Vanderbilt, Jr., to the American consul in Naples; copy at YCAL, box 89, folder “Miscellaneous 1940-42.” Steinberg’s cousin Henrietta Danson worked for Vanderbilt, a well-known publisher. The whole story of the Portuguese tourist visa was reported in 1999 in a study on Portuguese consuls and Jewish refugees (Avraham Milgram, “Portugal, the Consuls, and the Jewish Refugees, 1938-1941”, *Yad Vashem Studies* Vol. XXVII, Jerusalem 1999, 123-156. Online at

[http://www1.yadvashem.org.il/odot\\_pdf/Microsoft%20Word%20-%203230.pdf](http://www1.yadvashem.org.il/odot_pdf/Microsoft%20Word%20-%203230.pdf)), but it identified Saul Steinberg just as a “Romanian student.” So did a more recent book: Irene Flunser Pimentel, with the collaboration of Christa Heinrich, *Judeus em Portugal durante a II Guerra mundial. Em fuga de Hitler e do Holocausto* (Lisbon: A Esfera dos Livros, 2006), 96, 126. In 2009, after my earlier study mentioning Steinberg’s problems in Lisbon appeared in Italian, Alberto Dines (“Black Friday,” *Serrote*, no. 1 [2009], 69-72) made the explicit connection between the “Romanian student” and the renowned artist, and published the actual documents. All sources mention a classified letter dated May 11, 1940, from the Portuguese Foreign Ministry to the secret police concerning the request of the Portuguese consul in Milan to issue Steinberg a tourist visa. The visa application is to be rejected, the letter explains, because Portugal did not want to become a safe haven for Romanian Jews: “Romania is facing a serious problem, which they are actively trying to resolve, of disposing of an undesirable, numerous and mounting population of the Jewish race.” The official reason given was different: the application had expired – thus a handwritten note on a telegram dated May 15, 1940, from the Portuguese consul in Milan, responding to the consul’s new proposal that Steinberg now be issued a transit visa instead of a tourist visa. For the consequences of this correspondence, see pp. 343-344 and note 100.

to obtain a visa himself from the Dominican consulate in Genoa. On June 7, the Dominican Republic Settlement Association, writing to one of those supporters about the required documents for a visa, observed that the matter could wind up being “purely academic, as it is questionable whether there will be any boats out of Italy from now on.”<sup>80</sup> Even Cesare Civita feared that it was “too late now to get Saul out of Italy,” but he insisted on trying to get him a visa: “perhaps he might find some way we can not foresee to reach San Domingo or Ecuador.”<sup>81</sup> The paperwork went ahead, and on July 8 the Association telegraphed Henrietta Danson that the visa for Saul was ready at the Dominican Legation in Milan.<sup>82</sup>

Steinberg’s Dominican visa is dated July 26, 1940, seven weeks after Italy entered the war against France and England. It must have been a precious document to him because it promised deliverance from an alarming consequence of the declaration of war, the internment of civilians deemed dangerous to the Italian regime: subjects of enemy countries capable of carrying arms, those suspected of espionage, or with questionable political affiliations.<sup>83</sup> People were arrested, brought to a police station or a jail, and then transferred to the so-called “places of free internment” or to the *campi di concentramento* (internment camps), organized and run by the Ministry of the Interior.<sup>84</sup> “Free internment” meant that the detainee was deported to a small village and forced to live within its boundaries, subject to such constraints as curfews and roll calls. The internment camps were collective places of confinement, with the internees allowed only limited contact with the population. Most of the camps were situated in southern Italy or in isolated Central Italian regions, distant from possible war fronts and prying eyes. The physical facilities differed widely – villas, apartment houses, convents, even

<sup>80</sup> Rebecca Hourwich Reyher to Cornelius Vanderbilt, Jr., June 7, 1940, copy at SSF. Cornelius Vanderbilt, Jr., again at the behest of Henrietta Danson, had written to the Dominican ambassador in Washington, who suggested the family turn to the Dominican Republic Settlement Association of New York; see Danson, “An Heroic Decision”, 60, and the relevant correspondence, copies at SSF.

<sup>81</sup> Civita to Mrs. [Henrietta] Danson, n. d., but certainly from mid-June 1940, copy at SSF.

<sup>82</sup> Telegram from Rebecca Hourwich Reyher to Mrs. H. Danson c/o Cornelius Vanderbilt, Jr., July 8 (the year is missing), copy at SSF. Steinberg’s visa is in his passport, YCAL, box 89, folder “SS Romanian Passport 1939.”

<sup>83</sup> For a detailed account of the policies of internment, see Capogreco, *I campi del duce*, especially 56-84 and 283-94.

<sup>84</sup> The term *campo di concentramento* means literally “concentration camp,” but historians have made a distinction between “internment” camps, which kept some measure of formal and legal justification, and concentration camps, based on abuse and denial of human rights; see the discussion in Capogreco, *I campi del duce*, 49-53. The distinction should be kept in mind when we read in official papers, and in Steinberg’s own writings, the term *campo di concentramento*.

theaters had been taken over and adapted for the purpose; in other cases, fenced-in barracks were built, such as the camp of Ferramonti di Tarsia in Calabria, which eventually held over 2,000 prisoners (see below, p. 350).

Italian Jews as a whole were not considered candidates for internment, but they came to represent 11.7% of all Italian internees, about ten times the proportion of Italian Jews to the general population: much harsher criteria were clearly used to assess their supposed risk.<sup>85</sup> Foreign Jews like Steinberg presented a complicated problem, since they had been directed to leave the country but lacked exit papers. Although the policy of the Ministry of the Interior was to facilitate the departure of foreign Jews, the breakdown in international communications after Italy's entrance into the war radically changed the situation. A DELASEM report to the Ministry, dated July 22, 1940, announced that there were 150 Jews with visas for the United States, 50 with visas for Santo Domingo (within four days, Steinberg's would arrive), and a few others with visas for Palestine or Shanghai – but no one knew how to get them out of Italy.<sup>86</sup> War had no sooner been declared than the government decided to ease the worsening logjam by subjecting foreign Jews to internment as well, justifying the practice with a dose of racism. On June 15, the chief of police ordered the arrest of Jews “from countries with racial policies” and of stateless persons between the ages of eighteen and sixty: “These so-called undesirable elements,” he wrote in a telegram to the prefects and the police commissioner in Rome, “filled with hate toward totalitarian regimes, capable of any deleterious action, must be immediately removed from circulation in defense of the State and public order.” “Hungarian and Romanian Jews,” he specified further on, “must be” – in the euphemistic language of the Ministry – “removed from the Kingdom.”<sup>87</sup>

The beginning of the round-ups shattered both Jews and their organizations.<sup>88</sup> “In the last few days the arrests spread like wildfire,” wrote Gastone Polacco, a DELASEM official in Milan to headquarters in Genoa on June 20, 1940. On July 22, he described a recent roundup in Milan:

“There were about 100 arrests made, more than half of these [people

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<sup>85</sup> Voigt, *Il rifugio precario*, vol. II, 11

<sup>86</sup> DELASEM to the Ministry of the Interior, July 22, 1940; copy in AUCEI, cited in note 74.

<sup>87</sup> “Allontanati dal Regno,” in Italian. Reproduced in Akademie der Künste, *Deutsche Künstler und Wissenschaftler in Italien. Artisti e intellettuali tedeschi in Italia, 1933-1945* (Milano Milan: Mazzotta 1995), 41

<sup>88</sup> Voigt, *Il rifugio precario*, vol. II, 337.

who] voluntarily presented themselves [to the police] on the basis of lists given to us [by the authorities]. We have managed to have jail time reduced to the minimum possible, so that now those arrested are sent to their destinations usually on the second night following the arrest. We were unable to do anything about the manner in which the prisoners are accompanied: however, it appears to us that as soon as they board the trains, they are freed of their chains and it seems that the chains are not put back on....”

By August 12, Polacco reported that “our situation is to be considered absolutely terrifying and could give way to the most tragic and unthinkable consequences, as we must provide, practically forever, for the upkeep of nearly nine hundred persons, without any arrangements of any kind.”<sup>89</sup>

Saul Steinberg certainly witnessed the fate befalling fellow foreign Jews in his own city, and it shattered the illusion that he had found a real home in Italy. “I didn’t want to accept the reality, the betrayal – the way dearest Italy turned into Romania, hellish homeland.”<sup>90</sup> But this was written more than half a century later, and in a private letter. His public descriptions of life in post-1938 Italy were recast as amusing anecdotes. In the 1970s, he breezily recounted how he managed to escape the classic arrest hour, between 6 and 7 am, by waking up a little before 6, riding around Milan on a bicycle borrowed from Giovanni Guareschi, and then returning to bed at 7. But one morning, just as he was about to go out, the youngest of the four sisters who ran the Bar del Grillo, where he was staying, warned him that the police had arrived. He managed to flee by means of a secondary exit; returning at 8 am, he was “welcomed like a hero.”

“They told me that one of the policemen, a real Sherlock Holmes, had felt the bed and said, “It’s still warm.”

The policemen were poor devils, southerners who did this job without taking any interest in it. But their laziness, the fact that the organization did not function well, resulted in an inefficiency that would then be converted into a lack of injustice.”<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Letter of June 20, 1940, Gastone Polacco in Milan to Dante Almansì in Rome, AUCEI, s.f. “Genova.” July 22, 1940, Polacco to the Genoa office of DELASEM, in AUCEI, s.f. “Milano.” August 12, 1940, *ibid.*, for the copy sent to Rome. The statement concerning collaboration with the authorities appears in the July 22 letter.

<sup>90</sup> Steinberg to Buzzi, June 26, 1995, in Steinberg, *Lettere a Aldo Buzzi*, 277-78.

<sup>91</sup> Steinberg, *Reflections and Shadows*, 27, 32, for the quoted passage and the preceding details. The entire second chapter of this very short book concerns Steinberg’s arrest and internment. A longer, typewritten version of this chapter, headed “San Vittore e Tortoreto,” can be found at YCAL, box 78, folder “Tortoreto, trans. by Adrienne Foulke.” Only here (pages 1, 2) can one read the details about the bicycle borrowed



The stereotypical observation about the good-humored inefficiency of Italian bureaucracy sidesteps the repressive force that the Ministry of the Interior managed to exert with studied *souplesse*, as it tried, and to a certain extent succeeded, in forcing its victims to collaborate in the arrest process.

### An Aborted Escape

With his Dominican visa in hand, Steinberg now had to find a way to get to Lisbon, where he had passage booked on a boat to New York. A ticket awaited him. DELASEM had proposed to the Ministry that refugees heading for America board their vessels in Lisbon, and that they get to the Portuguese capital on ships bound for Spain, or fly via Barcelona “using the services of the Ala Littoria.”<sup>92</sup> The proposal was accepted, but Spanish ships no longer provided real passenger service, and Ala Littoria flew to Barcelona only once a week; furthermore, the flights were expensive, and the few available seats were often reserved for diplomats and official delegations. Between June 10 and November 30, 1940, only 202 people managed to leave Italy by these means.<sup>93</sup> But Saul Steinberg was one of those who made it out, if only briefly.

On August 26, Cesare Civita sent him a telegram: “Intervention by State Department at the American Consulate should authorize it to grant transit visa for the United States; even if you do not have it by Tuesday, depart nevertheless for Lisbon. Civita”<sup>94</sup> – which Steinberg did, since there is no US visa in his passport, only a Portuguese transit visa stamped on August 29, and a Spanish one dated September 3.<sup>95</sup> On Friday, September 6, he managed to leave on an airplane for Lisbon, via Barcelona-Madrid.<sup>96</sup> But at the Lisbon airport something dramatic

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from Guareschi, or notes like this one, which follows the passage cited above: “For a democracy it is a great advantage not to have laws or rules that are too precise, as was the case, at one time, in this country [USA] and as is still the case in many areas.”

<sup>92</sup> DELASEM to the Ministry of the Interior, July 22, 1940, AUCEI, cited in note 74.

<sup>93</sup> Voigt, *Il rifugio precario*, vol. II, 48, 50. Voigt also cites the report prepared by DELASEM, “Emigrazione dall’Italia di ebrei stranieri dal 10 giugno al 30 novembre 1940,” n.d., p. 17, copy in ACS, PS, Cat. A16, “Ebrei Stranieri,” b. 1/A 3/1. The report refers also to the departure of 416 people for Palestine between June 1 and the beginning of the internments, June 15, as well as the repatriation to Hungary and Romania of 29 other people.

<sup>94</sup> “INTERVENTO STATE DEPARTMENT PRESSO CONSOLATO AMERICANO DOVREBBE AUTORIZZARLO RILASCIARVI VISTO TRANSITO STATI UNITI NON AVENDOLO ENTRO MARTEDI PARTITE UGUALMENTE LISBONA – CIVITA =”; YCAL, box 1, folder “1942 Correspondence.”

<sup>95</sup> See the visas in Steinberg’s passport at YCAL, note 82.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., Border Police stamp on Steinberg’s passport.

happened. Portuguese authorities denied him entrance and sent him back to Italy the next day on the very same plane. This was to remain a catastrophic event in Saul Steinberg's life. The diary published here begins on December 6 with the statement: "3 months since my return from Lisbon," and a little later Christmas is described as "a day as sad as the 6 and 7 of September." Decades after, he still spoke of September 7 as a "most dramatic disaster – my black Friday."<sup>97</sup> In the autobiographical notes prepared for his 1978 retrospective at the Whitney Museum, there is not the slightest mention of the Lisbon disaster. Nor can it be found in Steinberg's narration in *Reflections and Shadows*, where he merely notes that in the quest for visas to leave the country, "the only one missing was the Italian one, which they wouldn't issue without my physical presence, proof of having obeyed the law."<sup>98</sup> The missing Italian "visa", however, probably refers to his second flight from Italy several months later. In the summer of 1940, it would have been unthinkable for a foreign Jew to board an airplane from Rome without an official exit permit.

The real reason for the September disaster in Lisbon has only recently come to light in the form of Portuguese documents, which tell a story Steinberg probably never knew. When he had applied for a tourist visa in May, the Portuguese Foreign Ministry denied it, fearing that the country would become a dumping ground for "undesirable" Romanian Jews.<sup>99</sup> As a result of the Foreign Ministry's letter to the secret police (PVDE, a powerful body during the autocratic regime of António de Oliveira Salazar), Steinberg was put on an unwanted list. To the "great surprise" of the border police at the Sintra airport near Lisbon, the artist showed up on September 6, carrying a valid passport and a valid visa signed by the Portuguese honorary consul in Milan, Giuseppe Agenore Magno, three months after the first refusal. The police went by the book and denied him entry, while the consul – one of a number of Portuguese diplomats who helped Jews finding safe havens – was disciplined for his action.<sup>100</sup> The fact that Steinberg was supposed to board a ship bound

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<sup>97</sup> Saul Steinberg to the art historian Leo Steinberg (no relation), September 7, 1984, original at SSF. Actually, September 7, 1940 was a Saturday. In his journal, there are references to "Fridays" as days on which to expect bad luck.

<sup>98</sup> Steinberg, *Reflections and Shadows*, 32.

<sup>99</sup> See p. 338 and note 79.

<sup>100</sup> Foreign Ministry to PVDE, May 1, 1940 (see also note 79); PVDE to Foreign Ministry, September 7, 1940. Both documents are published in Alberto Dines, "Black Friday"; Dines gives the archival locations as: "Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Lisbon, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, A/43, M/17." From the reproductions of the two documents, it can be inferred that Steinberg's file at the Foreign Ministry was given the reference number 552,1. The problems for Magno began with the Steinberg affair, according to Milgram, "Portugal, the Consuls, and the Jewish Refugees", 26-29 (see note 79 above), but it was not the only one. Magno was relieved of his functions in January 1941 and substituted by a

for New York but did not have an American transit visa may have reinforced decision of the police, who would have been unwilling to let in another refugee lacking the papers to leave. This is probably what he himself thought had happened, since two years later, just before his actual arrival in the United States, Civita's secretary had to reassure him: "As to your documents, please believe that they are now in perfect order, and that there is not the slightest danger that the events of Lisbon will again take place."<sup>101</sup>

### On the Paperwork Trail

September 1940: Saul Steinberg was back in Milan, without a job, without permission to stay in Italy and, most important, aware that he could be arrested and interned at any moment or forcibly sent back to the "primitive" and detested Romania, where a change of regime – for the worst – had just taken place. In Bucharest on September 6 and 7, the very days when Steinberg was at the Lisbon airport, General Ion Antonescu and the extreme right-wing group known as the Iron Guard staged a coup that ousted King Carol II and set up the so-called "National Legionnaire State" along Fascist-Nazi lines, and the Italian press was awash with coverage. To make things even more clear to the young Romanian Jew in Italy, the *Conducator* Antonescu explained in an interview to an Italian newspaper that extreme anti-Semitism was now official policy: "I will solve the Jewish problem (...) by gradually substituting Jews with Legionnaires who will ready themselves in the meanwhile. Most Jewish property will be expropriated and compensated. Jews who arrived in the country after 1913 (...) will be sent away as soon as possible, even if they have become Romanian citizens, while the others – I repeat – will be gradually replaced."<sup>102</sup>

Steinberg spent this period living at home in the apartment above the Bar del Grillo and in the houses of friends, in particular the studio of his

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vice-consul who never took up the post. As a matter of fact, though, Magno kept the consulate open until after the war and he kept issuing visas, since the last Portuguese visa on Steinberg's passport carries his signature and was stamped on June the 7, 1941 (see note 106). On Magno, see also Rui Alfonso, "Count Giuseppe Agenore Magno", *Portuguese Studies Review*, 5/1 (1996).

<sup>101</sup> Gertrude Einstein to Steinberg, May 25, 1942, YCAL, box 1, folder "1942 Correspondence," cited in Smith *Saul Steinberg: Illuminations*, 237, note 35. Steinberg's American family, meanwhile, hypothesized that he had been sent back from Portugal because he had been mistaken for another Steinberg, a Communist; see Danson, "An Heroic Decision," 61.

<sup>102</sup> "La Romania Legionaria. Con la disciplina all'interno ritroveremo il nostro equilibrio. A colloquio col gen. Antonescu", *La Stampa*, September 28, 1940.

colleagues Aldo Buzzi and Luciano Pozzo on Via dell'Annunciata.<sup>103</sup> As we have seen, he managed to work a little under the table for newspapers, did some advertising assignments and commissions for architect colleagues, and seems to have received financial help from his friends and acquaintances. His romantic life was filled with the woman whose name punctuates the journal, Ada or, in the affectionate diminutive, Adina (Fig. 14). Ada Cassola probably met Steinberg in 1937. Six years older than he, she was married (and later went by her husband's name, Ongari) and a Catholic.<sup>104</sup> Their relationship was intense, an admixture, as the frequent journal entries show, of longing and occasional annoyance.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> "Some of my friends showed great courage and they... kept me, they hid me....My friends, that's something else.You can't call them Italians. Anybody who's a friend is not an Italian, is not English, it's nothing, it's a friend, it's a mensch, it's something"; Steinberg, AJC-OHP, TP3 87. The reference to the studio is in Steinberg to Buzzi, November 23, 1945, *Lettere*, unpublished, apparently responding to a letter in which Buzzi mentions some drawings of Steinberg's that he still has: "I had forgotten, but now I recall that I left some in Via Annunziata [sic] 7 (by the way, does the studio still exist?)." Giò Pozzo, son of Luciano Pozzo, confirmed that his father also was in that studio, email to Sheila Schwartz, SSF, January 26, 2003, as did Aldo Buzzi, interview with the author, January 18, 2008.

<sup>104</sup> Ada Cassola was born in 1908 in Vigentino, a small town near Milan later incorporated in the larger city. She was married to Giovanni Ongari, two years her senior. She died in Erba, in the province of Como on January 16, 1997 (copies of official certificates from the Erba municipality with the author and SSF). See also Iain Topliss, "Saul Steinberg: un art de vivre," in *Saul Steinberg: L'Écriture visuelle*, exh. cat. (Strasbourg: Musée Tomi Ungerer, 2009), 19.

<sup>105</sup> In Steinberg's correspondence with Buzzi, there are frequent references to Ada, up until a letter of May 3, 1990, *Lettere*, unpublished. He stays in touch with her and even contributes to the cost of her nursing home; see, for example, the unpublished parts of the February 1, 1990 letter. There are occasional, but revealing hints of Ada in Steinberg's work. In a famous *New Yorker* cover of October 18, 1969, a Seurat-like man admires a painting by Georges Braque (Smith, *Steinberg at The New Yorker*, 125). A huge thought balloon, occupying almost all of the page, explodes from the man's head in a stream-of-consciousness series of mental associations, alliterations, and graphic games with linked meanings, beginning with "Braque, baroque, barrack...." In this verbal game, which gave Umberto Eco the subject of a seminar in the 1980s, autobiographical references appear, some so intimate that it would be hard to understand them without a detailed knowledge of the artist's biography. Two-thirds down his logical-formal chain, Steinberg inserts "...Dada, Ada, Hedda, Betty Parsons...." "Dada" sequesters into "Ada," the woman he was forced to abandon when he fled Italy, and whom, to some measure, he betrayed when he met "Hedda" in New York in 1943. Hedda Sterne is the Romanian painter who became his wife in 1944, while Betty Parsons had organized a show of his work the previous year and later became one of his dealers. Umberto Eco's seminar is recalled by Stefano Bartezzaghi, "Steinberg Talkboy/Thinkboy," *Saul Steinberg*, ed. Marco Belpoliti and Gianluigi Ricuperati, special issue of *Riga*, no. 24 (Milan: Marcos y Marcos, 2005), 335-46, where the author discusses the significance of other words in the balloon.

The main task for Steinberg in the fall of 1940 was to renew now-expired visas so that he could leave once more for Lisbon. He seems to have been aiming for a late December departure, since his journal for December 8 records that the USS *Siboney*, which made trips between Lisbon and New York, was scheduled to sail in twelve days. On November 17 he got a "Transit Certificate" stamp by the US Consul in Milan; on the 27<sup>th</sup>, having somehow cleared his position with the authorities in Lisbon, he managed to receive another Portuguese transit visa, this time from the Consul in Genoa.<sup>106</sup> But his Romanian passport, reissued the previous year, was to expire two days later, on November 29, 1940, and the Romanian Legation in Rome would not renew it, "without giving any reason therefore," according to Steinberg. What he may not have known was that the Legionnaire regime, as part of its anti-Semitic policy, was now targeting Romanian Jews even abroad: "passport renewals were denied for a wide range of reasons (not having paid military taxes, for instance), and return to Romania became more difficult."<sup>107</sup> Discovering that Steinberg's passport was no longer valid, the Spanish consulate cancelled a transit visa it had just granted, as he explains in the December 6, 1940 journal entry; the newly issued visa on p. 12 of his passport bears a large blue X and a red-penciled "Anulado." He had to start all over again: "I had a Rumanian passport, it was no good at all, it was like an indictment."<sup>108</sup>

In the meantime, however, the situation in Portugal had become chaotic. At the end of October, a famous American journalist arriving in Lisbon found the city to be "an international whirlpool into which were swept from every direction, people of all nationalities, races, colors and tongues, none wishing to stay, but all forced to remain long days, weeks, and sometimes months awaiting transportation."<sup>109</sup> There were refugees

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<sup>106</sup> Both the US transit stamp and the Portuguese transit visa are in his passport at YCAL (note 82). The new Portuguese visa was granted by the authority of the political police: in signing the third, and last, visa issued to Steinberg a few months later (June 7, 1941), the consul in Milan wrote above his signature, "Authorization by PVDE [the secret police] telegraphed to the Portuguese consul in Genoa."

<sup>107</sup> Radu Ioanid, *The Holocaust in Romania*, 259. On December 5, the Romanian regime formally abolished military service for Jews, and at the same time ordered them to forced labor under military authority. Those "physically incapable of labor service were required to pay a military tax"; *ibid.*, 27.

Steinberg's statement that the Romanians gave no reason for not renewing his passport appears in the travel affidavit he signed on January 16, 1941 at the American Consulate, Milan; the original is in his passport (note 82).

<sup>108</sup> Steinberg, AJC-OHP, T4 154-155

<sup>109</sup> Harry W. Flannery, *Assignment to Berlin* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1942), 3. Flannery was on his way to Berlin to run the CBS bureau there. He arrived in Lisbon on a PanAm Clipper and apparently left for Madrid on the Ala Littoria weekly flight. For a more general perspective, see Irene Flunser Pimentel, *Judeus em Portugal durante a II Guerra Mundial* (note 79).

who lacked valid visas for their countries of destination as well as visa-holders who could not find a berth on a ship. So many people were flocking to Portugal that the authorities cut off entry into the country even for those with legitimate transit visas until February 1941.<sup>110</sup>

Steinberg's journal for these later months of 1940 tells of his comings and goings between Milan, Rome, and Genoa to renew visas and permits, and of an uneasy relationship with the American Consulate. In the December 30 journal entry, the Vice Consul had been "tightlipped" when Steinberg applied for a transit visa earlier in the month, but on January 16, the US Consulate issued a "Affidavit of Travel," with a photograph and biographical details that somehow could be used as a corroborating identification with his now-expired passport. But the journal entries also speak of films he has seen (*Stagecoach*, *Piccolo mondo antico*, *Jamaica Inn*), of visits to galleries, of air raids, of the bombs on the Porta Ticinese neighborhood, and of his hopes to work again for *Settebello*; he writes of his disappointments as well, and of his clearly complex relationship with Adina. We learn, from the journal and elsewhere, of his friends' efforts to make the police authorities go easy on him. In an unpublished passage of the dictated memoirs that became *Reflections and Shadows*, Steinberg describes a "pact with the police headquarters" set up "through Mondadori and Mondadori's acquaintances," ensuring that he be treated well at the moment of his arrest. "I believe," he adds, "a certain Captain Verneti was helpful to me."<sup>111</sup> Verneti appears also in the journal entry for January 8, 1941 as the bearer of "extensions" and of both good and bad news; then, on April 24 and 27, as the police officer who arrested him and brought him to prison.

In fact, between hiding out and moments of accord with the local police, Steinberg was ignored by the central authorities until February 1941. What then happened to him can be reconstructed from the documents in the "Steinberg Saul di Moritz" folder still in the Archivio Centrale dello Stato, Rome. On February 21, a telegram from the Prefect of Milan informs the Ministry about this young Jew who, "having been warned to leave the Kingdom," now declares that he cannot do so since his passport has expired; and even though he has a travel affidavit for the United States, he has not yet obtained new transit visas for Spain and Portugal. This conundrum seems to create some kind of bureaucratic embarrassment, and the Prefect asks Rome for "directives"; in reply, the Ministry asks the Prefect to "formulate concrete proposals."<sup>112</sup> Two

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<sup>110</sup> Voigt, *Il rifugio precario*, vol. II, 49.

<sup>111</sup> "San Vittore e Tortoreto," typescript, p. 2, YCAL, box 78, folder "Tortoreto, trans. by Adrienne Foulke."

<sup>112</sup> Prefect of Milan to the Ministry of the Interior, February 21, 1941, in ACS, MI, PS, AG, Cat. A16 Ebrei stranieri, b. 270, f. "Steinberg Saul di Moritz"; *ibid.*, initialed draft,

weeks later, the Prefect proposes that, as “the foreigner in question is unable to leave the Kingdom,” he should be “assigned to a concentration [internment] camp.”<sup>113</sup> This last memo from the Prefect is covered with annotations in various hands (Fig. 15). Scrawled across the top is “nulla a debito”—there was “nothing against the subject.” Another, dated March 25: “Transfer to concentration camp Tortoreto.” The actual order is found in a memo dated March 31, though it was not immediately enforced.<sup>114</sup> Steinberg, in the meantime (as he explains in the journal entry of May 7), spent from late February until April 16 “awaiting Rome’s decision”; he may, sometime in April, have been taken by the police for a short time and then released (“April 16, already out,” he notes).<sup>115</sup> Another ten days passed before Steinberg, who was hastening to complete work projects, showed up at the police station. He turned himself in on April 27, was taken to San Vittore, Milan’s central prison, and from there to the camp of Tortoreto in the province of Teramo.

### Internment

“As a child, I dreamed of being the Count of Montecristo, of writing my diary with my own blood. When I found myself in prison I understood I had become an interesting subject for a novelist,” even amidst the “sadness that was permanent.”<sup>116</sup> In sum, a romantic “grand adventure” in the San Vittore prison, which Steinberg described in his journal entry of April 28 (in ordinary fountain pen ink) with punctilious curiosity: the chamberpot and the arrival of the *scopino*, the prisoner assigned to clean it; playing cards with a deck made from tobacco papers, the red ink drawn in blood; the schedule for prisoner checks and the “enormous trafficking” of cigarettes and news. And all this illustrated with drawings. The sketches of the three-man cell 111, second wing, along with views down corridors and through barred windows, are brief and informative

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Ministry of the Interior to the Prefect of Milan, February 27, 1941.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., Prefect of Milan to the Ministry of the Interior, March 12, 1941.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., initialed copy, Ministry of the Interior to the prefects of Milan and Teramo, March 31, 1941.

<sup>115</sup> Whatever happened on April 16, it must have been very important since the date is also noted (without explanation) in a very short handwritten list of addresses where he lived in Milan. The year 1940-41 only includes dates, beginning with September 6 and ending with his arrival at and departure from Tortoreto; YCAL, box 2, folder “Santo Domingo 1942.”

<sup>116</sup> “San Vittore e Tortoreto,” typescript, p. 4. Also: “I found consolation in that sort of Huckleberry Finn or Tom Sawyer impersonation of the Count of Monte Cristo right away.... [I] kept a diary, of course. As soon as you go to jail [laugh] you keep a diary [laugh]. It’s classic [laughter]. Tried to behave like a mixture of Devil’s Island, Foreign Legion, what have you, an adventure”; Steinberg, AJC-OHP, T3 74-75. The “diary” Steinberg described to his interviewers is the journal published here.

(Fig. 16), the first in a series of graphic notations Steinberg would make in the following months about his new places of residence.

His verbal and graphic inventory of prison life dodges the real horrors of the San Vittore jail, where he spent four days, though some prisoners remained there for several weeks before being transferred. They were treated like the common criminals with whom they lived, an experience described as “the most harsh and humiliating of the entire adventure.”<sup>117</sup> On July 2, 1940, the Ministry sent a memo to police headquarters, urging the officials to transfer the detainees to the internment camps as soon as possible.<sup>118</sup> Prisoners incarcerated in San Vittore were not informed of their final destination. Steinberg’s biggest fear, noted in his journal on April 30, was that he would be sent to “Ferramonte,” that is, Ferramonti di Tarsia, the large camp in the province of Cosenza (Calabria), about 150 miles south of Naples.<sup>119</sup> The only purpose-built camp, it was located in a marginal and depressed area, with malaria a constant menace, as the Milanese Jewish community had just learned from a first-hand observer.<sup>120</sup> Steinberg was not shipped to Ferramonti; on May 1, accompanied by two policemen, he was taken on a train headed for Tortoreto, a small Adriatic town in the Abruzzi. In *Reflections and Shadows*, he recounts his journey in tones that personalize geography: “During that wonderful trip I saw perilous mountains for the first time, with the train going ever so slowly along the edge of the abyss, which was precisely my situation.”<sup>121</sup> In the journal entry for May 1, however, there are no adventurous voyages described, only a simple itinerary Milan-Bologna-Rimini-Ancona, along a route that is actually very flat.<sup>122</sup> He spent the night at the

<sup>117</sup> Capogreco, *I campi del duce*, 64. See also Mario Avagliano, Marco Palmieri, *Gli ebrei sotto la persecuzione in Italia: Diari e lettere 1938-1945* (Turin: Einaudi, 2011), for an inside description of internment life by Jews in Urbisaglia (130-38), Campagna (139-48), and Ferramonti (149-51).

<sup>118</sup> Capogreco, *I campi del duce*, 289.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., pp. 242-44, for a brief account of Ferramonti. For more detailed information, see Voigt, *Il rifugio precario*, vol. II, 193-239, and Carlo Spartaco Capogreco, “The Internment Camp of Ferramonti-Tarsia,” ed. Ivo Herzer, *The Italian Refuge: Rescue of Jews During the Holocaust* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1989), 159-78, and his book *Ferramonti: La vita e gli uomini del più grande campo di internamento fascista (1940-1945)* (Giuntina: Firenze, 1987).

<sup>120</sup> Capogreco, “The Internment Camp of Ferramonti-Tarsia,” 163. On March 30, 1941, Israele Kalk, the organizer of the so-called *Mensa dei bambini* (the children’s mess), which helped Jewish refugee families survive in Milan, was allowed to visit Ferramonti for a few days. Thus, when Steinberg was arrested one month later, the Milan refugee community had already received first-hand news about conditions in the camp; *ibid.*, 167.

<sup>121</sup> Steinberg, *Reflections and Shadows*, 35. Like a good travel writer, he goes on to describe the embarkation of a procession of penitents and their ecstatic songs; they were probably pilgrims to the holy shrine at Loreto, not far from the train route.

<sup>122</sup> The image of the train traveling along a precipice in *Reflections and Shadows* could be a



Ancona station, where he managed to send his parents a postcard, written in an upbeat tone, which says nothing about his internment: "I'm constantly on the road in my attempt to leave. I hope I'll succeed soon. I'm well and hope to give you good news. In any case, even if I don't succeed right away, I'll console myself with the idea that sooner or later I'll succeed."<sup>123</sup> He arrived in Tortoreto, his journal tells us, at 10:30 in the morning on May 2: "I see the sea, beautiful."

In the township of Tortoreto, there were two different camps: one in the center of Tortoreto Alto, a village up in the hills; and one in Tortoreto Stazione, to which Steinberg was headed, located in the area around the railroad station, which after the war became known as Alba Adriatica.<sup>124</sup> The camp, he tells us in *Reflections and Shadows*,

"was a villa from which you could see the sea, but you weren't allowed to go to it. The camp was small, with perhaps fifty internees: a few Jews, White Russians, gypsies, stateless persons, refugees, being held there in a fairly makeshift and human fashion as compared with the other camps. I was lucky."<sup>125</sup>

The "villa" was the Villa Tonelli, not too far from the station (Figs. 18, 23). A two-story building with a large garden in front, a living room, kitchen, ten large rooms on the first floor, ten on the second, and nine other habitable rooms; the police authorities deemed it suitable for interning seventy-five people. It was not fenced in, and the prisoners

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conflation with Steinberg's later journey from Tortoreto to Rome upon his release in June 1941. On that voyage, the train would have climbed through the Apennines, along fairly tortuous routes, such as Pescara-Sulmona-Rome. This was the same route that he took in the opposite direction in 1955 when he went back to visit Tortoreto (see entries of March 24 and 25, Yearbook 1955, Box 3, YCAL; in *Reflections and Shadows*, he would also wrongly remember the trip as having taken place in 1957).

<sup>123</sup> The postcard, written to his parents, is dated May 3, even though Steinberg was in Ancona on May 1-2; Romanian Letters. The postal stamp is incomplete, but it seems to suggest May 2; this may be among the earliest instances where Steinberg, who cared little for chronological precision, inadvertently misdated a document or artwork.

<sup>124</sup> For information about the camps at Tortoreto, see the outline in Capogreco, *I campi del duce*, 222-23, as well as Costantino Di Sante, *Dall'internamento alla deportazione: I campi di concentramento in Abruzzo (1940-1944)*, n.d., paragraph 2.15, on the web at: ([http://www.associazioni.milano.it/aned/libri/di\\_sante.htm](http://www.associazioni.milano.it/aned/libri/di_sante.htm)). The papers regarding the organization and the management of the camps are in ACS, MI, PS, AG, Cat. Massime M4, b.136. f.16, "Campi di concentramento," s. f. 2 "Affari per provincia," ins. 41 "Teramo," ss. ff. 9 "Grande fabbricato (Villa) nel comune di Tortoreto Stazione," and ss. ff. 11 "Fabbricato di proprietà del Sig. De Fabritiis Nicola nel comune di Tortoreto paese."

<sup>125</sup> Steinberg, *Reflections and Shadows*, 35. "There were no fences, nothing. Anybody could have escaped, nobody was fool to escape, we were kept there;" Steinberg, AJC-OHP, T3 93-94

were allowed, under escort, to walk about for an hour a day.<sup>126</sup> Officially, contact between prisoners and the residents was prohibited, but Elena Zaroni, then a girl living in the villa next door, tells of strolling with her friends one day, when they became aware of a new arrival, a “romantic young man who fascinated all the girls on account of his good looks.” Some quick detective work revealed he answered to the name of Saul Steinberg. He was so remarkable and noticeable that the few weeks Steinberg spent in Tortoreto were enough for “the town girls” to use his first name, in the Italianized version of “Paolo.”<sup>127</sup>

Life went on in the form of daily roll calls, attempts to fill the empty hours, and the search for food (Fig. 17). Prisoners with no money were given a daily stipend of 6.5 lire, which was raised to 8 lire a little before Steinberg’s arrival—a raise for which the prisoners sent a thank-you note to Mussolini, illustrated by the architect Walter Frankl, a fellow inmate (Fig. 18).<sup>128</sup> These funds went to the common mess, where, Steinberg recalled, “there was quite a traffic in bread: fresh bread, dry bread, all kinds of bread. Grass and herbs, a bit of onion, were added to make bread soup, bread pies.”<sup>129</sup> Playing music was permitted, even if it had to be somewhat muted, and violinist-prisoners entertained their

<sup>126</sup> Elena Zaroni, *Alba Adriatica e la sua gente: Un secolo di eventi e di ricordi* (Rome: Pioda Imaging, 2006), 151-52. Steinberg later quipped to friends and relatives that “the Italians didn’t know how to run a concentration camp”; Danson, “An Heroic Decision,” 61.

<sup>127</sup> Zaroni, *Alba Adriatica e la sua gente*, 154. For Steinberg’s own account of the sensual women of Tortoreto, see Steinberg, *Reflections and Shadows*, 38-39.

<sup>128</sup> The note, on a large sheet of paper (40 x 44cm), is dated April 28, 1941. At the center, an ink and watercolor drawing by the architect Walter Frankl depicts the Villa Tonelli at Tortoreto Stazione, surrounded by the signatures of the internees. “Duce!” one reads above the drawing, “the prisoners of this camp, profoundly moved by your magnanimous gesture, express their most heartfelt thanks, and consider this measure, beyond its material value, a new sign of that human treatment, which everyone, without exception, will remember forever.” Another similar though smaller note, dated May 1, 1941, was sent by the inmates of the Tortoreto Alto camp. In this case the drawing, by another inmate, shows the clock tower of the town.

Both documents are reproduced in Pasquale Rasicci, *Alba Adriatica: I primi 50 anni, Ieri-Oggi 1956-2006* (Colonnella [TE]: Grafiche Martintype, 2005), 71, 75. The originals are among the papers and memorabilia in the Gianfranco Moscati collection, which documents anti-Semitic persecution in Italy and Europe at large. The collection is now at the Imperial War Museum, London; the two notes are in folder 79, items 18 (Tortoreto Stazione) and 19 (Tortoreto Alto). The same documents are also detailed in the inventory of the papers of the Italian Ministry of the Interior, but the indicated folder (ACS, MI, PS, AG, Cat. Massime M4, b. 136, f. 16 “Campi di concentramento”, s.f. 2 “Affari per provincia,” ins. 41 “Teramo,” ss.ff. 9 “Grande fabbricato (Villa) nel comune di Tortoreto Stazione”) contains only the cover letter from the Prefect of Teramo, with “seen by the Duce” noted in the margin.

<sup>129</sup> Steinberg, *Reflections and Shadows*, 38. Three decades later, Steinberg recalled the stipend as smaller, adding to the above passage, “The pope gave us six lire a day as an allowance, and for his own peace of mind.”

companions.

“At night we had curfew, and these thirty people gathered together in the dining room with the lights off, and there was one man there who was a good violinist, he had a fiddle with him, and he played the fiddle with a... mute, and played very quietly so that the guard wouldn’t wake up, and in the dark played... he played some Beethoven, some classical music. It was beautiful. It was the most beautiful... I still have goose pimples about that music.”<sup>130</sup>

The violinist was probably Alois Gogg, an Austrian who would eventually be freed along with Steinberg, and, like him, sail from Lisbon to New York.<sup>131</sup>

Steinberg spent his time drawing, painting, writing, receiving letters, and handling the paperwork necessary to secure his missing visas.<sup>132</sup> At the time of his internment, he had a new reservation on a ship scheduled to embark from Lisbon on June 20. He therefore asked for authorization to leave Tortoreto to complete his paperwork: on May 3, to go to the

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<sup>130</sup> Steinberg, AJC-OHP, T3 83

<sup>131</sup> Two decades later, Gogg wrote of his time in Tortoreto: “In the attic I found myself a roomy place and there studied and practiced. My friends often cooked for me and brought me the meals up to my ‘Studierstube’ so I could work for hours and hours. From my ‘study’ I had a beautiful view of the sea, but it got frightfully cold in winter & we would spend the day in bed, so as not to freeze”; note written to his wife and to his daughter, December 6, 1965, copy kindly provided to the author by Gogg’s widow, Paula Weber. Steinberg speaks of Gogg as a “mysterious man, because he remained in good spirits and always had faith; he never had a moment of silence or lack of courage”; “San Vittore e Tortoreto,” p. 6, and a briefer description in Steinberg, *Reflections and Shadows*, 35. Two pages on in the latter book, Steinberg recounts that Gogg also enlisted in the American army, but changed his name. After the war, Steinberg tried to contact him under the name “Warner,” but was unsuccessful and lost track of him. Gogg, however, had taken the name Milton Weber and settled in Wisconsin, where he taught music in a college and directed a symphony orchestra; he died on October 28, 1968. See also the entry for another prisoner from Tortoreto, Maximilian Balter, on the site dedicated to the memory of the many Jews who lived up until 1938 in a certain apartment building in Vienna: <http://www.grossestadtgutgasse34.at/balter.html>

In a journal entry of June 20, 1941, Steinberg writes: “Excalibur with Gogg and Isler”, which seems to suggest that Gogg boarded the S.S. *Excalibur* in Lisbon with him. Although they had shared a hotel room in Rome on the journey out of Italy (see note 137 below), passenger manifests show that Gogg departed Lisbon after Steinberg, on July 11, aboard the S.S. *Exeter* (copy of the manifest supplied by Paula Weber). Steinberg’s two friends probably just accompanied him to the boarding pier.

<sup>132</sup> Mail in the camps was subject to censure, which in some camps proved particularly oppressive, but it does not seem that Steinberg had any difficulty corresponding by mail.

Portuguese Consulate in Genoa for a transit visa; on May 21, to go to Milan to revalidate his American transit visa, which the American Consulate had demanded he do in person.<sup>133</sup> Such requests were not unusual, given that government policy was to help foreign Jews leave Italy.<sup>134</sup> In Steinberg's case, the Prefect of Genoa advised against allowing him to travel to the city, while a few days later the Ministry agreed to let him travel to Milan.<sup>135</sup> All these efforts, however, became unnecessary, thanks to the intervention of DELASEM. On June 4, the DELASEM office in Rome wrote to the Ministry requesting an immediate release for Steinberg so that he could catch a plane in Rome on June 12 in order to make his scheduled departure from Lisbon on June 20. Permission was granted on June 6, and Steinberg boarded a train for Rome two days later with Alois Gogg.<sup>136</sup> Writing to his friend a few months later from Santo Domingo, Steinberg would remember the train journey from Tortoreto, the excitement, the tension, even the people on board chanting prayers for family members who were fighting at the front: "It was an ugly period," he said, "which, remembering it now, becomes beautiful, especially for me, since I was going to Milan to see my girlfriend."<sup>137</sup> More than fifty years later, he reminisced to Aldo Buzzi:

"How lucky I was to be saved... I took a night train from Rome, seated, with all the perils, police, documents. Arrived safely in Milan, spent the day with Ada, while Natalina scolded me: What poor things you have in your suitcase, ingegnere! She had seen my worn-out socks etc. in the wardrobe. At night I returned to Rome, a crowded train, nameless hotel, on Via dei Chiavari, I think, in the Ghetto. Saved from minute to minute by a miracle. The only thing remaining in my mind is the beautiful maid in the hotel, going up and down the narrow staircase."<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> All this correspondence is in ACS, MI, PS, AG, Cat. A16 Ebrei stranieri, b. 270, f. "Steinberg Saul di Moritz." The letter from Lester L. Schnare, the American Consul, is dated May 19.

<sup>134</sup> For more on the relative ease with which one could get this type of travel permission, see Voigt, *Il rifugio precario*, vol. II, 131.

<sup>135</sup> Prefect of Genoa to the Ministry of the Interior, May 28, 1941, in ACS, MI, PS, AG, Cat. A16 Ebrei stranieri, b. 270, f. "Steinberg Saul di Moritz."

<sup>136</sup> DELASEM to the Ministry of the Interior, June 4, 1941; Ministry of the Interior to the Prefects of Milan, Teramo, and to the head of police administration in Rome, June 6, 1941; and, from the Prefect of Teramo to the same three offices, June 9 and 12, 1941, announcing that Steinberg had left for Rome on the 8<sup>th</sup>. The departure date of June 8 is confirmed in his journal entry for that day. All documents in ACS, MI, PS, AG, Cat. A16 Ebrei stranieri, b. 270, f. "Steinberg Saul di Moritz."

<sup>137</sup> Steinberg to Gogg, September 30, 1941, in Italian. Copy kindly provided to the author by Paula Weber; copy also at SSF. In Rome, Gogg shared a room with Steinberg at the Albergo Pomezia; in Fig. 20, Steinberg's drawing of that room, Gogg's name is written on one of the two beds, while a photo on the nighttable is identified as "Adina."

<sup>138</sup> Steinberg to Buzzi, June 26, 1995, in Steinberg, *Lettere a Aldo Buzzi*, 278. Natalina is

Between Milan and Rome, Steinberg collected the last of his missing documents (Fig. 19).<sup>139</sup> He stayed in Rome at the Hotel Pomezia in via dei Chiavari (Fig. 20) from June 12 until June 16, when he once more got on an Ala Littoria flight for Barcelona-Madrid-Lisbon.<sup>140</sup> This time, the Portuguese authorities allowed him entry. Arriving in Lisbon, he stayed at the Hotel Tivoli (Fig. 21), and on June 20, he boarded the S.S. *Excalibur*, a ship of the American Export Lines. Ten days later, the boat arrived in New York Harbor, but Steinberg could not get permission to disembark and was forced to remain on Ellis Island.<sup>141</sup> On July 5, he was once again at sea, now bound for Ciudad Trujillo, as Santo Domingo was then known. There he spent one more year, working and hoping for an American visa, until the summer of 1942, when he finally flew to Miami and boarded a bus to New York. After two years of frustration and fear, he had done it. And he was one of the lucky ones: between December 1, 1940 and October 15, 1941, only 210 other foreign Jews managed to leave Italy.<sup>142</sup>

In the United States, Steinberg began to work for the American government, and in February 1943 he received both US citizenship and a commission in the Naval Reserve. Assigned to the intelligence services, he was sent to China, India, Algeria, and finally, in mid-1944, to Italy,

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Natalina Cavazza, the second of the four sisters who ran the Bar del Grillo, cited also in the journal entry for Sunday, December 29, 1940, and in Steinberg to Buzzi, April 6, 1987, *ibid.*, 159.

<sup>139</sup> The new Portuguese and Spanish transit visas in his passport (note 82), in fact bear the respective dates of June 7 and June 10. The presence of the visas on his passport refutes the claim, which circulated for many years in print (and probably originated with Steinberg), that he was able to leave thanks to a passport “slightly falsified” with a stamp of his own making; see, for example, Sarah Boxer, “Saul Steinberg, Epic Doodler, Dies at 84,” *The New York Times*, May 13, 1999 (<http://www.nytimes.com/1999/05/13/arts/saul-steinberg-epic-doodler-dies-at-84.html>).

<sup>140</sup> Telegram from the Rome police headquarters to the Ministry, in ACS, MI, PS, AG, Cat. A16 Ebrei stranieri, b. 270, f. “Steinberg Saul di Moritz.”

<sup>141</sup> On July 2, 1941, he wrote to his parents in Bucharest that he had been met by “[Harold] Danson, Harry’s son-in-law, and Civita. Now I’m waiting on Ellis Island, I can’t enter New York because I’m in transit; still, Harry and Sadie and their girls with their husbands and Civita with his family visit me daily. They’ve bought me everything, I’m well equipped, they are all very nice and polite and very attentive. Saturday I embark [on] the ship for Santo Domingo, it’s not far, I hope to get there well and to start working right away because I have a lot of hope and potential to succeed – have hope, have confidence in me, I will do everything for you”; “Romanian Letters.”

<sup>142</sup> DELASEM report “Statistica degli israeliti espatriati dal 1 dicembre 1940 al 15 ottobre 1941,” cited by Voigt, *Il rifugio precario*, vol. II, 50. Voigt, 51, also considers it “realistic to calculate 700 to be the [overall] number of ‘foreign Jews’ who, persecuted by Fascist racial policies, left Italy after June 10, 1940 to transfer overseas.”

having literally gone around the world from east to west in less than three years.<sup>143</sup> But that is another story, which interests us only because in Bari in 1944, wearing an American officer's uniform, Steinberg ran into a fellow detainee from Tortoreto who was selling stamps from a street stand. The man, without recognizing Steinberg, said that he had survived because, with the fall of Mussolini on July 25, 1943, he had gone south, while others had traveled north, straight into Nazi hands.<sup>144</sup>

The night before his departure from Tortoreto, Steinberg's companions had made a dinner in his honor, offered him a "special supper," with "lots of bread and the sweetest tea,"<sup>145</sup> and a folded farewell pamphlet with a dedication: "A souvenir of Tortoreto. Cordially dedicated to Mr. S. Steinberg from his comrades" (Figs. 22, 23). Inside was a drawing of the Villa Tonelli, surrounded by the signatures of those destined to remain.<sup>146</sup> Thirty years later, Steinberg looked at the pamphlet once more:

"We are all there, I am in the title. And the signatures seem to be from the XIX century, signatures that give an idea of the importance, of the dignity of man, to the very last one. These poor men. I hope that many of them were saved on July 25."<sup>147</sup>

The signature on the drawing of the villa is that of the Viennese architect Walter Frankl, the same man who had created the thank you note to Mussolini for having raised their daily stipend, "a new sign of that human treatment, of which everyone, without exception, will remember

<sup>143</sup> See Smith, *Saul Steinberg: Illuminations*, 30-32.

<sup>144</sup> Steinberg, *Reflections and Shadows*, 37. The camps at Tortoreto had been dismantled in May 1943, and approximately ninety prisoners, mostly Jews, were transferred to the nearby camp in Nereto; see Capogreco, *I campi del duce*, 222. When Mussolini fell on July 25, 1943, the few Italians interned in Nereto were freed, while the 158 foreign internees – mostly Yugoslavs – were kept in the camp; after the armistice (September 8) and the creation of the Fascist republic in the north of Italy, conditions in the camp became harsher, until, on December 21, 1943, the director of the camp handed the Jews over to the German troops who had occupied the town; *ibid.*, 220. Steinberg's friend had probably been transferred elsewhere before the end of July – as was Max Balter, a Tortoreto internee and signatory (as "Balter, Massimo") to both the thank you note to Mussolini (see above p. 351 and note 128, Fig. 18, second row from top, third signature) and the "Ricordo" for Steinberg (see Fig. 23, top row, fourth from left). Balter was transferred to a camp in Istonio Marina (now Vasto, Abruzzo) in June, managed to escape in the summer of 1943, crossed over to Allied lines and ended up in a displaced persons camp not very far from Bari in the winter of 1944; see *Sylvia/Maximilian Balter*, in "Gedenkproject Große Stadtgutgasse 34," <http://www.grossestadtgutgasse34.at/balter.html>.

<sup>145</sup> Steinberg, *Reflections and Shadows*, 36.

<sup>146</sup> The original is in YCAL, box 89, folder "Tortoreto 2."

<sup>147</sup> "San Vittore e Tortoreto," typescript, p. 7.

forever” (see above p. 351, Fig. 18).<sup>148</sup> That “forever” did not last long. In October 1941, as a “family reunion” measure, Frankl was transferred to the village of Castelnuovo Garfagnana (northern Tuscany), so that he could live with his wife, Elisabeth. But at the end of 1943 the region was taken over by the Nazis. On December 6, with the other Jews who were living as “free internees” in Castelnuovo, the Frankls were sent to a nearby camp, then transferred to Milan’s San Vittore prison. On January 30, 1944, they were on the transport that left a special underground section of Milan’s central railway station bound for Auschwitz. Neither would ever come back.<sup>149</sup>

### Saul Steinberg’s Journal, December 1940-June 1941

Between the end of 1940 and the summer of 1942, Saul Steinberg kept an occasional journal, in Italian, on loose sheets of paper. Often they were only hurried notes, or after the fact reconstructions that followed long periods of silence. Along with the written entries, he sometimes added sketches of the places he was describing. The journal is among Steinberg’s papers at YCAL.<sup>150</sup> Here we publish the first part of the journal, which covers the period between December 6, 1940 and June 20, 1941.

The more or less continuous narration is interrupted at the end of December 1940 and picks up again on April 27, 1941 with a brief interlude dated “Tortoreto, May 7,” referring to events during the intervening period. Steinberg seems to have returned to the journal once

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<sup>148</sup> See note 128.

<sup>149</sup> Walter Frankl, the eldest brother of renowned neurologist and psychiatrist Viktor Frankl (1905-1997), had managed to leave Austria in July 1939 with his wife, only to find himself interned in Tortoreto one year later. For his full story, see Veronika Pfolz, “Nach Italien emigriert – drei Künstlerinnen und Künstler,” *Zwischenwelt. Literatur – Widerstand – Exil*, nos. 1-2 (August 2005), 61-63. A summary of this material can be found in “Gedenkprojekt Große Stadtgutgasse 34” (see note 144), note 8. In the repertory of Jews deported from Italy (Liliana Picciotto, *Il libro della Memoria. Gli ebrei deportati dall’Italia 1943-1945* [Milan: Mursia 2002], 299), the name is spelled Fraenkel, and his wife’s name is italianized into Elisabetta (*née* Weisz). In the report filed by his brother Viktor with the “The Central Database of Shoah Victims’Names” of Yad Vashem ([http://207.232.26.141/YADVASHEM/17031933\\_362\\_4648/204.jpg](http://207.232.26.141/YADVASHEM/17031933_362_4648/204.jpg)), the wife’s name is recorded as Else. See also the “Frankl, Walter” file in the database of the “Documentationsarchiv des österreichischen Widerstandes” ([http://de.doew.braintrust.at/db\\_shoah\\_55041.html](http://de.doew.braintrust.at/db_shoah_55041.html)).

<sup>150</sup> The pages of the journal are divided between two folders in box 89, “Tortoreto 1940-42” and “Miscellaneous 1940-42”; since the Steinberg papers are not yet catalogued, the pages are out of chronological order.

he had arrived at Tortoreto, picking up the thread again from his arrest on Sunday, April 27; afterwards, on May 7, he wanted to fill in the interim of four months using the available space on the bottom of December's page, and a little of the reverse of that same sheet of paper. The dates are highlighted in boldface and a line separates one page from the other. Editorial notes are in brackets.

**Milan, December 6, 1940**[*Originally 7, corrected to 6*]

3 months since the return from Lisbon – Today – as if to celebrate the date, the Spanish consul cancelled the visa already issued because [my] passport [was] expired. Accusation of bad faith. Enough.

I spoke with [Giovanni] Guareschi about gags, even drawings.

Evening at [Giovanni] Mosca's, where I lost 100 lire playing cards. Today I couldn't see Adina – After much time, in the afternoon, I went to the cinema (*Ombre Rosse* [Stagecoach, by John Ford]) . Always falling lower

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I received from Albisola 3 rather ugly ceramics.<sup>151</sup>

I notice that more and more often Friday brings me bad luck. Friday departure for Rome, Friday departure for Lisbon. Today, pitch-black day, Friday.

God will help me get through these years

**added May 7, 1941** (Tort[oreto])

Friday May 2, arrive in Tortoreto.

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**Saturday, December 7**

Yesterday naturally was the 6th. The 6th and Friday. It all [the bad luck of the day] still holds and even more so.

Afternoon with Adina at home. She told me small things that she shouldn't have told me because they're inconsequential.

I am anxious right now and as always when something eludes me my desire for it grows stronger.

Evening at [Giovanni] Mosca's [a *Bertoldo* colleague] – I had already sent him some little cubes of wood, painted, which he liked.

I appear to be courting him because I am interested but I do it without this idea in mind.

Fiorio and his wife were also there. Tonight I wondered whether Fiorio was the one who looked at Adina on the tram.

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<sup>151</sup> Albisola is a seaside resort on the Ligurian coast. The local ceramics industry dates from the sixteenth century.



They talked about a baby who put a bean in his nose and the bean sprouted roots and spread through the inside of the nose, way up. I finished reading *I Promessi Sposi* which is a great and fine book<sup>152</sup> – Still haven't received anything from home.

### Sunday, December 8

The "Siboney" leaves in 12 days.<sup>153</sup>

Got up at noon. Malaise. In the afternoon I tried to make a few gags. [Aldo] Buzzi came. He doesn't think I ought to work with them ["da loro," i.e., people, though it is not clear who]. I would not treat a friend this way.

I feel more and more empty in the head.

We have beautiful, moonlit nights, but there are no more alarms [air-raided sirens].

### Thursday, December 12

Yesterday and today were good days. I will see later if they really are good.

So: Monday Adina was here in the afternoon.

Then I went to [Pietro] Chiesa<sup>154</sup> to finish the drawing then, following a phone call with the Panamanian Consul, went at 10 in the evening to Rome.

I arrived at 8 in the morning and went to the Romanian Legation without any result. Spent 3 hours in the waiting room.

I saw in passing two magnificent gates, in a beautiful green, next to the Teatro Marcello near the gate of the Ghetto. I returned late on Tuesday evening.

Then on Wednesday, telephoning Mosca, I learned that [Angelo] Rizzoli bought *Il Settebello* and that they are well-disposed toward me.

In fact, in the afternoon, going to [the office of] the newspaper, Andrea [Rizzoli] said, in an absent-minded way, speaking to others, that his father agreed and that I will begin on the first of January.

I was very happy, it felt like the good [old] times. Today I saw Adina a little. We met and had tea downtown.

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<sup>152</sup> *I Promessi sposi* (*The Betrothed*) by Alessandro Manzoni (1785-1873) is the most renowned and influential novel in Italian literature.

<sup>153</sup> The USS *Siboney*, a troop transport in World War I, returned to passenger service on routes between the United States and the Caribbean. In 1940-41, it was leased to the American Export Lines, and made trips between Lisbon and New York; see "USS Siboney," Wikipedia, consulted May 9, 2010, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SS\\_Siboney](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SS_Siboney).

<sup>154</sup> See note 61 above.

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**Thursday, [December] 12**

Toward evening, I saw, with Buzzi, the exhibition of Birolli and Carrà.<sup>155</sup>

Hmmm...

Crosignani left.

Monday received a letter from home. I have to answer. Harry wrote them an ugly version about the Lisbon business.<sup>156</sup> I also have to write to Ciucu.<sup>157</sup>

I'm happy. Tomorrow I will go to the newspaper with "Candide" for Carletto [Manzoni] and 4 packs of tarot cards that I took from Clerici.<sup>158</sup>

Tomorrow is a bad day, I'll be careful. It's Friday the 13th.

Friday, December 20 [*he recaps the previous week*]

Friday the 13th nothing happened to me.

**Saturday** [the 14<sup>th</sup>] with Adina, and Sunday too.

**Tuesday** [the 17<sup>th</sup>] at Mosca's, evening.

**Wednesday** [the 18<sup>th</sup>] at 2 in the morning alarms. In a shelter with everyone on our floor. Saw some beautiful tracer bullets [from anti-aircraft fire]. Bombs at the Porta Ticinese. Fighting with Adina because yesterday evening she was with her girlfriends on the 1st floor.

Today I should have left from Lisbon on the Siboney – I was at the US Consulate, which will write to the Romanian Legation in Rome. If it doesn't get results, they'll get a Travel Affidavit for me.

I'm broke – I get up late these days. I am reading *The Life of Benvenuto Cellini* – Buongiardino from the architecture school brought me *Town & Country* with one of my drawings<sup>159</sup> – I made a painting for [Cesare]

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<sup>155</sup> Two Italian painters: Renato Birolli (1905-1959) and Carlo Carrà (1881-1966).

<sup>156</sup> His American uncle, Harry Steinberg.

<sup>157</sup> "Ciucu" Perlmutter was a childhood friend who studied with Steinberg in Milan. At the beginning of 1940, he left Milan without graduating; see Steinberg's 1940 letters to his parents, especially March 6, 1940, "Romanian Letters." Subsequent letters from Steinberg's parents and Perlmutter's sister document his peregrinations, to Portugal and eventually Australia.

<sup>158</sup> Clerici is probably the Italian surrealist painter Fabrizio Clerici (1913-1993), who also briefly worked as an architect in Milan in the thirties and the forties. The reference to "Candide" is unclear.

<sup>159</sup> He is referring to a line drawing of a hunter on horseback published *Town & Country*, October 1940, 50, illustrating a story by Oliver Wainright, "The Shot Heard Round the Country."

Civita using an earth brown–tempera.  
Five of my gags in an issue of Bertoldo.<sup>160</sup>

**Monday, December 23** [*he recaps the previous days*]

**Saturday** [the 21<sup>st</sup>] evening, alarm, nothing happened. They went over Fiume and Venice  
Had a fight with Adina in the evening.  
Buzzi was at my place.

**Sunday** [the 22<sup>nd</sup>] I got up late and in the afternoon Giorgio shot pictures of me and other “artistic” ones.  
In the evening I called Adina 2 hours in a row but the phone was always busy. Evening alarm.  
Mama writes me from home that she would like to come to me. She’s afraid because I will leave.  
Today, Monday, I was at Bertoldo in the late morning and toward the evening. [Mario] Brancacci<sup>161</sup> was there and others from Ecco [another magazine].  
Disgusting! At midday with Mosca in the Galleria to buy a book.  
In the afternoon, Adina came to see me. I made her talk.  
*I’ve done nothing else, not even work.*  
I’m an idiot, a real idiot. Even spent this evening chattering with Natalina etc.<sup>162</sup> Telling them about my business.  
Now I go to bed. I will pray to God.

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**Monday, December 30, 1940**

Nothing special this week except Sunday: **Sunday, December 29, 1940.**  
Yesterday evening I made the first 2 drawings for Bertoldo, useless and ridiculous work = It will last for one more issue and then that’s it. Then yesterday I spent the whole day with Adina – I want to sate myself.

**Saturday evening**[the 28<sup>th</sup>] with Adina to see Jamaica Inn with Laughton at the Impero [Alfred Hitchcock’s *Jamaica Inn*, 1939.]

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<sup>160</sup> The five drawings are probably the group entitled “Drammi del Mare,” published a month earlier in the November 22, 1940 issue of *Bertoldo*; listed in Guareschi, *Milano 1936-1943: Guareschi e il Bertoldo*, 491, in the appendix to unsigned drawings published in 1940-41.

<sup>161</sup> An Italian writer (1910-1991) who worked for *Bertoldo* and *Marc’Aurelio*.

<sup>162</sup> Natalina Cavazza; see note 138 above.

**Wednesday Christmas.** Tuesday evening at Mosca's to eat – [Gilberto] Loverso, game with Milly, Zenoni, Fiorio, Mangeri, Achille<sup>163</sup> –

Today Archangeli [*sic*] tells me that we need a telegram for Lisbon. This morning at the US Consulate where [William L.] Krieg [American Vice Consul] is very tightlipped – Sad day, like the 6th and 7th of September. Today I sent the ticket to Genoa.

These days usually get up at 10. Cappuccino and brioche, read *Corriere [della Sera]* and [*La*] *Stampa* and buy, depending on the day, Marc'Aurelio, Bertoldo, Oggi (these 3 now free) *Guerino*, [*Il*] *Travaso*, *Domenica [del] Corriere*. I eat at *Il Grillo* midday and evenings, spaghetti, cutlets and fruit now cost 10 lire – In the evening I buy *L'Ambrosiano* and *La Stampa Sera*.<sup>164</sup> – I played billiards a lot until last week.

Tomorrow is New Year's Day – For the first time I write 1941. I hope to be able to go on to see in 42 whether 41 has been good or bad for me -- 1940 for sure was a bad year, the worst so far -- Still, I got my degree, learned a little English, enough to understand a headline, but it's still good, [and] I published some stuff in America.

Certainly 1941 will begin badly: January 8. The day when school begins after vacation.

*[At this point, having arrived in Tortoreto, he summarizes the events of January-April]*

**May 7, 1941 Tortoreto.** January 8 I got other postponements with Vernetti.<sup>165</sup> Always blowing hot and cold every 8-10 days – Then an interval between the end of February to April 16 awaiting decisions from Rome – April 16 I was already out. **Thursday [April] 24**, presented myself with Vernetti after a painful week in which I made the panel for Rapallo.

Got two more days – **Sunday, April 27** went to S. Vittore<sup>166</sup> – **Saturday**

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<sup>163</sup> Gilberto Loverso was one of *Bertoldo's* writers. After the war, he worked for a few years in the publishing company founded by Cesare Civita in Buenos Aires, then returned to Italy, where he continued writing; he also became one of the directors and writers for the new Italian public broadcasting company, RAI; see Fausta Leoni, *Oltre il Karma* (1969) (Rome: Gremese Editore, 2002), 27, 31-33. "Achille" may be a reference to Achille Campanile; see note 28 above.

<sup>164</sup> Newspapers mentioned: [*Il*] *Corriere [della Sera]*, the most important Italian daily; [*La*] *Stampa*, the leading daily in Turin, *La Stampa Sera* was its evening edition; *Oggi*, a weekly magazine published by Rizzoli; *Guerino [Guerin Meschino]* and [*Il*] *Travaso [delle idee]*, humor newspapers; *Domenica [del] Corriere*, weekly illustrated magazine published by *Corriere della Sera*; *L'Ambrosiano*, Milan daily, noted for its coverage of the cultural and arts scenes.

<sup>165</sup> For Vernetti, see p. 347.

<sup>166</sup> For the prison of San Vittore, see p. 349.

**the 26th** with Adina to see “Piccolo mondo antico”<sup>167</sup> and then to eat at Il Grillo

Did everything in a hurry. Saturday the 26th had Adina for the last time—Dear girl.

I worked for Bertoldo up until the last issue [for him], published in the week of April 16. Then [Carlo] Manzoni continues by imitating my drawing. Also made a cartoon for an issue of Settebello.

Recently, 2 cartoons for Tempo.<sup>168</sup> Gags for : Guerino, Tempo, Bert[oldo] and Settebello.

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Continuation [on the back of the same page]

Made a painting for Radaelli (and 3 already published drawings framed with colored glass).

Panel for Sacerdot[t]i. Drawing for a shutter door for a bar. Thanks to Lattis.<sup>169</sup>

Sold 5 *cartoni*<sup>170</sup> at the newspaper: Guareschi, Manzoni, Andrea, Parini, Loverso.

Beautiful drawing with bottles and flowers for piece of bar furniture Chiesa (Fontana Arte).<sup>171</sup>

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**Milan** [*top left side, in a box*]

**Sunday April 27** [*originally “Thursday,” corrected to “Sunday”*]. I go with Vernetti to S. Fedele<sup>172</sup> –10 in the morning—11 o’clock with a policeman to S. Vittore (by taxi).

Until 9 in the evening in a security room with 36 others – I sleep on the ground floor with three others in the cell. Three: one [there] because of a fine – two thieves to be interned in the islands.

**Monday, April 28** – transferred to the 2nd floor, 2nd wing with

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<sup>167</sup> A 1941 film by Mario Soldati (1906-1991) from a 1885 novel by Antonio Fogazzaro (1842-1911).

<sup>168</sup> A weekly magazine created and edited by Alberto Mondadori. It seems clear from context that the two cartoons were newly drawn.

<sup>169</sup> Vito Latis; see pp. 331-332 and note 59.

<sup>170</sup> The meaning of *cartoni*, used only in this journal entry, isn’t clear. When Steinberg refers to cartoons or gags, he consistently says *vignette* and *battute* – the common words at the time. He may have meant preparatory drawings, or drawings painted on cardboard (*cartone*), which he sold to his five friends at the newspaper.

<sup>171</sup> Pietro Chiesa; see p. 332 and note 61.

<sup>172</sup> Then the headquarters of Milan’s police (*questura*).

Zessevich and Erdös. The first a Soviet Russian – inside for 56 days. The other a Hungarian for 50 days. Both under suspicion waiting for [their] repatriation or liberation. Playing cards with tobacco papers, bread crumbs and soup, white paper on top, all drawn with a copying pencil. The red [ink] made with blood. String to hold up the trousers. Lots of tobacco. I learn to play Scopa [Italian card game]. Newspapers: *Gazzetta dello Sport*, *Guerino*, *Domenica* [del *Corriere*], *Corriere* [dei] *piccoli*.<sup>173</sup> Marmalade, chocolate, dried figs, walnuts, beer, wine, cheese, bread, cigarettes, only Swedish matches, soap, warm milk. *Scoppino* (cleaner of chamber pots).<sup>174</sup>

[Steinberg's four drawings of *San Vittore*, Fig. 16, appear at this point, running horizontally across the page. Inscriptions:]

Second drawing from left, captioned "2<sup>nd</sup> wing, cell 111." On the long mattress is written "Io" (me), and described, to the right, as "straw mattress on floor, 3 blankets, 2 sheets." The mattress above is identified as that of "Zess[evich]," the gridded one to the right as that of "Erd[ös]." The objects on the floor contain, clockwise from lower right, "wine," "washing bowl," "water," and "soup."

Drawing at right: "Milk at 8, inspection of cell bars at 3pm, 3 checks per night – soup at 11, 2 loaves of bread (500-600 gr.) in the morning walk 9-10, lots of traffic, cigarettes, news, the *scrivano* [prisoner-scribe], pencil, razorblade, nail, in the hair - lice, fleas, bedbugs, cockroaches."

**Wednesday, April 30**, 11 am, am advised that departure will be tomorrow. Great fear of Ferramonte.<sup>175</sup>

**Thursday, May 1**, downstairs at 9. Shave. In a taxi with two policemen. Telephone Adina. She already knows, dear girl, she was at Ferraro's. Station, Buzzi with the suitcases. Adina sees me suddenly, does a little jump. Gray overcoat, black dress with her aunt's brooch. Donizetti in mourning: death of his mother.<sup>176</sup> Truly feel for him. Saw her just a few days ago, at their house. Don. gives me medicines.

I kiss Adina lightly, wet mouth, she cries – I won't see her any more– Dear Adina --

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<sup>173</sup>*Gazzetta dello Sport*, Italy's leading sports daily; *Corriere dei Piccoli*, weekly illustrated newspaper for children, published by *Corriere della Sera*.

<sup>174</sup> By *scoppino*, Steinberg means the *scopino*, literally, the "sweeper," who was the prisoner in charge of cleaning the cells.

<sup>175</sup> Ferramonti di Tarsia; see pp. 349-350 above.

<sup>176</sup> Dr. Pino Donizetti; Steinberg would often ask his friend Buzzi about him in the postwar period. After the war Donizetti, a radiologist, was active in many publishing enterprises. He was the author of an illustrated medical quiz published in the medical magazine *Tempo Medico*, beginning in 1958; the illustrations were by Guido Crepax.

Sicilian officers— Change at Bologna, then Rimini, where we eat at the *dopolavoro*.<sup>177</sup>

Arrive Ancona at midnight. Sleep in the station until 6:30 in the morning.  
Arrive Tortoreto 10:30.

**Tortoreto** [*in a box on the left margin*] I see the sea, beautiful – **Friday (again), May 2**, I begin at Tortoreto

**Saturday, May 3** I write to Buzzi, to the committee, [send a ] telegr[am to the] committee.

**Sunday, May 4** I write Buzzi a letter

**Monday, [May] 5** Can't go out today because of the fair— I look at a photogr[aph of] Adina

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**Tuesday May 6** - Receive a letter from Adina. She writes “Tortoretto.” She was in Genoa for me, dear girl. I answer a bit uneasily. Dear Adina. Read “Huck Finn” by Mark Twain. Tom Sawyer takes off his hat as if taking the lid off a box of sleepy butterflies. Then [Hugh] Walpole’s “The Joyful Delaneys.”<sup>178</sup> Try to buy a little table and chair to work. I clean the oily brushes, with turpentine. I begin to smoke Popolari.<sup>179</sup>

**Wednesday, May 7** Unpredictable weather. Wind. I’m beginning to get used to things. I do everything with great calm, in no hurry. So do all the people in town.

**Thursday, [May] 8** Receive letters from Adina and Buzzi – Dear Adina.

**Friday, [May] 9** It rains, I work on the little painting. It’s one week I’m at Tortoreto.

**Saturday, May 10** Today “10 mai” I finished the little painting. Still life on a table in the foreground, in the background, rooms, families, the

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<sup>177</sup> The Opera Nazionale Dopolavoro (“Afterwork”) was the national R&R organization created by Fascism for workers. Among other things, it also organized messes and bars in specific work places. Steinberg and his guards therefore ate their meal at the *Dopolavoro* mess of the Rimini railway station.

<sup>178</sup> The original text reads: “Poi ‘Gli spensierati Delaney’ di Walpole.” *Gli spensierati Delaney* was the Italian title of a book by Hugh Walpole, published by Corbaccio, Milan, in 1939. The original had been published in London in 1938 by Macmillan as *The Joyful Delaneys*.

<sup>179</sup> The cheapest cigarette brand available.

usual things. The self-portrait on the table, not bad – all a little messy and confusing in color – Adina –

*[The drawing of the dormitory at Tortoreto, Fig. 17, fills the rest of this page. It is headed "Room No. 2," and circled at right, "ten of us."]*

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**Tortoreto. Friday, May 23** No answer from Rome – Few hopes of leaving. Yesterday went to Tortoreto Alto – Dentist – Met Levitan, a Russian, nice guy. Anghel Dumitru from Galati.

Adina, always thinking of her – At nights, I put my head under the covers, start to think. I greet her, Hi, Adina – Adina sends me a 50 lire money order perhaps from her own money. Poor dear Adina, I love her very much.

I painted a horizontal picture with lots of things.<sup>180</sup> Made a good tree from life.

**Saturday [May] 24** Adina writes me the same day. She regretted having written me badly a few hours before. That's good, dear.

Received [a letter] from Buzzi. Says that a telegram arrived at Il Grillo from Lisbon.

Received [a letter] yesterday from home, from mama. I had bad forebodings – I received a package with paper and cardboards.

**Wednesday, May 28** Receive letter number 1 from Adina.

Yesterday I sent 2 temperas to Buzzi. I dream that I return home –No news about the departure. If I don't leave, I'll die of heartbreak. Toothache.

**Thursday, May 29.** 5 months since December 29. Passed quickly. Tomorrow, Friday the 30th, I will receive bad news for sure.

**Friday, [May] 30** Instead, Delasem sends a telegram that the Portuguese visa was received. Very happy. All of a sudden, I change the way I do things. Too much. Fear that I will have many disappointments and will have to eat my words of joy – Nothing from Adina.

**Thursday, June 5** –We've made it - await Friday the 6<sup>th</sup>, tomorrow, with terror.

**Friday, [June] 6** 8 o'clock, beautiful day – woke up early

---

<sup>180</sup> *Cime di cose*, literally, the tops, or summits, of things. This may be Steinberg's idiosyncratic version of *montagne di cose*, a mountain of, or lots of, things.



10 o'clock, perhaps 2 more hours. Ate cherries. Sent postcard to Adina with a view of the market date underlined --

10 minutes to 12

6 PM – nothing has happened so far - At noon Delasem Rome writes that [the time] until the 20th is very limited. They have to have the plane ticket and I messed things up. The day still isn't over– Something bad may have happened today and I will learn about it tomorrow or the day after --

**Saturday, [June] 7** I'm working, calmer. 10 o'clock--[Alois] Gogg calls me from the street<sup>181</sup> – We leave together tomorrow. The “commissario” calls me –Tomorrow you leave for Rome – Dear Adina

*[At the bottom of the page, probably added afterwards:]*

**Ciudad Trujillo Thursday, July 24.** I arrived here Sunday July 13–Dear Adina

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*[Drawing of his room at the Hotel Pomezia, Rome, Fig. 20. Inscriptions:]*

### **June 8 Tortoreto–Rome**

2 days **June 10 and 11** in Milan Adina.

### **From June 12 -16**

Rome Albergo Pomezia Via dei Chiavari

**Sunday, June 15** at [Mario] Ortensi's  
at 4 [went] to C.I.T.<sup>182</sup>

*On the far bed: “Gogg”; the photo on the nighttable is labeled “Adina”*

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*[Drawing of his room in the Hotel Tivoli, Lisbon, Fig. 21. Inscriptions, top to bottom:]*

### **Monday, June 16-20 (4:30 pm) – 20 (Friday) 3pm**

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<sup>181</sup> For Gogg, see p. 352 and note 131.

<sup>182</sup> Mario Ortensi was one of the original writers of *Bertoldo*, who later moved to Rome. Compagnia Italiana Turismo (CIT) was a state owned tourism and travel agency.

Lisbona Hotel Tivoli [in circle:] no 80. 3:00 in the afternoon.

Avenida Liberdade

Diary of Lisbon

Rua Aurea

Rossio

Edi Isler-----150 esc. (\$)

Yellow tram 0,50 (\$esc)

Eştoril–Caşcais

With Isler at the little restaurant in the westernmost tip of the city”

[*A line is drawn across the page below the sketch. Then:*]

**Friday, June 20**–Excalibur with Gogg and Isler - (Gogg arrived Thursday, 19).

---

**Mario Tedeschini Lalli** is a journalist and scholar of contemporary history. His long journalism career includes 35 years as a reporter and editor, mostly on foreign affairs; he later served as editor for various digital and multimedia news outlets, primarily with the Gruppo Editoriale L'Espresso, of which he is now Deputy Director for Innovation and Development. His scholarly publications include essays on the history of the Middle East, Italy, and the media. He is presently working on a lengthy essay about Saul Steinberg's service with the OSS during World War II.

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*url:* [www.quest-cdecjournal.it/focus.php?id=221](http://www.quest-cdecjournal.it/focus.php?id=221)

List of Illustrations



Fig. 1: *Autogeography*, 1966. Ink, gouache, and watercolor, 29 1/2 x 20 3/4 in. The Saul Steinberg Foundation, New York.  
© The Saul Steinberg Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS) New York



Fig. 2: *Milano—My Room—Bar del Grillo*, 1937. Ink, 9 x 11 3/8 in. YCAL  
© The Saul Steinberg Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS) New York



Fig. 3: Steinberg at his drawing table in his room above the Bar Il Grillo, Milan, 1930s. YCAL



Fig. 4: *Arte Pura*, published in Bertoldo, August 8, 1937. "I told you, Madam, that for my watercolors I use eau de Cologne." © The Saul Steinberg Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS) New York



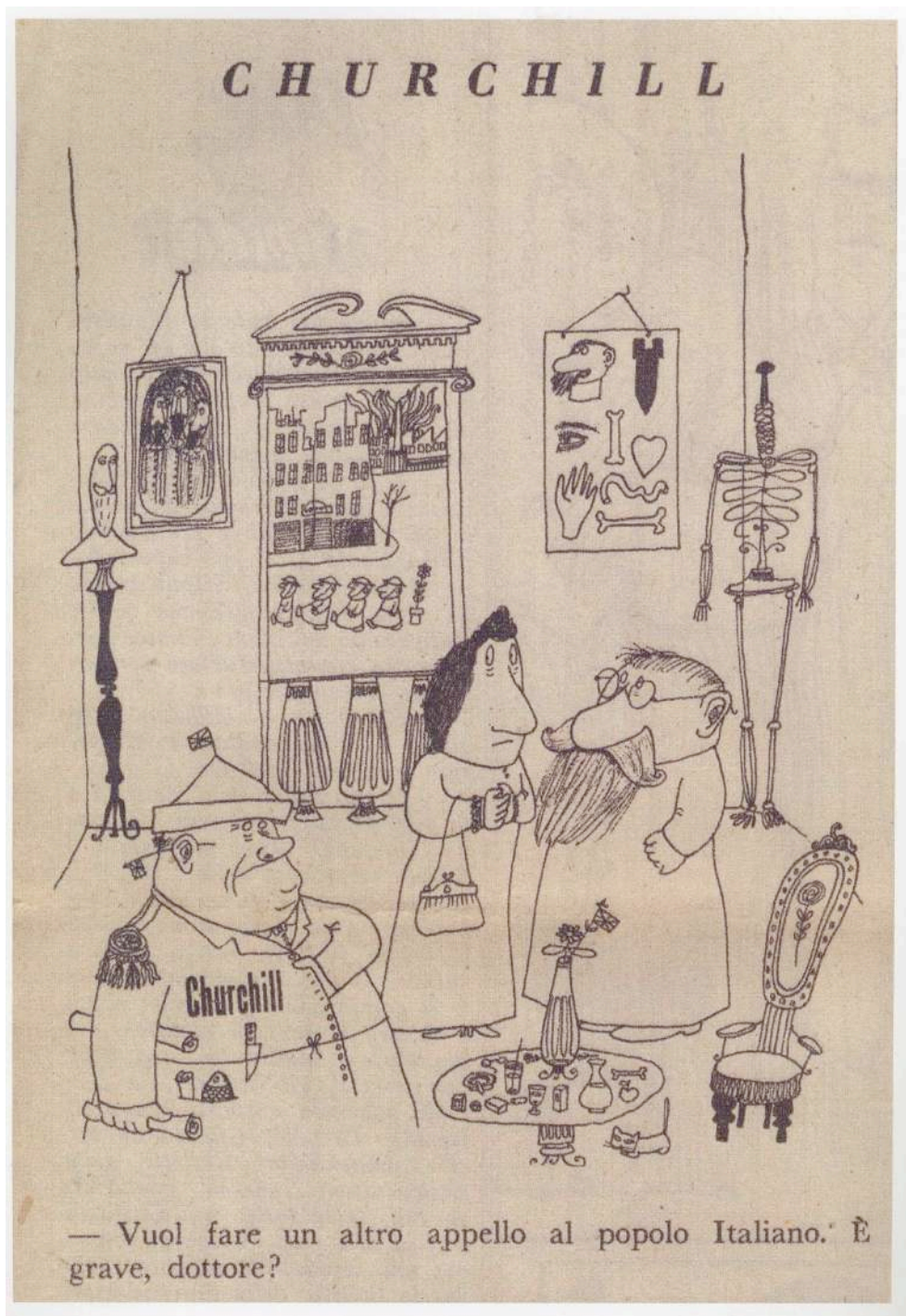


Fig. 5: *Churchill*, Steinberg cartoon in "Bertoldo", January 3, 1941. "He wants to address another appeal to the Italian people. Is this a serious condition, doctor?"  
 © The Saul Steinberg Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS) New York



Fig. 6: *Milano Bauhaus*, 1971. Pencil, colored pencil, ink, and crayon, 22 5/8 x 28 3/4. Originally published in *The New Yorker*, October 7, 1974  
© The Saul Steinberg Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS) New York

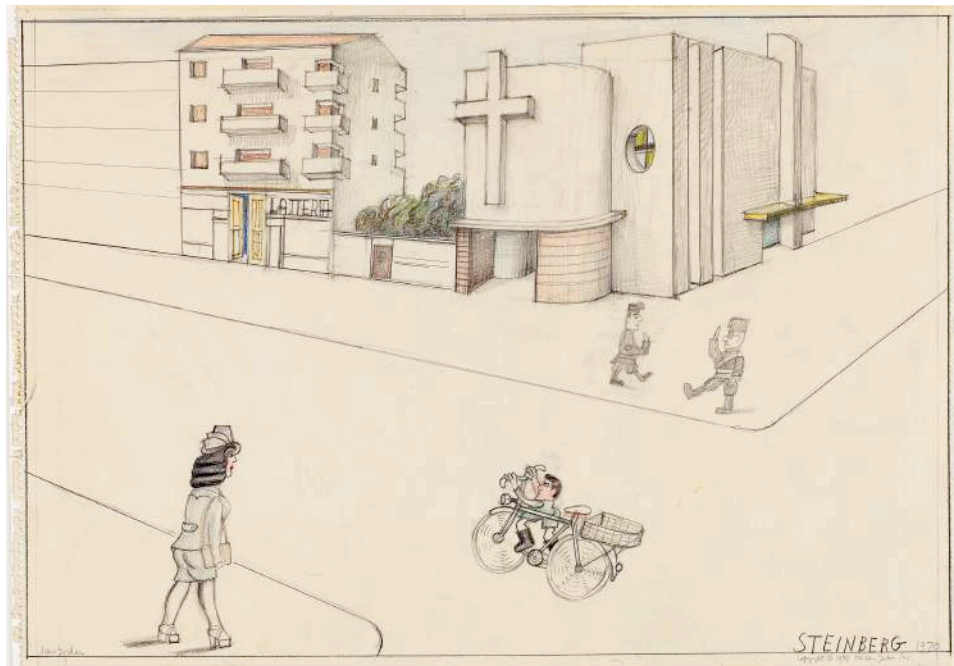


Fig. 7: "Via Ampere 1936", SSF 12. © The Saul Steinberg Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS) New York.



Fig. 8: Via Pascoli a Milano, 1971, SSF 65921. © The Saul Steinberg Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS) New York.



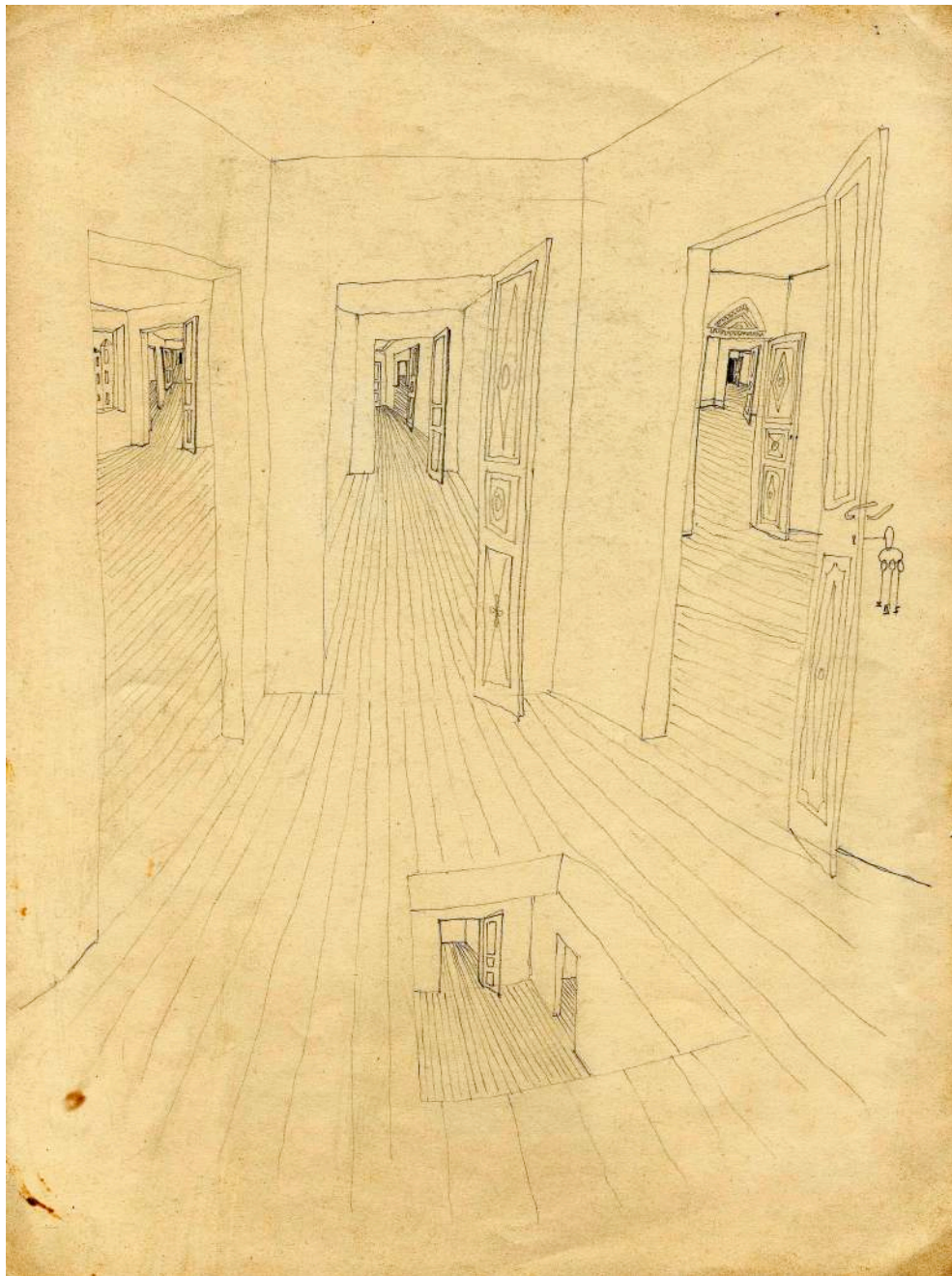
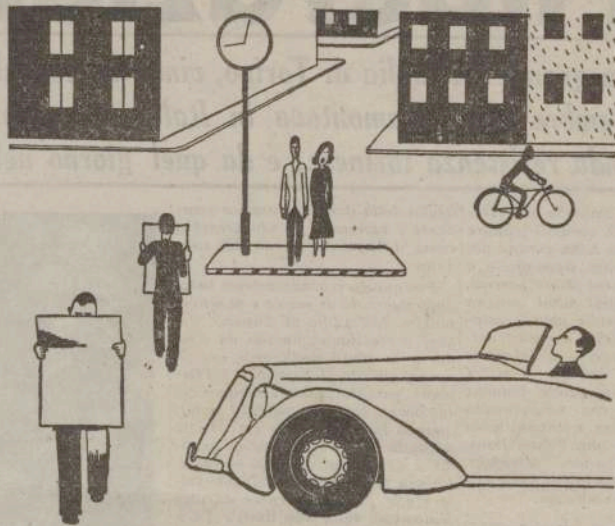


Fig. 9: Drawing for unknown Studio Boggeri project, ca. 1938-40. Archivio Boggeri, Milan.  
© The Saul Steinberg Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS) New York

ANO XVII

**ALT! e VIA! costano caro!**



Non è tanto la marcia regolare e continua del vostro motore, quanto i rallentamenti, le fermate e le riprese, che consumano il vostro carburante! Ad ogni "alt" consumate inutilmente tanto carburante da percorrere alcune centinaia di metri! Riducete questo spreco al minimo, usando un supercarburante ben proporzionato, "antidetonante", ed a grande accelerazione. A questo scopo noi abbiamo sviluppato la rete dei distributori di Dynamine, il Super Shell. Potete rifornirvi ovunque e non dimenticate che:

**con**

**DYNAMINE *il* SUPER SHELL**

**ripresa rapida e minor consumo!**

erberto carboni

17.99

CAVALLERA, Bazzani 21. Lattoria, SARTORIA uomo cerca giovane  
 quanta, reddi tante aiutanta, Cors...

Fig. 10: Clipping from *La Stampa*, advertisement for "Dynamine, the Super Shell," signed "Erberto Carboni" YCAL.



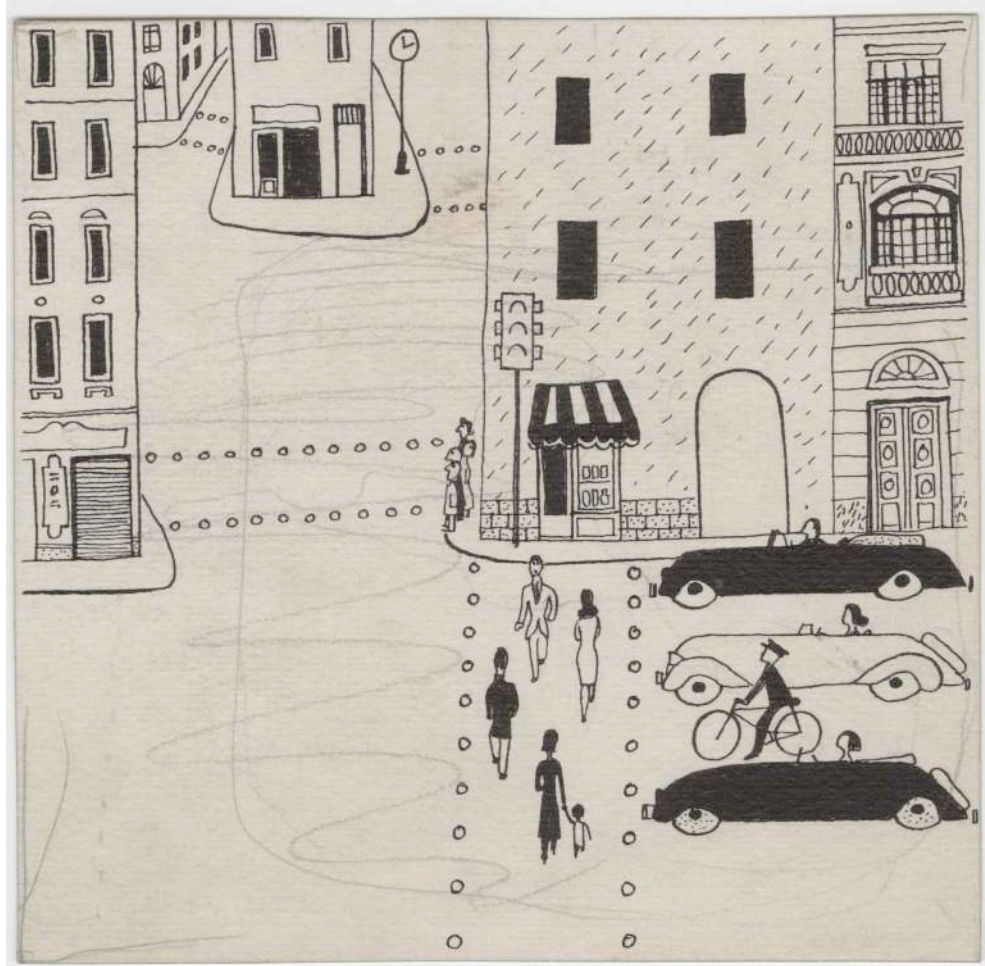
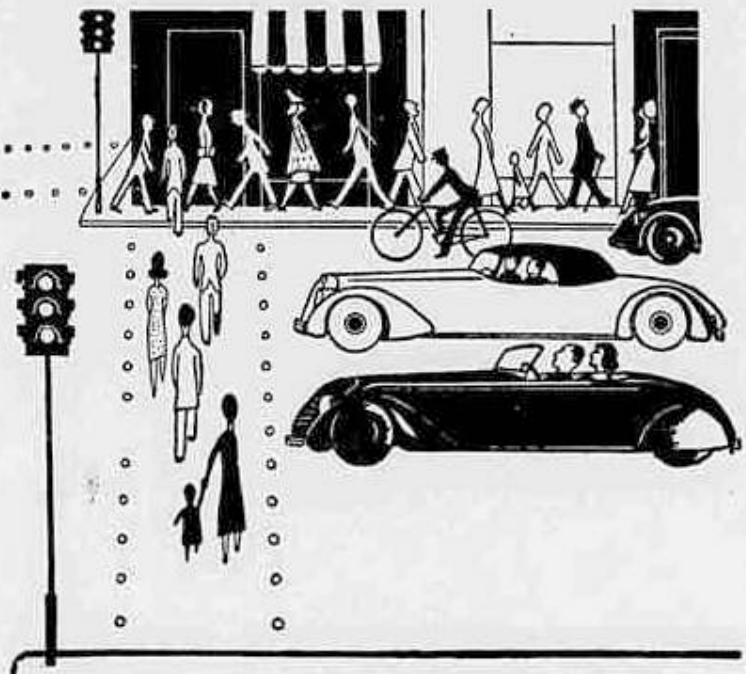


Fig. 11: Steinberg's drawing for Fig. 12, YCAL  
© The Saul Steinberg Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS) New York

**ALT! e VIA! che perdita di tempo!**



....ma anche di denaro! Ad ogni crocicchio un semaforo, ad ogni "alt" spreco di carburante. Come si può ridurre questo sciupio? Nel traffico intenso l'importanza di un supercarburante ben proporzionato e perfettamente "antidetonante" è altrettanto grande come nel traffico montano. Cambio di marcia meno frequente ed accelerata ripresa sono i coefficienti della marcia economica. "Alt"!.... al primo distributore di Dynamin, il Super Shell, e "Via"!....

**con**

**DYNAMIN *il* SUPER SHELL**

**ripresa rapida e minor consumo!**

erberto carboni

Fig. 12: Clipping from La Stampa, August 5, 1939, advertisement for "Dynamin, the Super Shell", signed "Erberto Carboni".



Fig. 13: Steinberg's diploma from the Regio Politecnico, Milan, Faculty of Architecture, 1940. YCAL



Fig. 14: Steinberg and his girlfriend, Ada Ongari, c. 1936-40. YCAL

23 MAR 1941 Anno XIX

*Stulla a Hbi*

**R. PREFETTURA DI MILANO**  
*+304020- A-4 bis*

P.S. 005207 *12 marzo 1941 XIX*

Divisione *N. di prot.*  
 N. 443-56251.

Proposta a nota *V-VV*

Allegati *Steinberg Saul di Moritz, ebreo rumeno.*

Oggetto *27/3*  
*Steinberg Saul*

Ministero dell'Interno  
 Direzione Generale della P.S.  
 Div. Affari Gen.li e Riservati

*ROMA*

Poichè lo straniero in oggetto non ha possibilità per ora di lasciare il territorio del Regno, si propone che venga assegnato in campo di concentramento e si resta in attesa di determinazioni.

Il Prefetto

*25/3 25 MAR 1941 Anno XIX*  
*Person in a h Bis*  
*Sh. att. ale h. 2*  
*Steinberg*  
*2*

*26/3*  
*Verpase A h bis*

26 MAR 1941 Anno XIX

Fig. 15: Memo from the Prefect of Milan to the Ministry of the Interior: Steinberg, March 12, 1941, with annotations in various hands. Archivio Centrale dello Stato, Rome.



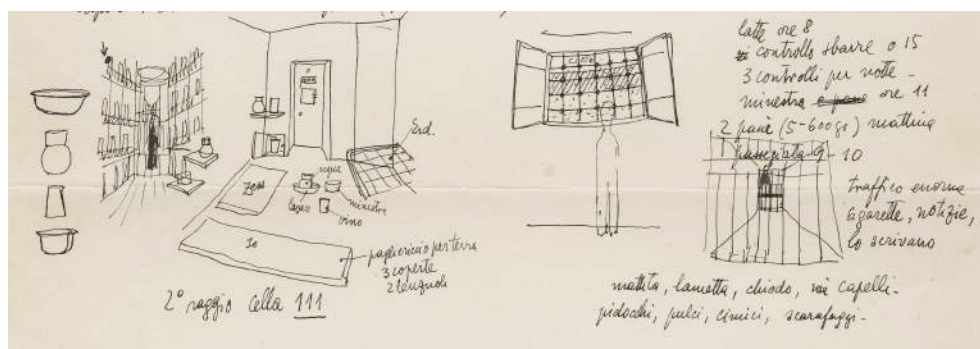


Fig. 16: San Vittore prison, Milan, from Steinberg's journal, April 28, 1940. YCAL. © The Saul Steinberg Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS) New York

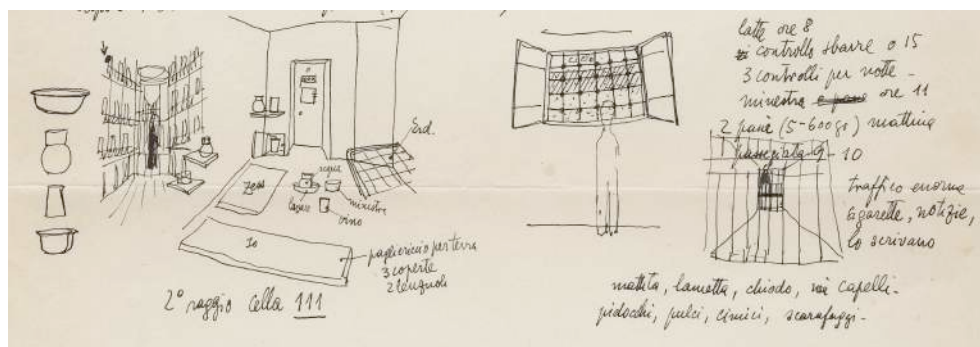


Fig. 17: Steinberg's dormitory at the Villa Tonelli, Tortoreto, from his journal, May 10, 1940. YCAL. © The Saul Steinberg Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS) New York

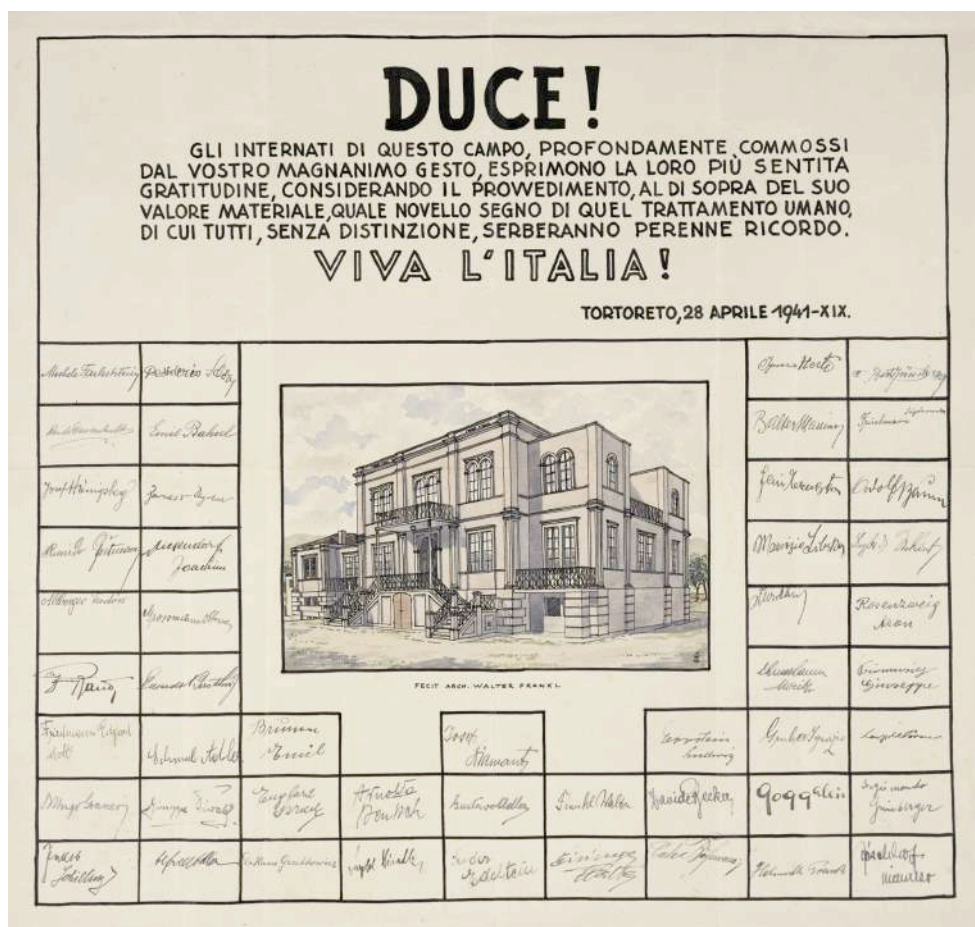


Fig. 18: Walter Frankl, drawing of the Villa Tonelli on thank-you note to Mussolini, April 28, 1941, detail. Imperial War Museum, London.





Fig. 19: Page from Steinberg's passport with Spanish transit visa, dated June 10, 1941. YCAL

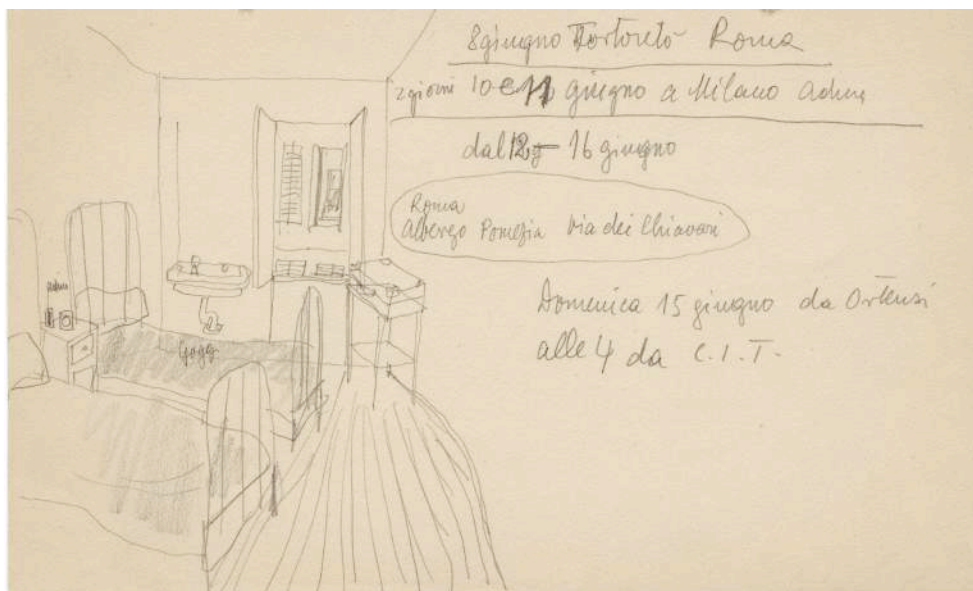


Fig. 20: Steinberg's room at the Hotel Pomezia, Rome, from his journal, June 12-16, 1940. YCAL. © The Saul Steinberg Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS) New York

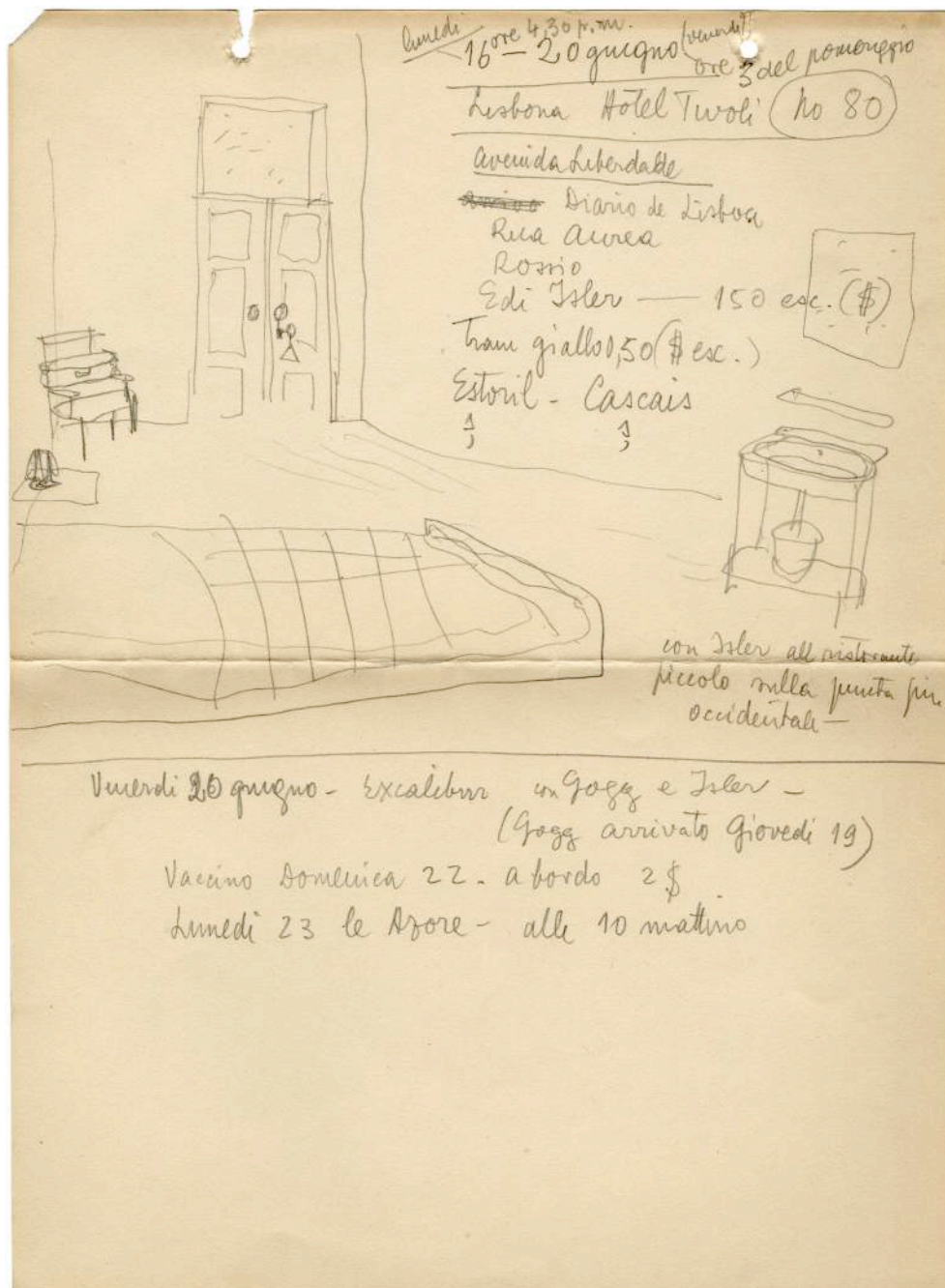


Fig. 21: Steinberg's room at the Hotel Tivoli, Lisbon, from his journal, June 16-20, 1940. YCAL. © The Saul Steinberg Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS) New York



Fig. 22: Cover of farewell pamphlet to Steinberg from his fellow prisoners, Tortoreto, June 6, 1941. YCAL

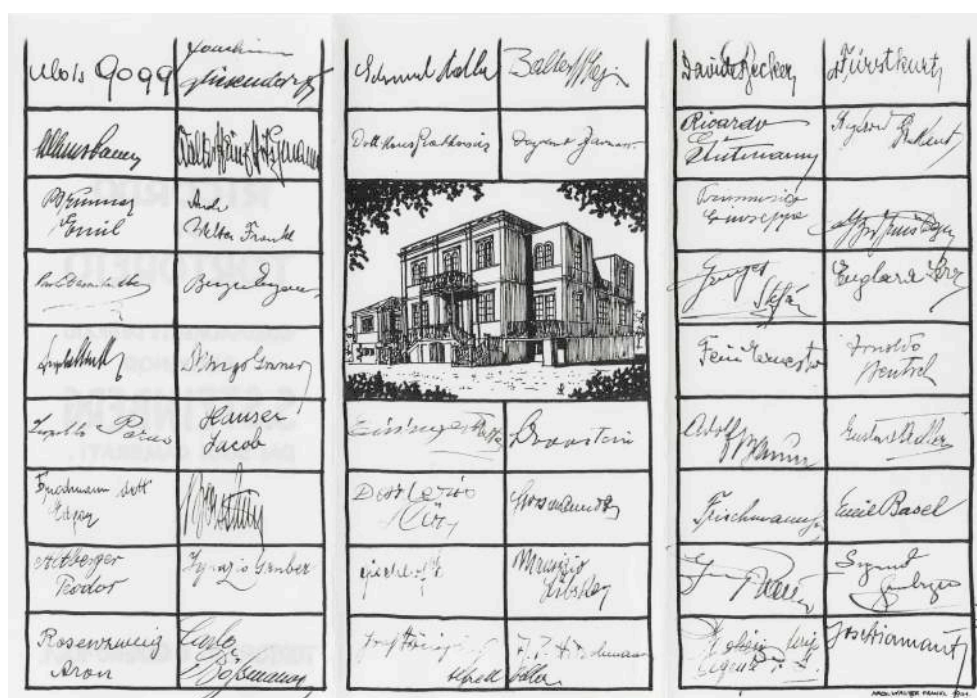


Fig. 23: Inside of farewell pamphlet, with signatures of the prisoners remaining; drawing of the Villa Tonelli by Walter Frankl. YCAL.