



## Miscellanea 2018

edited by *Quest Editorial Staff*

Issue n. 14, December 2018

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QUEST. Issues in Contemporary Jewish History

Journal of Fondazione CDEC

ISSN: 2037-741X

via Eupili 8, 20145 Milano Italy

Reg. Trib. Milano n. 403 del 18/09/2009

P. IVA: 12559570150

tel. 003902316338

fax 00390233602728

[www.quest-cdecjournal.it](http://www.quest-cdecjournal.it)

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*Direttore Responsabile ai sensi della legge italiana (Legge 47/1948), Stefano Jesurum.*

Cover image credit: *Shomer Tziyon Hane'eman*, issue n. 1, 1846, first page, detail.

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## Miscellanea 2018

*edited by* Quest Editorial Staff

This is the third time that *Quest* offers its readers a miscellaneous issue. We had chosen to publish a selection of unrelated research articles previously, with [issue n. 7 in July 2014](#) and then with [issue n. 12 in 2017](#). In 2019 and in 2020 we have planned to resume the publication of monographic special issues, yet we will be open to considering the possibility of publishing unrelated articles in miscellaneous issues in the future.

With this latest installment of our journal we offer the readers four articles, authored by scholars based in the U.S. and in Italy and covering diverse topics and time periods. We open the *Focus* section with an essay by Phil Keisman, dedicated to the study of the German periodical *Shomer Tziyon Hane'eman* (1846-1855), a key publication to understand the dialectic relationship between modern Orthodoxy and the developing reform movement. In an effort to comprehend the techniques employed by segments of the Orthodox world to compete with its adversaries, the author investigates the periodical's reading public, its network of contributors, as well as its content. We then move to the analysis of a blood libel case and the ensuing trial that took place between 1855 and 1856 in North-Eastern Italy, in Badia Polesine, at the time under Hapsburg rule. Emanuele D'Antonio reconstructs in detail the episode and the Jewish responses, illustrating how the minority was able to organize its defense with the support of some Catholic intellectuals as well as the State apparatus, leading the trial to become an analytical refutation of ritual murder accusations. The third article in this issue, written by Sonia Zanier, leads the readers well into the second half of the XX<sup>th</sup> century, enquiring on the matrices of the anti-Zionist and, at times, anti-Semitic rhetorics that, since the late 1960s and through the 1970s, developed within the rich and diversified world of the Italian New Left. The last article published in the *Focus* section is authored by Carmen Dell'Aversano, a literary scholar who proposes a theoretical reflection on the concept of assimilation. Her approach is not a historical one. She employs Gérard Genette's concept of hypertextuality and argues in favor of a transdisciplinary methodology, suggesting that semiotics and literary theory may offer useful insight also for a historical understanding of the issue.

The *Discussion* section this time is dedicated to Liliana Picciotto's recent book *Salvarsi. Gli ebrei d'Italia sfuggiti alla Shoah 1943-1945* (Turin: Einaudi, 2017), which won the [2018 award of Italian Society for Contemporary History \(Sissco- Società Italiana per lo Studio della Storia Contemporanea\)](#). The book is reviewed by Juliane Wetzel and Gabriella Gribaudo.

Finally, in the *Reviews* section we offer concise but critical presentations of seven books dedicated to a wide range of topics.

The Editors

**“I see a man of great wisdom... and in his hand is a nimble scribe’s pen.”  
The Readers and Writers of *Shomer Tziyon Hane’eman***

*by Phil Keisman*

**Abstract**

*A Hebrew language periodical opposing the nascent Reform movement in Germany, Shomer Tziyon Hane’eman ran from 1846 through 1855. It was the first Hebrew-language, self-consciously Orthodox Jewish periodical. Formed by a small contingent of like-minded German rabbis, the periodical expanded the geographic scope of its contributors through its run. In an effort to win the ideological contest against the Reform movement, the periodical also featured forms of written content found in maskilic literature. This article begins by exploring the cultivation of a network of contributors and then examines how that content and the distribution model of a periodical cultivated a reading public similar to others found in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Europe. It posits that the formation of a reading public should be understood among the techniques used in the early stages of modern Orthodoxy in order to retain power in the face of shifting structures of confessional authority.*

**Introduction**

**“From Near and Far the Voices of the Faithful of Israel Extol Our Work”: *Shomer Tziyon Hane’eman*’s Network of Contributors**

**“The Sages of the Nations Comfort Her and Bring Her Gifts; A Pleasant and Good Tasting *Melitzah*”: Marshalling the Power of *Melitzah* in the Battle against Reform**

**Conclusion**

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## Introduction

Rabbi Ya'akov Halevi Sapir included a description of the citron fruit found in Palestine in a travelogue describing his 1854 journeys in the Levant. He wished for his European readers that they might “fulfill the commandment of (uttering the blessing while taking up as one of the Four Species) the citron fruit using the produce of the Holy Land.”<sup>1</sup> Sapir imagined his audience interested in travelling to Palestine, and living in accordance with *Halachah* [Jewish law]. His readers belonged to the growing network of rabbis in Central Europe engaged in contentious debate with reformers. This audience, an Orthodox reading public, was generated, cultivated, and spread through *Shomer Tziyon Hane'eman*, the periodical in which Sapir's piece was published.

The question of “what is modern in Modern Orthodoxy” permeates historical scholarship, as writers look to identify novel aspects of German Jewish Orthodoxy amidst a movement ostensibly arguing in favor of conservation.<sup>2</sup> *Shomer Tziyon Hane'eman's* cultivation of an informed public of readers through the writing, printing, and distribution of a periodical is among these features. We explore how *Shomer Tziyon Hane'eman* borrowed from the Reform press to create an Orthodox reading public. The reading experience this public shared coalesced an Orthodox identity in the guise of an inherited tradition.

Analyzing *Shomer Tziyon Hane'eman* as cultivating a new reading public for the self-consciously Orthodox is a new departure in the historiography. For the study of the journal and Jacob Ettlinger, its founder, Judith Bleich's late 1970s and 1980s work remains authoritative.<sup>3</sup> Bleich notes that the periodical was “ideal for publicizing and popularizing religious innovation.”<sup>4</sup>

*Shomer Tziyon Hane'eman* appears in Adam Ferziger's work on Ettlinger, as well. Ferziger's *Hierarchy and Exclusion* narrates the genesis of Modern Orthodoxy's approach to Reform Jews. Four of the most important shapers of this approach were Ettlinger, Wolf Hamburg, Seligmann Bär Bamberger, and Esriel Hildesheimer. Each of these individuals wrote for *Shomer Tziyon Hane'eman*,

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<sup>1</sup> Yaakov Halevi Sapir, “*Sippurim MeEretz Nachalat Avoteinu*,” *Shomer Tziyon Hane'eman*, June 9, 1854.

<sup>2</sup> Eva Lezzi, “Secularism and Neo-Orthodoxy: Conflicting Strategies in Modern Orthodox Fiction,” in *Secularism in Question: Jews and Judaism in Modern Times*, eds. Ari Joskowitz and Ethan B. Katz, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), 209.

<sup>3</sup> In two recent pieces on Modern Orthodoxy, Bleich remains the sole citation on *Shomer Tziyon Hane'eman* and the Orthodox press in general. See Adam Ferziger, *Hierarchy and Exclusion*, (Philadelphia: University of Penn Press, 2005), 235; Jonathan M. Hess, “Fiction and the Making of Modern Orthodoxy, 1857 - 1890: Orthodoxy and the Quest for the German-Jewish Novel,” *Leo Baeck Year Book* 52/5 (2007): 50.

<sup>4</sup> Judith Bleich, “The Emergence of an Orthodox Press in Nineteenth-Century Germany,” *Jewish Social Studies* 42/3 (1980): 335-6.



reflecting the way in which that periodical served the careers of the most prominent rabbis of the nascent movement.<sup>5</sup> Ferziger focuses on the legal tools in these rabbis' *responsa*. In his chapter on Ettlinger, Ferziger mentions that "through his periodicals, Ettlinger sought to create a unique sense of group identity that would distinguish the Orthodox from other Jews."<sup>6</sup> Here Ferziger is close to Bleich, citing the periodical as a contributing factor to Orthodoxy's growing self-definition. This article builds on Ferziger's and Bleich's important work by demonstrating how the literary forms used by STH created a unique reading public that was both Orthodox and attuned to modern genre conventions.

As early as 1973, Jacob Katz observed that the coalescence of a cadre of Orthodox writers led to the "unconscious adaptation" of new genres of literature. For Katz the use of these was instrumental: blunt objects wielded in the battle against the Reform.<sup>7</sup> But new textual forms bring with them new understandings and practices. Jonathan Hess' 2005 essay "Fictions of a German-Jewish Public" and his 2007 piece "Fiction and the Making of Modern Orthodoxy, 1857-1890" argue that the Orthodox press built an "imagined community" in the Andersonian sense.<sup>8</sup> Hess argues that the Orthodox "subgroup" of German Jewry was among the first to make fiction part of its representations of the German-Jewish lived reality.<sup>9</sup> Hess attends to early novels serialized in Hirsch's *Jeshurun*.<sup>10</sup> *Shomer Tziyon Hane'eman* did not publish narrative fiction in the form of *novellae*. It did, however update older Talmudic stories in line with genre conventions of the day.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Hildesheimer was earning his doctorate when the journal launched, and would become prominent in 1851, well into the journal's lifespan. His first article, however, appeared in November 1847, before he became a community rabbi. See Ferziger, *Hierarchy and Exclusion*, 153-8, and David Ellenson, *Rabbi Esriel Hildesheimer and the Creation of Modern Jewish Orthodoxy*, (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1990).

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 97.

<sup>7</sup> Jacob Katz, *Out of the Ghetto: The Social Background of Jewish Emancipation, 1770-1870*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), 152.

<sup>8</sup> Hess, "Fiction and the Making of Modern Orthodoxy," 59; Jonathan M. Hess, "Fictions of a German-Jewish Public: Ludwig Jacobowski's *Werther the Jew* and its Readers," *Jewish Social Studies*.2/2 (2005): 222.

<sup>9</sup> Hess, "Fiction and the Making of Modern Orthodoxy," 50.

<sup>10</sup> *Jeshurun* began publication in 1854 by Ettlinger's student, Samson Raphael Hirsch. Its connections in form and personnel to *Shomer Tziyon Hane'eman* are worthy of study in their own right.

<sup>11</sup>The treatment of these stories is ripe for investigation. The two Talmuds – the Palestinian and the Babylonian – are filled with fanciful stories with motifs borrowed from the Roman, early Christian, and Zoroastrian contexts. European Jews through the intervening centuries had a variety of attitudes towards these stories, which often do not match the theology, cosmology, or demonology of the Bible. Throughout the journal's run, many different writers adapted *aggadeta* from both Talmuds. Ettlinger and Enoch included them in the *mesbalim umelitzot* section. There is no consistent form in which the stories are presented. Some are put forward as short prose pieces with a clear beginning, middle, and end. Others have a clear moral written out before the story begins. Some are presented as long-form poetry. None are presented in their original form. Abandoned are Talmudic narrative trappings like mnemonic devices or shorthand for personal

*Shomer Tziyon Hane'eman's* mimicking of forms used by the reformers - which the reformers themselves appropriated from non-Jewish forms - reflects an early example of a German-Jewish subculture within Orthodoxy. This article follows Hess' approach in demonstrating that *Shomer Tziyon Hane'eman* created a community of readers imagining themselves to be part of a larger group.

What was read from *Shomer Tziyon Hane'eman* and how it was read are both important components of the periodical's contribution. While we examine polemic content, we follow Eva Lezzi in believing that "even highly partisan literature constitutes a polyvalent system that harbors many ambiguities and ambivalent moments."<sup>12</sup> Though the periodical's material is often overtly polemical, claiming as the periodical does to reflect continuity and tradition, the editors' use of a periodical format allowed writers to use forms that deployed their polemics in new ways. The publishing schedule and distribution model of a 19<sup>th</sup>-century periodical meant that writers imagined readers who would follow their words regularly, and readers imagined a base of writers with whom they could correspond. These imagined and real interactions ended up growing *Shomer Tziyon Hane'eman* from the work of a collection of a group of previously interconnected German rabbis into a transnational network.

### **"From Near and Far the Voices of the Faithful of Israel Extol Our Work": *Shomer Tziyon Hane'eman's* Network of Contributors**

On March 26, 1846, Dr. Shmuel Enoch announced a new literary endeavor, a Hebrew-language "literature page" [*Literatur-Blatt*]. In a letter to the readers in the recently launched *Der Treue Zionswächter* [Zion's Faithful Guardian], Enoch wrote that the Hebrew periodical would allow readers to communicate across far greater distances and would "involve strict Jewish scholarship" which would go beyond his German-language periodical.<sup>13</sup> Enoch launched *Der Treue Zionswächter* in the years of political ferment leading up to 1848, when a wider variety of publications in German was reaching an ever more invested readership. In this more varied environment, Isaac Jost published *Zion* in 1840 as a Hebrew-language supplement to his *Israelitischen Annalen*, an organ for religious reform.<sup>14</sup> Enoch's and Ettlinger's *Shomer Tziyon Hane'eman* (a Hebrew translation of their periodical's German title) began as a similar type of project,

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pronouns. None of the stories selected for the journal are among the more fantastical stories of the Talmuds. Considering that accusations of fantasy and superstition were part of the ideological battleground, inclusion of these stories would have been not without ideological content.

<sup>12</sup> Lezzi, "Secularism and Neo-Orthodoxy," 209.

<sup>13</sup> Shmuel Enoch, "To the Audience," *Der treue Zions-Wächter*, March 24, 1846.

<sup>14</sup> Thomas Kollatz, "Hebräische Zeitschriften in Deutschland (1750 - 1856)," in *Jüdische Sprachen in deutscher Umwelt: Hebräische und jiddische von die Aufklärung bis ins 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. Michael Brenner, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 2002), 45-6.

but for those resistant to the nascent reform movement. The Hebrew-language addition would eventually become a self-standing publication with an importance all its own.

The periodical's bi-monthly publishing schedule allowed a real-time feel to the debates, while the distribution model allowed third parties to feel themselves part of the conversations. Edited by Enoch and Ettlinger, a luminary Halachist, the periodical would branch out from the initial network of German-Jewish Halachic scholars to include Galician rabbis and contributors from the Jewish settlement in Palestine.

The periodical targeted rabbis, who would then disseminate the knowledge in their role as communal leaders. Ettlinger wrote later in life that this had been his intention.<sup>15</sup> Enoch envisioned that the periodical could be distributed through the communal board (“*jüdischen religiösen Vorständen*”) or read privately. Listing the advance price as one Thaler, Enoch advised readers to contact the editors to arrange home delivery or to go to their local bookseller. One reader, writing to the editors in 1851, mentions that “Seventyfold does it please me when the letter carrier [*Breifträger*] comes to me and in his hands the love of my soul.”<sup>16</sup> The method of distribution of the periodical was an important determiner of how it would be read. So, too, was its language.

*Shomer Tziyon Ha'ne'eman's* use of the Hebrew language was fundamental to its purpose: the creation of an Orthodox reading public to rival that of the reformers, one predicated upon literacy in rabbinic sources, and which would transcend national boundaries. While Hebrew-language periodical literature was a phenomenon over 150 years old, only with *Hame'asef* in 1783 had the regular publication of Hebrew-language journals come to Germany.<sup>17</sup> *Hame'asef* was an instrument of the *Haskalah*, seeking to expand the possibilities of the Hebrew language beyond rabbinic genres.<sup>18</sup> It included poetry and literary prose, philosophical treatises, biographies, and reports on recently published books, attempting to do in Hebrew what one would expect from a contemporary

<sup>15</sup> Jacob Ettlinger, *Sefer Aruch L'ner al Masechet Sukkot*. (Jerusalem). Accessed at [hebrewbooks.org](http://hebrewbooks.org/pdfpager.aspx?req=14414&st=&pgnum=6&hilite=), <http://hebrewbooks.org/pdfpager.aspx?req=14414&st=&pgnum=6&hilite=> accessed 15, January 2019.

<sup>16</sup> David Strasser, “*Melitzah*,” in *Shomer Tziyon Ha'ne'eman*, September 19, 1851. Note discussion in section IV.

<sup>17</sup> Judith Bleich, “The Emergence of an Orthodox Press in Nineteenth-Century Germany,” *Jewish Social Studies*. 24/4: 324; cites Amsterdam's *Prei 'Etz Hayim* as the first Hebrew language peridicle. Bitzan notes that the first papers with purchase among Jewish consumers were “Kurents,” business bulletins published in the vernacular and utilized by overseas merchants.

<sup>18</sup> Katz, *Out of the Ghetto*, 125, and Walter Röhl, “The Kassel ‘Ha-Meassef’ of 1799: An Unknown Contribution to the Haskalah,” in *The Jewish Response to German Culture: From the Enlightenment to the Second World War*, eds. Jehuda Reinharz and Walter Schatzberg, (Hanover-London: Clark University-University Press of New England, 1985).

German-language journal.<sup>19</sup> Hebrew allowed the ideas of the German *Haskalah* to spread beyond the boundaries of the German-speaking world.<sup>20</sup> Whether in Hebrew or in German, the preponderance of the Jewish press in 1846 was preoccupied with advancing Reform Judaism. It was to meet this challenge that Ettlinger and Enoch launched *Der true Zionswächter* in July 1845.<sup>21</sup> They were now about to create a Hebrew-language supplement.

The supplement's primary function was polemical, aiming to undermine the growth of the Reform movement. Enoch described his goals as "preservation of godly religion, fixing its dogmas in the hearts of the *Volk*, strengthening Jewish consciousness, the arousal and further increase of religious sympathy."

Preservation would be a protective measure: "We fight all things unbelieving, deception and sham, (we) feature the activities of the so-called modernity in its perfect nakedness and vanity; daily heroes relentlessly strip it of its secure seeming-holiness."<sup>22</sup>

The debate with the Reform was central to the establishment of Orthodoxy as a discrete movement. The use of "Orthodoxy" as a term began in the 18<sup>th</sup> century; it was a tag with which the *maskilim* gestured to Jews who resisted the Enlightenment.<sup>23</sup> In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, as debates intensified and the Reform movement coalesced as viable, the meaning of the term shifted to denote those opposed to religious reform.<sup>24</sup> *Der Treue Zionswächter* described its writers as representatives of "*orthodoxen Judenthums*," marking the first time a group used the term "Orthodox" to refer to itself.<sup>25</sup> Enoch's work was part of a larger phenomenon of self-definition arising out of ideological conflict.

*Shomer Tziyon Hane'eman* launched in July 1846.<sup>26</sup> With some 500 subscribers between *Shomer Tziyon Hane'eman* and *Zionswächter*, the two Orthodox periodicals reached only a sliver of the Jewish readership.<sup>27</sup> It should be noted, however, that a single copy of a 19<sup>th</sup>-century periodical reached multiple readers. In 1841, a single copy of a German-language paper would be read by an average of

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<sup>19</sup> Röhl, "The Kassel 'Ha-Meassef' of 1799," in *The Jewish Response to German Culture*, 34.

<sup>20</sup> Katz, *Out of the Ghetto*, 72.

<sup>21</sup> Bleich, "The Emergence of an Orthodox Press Orthodox Press," 323.

<sup>22</sup> Enoch, "To the Audience."

<sup>23</sup> Ferziger, *Hierarchy and Exclusion*, 1-3, and Jeffrey C. Blutinger, "'So-called Orthodoxy': The History of an Unwanted Label," *Modern Judaism*. 27/3 (2007): 312.

<sup>24</sup> Blutinger, "'So-called Orthodoxy'," 320.

<sup>25</sup> Ferziger, *Hierarchy and Exclusion*, 96.

<sup>26</sup> Jacob Toury, *Turmoil and Confusion in the Revolution of 1848: The Anti-Jewish Riots in the "Year of Freedom" and Their Influence on Modern Anti-Semitism*, (Tel Aviv: Moreshet, 1968), 21.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

25 people, an average that had dropped to 9 by 1850.<sup>28</sup> Thus, more than the 500 subscribers were reading the two Orthodox publications. The periodical ran until March 1856, with a year's hiatus between July 5, 1850, and July 11, 1851, an unusually long run for a Jewish paper of the period.<sup>29</sup>

The periodical was published out of Altona, where Ettlinger served as chief rabbi and head of the *Beit Din*.<sup>30</sup> While nearby Hamburg placed caps on the number of Jews allowed to live within its walls, Altona opened its gates in an effort to bolster the skilled labor sector.<sup>31</sup> In 1610, Altona had the region's only Jewish cemetery and a large Ashkenazi community. The Jews paid a special tax that gave them rights of settlement, work, and private religious practice as *Schutzjuden*, or Jews under state protection. This was their status in 1834, when the town first reached out to Ettlinger to become chief Rabbi of the city.<sup>32</sup> Neighboring Hamburg, which was part of the unique three-part *Gemeinde* of Altona-Hamburg and Wandsbek, had been home to the controversial prayer book reforms earlier in the century and had more recently been the site of conflict between members of the Reform movement and Ettlinger's teacher, Isaac Barneys.<sup>33</sup> Ettlinger himself had already been a player in ritual contests with the reformers, as was the case with his resistance to an 1841 Danish restriction on burial practices that were at odds with Jewish law. His resistance to the restriction earned him ridicule from the local Reform community.<sup>34</sup> Ettlinger's unique position as *Av Beit Din* and Altona's

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<sup>28</sup> Peter Fritzsche, *Reading Berlin: 1900*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 52-3. We can thus assume more than 500 people read each issue of these Orthodox papers, it is prudent to avoid applying Fritzsche's multipliers.

<sup>29</sup> Toury, *Turmoil and Confusion in the Revolution of 1848*, 18. The paper does not deal explicitly in the political upheavals of 1848, though examining how changing expectations around citizenship appeared in the ostensibly Halachic genres of *Shomer Tziyon Ha'ne'eman* would be fruitful for future work.

<sup>30</sup> Denmark's sovereignty over Altona left its *Beit Din* as the last officially recognized *Beit Din* in German lands. In Prussia, however, legislation extending Jewish civil rights at the cost of *Gemeinde* privileges had been in force since 1847. Ettlinger would remain the last rabbi in German lands who retained judicial authority as late as July 1863. See Ellenson, *Rabbi Esriel Hildesheimer*, 8; Stefi Jersch-Wenzel, "Legal Status and Emancipation," in *German-Jewish History in Modern Times: Emancipation and Acculturation*, ed. Michael A. Meyer, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 48. For the response of the rabbis of Altona to the Danish constitution, see Yechezkel Duckesz, *A Vision of a Community: Biographies of the Rabbis Who Sat atop the Throne of Rabbanut of the Three Communities of Altona, Hamburg, and Wandsbek*, (Krakow: Shaltiel Ayzek Grauber, 1903), 121.

<sup>31</sup> R. Po-Chia Hsia, *Social Discipline in the Reformation: Central Europe 1150-1750*, (New York: Routledge, Chapman, and Hall, 1990), 85.

<sup>32</sup> Rainer Liedtke, "Germany's Door to the World: A Haven for the Jews? Hamburg, 1590-1933," in *Port Jews: Jewish Communities in Cosmopolitan Maritime Trading Centers, 1550 - 1950*, ed. David Cesarani, (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 2002), 80.

<sup>33</sup> Michael A. Meyer, "Jewish Self-Understanding," in *German-Jewish History in Modern Times*, 124 and 160.

<sup>34</sup> Judith Bleich, *Jacob Ettlinger, His Life and Works: The Emergence of Modern Orthodoxy in Germany*, (New York: University Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, 1974), 178.

geographical proximity to loci of conflict with the Reform movement made it a particularly suitable place for the appearance of an overtly anti-Reform publication. Ettlinger's family and colleagues formed the initial cluster of writers for the periodical.

*Shomer Tziyon Hane'eman*'s publication came at the end of a period in which reading practices in Europe underwent a significant shift. The proliferation of new and different types of reading materials, especially those targeting women, created an industry for journals, newsletters, and periodically published fiction.<sup>35</sup> Shifting literacy rates, increasing heterogeneity in religious preferences, and the growth of industrial modes of production provided the foundation for greater numbers of people reading individualized materials for pleasure in their private spaces.<sup>36</sup> These changes were opposed by "reactionary, conservative, and clerical strata of society," as there was a thought that reading would have an emancipatory outcome.<sup>37</sup>

From the 18<sup>th</sup> century and into the 19<sup>th</sup>, more Jews began reading for pleasure, doing so in the vernacular.<sup>38</sup> In the wake of changing reading practices during this period, Jews gained access to secular periodicals, and began publishing their own.<sup>39</sup> Prior to the appearance of Enoch's work, these were all in the service of the *Haskalah* and religious reform. A doctrinally reactionary, Hebrew-language periodical was a new, hybrid cultural product.

Unlike other Hebrew-language periodicals, *Shomer Tziyon Ha-ne'eman* deployed the Hebrew language in order to publish Halachic scholarship. Its largest articles fit within rabbinic genres such as Halachic *responsa*, the exegetical essay, homilies, and conversations between imagined interlocutors about philosophy and theology. This material shared space in each issue with poems, stories, jokes, and riddles. The journal's rabbinic writers also used this medium to print and disseminate previously unpublished works by European rabbis. This picked up in frequency after the year-long hiatus in the periodical's publication. Beginning with issue 129 (June 11, 1852), the journal included a section containing "Hamburg's treasures," poetry and prayers taken from the communal archives.<sup>40</sup> This section

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<sup>35</sup> Reinhard Wittmann, "Was there a Reading Revolution at the End of the Eighteenth Century?," in *A History of Reading in the West*, eds. Guglielmo Cavallo and Roger Chartier, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999), 285-6.

<sup>36</sup> Cavallo and Chartier, *A History of Reading in the West*, 20-21.

<sup>37</sup> Wittmann, "Was there a Reading Revolution at the End of the Eighteenth Century?," in *A History of Reading in the West*, 284. On early Jewish pleasure reading, see Amos Bitzan, *The Problem of Pleasure: Disciplining the German Jewish Reading Revolution, 1770 - 1870*, (PhD Dissertation, University of California Berkeley, 2011), 23-30.

<sup>38</sup> On the Jewish difference see Robert Bonfil, "Reading in the Jewish Communities of Western Europe in the Middle Ages," in *A History of Reading in the West*, 171.

<sup>39</sup> Röhl, "The Kassel 'Ha-Meassef' of 1799," in *The Jewish Response to German Culture*, 32-33.

<sup>40</sup> These pieces all cite (in Latin characters) specific folios or codices, labeled alphanumerically.

was included in most issues through the end of the period when the journal was published.<sup>41</sup>

Halachic pieces treated issues of the day and of general interest, with some debates playing out over multiple issues. One well-known example came on September 1, 1846, when Ettlinger published a *responsum* he had penned defending the practice of *Metzitzah b'peh* (oral suction of circumcision blood) in the face of calls for an end to the practice.<sup>42</sup> After the ferocity of his argument intensified in the 12<sup>th</sup> issue (December 8 of the same year), responses from other rabbis and Ettlinger's defenses of his position became a regular feature of the journal; this continued for some six months.<sup>43</sup> In another piece, one reflecting the concerns of its time, Elazar Strasser composed a three-part *responsum* on riding a train on Shabbat.<sup>44</sup> Because the Hebrew language had not yet developed a word for "train," Strasser Hebraicized the German *Eisenbahn*. Only decades later would the Hebrew word *rakkevet* come into regular use.

The journal's network of contributors grew over time to 118 men. The core early contributors, however, had originally come from a small German Jewish network of rabbinic scholars. Prolific among these were Ettlinger's extended family: his brother Leib, his father Aharon, and his brother-in-law Ya'akov Koppel.<sup>45</sup> Ettlinger's teachers, classmates, and students featured in a number of articles. These included figures recognized as seminal in modern Orthodoxy, including his teacher Avraham Wolf Hamburg and his student Esiel Hildesheimer and Seligman Bär Bamberger.<sup>46</sup> This German core, clustered around Ettlinger, represented only a narrow cross-section of Jewish thought in Germany. However,

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<sup>41</sup> The journal's masthead makes clear both the heterogeneity of the material and the importance of its mission: *Shomer Tziyon Hane'eman*: A letter to proclaim the foundation of Torah and to make it known, and to remove stumbling blocks from the path of faith. It has four parts: (Halachic) research, (Halachic) innovations and explanations, *responsa*, and parables and *melitzot*. Founded by a group of rabbis and men of science who stand against the rift.

<sup>42</sup> The matter of circumcision in general and *metzitzah* in particular were sources of contention within the Jewish community and between some local communities and the state. See Robin Judd, "The Circumcision Question in German-Speaking Lands: 1843 - 1857," in *Contested Rituals: Circumcision, Kosher Butchering, and Jewish Political Life in Germany, 1843 - 1933*, (Cornell University Press, 2007); and my forthcoming work on Ettlinger's approach to public health.

<sup>43</sup> See: Jacob Ettlinger "On the Matter of *Metzitzah*," *Shomer Tziyon Hane'eman*, September 1, 1846, and Ettlinger, "More on the Matter of *Metzitzah*," *Shomer Tziyon Hane'eman*, December 8, 1846; Avraham Ulman, "Responsum on the Matter of *Metzitzah* with Use of a Sponge on Shabbat," *Shomer Tziyon Hane'eman*, March 30, 1847 and April 13, 1847.

<sup>44</sup> Elezar Strasser, "A Great Announcement with Regard to Traveling by Train on Shabbat," *Shomer Tziyon Hane'eman*, April 27, 1847, May 11, 1847, and May 25, 1847.

<sup>45</sup> "Dowry agreement for Rachel Ettlinger," *Jacob Koppel Collection. 1816-1829* 1/9.

<sup>46</sup> For Hamburg's relationship to Ettlinger, see Bleich, *Jacob Ettlinger*, 19. For Hildesheimer's relationship to Ettlinger, see Ellenson, *Rabbi Esiel Hildesheimer*, 15 -16, 26, 74, and 174; On Bamberger, see *The Jewish Encyclopedia* s.v. "Bamberger, Seligman Baer," Accessed at <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/2429-bamberger-seligman-baer> .

from this cross-section would emerge the bulk of the institutional, literary, and religious leadership of modern Orthodoxy.

Debates drew in readers, some going on to become regular contributors to the journal. It was through the incorporation of these contributors that *Shomer Tziyon Hane'eman* began growing beyond its initial cluster of German rabbis and into Central and Eastern Europe. In issue 20, the journal published a letter from Itzik Wegner of Urman, then in Austria-Hungary. Wegner addresses Ettlinger as the writer “of his beautiful book, *Bikkurei Yaakov*.”<sup>47</sup> While his career in the journal began as an appreciator of Ettlinger, by issue 26 Wegner was a regular contributor to the literary section. Wegner wrote poetry and homilies, including an extended piece on February 29, 1848, about the nature of legitimate and illegitimate biblical kingship.<sup>48</sup> Three months after Gavriel Adler Hacoen, one of the journal’s luminaries, – had authored a *responsum* (in issue 14) concerning the writing of a Torah scroll, the journal published a comment by Shmuel Yardevahn of Warsaw.<sup>49</sup> In issue 26, Yardevahn would go on to publish his own first piece composed for the journal, printing a section of a manuscript from the prayerbook of Yaakov Lorberbaum (of Lissa, Leszno in Poland today).<sup>50</sup> Wegner’s and Yardevahn’s involvement enabled the journal to access and publish manuscripts from places in Europe outside Germany. Unlike other pieces, labeled only by city, Yardevahn’s was identified by city and country. In this regard, Enoch’s proclamation that the use of the Hebrew language would draw in readers from far away proved prescient. Nothing makes this clearer than the journal’s tapping into the nascent Jewish settlements in Palestine. Early in the periodical’s run, the Sephardi community in Jerusalem used it to publicize the economic and ecological hardships it was experiencing in Palestine.<sup>51</sup> Significantly later, beginning in September 1852 Ashkenazi Jerusalemites – former residents of Central Europe or students of European rabbis – began contributing regularly, as well.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Itzik Wegner, “A Letter,” *Shomer Tziyon Hane'eman*, March 30, 1847.

<sup>48</sup> Itzik Wegner, “Plastered Walls,” *Shomer Tziyon Hane'eman*, June 22, 1847; Id., “An Explanation of *Midrash Rabbah Shmot*, Section One,” *Shomer Tziyon Hane'eman*, February 29, 1848. The piece may be gesturing towards contemporary revolutions, exploring as it does the illegitimacy of hastily erected administrations.

<sup>49</sup> Gavriel Adler Hacoen, “A Question on the Matter of Writing of a Torah Scroll,” *Shomer Tziyon Hane'eman*, January 5, 1847; Shmuel Yardevahn, “A Comment to *Shomer Tziyon Ha'ne'eman*,” *Shomer Tziyon Hane'eman*, March 2, 1847.

<sup>50</sup> Shmuel Yardevahn, “Order of the Prayers of Israel by *Derech Hachaim*,” *Shomer Tziyon Ha'ne'eman*, June 22, 1847.

<sup>51</sup> “A Letter from The Rabbis of Jerusalem, the Holy City, May She Be Built up and Established Speedily in Our Time,” *Shomer Tziyon Hane'eman*, November 10, 1846.

<sup>52</sup> Isaac Prague, Shimon Weitz, and Nachman Natan Cornel all wrote their first pieces in late 1852. Prague had been a disciple of Moses Sofer. In December of that year, regular contributor Matitياهو Monek Hacoen submitted a manuscript by Yishayahu Horowitz, who had been in Safed at the time of his death. Hacoen’s publication of Horowitz’s manuscript may indicate that he had been to Palestine. See: Isaac Prague, “On the Laws of *Shlichut* (legal representation),” *Shomer Tziyon Hane'eman*, September 3, 1852; Shimon Weitz, “A Letter to *Shomer Tziyon*



In publishing *responsa* and then soliciting replies from their readers, the editors leveraged a level of engagement with their imagined public. Unlike an addressed letter, a periodical reached a general audience, some of whom were unknown to the editors. And unlike a correspondence between two rabbis, in which one might write a question and the other a *responsum* that would then be promulgated throughout a community, a periodical's publication schedule and distribution model enables third parties to offer their opinions in writing, as well, and even expect a follow-up that would be made available in a public manner. Writers could put out pieces that anticipated responses from an imagined public of third parties, as opposed to specific individuals. In addition, the individuals reading could imagine themselves as a part of a larger public, and compose their replies knowing they might see their names in print.

Periodical literature also enabled contributors to use forms hinging on reader interaction. Issue 24 (dated May 29, 1847) featured a short piece titled “I Pose for You Now a Riddle” by Isaac Berlin and a five-stanza “riddle” by Moshe Onnah. Each of these pieces asks its readers to guess the name of a biblical character based on a series of clues. The following issue (dated June 12), gave the answers. Each riddle's answer involved word play upon meanings that names could have in addition to their use as proper nouns.<sup>53</sup> Riddles like these, as well as those in issues 27-28 and 30-31, require readers to engage with the periodical over some time by regular purchase or subscription. They also require familiarity with biblical narrative and a plasticity of language use allowing for double entendres and puns.

Many of the contributors not connected to Ettliger by blood or learning were former students of Rabbi Moses Sofer (1762-1839) of Central Europe. These included Hayim Yosef Pollack, Moshe Schick, Simon Deutsch, and Ya'akov Erlich.<sup>54</sup> We follow Bleich in seeing the periodical as “instrumental in forming links between members of the scholarly community in the Holy Land and their colleagues in Europe.” However, examining contributions chronologically by

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*Hane'eman*,” *Shomer Tziyon Hane'eman*, October 8, 1852; Nachman Natan Cornel, “More New Versions of Manuscripts of the Shas on Parchment,” *Shomer Tziyon Hane'eman*, November 5, 1852; and Mattityahu Monek Hacoheh, “Writing by One (Yishaya Horowitz) Copied from an Older One That Had Been Copied,” *Shomer Tziyon Hane'eman*, December 3, 1852.

<sup>53</sup> Isaac Berlin “I Pose for You Now a Riddle,” and Moshe Onnah “Riddle,” in *Shomer Tziyon Hane'eman*, May 29, 1847. The answers to the riddles are “Ish-Boshet,” which is a name made up of words with the meaning of “Man of Shame” and Avner ben Ner, also a proper noun, but composed of words meaning “Father of Candle son of Candle.” The riddles hinge on such dual functioning of personal names.

<sup>54</sup>On Pollack, see Michael Miller, *Rabbis and Revolution: The Jews of Moravia in the Age of Emancipation*, (Stanford University Press, 2010), 89, 94. On Schick, see: Jacob Katz, *A House Divided: Orthodoxy and Schism in Nineteenth-Century Central European Jewry*, (Brandeis University Press, 1998), 131 -133. On Deutsch, see Bleich, “The Emergence of an Orthodox Press Orthodox Press,” 335; On Erlich, see *Ibid.*, 342.

region reveals that it took time for the network to branch out from its German core.<sup>55</sup> Galician contributors had either studied in German schools or had their letters published by the journal before becoming regular contributors. Rabbis in Palestine – aside from the initial plea by the Sephardi rabbis – gradually joined the network, possibly encouraged by their contact with students of Moses Sofer such as Isaac Prague who had established a community in Palestine in 1830 upon the arrival a delegation of rabbis from Europe.

Expansion in the network of contributors came after the hiatus. The last issue before the hiatus featured a letter indicating how important Ettlinger and Enoch thought the cultivation of a network of rabbis involved with Halachic scholarship. While the work of putting the journal together was difficult, the editors describe the praise of their readers as nourishing “like cold water upon the weary soul.”<sup>56</sup> Ettlinger and Enoch saw their journal’s purpose as healing “the divisions that have been made in the tents of the righteous by the misfortunes of the day.” The public had responded positively to the journal’s content, and the response emboldened the creators. The genuine quality level of the journal’s scholarship was itself their weapon against the reformers. Recall Enoch’s emphasis on his intention for *Shomer Tziyon Hane’eman* to be involved in “serious scholarship.” Success required an international network of learned men to collaborate and advance rabbinic discourse.

In July 1851, upon the journal’s return, the editors addressed a paragraph “to the reader.”<sup>57</sup> The paragraph leveraged readership to widen the network of contributors. In it, the editors apologize for “having rested at their post” as guardians of Zion. Elaborating on the motif of warfare, the writers describe being roused by “the thunderous sounds of battle still heard in our land.” So, “for the love of Torah,” the writers plead with their readers to send them words of high quality “to be printed in this letter...<sup>58</sup> in order to put the house of Israel on the straight and true path and so that they may grow sick of the evil and the lies and choose the good and the true.” The editors implore readers not to see the absence of schism in their countries as reason to be complacent. They raise the specter of the ideological battle against the Reform movement spreading from Germany, and solicit help “from far and from near.” The editors see the Reform movement as an international threat, one which demands an international response.

This request for outside help had a quantitative and geographic impact. By the time issue 105 was being worked on, 75 individual writers had contributed pieces,

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 335.

<sup>56</sup> “Conclusion to the Letter,” *Shomer Tziyon Hane’eman*, July 5, 1850.

<sup>57</sup> “To the Reader,” *Shomer Tziyon Hane’eman*, July 11, 1851.

<sup>58</sup> The periodical refers to itself as a *michtav* (today: “letter”); the modern Hebrew term *iton* had not yet been invented. See Akiva Zimmerman, “‘Loyal Guardian of Zion:’ An Orthodox Jewish Biweekly in Mid-Nineteenth Century German,” in *Kesher* 19 (1996): 131.

three of them as entities seemingly unknown to the editors and which gained exposure only through the submission of responses. 52 new contributors published in issues 105-222 (the last issue to be published). The new contributors covered a much wider geographical range than had been engaged with before the hiatus. Recall the sense of novelty associated with the publication of material from Yardevahn of Warsaw in issue 26. In issue 72, still prior to the hiatus, the editors labeled a submission from Neustadt as being “from the land of Poland.”<sup>59</sup> After 1850, the journal – no longer labeling countries outside German-speaking Europe – saw first-time submissions from Krakow and growing numbers of submissions coming from Lemberg in Galicia.<sup>60</sup> Submissions came from Amsterdam and Copenhagen, and even included reprinted manuscripts attributed to findings in Oxford and Grenada.<sup>61</sup> All this appeared in addition to the ties cultivated with Ashkenazi rabbis in Jerusalem.

Ettlinger saw the Hebrew language as instrumental in building networks of Orthodox rabbis. Reflecting, close to the end of his life, on the journal’s run, he reprised the militant language from the journal, recalling the need to “encircle and guard the daughter of Zion and to be a vigilant warrior.”<sup>62</sup> As one such warrior, he imagined using *Shomer Tziyon Hane’eman* “to wage the war of God against the deniers.” He goes on, “In this periodical a voice was raised, clashing with the sectarians.” Critical for our purposes, he describes the importance of enlisting the Hebrew language in this battle:

The journal published in Hebrew allows scholars from distant lands to (use it) for a composition book<sup>63</sup> and to make known to each other new

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<sup>59</sup> Yehoshua Cohen Nishkoni, “On the Law of Cooking on Shabbat,” *Shomer Tziyon Ha’ne’eman*, April 6, 1849.

<sup>60</sup> Investigating the question of influence – or lack thereof – of this early Orthodox press on Galician Jewry is a worthy endeavor. According to Rachel Manekin, self-consciously Orthodox papers in Hebrew begin appearing in Galicia only in the late 1870s, and only as part of political maneuvering of greater scope in the region. Further research could help explain this lag. See Rachel Manekin, “Die hebräische und jiddische Presse in Galizien,” *Die Habsburgermonarchie* 7/2 (2006), 2346–7; Id., *The Jews of Galicia and the Austrian Constitution: The Beginning of Modern Jewish Politics*, (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center for Jewish History, 2015), 122.

<sup>61</sup> Krakow: Issue 150; Lemberg: Issue 200; Amsterdam: Issue 162; Copenhagen: Issue 157; Grenada: Issue 107; Oxford: Issue 145.

<sup>62</sup> Published without a date, Ben-Zion Ettlinger (Jacob’s son) included a riddle in his introduction to give the date of publication, indicating the Hebrew year 5634. Ettlinger, *Sefer Aruch L’ner al Masechet Sukkot*.

<sup>63</sup> Ettlinger’s language here – להיות להחכמים ממדינות רחוקות למחברת – is somewhat unclear in its use of the last word - which is used to mean “notebook” in Hebrew today, but also contains the root for “joining” and “composition.” It is possible that he refers here to a “commonplace book,” used in the early modern period for copying verses and words of wisdom. The implication would be that Ettlinger thought of *Shomer Tziyon Hane’eman* as a source from which entire communities could glean and copy particular phrases. Arthur Kiron’s work on the scrapbook of Sabato Morias demonstrates at least one instance of a nineteenth-century Jew over time transplanting text from ephemera to ledger. Kiron shows that Morias’ scrapbooking relied on newspapers as a source.

insights and interpretations, along with legal discussions and investigations of valuable matters. And [it makes it possible] to convey back and forth between them questions and answers and to clarify and elucidate *Halachot*.

Hebrew here serves two purposes. As the language of Halachic discourse, Hebrew allows Ettlinger and his network to conduct discussions using the Halachic lexicon. This involves more than using the same vocabulary as earlier writers; it also allows Ettlinger and his network to rely on concepts laden with centuries of meaning. Talmudic conversations utilized terms reflecting a particular legal reality. In a rabbinic document, a noun like “ox” or “donkey” can stand for a particular constellation of features within a legal reality.<sup>64</sup> By writing in Hebrew, *Shomer Tziyon Hane’eman* marshalled a vocabulary that carried both lexical and legal meaning. Doing so allowed its writers to share a shorthand for complex concepts, enriching their engagement with one another, enabling them to “convey ... questions and answers between them” across distances.

The expansion of the network of contributors influenced the journal’s content as well. Sapir’s travelogue of his journeys along “the length and breadth of our land,” was a product of this expansion. The network was a means by which European Jews could help poor Jews in Palestine. Palestinian Jews faced a drought in the summer of 1854. The rabbis of the community of Amsterdam solicited donations from the Jews of Europe to be delivered to the Land of Israel.<sup>65</sup> Immediately following the solicitation is the first installment of a two-poem contribution by Yitzchak Greenburger, entitled “The Beauty of the Hebraic Language.” The poem summons readers to study in Hebrew and study the Hebrew language itself; this, despite the “lovely and good of taste *melitza(ot)*” of the other nations. The visual placement of the poem alongside the call for donations is noteworthy. When these pieces are considered along with Sapir’s travelogue and an essay later in the run called “The Hebrew Language Speaks to the Heart,” an orientation toward the Levant and the Hebrew language together emerges.

*Shomer Tziyon Hane’eman* ran until March 1856. It isn’t clear why it ended its run at this time. Bleich argues that Enoch’s move to the town of Fulda, away from Altona and Ettlinger, prompted the closing of the journal. She does not, however, cite any source for this.<sup>66</sup> Most enterprises of similar profile during this period

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Perhaps Ettlinger envisioned scholars using copies of *Shomer Tziyon Hane’eman* for a similar purpose. See Arthur Kiron, “Cutting and Pasting: Interpreting the Victorian Scrapbook Practices of Sabato Morias,” in *For the Sake of Learning: Essays in Honor of Anthony Grafton*, eds. Ann Blair and Anja-Silva Goeing, (Boston: Brill, 2016), 652.

<sup>64</sup> Oren Soffer, “The Case of the Hebrew Press: From the Traditional Model of Discourse to the Modern Model,” in *Written Communication* 21/2 (2004), 150.

<sup>65</sup> Zalman Robenm, Ya’akov Meir Lehren, and Yitzhak Hacoheh Laub, “To our brothers, all of the house of Israel,” *Shomer Tziyon Hane’eman*, August 4, 1854.

<sup>66</sup> Bleich, “The Emergence of an Orthodox Press Orthodox Press,” 326.

were ethereal, lasting only a few months.<sup>67</sup> The span of the periodical and its unique nature make it a rich source for studying the history of modern Orthodoxy, yet all too often commenters on *Shomer Tziyon Hane'eman* attend to the Halachic material but not the periodical's format or novel distribution model.

**“The Sages of the Nations Comfort Her and Bring Her Gifts; A Pleasant and Good Tasting *Melitzah*”: Marshalling the Power of *Melitzah* in the Battle against Reform**

In May 1850, Ya'akov Erlich decried “the priests of *Ba'al* who.... stand in congregations, beard shaved and *pe'ah* destroyed.”<sup>68</sup> *Ba'al*, an image borrowed from the ancient Near Eastern pantheon, serves here as a stand-in for religious betrayal. Just as the priests of *Ba'al* attempted to sway the hearts of ancient Israel in the days of King Ahab, taking part in a contest against Elijah the Prophet to see whose supplication would lead to a manifestation of divine involvement (I Kings 18), so too do these men – stationed in synagogues – preach and demonstrate practices which would make Israel turn against God. For Erlich, among the distinguishing characteristics of these betrayers is the aesthetic beauty of their adopted mode of self-expression: form and usage associated with European literature. Erlich writes:

their literature's... entire purpose is to show the power and glory of their own words, how wondrous are their poems; (the products of) their lips: How they make heard the sweetness of the pleasantness of their lips.<sup>69</sup>

Describing the self-serving poetry of the reformers, Erlich uses the term “*melitzot*.” It is striking, therefore, that Erlich's piece itself appears under the heading *Meshalim umelitzot* (Parables and poetic turns of phrase). The *melitzot* of the reformers indicate their selfish turning away from God, yet Erlich's screed is embedded in a publication that recognizes the importance of new forms of literature that will allow his cohort to “preach their lessons to the listener.”

The title of the *Meshalim umelitzot* section of the journal had a particular resonance in Jewish law. In Joseph Karo's *Shulchan Aruch* “*mashal*” and

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<sup>67</sup> Toury, *Turmoil and Confusion in the Revolution of 1848*, 17.

<sup>68</sup> The beard and outgrown sidelocks (*pe'ot*) would seem for Erlich to mark one as obedient to Jewish law, and lack of these indicating an affinity for, or alliance with the reformers. However, these outward markers did not always indicate one's position vis-a-vis *Halachah*. The *Hatam Sofer* argued against using facial hair or lack thereof as an indicator of Halachic observance. Ferziger, *Hierarchy and Exclusion*, 65.

<sup>69</sup> Ya'akov Erlich, “A Reproof of Love,” in *Shomer Tziyon Hane'eman*, May 24, 1850.

“*melitzah*” were foremost in a list of the types of literature forbidden for Jews.<sup>70</sup> Moshe Isserles permitted the reading of these works, but only in “the Holy tongue,” i.e., Hebrew, and the category retained its connotation of “profane” and separate from “holy texts.”<sup>71</sup> “*Melitzah*” evolved to refer to texts that had no liturgical or ritual purpose, ones that were read for pleasure.<sup>72</sup>

For rabbinic authorities, reading for reasons other than fulfilling a Commandment stood apart from acceptable behavior.<sup>73</sup> Halachah commands the activities of *keri’ah* (vocalizing a text) and *limud* (study of a text). Reading aloud from a Torah scroll three times a week in a liturgical group setting and daily study of canonical biblical and rabbinic texts both served as pillars of male Jewish life, and both were encouraged (indeed commanded) by rabbinic elites. In order to fulfill their obligation, Jews taught their children to read, and Jewish literacy among males remained high relative to non-Jews through the pre-modern period.<sup>74</sup> Before the 18<sup>th</sup> century saw a proliferation of private collections of books, when Jews read books in the vernacular, they did so in synagogues under rabbinic control and guidance.<sup>75</sup>

With the 18<sup>th</sup> century’s shifts in reading practices, it became difficult for rabbinic authorities to continue this supervision. In this period, German Jewish women (and men shortly thereafter) began reading essays, poetry, and fiction in German, French, and English.<sup>76</sup> With the growth of pleasure reading at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Jewish publications such as *Hame’asef* began including *belles lettres* (fine writing) sections designed for private reading.<sup>77</sup> Unlike *Hame’asef*, *Shomer Tziyon Hane’man* claimed to be dedicated to preserving tradition, and the emergence of its *Meshalim umelitzot* section marks the first time a self-defined traditionalist publication included a section of this sort.<sup>78</sup>

The content of the *Meshalim umelitzot* section varied from issue to issue. At times less than a page long (or entirely missing) and sometimes running multiple pages, the section was the final one in each issue. Most issues’ *belles lettres* sections featured at least a column and-a-half of material each. This would be a repository for anything outside the Halachic genre. This included readers’ responses, liturgical and non-liturgical poems, retellings of stories from the Talmud, jokes and riddles, and material printed from older manuscripts. Despite the variety, all

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<sup>70</sup> Bitzan, *The Problem of Pleasure*, 14-15.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid, 16.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid, 15.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid, 20-22.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid, v.

<sup>75</sup> Bonfil, “Reading in the Jewish Communities,” in *A History of Reading in the West*, 163.

<sup>76</sup> Bitzan, *The Problem of Pleasure*, 32.

<sup>77</sup> Röhl, “The Kassel ‘Ha-Meassef’ of 1799,” in *The Jewish Response to German Culture*, 34.

<sup>78</sup> Hess, “German-Jewish Novel,” 50.

the material printed was based on adopting the periodical's mission: preserving "traditional" Judaism.

Enoch and Ettlinger thought of two groups as, together, threatening Judaism. In their analysis, a small group of Reform rabbis led astray the majority of German Jews. Imagining that this majority could be swayed one way or another, they positioned their journal as a tool to reaffirm "principles of conservative, orthodox Judaism."<sup>79</sup> Appealing to the traditional rabbinic leaders in communities would enable them to sway the Jewish masses. This approach comes to the fore in Eliezer Lipman's five-part contribution in the first five issues of *Shomer Tziyon Hane'eman*.<sup>80</sup>

Lipman's piece, titled *Moda'ah Rabba Le'oraita*, lays out a plan for creating and cultivating an educated elite who would hold sway over the Jewish masses. Lipman singles out the "rebellious sect" which has coalesced in Brunswick and Frankfurt am-Main and "issued a call of iniquity."<sup>81</sup> Lipman refers to the Brunswick conference of the summer of 1844 and the Frankfurt conference the following year, significant steps for the emergence of Reform Judaism as a discrete movement. The conferences debated the acceptability of certain prayers with theological underpinnings difficult to square with reason, the use of the vernacular in the synagogue, and the legality of mixed marriages. The conferences also moved away from legal precedent.<sup>82</sup> Response from traditionally minded German rabbis came in the form of a letter entitled *Shelomei Emunei Yisrael* [Those Seeking the Well-Being of the Faithful of Israel] and repudiating the conferences' decisions. Some of the signatories of the letter would go on to publish in *Shomer Tziyon Hane'eman*, and Ettlinger's activism may have been the impetus behind the project of composing the response they all signed.<sup>83</sup>

Lipman berates the rabbis who took part in the conferences, calling them "foxes in the vineyard of God" who use the appearance of authenticity to mislead the common Jew. He decries their tendency to select individual laws to follow, thus

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<sup>79</sup> Enoch, "To the Audience." We should point out that neither "conservative" nor "orthodox" in this passage denotes a specific movement.

<sup>80</sup> Eliezer Lipman, "A Great Announcement to Torah," *Shomer Tziyon Hane'eman*, July 7-September 1, 1846.

<sup>81</sup> In the piece, Lipman uses different expressions to refer to this majority of Jews. He seems to use them interchangeably. Most often he refers to "*dalei ha'am*," "the lowly of the nation." Once he uses "*am ha'aretz*," a Talmudic expression referring to the uneducated among the Jews. Occasionally he also refers to "*hamonam*," "their masses." In each case, he means an undifferentiated mass guided by leaders who instruct it as to ways of thinking.

<sup>82</sup> *The Jewish Encyclopedia* s.v. "Conferences, Rabbinical," Accessed at <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/4592-conferences-rabbinical#anchor3>.

<sup>83</sup> Bleich, *Jacob Ettlinger*, 186-88; see also Ismar Schorch, *From Text to Context: The Turn to History in Modern Judaism*, (Hanover: Brandeis University Press, 1994), 44, n. 36; and Katz, *A House Divided*, 16-18.

“uprooting” *Halachah* while convincing the “lowly of the nation” that they have God on their side. These rabbis, says Lipman, are maliciously misleading the Children of Israel.

Lipman echoes one of the principal issues laid out by Ettliger and Enoch at the journal’s inception. We have already seen that the editors thought of their publication of Halachic inquiry as protection against “modern” rabbis who would pick and choose decontextualized passages from the Talmud to lend support to their positions. Lipman promotes the use of literary forms, language and devices in the service of true Judaism.

In the second and third sections, Lipman takes up the issue of protection against “the rebellious household” among the Jews. He distinguishes between two tactics, either addressing the reformers directly or insulating the faithful among the Jews. Opting for the latter would require establishing a strong leadership capable of preventing Judaism’s further erosion in public spaces,

In the streets and the open areas using our holy Torah or divine philosophy to demonstrate to them that their mouths (speak) fallacy and their right hand is a hand of lies and to ruin all of their plans so that the common folk may see that all of their deeds are void and they are altogether vapid.

Lipman worries, however, that “the lowly of the masses are dammed and unable to distinguish and recognize between truth and lies.” To reach this “majority of the House of Israel who do not know and do not understand (who is of) the tribe of falsehood and the clan of traitors,” Lipman recommends strengthening the group rather than directly reaching out to the masses. He makes this point with an extended allegory and a series of metaphors. If the masses of Jews are not equipped to separate the truth offered by Halachic authorities from the lies advocated by the Reform rabbis, how then to reach them? Lipman opted to avoid dealing with the masses directly, and instead encouraging a shared scholastic culture among their leaders.

Lipman’s fourth and fifth installments lay out a program for cultivating an educated cohort of thinkers able to disseminate orthodox thinking more widely through publication. By publishing *melitzot* like his own article, *Shomer Tziyon Hane’eman* will equip local rabbis with language and ideas that they can use to sway the Jews of their communities.

Lipman remarks on the utility of *melitzah*, as he invites his readers to “take a bit of the balm of *melitzah*, a bit of the honey of (Halachic) investigation and sweeten the juice of tradition.” Lipman goes on to argue that when used together, “beautiful *melitzah* and the words of the living God” will “enlighten the masses,”



and “open their eyes so that they see and know and understand that the sun of truth shines like a bright star.” Lipman ends by charging his readers to

Go! Go! Each man to his tent of Torah, and for the sake of heaven, and to each tent one should bring the tradition of wisdom and enlighten the ignorant with Torah, and lead them along the true path.

Lipman imagines his readers as thought leaders for their communities or families, bringing back a solidified sense of self enhanced by the reading practices they share with the readers of the rest of the periodical.

This strategy gives us a sense of how the periodical’s initial cohort of contributors envisioned the reading of what they wrote. Lipman’s repeated claims that direct appeal to the masses would not work, coupled with his frank assessments of the masses of Jews as ignorant, indicates that he anticipated having a learned audience. This matches the stated intention of the periodical as laid out by Enoch and Ettlinger in their announcement of February 1846. What Lipman adds, however, is an understanding of the power of literature. While he imagines that only the most learned will read the *Mesbalim umelitzot*, Lipman anticipates that this cohort will bring gleanings from this reading experience to their communities. This dovetails with Ettlinger and Enoch’s expectations that the public would be most easily accessible through synagogue leaders.

Lipman addressed a community of like-minded elite thinkers who could, through a shared discourse, shape the behavior of the ignorant. Using a variety of genres to cultivate a readership united only by shared structures of language and belief matches the “imagined communities” that marked the second reading revolution throughout Europe. The fact that this language was rabbinically inflected lent this readership a particularly elitist element. The community of readers that the periodical sought to form had a particular prerequisite for entry – a classical rabbinic education.

Two letters to the journal – one before and one after the 1850 hiatus – give hints as to its readers’ reactions. Joseph Heine wrote to the editors in the fall of 1847. The editors published his letter in issues 32-33.<sup>84</sup> Heine compares his discovery of the periodical to a lonely, hungry man finding food and drink. In the face of the “noise making” of the partisans, “I looked this way and that and found no man of words to confront them with a periodical narrating events of the moment<sup>85</sup> that would reveal their chains. Instead we all fell silent and put our hands to our mouths.” Now, however, “I see a man of wisdom, among those precious to the

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<sup>84</sup> Joseph Heine, “A *Melitzah* for *Shomer Tziyon Hane’eman*,” in *Shomer Tziyon Hane’eman*, September 14-28, 1847.

<sup>85</sup> “במכתב בקורות העיתים”

living God, and in his hand is a nimble scribe's pen, and his speech is pleasant and clear." Now, Heine says, there are champions of a traditional way of life accessible to anyone who pays a subscription fee and has the ability to read rabbinic Hebrew. Heine is excited by the novelty of a public discourse based on protecting what he views as the traditional Jewish lifestyle. This understanding of its public is enabled by *Shomer Tziyon Hane'eman*'s periodical format; its ability to address "events of the moment" gives its contents an immediacy that involves it in the debates of the day.

A few months after the periodical relaunched in July 1851, it published a letter from "the youth from among the legions of Israel, David," son of a Rabbi Strasser.<sup>86</sup> "Seventyfold does it please me when the letter carrier [*Breifträger*] comes to me and in his hands the love of my soul."<sup>87</sup> As Heine did, so, too, David refers to the role of the periodical in bringing the battle against the reformers into the public sphere for the first time. "I had circulated in the markets and the streets to find a faithful man to fight the war for God and his Torah." He had almost succumbed to despair before "I found the guardians circling the House of Israel to call in the name of God, to raise their voices like a trumpet to tell the House of Jacob their sins." The public dissemination of the periodical and its ideas' presence in "the streets and the markets" are indications that it had built a reading public among the rabbinically literate.

David expresses a strong sense of division from the reformers, promising never to "enter the congregations of the liars." David's letter to the editors not only makes it clear that there is a self-aware sense of identity connected to the struggle with the reformers; it also speaks to the role the written word had in coalescing that shared sense of identity.

David's letter reveals an exposure to *Shomer Tziyon Hane'eman*'s polemical involvement, but his engagement is with the ideas expressed by its literature, not the minutiae of its Halachic discussions. Publishing *melitzot* to compete with reformers eventually generated an interconnected network of readers who saw themselves as on the same side in a larger fight and as part of a single group. This community, which in the later decades of the century would coalesce into Modern Orthodoxy, developed from a reading public with shared values. These shared values had particular resonance in an age of doctrinal conflict.

## Conclusion

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<sup>86</sup> David Strasser, "Melitzab," *Shomer Tziyon Hane'eman*, September 19, 1851. David was most likely the son of Eleazar Strasser, who wrote the *responsum* about riding a train on the Sabbath.

<sup>87</sup> The published letter includes the Hebrew, "ניושה המכתב" followed by parentheses which enclose the German in Hebrew letters, "בריעפטר אגער."

*Shomer Tziyon Hane'eman* was an attempt to exercise authority over the larger Jewish community in Europe. The writers could not coerce their co-religionists in the manner accepted in earlier centuries, and so needed to turn instead to constructs such as a community of readers in order to perpetuate their Judaism. Decades of state reform beginning in the early 1800s had gradually eased the restrictions on Jews as individuals and lessened the long-standing authority of local rabbis. This created the space for reformers to establish their own synagogues in while also prompting the inheritors of the earlier power structure to look for new ways to influence their communities. David Ellinson calls this a turn towards “influential authority.”<sup>88</sup> No longer could a rabbi write a *responsum* to his peer and expect adherence; neither rabbi had the state’s backing to exert the power to keep adherence normative. The turn towards new methods of influence necessitated shifts in discursive strategies. Jacob Katz sees these shifts as adaptations that the Orthodox faction used defensively.<sup>89</sup>

*Shomer Tziyon Hane'eman's* creation of a reading public is among these adaptations. In their attempts to stave off the Reform movement, Ettlinger and his cohort relied upon models of community that could exist without the imperative authority of the past. Thus a periodical tied to an interest group – and thus an effective choice for the nationalists, liberals, and Enlightenment thinkers seeking ways to cultivate a sense of belonging to a larger whole – became a tool with which the rabbis of Germany could build a shared sense of community in a world where the old ways of organizing were evaporating.

This community was linked together by a shared stake in the invention of a tradition, described by *Shomer Tziyon Hane'eman* contributor Avraham Zutra by means of a contrast:

for some two thousand years when the Children of Israel were scattered and divided among all the other peoples from one end of the earth to the other, and among many nations who have since been uprooted from their land and forgotten. But Israel and the fire of its Law which emerges from (God’s) right hand stands as a flint rock through the ages.<sup>90</sup>

The fire of God’s Law, which Zutra depicts as unchanging, served a discursive purpose. It united and would preserve the new periodical’s readers. Invented tradition, which Shulamit Volkov calls a “complex of textual symbols,” responded

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<sup>88</sup> Ellenson, *Rabbi Esriel Hildesheimer*, 21.

<sup>89</sup> Katz, *Out of the Ghetto*, 152.

<sup>90</sup> Avraham Zutra, “A Responsum against the Renewers in the Synagogues,” *Shomer Tziyon Hane'eman*, December 14, 1855.

to the needs of the present by using curated elements of the past.<sup>91</sup> The writers of the periodical used new methods to articulate a vision portrayed as classic, and unchanging; in doing so, they invented tradition as a source of influential authority.

*Shomer Tziyon Hane'man* cultivated an Orthodox identity by establishing a network of rabbis linked through their shared educational background. It cultivated readers who could see themselves as sharing doctrinal and ritual values with the writers and with each other. Its doing so is an important stage in the emergence of Modern Orthodoxy as a viable movement.

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**How to quote this article:**

Phil Keisman, "I see a man of great wisdom... and in his hand is a nimble scribe's pen." *The Readers and Writers of Shomer Tziyon Hane'man*, in Miscellanea 2019, eds. Quest Editorial Staff, *Quest. Issues in Contemporary Jewish History. Journal of Fondazione CDEC*, n. 14 December 2018

url: [www.quest-cdecjournal.it/focus.php?id=406](http://www.quest-cdecjournal.it/focus.php?id=406)

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<sup>91</sup> Shulamit Volkov, *Germans, Jews, and Anti-Semites: Trials in Emancipation*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 276.

**Jewish Self-Defense against the Blood Libel in Mid-Nineteenth Century Italy:  
The Badia Affair and Proceedings of the Castilliero Trial (1855-56)**

*by Emanuele D'Antonio*

**Abstract**

*In 1855, the Badia affair, the sequel to a blood libel against a Jewish businessman in a Veneto town, temporarily put in question relations between state, society and the Jewish minority in the Lombardo-Venetian Kingdom. After reconstructing the stages of the episode, the present article analyzes the strategies of response to the crisis resorted by the Jewry of Hapsburg Italy, then in the process of emancipation nearly achieved. With the support of state authorities, community leaders and Jewish intellectuals together with some Catholics, Venetian liberalism urged in favor of an apologetic explication to undermine majority prejudice. The effort led to the creation of a text, published as a supplement in the authoritative Eco dei Tribunali, which used the trial minutes against the slanderer, making the legal proceedings into a refutation of the ritual murder stereotype.*

**Blood Libels in Restoration Italy**

**Crisis and Resolution**

**Preparing the Refutation**

**The Blood Libel on Trial**

**Useful Knowledge?**

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## Blood Libels in Restoration Italy

The Restoration coincided with the process of emancipation for Italian Jewry when it became the victim of a new, now little-known wave of blood libels. The six documented cases took place between 1824 and 1860 in cities and towns of the Lombardo-Venetian Kingdom, the Papal States, and the Kingdom of Sardinia.<sup>1</sup> The accusations of ritual murder were local in scope overall; urban Jewish communities of varying size and demographic and socio-economic makeup were involved. The immediate cause provoking a libel was often the violent death or the disappearance of a young Catholic, for which the public authorities could not provide an adequate explanation. Local communities questioned these traumatic events in search of a “truth” more persuasive than the official account. The answer would typically surface based on the slanderous claim, widespread to the point of being taken to be common knowledge,<sup>2</sup> that Jews had some religious rites which called for the sacrifice of Christian youths and then for feasting upon their blood as part of ritual ceremonies. The accusation would spread among the common folk as a rumor,<sup>3</sup> increasing the sense of alarm and fueling strong anti-Jewish hostility among locals. Brought together by their belief in the veracity of the slander, the community would feel that it had to punish the Jews for the monstrous crime, as well as to neutralize the threat posed by their degenerate religiosity. The ensuing anti-Jewish riots saw different degrees of local participation and intensity, sometimes resulting only in symbolic acts of exclusion, sometimes in violence against individuals and property or, in some extreme cases, in mass assault on the former ghetto areas.<sup>4</sup>

In Restoration Italy, blood libels became the expression of a new anti-Jewish hostility stemming from long-term religious, cultural, and socio-political causes as

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<sup>1</sup> Attilio Milano, *Storia degli ebrei in Italia*, (Turin: Einaudi, 1963), 606; Alessandro Novellini, “«Perseguitar li Ebrei a morte.» I tumulti contro il ghetto di Mantova nella prima metà dell'Ottocento,” *Storia in Lombardia*, 22/1 (2002): 75-95; Marco Francesco Dolermo, *La costruzione dell'odio. Ebrei, contadini e diocesi di Acqui dall'istituzione del ghetto del 1731 alle violenze del 1799 e del 1848*, (Turin: Zamorani, 2005), 102-7; Valerio De Cesaris, *Pro Judaeis. Il filogiudaismo cattolico in Italia (1789-1938)*, (Rome: Guerini e Associati, 2006), 70-6; 150-62; Abigail Green, *Moses Montefiore. Jewish Liberator – Imperial Hero*, (Cambridge – London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010), 275-7.

<sup>2</sup> Hillel Kieval, “Antisemitisme ou savoir sociale? Sur la genèse du procès moderne pour meurtre rituel,” *Annales*, 49/5 (1994): 1091-105.

<sup>3</sup> On oral communication and the production of “truth,” see Helmut Walser Smith, *The Butcher's Tale. Murder and Anti-Semitism in Wilhelmine Germany*, (New York – London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2002), 67-8.

<sup>4</sup> For a typology of anti-Jewish violence, see Werner Bergmann, “Exclusionary Riots: Some Theoretical Conclusions,” in *Exclusionary Violence. Antisemitic Riots in Modern German History*, eds. Christhard Hoffmann, Werner Bergmann Helmut Walser Smith, (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2002), 181-2.

well as aversion to secular modernity and its call for emancipation.<sup>5</sup> The accusations' breeding ground was the restored cultural legitimacy of the ritual murder stereotype, a medieval ecclesiastical concoction which, in the course of its secular history, was shared by theological anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism.<sup>6</sup> Its revival was part of an overall negative anthropology of Judaism originating in Catholic circles close to the anti-modern positions espoused by the Church between the mid-eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth centuries.<sup>7</sup> Contributing to this, hagiographies of the alleged "martyred victims of Jewish hatred,"<sup>8</sup> echoes of the Damascus affair (1840),<sup>9</sup> propaganda against emancipation,<sup>10</sup> and writing of questionable merit<sup>11</sup> all combined to create a popular notion of the Jews as a dangerous group animated by hatred of everything Christian and committed to religious crime, cannibalism and vampirism. Christianity needed to defend itself against all of these. However, the six documented cases of ritual murder charges in this period became an expression of the socio-political anxieties of the classes most affected by the crises of modernization. During the process of emancipation, Italian Jewry was identified with its bourgeois élites, and was perceived as a social enemy, the beneficiary of a modernity which, from the point of view of many, was nothing but the harbinger of worse living conditions to come. Rural dwellers' anti-Jewish hostility, impacted by misleading social claims, was also often linked to the loss of land in ways which advanced the interests of bourgeois Jews,<sup>12</sup> while

<sup>5</sup> Simon Levis Sullam, "I critici e i nemici dell'emancipazione degli ebrei," in *Storia della Shoah in Italia*, vol. 1, *Vicende, memorie, rappresentazioni*, eds. Marcello Flores, Simon Levis Sullam, Marie-Anne Matard-Bonucci, Enzo Traverso, (Turin: Utet, 2010), 45-6.

<sup>6</sup> Ruggero Taradel, *L'accusa del sangue. Storia politica di un mito antisemita*, (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 2008).

<sup>7</sup> Giovanni Miccoli, "Santa Sede, questione ebraica e antisemitismo tra Otto e Novecento," in *Gli ebrei in Italia. Storia d'Italia. Annali*, vol. 11/2, ed. Corrado Vivanti, (Turin: Einaudi, 1997), 1369-574; Marina Caffiero, "Alle origini dell'antisemitismo politico. L'accusa di omicidio rituale nel Sei-Settecento tra autodifesa degli ebrei e pronunciamenti papali," in *Les racines chrétiennes de l'antisemitisme politique (fin XIXe-XXe siècle)*, eds. Catherine Brice, Giovanni Miccoli, (Rome: École française de Rome, 2003), 25-59; Marina Caffiero, *Battesimi forzati. Storie di ebrei, cristiani e convertiti nella Roma dei papi*, (Roma: Viella, 2004), 43-60.

<sup>8</sup> Tommaso Caliò, *La leggenda dell'ebreo assassino. Percorsi di un mito antiebraico dal Medioevo a oggi*, (Rome: Viella, 2013); Nicola Cusumano, *Ebrei e accusa di omicidio rituale nel Settecento. Il carteggio tra Girolamo Tartarotti e Benedetto Bonelli (1740-1748)*, (Milan: Unicopli, 2012).

<sup>9</sup> Jonathan Frankel, *The Damascus Affair. Ritual Murder, Politics and the Jews in 1840*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). On its Italian reception, see David I. Kertzer, *I papi contro gli ebrei. Il ruolo del Vaticano nell'ascesa dell'antisemitismo moderno*, (Milan: Rizzoli, 2001), 94-114; Caliò, *La leggenda dell'ebreo assassino*, 117-39.

<sup>10</sup> Gadi Luzzatto Voghera, *Il prezzo dell'eguaglianza. Il dibattito sull'emancipazione degli ebrei in Italia (1781-1848)*, (Milan: Angeli, 1998), 70-7.

<sup>11</sup> Riccardo Bonavita, "Grammatica e storia di un'alterità. Stereotipi antiebraici cristiani nella narrativa italiana 1827-1938," in Id., *Spettri dell'altro. Letteratura e razzismo nell'Italia contemporanea*, (Bologna: il Mulino, 2008), 108; 112-5.

<sup>12</sup> Renzo Derosas, "Strutture di classe e lotte sociali nel Polesine preunitario," *Studi storici*, 18/1 (1977): 80; Maurizio Bertolotti, introduction to *Drammi giovanili. Emanuele. Gli ultimi anni di Galileo Galilei*, by Ippolito Nievo (Venezia: Marsilio, 2005), 27-8; Dolermo, *La costruzione dell'odio*, 110; Marida Brignani, "Ostiano e Benedetto Frizzi," in *Benedetto Frizzi. Un'illuminista*

nobles were resentful about the “usurpation” of rights which had once been their prerogative.<sup>13</sup>

The Jewish response to blood libels in Restoration Italy has not been the object of focused historical research, apart from sporadic exceptions.<sup>14</sup> The leaders of the targeted Jewish groups seem to have defended themselves mainly by means of the traditional vertical alliance with the sovereign power,<sup>15</sup> calling for protection by its local representatives. State authorities disposed of superior forces and appeared more reliable than the local; they were also not about to leave a “useful” population at the mercy of a local populace in turmoil. Even though dictated by a somewhat mythologized rereading of its own historical experience, this approach was generally effective in normalizing situations of crisis. To retain their growing monopoly over force, state authorities tried to prevent general unrest or, if this proved impossible, to repress it by military means. Control of the territory would sometimes be accompanied by the attempt to eradicate the source of the crisis. In 1824, government representatives in Mantua, in addition to taking the usual measures to preserve public order, organized a public refutation of the blood libel, all as part of a popular education effort to “tolerance.”<sup>16</sup> In this as in other cases, defending the Jews from a blood libel charge depended on the attitude and choices of the sovereign power.<sup>17</sup> To this end, self-defense measures taken by the Jews were not aimed directly at the surrounding dominant culture; the apologetic explanations documented in community archives or in the Jewish press<sup>18</sup> were rather intended to support the plea for assistance from the authorities.

The Badia affair is an instance of this kind; however, it also involves a number of elements that make it unique in the history of pre-unification Italy.<sup>19</sup> Without

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*ebreo nell'età dell'emancipazione*, eds. Marida Brignani, Maurizio Bertolotti, (Florence: Giuntina, 2009), 64-5.

<sup>13</sup> Bertolotti, introduction to *Drammi giovanili*, 29-33; Paolo Pellegrini, “Ebrei nobilitati e conversioni nell'Italia dell'Ottocento e del primo Novecento,” *Materia giudaica*, 19/1-2 (2014): 277-8.

<sup>14</sup> Enzo Sereni, “La Comunità di Roma e l'affare di Damasco,” *La Rassegna mensile di Israel*, 3/2-3 (1927-28): 87-98.

<sup>15</sup> Yoseph Hayim Yerushalmi, «*Servitori di re e non servitori di servitori.*” *Alcuni aspetti della storia politica degli ebrei*, (Florence: Giuntina, 2013).

<sup>16</sup> De Cesaris, *Pro Judaeis*, 74.

<sup>17</sup> On the limits of vertical alliance Paolo Bernardini, *La sfida dell'uguaglianza. Gli ebrei a Mantova nell'età della rivoluzione francese*, (Rome: Bulzoni 1996), 161; Pierre Birnbaum, *A Tale from a Ritual Murder Trial in the Age of Louis XIV. The Trial of Raphael Levy, 1669*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 123-35; Cristiana Facchini, “Letture di storia ebraica. Riflessioni a margine di alcune recenti pubblicazioni,” *Storica*, 19/56-57 (2013): 189-202.

<sup>18</sup> See for example [Isacco Samuele Reggio], “Ebrei di Candia,” *Strenna israelitica per l'anno dalla creazione del mondo 5615*, 3 (1854-55): 23-4.

<sup>19</sup> On the Badia affair, see Gabriella Cecchetto, “Gli ebrei a Venezia durante la III dominazione austriaca,” *Ateneo Veneto*, n.s., 13/2 (1975): 84-87; De Cesaris, *Pro Judaeis*, 152-58; Emanuele D'Antonio, *Badia Polesine 1855. Storia di una calunnia del sangue nell'Italia dell'Ottocento*, (PhD Thesis, University of Udine, 2016).



providing a systematic analysis and reconstruction of the events, which I leave for a future monograph, in this essay I propose to examine the Jewish response to the 1855 blood libel in a small town in southern Veneto. The Jews of Hapsburg Italy, whose civil emancipation was nearly complete by this time, managed a public self-defense which culminated in the publication – in the non-Jewish *Eco dei Tribunali* – of the report of the trial against the instigator of the charge of ritual murder.<sup>20</sup> Similar to long-established trends elsewhere among contemporary European Jews, the decision to undertake a public refutation – which was also part of the attempt to achieve full emancipation<sup>21</sup> – was taken in response to a socio-political crisis of unexpectedly vast proportions. The short-term cause, the local failure of the vertical alliance, led to the arrest of a respected bourgeois Jew, the victim of a heinous accusation. After a summary of the events, the present essay will reconstruct the history of the publication of the proceedings, focusing in particular on the case of Lombardo-Venetian Jewry. The publication will be considered together with some non-Jewish exhortations to liberal thought, and the apologetic and intellectual strategies used.

### Crisis and Resolution

The first seven years of the third Austrian period of rule were a critical phase in the history of the Austrian Lombardo-Venetian Kingdom, marked by military domination – though incomplete and fluctuating – of the state apparatus, and by a profound economic crisis which had far reaching social consequences.<sup>22</sup> The Jewish minority, represented by the communities of Mantua in Lombardy and Venice, Padua, Verona and Rovigo in Veneto,<sup>23</sup> was faced with additional difficulties. The failure of the Revolution of 1848, a source of great disappointment for its many Jewish supporters, had meant the loss of the civil and political equality achieved during the Republic of Manin.<sup>24</sup> The old

<sup>20</sup> *Processo Giuditta Castilliero. Supplimento [sic!] al n. 641 dell'Eco dei Tribunali, Sezione prima*, (Venice: Tipografia de L'Eco dei Tribunali, 1856) [from now, PC].

<sup>21</sup> Luzzatto Voghera, *Il prezzo dell'eguaglianza*, 74.

<sup>22</sup> See Marco Meriggi, *Il Regno Lombardo-Veneto*, (Turin: Utet, 1987), 355-65; Bruno Caizzi, "La crisi economica del Lombardo Veneto nel decennio 1850-59," *Nuova Rivista storica*, 62/2 (1958): 205-26; Renzo Derosas, "Lo sciopero de «La Boje» nel Polesine e le sue origini," *Società e storia*, 1/1 (1978): 65-86.

<sup>23</sup> See Francesca Cavarocchi, *La Comunità ebraica di Mantova fra prima emancipazione e unità d'Italia*, (Florence: Giuntina, 2002); Gadi Luzzatto Voghera, "Gli ebrei," in *Storia di Venezia*, vol. 3/1, *L'Ottocento*, ed. Stuart J. Woolf, (Rome: Istituto per l'Enciclopedia Italiana, 2002), 619-48; Ariel Viterbo, "Da Napoleone all'Unità," in *Ha-Tikvā. Il cammino della speranza. Gli ebrei e Padova*, vol. 2, ed. Claudia De Benedetti, (Padua: Papergraf, 2000), 1-58; Valeria Rainoldi, *Il ghetto e la sinagoga di Verona fra Ottocento e Novecento. Introduzione di Achille Olivieri, prefazione di Michele Luzzati*, (Padua: Cleup, 2006); Antonia Savio, *La comunità israelitica di Rovigo tra Ottocento e Novecento. Aspetti, forme, problemi*, (Graduate Thesis, University of Trieste, 1997-98).

<sup>24</sup> Tullia Catalan, " 'La primavera degli ebrei.' Ebrei italiani del Litorale e del Lombardo Veneto nel 1848-1849," *Zakhor. Rivista di storia degli ebrei d'Italia*, 6 (2003): 35-66. For the case of Venice, see

discriminatory laws were reenacted, and the Austrian authorities seemed more interested in using political institutions to promote a slow, gradual expansion of rights related to “civil tolerance.” This approach was endorsed by a positive evaluation of the socioeconomic and cultural integration achieved by the Jews of Hapsburg Italy.<sup>25</sup> The preceding three decades had shown partial emancipation to be – compared with other geopolitical developments in the peninsula – especially favorable to the rise of a Jewish bourgeoisie throughout the country.<sup>26</sup> Jewish leaders, however, understanding the meaning of complete civil emancipation, could not accept a partial one; they were also concerned about the negative impact of the rapprochement between the Empire and the Holy See, which had led to the 1855 Concordat.<sup>27</sup> Finally, surrounding majority views on the “Jewish question” were divided between pro-equality liberals and an opposition camp, which was probably larger and more articulate than intransigent Catholic circles.

The blood libel that broke the fragile balance in the relations between state, society, and the Jewish minority in the Lombardo-Venetian Kingdom took place in Badia in the province of Rovigo, a location significant in terms of rural, manufacturing, and commercial activity and having about five thousand inhabitants.<sup>28</sup> The affair broke out on June 25, 1855, with the return of Giuditta Castilliero, who had disappeared from the town eight days previously. The young woman, a twenty-one-year-old peasant officially resident in nearby Masi, was living in the house of an aunt and publicly explained her disappearance by claiming to have escaped from a ritual murder. As per her account, the Jews had kidnapped her and taken her to Verona, where they had tried to sacrifice her along with an unknown little girl whom she later lost track of. Her executioners had stunned her by repeatedly bloodletting her in the arms, collecting her blood in a terracotta basin. The “martyrdom” was prevented by a Catholic servant, who assisted her in escaping and, after a stop in nearby Legnago, returning to Badia. Among the alleged Jewish perpetrators, Badians recognized their fellow townsman Caliman Ravenna. He was accused of kidnapping a Christian for the purpose of ritual murder. As evidence of the alleged bloodletting, Castilliero

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Ester Capuzzo, “A Venezia con Manin,” in *Gli ebrei italiani dal Risorgimento alla scelta sionista*, (Florence: Le Monnier, 2004), 50-78; Elena Bacchin, “Per i diritti degli ebrei: percorsi dell’emancipazione a Venezia nel 1848,” *Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa. Classe di Lettere e Filosofia*, s. V, 5/1 (2013): 91-128.

<sup>25</sup> Cecchetto, “Gli ebrei a Venezia,” 88-91.

<sup>26</sup> Marino Berengo, “Gli ebrei veneti nelle inchieste austriache della Restaurazione,” *Michael. On the History of the Jews in the Diaspora*, ed. Shlomo Simonsohn, 1 (1972): 9-37; Id., “Gli ebrei nell’Italia asburgica nell’età della restaurazione,” *Italia. Studi e ricerche sulla storia, la cultura e la letteratura degli ebrei d’Italia*, ed. Shlomo Simonsohn, 6/1-2 (1987): 62-103.

<sup>27</sup> On the anti-Jewish attitude of the Church in the Venetian provinces Angelo Gambasin, *Religione e società dalle riforme napoleoniche all’età liberale*, (Padua: Liviana, 1971), 57-8; 102-21. See also Ignazio Veca, “La strana emancipazione. Pio IX e gli ebrei nel lungo Quarantotto,” *Contemporanea: rivista di storia dell’800 e del ’900*, 17/1 (2014): 3-30.

<sup>28</sup> Gianpaolo Romanato, “L’Ottocento,” in *Badia Polesine: contributo per la conoscenza della città*, (Badia Polesine: Biblioteca Civica Bronziero, 1993), 158-79.

displayed six wounds in her arms, evoking perfect resonance with deep-rooted common anti-Jewish fantasies.

The blood libel immediately fueled strong anti-Jewish sentiment; townsfolk united against the alleged kidnapper. Born in Rovigo in 1817, Ravenna had arrived in Badia with his wife Stella Levi in 1840. The few Jews of the town<sup>29</sup> were formally members of the Jewish community of the provincial capital, Rovigo. Ravenna was a well-respected entrepreneur, hardware merchant, district tax collector, and moneylender.<sup>30</sup> His success in business had placed him at the top of the bourgeoisie in Badia,<sup>31</sup> making him an integral part of the elite. Ravenna was prominent in the city's public life, frequented its salons and cafés, became co-founder of its Philharmonic Society and was one of the owners (*palchettisti*) of the local *Teatro Sociale*.<sup>32</sup> His prestige could not protect him from prejudice, however. Opinion among his Catholic acquaintances was divided concerning his alleged guilt, further contributing to Ravenna's social isolation. Amid mounting tension, the first wave of anti-Jewish agitation washed over Badia at the same time.<sup>33</sup> Rumors helped spread this throughout the area, reaching as far as Rovigo.<sup>34</sup>

The local authorities' intervention led to the acknowledgment of the blood libel. Having been warned of the seriousness of the case, Ravenna went to the local government representative (*commissario distrettuale*)<sup>35</sup> to proclaim his innocence and ask that measures be taken to protect his "honor."<sup>36</sup> The officer, though skeptical about the attempted ritual murder, did not respond to his request, and under pressure from the municipal authorities transferred the case to the justice authority. Investigation by the local magistrate (*pretore*) put Ravenna in an even worse position. Strongly prejudiced, the investigators accepted Castilliero's

<sup>29</sup> On Jews in Badia in the Middle Ages, a study unconnected to the nineteenth-century Badia's Jewish minority, see Elisabetta Traniello, *Gli ebrei e le piccole città: economia e società nel Polesine del Quattrocento*, (Rovigo: Minelliana, 2004).

<sup>30</sup> Municipality of Rovigo, "Register of Population, Jewish Community, 1836," Archivio Storico del Comune di Rovigo, 14:31, Archivio di Stato di Rovigo; Municipality of Badia Polesine, "Register of Population, 1871," 21, Archivio Comunale, Badia Polesine.

<sup>31</sup> Chamber of Commerce, "List of prominent 'shopkeepers' in the Province of Rovigo, 1854," Camera di Commercio della Provincia del Polesine, 90:88, Archivio di Stato di Rovigo.

<sup>32</sup> Municipality of Badia Polesine. "List of *palchettisti* (heirs or successors in 1895)," Teatro Sociale, Archivio Comunale, 6:4, Biblioteca Civica Bronziero, Badia Polesine.

<sup>33</sup> Giuseppe Cappelli. "Report to Delegazione provinciale di Rovigo, 27 June 1855," Presidenza della Luogotenenza, 97:I/1-66, Archivio di Stato di Venezia (from now, ASV).

<sup>34</sup> Giacomo Angelo Giustinian Recanati. "Report to Luogotenenza veneta, 10 August 1855," Presidenza della Luogotenenza 97/I.1-66, ASV.

<sup>35</sup> On this public officer, see Luca Rossetto, *Il commissario distrettuale nel Veneto asburgico. Un funzionario dell'Impero tra mediazione politica e controllo sociale (1819-1848)*, (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2013).

<sup>36</sup> PC, 3; Jewish Community of Rovigo. "Story of the event, 21 October 1855," Jewish University of Rovigo, IT/Rov 360:7b, Central Archives for the History of Jewish People, Jerusalem (from now CAHJP).

allegations, swayed by the deposition given under oath and the forensic examination of the injuries to her arms.<sup>37</sup> On June 28, Ravenna, charged with public violence,<sup>38</sup> was taken into preventive custody in the Badia prison. Next the case, in accordance with procedural requirements, moved on to the Court of Rovigo. The magistrates of the provincial capital, together with other criminal authorities, expedited the investigation of the crime, allegedly inspired by the “religious superstition of the Jews.”<sup>39</sup> The immediate arrest of the perpetrators, from their point of view, was also a public order measure. Answering the public’s calls for “justice” could limit the unrest, and prevent its spreading to the cities where the larger Jewish communities of the Lombardo-Venetian Kingdom were concentrated.

The Badia affair became a regional crisis once the first accounts of it appeared in the press. On July 5, the *Annotatore friulano*, an authoritative weekly printed in Udine, published an account of the violence suffered by the “young little peasant” from Polesine.<sup>40</sup> Without mentioning the Jewish identity of the alleged perpetrators, the report helped spread the libel by indirectly endorsing a story already familiar to its readers through rumors. Public opinion put Judaism on trial on its own, in discussions held among the social elites of the cities of Veneto and elsewhere. The Pedrocchi coffeehouse in Padua, where the *Annotatore* was typical reading, became the scene of verbal abuse against Jewish patrons.<sup>41</sup> The agitation spread to the popular social classes in Venice and Padua, who were shaken by the rumors and determined to avenge the self-proclaimed “martyr.”<sup>42</sup> In Venice, Jewish institutions received threatening letters that ordered Jews to stay away from the public sphere, or face an imminent massacre. Armed intervention proved needed to block the escalation of anti-Jewish violence, ultimately preventing damage to property and physical attacks against individuals.

State authorities interfered to respond to the pleas for protection from the area’s Jewish leadership. Diplomatic efforts by the Venetian community were paralleled by those of other communities approaching their various provincial authorities; together, they proved decisive in winning the support of the Veneto

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<sup>37</sup> The documents are published in PC, 34, 38-41.

<sup>38</sup> On this crime, see Claudio Povolo, *La selva incantata. Delitti, prove, indizi nel Veneto dell'Ottocento*, (Sommacampagna: Cierre, 2006), 45.

<sup>39</sup> State Prosecutor to Luogotenenza veneta, June 29, 1855, Presidenza della Luogotenenza, 97:I/1-66, ASV.

<sup>40</sup> *Annotatore friulano*, July 5, 1855: 108, appendix. On this usually philo-Semitic journal, see Emanuele D'Antonio, *La società udinese e gli ebrei tra la Restaurazione e l'età unitaria. Mondi cattolici, emancipazione e integrazione in Friuli 1828-1866/70*, (Udine: Istituto Pio Paschini, 2012).

<sup>41</sup> Hoffer. “Report to Luogotenenza veneta, 8 July 1855,” Presidenza della Luogotenenza: 97:I/1-66, ASV.

<sup>42</sup> General head of police. “Report to Luogotenenza veneta, 7 July 1855,” Presidenza della Luogotenenza, 97:I/1-66, ASV. See also General head of police. “Daily reports on public spirit, 11 July 1855,” Presidenza della Luogotenenza, 97:I/1-66, 133, ASV.

government.<sup>43</sup> The Jews' leading arguments<sup>44</sup> must have been the refutation, in principle and in fact, of the accusation of ritual murder, as well as the political criminalization of the charge's supporters. The Badia affair undermined "civil tolerance" and could be used as a cover for a conspiracy against Austria. The hypothesis that the anti-Jewish agitation signaled a renewal of the patriotic movement in Italy was farfetched and instrumental, but sounded dangerous to a power still traumatized by the events of 1848 and obsessed with the ghost of the Revolution.<sup>45</sup> The highest political authorities in Venice took over the supervision of the case, and used the administrative bodies subordinate to them to conduct an effective defense of the Jews and an investigation to challenge the accusation.

Public opinion responded immediately to the change in the political climate. On July 9, the *Gazzetta ufficiale di Venezia*, the leading newspaper in Veneto, published a front-page refutation of the blood libel by Abraham Lattes, the chief rabbi of the Venetian community.<sup>46</sup> Three days later, the Viennese *Corriere Italiano*, a ministerial newspaper widely read in Hapsburg Italy, accused the *Annotatore* of having intentionally promoted an anti-Semitic campaign.<sup>47</sup> These articles made the weekly in Udine, after an inconsistent attempt at self-defense,<sup>48</sup> retreat into silence for fear of penal sanctions.

This critical phase of the Badia affair ended with the collapse of the legal endorsement of the blood libel. On July 9, Castilliero was arrested for theft committed in Legnago against a family who, unconnected to the blood libel, had hired her as a domestic servant; the theft took place during the days of Castilliero's disappearance.<sup>49</sup> This news obviously contradicted the story of the attempted ritual murder; the indictment against Ravenna and his alleged accomplices from Verona was undone. The investigators, after obtaining the young woman's confession, next devoted their efforts to identifying her apparent accomplice, the instigator of the libel. On July 14, Ravenna was released from jail. He held a celebration in the public square, thus starting his reintegration into the city community. The news was immediately published by the *Sferza* in Brescia,<sup>50</sup> and

<sup>43</sup> "Article in the journal *L'Orfeo*, 18 July 1855," Viterbi Archive, P56:13, CAHJP.

<sup>44</sup> See, for example, the petition from the Jewish Community of Mantua, July 6, 1855, published in Angelo Tedeschi, "La calunnia del sangue pasquale," *Educatore israelita*, October 1862: 335-8.

<sup>45</sup> Meriggi, *Il Regno Lombardo-Veneto*, 354-57.

<sup>46</sup> Abraham Lattes, "Agli amici della giustizia, onesti ed illuminati," *Gazzetta ufficiale di Venezia*, July 9, 1855. See also "Brescia, 12 luglio 1855 (Agli amici della giustizia, onesti ed illuminati)," *Gazzetta provinciale di Brescia*, July 13, 1855.

<sup>47</sup> "Notizie diverse. Vienna 11 luglio 1855," *Corriere italiano*, July 12, 1855. The article was republished in *Gazzetta di Mantova*, July 17, 1855. On the Viennese newspaper, see Giuliano Gaeta, "Il «Corriere italiano» di Vienna (1850-1857) ed il suo redattore," *Rassegna storica del Risorgimento*, 40/4 (1957): 690-724

<sup>48</sup> *Annotatore friulano*, July 19, 1855: 116. See also La Redazione, "Dichiarazione," *Annotatore friulano*, July 12, 1855: 112.

<sup>49</sup> PC, 26-30 e 43.

<sup>50</sup> [Luigi Mazzoldi,] "Onestà e tolleranza," *La Sferza*, July 17, 1855.

ten days later, in greater detail in the *Gazzetta di Mantova*; this latter article was widely reproduced by the newspapers of Hapsburg Italy.<sup>51</sup> The disproof of the charge of attempted ritual murder crowned the press campaign initiated by Rabbi Lattes' refutation.

### Preparing the Refutation

The Badia affair cast in question the real extent of the Jews' integration in Lombardo-Venetian society; the shock reverberated throughout the Jewish world of the land. The widespread public acceptance of the blood libel called for an immediate response and a public refutation capable of counteracting prevalent prejudice. This project, though the names of its initiators are today impossible to establish, took shape among the leaders of the Jewish communities in Padua and Venice, and in the intellectual circles close to the Rabbinical College of Padua,<sup>52</sup> the main Jewish cultural center in the area. The support of political authorities, which had been crucial for the success of the campaign against the libel in the press, was guarantee against intervention from the censors. Hailing from a long-standing tradition, public self-defense also reflected contemporary states of mind among European Jews, affected especially by the Damascus affair.<sup>53</sup> In 1840, Lipman Hirsch Löwenstein published his *Damascia*, soon to have widespread impact and urging his coreligionists to break with the isolation induced by an enlightened culture that had nonetheless come to terms with "superstition."<sup>54</sup> The strategy envisaged by the Hebraist from Frankfurt did not seek the emotional support of non-Jews but rather aimed for their rational persuasion, based on rigorously documented facts about religion and history. Samuel David Luzzatto (Shadal), professor at the Rabbinical College and renowned Hebraist, was familiar with the text<sup>55</sup> and shared its perspective. His rationalist approach followed the principles of the *Wissenschaft des Judenthums*, a European Jewish movement which rediscovered, by using scholarly method and analysis, its own religious and

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<sup>51</sup> "Regno Lombardo-Veneto, Mantova, 24 luglio 1855," *Gazzetta di Mantova*, July 24, 1855. The article was republished in *Gazzetta ufficiale di Venezia*, July 26, 1855, *Gazzetta ufficiale di Verona*, July 28, 1855, and *Osservatore triestino*, July 28, 1855. See also "Un po' di tutto. Il fatto di Badia," *Il Diavoletto*, July 29, 1855.

<sup>52</sup> Maddalena Del Bianco Cotrozzi, *Il Collegio rabbinico di Padova. Un'istituzione religiosa dell'ebraismo sulla via dell'emancipazione*, (Florence: Olschki, 1995).

<sup>53</sup> David Biale, *Blood and Belief. The Circulation of a Symbol between Jews and Christians*, (Los Angeles – London: Berkeley University Press, 2007), 163-7. See also Taradel, *L'accusa del sangue*, 169-73.

<sup>54</sup> Lipman Hirsch Löwenstein, *Damascia. Die Judenverfolgung zu Damaskus und ihre Wirkungen auf die öffentliche Meinung, nebst Nachweisungen über die Ursprung der gegen die Juden wiederholten Beschuldigung*, (Rödelheim: Lehrgeber und Co., 1840). On this book, see Frankel, *The Damascus Affair*, 402-07.

<sup>55</sup> Samuel David Luzzatto to Abraham Lattes, 31 maggio 1853, *Epistolario italiano francese latino di Samuel David Luzzatto da Trieste pubblicato da' suoi figli*, 2 vols., (Padua: Tipografia della Minerva dei fratelli Salmin, 1890), 756.

historical-cultural heritage.<sup>56</sup> The strategy of rational persuasion of non-Jews also adhered to a particular apologetic tradition, masterfully analyzed by Cristiana Facchini, which had emerged in the Veneto area at the end of the seventeenth century.<sup>57</sup> Carrying out a public refutation of the blood libel, however, required the unanimous consent of the Jewish leadership of the area.

The news of Castilliero's arrest, even before it was officially announced, relieved the pressure on the Jews of Lombardo-Veneto. Once the minutes of the legal proceedings had been made public, the President of the Community of Padua invited the leaders of the other four Jewish communities of the kingdom to send representatives to a conference to plan "further steps to be taken vis-a-vis the Higher Government Authorities" in order to advance "the state of well-being overall."<sup>58</sup> The call for coordinated action echoed widespread trends towards self-organization in contemporary European Jewry;<sup>59</sup> it was also in perfect consonance with recent developments in Lombardo-Venetian Jewish political tradition. Under the Austrians, Jewish leadership in the area had repeatedly produced joint responses to dangerous challenges from majority society.<sup>60</sup> But joint effort in the past had been based on contingent choices informally agreed upon by the members of the five presidencies. The conference of 1855 was, by contrast, an official event, which required participating members to renounce their traditional autonomy.<sup>61</sup> The struggle against the blood libel required a joint initiative of an extraordinary nature. The idea of publishing the proceedings was, perhaps, transparent to the invitation's recipients, but remained hidden between the lines of the circular from Padua.

The representatives of the communities of the Lombardo-Venetian Kingdom finally met in Venice, at Graziadio Vivante's house, on October 23.<sup>62</sup> The delay was due to the resistance of Mantua's Jewish leaders, the only ones hostile to the

<sup>56</sup> Luzzatto Voghera, *Il prezzo dell'eguaglianza*, 158-165. On the *Wissenschaft*, see Yoseph Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor. Storia ebraica e memoria ebraica*, (Parma: Pratiche, 1983).

<sup>57</sup> Cristiana Facchini, *Infamanti dicerie. La prima autodifesa ebraica dall'accusa del sangue*, (Bologna: EDB, 2013). See also Yoseph Hayim Yerushalmi, *Dalla Corte al ghetto. La vita le opere le peregrinazioni del marrano Cardoso nell'Europa del Seicento*, (Milan: Garzanti, 1991), 384-91.

<sup>58</sup> Jewish Community of Padua. "Letter to the Jewish Communities of the Lombardo-Venetian Kingdom, 11 July 1855," *Oggetti generali*, 504: Badia-Rovigo, Archive of the Jewish Community, Venice (from now ACEV).

<sup>59</sup> Perrine Simon-Nahum, *Aux origines de l'Alliance*, in *Histoire de l'Alliance israélite universelle de 1860 à nos jours*, ed. André Kaspi, (Paris: Colin, 2010), 11-52.

<sup>60</sup> See, for example, the documents kept in *Persecuzioni*, 75: *Calendario antiebraico*, Damasco, ACEV. See also Capuzzo, "A Venezia con Manin," 58-9.

<sup>61</sup> The Jewish Communities of the Venetian provinces had however participated in some Jewish political meetings during the Early Modern period, such as the synods held in Ferrara (1554) and in Padua (1585-6), Milano, *Storia degli ebrei*, 478-79.

<sup>62</sup> Jewish Community of Rovigo. "Decisions taken in Venice, 23 October 1855," Jewish University of Rovigo, IT/Rov 360:7b, CAHJP.

initiative.<sup>63</sup> The choice of venue underlined the hegemony of the Venetian Community in the nascent consortium, but it must also be interpreted as offering a guarantee. The community's president, Abramo Errera,<sup>64</sup> was also in charge of the presidency of the Rabbinical College,<sup>65</sup> the only institution shared in by all five of the kingdom's communities. The participants were almost all members of their cities' Jewish elites. They were distinguished people even in the eyes of non-Jewish society and experienced in dealing with the political authorities.<sup>66</sup> Prominent among them were Rabbi Lattes, the director of the Rabbinical College, Giuseppe Consolo,<sup>67</sup> and a member of the presidential committee of the community of Rovigo, Alessandro Levi.<sup>68</sup> Levi was Caliman Ravenna's brother-in-law and his advisor on legal matters. The conference finalized the decision to take action against surrounding majority prejudice by publishing a report on the upcoming Castilliero trial together with a refutation of the blood libel based on rigorously documented historical-religious arguments. The expenses incurred would be shared by the communities as per the "carati" system used in financing the Rabbinical College,<sup>69</sup> that is, in proportion to community size.

Immediately following the conference, Jewish leaders of the region began preparation for the envisioned publication, led by Venice. Returning to Rovigo, Levi met with Alessandro Cervesato, a Catholic liberal and a supporter of emancipation,<sup>70</sup> as well as Ravenna's future defense attorney. Levi asked Cervesato to clarify the structure of the upcoming Castilliero trial. The risk was

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<sup>63</sup> Jewish Community of Mantua, "Protocol 608:329," 464/1855, Archives of the Jewish Community (Administrative Section), Mantua. See also Jewish Community of Padua, "Letter to the Jewish Communities of the Lombardo-Venetian Kingdom, 10 October 1855," *Oggetti generali*, 504: Badia-Rovigo, ACEV. Reasons for Mantua's hostility to the meeting may not have been documented. The local Jewish leadership probably opposed the strategy of public self-defense in a context complicated by recurrent conflicts with the Jewish communities of the Venetian provinces, with the exception of the community in Verona. On these issues, see Maurizio Bertolotti, "Giacobbe and Tullio Massarani," in *Portrait of Italian Jewish Life (1800s-1930s)*, eds. Tullia Catalan, Cristiana Facchini, *Quest. Issues in Contemporary History. Journal of Fondazione CDEC*, n. 8, November 2015, url. <http://www.quest-cdecjournal.it/focus.php?issue=8&id=364>; Berengo, "Gli ebrei nell'Italia asburgica," 75; Del Bianco Cotrozzi, *Il Collegio rabbinico di Padova*, 192.

<sup>64</sup> On Errera, see Lelio Della Torre, "Abraham Errera, à Venise," *Archives israélites*, June 1861: 329-34.

<sup>65</sup> Del Bianco Cotrozzi, *Il Collegio rabbinico di Padova*, 294-5.

<sup>66</sup> See, for example, Berengo, "Gli ebrei dell'Italia asburgica," 79; Bertolotti, introduction to *Drammi giovanili*, 15 e 71-2.

<sup>67</sup> On Consolo, see Maddalena Del Bianco Cotrozzi, "«Con zelo operosissimo e con illuminata sapienza». Il contributo di Giuseppe Consolo all'Ebraismo italiano dell'Ottocento, fra tradizione e modernità," *La Rassegna mensile di Israel*, 67/1-2 (2001): 215-42.

<sup>68</sup> On him, see "Rovigo. Cenni necrologici," *Educatore Israelita*, February 1873: 62.

<sup>69</sup> Del Bianco Cotrozzi, *Il Collegio rabbinico di Padova*, 291-2.

<sup>70</sup> For his views on the "Jewish question," see [Alessandro Cervesato,] "Sul divorzio," *Corriere israelitico*, December 1864: 260-62. On the debate on divorce and Jewish identity in nineteenth-century Italy, see Carlotta Ferrara Degli Uberti, *Fare gli ebrei italiani. Autorappresentazioni di una minoranza (1861-1918)*, (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2012), 161-77.



that the young woman would be indicted for theft primarily and the slander reduced to an ancillary crime, thus downplaying the importance of the mistreatment suffered by Ravenna and the need for redress. This scenario required an alternative strategy. The attorney gave a reassuring opinion, which ultimately proved to be correct.<sup>71</sup> The main charge in the trial was slander; this was a more severely punishable offense than theft by virtue of some codified aggravating circumstances. By suing for civil damages, the victim of the slander would play a central role in the trial, testifying about the circumstances and consequences of the “infernial accusation.” The lawyer also supported printing the trial proceedings, both so as to advance Ravenna’s public rehabilitation and in order to establish the relevance of the legal case as a whole. Castillero’s verdict would set a precedent that could prevent new blood libels in the future.

Reassured by Cervesato’s opinion,<sup>72</sup> Jewish leaders started work on the explanatory, or apologetic, part of the publication. The task of drafting the preliminary briefs, which would specify documentary sources and outline an overall strategy, was assigned to two learned experts with a solid background in Jewish history and religious lore.<sup>73</sup> Trained at the College in Padua, the Rabbi of Rovigo, Abram Mainster, was a Judaica scholar with a rigorous background in philology. Through his mentor, Luzzatto, he was also connected to the *Wissenschaft des Judenthums* movement.<sup>74</sup> New to Jewish learning but familiar with the literature of the *Wissenschaft des Judenthums*, the Venetian Samuele Romanin was a renowned historian, a believer in the “religion of the document,” which then dominated scholarly research, and the author of an innovative *Storia documentata di Venezia* that was just then being printed.<sup>75</sup> The director of the Rabbinical College, Consolo, was unable to collect at the College all of the documents pertaining to the blood libel which were in the communities’ possession;<sup>76</sup> the College was left out of this preparatory work as a result. Luzzatto

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<sup>71</sup> Alessandro Cervesato to Alessandro Levi, November 3, 1855, Oggetti generali, 504: Badia-Rovigo, ACEV.

<sup>72</sup> Jewish Community of Venice to Jewish Community of Rovigo, November 16, 1855, Oggetti generali, 504: Badia-Rovigo, ACEV; Jewish Community of Padua to Jewish Community of Rovigo, November 16, 1855, Jewish University of Rovigo, It/Rov 360: 7b, CAHJP.

<sup>73</sup> Biale, *Blood and Belief*, 169-70.

<sup>74</sup> On Mainster, see Del Bianco Cotrozzi, *Il Collegio rabbinico di Padova*, 257-8; Luzzatto Voghera, *Il prezzo dell’eguaglianza*, 148-9; Marco Di Giulio, “Resisting Modernity: Jewish Translations of Scripture and Rabbinic Literature in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Italy,” *Modern Judaism*, 35/2 (2015): 204-10.

<sup>75</sup> On Romanin, see Gino Benzoni, “Dal rimpianto alla ricostruzione storiografica,” in *Venezia e l’Austria*, eds. Gaetano Cozzi, Gino Benzoni, (Venezia: Marsilio 1999), 364-9; Filippo Maria Paladini, “Civilizzazione europea, storia italiana e rigenerazione di Venezia,” in *Ateneo Veneto 1812-2012. Un’istituzione per la città*, eds. Michele Gottardi, Marina Niero, Camillo Tonini, (Venice: Ateneo Veneto, 2012), 39-46.

<sup>76</sup> Jewish Community of Padua. “Letter to the Jewish Communities of the Lombardo-Venetian Kingdom,” November 16, 1855, Oggetti generali, 504: Badia-Rovigo, ACEV. For a negative response, see Jewish Community of Mantua, “Protocol,” 608: 540/1855, Archive of the Jewish

was instrumental in other ways, giving Mainster bibliographical leads<sup>77</sup> and inspiring the research conducted by Romanin, to whom he was connected by feelings of esteem and friendship.

The briefs provided the Jewish leadership with essential material for the refutation. Mainster's draft added a preliminary documentary basis. Studying two polemical writings published in connection with the Damascus affair, one by the Parisian lawyer, Alphonse Pinède, and the other by the founder of *Wissenschaft*, Leopold Zunz,<sup>78</sup> had allowed him to put together a heterogeneous textual corpus to demonstrate that Jews could not possibly be involved in ritual murder.<sup>79</sup> The Rabbi of Rovigo, albeit skeptical about the usefulness of the publication plan, suggested emphasizing the Christian tradition opposed to the blood libel, as in his opinion Catholics would accept this as more authoritative than Jewish sources of similar content. As we will show, the refutation was eventually based on a Protestant text and represented – in a manner consciously apologetic – the blood libel as a malicious deviation from Christian worldview.

Romanin's brief pursued a very different goal, but came to similar conclusions.<sup>80</sup> The Venetian scholar went on a research mission to Trent and produced a historical-documentary refutation of the “martyrdom” of the then blessed Simonino. The legend of the infant from Trent sacrificed by the Jews in 1475<sup>81</sup> had served as one of the main sources for legitimating the allegation of ritual murder. Its appeal derived from popular religious devotion, recognized by the Church, and had been revived by both erudite and popular hagiography, with increasing intensity, since the mid-eighteenth century.<sup>82</sup> The story of the “martyrdom” was perpetuated in liturgy and hagiographic narratives, arousing interest far beyond

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Community (Administrative Section), Mantua; Jewish Community of Venice to Jewish Community of Padua, November 27, 1855, Oggetti generali, 504: Badia-Rovigo, ACEV.

<sup>77</sup> Samuel David Luzzatto to Abram Mainster, January 23, 1856, Epistolario Luzzatto, X:2175, Centro Bibliografico UCEI, Rome.

<sup>78</sup> [Alphonse Pinède,] “Damas,” *Archives israélites de France*, July 1, 1840: 390-6; Leopold Zunz, “Damas. Parole de défense,” *Archives israélites de France*, August 1, September 1, 1840: 426-32, 471-7.

<sup>79</sup> Abram Mainster, “Brief, 26 January 1856,” Jewish University of Rovigo, IT/Rov 360:7b, CAHJP.

<sup>80</sup> Samuele Romanin, “Brief, 26 March 1856,” Jewish University of Rovigo, IT/Rov 360:7b, CAHJP.

<sup>81</sup> *Processi contro gli ebrei di Trento (1475-1478)*, eds. Anna Esposito, Diego Quagliani, vol. 1, (Padua: Cedam, 1990), and Vol. 2, *I processi alle donne*, (Padua: Cedam, 2009); Ronnie Po-Chia Hsia, *Trent 1475. Stories of a Ritual Murder Trial*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).

<sup>82</sup> Calìo, *La leggenda dell'ebreo assassino*, 108, 162. See also Cusumano, *Ebrei e accusa di omicidio rituale*; Marco Iacovella, “San Simonino da Trento. Un culto locale dall'antisemitismo politico al Concilio Vaticano II,” *Rivista di Storia del Cristianesimo*, 12/2 (2015): 381-404. For Simonino's legacy in Polish Catholicism, see Magda Teter, “The Sandomierz Paintings of Ritual Murder as *Lieux de Mémoire*,” in *Ritual Murder in Russia, Eastern Europe and Beyond. New Histories of an Old Accusation*, eds. Eugene M. Avrutin, Jonathan Deckel-Klein, Robert Weinberg, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017), 253-77.

the religious sphere, and entrenching the belief that Jews killed young Christians to feast on their blood in the Jewish Easter banquet ceremonies.<sup>83</sup> Its strong anti-Jewish potential was evident in propagandistic texts, and could easily become the cause of blood libels in the future. In 1824, the people of Mantua cried “ritual murder!” following the discovery of a missing child near a Jewish property; according to rumor, the girl’s wounded body resembled that of Simonino, bleeding “from innumerable punctures [...] made with a needle.”<sup>84</sup>

Romanin was the first Jewish intellectual to examine the documents of the “great trial” against the Jews of Trent, but he was not the first to deploy critical method in studying the case. His work continued a project conceived by Shadal during the Damascus crisis.<sup>85</sup> In 1840, addressing German-speaking Jews and based on a historical-philological critique of the available documents, the Hebraist from Padua had exposed the groundlessness of the hagiographic narratives of Simonino’s “martyrdom.”<sup>86</sup> The Venetian scholar, somewhat by contrast, analyzed historical-documentary evidence to refute the original source as reproduced in a seventeenth-century rendition of the documented proceedings involving six defendants.<sup>87</sup> The accusation of ritual murder had emerged, in his opinion, in a climate of anti-Jewish hatred promoted by Franciscan preaching. This brought the civil and ecclesiastical authorities together to search for a new saint who would attract a stream of devotees and pilgrims, bringing prestige and income to the city of Trent. Nonetheless, the Trent case, in the historian’s opinion, had to be omitted from the refutation “in order not to clash with the belief, which the Church has unfortunately made a religious tenet, in the alleged Saint.” Challenging Simonino’s beatitude would have provoked Catholic hostility, leading ecclesiastical authorities to call for censorship. The publication would then lose much of its persuasive impact, even if still permitted to circulate without restriction.

Endorsing Mainster’s and Romanin’s briefs, Jewish community leaders next needed to find an appropriate publishing house. Making choices of this kind had always posed a problem for the Jewish community; the issue remained unresolved as late as the end of the nineteenth century. Lombardo-Venetian Jewry under

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<sup>83</sup> See, for example, Emmanuele Antonio Cicogna, *Delle iscrizioni veneziane raccolte ed illustrate*, vol. 1, (Venice: presso Giuseppe Orlandelli, 1824), 89; vol. 4, (Venice: presso Giuseppe Picotti, 1834), 557.

<sup>84</sup> Giovanni Arrivabene, *Compendio cronologico-critico della storia di Mantova dalla sua fondazione ai nostri giorni*, vol. 6, ed. Renato Giusti, (Mantua: Accademia Virgiliana, 1975), 180.

<sup>85</sup> Samuel David Luzzatto to Samuele Romanin, August 9, 1855, *Epistolario italiano francese latino*, 826.

<sup>86</sup> S.D.L. “Nachrichten und Correspondenzen. Padua, 25. Sept.,” *Israelitische Annalen*, October 16, 1840: 353-4. For the Italian manuscript of the article, originally called *Intorno a San Simonin da Trento*, see Samuel David Luzzatto to Isaac Marcus Jost, 25 September 1840, *Epistolario italiano francese latino*, 380-5.

<sup>87</sup> Ms BCTI-1591, Biblioteca Comunale, Trent.

Austrian rule was typically reluctant to intervene publicly in political or religious questions that concerned them directly: the risks involved – censorship and clashing with hostile Catholic public opinion – were effective deterrents.<sup>88</sup> Refuting the blood libel – any attack on the Church excepted – was granted the political authorities' support, but it still had to face the prejudice of the surrounding milieu. Issuing a publication by the communities themselves appeared a doubtful course to pursue. The public would have greeted an "Israelitic" publication with "unpleasant polemics," exposing it to "religious bias that would make it significantly less credible."<sup>89</sup> This fear was shared by Jewish intellectuals and the leaders of the communities of Rovigo and Mantua; the apprehension in this latter seemed even stronger. Any statement by a Jewish apologist would be treated by the Catholic public as "always suspect" of being partial, as Shadal put it.<sup>90</sup>

In June 1856, Paride Zajotti (*junior*) approached Ravenna with the idea of publishing the trial's proceedings in his *Eco dei Tribunali*, thus putting the Jewish leaders out of their embarrassment. The periodical offered by the young Venetian journalist, a leading liberal publication, was a respected biweekly covering legal issues.<sup>91</sup> Ever since its founding, reports that appeared on its pages about hearings of well-known cases had attracted great public interest. Zajotti himself, a pro-emancipation Catholic, thought of the need to disprove the blood libel as a "question of civilization,"<sup>92</sup> while liberal-minded lawyers wanted to make their "academic" contribution as part of criticizing the inquisitorial system. The prejudice, as Rabbi Lattes had written on the same periodical's pages, was also fostered by uncritical adherence to outdated legal decisions and documents. The confessions extracted under torture from the Jews accused of ritual murder, however, satisfied the superstition of the town's magistrates, not the test of historical truth.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Luzzatto Voghera, *Il prezzo dell'eguaglianza*, 96; Piero Brunello, *Colpi di scena. La Rivoluzione del Quarantotto a Venezia*, (Sommacampagna: Cierre, 2018), 191-2, 412. For some examples of this attitude, see the documents kept in Oggetti generali, 503: Jabalot, ACEV. See also Abramo Errera to Samuele Salomone Olper, August 11, 1840, Samuele Salomone Olper to Abramo Errera, February 18, 1841, Persecuzioni, 75: Damasco, ACEV.

<sup>89</sup> Jewish Community of Rovigo to Jewish Community of Venice, June 27, 1856, Oggetti generali, 504: Badia-Rovigo, ACEV.

<sup>90</sup> Samuel David Luzzatto to Alessandro Manzoni, 24 March 1843, *Epistolario italiano francese latino*, 419.

<sup>91</sup> On Zajotti and his journal, see *In morte del comm. Avv. Paride Zajotti (9 giugno 1886)*, (Venice: Tipografia della Gazzetta di Venezia, 1887); Ettore Dezza, "Forme accusatorie e garanzie processuali nelle attese dei giuristi lombardo-veneti. Il primo anno de «L'Eco dei Tribunali» (1850-1851)," in *Processo penale e opinione pubblica in Italia tra Otto e Novecento*, eds. Floriana Colao, Luigi Lacché, Claudia Storti, (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2008), 31-75.

<sup>92</sup> Paride Zajotti to Jewish Community of Venice, July 10, 1856, Oggetti generali, 504: Badia-Rovigo, ACEV.

<sup>93</sup> "Varietà. L'accusa del sangue contro gli Ebrei," *Eco dei Tribunali. Sezione prima. Giornale di Giurisprudenza penale*, 3/299 (1853): 812-14.

Zajotti's proposal was given an enthusiastic welcome in Rovigo and Venice. Acting on Ravenna's behalf, the community of Venice gave Zajotti exclusive rights to publish all trial documents.<sup>94</sup> Beyond this, the Jewish communities of the Lombardo-Venetian Kingdom, pledged to buy five hundred copies of the publication.<sup>95</sup> The preliminary investigation conducted by the Court of Rovigo had drawn to a close in the meantime; the Castillero trial would not involve the instigator of the Badia affair. Protected by the young woman's staunch silence, this character was not going to appear as one of the accused.

### The Blood Libel on Trial

Castillero, charged with having slandered Ravenna, was tried in the Court of Rovigo during September 29-October 1, 1856. Following the proceedings, Zajotti returned to Venice, where he started printing the special supplement to the *Eco dei Tribunali*. This was published in fourteen biweekly installments later to be collected in a large-format booklet of fifty-six pages. The text was divided into two interconnected parts, the first a detailed report of the trial proceedings and the second made up of two refutations of the blood libel. One of these was fully referenced with extensive primary source citations. The exact number of copies printed is not known, but the publication must have been widely circulated, especially in the Veneto area. Advertised by the *Gazzetta di Venezia*, distribution was officially in the hands of local book markets in Veneto's provincial capitals, as well as in Milan and Trieste (but not Mantua).<sup>96</sup> In addition, Jewish communities promoting the publication distributed their five hundred copies among the Jews of the peninsula and in Europe beyond; the booklet, re-launched by the Jewish press outside the Lombardo-Venetian Kingdom,<sup>97</sup> was instrumental in augmenting the refutations arsenal available to European Jewry as a whole should more ritual murder charges appear in the future.<sup>98</sup>

As reported in the *Eco dei Tribunali*, the trial was conducted in a manner acceptable to the Jews, even if an occasional shadow was cast on certain points. The public in the courtroom found the proceedings captivating, but the trial itself

<sup>94</sup> Jewish Community of Venice to Paride Zajotti, June 30, 1856, Oggetti generali, 504: Badia-Rovigo, ACEV.

<sup>95</sup> Jewish Community of Venice to Paride Zajotti, 22 July 1856, Oggetti generali, 504: Badia-Rovigo, ACEV.

<sup>96</sup> "Avvisi diversi. L'IMPORTANTE PROCESSO," *Gazzetta di Venezia*, October 1, 1856.

<sup>97</sup> "Processo Giuditta Castillero," *Educatore Israelita*, October, November, 1856: 303-14, 364-69. For echoes of this in the French Jewish press, see "Chronique du mois," *Archives Israélites*, November, December, 1856: 649-50, 725; Madame [Niny Modona-]Olivetti, "Procès Judith Castillero," *Archives Israélites*, January 1, and February 1, 1857: 22-30, and 88-97.

<sup>98</sup> The tantalizing question of the booklet's availability in Italian and other European Jewish libraries and archives today requires further research.

did not yield any new relevant disclosures. The slanderer's guilt was established based on abundant evidence as well as her own confession; it was not put in question. The magistrates used the proceedings to address the only question still open, urging the accused to reveal the identity of her instigator. Blaming an unknown carter, Castilliero repeated a story that had already been disproved, and thus lost the disposition of the Court in favor of clemency. The court debate, as would often happen in Lombardo-Veneto, became a clash between "two opposing, if not antithetical, truths."<sup>99</sup> The recalcitrance of the accused, whom many saw as a naive victim of seasoned criminals, was greeted with general sympathy by those present, which was likely the overt expression of deeper seated feelings of anti-Jewish hostility. The trial also marked Ravenna's solemn rehabilitation, legally irrelevant but crucial for the economy of the publication. Having legally established his innocence, the entrepreneur, through a statement delivered by his lawyer Cervesato, withdrew from the proceedings and forgave his slanderer. After brief deliberation, the Court issued the sentence requested by the public prosecutor. Castilliero was sentenced to six years' imprisonment (*carcere duro*), confirmed on appeal, the term to be served in the Giudecca women's prison in Venice.<sup>100</sup>

In his introduction to the trial minutes, Zajotti invited the public to rethink the Badia affair without prejudice, focusing on "the facts" so as to arrive at the correct legal and historical-cultural conclusions.<sup>101</sup> Similar in form and structure to a document produced by a court registry, the text does not tell the story of an attempted ritual murder, but uncovers a conspiracy against an honest and well-respected Israelite. The architect of the crime was an unidentified Ravenna enemy, with personal ties to the accused, whom he was able to take advantage of to act upon his plan. Justice had initially been deceived by the conspirators, depriving Ravenna of his honor and freedom. But truth was soon reestablished, and eventually led to the release of the slandered victim and the arrest of the slanderer. Although she had confessed, Castilliero was still loyal to the criminal network she had acted at the behest of; she was not sincerely repentant, and deserved no pity. The Badia affair taught this lesson: Jews should not be attacked on the basis of slander and prejudice. Contributing to the hope of identifying the core fueling the conspiracy, Castilliero's conviction sent a warning to society as a whole: the State would not tolerate the recurrence of similar incidents.

The chronicling of the Badia affair formed the basis for the refutation of the ritual murder stereotype. To this end, two discussion pieces followed up on the court proceedings, constituting the second part of the publication. The first piece was

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<sup>99</sup> Povo, *La selva incantata*, 132.

<sup>100</sup> Court of Appeal, "Session, November 5, 1856," Tribunale generale d'Appello, Atti 3316, sez. IV, 632:1856, ASV. On the Giudecca women's prison, see Simona Trombetta, *Punizione e carità. Carceri femminili nell'Italia dell'Ottocento*, (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2004), 131-8, 189-95, 229, 269-70.

<sup>101</sup> PC, I.

composed in the form of a letter addressed to Zajotti; it contains a brief but well-documented counter-history of the blood libel by Cervesato.<sup>102</sup> He was presumably commissioned to compose the piece by the Jewish leadership of Rovigo, in keeping with its tradition of entrusting the writing of its appeals to Christian lawyers.<sup>103</sup> Despite there no longer being any valid legal prohibition in this regard, a defense of Judaism produced by a Catholic was believed, as discussed above, more effective vis-a-vis non-Jewish public opinion than one by a Jew. Jewish intellectuals, nonetheless, played a decisive role in the composition of the text, providing the lawyer with the documentary references needed and elucidating the strategy to be adopted based on the briefs by Mainster and Romanin. His argument was primarily indebted to one of the first systematic refutations of the blood libel ever produced by a Christian; the official text of this had been submitted to the Elector of Saxony, Frederick Augustus II, by the Theological Faculty of Leipzig in 1714.<sup>104</sup> Romanin had come upon this document in *Damascia*; it had probably also been known to Luzzatto even earlier.<sup>105</sup> It discredited ritual murder theories produced by European culture over the centuries as superstition. Synthetic and schematic, the text was chosen to be the mainstay of the documentary appendix and would be published on the pages of the *Eco* with the trial proceedings.<sup>106</sup> Rabbi Mainster is likely to have done the Italian translation, which was later edited by Luzzatto who, upon seeing it printed, experienced “great pleasure.”<sup>107</sup> This primary source enabled Cervesato to argue that the ritual murder accusations originated from superstition, fought by the Church and Christian authorities whenever it broke out in history, as the “unfortunate [...] bait of social upheaval.”

In the introduction to his piece, Cervesato, although satisfied with the outcome of the trial proceedings, reminded the reader that the “cardinal issue” of the Badia affair remained unresolved. As long as the motive as well as the identity of the “moral culprit” remained unknown, it would remain impossible to expose the case against Ravenna as an anti-Jewish conspiracy motivated by material gain. This hypothesis about the libel’s roots was inspired by an understanding of the libel’s function which was widespread among the Jewish intellectuals of the area. Less nuanced than Romanin, Luzzatto had voiced the same idea in explaining the Trent libel, borrowing this interpretation from early modern Jewish histories and memoirs. His main reference, in the aforementioned text of 1840, was the *Valley of Tears* (*Éméq ha-bacha*, 1558) by Yoseph ha-Cohen, a Hebrew manuscript

<sup>102</sup> Alessandro Cervesato, “[Letter to] Signor Redattore,” PC, 50-51.

<sup>103</sup> Kenneth Stow, *Jewish Life in Early Modern Rome: Challenge, Conversion, and Private Life*, (London – New York: Routledge, 2007), 242.

<sup>104</sup> Taradel, *L'accusa del sangue*, 179-83; Cusumano, *Ebrei e accusa di omicidio rituale*, 44-49.

<sup>105</sup> Löwenstein, *Damascia*, 352-62.

<sup>106</sup> “Parere della facoltà teologica di Lipsia dell’8 agosto 1714,” PC, 51-54.

<sup>107</sup> Samuel David Luzzatto to Abram Mainster, November 14, 1856, Epistolario Luzzatto, X:2191, Centro Bibliografico UCEI, Rome.

published by Meir Letteris in Vienna in 1852.<sup>108</sup> On the pages of the *Eco*, stating the conspiracy hypothesis was relegated to a legal document published in the appendix. In their investigation of a recent case from the vicinity of Aachen, the Prussian judiciary had withdrawn the charge against two Jews, and recorded the discovered motive of their slanderers: a sum of money which they stood to gain.<sup>109</sup>

Cervesato's text goes on to refute the two main theories of ritual murder which had been in circulation together with Castilliero's story. In the summer of 1855 the blood libel, according to the testimony of the rabbi and teacher at the Paduan College, Lelio Della Torre,<sup>110</sup> had led to attacks on Judaism based on ancient theological stereotypes enhanced by echoes of the Damascus affair and spread far and wide by ultramontane propagandistic literature. The Jews, according to claims often connected to these attacks, used Christian blood in ceremonies prescribed by their religion. The main target of this theory, although Della Torre did not explicitly mention it,<sup>111</sup> must have been the Talmud, a then unknown work which had been denigrated by the Church for centuries,<sup>112</sup> and which aroused the distrust of the surrounding non-Jewish milieu. Casting the Talmud as a normative religious text prescribing ritual murder, a central theme of the Damascus affair,<sup>113</sup> overlapped with the established notion of "Talmudism," according to which Judaism had departed from its biblical roots, re-founding its morality on anti-Christian hatred.<sup>114</sup> According to Della Torre, however, the main theory behind ritual murder charges was different, and had been assimilated by Italian Catholic culture through the echoes of the Damascus affair.<sup>115</sup> Its supporters did not impute

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<sup>108</sup> Alain Boyer, Maurice-Ruben Hayoun, *L'historiographie juive* (Paris: Presse Universitaire de France, 2001), 33-4. On another source familiar to Luzzatto, see Mauro Perani, "Un'accusa di omicidio rituale contro gli ebrei di Ragusa-Dubrovnik nel 1622: il Ma'aseh Yeshurun di Aharon ben David ha-Kohen, Venezia 1657," *Annali di Storia dell'Esegesi*, 16/2, (1999): 403-34.

<sup>109</sup> "Dichiarazione del R. Procuratore generale prussiano (21 marzo 1840)," in PC, 54-5. The declaration, originally published in the *Stadt-Aachener Zeitung* on March 22, 1840, was found in Löwenstein, *Damascia*, 312-5. On Prussian officers' skepticism about ritual murder, see Smith, *The Butcher's Tale*, 114.

<sup>110</sup> Lelio Della Torre "Ausführlicher Bericht über die Anklage von Badia," in Id., *Scritti sparsi. Preceduti da uno studio biografico intorno all'autore*, vol. 2, (Padova: Prosperini, 1908), 346-50. The article was originally published anonymously as "Wichtige Nachrichten. Aus Oberitalien, 31. Juli," *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums*, October, 1855: 436-7.

<sup>111</sup> See, for example, the unusual apologetic article by Carl Gutzkow, "Gli ebrei e il Talmud," *Corriere italiano*, July 24, 31 and August 1, 2, 1855.

<sup>112</sup> Fausto Parente, "La Chiesa e il Talmud," in *Gli ebrei in Italia. Storia d'Italia: Annale*, 11/1, ed. Corrado Vivanti, (Torino: Einaudi, 1996), 524-646.

<sup>113</sup> See Frankel, *The Damascus Affair*, 438-9; Taradel, *L'accusa del sangue*, 213-4; Kertzer, *I papi contro gli ebrei*, 109-11.

<sup>114</sup> Miccoli, "Santa Sede, questione ebraica e antisemitismo," 1385.

<sup>115</sup> Luigi Vincenzi, *Alcuni pensieri sopra gli atti di beneficenza del sommo pontefice papa Pio IX felicemente regnante verso gli ebrei di Roma, e sopra vari commenti manifestati al pubblico su questo proposito*, (Roma: Zampi, 1848), 57. On the theological origins of this theory, and on its fortune in the context of the Damascus affair, see Frankel, *The Damascus Affair*, 265; Ronnie Po-Chia Hsia,



the “bloody ceremonies” to all Jews, but to a “secret sect” that had deviated from Judaism’s religious principles and was unknown to most of its coreligionists. The sect’s members supposedly practiced human sacrifice in deference to an esoteric tradition taken over from idolaters in antiquity, then charging the practice with anti-Christian meanings during the Middle Ages. In the absence of a clear description of the sect, the theory lent itself to elastic application, open also to magical-witchcraft interpretations of the use of Christians’ blood.<sup>116</sup> The images that emerged from this theory, in the worldview of the upper urban classes of the area, gave it a further appearance of plausibility. The survival of “primitivism” in an otherwise “civilized” society seemed proven by the continued existence of rural lifestyles structured by archaic beliefs and practices routinely dismissed as “superstitious.”<sup>117</sup> It was therefore not surprising that the Jewish population, like the society around them, would include isolated groups of fanatics committed to criminal practices most typical of “savages.”

In mounting an attack against these claims, Cervesato relied heavily on the historical and religious information affirmed by the official statement by the Theological Faculty of Leipzig. The reference to the Mosaic laws of purity, which forbade ingestion and contact with blood, directly disproved the accounts of the bloodthirsty “rabbinical rite.” The hypothesis of the original laws’ subversion by later interpreters was contradicted by the Jewish “abhorrence” of blood, developed over centuries of observance and documented in contemporary Europe, as well. Thus, the Jews refused to eat meat not slaughtered according to ritual *shechitah* procedure, for fear of being contaminated by its blood residues.<sup>118</sup> The lawyer went on to refute the secret sect theory, arguing that no historical basis could be adduced for the claim of the Jews’ having assimilated the practice of human sacrifice. The blood libel as a ploy based on using trumped up charges, had appeared in the late ancient period, striking, as Tertullian wrote, the first Christians.<sup>119</sup> The absence of any suspicions about the Jews, in the context of a bitter political-religious struggle, proved their original non-involvement in the

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*The Myth of Ritual Murder. Jews and Magic in Reformation Germany*, (New Haven – London: Yale University Press, 1988), 128.

<sup>116</sup> On the stereotype of the Jewish sorcerer, see Marina Caffiero, *Legami pericolosi. Ebrei e cristiani tra eresia, libri proibiti e stregoneria*, (Turin: Einaudi, 2013).

<sup>117</sup> Piero Brunello, *Ribelli, questuanti e banditi. Proteste contadine in Veneto e in Friuli 1814-1866*, (Sommampagna: Cierre, 2012), 212.

<sup>118</sup> On this argument, see Biale, *Blood and Belief*, 127. It should also be noted that, in his *Dissertazioni di polizia medica del Pentateuco* (1787-90), the Jewish physician Benedetto Frizzi from Ostiano constructs a medical interpretation of ritual *shechitah*, which he uses to defend Judaism, Lois Dubin, “Una corda a tre capi: cura, apologetica e critica nell’opera di Benedetto Frizzi,” in *Benedetto Frizzi*, 26-36.

<sup>119</sup> Tertulliano, *Apologia del cristianesimo*, (Milano: Rizzoli, 2012), 38. On this point, crucial in connection with Jewish self-defense against blood libels throughout history, see Facchini, *Infamanti dicerie*, 75-81.

practice.<sup>120</sup> The accusation, once Christians had been cleared, rebounded on the Jews only in the thirteenth century.<sup>121</sup> Cervesato argued it was a far-fetched connection, considering the Jews' political predicament in medieval Christian Europe. Reduced to impotence, the Jews would have paid a heavy price had they really ever challenged Christian society in this way: they would have been deprived of the "only social protection" they had – the laws of tolerance – and de facto condemned to extinction. The genesis of the anti-Jewish ritual murder charge was explained, as hypothesized by the Saxon theologians, as a byproduct of the political-religious fanaticism fueled by the Crusades. The monks and the opportunists who had devised the blood libel against the Jews wanted to satisfy their lust for power and wealth, fighting a sort of parallel anti-Jewish crusade of their own. Invoking the pogroms of the Rhine and Moselle valleys, the lawyer recalled the Church's defense of the Jews, well known to an audience familiar with the romantic rediscovery of the Crusades.<sup>122</sup> Catholic culture glorified this as a shining example of Christian charity, while typically did not question the accusation of ritual murder.<sup>123</sup> By contrast with this, Cervesato emphasized the struggle of the ecclesiastical authorities against the "senseless slander," describing this as a rational choice documented by a long series of papal pronouncements. According to him, the position of the medieval popes had been adopted by the civil authorities, uniting them in the defense of the laws of tolerance in the face of the periodic re-emergence of the accusation. In his conclusion, Cervesato urged the legal authorities to bring to justice the "occult engine" of the Badia affair, the cause of a temporary relapse into barbarity of a "civilization" that now considered Jews and Christians "children [almost] of a single family."

In the second and final commentarial piece, Zajotti refuted the blood libel from a "legal" perspective with extensive historical and cultural repercussions.<sup>124</sup> The journalist reconstructed the developments leading to Ravenna's "luminous" acquittal, and then polemically wondered what the outcome would have been had the legal authorities worked with the "Inquisition's system." In this case, defending the accused would turn into more than just a legal problem. Since the late eighteenth century, criticism of torture had been linked to the Enlightenment's struggle against superstition, relegating beliefs in constructs such

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<sup>120</sup> For a different refutation strategy, see Samuel David Luzzatto, *Il Giudaismo illustrato nella sua teorica, nella sua storia e nella sua letteratura*, vol. I, (Padua: Bianchi, 1848): IV, II.

<sup>121</sup> According to the Declaration by the Theological Faculty of Leipzig, Cervesato turns out to be wrong; on the origins of the blood libel in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, see Taradel, *L'accusa del sangue*, 21.

<sup>122</sup> Charles Tyerman, *L'invenzione delle Crociate*, (Turin: Einaudi, 2000).

<sup>123</sup> Giuseppe Francesco Michaud, "GI'Israeliti nel tempo delle Crociate," in Id., *Storia delle Crociate. Prima edizione veneta sopra la sesta francese*, vol. 4, (Venezia: Tommaso Fontana, 1847), 372. See also Lodovico Menin, *Il costume di tutte le nazioni e di tutti i tempi descritto ed illustrato*, vol. 3: *Costume moderno*, (Padua: Società editrice co' tipi della Minerva, 1843), 7; Vincenzi, *Alcuni pensieri*, 57, 66, 108.

<sup>124</sup> P.Z., ["Conclusioni"], PC, 55.

as witchcraft and pestiferous unguents to a past both “barbaric” and irrational.<sup>125</sup> Shortly prior to this time, the topic had been taken up by Alessandro Manzoni in his acclaimed *Storia della colonna infame* (1840/42), a critical reconstruction of the 1630-31 trial against the Milanese men accused of intentionally spreading the plague through the use of unguents (*untori*). In his account, the Lombard writer had delegitimized the “infernal” condemnation of the defendants: their crime, to which they had confessed under brutal torture, existed only in the magistrates’ minds overwhelmed by “passion” and “prejudice.” In nineteenth-century Italy, criticism of torture, though present in some Jewish writing in defense of Judaism,<sup>126</sup> does not seem to have been systematically relied upon by non-Jewish writers rejecting the blood libel.<sup>127</sup> This omission, openly hostile in the case of Manzoni,<sup>128</sup> left room for uncritical acceptance of older legal sources along with undisguised anti-Jewish propaganda.<sup>129</sup> In the Veneto area, the most dangerous, deemed authoritative, and widely accepted project serving this end was the recent work of a Venetian scholar and priest. In 1853, Giuseppe Cappelletti, in an installment of his *Storia della Repubblica di Venezia*, had summarized his view of local Jewry – a religious, moral, and social “pestiferous infection” of the *Serenissima* – by accusing them of ritual murder.<sup>130</sup> The “evidence” consisted of the conviction of three Jews from Portobuffolè, burned at the stake in Piazza San Marco in 1480.<sup>131</sup> Although he did not directly attack Cappelletti, Zajotti exposed his type of account, criticizing its ahistorical use of primary sources. His proof was based on an imagined trial against Ravenna held according to inquisitorial procedure. The deposition of Castillero, although far-fetched, was supported by sufficient evidence to resort to the use of torture. In what followed, the magistrates, faced with Ravenna’s denial, would have “placed him on the rack.” Then the “progressive increase in martyrdom,” as in the situation in 1840 in Damascus, would have forced him to yield, confessing to the crime he was accused of. His conviction, however, would not have proven his guilt, nor produced any revelation about his religious tradition. Thanks to the legal safeguards, Ravenna had instead proved his innocence, persuading magistrates and even the most obstinate observers. The Badia affair thus had “immense historical significance,” as it invalidated in one swoop all the convictions ever obtained by torture from Jews accused of ritual murder.

<sup>125</sup> Paolo Preto, *Epidemia, paura e politica nell’Italia moderna*, (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 1987), 105-8.

<sup>126</sup> Facchini, *Infamanti dicerie*, 90-94.

<sup>127</sup> For remarks on this, see Luigi Maffoni, *Origine delle interdizioni israelitiche e dannosi effetti dalle medesime derivanti*, (Turin: Mussano, 1847), 32; “Inghilterra. Adunanza di banchieri per provveder agli Ebrei di Damasco,” *Gazzetta privilegiata di Venezia*, July 16, 1840.

<sup>128</sup> Luzzatto Voghera, *Il prezzo dell’eguaglianza*, 92.

<sup>129</sup> Calò, *La leggenda dell’ebreo assassino*, 138-9, 155.

<sup>130</sup> Giuseppe Cappelletti, *Storia della Repubblica di Venezia dal suo principio sino al giorno d’oggi*, vol. 9, (Venezia: Antonelli, 1855), 120, 135, 155. On Cappelletti and his anti-Semitism, see Benzoni, *Dal rimpianto alla ricostruzione storiografica*, 362-3; D’Antonio, *La società udinese e gli ebrei*, 204-7.

<sup>131</sup> On that late medieval case, see Salomon Radzik, *Portobuffolè* (Florence: Giuntina, 1984).

## Useful Knowledge?

Publicizing the proceedings of the Castilliero trial, a satisfying enterprise for the Jewish communities of the land with the exception of Mantua,<sup>132</sup> had a positive impact in the short term. The publication's reception helped to change the attitude of the political authorities, endowing Lombardo-Venetian Jewry with effective defense tools against the blood libel. In the years following, state authorities would consider the libel, as the unusual case of Lendinara (1860) shows, a superstitious, defamatory and dangerous belief that had to be "eradicated" from the "plebs" through public refutation and the summary legal conviction of its promoters.<sup>133</sup> The publication also had an impact, albeit a limited one, on prejudice of dominant cultures. In the decades immediately before and after Italy's unification, the booklet – together with other apologetic writings – forced some propagandists of the ritual murder accusation publicly to retract their statements.<sup>134</sup> Its persuasive power was, however, nullified by clerical propaganda which, amid the turbulence of the *fin-de-siècle*, made the blood libel a pillar of its campaign to demonize Judaism, the "hidden instigator" of the abhorrent secularizing modernity.<sup>135</sup> The text was mentioned in some later Jewish apologetic writings,<sup>136</sup> but was more often ignored and sometimes even ridiculed by polemicists. The "truth" about ritual murder, wrote a Paduan clerical daily in the period of the debates surrounding the Beilis trial, had been revealed by the magistrates of Damascus; those of Rovigo had only unmasked the "trick" of a young peasant girl.<sup>137</sup> Rational argumentation, carried out in an apologetic key, was finally overwhelmed by a far more powerful mythologizing machine.

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<sup>132</sup> Jewish Community of Mantua to Jewish Community of Rovigo, February 18 1857, ACEV 504, Oggetti generali: Badia-Rovigo.

<sup>133</sup> Documents on the Lendinara case are kept in Delegazione provinciale di Rovigo, protocolli riservati 1860:122, Archivio di Stato di Rovigo. On this episode, see also De Cesaris, *Pro Judaeis*, 158-61.

<sup>134</sup> See, for example, Giuseppe Levi to the Jewish Community of Venice, April 22, 1857, Oggetti generali, 504: Badia-Rovigo, ACEV.

<sup>135</sup> Ruggero Taradel, Barbara Raggi, *La segregazione amichevole. «La Civiltà Cattolica» e la questione ebraica 1850-1945*, (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1999), 22-6, 45-6; Taradel, *L'accusa del sangue*, 214-7.

<sup>136</sup> Corrado Guidetti, *Pro Judaeis. Riflessioni e documenti*, (Turin: Roux e Favale, 1884), 151, 333-51. On this author, a journalist close to the Jewish Community of Padua, see Luzzatto Voghera, *Il prezzo dell'eguaglianza*, 45.

<sup>137</sup> G.M., "Ancora sul delitto rituale degli ebrei. Ad un avvocato che ignora troppe cose," *La Libertà. Quotidiano cattolico*, November 7, 1913. The article is a polemicized reply to the lawyer Aronne De Benedetti, author of a journalistic refutation of the blood libel. See Aronne De Benedetti, "Lettere al giornale "Il lavoro." A proposito pel "delitto rituale" a Kiev," in Id., *Conferenze. Epistole*, (Genova: Tipografia Sociale, 1915), 26-7. On the Beilis affair, see Robert Weinberg, *Blood Libel in Late Imperial Russia. The Ritual Murder Trial of Mendel Beilis*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014).

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*This article was translated from Italian by Federico Damonte.*

**How to quote this article:**

Emanuele D’Antonio, “*Jewish Self-Defense against the Blood Libel in Mid-Nineteenth Century Italy: The Badia Affair and Proceedings of the Castilliero Trial (1855-56)*,” in *Miscellanea 2019*, eds. Quest Editorial Staff, *Quest. Issues in Contemporary Jewish History. Journal of Fondazione CDEC*, n. 14 December 2018

*url:* [www.quest-cdecjournal.it/focus.php?id=405](http://www.quest-cdecjournal.it/focus.php?id=405)

*Sonia Zanier*

**The Representations of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict in the Italian New Left's  
Periodicals of the 1970s**

*by Sonia Zanier*

**Abstract**

*This article presents and discusses the representations of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict produced in Italy during the long 1970s by the most important organizations of the New Left. The goal is to reconstruct the often radical and prejudiced discourses of the extreme left, highlighting how in the middle of the Seventies we can identify a break in the ways in which the Italian New Left chose to narrate and interpret the Middle Eastern political scenario.*

**Introduction**

**The First Half of the Seventies**

**“Palestinian resistance” and “proletarian revolution”**

**The Second Half of the Seventies**

**Conclusions**

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## Introduction

The goal of this study is to identify and discuss the representations of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict produced in Italy during the Seventies by the New Left.<sup>1</sup> The phrase refers to a set of left-wing movements, groups and political parties that developed outside of, and in opposition to, traditional left-wing parties, which they accused of ideological revisionism, political moderatism and organizational bureaucracy. The objective is to provide an interpretation that accounts for the plurality of points of view that have characterized the analyses - often radical and prejudiced - of the New Left regarding the Middle Eastern conflict, highlighting, rather than the causes of the phenomenon, the different forms of discursive production. At the same time, this investigation - which is not exhaustive and follows a path already partly explored by historians<sup>2</sup> - intends to show how in the middle of that decade we can notice a break in the way in which the extreme left decided to tell and interpret events in the Middle East. Finally, we will try to pin down those analyses that took form in the Seventies and still represent an element of political identification for that part of the left that is ideologically critical of Israel.

Chronologically, this article focuses on the period 1968-1981, a choice that reflects the peculiar Italian political context. This time frame is delimited on one side by the youth protests of 1968 and the birth of numerous New Left groups. On the

<sup>1</sup> Other labels will also be used, such as “extraparliamentary left” and “extreme left;” on the legitimacy of these expressions see: Gabriele Donato, *“La lotta è armata.” Estrema sinistra e violenza: gli anni dell'apprendistato 1969-1972*, (Trieste: Irsml Fvg, 2012), 16-17.

<sup>2</sup> Arturo Marzano, “Il mito della Palestina nell'immaginario della sinistra extraparlamentare italiana,” *Italia contemporanea*, 280 (2016); Arturo Marzano, Guri Schwarz, *Attentato alla sinagoga. Roma, 9 ottobre 1982. Il conflitto israelo-palestinese e l'Italia*, (Rome: Viella, 2013). There are also several studies on the positions taken by the Italian Communist Party (PCI) since 1967: Luca Riccardi, *Il “problema Israele.” Diplomazia italiana e Pci di fronte allo Stato ebraico (1948-1973)*, (Milan: Guerini, 2006); Id., *L'internazionalismo difficile. La “diplomazia” del Pci e il Medio Oriente dalla crisi petrolifera alla caduta del muro di Berlino (1973-1989)*, (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2013); Valentino Baldacci, *1967. Comunisti e socialisti di fronte alla guerra dei sei giorni. La costruzione dell'immagine dello Stato d'Israele nella Sinistra italiana*, (Florence: Aska Edizioni, 2014); Gianmarco Santese, “Il Partito comunista italiano e la questione palestinese (1945-1956): ‘L'Unità’ e ‘Rinascita,’” *Mondo contemporaneo*, 2 (2007): 63-104. Other significant studies focus on the relationship between the left, Judaism and the Jewish state: ed. Mario Toscano, *Ebraismo, sionismo e antisemitismo nella stampa socialista italiana. Dalla fine dell'Ottocento agli anni sessanta*, (Venice: Marsilio, 2007); eds. Marcella Simoni, Arturo Marzano, *“Roma e Gerusalemme.” Israele nelle vita politica e culturale italiana (1949-2009)*, (Genova: ECIG, 2010); Matteo Di Figlia, *Israele e la sinistra. Gli ebrei nel dibattito pubblico italiano dal 1945 a oggi*, (Rome: Donzelli, 2012). The recent volume edited by Mario Toscano, *L'Italia racconta Israele, 1948-2018*, (Rome: Viella, 2018) also deserves to be mentioned; it offers an analysis of the evolution of the representation of the Jewish state by Italian culture, society and politics in the last seventy years. It must also be considered that the interconnected and partially overlapping issues of Left wing anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism have been the object of ample discussions by international historiography. Those contributions rarely even mention the Italian case. For the French case see Marcel Dreyfus, *L'Antisémitisme à gauche. Histoire d'un paradoxe, de 1830 à nos jours*, (Paris: Éditions La Découverte, 2009); for the German scenario cfr. Jeffrey Herf, *Undeclared Wars with Israel: East Germany and the West German Far Left, 1967-1989* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016). Attempts at offering a broad transnational framework, encompassing recent phenomena within a larger history, have been offered by the late Robert Wistrich; see at least Id., *A Lethal Obsession. Anti-Semitism from Antiquity to the Global Jihad*, (New York: Random House, 2010).

other hand we have the conclusion – in 1979 – of the national solidarity experience, during which the Italian Communist Party had offered its external support to the Government led by the Christian-Democrats; the development of a five-party neo-centrist alliance (1981); and finally the evident decline [*riflusso*] experienced by extreme left groups and movements.<sup>3</sup> The choice of defining the Seventies as the period between 1968 and 1981, however, also finds external motivations, that are linked to the Middle Eastern context. The West “discovered” the Palestinian armed struggle with the battle of Karameh in 1968.<sup>4</sup> Instead 1981 was the calmest year along the border between Israel and Lebanon, an area from which the largest number of terrorist actions had been launched by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). Shortly thereafter, in June 1982, the operation “Peace in Galilee” was launched, that was a watershed event in the relations between Israel and the West, and it greatly influenced the attitudes of the Italian Left.<sup>6</sup>

In this work we have examined the periodicals published by the most important organizations - in terms of both the distribution on national territory and number of members - of the extra-parliamentary left that emerged in the two-year period 1968-1969, i.e. *Servire il popolo* of the *Unione dei Comunisti Italiani, marxisti-leninisti - UCI* [Union of Italian Communists, Marxist-Leninists];<sup>7</sup> *Avanguardia Operaia*, *Quaderni di Avanguardia Operaia* and the *Quotidiano dei lavoratori* connected to the *Autonomia Operaia - AO* movement [Worker's Autonomy];<sup>8</sup> *Lotta Continua - LC* and *Potere Operaio - PO* of the respective and homonymous organizations;<sup>9</sup> and finally the daily *il manifesto*, produced by a group of radical communist intellectuals that had left the PCI [Italian Communist Party] after Pietro Ingrao's defeat at the 11th Party Congress in 1966.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>3</sup> On the years 1968-1969 see: Nicola Gallerano, “Il Sessantotto e la politica,” in *Il '68: l'evento e la storia*, ed. Pier Paolo Poggio, (Brescia: Annali della Fondazione Micheletti 1990); on the intermediate nature of the two-year period 1979-1981 see: Roberto Bellofiore, “I lunghi anni settanta. Crisi sociale e integrazione economica internazionale,” in *Le radici della crisi. L'Italia tra gli anni sessanta e settanta*, ed. Luca Baldissara (Rome: Carocci, 2001), 101.

<sup>4</sup> The battle of Karameh, between Palestinian armed groups and the Israeli army, though not very important from a military point of view, became a crucial point in the history of the Palestinian movement. Xavier Baron, *I Palestinesi. Genesi di una nazione*, (Milan: Baldini & Castoldi, 2002), 655-9.

<sup>5</sup> Marzano, “Il mito della Palestina,” 16.

<sup>6</sup> During the Second invasion of Lebanon there was a wide mobilization in defense of the Palestinian cause, as well as a widespread anti-Zionist hostility that took over even moderate public opinion and sometimes gave expression to petty anti-Semitism. The reader is referred to: Marzano, Schwarz, *Attentato alla sinagoga*; Marianna Scherini, “L'immagine di Israele nella stampa quotidiana italiana. La guerra del Libano (settembre 1982),” in “*Roma e Gerusalemme*,” 177-99; ed. Adriana Goldstaub, *La guerra nel Libano e l'opinione pubblica italiana*, (Milano: CDEC, 1983); Enzo Campelli, Roberta Cipollini, *Contro il seme di Abramo. Indagine sull'antisemitismo a Roma*, (Milan: Angeli, 1984).

<sup>7</sup> On the UCI see Dolores Negrello, *A pugno chiuso. Il partito comunista padovano dal biennio rosso alla stagione dei movimenti*, (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2000), 171-3.

<sup>8</sup> On AO see Angelo Ventrone, *Vogliamo tutto. Perché due generazioni hanno creduto nella rivoluzione 1960-1988*, (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 2012).

<sup>9</sup> On LC the reader is referred to Luigi Bobbio, *Storia di Lotta continua*, (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1988); on PO Aldo Grandi, *La generazione degli anni perduti: storie di Potere Operaio*, (Turin: Einaudi, 2003).

<sup>10</sup> On the history of the group of *il manifesto* see: Aldo Garzia, *Da Natta a Natta. Storia del Manifesto e del Pdup*, (Bari: Dedalo, 1985).



### The First Half of the Seventies

Although the various groups, and related periodicals, of the New Left had very different political perspectives, in the case of the Middle Eastern conflict there was a repertoire of positions common to all groups and movements, and only partly subject to different interpretative nuances. The central element of this “substratum” of echoes and shared themes was anti-imperialism:<sup>11</sup> the Arab-Israeli conflict was interpreted as a battle between imperialism and anti-imperialism; the former was represented by the two superpowers, and America’s ally Israel, the second was the expression of revolutionary forces, especially the ‘Resistance’ and the Palestinian proletariat.

The paradigm of the anti-imperialist struggle imposed an extremely schematic understanding of the reality and international role of Israel: the Jewish state was, according to the most common definition, the “bridgehead”<sup>12</sup> of the US superpower, a “puppet” state,<sup>13</sup> forced by its very nature to play the role of the “watchdog”<sup>14</sup> in the strategic Middle Eastern region. Thus it was a capitalist, sub-imperialist, racist, fascist country, whose artificial birth and existence could only be supported by a war-mongering and oppressive rhetoric.

The statements on the “unnatural” nature of Israel were closely linked to the debate on Zionism. All the periodicals studied here held that Zionism was a racist ideology, a clear manifestation of European colonialism and nationalism, guilty of the Arabs’ expulsion from their lands. The Zionists were considered guilty of the expulsion of the Palestinians, as well as of practicing or defending Israel’s imperialist policy in the Middle East. In that context, the word “Zionism” collected in a single definition the characteristics that made Israel a sub-imperialist state - hence capitalist, racist, fascist, war-mongering - or was synonymous with one of them.

During the early Seventies the New Left was then monopolized by a marked and polarized revolutionary rhetoric aimed at extolling a process that was expected to spread in the Middle East through its struggle against a single - and triple - enemy: “imperialism, Zionism and Arab reactionary forces.”<sup>15</sup>

This last label referred to those oppressive Arab regimes that were bound to stand against the Arab masses in order to protect their own interests, thus hindering the revolutionary and national liberation processes. The periodicals taken into consideration, however, tended to incorporate in this “sphere of evil” not only those Arab states they considered “feudal remnants,” such as Hashemite Jordan, but also those governments that were the expression of the “progressive” bourgeoisie, which were also considered an obstacle to the revolutionary

<sup>11</sup> Marzano, “Il mito della Palestina,” 16.

<sup>12</sup> “La difficile resistenza dei compagni palestinesi,” *Avanguardia Operaia*, March 25, 1972, “Dalla lotta nazionale palestinese verso la guerra di classe per il socialismo nel mondo arabo in un processo di rivoluzione ininterrotta,” *Quaderni di Avanguardia Operaia*, 1970.

<sup>13</sup> “Vittoria dei palestinesi,” *Servire il Popolo*, October 3, 1970.

<sup>14</sup> “Aggressione USA,” *Servire il Popolo*, September 26, 1970.

<sup>15</sup> “Libano: dalla reazione nazionale alla nazione araba,” *Potere Operaio*, October 30, 1969.

struggles for the emancipation of peoples. On the contrary, such regimes were valued by the PCI as anti-imperialist engines. The judgment on the various Third World governments did not depend, in fact, on whether they belonged to the Soviet sphere - which in their view also had an imperialist character, complementary to that of the United States - or to a non-aligned position, which they often viewed as sterile. The main difference was found in the ability to adopt a revolutionary Marxist strategy that could take into consideration and implement the armed struggle. Hence the condemnation of Nasser's regime in Egypt, even if he was the leader of the Arab Socialist Union, hence the sometimes marked hostility against Yasser Arafat. Although the condemnation of the leader of *Al Fatah* was not constant throughout the Seventies, nor was it so clear-cut for all the organizations of the extreme left, most of them decided to support more markedly Marxist groups, such as the PFLP (Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine) and the PDFLP (Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine).

### **“Palestinian resistance” and “proletarian revolution”**

The “Palestinian resistance movement” was inserted by the New Left into an interpretative paradigm that tended to compare situations that were geographically, politically and socially very distant, but were thought to share the evident emergence of an imperialist and fascist oppression; different international events also acquired significance because, according to the groups to the left of the PCI, there was a link and profound affinity between anti-imperialist struggles in the Third World and the class struggle against factory owners in the West. Support for the struggles in the Third World was accompanied by a strong identification with them. Guevara's watchwords “Create 2, 3, many Vietnams”<sup>16</sup> were the guiding principle of the different groups of the New Left. In March 1971 *Potere Operaio*, in an article titled “We, the vietcong,” repeated how, despite the laxity of the Communist Party, the revolution could be carried out in Italy as well

Italy is today at an extremely weak point [...] there are all the objective conditions, and a part of the subjective ones, for the opening, here and today, of the revolutionary process. The facts speak clearly. And the facts tell us that today Italy is already our Vietnam.<sup>17</sup>

The reference to Vietnam was certainly not casual; as pointed out by Peppino Ortoleva, the struggle of the Vietnamese people became for the extreme left a moral example that transcended national, historical and geographical reality,<sup>18</sup> a prototype for the daily battles at the university, in the factory or in the Country at large. The conflict in Indochina became the yardstick used to measure other conflicts: a concrete example through which to evaluate other liberation movements and their strategies, from different African contexts, to the *foquista*

<sup>16</sup> “Creare 2, 3, molti Vietnam,” *Lotta Continua*, October 1, 1970.

<sup>17</sup> “Noi, i vietcong,” *Potere Operaio*, March 5-19, 1971.

<sup>18</sup> Peppino Ortoleva, *Saggio sui movimenti del 1968 in Europa e in America*, (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1988), 50-2.

or the Tupamaros' guerilla in South America, to the urban guerilla in Ireland, to that of the Palestinian *fedayeen*.

Arturo Marzano has pointed out that as early as 1968-1969, with the “discovery” of the Palestinian struggle, began the “journey that saw Palestine progressively become the new Vietnam” in the eyes of the leftist militants.<sup>19</sup> The parallelism arose from explicit comparisons, from the use of a similar language to describe the two different scenarios, and from analogous iconographic depictions of the protagonists. Vietcong and *fedayeen* were portrayed in cartoons, drawings and photographs as guerrilla fighters, each with their own typical headgear and holding the Kalashnikov, the weapon *par excellence* of Third World liberation struggles. Of course, this analogy did not exclude others, but gradually, thanks also to the image that the Palestinians themselves gave of their own struggle,<sup>20</sup> it certainly became a privileged symmetry. In September 1972 *Lotta Continua* inserted this parallelism in the exaltation of the heroic popular struggle that the Palestinians had been able to oppose to the Israeli army:

The struggle of Palestinian guerrilla fighters has included men, women and even children from refugee camps, who often attack their exterminators with bare hands, stones, sticks. In the history book of this area tormented by imperialism, therefore, a new page of heroism and irreducible struggle for the life of a people has been inserted in front of that of the Israeli infamy, a page that for the proletarians and the oppressed of the world, next to Vietnam, is the symbol of a historical certainty: the will of liberation.<sup>21</sup>

The rhetoric of the people's war assisted by an elite was in some ways similar to the one that at the beginning of the Seventies still dominated the narrative on the Italian anti-fascist Resistance. In fact, the New Left often interpreted its own battles and contemporary national liberation movements through the filter of the memory of the Resistance: the partisan war against Nazi-fascism became a fundamental symbolic and historical reference point that provided legitimacy to its own anti-authoritarian action and to that of resistance movements in other countries. The struggles against foreign armies or despotic regimes were often interpreted as specific stages of a single great international emancipation movement that was conceived as the logical prosecution of the anti-fascist struggle of the 1940s.

Around these interpretative keys an ideological imaginary was established: the Vietcong and the *fedayeen* could be portrayed as the Italian partisans of 1943-45,

<sup>19</sup> Marzano, “Il mito della Palestina,” 25.

<sup>20</sup> It was the Palestinians themselves that promoted the comparison with the Vietcong. The symmetry between the Middle Eastern and the Vietnamese scenario came to Italy from the Arab world, favored by the presence on the Italian territory of Palestinian organizations, especially the students' organization, and in close relationship with movements and groups of the New Left. On the image promoted by the “Palestinian Resistance” see T. Chamberlin, *The Global Offensive: The United States, the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Making of the Post-Cold War Order*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012). On the activity of Palestinian students in Italy and in particular on the General Union of Palestinian Students (Gups), see Marzano, “Il mito della Palestina,” 25.

<sup>21</sup> “Il terrorismo israeliano e l'eroismo palestinese,” *Lotta Continua*, September 19, 1972.

the United States' intervention in Vietnam and the Israeli policies in the Middle East could be conceived as similar to Nazi expansionism during the Second World War, and very different struggles could be unified under the common category of "resistance." This mixture of themes and identities emerges clearly from this passage taken from *Lotta Continua*, describing the Palestinian response to Israeli attacks in Lebanon in the aftermath of the massacre of eleven Israeli athletes at the Olympic Games in Munich:

The Israeli aggression against Lebanon has been carried out with the classic methods of Hitler's invasions: destruction and killing of all that is encountered during the advance. [...] Hundreds of houses have been blown up, often with the families inside; whole villages have been burnt and razed to the ground; dozens of people have been shot; refugee camps have been bombed with napalm, burning old people, women, children. [...] They have destroyed the poor tents of those refugees who in their lives had to suffer three times (in '48, '56 and '67) the ferocity of the Zionist genocide and the tragedy of the escape, of the loss of everything, of the loss of family members. It has not yet been possible to make an exact calculation of the civilian victims of this Nazi enterprise. [...] Another element of the invasion [...] is the heroism of the Palestinian *fedayeen* who have opposed the advance of the fascist army step by step, fighting with the force of justice and despair, inflicting heavy losses on the aggressor, which the Tel Aviv liars will never admit. The cornerstone of the resistance has come from the Kalashnikovs of the *fedayeen*, firing from windows, doors, roofs, bushes, caves, hills; from their bazookas; from their mines.<sup>22</sup>

If the *fedayeen* were the new partisans and their struggle promoted a people's war of liberation, then the Zionists, just like the Americans in Vietnam, were the new Nazis. This parallelism often showed up in simple labels - the "Nazi retaliation in Israel,"<sup>23</sup> "Dayan's SS,"<sup>24</sup> "Israel's Hitlerian blitz"<sup>25</sup> - but sometimes it lingered on in more detailed accounts, where the comparison between Zionist and Nazi violence was spelled out. Among the numerous examples of this discursive rhetoric, perhaps the most complete and radical was produced by *Servire il popolo* after the Munich terror attack and the Israeli government's decision to strike some PLO bases in Lebanon:

The school from which Dayan, Golda Meir, and the other Zionists come - stated the Maoist periodical - has a name: Nazi-fascism. The practice of the SS was: 10 Italians for every fallen German. At Marzabotto, at the Fosse Ardeatine, the SS slaughtered defenseless and innocent civilians as "retaliation." To avenge the eleven Israeli athletes that he himself has killed in Munich, he has ordered a "retaliation" against hundreds of unarmed civilians. The Zionists have surpassed the master: they are now

<sup>22</sup> "Il terrorismo israeliano e l'eroismo palestinese." The passage is also quoted in Marzano, Schwarz, *Attentato alla sinagoga*, 82.

<sup>23</sup> "Centinaia le vittime della rappresaglia nazista in Israele," *Lotta Continua*, September 12, 1972.

<sup>24</sup> "Le SS di Dayan sbarcano nella notte a Beirut. Dirigenti palestinesi assassinati nelle loro case sotto gli occhi dei familiari," *il manifesto*, April 11, 1973.

<sup>25</sup> "Rivoluzione e controrivoluzione in Medio Oriente," *Il Giornale di Avanguardia Operaia*, September-October, 1972.

at the level of Nixon, their arms supplier. Hitler practiced the doctrine of the extermination of the nations that were considered inferior. Dayan and Golda Meir are anxious to apply the solution of collective extermination to the two and a half million Palestinian Arabs. When the SS could not find the partisans, they killed the women at the front door. The Israelis, who cannot find the *fedayeen*, bomb the villages with napalm, with women and children inside. [...] Dayan and the Zionists accuse the Arab terrorists, complain of being oppressed and defenseless. But they are the only terrorists, with the support of US imperialism.<sup>26</sup>

Among the organizations studied here it was the *Unione dei Comunisti Italiani* that fully married the Palestinian cause, presenting the armed struggle of the *fedayeen* through a grandiose narrative, devoid of any concern for the most radical war conduct. The other organizations of the New Left never went as far as to grant an unconditional support for the Palestinian resistance: *Avanguardia Operaia* supported fully only the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, led by Nayef Hawatmeh, insisting on the need for the “Resistance” to involve the masses towards a proletarian revolution of the whole Middle East; *Potere Operaio* relied almost exclusively on this perspective, and criticized the bourgeois character of Al Fatah, but also the unpreparedness of the various Fronts; *Lotta Continua* also considered Arafat excessively inclined towards “solutions of compromise and renunciation,”<sup>27</sup> and it wondered about the inability of the resistance’s vanguard to involve the masses; the group of *il manifesto*, which did not refuse *a priori* to support *Al Fatah*, but it also noted the limits and the unpreparedness of a ‘Resistance’ that often appeared immature.

The most important factor that prevented the New Left from supporting without hesitation the armed Palestinian struggle was represented by the terrorist acts that had repeatedly hit representatives of the Jewish state in Europe since 1968. Palestinian terrorism constituted one of the most difficult and ambiguous terrains that the new organizations to the left of the PCI had to face regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Terrorism was often judged counterproductive, the result of the exasperation and inexperience of the various armed organizations, far removed from what was instead supposed to be the only and definitive struggle: popular struggle on Middle Eastern land.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>26</sup> “Le bombe di Dayan fanno centinaia di vittime,” *Servire il Popolo*, September 16, 1972.

<sup>27</sup> “Nixon boia: ti aspettiamo alle presse,” *Lotta Continua*, October 1, 1970.

<sup>28</sup> The debate became fierce in 1972, when two Palestinian terrorist attacks took place within a few months, which made a deep impression on international public opinion and prompted extensive coverage in the press (on May 29, three members of the Japanese Red Army recruited by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine attacked the Lod airport of Tel Aviv, killing 26 people; a few months later, during the Munich Olympics, a Black September organization’s commando kidnapped eleven Israeli athletes and, after twenty hours of negotiations, the action concluded tragically at the airport of Fürstentfeldbruck with the death of all the hostages). While the attack in Tel Aviv was criticized as reckless and the result of the desperation of the Palestinian armed organizations, concerning Munich the positions were more nuanced: with the exception of *Lotta Continua*, in fact, according to which terrorism did not have legitimacy neither in Tel Aviv nor in Munich, as it was indistinctly deemed as counterproductive and the fruit of the critical situation in which the Resistance found itself, the other periodicals provided evaluations that made the responsibility of the kidnapping’s tragic conclusion fall on the Western powers, underlining how the attack had the primary objective of obtaining the release of Palestinian

However, these assessments did not tackle the problem of revolutionary violence, which instead found full legitimacy even in the Middle East. Both in the Third World and in the West, “violence [was believed to be] indispensable to regain that humanity that the oppressors had taken from the oppressed; in fact, the oppressed could be freed only in and through violence.”<sup>29</sup> The New Left’s Third-Worldism, in fact, did not extol the supposedly uncontaminated innocence of the oppressed in contrast with the violence of a colonizing West. Rather, the attention for Third World struggles was fueled in the first place by the energy that that area of the world seemed to emanate in the eyes of the extreme left. In those armed liberation struggles many militants thought they recognized the impulse for their own battles in the West:

Doing a wildcat strike - said *Lotta Continua* - is not like shooting. It is still much, much less. But the proletariat is the same everywhere: it has no country, it has no land, it has nothing [...]. We have learned a new word: *fedayeen*. We like the one we learned ten years ago: vietcong. We know that if we produce less, the *fedayeen* will be able to shoot more and more. We know that they will be able to shoot less if we produce more (as the masters want). We want the *fedayeen* to shoot more. We want to produce less. It’s the way we get to shoot sooner with them, too.<sup>30</sup>

Leaving aside the different opinions on Palestinian revolutionary violence, what all the periodicals shared was the accusation directed at Israel of being the one responsible, with its “dangerous terrorism, more serious, more cynical and less desperate,”<sup>31</sup> of the inevitable Palestinian reaction. If the *fedayeen*’s terrorist actions could appear inconsiderate to some, and the result of the exasperation induced by the Israelis, the violence perpetrated by the latter remained in any case unequalled.

*Potere Operaio* was among the few periodicals that avoided the discussion on Palestinian terrorism. In general, the periodical dealt less with Middle Eastern and foreign matters than the others studied here; PO was above all a place for debate and reflection on internal dynamics, especially the unity and prospects of the workers’ struggle.<sup>32</sup> However, the periodical of Toni Negri and Franco Piperno’s organization differed from other newspapers of the New Left also because it looked at the Middle Eastern conflict from a peculiar perspective. The emphasis was placed almost exclusively on the so-called proletarian revolution, that is, on that revolutionary process that should have involved Arabs and Jews united together towards the socialist future in the Middle East. The magazine

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fighters and not the indiscriminate slaughter of the athletes. “Una guerra terribile,” *il manifesto*, November 6, 1972; “I disperati, i cinici, gli ipocriti,” *il manifesto*, September 7, 1972; “Strage all’aeroporto,” *Lotta Continua*, June 1, 1972; “Sul “terrorismo,” *Lotta Continua*, June 3, 1972; “Una strage voluta da Brandt e Dayan,” *Servire il Popolo*, September 9, 1972.

<sup>29</sup> Ventrone, *Vogliamo tutto*, 93.

<sup>30</sup> “Nixon boia: ti aspettiamo alle presse.”

<sup>31</sup> “Terrorismo di stato,” *il manifesto*, February 22, 1973.

<sup>32</sup> As Angelo Ventura points out, *Potere Operaio* also placed itself in the international revolutionary movement, but entrusted the hegemonic role in the struggle to the working class of industrialized countries (A. Ventura, *Per una storia del terrorismo italiano*, (Rome: Donzelli, 2010) 47-50). The periodical used the term “Third-Worldism” with a contemptuous connotation: Third World approaches were judged as opportunist because they were unable to recognize the potential of the revolutionary struggle in developed countries.

believed that “the relationship between the Palestinian revolution and the Arab revolution” should be reversed:

And to reverse it – said an article of 1971 - [...] means [...] to subordinate the Palestinian organizations’ choices to the revolution of the Arab world and in Israel, it means the full support for the workers’ struggles, not only in Israel, but also in Egypt, and not only in Egypt and Jordan, but also among the Arab proletarians living in the area occupied by Israel, and among the Palestinians dispersed to work in the Arab countries.<sup>33</sup>

Within the diversified Marxist galaxy there were therefore at least two diverging perspectives concerning the way the anti-imperialist struggle was supposed to progress. On the one hand that of *Servire il Popolo*, for example, but also of the Communist Party. They insisted above all on the armed struggle of the vanguard of the Palestinian resistance and the Arab peoples against the imperialist pillar represented by Israel. On the other hand there was the line supported by *Potere Operaio*, according to which the main struggle that should have developed in the Middle East was the one that should see the united proletariat, both Arab and Jewish, fighting against the dominant bourgeoisie.<sup>34</sup> An approach of this kind, based on the primacy of the class struggle, involved two further considerations. In the first place, it underlined the existence of a Jewish proletariat, which was also seen as a possible revolutionary agent. This in itself constituted a brake on the possible transfer of negative judgments from the “Zionist” (imperialist, racist and war-mongering) to the “Israeli” and to the “Jew” in general. In that framework Israel became a State like all the others, and the criticism against it was placed within the more generic condemnation of the imperialist bourgeois elements. Secondly, such a position did not consider “the privilege of the ‘national’ aspects of the Palestinian cause” as insurmountable.<sup>35</sup> In this sense, there prevailed a clear rejection of all nationalisms, including the Palestinian one. It could be sacrificed in the name of the clash with the bourgeoisie.

To these two perspectives were also linked two different considerations on how the Jewish state should have changed, and into what. For those who emphasized the proletarian struggle, the first objective was the revolution, a situation that was hoped for and considered possible, but which was not investigated in its subsequent developments (Israel was to be overcome as a state). For those who accepted Palestinian nationalism and placed themselves within an anti-imperialist logic, the privileged solution remained the so-called “democratic Palestine,” i.e. an a-confessional and ethnically diverse Palestine in which Jews

<sup>33</sup> “Contro ‘l’unità nell’interesse nazionale’, offensiva di classe e lotta armata rivoluzionaria,” *Potere Operaio*, September 25, 1971.

<sup>34</sup> Halfway between these positions were *Lotta Continua*, *Avanguardia Operaia* and *il manifesto*, which saw in some components of the “Resistance” a possible revolutionary engine of the Arab masses, while considering the socialist revolution of the proletariat as the ultimate goal. The crucial factor for these groups was the trust in the resistance movement: the less they thought that it was an autonomous force, capable of not sheltering itself in terrorist actions far from Middle Eastern soil, the more they believed that the only solution to imperialist oppression passed through an immediate struggle of the united proletariat.

<sup>35</sup> “Contro ‘l’unità nell’interesse nazionale’, offensiva di classe e lotta armata rivoluzionaria.”

and Arabs could live peacefully outside the Zionist theocratic bond (in other words, Israel had to be overcome as a Zionist state).

### The Second Half of the Seventies

Starting from 1974-1975, but more clearly from the following two years, there is a change in the modalities and themes with which the periodicals relate to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the Jewish state. The discussion on Middle Eastern events began to focus more on Israel and on the issue of the occupation, compared to the preponderant application of the anti-imperialist paradigm and the almost exclusive focus on "liberation" at the hands of the "Palestinian Resistance," which had dominated the New Left's rhetoric after '68. After the Yom Kippur War, a new rhetoric began to take form, it was largely structured around the constant confrontation between Israel's arrogance, violence, intolerance and the suffering of Palestinians, not just armed "partisan" guerrilla fighters but also children, women, old men.

The first evident change consisted in the gradual loss of hegemony, within the New Left's narrative, of the "Palestinian Resistance." The paradigm that made the new partisan out of the *fedayeen* never completely disappeared; however, in the second half of the decade the primary objective became the immediate pacification of the Middle East and the diplomatic resolution of the dispute through explicit support for the proposals brought forward by Arafat's PLO. The latter became the point of reference for those organizations of the New Left who had shown in the early Seventies a certain hostility towards him.

This tendency to applaud diplomatic negotiations was linked to a re-evaluation of the role of the United Nations, a favorite venue in which the PLO - *Lotta Continua* said - was implementing a real "diplomatic escalation."<sup>36</sup> This forum became the main stage for the claims with which the New Left accused the Jewish state: it was according to UN resolutions, and in particular to that of November 1967, that Israel was accused of extremism and aggression; and it was a United Nations resolution of 1975 that had internationally ratified the equation between Zionism and racism, a favorite argument of the New Left as well.

At the center of the New Left's discourse were the sufferings and abuses suffered by the Palestinians; the photographs of the armed *fedayeen* were accompanied by those from the refugee camps and above all, inside these, Palestinian children. There were numerous in-depth analyses, reports on the conditions of the Arabs residing inside and outside Israel, and the occupation became one of the main stories on the international pages. Israel - explained *il manifesto* in September 1978 - boasted that it was "a strong, modern country, without contradictions,"<sup>37</sup> but was actually pervaded by the latter and the occupation was its clearest sign. The Jewish state seemed to have two faces, an external facade, cloaked in democracy and free elections, and another, that of the "napalm bombings against

<sup>36</sup> "L'ONU per l'autodeterminazione del popolo palestinese," *Lotta Continua*, November 23, 1974.

<sup>37</sup> Lucia Annunziata, "Il volto di Israele che preoccupa," *il manifesto*, September 5, 1978.



refugee villages” and the “Arab hunting systematically carried out in the occupied areas with violence and terrorism.”<sup>38</sup>

Terrorism, racism, military expansionism, the identification of an internal and external enemy, were seen as indispensable unifying factors for a society that was actually disrupted, and – it was believed – was about to implode because of its social, ethnic and economic contradictions. One of the most frequently underlined aspects was the belief that Israeli society, politics and the state itself were being traversed by a constant state of neurosis; an irrational, pervasive component of the whole of Israeli society, which contrasted in a complementary way to the ruthless lucidity, the coldness with which military operations and punitive reprisals were carried out, and to the cunning way in which Israel played for time, waiting for a collapse in diplomatic initiatives. Too easy - claimed *Lotta Continua* – “to explain the hysterical reactions of Zionist leaders with the ancestral fears of the Jews, with the ‘Samson complex’, or with the mania of persecution.”<sup>39</sup> In fact, it was believed that the fear, real or imaginary, and the anathema of the besieged country were ably exploited by the Israelis and used as a cover for every infamy:

When an Israeli is asked about the thousands of Palestinian and Lebanese civilians bombed and killed by his air force - stated *Lotta Continua* - the answer will inevitably be: “We had six million people killed without anyone lifting a finger.”<sup>40</sup>

The New Left magazines did not hesitate to speak of an unacceptable “moral blackmail” based on the constant reference to the Shoah, which the Israelis imposed to the Jews of the Diaspora and the international public opinion to obtain solidarity and understanding. A “cynical mystification” that, “to cover the systematic massacre of the Palestinian people,”<sup>41</sup> associated anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism when, instead, we read in *il manifesto*, those who fought against the Zionist, racist and fascist nature of the State of Israel were fighting “the true and profound nature of anti-Semitism, [preserving] the lesson of Auschwitz.”<sup>42</sup>

In the second half of the Seventies, the transformation of Palestinian-combatants into Palestinian-victims involved a more frequent use of the parallelism that made Zionists, the victims of yesterday (the Jews of the past), the oppressors of today. For example, AO’s magazine recalled how “Israel [had] learned so far more from its executioners, than from the partisans who [had risked] sometimes everything to snatch them from the concentration camps,”<sup>43</sup> likewise, *Lotta*

<sup>38</sup> Silverio Corvisieri, “Razzismo, Onu e antisemitismo,” *Quotidiano dei lavoratori*, November 13, 1975. The comparison between Zionist and Nazi violence continued to be used. The *Quotidiano dei lavoratori*, in particular, used the category of Nazi-Zionist, introducing next to it another comparison that would become widespread on the left between the Seventies and eighties: that with South African apartheid.

<sup>39</sup> “Medio Oriente: Grominko parte, arriva Kissinger. Tutto resta in alto mare,” *Lotta Continua*, February 9, 1975.

<sup>40</sup> “Ma che pace potrà mai fare questo stato d’Israele?,” *Lotta Continua*, September 5, 1978.

<sup>41</sup> “Il sionismo è una forma di razzismo,” *Lotta Continua*, November 12, 1975.

<sup>42</sup> Roberto Livi, “Gli ebrei di sinistra discutono, sulla difensiva, di Olocausto,” *il manifesto*, May 27, 1979.

<sup>43</sup> “Il quadro mediterraneo e la guerra in Libano,” *Quotidiano dei lavoratori*, September 5-6, 1976.

*Continua* in March 1978 recalled how the only possible fate for the Palestinians seemed to be that

of replacing the Jews (who, in a dramatic role reversal, have freed themselves of their “curse” only to build a state whose ferocity is equal only to that of their persecutors of yesterday) in the role of “scapegoat,” which humanity apparently cannot do without: from the “mean Jew” to the “Palestinian terrorist” the world of states does not recognize dignity to a people without a state.<sup>44</sup>

In May 1979 *il manifesto*, in an article-debate on the television miniseries *Holocaust*, reported the words of Livia Rokach, an expert in the Middle East and collaborator of the newspaper, who explained the parallelism between the Nazi-fascists responsible for the Holocaust and the Israeli conduct:

The Nazis and the fascists demonized the “Rothschilds” and the “Jewish plutocracy” to exterminate the Jewish proletarian masses of Europe. In the same way the Zionists today demonize Arab oil to justify genocide in Palestinian refugee camps [...]. If this is the profound nature of anti-Semitism, and the lesson of Auschwitz, then Zionism as a political movement and the state of Israel as its realization repeat the anti-Semitic mechanism.<sup>45</sup>

The danger that Zionism could adopt the same logic from which it escaped was now - according to Rokach - a fact.

In fact, Zionism continued to be at the basis of every analysis, and continued to be accused, representing a real “cement”<sup>46</sup> that held together Israel’s contradictions, as the official “religion” of the Jewish State, the “moral and religious foundation of its existence”, “its very legal foundation.”<sup>47</sup>

the state of Israel, as is well known, does not have a constitutional charter, precisely because its non-written constitution identifies it with the “kingdom of Zion”, i.e., it is a theocratic, totalitarian and racist state. The rights of the “chosen people” are those in the name of which every right is denied to the people who inhabited that land, destined by God to the Jews.<sup>48</sup>

These last quotations place us, in our opinion, before the most relevant aspect that emerges from the press of the latter part of the Seventies: the considerable attention given to the “religious factor” and to “attachment to the land” as constitutive elements, indispensable and at the same time metastasis of Israel.

After the Six Day War the imperialist aspect had been the pivot of all the analyses of the Jewish state, and Zionism had been brought fully into that interpretative

<sup>44</sup> “La pace è lontana,” *Lotta Continua*, March 24, 1978.

<sup>45</sup> Livi, “Gli ebrei di sinistra discutono, sulla difensiva, di Olocausto.”

<sup>46</sup> “In Libano una lotta a morte: l’autonomia e la rivoluzione dei popoli contro la guerra e l’oppressione imperialista,” *Lotta Continua*, September 7, 1976.

<sup>47</sup> “Il sionismo è una forma di razzismo.”

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

paradigm. In this view, the confrontation in the Middle East was between the military and governmental Zionist apparatus, subservient to the American power, on the one hand, and the *fedayeen*, the new partisan and the new Vietcong, on the other. In the second half of the Seventies the description of the Jewish state was enriched by further elements revolving around the theme of “religion” and “land,” factors which became indispensable to explain Israel’s racism, war-mongering and fascism. If Israeli society and state were pervaded by a “congenital militaristic folly,”<sup>49</sup> the situation was such not only for a general Israeli enslavement to imperialism, that required it to act through expansionism and repression, but above all because the foundations on which the Jewish state continued to be based were undermined by a series of myths, beliefs, ideologies that pushed it in that direction. The Jewish state was no longer just an instrument of imperialism, but rather an irremediably sick state: it would not be enough to repudiate the bond with the United States to recover, it would have to deny its very Zionist foundation. The latter, however, was no longer just regarded as the direct result of European nationalism and colonialism. It was seen more and more as an ideology that established an inseparable link between the “land” and the “people” on the basis of religion. Within that framework the prospect of the so-called “great Israel” was conceived, and it represented the main obstacle not only to the pacification of the Middle Eastern region, but also to a possible democratic existence of Israel.

Persistently, on the pages of the periodicals under study appeared accusations against the Israelis, because they identified themselves with the “chosen people,” because of their obstinacy in supporting religious parties and the fundamentalism they expressed. References to the ‘violent god’ of Israel, and the supposed Zionist obsession for the realization of an empire from the Nile to the Euphrates also increased. In November 1975 Silverio Corvisieri, arguing that there was no doubt that Hitler today would have sided with the “exterminators of the Palestinians,”<sup>50</sup> listed a series of factors that confirmed how racism in Israel found strong support in the religious ideology of which the Zionist ideal had become a vehicle:

in that country one cannot marry, separate, divorce or make a will if not according to the rules of the Torah. The dietary laws of the Jewish religion are compulsorily followed in hotels, restaurants, military kitchens, schools, airplanes and Israeli ships. The state of Israel - unbelievable but true - is perhaps the only modern state that does not have a Constitution: this peculiarity is determined by the concern not to clash with religious parties that demand that the Torah be the fundamental law of Israel. [...] Religious pressure does not have the sole purpose of strengthening national unity [...] It acts as a screen to a policy of frankly racist inspiration. “There is no ‘chosen people’ without accursed foreigners.”<sup>51</sup>

<sup>49</sup> “Medio Oriente: Israele prepara la ‘bomba atomica,’” *Lotta Continua*, March 20, 1980.

<sup>50</sup> Silverio Corvisieri, “Razzismo, Onu e antisemitismo,” *Quotidiano dei lavoratori*, November 13, 1975.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

It was a representation that summarized and generalized a particular notion of Zionism, of which some Jewish fundamentalist religious movements were made spokesmen; the most immediate reference, and the focus of intense attention by the press considered here, is to the *Gush Emunim*, the “block of the faithful,” a movement that arose in 1974 within the occupied territories and supported the need for the Jewish state to become a messianic kingdom extending over all the “territories of Israel.” However, the shift from religious Zionism to the political extremism of *Gush Emunim* was extended by the New Left to Zionist ideology, to Israeli politics and society as a whole. Then in 1977, as the right wing for the first time won the elections and took over the government in Israel, this generalization appeared to find a full justification in the eyes of the New Left. The fact that the coalition led by Menachem Begin promoted a “line of maximization of the extension of the Jewish state,”<sup>52</sup> led the New Left to argue that the policy promoted by the Israeli ruling class was a clear expression of the religious fundamentalist ideology, dominated by military expansionism. The accusation against the government of having as its goal the construction of the ‘great Israel,’ of wanting to pursue it militarily, with continuous provocations and clever maneuvers, capable of exploiting to its advantage international diplomatic uncertainties, then became recurrent references. Although most of the periodicals came to the conclusion that with the arrival of Likud to power there had not been a real political change, but rather a confirmation of trends already widely developed by Labor governments, with 1977 the accusations of fascism, bellicism and in particular fanaticism, became even more pronounced. Menachem Begin, the new prime minister, was accused of wanting to feed the violence of his people and of not reining-in extremist groups. As *Lotta Continua* put it, the settlers, with their intolerance and extremism, were used as “tacks to better fix the annexation choice.”<sup>53</sup> The figure of the fanatic, violent, provocative settler, obsessed with the return to a biblical land, thus became one of the new trends on the pages dedicated to the Middle East. The settler was a sort of emblem of the regression that was taking place in Israeli society as a whole. It was represented as increasingly unwilling to share its space with non-Jews and impregnated with a growing hatred for the Palestinians. The settlers epitomized, together with the religious parties and the victory of the right, the most tangible proof of the continuous degeneration of the Jewish state.

## Conclusions

The New Left’s original perspective, strongly centered on the post-’68 revolutionary rhetoric, dissolved in the second half of the Seventies in favor of a pacifist Third-World ideology, that broke the rigid anti-imperialist paradigm and replaced the exaltation of the heroic struggle of the *fedayeen* with a specific attention to the Palestinian people as a whole. At the end of the Seventies, the dominant interpretative pattern was no longer the one that saw the confrontation between Israel’s imperialism and the armed “partisan” guerrillas’ anti-imperialism, but the one that saw the suffering and almost unarmed Palestinian people being overwhelmed by an Israel that was no longer a simple pawn on the western front, but a willing executioner of a whole people; the

<sup>52</sup> Marcella Emiliani, *Medio Oriente. Una storia dal 1918 al 1991*, (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 2012), 213.

<sup>53</sup> “Altri guai per Begin,” *Lotta Continua*, October 23, 1979.

immediate prospect was no longer the revolutionary transformation of the Middle East in favor of a socialist Palestine - that had never been investigated in detail - but the pacification of the Middle Eastern region and the end of Israeli violence. Pacifism was certainly not an unprecedented phenomenon in the analyses of the extreme left, but now it seemed to be organically assumed as a way of thinking in place of anti-imperialism. This rejection of war was primarily moral: wars, that is, were criticized not only as the effects of economic aggression, but also as violence to be disapproved from an ethical point of view. References to 'human rights' were then added to those to the geo-political framework and the economic context. The United Nations became the most accredited reference point for deciding what was legitimate and what was not, in a sort of primacy entrusted primarily to international law.

This development was primarily due to a series of changes that occurred at the international level and revolved around the so-called 'moderate turn' of the Palestinian armed groups. Starting from 1973-1974 there was a slowdown in terrorist activity and armed actions in general and there were also some important diplomatic successes by the PLO in the aftermath of the Kippur War. On the Arab side, the summit of Algiers in November 1973 recognized the PLO as the only legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, while the following summit of Rabat of October 1974 stated the PLO's right to establish an independent entity on all the Palestinian territories that would be liberated. On the international side, a UN Assembly resolution of November of the same year proclaimed the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, granting the PLO permanent observer status. The fact that the armed activities of the Palestinian formations had diminished, though never ceased altogether, and that a more incisive diplomatic action had been added, entailed a necessary retreat of the revolutionary rhetoric: starting from the mid-Seventies, that is, there was a different Palestinian reality to be interpreted and a different form of struggle that was no longer centered on armed guerrilla war and was no longer comparable to the Indochinese context which, in the meantime, had seen the main pivot of the parallelism between Palestine and Vietnam - the United States - disengage from its twenty years long conflict.

To all this must be added the changes within the Jewish state and in particular the shift represented by the 1977 elections. The Jewish state had always represented a challenge for the Marxist left, but with the right's coming to power the new character of the state became even more unsustainable. Without a radical secularization of the Jewish state, a sort of 'identity monster' in the representations of the New Left, there was no possibility that the Middle Eastern region could find a lasting peace. Thus the "de-zionistization," or the transformation of Israel into an a-confessional and fully inclusive state, became for the extreme left an indispensable necessity in the face of a society and a country that were perceived as pervaded by an exasperated presence of religion and ultra-nationalist ideology, elements that could potentially curb any positive social transformation.

The shift recorded during the Seventies, however, also called for a reconsideration of class analysis, or for what then passed for class analysis as applied to the international conflicts of the Cold War era. In the early Seventies, both those who placed themselves in an anti-nationalist perspective, and those

who accepted a 'partisan' logic of support to anyone who opposed imperialism, believed that the imperialist war had to be confronted with the mobilization of the masses (the oppressed nations in this scheme occupied the role of the proletariat). In their view all conflicts were connected and their hope was that such a struggle would eventually lead to a global revolution. The pacifist perspective, on the other hand, led to the conviction that, despite the resistance of the oppressed masses, it was legitimate to act primarily through the pressure of public opinion in order to convince the powerful and international organizations to end the violence against the oppressed. The abandonment of the most markedly revolutionary rhetoric should therefore, in our view, be traced above all to internal political issues and in particular to the collapse of the political axis of the New Left in the first half of the Seventies: for the organizations analyzed here the goal of developing a truly 'revolutionary party' would be set aside. The choice of some organizations of the extreme left, also driven by the crisis that they were going through since the middle of the decade, to participate in elections,<sup>54</sup> abandoning the "traditional" refusal of liberal-democratic political practice, necessarily led to set aside revolutionary rhetoric in the analysis of international scenarios as well. At the same time, a renewed, pacifist, Third-World ideology allowed the New Left to reconvert the almost exhausted dream of a social and political revolution, carrying forward a particular form of internationalism at a time when the Marxist paradigm was now going through an inexorable crisis.

Recognizing a hiatus within the Seventies leads us to propose two further considerations. First, it should be noted that it is precisely with the weakening of the global anti-imperialist rhetoric that a connection was established between a radical criticism of Israel and cultural codes derived from the anti-Semitic repertoire. In the second half of the Seventies, in fact, the criticism carried out by the extreme left towards the Jewish state became more direct and at the same time tainted with ambiguity. In the earlier phase the rigid anti-imperialist paradigm made it possible to leave in the background Israel's peculiarity, while bringing to the foreground the imperialist enemy as a whole. Instead, by the middle of the Seventies a more context-specific anti-Israeli discourse began taking shape. It was marked by its own rhetoric, and ended up involving the image of the Jew in general: i.e. the reversal of the dichotomy between victims and perpetrators (the victims of yesterday who have become the executioners of today) and the attention paid to the role played by religion in the representation of Israel and the Middle Eastern affairs.

Secondly, it should be emphasized that the adoption of a Third-World ideology characterized above all by pacifist connotations was not a prerogative of the New Left. At the end of the Seventies, it was above all 'peace' that moved – at least rhetorically – not only the international considerations of the extreme left, but also of socialists and communists, in a sort of irenism that united "men of the left," who were actually ideologically quite distant. In the past, a part of the left,

<sup>54</sup> In particular, we refer here to the electoral list of *Democrazia Proletaria* (Proletarian Democracy, DP), established since the national elections of 1976, to which adhered the already constituted *Partito di unità proletaria per il comunismo* (Party of proletarian unity for communism, PdUPpc), and the major groups of the extreme left, like *Lotta Continua* and *Avanguardia Operaia*.

more linked to the logics of the Cold War, had judged as unjust only the wars of the West, but now, by loosening its link with the USSR, the left adopted a more “inclusive” pacifism, which considered that there were no just wars in any case.<sup>55</sup> At the end of the Seventies, a shared identity of the left was under construction: an identity that was going to make pacifism and the promotion of the people’s diplomacy one of its fixed points.<sup>56</sup>

Historical research should therefore clarify how and through what cultural contributions the New Left galaxy came, in the late Seventies, to read the Middle Eastern conflict through interpretative categories that were at the same time renewed and widely shared on the left. That ideology continues to represent, even today, the lens through which the Middle Eastern conflict and the vicissitudes of the Jewish State are conceived by a substantial part of the Italian political and cultural world. It is a worldview that has more to do with what matured at the end of the long Seventies, rather than with the simplistic anti-imperialist doctrine of the post-’68 period.

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This article was translated from Italian by Federico Damonte.

**How to quote this article:**

Sonia Zanier, “The Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the Italian New Left’s magazines of the Seventies,” in *Miscellanea* 2019, eds. Quest Editorial Staff, *Quest. Issues in Contemporary Jewish History. Journal of Fondazione CDEC*, n. 14 December 2018

*url*: [www.quest-cdecjournal.it/](http://www.quest-cdecjournal.it/)

<sup>55</sup> On the progressive fusion between pacifism and Berlinguer’s “third way” see: Andrea Guiso, “Sul’ultimo Pci nella crisi della sua cultura politica,” in *Socialisti e comunisti negli anni di Craxi*, eds. Gennaro Acquaviva, Marco Gervasoni, (Venice: Marsilio, 2011), 204-8.

<sup>56</sup> On this point see the analysis of Silvio Pons, *Berlinguer e la fine del comunismo*, (Turin: Einaudi, 2006), 240-52.

To Isoar, forever.

*If I concentrate here on the confrontation of Jews with modernity and on German Jews in particular, it is because here, as if in a laboratory, we have an excellent example of the problems and dangers inherent in such a secularization and modernization of religion.*

George L. Mosse, *The Secularization of Jewish Theology*

### Some Points of Theory and Method

The purpose of this paper is twofold.<sup>1</sup> The first is to propose a first essay of an argument about the possibility of a theoretical – as opposed to a historical – understanding of the situation in which, from the Enlightenment onwards, a sizable part of the Jews of Europe focused their individual and collective actions and aspirations towards the aim of approximating as closely as they could the culture and identity of the majority population of the countries where they lived, that is, of the process and condition of assimilation.<sup>2</sup> Because it focuses not on the

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<sup>1</sup> Heartfelt thanks to Piero Capelli for getting this (and me) out of the closet.

<sup>2</sup> I would like to thank Guri Schwarz and an anonymous reviewer for pointing me towards a number of important contributions which helped me refine and complicate my understanding of the historical debate around the term “assimilation.” A number of very recent articles: David N. Myers, “On Gerson Cohen’s ‘Blessing of Assimilation’ a Half Century Later: Editor’s Introduction,” *Jewish Quarterly Review*, 106/4 (2016): 429-32, David B. Ruderman, “The Blessing of Gerson D. Cohen,” *Jewish Quarterly Review*, 106/4 (2016): 459-64, Arnold Eisen, “The Case for ‘Assimilation’ and Diaspora,” *Jewish Quarterly Review*, 106/4 (2016): 450-458, Sarah Bunin Benor, “On Jewish Languages, Names, and Distinctiveness” *Jewish Quarterly Review*, 106/4 (2016): 440-49, Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert, “A View from Late Antiquity Onward,” *Jewish Quarterly Review*, 106/4 (2016): 433-39) are focused on the analysis of Gerson Cohen’s 1966 remarkable commencement address to the Hebrew Teachers College “The Blessing of Assimilation in Jewish History.” Till van Rahden, “Treason, Fate, or Blessing: Narratives of Assimilation in the Historiography of German-Speaking Jewry since the 1950s,” in *Preserving the Legacy of German Jewry. A History of the Leo Baeck Institute, 1955-2005*, ed. Christhard Hoffmann, (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 2005), 349-73 is an extraordinarily useful contribution, notable both for its scope and for its rigor: after outlining several early-twentieth-century debates on assimilation which remain of interest today, the author considers the role played by the concept in historiography from the mid-1950s onwards, its relation to the contiguous concept of acculturation, and its “remarkable renaissance” (p.351) after the mid-1990s; its lucid methodological point is that “A reassessment of the concept should not aim at a definition that is analytically precise and free of historical and ideological ballast. Instead, the priority should be to analyze the concept’s historicity and explore the self-consciousness and hopes for the future contained within its various definitions and deployments” (p.351); van Rahden’s well-balanced conclusion, inspired by American sociologist of religion José Casanova, is that renouncing the concept of assimilation “would lead to even greater conceptual impoverishment, for in such a case one would also lose the memory of a



unique details of individual situations, but on abstract relationships and invariant definitions, such an understanding may prove relevant to the analysis of a number of urgent contemporary issues. The second is to argue for the relevance of methods from other, apparently very distant and quite unrelated, disciplines in achieving such an understanding; in the case I am going to discuss the discipline is literary theory, specifically Gérard Genette's concept of hypertextuality.

The present paper is but a part of a much larger project, very much in progress, aiming to apply a variety of concepts and methodologies elaborated in the humanities and social sciences over the last half century or more to the analysis of the path of European Jewry from the Enlightenment to the Shoah; one not negligible consequence of this application is to demonstrate the fundamental unity of a considerable range of theoretical approaches which are normally practiced in isolation, and whose proponents are, for the most part, not aware of one another's existence. The purpose – and the point – of applying methodologies from fields other than history to the study of assimilation is to achieve an understanding that, while different from the one which can be reached by historians, is potentially interesting and productive. More specifically, I believe that a set of tools and concepts developed over the last sixty years or so in fields as far apart as semiotics and literary theory, Membership Categorization Analysis and queer theory, critical discourse analysis and culturology, can illuminate a number of *logical* (as opposed to historical) dynamics which can be shown to underlie, to different extents and with different outcomes, most relationships between majority populations and minorities in multicultural societies.<sup>3</sup>

My interest in the logical structure of assimilation has, as far as I have been able to ascertain, not been shared so far by other researchers; this is somewhat surprising, since even the most cursory examination of the formidable literature on the topic shows that the words “paradox” and “contradiction” are routinely employed to define the condition of European Jews in the age of assimilation. Such commonplaces of historical description are clearly not to be understood with reference to a historical, political, or sociological framework; if they are to be taken seriously, there seems to be no choice but to acknowledge that they assert, implicitly but unambiguously, that one of the most conspicuous peculiarities of the process of assimilation – and one of the most fraught with implications – is the *logical* nature of the situations that arise from it. This would seem to me to

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complex history accumulated within the concept” (p.373). My decision to select “assimilation” as the fundamental keyword of my own enquiry, however, owes less to the most recent developments of historical understanding than to the central and fundamental place the term occupies in my sources: see below.

<sup>3</sup> I have sought to illuminate some of these dynamics from a specifically psychological viewpoint in Carmen Dell'Aversano, “Intersubjective Anticipation: Accountability, Anticipation, and Conversation as a Zero-Sum Game or, the (Real) Pleasures of a Pluralistic Society,” *Journal of Constructivist Psychology*, in press.

indicate the possibility that employing in the analysis of assimilation a number of methods and concepts devised with the express purpose of accounting for paradoxes in social situations and human relationships might prove productive.

Through the labor of abstraction and generalization necessary to lay bare the logical structure implicit in the wide variety of historical situations which shaped the course of assimilation, the study of this past event can be shown to be relevant to the predicament of any multicultural society, and therefore to our contemporary world in general. Analyzing the path of European Jewry not as a historical phenomenon (one by definition unique and never to be repeated) but as a logical entity, that is, as a bundle of formal relationships between abstract objects which can occur in a wide variety of social, chronological, and geographical contexts, highlights a number of political, cultural, social, interpersonal, and psychological dynamics which can prove to be of momentous relevance to our own predicament.

This does not mean, of course, that these logical determinants by themselves can account for actual individual cases (whether it be the history of Italian Jewry, or of the Jews of a single German town), or deterministically predict their course or outcome; on the contrary, one major purpose of singling out and analyzing these determinants is exactly to make it possible to trace their diverse, and completely non-deterministic, paths in the bewildering variety of concrete historical situations.

As a consequence, even though the thrust of my argument is not limited to a specific national or geographical context, the theoretical focus of my enquiry is necessarily rooted in the analysis of a definite corpus. I have chosen to concentrate on the case of German-speaking Jewry for three main reasons: the first is, of course, that the most extreme and world-altering forms of anti-Semitism were a consequence of the policies of the Third Reich; the second is that German-Jewish history has been, over the last several decades, the object of sustained scholarly attention, which has resulted in a considerable number of extraordinarily perceptive investigations of virtually every aspect of the Jewish experience in Germany (both before and after unification), and in the German-speaking parts of the Austrian empire; the third, and probably the most important, is that a number of leading Jewish writers and intellectuals who wrote in German (from Zweig to Scholem, from Kafka to Anders, to name just a few) have extensively reflected on their experience of Jewishness in a number of contexts, and of both literary and non-literary forms – from letters to essays to novels to memoirs. These works, which are almost invariably of exceptionally high quality, provide a kind of insight into the *lived experience* of the Jewish condition which would be impossible to achieve through the means of historical inquiry, blending as they do sustained and nuanced first-hand knowledge of the various contexts and aspects of everyday life with an outstanding ability to reflect, abstract, and theorize in a

way that manages not only to take into account the most minute details of mundane experience, but to make them stand out as exceptionally vivid, and to endow them with lasting significance. As anticipated above (note 2), my main reason for choosing to use the word “assimilation” is that the authors I am referring to, in seeking to come to terms, each in their different times and ways, in a wealth of writings of extraordinary historical, theoretical and, in many cases, literary value, with the German Jewish experience, invariably referred to that experience with the (German) word “Assimilation.”

It should, however, be spelled out at the outset that in my argument (just as in Georg Mosse’s paper from which my epigraph is derived) the parable of German-speaking Jewry plays the (fundamental) role of a case study; because the purpose of my research is not historical but theoretical, the point of my argument is that the methods, results, and conclusions of my enquiry should illuminate a wide range of geographically and historically diverse situations and events.

In order to achieve a theoretical understanding of any object it is necessary first of all to construct a *model* of the object in question, one which, above and beyond the myriad fascinating historical, geographical, social, and cultural variables and variants lays bare, so to say, its most basic logical form. It is hardly worth pointing out that this is, by definition, an arbitrary choice: other researchers could (and, no doubt, would) select different models, and, consequently, reach different forms of understanding. Its being arbitrary does not, however, make it irrational: the most important consequence of this choice is to make available for the understanding of the object methods developed to account for the model in the most diverse disciplines; the relevance and significance (or lack thereof) of the results obtained by applying these methods is what ultimately determines the value of the choice.<sup>4</sup>

With regard to assimilation the model I chose was *imitation*. In my view, the logical essence of the process of assimilation lies in its being an imitative process, one in which a social group, and the individuals which make it up, mould the most diverse components of their identity and of its manifestations on those of another group.<sup>5</sup> This choice of model is, of course, far from original: not only is the

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<sup>4</sup> For example, in striving to understand the human psyche, Freud chose to model it as a nexus of physical forces to be accounted for by the laws of dynamics (this is why psychoanalysis is also known as “dynamic psychology”); such forms of understanding are, of course, metaphorical; again, this does not make them irrational: for the foundational role of metaphors in human cognition see George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live by*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

<sup>5</sup> In a structurally comparable, even though historically distinct, context, that of colonialism, the role of this kind of imitative dynamics has been highlighted and investigated at least since the middle of the twentieth century thanks to Franz Fanon’s enlightening reflections on colonial identity, whose extraordinary results have subsequently been built upon, with endless variations, since the Eighties with the establishment of postcolonial studies; Homi Bhabha, “Of Mimicry and Man: the Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse,” *October*, 28 (1984) 125–33 is the most widely

connection between assimilation and imitation self-evident from mere etymology, but historical accounts of assimilation regularly stress the imitative nature of the process.<sup>6</sup> It is common knowledge that the Enlightenment project of universal rights took, as far as the Jews were concerned, a rather peculiar form: both the theorists who dealt with the issue of the rights of Jews in the abstract, and the states which defined it in legislation, started from the assumption of the Jews' fundamental inferiority; therefore Jews were to conquer what Arendt would later define as the "right to have rights"<sup>7</sup> through a process which would lead them to transcend their cultural and moral peculiarities, in order to assume those of the Christian population among which they lived:

Emancipation and assimilation denoted reciprocally dependent processes [...]. They represented the inseparable halves of a *quid pro quo*, the two clauses of a complex contract. Put most simply, emancipation was what the states were to grant, assimilation what the Jews were to give in return.<sup>8</sup>

As Sorkin makes clear, the Jews were asked to assimilate in exchange for eventually being allowed, at an unspecified time in the future, to enjoy the same rights as the Christian majority, and assimilation was presented as the essential precondition to show that they were indeed deserving of those rights. The "quid" that the Jews had to contribute in the "quid pro quo of rights for regeneration" which spelled out the unwritten contract of emancipation (Sorkin 1987 p.4) was an *imitation* of the manners, competences, interests, occupations and ideals of the German *Bildungsbürgertum*.<sup>9</sup>

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quoted instance, but Frantz Fanon *Peau noire, masques blancs*, (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1952) offers an analysis which is at least as perceptive and enlightening. David N. Myers "The Blessing of Assimilation' Reconsidered: An Inquiry into Jewish Cultural Studies" in *From ghetto to emancipation: historical and contemporary reconsiderations of the Jewish community*, eds. David N. Myers and William V. Rowe, (Scranton PA: University of Scranton Press, 1997), 17-36 outlines an illuminating perspective on the possibilities and rewards of connecting 'the exploration, and at times celebration, of hybridity as an existential condition" in 'cultural studies, postcolonial discourse, and postmodernism" with Jewish studies under the rubric of 'Diaspora identities" (76-83); this connection is certainly deserving of further exploration.

<sup>6</sup> For instance, David Sorkin, *The Transformation of German Jewry 1780-1840*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 181 note 7 specifies that "German Jewry's subculture [...] borrowed its major elements from the majority middle-class culture [...] *consciously striving to avoid distinctiveness*" (my italics).

<sup>7</sup> The phrase 'a right to have rights' occurs for the first time in Hannah Arendt, "The Rights of Man': What Are They?," *Modern Review* (summer 1949): 24-37, parts of which Arendt later reworked in chapter 9 ("The Decline of the Nation-State and the End of the Rights of Man") of Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1951), on which most discussions of the concept are based.

<sup>8</sup> David Sorkin, "Emancipation and Assimilation. Two Concepts and their application to German Jewish History," *The Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook*, 35/1 (1990): 17-33, here 18.

<sup>9</sup> "What was the substance of Jewish assimilation? In practice it was linked to the process of *embourgeoisement*. [...] German Jewry did not integrate into some abstract *Volk* but into the middle class, and they spent much of the nineteenth century internalizing the economic, ethical,

What may be considered novel, and might prove interesting, in the approach I am presenting here is the decision to make the choice to model assimilation as an imitative process the focus of a systematic enquiry, by deploying towards the understanding of assimilation a number of theories developed over the last sixty years in a wide variety of fields of the humanities and social sciences with the express purpose of accounting for imitative processes. The connection between these theories and the issue of assimilation may well prove surprising, and its consequences and results may consequently be of some interest.

To my mind, an attempt to reach a new understanding of assimilation, one which considers its theoretical structure rather than focusing on its historical peculiarity, by a synergy of methodologies which have not, as far as I know, been employed to this end, may prove worthwhile for at least three reasons: first because assimilation, in all its bewildering intricacy, can only be accounted for by a genuinely inter- and multidisciplinary approach, one that not only considers a wide variety of highly complex materials, but which also employs a range of methodological perspectives of equivalent complexity; second, because assimilation, being, so to say, an “intrinsically transdisciplinary” topic, embracing as it does (among others) linguistic, psychological, social, literary, historical, economic, political, religious and philosophical components, is quintessentially apt to demonstrate the productivity (or lack thereof) of ideas and methods from a variety of disciplines, and the possibility (or the impossibility) of integrating different approaches into an informative and original synthesis; and lastly, because the patterns, structures and invariants which can be unearthed by a theoretical – as opposed to a historical – analysis of assimilation are of crucial relevance to our own predicament. As a historical phenomenon, the assimilation of German Jewry may have met its end in the Shoah; but as a theoretical entity – and as a social process – assimilation still plays a major role in our present-day multicultural society: the more we understand about its hidden – and not invariably benign – workings, the better for all concerned.

### **Assimilation as a Hypertextual Practice**

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and aesthetic standards of that class.” (Steven E. Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers. The East European Jew in German and German-Jewish Consciousness, 1880-1923*, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982), 7). This had already been pointed out by Katz in his dissertation (Jacob Katz, *Die Entstehung der Judenassimilation in Deutschland und deren Ideologie*, (Diss. Frankfurt, 1935), 32). Simone Lässig, *Jüdische Wege ins Bürgertum*, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004) explains the peculiarities of this unique process by referring to Bourdieu’s theory of cultural capital; her work is an exceptional—and exceptionally successful—attempt to integrate methodologies from other fields in the analysis of historical data.

The importance of imitative practices in the genesis of literary texts has been recognized since the beginning of literary-theoretical reflection in the West.<sup>10</sup> In this paper I will focus on showing how a small number of theoretical concepts, originally formulated to account for literary practices of imitation, can be helpful in elucidating both the peculiarity of the German-Jewish subculture (Sorkin 1987 p.6), and some of the most puzzling – and most devastating – reactions which confronted it.<sup>11</sup> Because of its momentous long-term consequences, the resurgence of anti-Semitism in Germany after 1870 has been the object of sustained scholarly attention; here I would like to suggest one additional potentially productive approach, which is, to my knowledge, original: considering its sudden appearance, and its inexplicable virulence, as sociopsychological reactions to a specific form of imitation, that of the *fake*.

In his 1982 book *Palimpsests. Literature in the Second Degree*, literary theoretician Gérard Genette delineates a typology of hypertexts (texts which derive from other texts: Genette 1982 p.7), which considers pragmatic variables, that is, the effects texts have on their audiences, as well as formal ones. Among the kinds of *mimotexts* (texts arising from a process of imitation: Genette 1982 p.81) he describes, two are, in my opinion, deeply pertinent to an understanding of assimilation: forgeries and fakes.

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<sup>10</sup> One not negligible issue in which a reference to the conceptualization of imitation in literary studies can be shown to be immediately pertinent to the issue of assimilation is that of the creativity evidently displayed on so many levels in the process of assimilation. This feature has been rightly emphasized in historical accounts: Cohen's authoritative interpretation states that "The great ages of Jewish creativity were born out of a response to the challenge of assimilation" (Gerson Cohen, "The Blessing of Assimilation in Jewish History" (1966 commencement address to the Hebrew Teachers College), in *Jewish History and Jewish Destiny*, (New York – Jerusalem: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1997), 145-56, here 155), and Fonrobert, "A View from Late Antiquity," 436, while discussing Cohen, rightly stresses the component of 'cultural agency' in the process. Van Rahden, "Treason, Fate, or Blessing," 370 quotes a number of scholars who 'have all recently argued that assimilation should be understood as a mode of creative agency,' and his reference to postcolonial approaches to the issue is particularly pertinent, and potentially very enlightening. However, this active, agentic, and creative component of assimilation is invariably presented, however implicitly, as somehow surprising, or at least counterintuitive; of course Western literary theory since its inception has considered creativity a hallmark of conscious and sophisticated imitation, as witnessed most conspicuously by nearly three thousand years of Western literary tradition.

<sup>11</sup> The equivalence between cultures and texts, which has proved methodologically extraordinarily productive in cultural anthropology over the last forty years, was first put forward by Clifford Geertz in his book *The Interpretation of Cultures*, (New York: Basic Books, 1973), which introduced hermeneutical concepts and methods into anthropological research: "The culture of a people is an ensemble of texts, themselves ensembles, which the anthropologist strains to read over the shoulders of those to whom they properly belong" ("Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight," in Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures*, 450).

Forgery is an imitation in a serious mode whose dominant function is the pursuit or the extension of a preexistent literary achievement.<sup>12</sup>

From Genette's definition of forgery three fundamental characteristics emerge, two explicitly and one implicitly. First, the aim of a forgery is "serious," not comic or satiric: the purpose of a forgery is not to ridicule the model; on the contrary, because the forger chose the model as his model, and devoted a considerable amount of effort to mastering its most minute peculiarities, he implies that the model is worthy of being imitated, and thus admirable and excellent. Second, the forgery aims to "pursue or extend" a pre-existent text, not to distort or exaggerate its features: a good forgery is stylistically indistinguishable from its model, not a caricature. Third, the forgery is an imitation presented and recognizable as such; it does not aim to take anyone in, it does not attempt to pass as the work of the author of the model.

Out of these three characteristics, the forgery shares one with another kind of imitative text: the fake:

an imitative text itself is not identified *as such*, and therefore passes for an authentic text [...]. This [...] situation is the well-known *literary fake* or apocryphal text.<sup>13</sup>

In order to pass for an authentic text, the fake, just like the forgery, must reproduce the features of the model in the most painstakingly scrupulous way; any divergence in any details, no matter how minute, will make the fake recognizable as such. But, even though they share this all-important technical feature, forgery and fake are very different, indeed opposite, semiotic and social phenomena. Unlike the forgery, the fake aims to pass for an authentic work. This implies on the part of the faker a very different attitude from that of the forger; the forger is motivated by respect and admiration for his model, and is honest with his audience, whereas the faker uses his model to deceive his audience, usurping a status to which his work, if it were presented as his own, would have no social right.

One extremely important technical consideration is that the—pragmatically crucial—distinction between forgery and fake hinges not on formal or intrinsic factors but on the availability (or lack thereof) of external information:

the theoretical distinction between [the various kinds of mimotexts] is clear, but the specific mode of a given mimetic performance often remains

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<sup>12</sup> Gérard Genette, *Palimpsests. Literature in the Second Degree*, original French edition 1982, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 85.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, 86.

indeterminate, except when determined externally through context or paratext.<sup>14</sup>

More specifically, the *only* piece of information which makes it possible to distinguish a forgery from a fake is the identity of the author: if I write a credible imitation of Montale and sign it with my own name, that is a forgery; if I circulate the exact same poem with Montale's name on it, that is a fake. And it goes without saying that the two texts, identical word for word except for the author to which they are attributed, will actually be perceived as very different, and will elicit very different responses. It is perhaps worth spelling out that (as is evident from the previous example) the most pragmatically crucial piece of information delivered by the paratext concerns precisely the identity of the author, whose name is of course hardly ever included in the text of the literary work proper.

The reason why I believe it to be useful to introduce subtle technical distinctions pertaining to literary theory to the analysis of a socio-cultural phenomenon is that I am convinced that the relationship between forgery and fake is a crucially relevant component in the complex dynamics of assimilation, and that its consideration can shed light on otherwise puzzling and bizarre attitudes and events. It is worth emphasizing again that this relationship only exists on the pragmatic level, “in the eye of the beholder.” But “the eye of the beholder” (and their minds, and their lives...) is the place where all social realities exist. In the eyes and minds of all its supporters, both Jewish and non-Jewish, from the late eighteenth-century onwards, the process of assimilation had as its end (both chronologically and teleologically) the elimination of every perceptible difference between Jews and non-Jews, an elimination which was to be achieved through painstaking imitation by the Jews of the most minute particulars (with the possible exception of religious belief, as the tellingly awkward<sup>15</sup> formulation ‘deutsche Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens’ implies) of Gentile culture, that is, in Genette's terms, through the production of a forgery. However, what makes assimilation as a social practice not only intrinsically paradoxical but also always potentially explosive is that, from the point of view of its audience (which is of

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 85. Genette defines the paratext as follows: “The second type [of relationship between two texts] is the generally less explicit and more distant relationship that binds the text properly speaking, taken with the totality of the literary work, to what can be called its *paratext*: a title, a subtitle, intertitles; prefaces, postfaces, notices, forewords, etc.; marginal, infrapagina, terminal notes; epigraphs; illustrations; blurbs, book covers, dust jackets, and many other secondary signals, whether allographic or autographic. These provide the text with a (variable) setting and sometimes a commentary, official or not, which even the purists among readers [...] cannot always disregard as easily as they would like and as they claim to do. [...] [T]his is probably one of the privileged fields of operation of the pragmatic dimension of the work—i.e., of its impact upon the reader [...]” (Genette, *Palimpsests. Literature in the Second Degree*, 3, emphasis mine).

<sup>15</sup> The awkwardness is a consequence of the fact that no equivalent expression exists for Christian citizens, since “deutsche Staatsbürger” of the Christian faith did not have to specify their confession, since it went without saying that all “normal” German citizens were Christians.



course the only pragmatically relevant one), in a number of social situations the imitative practice of forgery automatically, naturally, and involuntarily crosses the border which is supposed to keep it always separate from that of the fake. If Jews must earnestly and tirelessly devote all their energies to becoming as similar as they can to non-Jews, it is only to be expected that, sooner or later, they will succeed. At that point, unless a helpful yellow star is introduced, it will prove impossible to distinguish them from non-Jews.

One major component in making this distinction more difficult was, of course, the granting of legal equality: before emancipation (a process which in Germany reaches its conclusion between 1869 and 1871)<sup>16</sup> Jews could be distinguished from the rest of society at least because a variety of social roles and contexts were *a priori* inaccessible to them; under these conditions the outcome of the imitative process of assimilation, no matter how high the technical proficiency displayed in its accomplishment, could still be interpreted as a forgery; when emancipation erased (at least in theory) all boundaries between Jews and non-Jews, the outcome of the exact same process achieved the transition from forgery to fake.<sup>17</sup>

There is also another reason why emancipation precipitated the forgery/fake shift: one fundamental difference between forgery and fake is that a forgery is *pragmatically empty*: for all its ingenuity, it does not aim to achieve any effect beyond disinterested aesthetic admiration for the technical proficiency it displays. A fake, on the other hand, clamors for social recognition: it wants to break into the closed and closely guarded circle of “authentic” works. This is exactly the kind of social recognition which the Emancipation made accessible to Jews as a matter of undisputable legal principle; and the central relevance of pragmatic considerations to the “new anti-Semitism” from the 1870s onwards is shown by

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<sup>16</sup> In July 1869, King Wilhelm I of Prussia promulgated the North German Confederation Constitution, which gave Jews civil and political rights; when the new German empire was established, on 14 April 1871, the constitution was extended to all German states (Bavaria adopted it on 22 April).

<sup>17</sup> That the accessibility of all social contexts to Jews after the Emancipation proved immensely anxiety-provoking is shown, for instance, by a petition, signed by a quarter of a million Germans in 1881, which, among other things, asked “that the Jews be excluded from all positions of authority; that their employment in the judiciary – namely as autonomous judges – receive appropriate limitation” and “that the Christian character of the primary school – even when attended by Jewish pupils – be strictly protected; that only Christian teachers be allowed in these schools and that in all other schools Jewish teachers be placed only in special and exceptional cases” (2. daß die Juden von allen obrigkeitlichen (autoritativen) Stellungen ausgeschlossen werden und daß ihre Verwendung im Justizdienste – namentlich als Einzelrichter – eine angemessene Beschränkung erfahre; 3. daß der christliche Charakter der Volksschule, auch wenn dieselbe von jüdischen Schülern besucht wird, streng gewahrt bleibe und in derselben nur christliche Lehrer zugelassen werden, daß in allen übrigen Schulen aber jüdische Lehrer nur in besonders motivierten Ausnahmefällen Anstellung erlangen): [http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/pdf/eng/413\\_Antisemites%20Petition\\_114.pdf](http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/pdf/eng/413_Antisemites%20Petition_114.pdf); original German version [http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/pdf/deu/413\\_Antisemitempetition\\_114.pdf](http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/pdf/deu/413_Antisemitempetition_114.pdf)).

the rather inelegant, indeed grotesque attempts which were made to transform emancipation itself into a kind of forgery, that is, into a sign without pragmatic implications, as illustrated by an incident related by Gershom Scholem in his memoirs:

How far this went is shown by a very characteristic statement made by Werner Sombart, a very famous sociologist and economist of the time who was torn between liberal and antiliberal views. When this statement was published and widely quoted in 1912, it created a tremendous stir among the Jews. It said that while the legal equality and formal emancipation of the Jews should not be abrogated, Jews should voluntarily refrain from making use of these rights in public life.<sup>18</sup>

But this implicit claim for social recognition is far from being the only reason why a fake is invariably experienced as a powerful threat to the social order, and calls forth the most extreme reactions. In order to achieve a better understanding of this apparently puzzling fact we should now turn to examine in some detail several aspects of the social significance of fakes.

First, fakes are intrinsically threatening to any social order because they question the distinctions on which the social order itself rests. The invariably violent reaction to the discovery of a fake is a reaction to its perceived mockery of the social competence of all those who did not spot it. The ineludible presence of an element of mockery in the pragmatics of the fake is cursorily referred to by Genette:

[in] the well-known [situation of] the *literary fake* or apocryphal text [...] the imitator is the only one to laugh—with his friend or accomplices, if there be any—at the expense of everyone and especially of self-proclaimed experts.<sup>19</sup>

Genette, however, does not explain why a fake is inevitably experienced as a mockery by those who fall prey to it, what exactly it is that it mocks, and why this mockery should be perceived as threatening by society as a whole. The reason for these far from self-explanatory reactions is that what the fake mocks is not only the competence of those it managed to take in, but also, and most of all, the natural, cultural, and social boundaries which that very competence, and the social role connected to it, should above all protect.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Gershom Scholem, *From Berlin to Jerusalem: Memories of My Youth*, original German edition 1977, (New York: Schocken, 1980): 27.

<sup>19</sup> Genette, *Palimpsests*, 86 (italics in the original).

<sup>20</sup> Two examples, neither of them having to do with Jews or with assimilation, are useful to illustrate this. One is the case of the Modigliani fakes, which upset the art world in Italy in 1984; after the teenagers who had manufactured the statues explained the prank, the media and public opinion turned violently against the art critics who had vouched for the authenticity of the fakes

What the fake says to its victims is, in effect: “You assume that you are able to distinguish A from B, and this ability enables you to function in the world, and is a part of who you are. But, actually, despite what you would like to think, you cannot tell A and B apart; and this may mean either that you are not who you think you are, or that the world, in which you assume the distinction between A and B to hold, is not what you think it is, or, of course, both.” The structurally and intensely subversive effects of any successful serious imitation which does not preliminarily disqualify itself as a forgery through a cautious use of paratextual signals are illustrated with particular clarity by this passage from an autobiographical narrative by a Jewish mother in the Third Reich:<sup>21</sup>

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and who, by so doing, had demonstrated their own inability to recognize the social distinction which it was their institutional task to uphold (a useful English summary of the facts can be found in (no author named), “Livorno plans to show fake Modigliani heads,” *The Local*, 20 May 2014, <https://www.thelocal.it/20140520/livorno-plans-to-show-fake-modigliani-heads>). The other is Kimberly Peirce’s *Boys Don’t Cry* (USA 1999); the movie, based on a true story, relates the successful passing of a transexual boy in a group of marginal teenagers in Nebraska, his happy love relationship with the sister of one of his male friends, and their savage reaction to the chance discovery of his biological sex. The rape and murder of the protagonist by his former friends is a typically violent reaction to a fake involving crucial dimensions of social competence and personal identity: if I have been unable to realize that my buddy was actually a woman, this may mean that I do not know the first thing about men and women, and the reason why I do not may well be that the categories of “man” and “woman” are more problematic than I ever suspected, and than I am willing to acknowledge.

<sup>21</sup> *Jewish Life in Germany. Memoirs from Three Centuries*, ed. Monika Richarz, abridged translation of the original German edition 1976–1982, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991): 355–56. The original is as follows: “Eines Tages kamen meine Kinder einmal wieder mit glänzenden Augen und kichernd und lachend aus der Schule nach Hause. Sie berichteten, daß sich am Morgen fast alle Klassen in der Aula versammeln mußten, weil ein Beauftragter der neugeschaffenen Rassenamtes den Kindern einen rassenkundlichen Vortrag halten wollte. “Ich fragte die Lehrerin, ob ich nach Hause gehen konnte,” erzählte meine Tochter, “aber sie meinte, sie habe keine Anweisung irgend jemanden wegzuschicken. Du kannst dir vorstellen, daß der Vortrag gräßlich war. Zuerst erklärte der Mann, daß es hochstehende und niedere Rassen gäbe, die am höchste stehende Rasse seien die Germanen, die daher auch dazu bestimmt seien, die Welt zu regieren, während die Juden eine sehr niedrigstehende, verächtliche Rasse seien. Dann, Mamma, schaute er sich in die Aula um, und bat eins von den Mädchen, zu ihm zu kommen.” Die Kinder fingen wieder an zu kichern. “Zuerst wußten wir überhaupt nicht, was er eigentlich wollte,” erzählte meine Tochter weiter, “und wir wurden ganz ängstlich, als er Eva auswählte. Aber dann fing er an zu erklären, und zeigte dabei auf Eva: ‘Seht mal, den schmalen Schädel dieses Mädchens, die hohe Stirn, die blauen Augen und das blonde Haar,’ und dabei nahm er einen ihrer langen Zöpfe in der Hand. Er fuhr fort “Beachtet auch die hohe schlanke Gestalt. All dies sind die untrüglichen Zeichen der reinen, unvermischten Germanischen Rasse!” Mamma, du hättest wirklich hören sollen, wie alle Mädchen zu lachen anfangen. Sogar Eva konnte sich das Lachen nicht verbeißen. Von allen Seiten wurde dem Beamten zugerufen: ‘Sie ist doch jüdisch!’ Sein Gesicht war sehenswert. Ich glaube, er war froh, daß der Direktor schnell aufstand, uns mit einer Handbewegung zum Schweigen brachte und die Veranstaltung beendete, indem er dem Mann für seinen so interessanten und lehrreichen Vortrag dankte. Bei den Worten des Direktors mußten wir wieder lachen, aber er sorgte sofort für Ruhe. [...]” *Jüdisches Leben in Deutschland*, herausgegeben und eingeleitet von Monika Richarz, 3 Bände, (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1976–1982), 3, 236–37.

[Dortmund 1935] One day, for the first time in a long while, I saw my children coming back from school with shining eyes, laughing and giggling together. Most of the classes had been gathered that morning, since an official of the new *Rassenamt*, the office of races, had come to give a talk on the differences of races. "I asked the teacher if I could go home" my daughter was saying, "but she said she had orders not to dismiss anyone. You may imagine it was an awful talk. He said that there are two groups of races, a high one and a low one. The high and upper race that was destined to rule the world was the Teutonic, the German race, while one of the lowest was the Jewish race. And then, Mommy, he looked around and asked one of the girls to come to him." The children again began to giggle about their experience. "First we did not know what he intended, and we were very afraid when he picked our Eva. Then he began, and he was pointing at Eva 'Look here, the small head of this girl, her long forehead, her very blue eyes, and blond hair [...] and look,' he said 'at her tall and slender figure. These are the unequivocal marks of a pure and unmixed Teutonic race.' Mommy, you should have heard how at this moment all of the girls burst into laughter. Even Eva could not help laughing. Then from all sides of the hall there was shouting: 'She's a Jewess!' You should have seen the officer's face! I guess he was lucky that the principal got up so quickly and, with a sign to the pupils, stopped the laughing and shouting and dismissed the man, thanking him for his interesting and very enlightening talk. At that we began again to laugh, but he stopped us immediately."<sup>22</sup>

This potential of a successful fake – even of a completely involuntary one, as in the case of little Eva – to radically question the usefulness, applicability, and ontological consistency of the most basic distinctions on which social order rests, and to mock the authorities whose task it is to uphold them, is one main reason why society will always attempt to exert a capillary and totalitarian control on imitative practices, that is, on the appropriation of signs characterizing a specific social category by other categories: the yellow star that a few years later little Eva will be compelled to wear will have the double – and logically contradictory – effect both of controlling her “imitation” of Aryanness, and of admitting that no competent objective judgment on the quality of that imitation is possible, that

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<sup>22</sup> Episodes like this one must of course have been far from infrequent. The most iconic instance is the joke Berlin portrait photographer Hans Ballin played on the Nazi propaganda machine in 1935, when he submitted a photograph of a Jewish baby to a contest for a depiction of the “perfect Aryan baby;” his image won the contest, and the picture of young Hessa Taft appeared not only on the cover of the *Sonne ins Haus* magazine, but on countless cards and posters (Adam Whitnall, “Hessa Taft: ‘Perfect Aryan baby’ of Nazi propaganda was actually Jewish,” *The Independent*, Wednesday, July 2, 2014, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/hessa-taft-perfect-aryan-baby-of-nazi-propaganda-was-actually-jewish-9578268.html>).

Jews cannot be distinguished from non-Jews unless by having recourse to what Genette would call paratextual aids.

This sobering acknowledgement is the basis of a very important strategy through which the anti-Semitic worldview reacts to the world-shattering anxiety induced by the prospect of a successful “fake.” Whenever, and as soon as, damning paratextual information becomes available, that information is put to paradoxical use in evaluating the “imitation” *retrospectively*; this allows the anti-Semite to congratulate himself on his necessary vigilance, and on his eagle-eyed ability in “spotting the fake.”

The company in my present pension [...] are all German and Christian. Conspicuous are [...] one former or present — I t is all the same — general and a similar colonel, both sensible, pleasant people. I asked to be served at a separate little table in the common dining room, for I saw that others were served that way; moreover, that way my vegetarian diet attracts less attention, and above all one could chew better and on the whole it is safer. [...] But today when I went into the dining room the colonel (the general was not there yet) invited me so cordially to the common table that I had to give in. So now the thing took its course. After the first few words it came out that I was from Prague. Both of them – the general, who sat opposite me, and the colonel– were acquainted with Prague. Was I Czech? No. So now explain to those true German military eyes what you really are. Someone else suggested “German-Bohemian,” someone else “Little Quarter.” Then the subject was dropped and people went on eating, but the general, with his sharp ears linguistically schooled in the Austrian army, was not satisfied. After we had eaten, he once more began to wonder about the sound of my German, perhaps more bothered by what he saw than by what he heard. At this point I tried to explain that by my being Jewish. At this his scientific curiosity is satisfied, but not his human feelings. At the same moment, probably by sheer chance, for all the others could not have heard our conversation, but perhaps there was some connection after all, the whole company rose to leave (though yesterday they lingered on together for a long while; I heard that, since my door is adjacent to the dining room). The general too was very restless, though from politeness he brought our little chat to a sort of end before he hurried out with long strides. That hardly satisfied my human feelings either; why must I be a thorn in their flesh? But otherwise it is a good solution; I shall be alone again without ridiculously sitting off by myself, provided that they do not invent some disciplinary action for me.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Franz Kafka, Letter to Max Brod and Felix Weltsch, Meran April 10, 1920: “Die Gesellschaft in meiner jetzigen Pension [...] ist ganz deutsch-christlich, hervorstechend: [...] ein gewesener oder gegenwärtiger, es ist ja das gleiche, General und ein ebensolcher Oberst, beide kluge, angenehme Leute. Ich hatte gebeten, mir im gemeinsamen Speisezimmer auf einem separierten Tischchen zu

What the two well-meaning military men desperately need to perceive, and what therefore they lead themselves to believe that they *are* perceiving, is an immediate, self-evident sensory difference between Jew and German; one which, unlike those pertaining to somatic characters, can offer a foundation and a justification for a verdict of inadequate mastery of the linguistic code, and therefore of *cultural otherness*: the significance and the consequences of this verdict of otherness are clearly perceptible in one of its extreme examples (not only chronologically), the statement by Msgr. Joseph Frings of Cologne in 1942 “The Jew is not of our blood” and “does not speak our language.”<sup>24</sup> I believe that this is the reason for the centrality of the “Jewish” accent (the notorious *Mauscheln*) in the image of the Jew manufactured by anti-Semitic propaganda.<sup>25</sup> That, in the speech of Jews like Kafka, whose mother language was German, the perception of such an accent was, in all likelihood, purely hallucinatory is not the point: paradoxically, what was presented as the objectively motivated indictment of the language of the Jew was nothing but an obvious and predictable consequence of the pre-existing awareness of his being Jewish,<sup>26</sup> which could be easily inferred, if not from his somatic traits, as in Kafka’s case, certainly from his name, which is normally the first object of any verbal exchange, whether it takes place in person or on the phone.

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servieren, ich sah, daß auch sonst derartig serviert wurde, auch fällt das Vegetarische so weniger auf und vor allem, man kann besser kauen und es ist überhaupt sicherer. [...] Nun nötigte mich aber heute der Oberst, als ich ins Speisezimmer kam (der General war noch nicht da) so herzlich zum gemeinsamen Tisch, daß ich nachgeben mußte. Nun ging die Sache ihren Gang. Nach den ersten Worte kam hervor, daß ich aus Prag bin; beide, der General (dem ich gegenüber saß) und der Oberst kannten Prag. Ein Tscheche? Nein. Erkläre nun in diese treuen deutschen militärischen Augen, was du eigentlich bist. Irgendwer sagt “Deutschböhme,” ein anderer “Kleinseite.” Dann legt sich das Ganze und man ißt weiter, aber der General mit seinem scharfen, im österreichischen Heer philologisch geschulten Ohr, ist nicht zufrieden, nach dem Essen fängt er wieder den Klang meines Deutsch zu bezweifeln an, vielleicht übrigens zweifelt mehr das Auge als das Ohr. Nun kann ich das mit meinem Judentum zu erklären versuchen. Wissenschaftlich ist er jetzt zwar zufriedengestellt, aber menschlich nicht. In demselben Augenblick, wahrscheinlich zufällig, denn alle können das Gespräch nicht gehört haben, aber vielleicht doch in irgendeinem Zusammenhang, erhebt sich die ganze Gesellschaft zum Weggehen (gestern waren sie jedenfalls lange beisammen, ich hörte es, da meine Tür an das Speisezimmer grenzt). Auch der General ist sehr unruhig, bringt er aber doch das kleine Gespräch zu einer Art Ende, ehe er mit großen Schritten wegeht. Menschlich befriedigt mich ja das auch nicht sehr, warum muß ich sie quälen?, sonst ist es eine gute Lösung, ich werde wieder allein sein ohne das komische Alleinsitzen, vorausgesetzt, daß man nicht irgendeine Maßregeln ausdenken wird.” English translation in Franz Kafka, *Letters to Family, Friends and Editors*, translated by Richard and Clara Winston, (New York: Schocken Books, 1977), 232-33.

<sup>24</sup> Sander Gilman *The Jew’s Body*, (New York – London: Routledge, 1991), 20.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>26</sup> Exactly like the indictment of women’s musical abilities, until – quite recently – blind auditions became the norm – see Claudia Goldin & Cecilia Rouse “Orchestrating Impartiality. The impact of ‘blind auditions’ on female musicians,” *NBER Working Paper Series*, Working Paper 5903 <http://www.nber.org/papers/w5903.pdf>

The forgery-fake dynamic is the reason why the problem of telling Jews apart from non-Jews is an obsession of anti-Semitic propaganda. The anxiety which arises from the difficulty, nay, the impossibility, of identifying the Jew consumes the anti-Semite's psyche. From Achim von Arnim's "Über die Kennzeichen des Judenthums," published in 1812, to *Der Stürmer's* 1938 textbook for schoolchildren, *Der Giftpilz* [*The Poisonous Mushroom*],<sup>27</sup> to Goebbel's articles and speeches during the second world war, the anti-Semitic imagination is haunted by the specter of "mimicry," by the Jew's uncanny ability to escape identification through what are regarded as his praeternatural imitative abilities. The impossibility of identifying the Jew with any certainty induces an unbearable anxiety in the anti-Semite, since it calls into question the validity and applicability of the fundamental categories on which both his worldview and his construction of his own identity rest. And of course, in the anti-Semitic worldview, this impossibility is not evidence of the scrupulous honesty with which the Jews kept their side of the "rights for regeneration" deal and, consequently, of the obsolescence of the label "Jew" as an informative, indeed as a viable, social or anthropological category but, on the contrary, of the dreaded *Judenschwindel*, the "Jewish deception."

Jews are the only people who practice mimicry. Mimicry of blood, of name, and of shape. [...] But when the Jew practices mimicry, he hides his essence completely. [...] Jewish mimicry is rooted in the destiny of the race, that is, in the idea of Jewishness.<sup>28</sup>

When the Jews showed up a few weeks ago, marked with a Jewish star, at first, the population of the Reichshauptstadt was perplexed. Only very few knew that there were still that many Jews in Berlin. Everyone discovered in his area or neighborhood a contemporary [but a Jew] acting as if he was harmless, except for his occasional griping or inappropriate action but would have never recognized him as a Jew. So, obviously, he has masked himself in mimicry, adjusted to his environment in which he lived, and waited for the hour of his opportunity. Who of us would have recognized that an enemy stands right next to us who was a silent listener or skilled agitator in talks on the street, the U-Bahn, and amongst the lines assorting in front of the cigarette stores? There are Jews who can hardly be recognized

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<sup>27</sup> Ernst Hiemer, *Der Giftpilz*, (Nürnberg: Stürmer-Verlag, 1938).

<sup>28</sup> Hans Blüher, *Secessio Judaica*, (Berlin: Der Weiße Ritter, 1922), 19, my translation; the original is as follows: "Die Juden sind das einzige Volk, das Mimikry treibt. Mimikry des Blutes, des Namens und der Gestalt. [...] Wenn aber der Jude Mimikry treibt, so verbirgt er seine ganze Substanz. [...] Die jüdische Mimikry ist im Schicksal der Rasse verankert, das heißt in der Idee Juda."

from their looks. They have aligned themselves here also as much as possible. These are the most dangerous ones.<sup>29</sup>

This explains the central, and the most tragic, paradox of assimilation: the more seriously the Jews took the “assimilation contract,” and the more scrupulously they displayed their observance of their side of the deal, the more violent and rabid the majority population’s hatred of them became. What the anti-Semites desperately wanted and needed was to be able to distinguish the Jews’ “imitation” of Germanness from the “real thing,” which they considered to be their birthright, the foundation of their identity, and the justification for their being in the world. As a consequence, the more impossible it proved to tell Jews and “pure Germans” apart, the more hostility to Jews grew and spread. And one main form this hostility took was the pervasive attempt to police and control imitative practices, which of course culminated in the German 1941 law mandating the wearing of a six-pointed yellow star for all Jews over the age of six in Germany and in the annexed territories.

On an abstract level, control on imitative practices can assume two main forms. The first is that of only allowing a kind of imitation which has no connection to any claim to social recognition. This is what regularly happens when, for paratextual reasons, the forgery cannot aspire to take anyone in: Macaulay’s vision of “a class of persons Indian in blood and color, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect” (meant, of course, to be confined to India and never to darken the door of the metropolis, geographical isolation compounding the effect of physical anthropology) is a case in point.<sup>30</sup> This brand of imitation, because of its very lack of pragmatic consequences, can be brought to the highest levels of perfection without being perceived as a threat but, on the contrary, is only

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<sup>29</sup> Josef Goebbels, “Die Juden sind Schuld!,” *Der Stürmer*, 16 November 1941: “Als die Juden vor einigen Wochen, geschmückt mit ihrem Judenstern, im Berliner Stadtbild erschienen, war der erste Eindruck unter den Bürgern der Reichshauptstadt der einer allgemeinen Verblüffung. Nur die allerwenigsten wußten, daß es noch so viele Juden in Berlin gab. Jeder entdeckte in seiner Umgebung oder Nachbarschaft eiens harmlos tuenden Zeitgenossen, der zwar durch gelegentliches Meckern oder Miesmachen aufgefallen war, der aber niemand für einen Juden gehalten hätte. Er hatte sich also offenbar getarnt, Mimikry getrieben, sich in seiner Schutzfarbe dem Milieu, in dem er lebte, angepaßt und auf seine Stunde gewartet. Wer unter uns hatte auch nur eine Ahnung, da der Feind direkt neben ihm stand, daß er schweigend oder geschick antreibender Zuhörer war bei Gesprächen auf der Straße, in der U-Bahn, in den von den Zigarettenläden stehenden Schlangen? Es gibt Juden, die man kaum noch an ihrem Äußeren erkennen kann. Diese sind die gefährlichsten,” quoted in Cornelia Schmitz-Berning, *Vokabular des Nationalsozialismus*, (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2007), 606-7; English translation: [https://archive.org/stream/ItsTheFaultOfTheJews/SpeechGoebbelsItsTheFaultOfTheJews1611941\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/ItsTheFaultOfTheJews/SpeechGoebbelsItsTheFaultOfTheJews1611941_djvu.txt)

<sup>30</sup> *Minute by the Hon'ble T[homas] B[abington] Macaulay*, dated the 2nd February 1835: *Bureau of Education. Selections from Educational Records, Part I (1781-1839)*, edited by H. Sharp, (Calcutta: Superintendent, Government Printing, 1920; reprint: Delhi: National Archives of India, 1965), 107-17.



interpreted as an act of homage to the excellence and the ontological superiority of the model, much like Virgil's imitation of Homer, which, however masterly, could never aspire to the status of a fake since, after all, Homer did not write in Latin.

The second form of control, which is the exact mirror image of the first, is the brutal repression of any form of imitation which, no matter by how circuitous or paranoid an interpretation, could be read as trying to pass as an original, that is, as a fake, and the pre-emptive attribution of fraudulent or generally antisocial intentions to all imitative practices, which (with a seemingly paradoxical reaction) are punished with a violence which escalates in parallel with their pragmatic success:

The more the old Jew with his sometimes ridiculous aspect fades away, the more Jew-hatred increases. One disdained the Jew that made one laugh, but one tolerated and often even liked him; but one hates the Jew in equal position and with equal rights.<sup>31</sup>

That the more honestly the Jews kept faith to their side of the “rights for regeneration” deal,<sup>32</sup> by an ever more painstaking and successful imitation of German culture, the more vicious, violent and uncontrollable anti-Semitism became is thus tragic but not surprising: for an incompetent caricature a laugh will suffice;<sup>33</sup> for a successful fake, performed by hundreds of thousands of people over many decades, nothing short of death camps will do.

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<sup>31</sup> *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums* 1855, Heft 33 (13/8/1855), 418, my translation. The original is as follows: “[J]e mehr der alte Jude mit seinen mancherlei lächerlichen Außenseiten verschwindet, desto mehr nimmt der Judenhaß zu. Den Juden, der Stoff zum Humor gab, verachtete man zwar, aber man tolerierte [*sic*] ihn, hatte ihn oft gern, den gleichstehenden und gleichberechtigten haßt man.” (Rachel 26 Juli (Privatmitth.); quoted from <http://www.compactmemory.de/>).

<sup>32</sup> Sorkin, *The Transformation of German Jewry*, 5.

<sup>33</sup> In the early nineteenth century a number of playwrights and actors built their fortunes on unflattering portrayals of what were perceived as the typical mannerisms of unsuccessfully assimilated Jews (Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers*, 64). As the century progressed, it became increasingly clear that caricature was no longer an appropriate means to stigmatize their efforts: “As the [nineteenth] century wore on, it grew more difficult to satirize cultural assimilation precisely because German Jews were acculturating so successfully. [...] [B]y mid-century most of these embarrassing vestiges had been removed from the language and gestures of German Jews. Certainly with the rise of the organized anti-Semitic movement of the 1880s the obviously distinguishing elements had disappeared.” (ibid.).

Centre <http://cirque.unipi.it/en/>), the first center for queer studies in the Italian academic system, which she directs. For well over a decade now she has been working to integrate a number of theoretical approaches (from literary theory, personal construct psychology, queer studies, and several other fields in the human and social sciences) into a coherent and CTR usable methodological perspective.

**How to quote this article:**

Carmen Dell'Aversano, "*Literary Theory and the Jewish Condition: Assimilation as a Hypertextual Practice magazines of the seventies*," in *Miscellanea 2019*, eds. Quest Editorial Staff, *Quest. Issues in Contemporary Jewish History. Journal of Fondazione CDEC*, n. 14 December 2018

*url:* [www.quest-cdecjournal.it/](http://www.quest-cdecjournal.it/)

Liliana Picciotto, *Salvatori. Gli ebrei d'Italia sfuggiti alla Shoah. 1943-1945*, (Turin: Einaudi, 2017), pp. 590

by Juliane Wetzel

The history of the rescue of Jews in Italy during the Holocaust can only be narrated against the backdrop of the political situation at the time. Liliana Picciotto accordingly begins her in-depth study by detailing the anti-Jewish discrimination and persecution by the fascist government up to the period following the German occupation of northern Italy in September 1943, when deportations began under Mussolini's pro-German puppet government of the *Repubblica Sociale Italiana* with headquarters in Salò on Lake Garda. In addition to the hunting down of Jews, the author also discusses the dangers facing individuals who became in any way involved in rescue operations. In contrast to the situation in Poland and other Nazi-occupied countries, no one in Italy was sentenced to death if charged with assisting Jews. But when this took on the form of armed resistance, it was deemed a punishable offense in Italy, as well. However, it is essential to bear in mind that even when their lives were not at risk, the pressure upon those seeking to help Jews was immense (p. 59). Their research has led Picciotto and her team to the conclusion that clear and definitive distinctions may be impossible to draw among informants, victims, rescuers, and bystanders. Individuals would at times take on several of these roles simultaneously. They would be victims *and* helpers; a person exposed to persecution could at the very same time be a helper, as well (pp. 7ff.).

In Italy, where Jews had long been an integral part of society, the situation was unlike other lands which had come under Nazi control. In Italy Jews had held high-ranking official positions, they had been fully integrated into the economy, and with the beginning of the German occupation they were not required to wear any identifying badges on their clothing. Their options for going underground or into hiding and their chances of finding assistance were far greater than in other countries. In addition, the author points out that Jews were prepared to take steps to protect themselves, doing everything they could to secure false identity papers even when they had never previously engaged in illegal activity (p. 489). Even so, people still had to be found who were ready to take the risks involved in providing assistance. Survival depended on the state of mind of both the saviors and the saved.

In the course of empirical investigation for her study, Liliana Picciotto decided not to employ the term *salvatori* [saviors] but rather *soccorritori* [helpers], because in her view it were more frequently selective actions of assistance that were involved, and these constituted only a partial component in the final overall rescue (p. 17).

In her investigations, only in the very rare cases did she come across actual rescue activities that a single individual had organized and carried out. Similar considerations also induced the historian Wolfgang Benz at the time to designate his European project “Solidarity and Assistance for Jews during the Nazi Era.”<sup>1</sup>

However, Picciotto’s study does not have a primary focus on the rescuers, but rather, as her title underscores in the term *salvarsi* [self-rescue] – focuses on those persons who were rescued, where *salvarsi* means “saving oneself,” and thus ascribes an active role to those who were rescued. The subtitle *Gli ebrei d’Italia sfuggiti alla Shoah, 1943-1945* [The Jews of Italy Who Escaped the Shoah, 1943-1945] illuminates further the perspective that the author has adopted. Included in the analysis are also those Jews who had been able to flee to Italy after the ascent to state power of the National Socialists in Germany and the occupation of several European countries, and who were thus refugees and not Italian citizens. For that reason, in order to determine the total number, the author speaks correctly of the Jews of Italy and not the “Italian Jews.” Of the total of 38,994 Jewish individuals – Italian and foreign – 7,172 were arrested and deported, i.e. it was possible to rescue 81% (pp. 3, 16). They symbolize the “other side of the coin” against the 18% who perished in the course of the persecution. At the conclusion of nine years of intensive research, the author and her team could determine the fate of ca. one-third (10,599 persons) of the 31,822 who were rescued (p. 4).

The chapter *Numeri* [Numbers] describes in greater detail the demographic makeup of the Jews of Italy and the size of the respective Jewish communities. Interestingly, the author does not refer to her own contribution to the volume edited by Wolfgang Benz, *Dimension des Völkermords*,<sup>2</sup> in which – preceding the study by Michele Sarfatti<sup>3</sup> and parallel to Picciotto’s own large-scale investigation of the deportation of the Jews of Italy<sup>4</sup> – she provided a detailed account of the Jewish communities in Italy and the conditions prevailing in them at the time of the German occupation beginning in autumn 1943.

In the chapter *Le persone* [Individuals], 23 witnesses who survived thanks to the help of other people give their testimony, along with 25 other survivors who had managed to rescue themselves and their families. One case is described in particular

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<sup>1</sup> Series *Solidarität und Hilfe. Rettungsversuche für Juden vor der Verfolgung und Vernichtung unter nationalsozialistischer Herrschaft*, ed. Wolfgang Benz, under the auspices of the Zentrum für Antisemitismusforschung, Voll. I-VII, (Berlin: Metropol Verlag, 1996-2004).

<sup>2</sup> Liliana Picciotto Fargion, “Italien Die Annäherung an die nationalsozialistische Judenpolitik ab 1938 Die Zahl der jüdischen Opfer des Nationalsozialismus,” in *Dimension des Völkermords. die Zahl der jüdischen Opfer des Nationalsozialismus*, ed. Wolfgang Benz, (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1991), 199-227.

<sup>3</sup> Michele Sarfatti, *Gli ebrei nell’Italia fascista. Vicende, identità, persecuzione*, (Turin: Einaudi, 2000).

<sup>4</sup> Liliana Picciotto, *Il libro della memoria. Gli ebrei deportati dall’Italia (1943-1945)*, (Mursia: Milan 2000; 1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1991).

detail: in a rare combination of circumstances, the Finci family, who had fled from Sarajevo to Italy, later made their way from Parma into Switzerland (p. 5). Of the total of 682 Italian helpers honored by Yad Vashem, the author and her team were able to interview two who have also been officially honored in Italy for their acts of solidarity and support. Their detailed narratives are part of the book, as well (pp. 337-43).

Picciotto apologizes to a certain extent for the fact that although much is conveyed here about the history of the rescue of the Jews in Italy, it is of course not everything. She notes that the study was only able to spotlight what transpired, providing insight into the efforts for rescue and the persons involved there as actors. A selection had to be made during the investigation, and she stresses that others might possibly have chosen a different approach. It is unfortunate perhaps that she does not tell the story of the renowned racing cyclist Gino Bartali, since Picciotto tends to concentrate more on those rescued rather than the helpers. Bartali is only mentioned in a footnote (p. 188).<sup>5</sup>

Three times the winner of the *Giro d'Italia* (1936, 1937, 1946) and twice of the *Tour de France* (1938 and 1948), under German occupation in Italy Bartali found a specialized calling.<sup>6</sup> Under the pretext of doing training runs, he delivered false documents, which he would transport hidden inside the frame of his racing bike, to Jews in Toscana. Shuttling back and forth between his hometown, Florence, and Assisi, Bartali also undertook trips to Rome, serving as the courier for an inter-religious helpers' group composed of Jews, Christians, and atheists.<sup>7</sup> Bartali passed away in 2000; the media today compares him with Giorgio Perlasca, who impersonated the Italian ambassador in wartime Budapest to supply thousands of Jews with forged safe-conduct passes.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Aili McConnon & Andres McConnon, *Road to Valor: A True Story of World War II Italy, the Nazis and the Cyclist Who Inspired a Nation*, (New York: Crown Publishers, 2012; Italian edition 2013: *La strada del coraggio. Gino Bartali, eroe silenzioso*, Rome 2013). Michele Sarfatti, former director of CDEC, has written an article on Bartali's rescue activities which, to his mind, are to be questioned, at the very least. See Michele Sarfatti, [Gino Bartali e la fabbricazione di carte di identità per gli ebrei nascosti a Firenze](http://www.michelesarfatti.it/documenti-e-commenti/gino-bartali-e-la-fabbricazione-di-carte-di-identita-per-gli-ebrei-nascosti-a-firenze), "Documenti e commenti," n. 2 (upload January 17, 2017; last update February 3, 2017) at: <http://www.michelesarfatti.it/documenti-e-commenti/gino-bartali-e-la-fabbricazione-di-carte-di-identita-gli-ebrei-nascosti-firenze>.

<sup>6</sup> See Juliane Wetzel, "Retter in der Not? Das faschistische Italien und die Hilfe für jüdische Verfolgte," in *Solidarität und Hilfe für Juden während der NS-Zeit*, eds. Wolfgang Benz and Juliane Wetzel, Regionalstudien 4, (Berlin: Metropol Verlag, 2004), 281-366.

<sup>7</sup> ZENIT (online), Internationale Nachrichten Agentur der Katholischen Kirche, German version, April 9, 2003; *Corriere della sera*, April 3, 2003: <http://www.corriere.it/edicola/index.jsp?path=INTERNI&doc=BARTALI>, accessed 16 April 2018.

<sup>8</sup> Giorgio Perlasca, *L'impostore*, (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1997); Enrico Deaglio, *La banalità del bene. Storia di Giorgio Perlasca*, (Milan: Feltrinelli 1991).

In April 2003, a report in the international press stated that Giorgio Nissim's actions to rescue endangered Jews, and his group, including Gino Bartali, had only become known in their full totality by a new discovery of sources. Giorgio Nissim's children had discovered correspondence and a report by a contemporary witness that two historians had investigated, under the direction of Liliana Picciotto (CDEC).<sup>9</sup> Nissim, who passed away in 1976, provides insight into the work of the group in his notes written in 1969 and published under the auspices of the Florence Regional Council in 2005.<sup>10</sup> There he observes:

I set up a forgery workshop in a room in a secluded sisters' convent, and frequently the priests themselves would forge the signatures on the IDs. [...] Whenever possible I would go to Genoa in order to obtain some funds from Father (Francesco) Repetto,<sup>11</sup> Secretary to the Archbishop. I would then pass them on to Father [an oblate priest from Lucca] in order to cover the expenses of our operations.<sup>12</sup>

Nissim also notes that the Catholic Relief Network had been commissioned to "initiate contact [with Nissim's group], and this order had come from Pope Pius XII himself."<sup>13</sup> Unfortunately, this important contemporary document goes unmentioned in Picciotto's new book, despite its detailing the history of the network. In 1999, Yad Vashem recognized Nissim's group as "Righteous among the Nations."<sup>14</sup>

Unfortunately, devoid of any mention in Picciotto's study is also the mountain climber from Milano, Ettore Castiglioni, who saved the lives of many Jews and of persecuted anti-fascists, helping to bring them, together with his pupils across the Swiss mountains into security. In his diary, first published in 1993,<sup>15</sup> Castiglioni, who died in 1944 after returning to Italy, mentions not just his experiences in the Alps but also reports about the actions to rescue Jews in danger. Parallel with the

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<sup>9</sup> ZENIT (online), International News Agency of the Catholic Church.

<sup>10</sup> Giorgio Nissim, *Memorie di un ebreo toscano (1938-48)*, ed. Liliana Picciotto Fargion, (Rome: Carocci, 2005). See also: Consiglio Regionale della Toscana, Servizio Informazione, *Giorgio Nissim: il Consiglio pubblicherà i diari sulla "rete" che salvò 800 ebrei*, press release, May 28, 2003.

<sup>11</sup> Don Francesco Repetto, Secretary to Cardinal Pietro Boetto, organized a group of helpers which he later expanded into a rescue network. The rescuers provided support for hundreds of Jews and assisted many in making it across the border into Switzerland. See Susan Zuccotti, "Pope Pius XII and the Holocaust: The Case in Italy," in *The Italian Refuge. Rescue of Jews during the Holocaust*, ed. Ivo Herzer, (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1989), 268.

<sup>12</sup> Nissim, *Memorie di un ebreo toscano*, 99-102.

<sup>13</sup> Quoted *kath.net/ZENIT.org online*, April 10, 2003.

<sup>14</sup> *AGI-online*, April 28, 2003, quotes a statement by Liliana Picciotto Fargion.

<sup>15</sup> Ettore Castiglioni, *Il giorno delle Mésules: Diario di un alpinista antifascista*, ed. Marco Albino Ferrari, (1993).

new edition of his diary in 2017, a documentary film was brought out,<sup>16</sup> about Castiglioni and his rescue actions, a man glorified by fascist propaganda as a great alpinist climber.<sup>17</sup> The envisioned honor for him as a “Righteous Among the Nations” in Yad Vashem is still in the process of final approval. In Italy, Castiglioni was honored in 2016 by name on a memorial plaque in the Parco Groane, the “Forest of the Righteous” near Solaro north of Milan.<sup>18</sup>

Today in Italy it is not only Bartali and Castiglioni who are known for their activism in assisting Jews during the Holocaust. Similarly alive in Italian memory is the story of a group of refugee children, whose rescue odyssey took them from Germany and Austria via Yugoslavia – Croatia and Slovenia – to Italy and from there to Switzerland, whence they ultimately went on to Palestine.<sup>19</sup> In Italy, the 73 Jewish children, aged 14 to 16, lived for a year at “Villa Emma,” a term which today still serves as a name for the refugee group as a whole; the villa itself is located in the small town of Nonantola near Modena. Picciotto describes in detail the story of the teenagers’ life there (pp. 82-86). Their fate has also become the basis of a German-Austrian film broadcast for the first time on Austrian television as “*Die Kinder der Villa Emma*” in 2016 and in March 2018 on TV (ARD) in Germany.<sup>20</sup>

Picciotto deals in detail with the attitude of the Catholic Church toward the Jews during WWII (pp. 164-219). The author reports about monasteries and special church facilities where Jews were in hiding, providing numbers that the research team has confirmed. The usefulness of this may appear questionable at first glance. However, approaching the book about “the rescued” as a handbook with a list of the names of those rescued and their helpers will make the significance of this Sisyphean project clear.

The role of the Catholic Church and of Pope Pius XII in particular in the destruction of the Jews in Europe is controversial; debate concerning this has

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<sup>16</sup> *Oltre il confine. La storia di Ettore Castiglioni* [Beyond the border. The story of Ettore Castiglioni].

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.filmitalia.org/p.aspx?t=film&l=en&did=114130>, accessed April 16, 2018. Film Italy/Switzerland 2017; <http://www.oltreilconfine.com/>, accessed 16 April 2018; [https://www.swissinfo.ch/ita/aiut%C3%B2-ebrei-e-antifascisti\\_ettore-castiglioni-un-alpinista-in-cerca-di-libert%C3%A0/43748262](https://www.swissinfo.ch/ita/aiut%C3%B2-ebrei-e-antifascisti_ettore-castiglioni-un-alpinista-in-cerca-di-libert%C3%A0/43748262), accessed April 16, 2018.

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.parcogroane.it/visita-il-parco/cosa-vedere/il-bosco-dei-giusti/>; here the memorial plaque: [http://www.parcogroane.it/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/20150710\\_123025.jpg](http://www.parcogroane.it/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/20150710_123025.jpg), accessed April 16, 2018.

<sup>19</sup> Klaus Voigt, *Villa Emma, Jüdische Kinder auf der Flucht 1940-1945*, (Berlin: Metropol Verlag 2001), Italian edition: *Villa Emma. Ragazzi ebrei in fuga. 1940-1945*, (Milan: La Nuova Italia, 2002).

<sup>20</sup> *Il muro e la bambina* (*The Wall and the Girl*), a film by Silvia Staderoli (Vivo film, Rome, 2013), was temporarily available online at <https://youtu.be/iuWYv9wcYPs> in Italian with German subtitles (accessed 21 April 2018).

continued since the 1960s.<sup>21</sup> The two volumes by Sister Margherita Marchione and Antonio Gaspari focus on assistance given to Jews by representatives of the Catholic Church. The two publications are marked by whitewashing and are occasionally apologetic in tone and approach; they also contain a wealth of material which cannot be accepted without additional verification.<sup>22</sup> Both books quote numerous statements made by survivors after the war, which repeatedly exaggerate the assistance provided by the Church and the Pope. This is due to the survivors' extrapolating from individual help they were given to the leadership of the Catholic Church, as well as to their believing much-circulated pronouncements about the Vatican's having indeed arranged for assistance to be provided to Jews.

During the German occupation, several thousand Jews found shelter in church facilities, some for only a few days and others for longer periods, with some actually remaining in hiding for the entire duration of the war. Others wandered continually in search of a new location in monasteries, parsonages, church institutes or with private families.<sup>23</sup> The issue of gilding the memory of help provided by the Church needs to be singled out. In Rome – to cite a leading example – of the hundreds of parish churches, more than 1,000 church-connected institutions for women, and 152 institutions for men which were in existence at the time, only an estimated 100 women's convents and 55 institutions for men, including 11 parish churches, accepted Jews or were otherwise helpful in any way.<sup>24</sup> Even if these figures require slight readjusting with the addition of another few instances of assistance, the numbers speak for themselves as a commentary on the widespread notion of comprehensive assistance provided by the Church. This critical assessment of the attitude of the Church notwithstanding, individual representatives of the Church, monasteries and Catholic Church relief organizations did help Jews, in Italy as well as in many other countries under German occupation, rescuing them from deportation and death.

Picciotto is critical of the Resistance (the National Liberation Committees [*Comitati di Liberazione Nazionale*]), because they were slow to recognize the threat that Jews were facing. The Italian Resistance was not interested in the Jews

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<sup>21</sup> On the role of individuals, see Michaelis, *Mussolini and the Jews*, 240-247; José M. Sánchez, *Pius XII und der Holocaust. Anatomie einer Debatte*, (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh Verlag, 2003), Introduction and passim; *A sessant'anni dalle leggi razziali*, interventi di Guido Bolaffi, Francesco Margiotta Broglio, Michele Sarfatti, Mario Toscano, in *API* 5/6 (1998): 14.

<sup>22</sup> Margherita Marchione, *Yours is a Precious Witness: Memoirs of Jews and Catholics in Wartime Italy*, (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1997); Antonio Gaspari, *Nascosti in convento. Incredibili storie di ebrei salvati dalla deportazione (Italia 1943-45)*, (Milano: Ancora, 1999).

<sup>23</sup> Picciotto, *Salvarsi*, 166, speaks of a third of the Jewish population in Rome; Attilio Milano, *Storia degli ebrei in Italia*, (Turin: Einaudi, 1992), 404, estimates more than 4,000 Jews in Italy in total, which seems to be too high.

<sup>24</sup> Susan Zuccotti, *Under his Very Windows: The Vatican and the Holocaust in Italy*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 201.



overall. Nevertheless, there are numerous instances of individual partisans or Resistance committees who helped Jews in danger. In addition, the younger Jews who had joined the Resistance were – unlike what happened in other countries – accepted into the ranks of anti-fascist forces. The author suggests that some 19 per cent of the Jews who fought in the *Resistenza* lost their lives in partisan operations (p. 153). But she also points out that the topic of Jewish members of the Resistance has still not been thoroughly researched (p. 155).

Picciotto states that when she began her book project in 2007, only a few references were available to published books that touched on the topic of solidarity with and assistance to Jews in Italy during the Holocaust. She seems to have unfortunately overlooked the fact that the Center for Research on Anti-Semitism at the TU Berlin had – in the late 1990s and early 2000s – carried out a larger-scale project, addressing solidarity and assistance for Jews in Europe during WWII; the case of Italy is extensively documented and discussed in Vol. 7 of this series, based largely on source materials kept at the *Centro di Documentazione Ebraica Contemporanea* (CDEC) in Milan and material then available at the “Righteous among the Nations” department at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem.<sup>25</sup> The oversight appears to have been due to the fact that the series appeared in German and consequently went unremarked upon by the Italian research team, who must have been on the lookout for national publications on the question.

The essential merit of the present study, based on many long years of research that perhaps developed at times with an excessive concern for tiny details, is the fact that a reference work has been produced here – to a certain degree a veritable encyclopedia of the rescued – which documents countless names of persecuted Jews, in each case with brief reference to their story, and in a broader frame, the fate and whereabouts of their families.

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This article was translated from German by William Templer

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<sup>25</sup> Wetzel, “Retter in der Not?”

Liliana Picciotto, *Salvarsi. Gli ebrei d'Italia sfuggiti alla Shoah. 1943-1945*, (Turin: Einaudi, 2017), pp. 590

by Gabriella Gribaudi

With the publication of her *Salvarsi*, Liliana Picciotto brings to completion a monumental research project extending deep into documents and memory. As the author explains in the introduction, the volume forms a complement to her *Il libro della memoria*, published in 1991, wherein she records the stories of victims who lost their lives in Nazi extermination camps. A counterpart to this, the new study a sort of “other side of the coin” the trials and the trajectories of the survivors – the title’s “saved.”

9 years of painstaking research, including 613 interviews and extensive work with national and international documentary sources, have led to the reconstruction of 10,599 narratives – out of the total number of 31,822 Italian Jews who survived the war thanks, in part, to the efforts of others. Studying the biographies of the saved and of their saviors, the author reflects on a spectrum of key issues: modalities of rescue, regional differences, social characteristics of communities and individuals, the role of the Church, and the contribution of the Resistance. The testimony of visual images and documented figures intersects with eye witness accounts, so that ultimately a composite picture emerges, conveying the nuances and the fluidity of a context too complex to be exhaustively broken down into rigid categories. The book aims to demonstrate precisely this: to bring to light the infinite flux of the predicaments in which rescue took place, and to understand in depth the dynamics that have generated them. What qualities did the saved share in common? Courage? Social bonds? Financial resources? What motivated the saviors? To address these questions, Picciotto reconstructs the contexts of the events’ unfolding. Ahistorical stills and timeless medallions that preserve isolated moments are unhelpful when it comes to understanding human causality; only the totality of dynamic context can enable insight into how people came to be saved and how and why individuals reached out to rescue fugitives.

The book’s chapters are a flowing unity of instances, contexts, individual personalities, and institutions, through which ways to salvation took shape. The focus shifts by turns to rescue efforts in Italy and Switzerland, the Resistance, the Catholic world, assistance networks, and particular communities; individual skills, inventiveness, ability to adapt, and courage are taken in next; social networking, generosity, group and individual selflessness enable another angle of vision; geography, war zones, the urban world and rural settings also form part of the list. The book analyzes salvation strategies, addressing the role of information and economic resources, the helpfulness of social networks, ways of covering fugitives’

tracks, the nomadism of escapee families, and the complexity and continuity involved in modifying ways to safety.

There is a long chapter devoted to life stories; stories of individuals and family groups underscore the complexity of the composite picture. The narratives, pieced together from oral and videotaped interviews, emerge as the orality and the dialogic give-and-take of each interview are translated into statements recounting the events that accompanied the fugitives *en route* to being saved. The doubts, the hesitation, the silences – none of the typical indications of orality are preserved in the accounts. But it was in a certain sense a choice following the questions posed by the book and the desire to show almost in its entirety the outline of the research and to offer as many individual events as possible. The emergent corpus of recorded stories represents a crucial documentary archive that future scholars will be able to investigate from many as yet unknowable points of view.

A long chapter close to the end of the book reflects on the overall canvas formed by the historical events that the book addresses. Italians had remained indifferent when the racial laws of 1938 went into effect. The author notes the “incredibly low... number of people who showed solidarity with the Jews publicly humiliated and banned from society.” Intellectuals who openly objected to the racial laws or to specific instances of discrimination that the laws were invoked as the basis for, could be counted on the fingers of one hand.

The fascist regime was harsh in repressing opponents, but left its citizens in peace overall, on condition that they address nothing but their daily lives. [...] Few people evinced much concern for the fact that between 1938 and 1943 Jews had been discriminated against and marginalized in the life of the nation; many thought it best to have nothing to do with the matter. The impression is that not all those who stopped having anything to do with the Jews were fanatical fascists; they were rather folks who simply did not want get into any trouble. (p.57)

This attitude changed with the beginning of deportations in 1943. Seeing the unambiguous death warrant which the deportations spelled out for entire families made many Italians shift from silent indifference to active assistance. As Picciotto explains, this was a matter not of “strategic conduct,” but of “private altruism”: the rescuers responded to their own humanity and personal impulse of compassion. Being physically indistinguishable from the Italians around them and well integrated into Italian society was to the Jews’ advantage, as was the fact that no primacy was ascribed to race and racial origins in fascist ideology. From the typical Italian’s point of view at the time, fascist ideology was shallow; it proved ephemeral. In fact, the regime’s rites and propaganda had left room for “individual action and unconventional thinking to be exercised among close family or circles of friends, where people were allowed to mock the Duce and his campaigns

without evincing much veneration for the new myths” (p.490). Fascist propaganda failed to turn the Jews into aliens in the minds of Italian civilians. This meant that the Jews continued to be thought of as human beings in danger no less than many others in wartime. And like many others, they were offered help. The proffering of succor was the expression of a spontaneous attitude typical of Italian society at the time: Italians would provide assistance to whomever needed to flee, hide, or find shelter.

The 31,822 saved Jews were part of a second, submerged Italy, which was made up of thousands of individuals in need of help: soldiers escaped from their barracks because they refused to fight alongside the Germans, Allied POWs escaped from internment quarters, political dissidents, Jews.... [...] Rescuers were urged to help anybody, not only the Jews, in a context created by Allied bombings, food shortages, enormous difficulty of maintaining communications, fear for the lives of sons and brothers at the front, and pleas for help from impoverished civilians. In this setting, rescuers responded with solidarity not only but also to Jews; a popular mentality of a new kind had emerged. (pp. 495-496)

Jews were among the myriads of others clandestinely floating about a “submerged” Italy to seek asylum and relief. The rescue they would be offered was impulsive and humanitarian. The Church and its intermediary institutions, priests, parishes, and convents, was one of the few organizations to offer protection and aid to the needy at the time; it provided real help without discriminating against Jewish refugees. “During 1943-45, compassion for the miserable of any category was exercised without restraint, making the Catholic world a principal source of aid for thousands of the persecuted” (p. 502).

Picciotto emphasizes that it was not the organized Resistance, which never made the struggle against racism or anti-Semitism one of its declared objectives, that helped fugitive Jews, but a “civilian, unarmed, and non-politicized resistance arisen among a people weary of war, of the regime’s rhetoric, of Nazi violence, of the alliance with Germany, of harsh living conditions, of Allied bombardments” (p.140). It was “a type of primordial anti-fascism, not necessarily premeditated, often spontaneous, and practiced by small everyday heroes, not at all revolutionaries or nonconformists” (p. 498). Rescuers would often be unaware of the ethical or political import of their actions. Picciotto sums up by describing the rescue of 81% of Italy’s Jews as a phenomenon of “collective resilience,” (p.506) a type of resilience central to the mindset of the Jews, who acted with “resistance to adversity, with wisdom, foresight, adaptation, and timeliness of action,” (p.506) as well as the resilience of the rescuers “who, put in individual contact with Jews in danger, opted for principles of humanity“ to resist fascist dictates. The book’s final lines resound with significance for the world of today, when many countries close their doors to refugees fleeing wars and massacres. “We must look with

reverence upon individuals who thought the care of others an absolute value, revolutionizing the common mentality of their time, which consisted of fear, mistrust and inhumanity” (p.507). Unfortunately, these are words that could also be adapted to the situation today, when political parties and movements in Europe are once again spreading xenophobia and mistrust.

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Zvi Yehuda, *The New Babylonian Diaspora. The Rise and Fall of the Jewish Community in Iraq, 16th-20th Centuries C.E.*, (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2017), pp. xvi+310.

by Esther Meir-Glitzenstein

The narrative establishing the antiquity of the Babylonian Jewish community is central to Iraqi Jews' sense of identity. The narrative posits an uninterrupted Jewish presence in the Babylon of once, beginning more than 2,500 years ago, from the time of the destruction of the First Temple and the Judean exile in the 6th century BCE until the mass Jewish emigration from Iraq in the mid-20th century. It suggests that Iraqi Jews are the descendants of the Jews of ancient Babylon, making the legacy of the great Jewish community of ancient times – the seat of the prosperous cultural center that helmed Jewish cultural growth for hundreds of years – an indelible part of the history of modern Iraqi Jewry.

This narrative acquired unique significance following the establishment of the independent state of Iraq in the 1920s. The narrative's chronology provided a basis for the Jews' demand that as an integral element of the country's indigenous population, they needed to be granted equal civil rights and the opportunity to be actively involved in all state concerns including the new state's economic, social, and cultural life. Heads of the Iraqi Jewish community and its intellectual elite upheld this traditional account of the origins of Iraqi Jewry; the narrative was accepted by both Moslems and Jews in Iraq. It also gave the Jews a sense of pride in being heirs to a native population who preceded Islam in Iraq, having arrived in the region a thousand years prior to the beginning of Moslem rule.

The continuity of Jewish life in Babylon forms the core of *The New Babylonian Diaspora: The Rise and Fall of the Jewish Community in Iraq, 16th-20th Centuries C.E.*, an innovative, fascinating new study by Dr. Zvi Yehuda. The subject is approached from two directions: the first part of the book traces the history of the Jewish community in what was once Mesopotamia over the last 500 years, while the second focuses on four formative developments in this period.

As its title suggests, the work begins by detailing the unraveling of the prosperous Jewish community in the period of the Geonim, a process paralleling the political and economic disintegration of the Abbasid Caliphate, and goes on to the destruction of Baghdad, the Abbasid capital, by Mongol invaders in the 14th century. Two hundred years later, Babylonian Jewry began to revive, a gradual reemergence which continued for the next several hundred years, reaching a peak in the 20th century.

While the Talmudic and Gaonic periods have been the subject of outstanding studies by established scholars from Israel and abroad, little has been written on

the region's Jews after the decline of the Babylonian cultural center and the physical destruction of the communities which it directed. This paucity in research reflects both limited interest and the dearth of primary sources pertaining to events in the region after it had ceased functioning as a focal center for world Jewry as a whole.

Dr. Yehuda grapples with these lacunae. Based on a broad scholarly literature to date, his book, unprecedented in scope, is a detailed examination of an extensive collection of sources that include previously unstudied documents in Hebrew, Arabic, English, and French. This forms the first in-depth study of the renewal of Babylonian Jewry. Most importantly, it sheds light on the 15th-century "black hole" in the history of the region's Jews; no information has previously been made available on Babylonian Jewry during this period. Albeit lack of knowledge cannot form a solid grounding for inference the author's data about the breakdown of infrastructure in the region, the drastic drop in population, and the political and economic decline of the city of Baghdad and Mesopotamia as a whole, provides an understanding of destruction whose impact clearly reached far beyond the Jewish community. The 1000s saw the beginning of the unraveling of the Babylonian Jewish center, ultimately followed by a general regional collapse in the wake of the sack of Baghdad by the Mongols. A miniscule part of the native population remained in the region; many Jews immigrated to neighboring countries: Persia, Syria, and Lebanon. Others ventured further, moving to Egypt, North Africa, Spain, and countries of Christian Europe.

A new Babylonian diaspora began to take shape in the 16th century, when Jews from Persia, Kurdistan, Syria, and other lands, migrated to Iraq. It seems that few members of the then Baghdadi community were directly descended from Babylonian Jews. These findings raise important questions about the languages spoken by the new Jewish arrivals and the religious and cultural traditions of the emergent community. These issues are not touched upon in Dr. Yehuda's book; they await research to be done in the future.

The second part of the book considers four 18-20th century incidents which took place in Baghdad and Basra and which had far reaching repercussions for the relations among Jews, Christians, and Moslems. The four incidents were prompted by the workings of the system of colonial rule and its economic and political impact in the region; Jewish activists and organizations in Constantinople, Paris, and London seeking to help their brethren in the East, contributed their share to the unfolding of events. The episodes showcase the political and cultural network functioning as a major source of support for the Jews of Babylon-Iraq.

The first three of the four incidents took place under Ottoman rule. The earliest, a confrontation between Jews and Christians in Basra, was prompted in 1791 by

claims that Christians had killed a Jew for religious sacrifice; the second involved the struggle of Babylonian Jews in 1860 to retain control over Ezekiel's grave; and the third, the dispute over the gravesite of Joshua the High Priest in the vicinity of Baghdad, took place in connection with the burial of Rabbi Abdallah Somekh in 1889. Jews were the ones to initiate the conflict in all three cases, the key difference being that while they challenged Christians in the first, the two episodes from the 1800s involved Baghdadi Moslems. The dispute over the grave of Ezekiel ended in a Jewish triumph, but the other two conflicts, particularly the last, spelled out a loss for the Jews, leading to the imprisonment of a number of Baghdad's Jewish community leaders.

The colonial Jewish and Ottoman Jewish networks were asked to intervene in each of these cases. All of their records indicate an improvement in the economic status of Jews and a rise in Jewish population, level of modern education, and contact with the European Jewish world as well as, through this, with the European powers.

Fourth and last on Dr. Yehuda's itemized list are the Baghdad anti-Jewish "Farhud" pogrom. This took place in 1941 in sovereign Iraq. The violence left some 180 Jews dead and hundreds more wounded, amid extensive damage and looting of Jewish homes and property. Much has been written about the disturbances, with special attention focused on their political aspects and chronology. The innovativeness offered by Dr. Yehuda's chapter on the *Farhud* is in its near-exclusive focus on the unmediated voices of members of the Jewish community, and its being structured around testimonials that enable a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the trauma the pogrom entailed. The author details the unfolding of the pogrom events, which are considered a watershed in Iraqi Jewish history and the beginning of a marked decline in Jewish life in Iraq. The birth of the State of Israel further undermined the status of Iraqi Jews. 1950-1951 saw the *en masse* exodus of most of them to Israel; those remaining departed for England and North America in subsequent years. The end of the second Babylonian diaspora had become a reality.

It is clear that the new work by Dr. Yehuda forms a unique contribution to the study of the Iraqi Jewish community in the modern era. The book will undoubtedly serve as a foundation for further research, which will shed new light on the religious, social, and cultural characteristics of Jewish life in Iraq.

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Lisa Moses Leff, *The Archive Thief. The Man Who Salvaged French History in the Wake of the Holocaust*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 304.

by *Elissa Bemporad*

On April 13, 1961, a world-renowned scholar of French Jewish history, Zosa Szajkowski, was caught red-handed in the process of stealing documents from the municipal archives of the city of Strasbourg. He had lacerated precious archival collections. One of the items Szajkowski had been about to carry away was a 14th-century parchment which he had ripped out of the archival registers' binding. Besides constituting a legal crime, the theft represented a disavowal of the rules of the historian's craft, as well as an act of deception against the archivists, the historian's comrades-in-arms who had guarded the primary sources, entrusting them briefly to the bona fide researcher for reverent, painstaking use. And what about the work of future scholars? How would they ever be able to write history without having access to documentary sources known and recorded as extant?

In a gripping tour de force which at times reads like a detective story, Lisa Leff captures the deep ambiguity at the heart of the work of a man who, while devoted to the preservation of Jewish historical sources, also engaged in looting these very same documents. Pillaging documents from archival collections in Europe and selling them across the US and Israel to special collections and university libraries at Harvard, Brandeis, UTS, JTS, YIVO, and the Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People in Jerusalem, Szajkowski became one of the most significant and problematic figures in the history of twentieth-century Jewish archives. Acting both as a rescuer and as a destructive force in the preservation of Jewish sources, he removed unique originals from state archives to create new collections. Based on a detailed study of Szajkowski's heroic – as well as criminal – life and work, Leff strings together the emotional stages of his involvement with documents and archives. Always a compulsive collector, Szajkowski reclaimed Jewish documents across Europe during and after World War II, reshaping entire archival collections. He exploited these materials for his own research, publishing, in just a few years, more books and academic articles than most scholars do in a lifetime. In the wake of the Holocaust, Szajkowski experienced taking possession of these documents as a heroic act of revenge against European anti-Semitism. He thus “rescued” Jewish documents from France, a country where the local authorities had facilitated the deportation of tens of thousands of Jews. Secretly trading the stolen documents with the best buyers on the market was also Szajkowski's way of supporting himself: his extraordinary erudition and talent notwithstanding, his lack of formal education and academic degrees made it impossible for him to obtain a university employment.

One of the many virtues of Leff's book is that it never loses sight of the context and the way this impacted Szajkowski's actions and choices. Chapters Two and

Eight in particular are exemplary of the art of history writing. Chapter Two examines the origins of Szajkowski's uncontrollable passion for books and collecting. This obsession grew out of the Yiddish-speaking East European diaspora in Paris of the 1920s and '30s. Growing up here among immigrant scholars, activists and intellectuals, the future history burglar forged a lasting friendship with Elias and Riva Tcherikower, who are to this day credited with preserving the records of anti-Jewish violence unleashed during the Civil War in Ukraine. In their Paris apartment the couple had amassed the monumental record group 81 of the YIVO archives, detailing the Ukrainian pogroms of 1918-1921 and a sine qua non for the study of the events of 1918-1921 today. The Tcherikowers became Szajkowski's mentors and family, passing on to him the fixation to collect in the wake of destruction. Chapters Three and Four chronicle the continued impact of recent history on Szajkowski's shifting passions and obsessions. With the outbreak of World War II, Szajkowski enlisted in the French Foreign Legion, and went on to collect materials on behalf of YIVO, salvaging archives and sending the materials he had obtained to America in a desperate act of devotion to scholarship and to Jewish history. The deaths of his family members in Auschwitz and his awareness of the part that neighbors had played in the Holocaust made Szajkowski bitterly resentful of the French state. He remained convinced that Europe would never be a safe place for Jews or for their cultural treasures: "Saving those books amounts to saving the People of the Book", wrote Szajkowski (p. 127).

But Szajkowski went on collecting and looting even when it was no longer an issue of salvaging historical record and testimony from persecution or destruction; committing larceny and fraud against institutions of the post-WWII West would no longer be accepted as moral. YIVO research director Max Weinreich, who had initially encouraged Szajkowski to remain in Europe to pursue the hunt for Jewish books and surviving documents, later reprimanded him for doing so; in the 1950s he called Szajkowski's ethics into question. Chapter Eight, one of Leff's most compelling, focuses on the buyers of the looted treasure. The author reminds us that Szajkowski was not the only one to operate in the postwar chaos of Judaica rescue, amid the emotional trauma and the absence of the murdered people. The archivists and cultural activists in America and Israel who purchased from Szajkowski, without keeping any acquisition records, hundreds of thousands of pages of rare documents and stolen books and periodicals, were equally responsible for the violation of law and ethics they were jointly committing with their illicit vendor. They, too, chose to disregard the moral questions involved in the sale of the looted collections. We might believe the buyers to have been driven by a sense of mission to (re)gain possession of Jewish cultural treasures lost during the war and to (re)constitute their own initiatives into new centers of Jewish lore and learning. Granting this, the archive thief might find justification by blaming the Jewish world for not having supported him as a scholar, thus implicating world Jewry in his crimes. The dealer and the buyers formed two sides of the same coin,

a coin tossed by history and caught between destruction and preservation at all costs.

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Gao Bei, *Shanghai Sanctuary. Chinese and Japanese Policy toward European Jewish Refugees during World War II*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 185.

by Laura De Giorgi

Based on extensive archival research in China, Japan, the United States and the United Kingdom, this book is a study of the policies adopted by the Chinese Nationalist Government and the Japanese Empire toward the Jews who, in the late 1930s, were compelled to leave Europe and arrived in Shanghai. For these refugees the cosmopolitan and semi-colonial metropolis on the Yangzi river became the “port of last resort” – as in the title of the 1998 documentary by Paul Rosdy and Joan Grossman and the 2002 book by Marcia Ristaino – where they managed to escape Nazi persecution thanks to the *de facto* protection provided by the Japanese occupiers of the city after 1937.

Since the 1990s, their experience has become a topic of historical research, and, at the same time, the memory of the events has had an important part in the cultural diplomacy between China and Israel, as the visits to the so-called “Shanghai ghetto” by the last survivors and the several memoirs written by the protagonists show. Gao Bei’s book draws upon this literature, among other sources, to reconstruct the experience of European Jews in the “Shanghai sanctuary”; but her main goal is to understand what made this experience possible. The answer to this question is to be found in Chinese and Japanese strategy in international politics in wartime.

The premise of Gao Bei’s book is that anti-Semitism has no cultural or historical roots in East Asia. In China, a community of Jews, most of them in the city of Kaifeng, had lived peacefully for centuries. Later, after the First Opium War, several Baghdadi Jews, most of whom became British nationals, moved to Shanghai. They were among the most important players in the development of the metropolis, amassing great fortunes from trade and real estate business. Among them were families such as the Sassoons, the Hardoons and the Kadoories. From the Chinese and the Japanese points of view, this Jewish community was primarily representative of the West, as no obvious racial or religious features seemed to make them different from the Western colonial élite. Besides, awareness of the Jewish question and of the Zionist movement was mediated by the Western press in East Asia; Chinese nationalists such as Sun Yat-sen treated them with empathy as an embodiment of the same patriotic spirit that was supposed to inspire the Chinese in their struggle for their homeland. Gao Bei argues that these feelings impeded the development of anti-Semitism among Chinese political élites, while in Japan, by contrast, especially among the military, a negative attitude towards Jews began to emerge in the 1920s as a consequence of European – particularly Russian and German – anti-Semitism. As a matter of fact, it is quite

evident that several stereotypes, especially the view of the Jews as a transnational, rich and powerful capitalist élite, affected both the Chinese and the Japanese way of treating Jewish refugees in wartime. As the author explicitly affirms, "Both China and Japan formulated plans to use Jewish financial power to achieve final victory in the war" (p.55).

The most important consideration impacting Chinese and Japanese political choices concerning the Jews who had reached – or attempted to reach – Shanghai was relations with Germany and with the United States. Though Gao Bei argues that the Chinese Nationalists, unlike the Japanese, were also motivated by humanitarian reasons, decisions were effectively taken based on an estimate of the greatest possible political benefits.

The third chapter focuses on Chinese plans to settle Jewish refugees in unoccupied China during the war, such as the one formulated in 1939 by Sun Ke, Sun Yat-sen's son and a prominent member of the Nationalist Party. The plan depended on American Jewish financial assistance; it was considered essential for winning the support of American public opinion for Chinese resistance against Japan. However, American funding proved impossible, leading to the failure of the plan, as the Chinese had insufficient financial and political means to protect the Jews on their own. According to the author, the Chinese Nationalists were not supportive of German anti-Semitic policy, even though they were careful not to damage their relations with Berlin in the first years of the war. As evidence of this, Gao Bei argues that steps taken by Chinese consuls in Europe, such as in the well-known case of He Fengshan in Vienna, who granted European Jews visas for Shanghai, were actually consistent with instructions issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, despite some pro-German Nationalist Party leaders' opposition. As Gao Bei affirms, though visas were not required to get to Shanghai, the Nationalists issued them for symbolic reasons, as a sign of Chinese sovereignty; in addition, visas were required by the Nazi authorities in order for Jewish refugees to leave their country.

The book's last two chapters are a detailed study of Japan's Jewish policy, covering, beyond the case of Shanghai, plans to settle Jews in Manzhouguo (Manchukuo) and focusing especially on the role of the so-called "Jewish experts" in the Japanese military, such as Yasue Norihiro in Manchuria and Inuzuka Koreshige in Shanghai. Manchuria, where a community of Russian Jews continued to exist until the 1930s, and Shanghai were strongly connected in the way the Japanese thought of Jewish presence in China. Japanese policy is analyzed in light of inner conflicts unfolding within the Japanese army and their impact on Japanese foreign policy and wartime military strategy. From 1937 to late 1939, the Japanese "Jewish experts" worked to create the conditions to facilitate Jewish migration in China and Manzhouguo. There is also a discussion of the relationship of Japan's "experts" with the Shanghai Jewish élite and with international Jewish relief

organizations. Gao Bei argues that the primary objective of the Japanese experts was to "use" the Jews to finance the development of Manzhouguo, on the one hand, and to appease American public opinion about Japanese imperialism, on the other. But, as noted, difficulties arose due to the need to take German interests and anti-Semitic aims into account. In fact, prior to the conclusion of the Tripartite Pact in 1940, relations with Berlin were a bone of contention within the Japanese military and political élites, a fact which permitted Japanese experts on the Jewish question to transform Shanghai into a safe haven for European refugees, as per official policy in 1938. Gao Bei provides an in-depth discussion of the various policies and regulations issued by the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, devoting special attention to the influence of the military and the relations of local Japanese authorities with the Shanghai Jewish élite. Once the alliance had been concluded with Germany and Italy in 1940, Japan's policy towards European Jewish refugees in China changed. The alliance with Germany became fundamental to Tokyo's foreign policy and military strategy; even so, in summer 1940 the Japanese consul in Lithuania, Sugihara, went on issuing visas to Polish Jews leaving Europe for Asia (a community that settled in Kobe, to be moved later to Shanghai). Jews in Shanghai were not deported to Europe, but merely confined – in poverty but without risk to life – in the Shanghai ghetto.

Gao Bei emphasizes that the Japanese policy toward Jewish refugees did not originate from any kind of humanitarian sympathy for their plight, but only from utilitarian considerations, which were ultimately subordinated to political and military strategy. In this way, she suggests that there was a difference between China's and Japan's approaches to the Jewish refugees. Her book makes it evident that the main factor behind the difference was each country's political and military strength and ability to pursue their domestic and international goals. Anti-Semitism had no real influence in either China or Japan, and for both the Jewish question was only one particular element to be taken into consideration when dealing with international developments and maximizing national interest during the war.

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Martina Mengoni, *Primo Levi e i Tedeschi*, (Turin: Einaudi, 2017), pp. 219.

by Jonathan Druker

*Primo Levi e i tedeschi* [Primo Levi and the Germans] by Martina Mengoni is the eighth volume in the *Lezioni Primo Levi* series, the published versions of the annual lectures sponsored by the Turin-based Centro Internazionale di Studi Primo Levi. Like the preceding volumes, this one supplements Mengoni's original Italian version of the lecture with facing page translations in English, this time ably executed by Gail McDowell.

“Who were the Germans for Primo Levi?” (p. 10). Mengoni introduces her topic by posing this apparently reductive or merely provocative question, and then proceeds to offer a richly complex response over the course of seven chapters. Certainly, Mengoni explains, Levi would always remember “the Germans” collectively as his tormentors: he mentions them, without any qualifiers such as “*these particular Nazi Germans*,” more than thirty times in *If This Is a Man* (p. 54). Even thirty years after the Holocaust, Levi still seemed committed to this undifferentiated notion of the perpetrators: in the appendix to the 1976 edition of his Auschwitz memoir, four of the eight habitual questions posed by students and answered by Levi invoke “the Germans,” along with their deep-seated anti-Semitism and their extermination camps (p. 56). However, over the course of his life, individual Germans (and Austrians) were among Levi's favorite authors, such as Thomas Mann and Heinrich Heine, and included some of his literary collaborators and esteemed correspondents. There were also Holocaust writers and historians, such as Jean Améry and Hermann Langbein, who greatly influenced Levi's understanding of the traumatic history he experienced personally. (Mengoni's volume includes a helpful list of more than twenty German-language authors about whom Levi first learned from his German correspondents, and who were later mentioned in his own published works.)

Mengoni devotes an entire chapter – and with good reason -- to the German translation of *If This Is a Man* and its 1961 publication by Fischer Verlag under the title *Ist das ein Mensch?* It was the first autobiographical account by an Auschwitz survivor offered by a major West German publishing house. In the “Letters from Germans” chapter of *The Drowned and the Saved*, Levi himself wrote about his wonderfully successful collaboration with translator Heinz Riedt, whose accurate and sensitive work overcame the Italian author's initial mistrust. Mengoni enhances our understanding of this partnership by drawing upon the largely unpublished Levi-Riedt correspondence, held at the Wiener Library in London. In the nineteen letters exchanged, all of them in Italian, we observe our author engage in “self-commentary, the first in a genre in which Levi would excel and which he would increasingly master” (p. 24). Noting Levi's strong hand in the translation process, and his nearly obsessive search for the best German

equivalents for his Italian usages, Mengoni raises a fascinating, ultimately unanswerable question: “Is *If This Is a Man* a book of ‘total self-control’ right from the start, or did its German translation force Levi to reflect on his own choices and, thus, to justify and defend them?” (p. 24). Of course, the Italian text is itself a kind of translation since so many of the crucial words Levi heard in Auschwitz, and in some cases used himself, were German (but also, I would add, were Polish and Yiddish). Mengoni concludes perceptively that the memoir’s “full linguistic complexity...only emerges before the mirror of its double *mother tongue*: of its German version” (p. 32).

In the preface to *Ist das ein Mensch?* Levi expressed his hope that the book would produce an echo which, in a rebound from the north, might help him understand the perplexing Germans. Several of his German readers wrote to him in the 1960s and tried, with various degrees of insight and willful blindness, to explain the rise of Nazism or to confess their utter inability to account for it. In this latter group was Wolfgang Beutin, a 26-year-old scholar and social democrat to whom Levi refers by the initials W.G. in “Letters from Germans.” Mengoni reproduces Levi’s joyful reply to Beutin: “it is just the letter I have been waiting for and hoped to receive, and it made me happy. Why? Because you are young, and because you are German” (p. 60). Beutin was the kind of ideal reader that would transform Levi’s relationship with “the Germans.” Another and far more significant respondent was Hety Schmitt-Maass, a woman of Levi’s own age who had been raised in an anti-Nazi family and about whom Levi wrote at length in “Letters from Germans.” Mengoni fills out the contours of this long and fruitful relationship with selected passages from the voluminous Schmitt-Maass-Levi correspondence held in the Stadtarchiv Wiesbaden. Levi described Schmitt-Maass’s first letter to him, in his November 1966 reply, as “important because it comes from someone who, in those years, was mature and old enough to understand what was happening, to not accept it as something proper and natural” (p. 84). For her part, Schmitt-Maass worked tirelessly to see that *Ist das ein Mensch?* would be widely read. In addition, she put Levi in contact with writers like Améry and, at Levi’s request, with Ferdinand Meyer, a sympathetic German chemist whom Levi first met while working in the lab at Auschwitz-Buna. Potentially, Meyer could be yet another type of ideal interlocutor: unlike Beutin or Schmitt-Maass, he was a direct witness and participant in the events described in *If This Is a Man*. Unfortunately, their dialogue was cut short when Meyer died suddenly, a bare eight months after sending his first letter to Levi in March 1967.

As Mengoni points out, Levi’s post-war contact with Meyer had two distinct aspects: the generally hopeful correspondence between the two chemists, which is currently archived in Wiesbaden, and Levi’s 1974 literary transfiguration of Meyer into “Lothar Müller,” an ambiguous character at the center of the “Vanadium” chapter in *The Periodic Table*. In his previously unpublished reply to Meyer’s first letter, Levi stated: “I do remember that, in your presence, I had the precise



impression of being before a man who realized our situation, and who felt pity and even shame” (p. 132). Mengoni notes that, in Müller, Levi created a less sympathetic character, one who is oblivious to the prisoners’ suffering, a man so different from Meyer that Schmitt-Maass found notable the negative shift from the real chemist to the fictional one (p. 148). It becomes clear that Müller does not represent a single individual but serves, instead, as a paradigmatic figure, as “a typically gray human specimen,” in Levi’s words. In fact, Müller as a character enables the author to articulate, in preliminary terms and for the first time, his concept of the “gray zone,” the condition arising from the morally corrosive power of institutions, to be thoroughly developed ten years later in *The Drowned and the Saved* (p. 114). It seems that Levi used the bare outlines of Meyer’s story in “Vanadium” to dramatize his preliminary pronouncement on the larger moral and psychological questions at stake in the case of bystanders and non-violent participants in crimes against humanity. Mengoni observes that Levi manipulated his memory of Meyer to exploit the liberating possibilities of fiction, thus “freeing himself, at least in part, from his role as witness” (p. 152).

In sum, Mengoni’s valuable study, based on the latest and most detailed research, brings new insight and focus to a topic of interest to Levi scholars, and to all those who study Holocaust memory within the broader European context.

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*Enzyklopädie jüdischer Geschichte und Kultur*, ed. Dan Diner, Sächsische Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Leipzig, (Stuttgart – Weimar: Metzler, 2011-2017), 7 Voll.

by Ulrich Wyrwa

Jewish encyclopaedias – reference works in which information about Jewish lore is presented in alphabetical order – have a tradition dating back to the beginnings of *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, or Science of Judaism, in the 1800s. Moritz Steinschneider and David Cassel submitted the plan for a *Real-Encyclopädie des Judentums* in 1844; Jakob Hamburger published a *Real-Encyclopädie des Judentums* in three volumes during 1870-1901. In 1901 the first of ten volumes of the pioneering English-language *Jewish Encyclopedia* was published in New York; a similar project began publication in Russia shortly thereafter. 1927-1929 saw the publication of the *Jüdisches Lexikon* in German as a five-volume encyclopaedic handbook of Jewish culture and concepts. The initial volumes of the *Encyclopädia Judaica*, also in German, appeared in 1928. The whole was envisioned as a fifteen-volume compendium to complete publication in German within the next few years, but only the first ten volumes had actually been issued before the coming to power of the National Socialists put a stop to the project.

Publication resumed forty years later in Israel. The new English-language *Encyclopaedia Judaica* appeared in 26 volumes in 1971; a revised and expanded edition of this was published in 2006.

Another few years later, Dan Diner, former director of the Simon Dubnow Institute for Jewish History and Culture in Leipzig, was commissioned by the Saxon Academy of Sciences to produce the first volume of an ambitious new reference work on Jewish history and culture. With the publication in 2017 of the seventh volume, the new project is now complete. Some five hundred authors have contributed to the new encyclopaedia, most of them from Germany, the USA or Israel. Only a small number are from other European countries, with two each from Russia and Poland, one from the Czech Republic, and three from Italy. In all, they have submitted over eight hundred entries on an approximate total of 4,200 pages. The chronological focus of the new *Encyclopaedia of Jewish History and Culture*, or EJGK, is on the period from the mid-18th to the mid-20th century, with occasional references to earlier times and to the present. Center stage is the era of secularization and the fundamental social changes which has also had a profound impact on all aspects of Jewish life in Europe and worldwide.

But the aim of this new instrument for navigating the “histories and cultures of the Jews,” as the introduction, using these deliberately pluralized forms, explains, was not to come up with yet another reference work structured in a familiar format with alphabetized headwords, names, terms or events.

The aim of the editorial staff working under the direction of Markus Kirchhoff was rather to do away with the conventional, the familiar, and the trite attaching to the terms and the buzzwords of Jewry's life worlds. The means for achieving this was an "alienating approach," making it possible to single out elements that are most significant and emblematic. The *Verfremdungseffekt*, a literary device based on evoking a sense of alienation rather than identity and empathy in the viewer, had originally been introduced by Bertold Brecht in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as a revolutionary way for epic theatre to proceed; it was now to be deployed in the compilation of an encyclopaedia. The objective was to stupefy, to astound, and to make curious.

The EJGK accordingly contains no biographical entries and no conventional headwords. It resorts to a different intricate system to compile its choice of entries. Alongside articles the introduction labels "factographic" are lemmas which, in Diner's words, make use of "the mode of iconic figures of thought," taking their bearings from loci of remembrance, a calque from "*lieux de mémoire*."

The Encyclopaedia of Jewish History and Culture is, thus, no encyclopaedia in the conventional sense of the term. Anyone consulting this reference work without prior preparation is likely to be led astray, irritated, or astonished.

To benefit from the new reference work, readers must first familiarize themselves with its underlying concept and the principles guiding its organization and writing. To do this, it is indispensable to pore over the editor's introduction as well as the project description written by the editor-in-chief, Markus Kirchhoff, and titled *Jüdische Kultur als europäische Tradition. Die ,Enzyklopädie jüdischer Geschichte und Kultur' im Kontext*.

These prefatory texts spell out the systematic underpinnings of the EJGK, elucidating both the notion of "factographic" entries and the part of iconic contributions oriented toward *lieux de mémoire*.

The former is a concept borrowed from the French historian Pierre Nora, who used it to address the history of the French nation at a time of the disappearance of national history; the same principle informs the way Jewish history is approached in the EJGK. But as for the latter term, the concept of *lieu de mémoire* and its associations are left out of the introduction. The introduction also makes the apodictic announcement that keywords ending with *-ism* are not included. The encyclopaedia thus passes over in silence concepts which, as Richard Koebner wrote in 1953, "had a leading role in the shaping of political catchwords" and

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<sup>1</sup> In *Denkströme. Journal der Sächsischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* 2 (2009): 192-205 [[http://www.denkstroeme.de/heft-2/s\\_192-205\\_kirchhoff](http://www.denkstroeme.de/heft-2/s_192-205_kirchhoff)].

“provoked the greatest surge of emotions,” and which have also become extremely significant in connection with the Jewish *Lebenswelt* and historical experience.

Among the “factographic” headwords are the term “encyclopaedia” itself and terms such as *Alliance israélite universelle*, *Ansiedlungsrayon*, *Colleggio Rabbinico*, *Landjuden*, “historiography,” and “philosophy,” along with a large number of terms drawn from Jewish religious life such as “rabbi” and “rabbinical seminary,” as well as articles on Jewish legal traditions (the “*Zentrum alles Jüdischen*,” according to Diner) and terms connected to Jewish Studies and research in Jewish culture, such as the *Verein für Kultur und Wissenschaft der Juden* or the concept of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums*. The “factographic” entries also include articles on events and historical developments such as the Auschwitz-trial, the Balfour Declaration, the Berlin Congress, the Dreyfus Affair, the Hep Hep riots, the Hilsner Affair, the Jewish census commissioned by the German War Ministry during the First World War, Cossack persecution, the New Deal, and the Slánský trial.

The “factographic” category also contains entries treating Jewish history as an element of European history as a whole, such as an entry on the Prussian Emancipation Edict of 1812 and terms pertaining to parliaments in the German Reich and the Habsburg Monarchy, as well as an entry on the People’s Front.

As mentioned, alongside the “factographic” entries, some of which ultimately prove quite conventional in their encyclopaedic format and structure, the EJGK contains articles on Jewish places of remembrance penned in the “mode of iconic figures of thought.” Headwords such as “Hebrew University,” “Leo Baeck Institute,” and “Paulskirche” are examples of perfect capture of the idea of *lieu de mémoire*. But the aim here is selective and conceptual, dispensing with biographical headwords; the articles based on iconic figures of thought combine biography with the history of ideas. The reader thus comes across details of Alfred Döblin’s biography in connection with “Alexanderplatz,” the life of Theodor Herzl under “Altneuland,” Walter Benjamin under “Angelus Novus,” Primo Levi under “Atempause,” and Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno in the article on the “Dialektik der Aufklärung.” The entry on the Freimann Collection, the extensive Judaica holdings at the University Library in Frankfurt am Main, also provides biographical details about Aron Freimann, head librarian at Frankfurt City Library until 1933. However, the entry makes no mention of the fact that this impressive collection is now available online in its entirety (at <http://sammlungen.ub.uni-frankfurt.de/freimann>). The lemma “Kabbala” makes reference exclusively to Gershom Scholem, the one on class consciousness centers solely on Georg Lukács, and the entry on “Lebensgeschichte” [Life History] is all about the autobiography of Salomon Maimon. “Mass” introduces Elias Canetti, and under “Mimesis” we read about Erich Auerbach. “*Nichtjüdischer Jude*” [Non-Jewish Jew] is entirely about Isaac Deutscher.

Biographical detail also hides under entries such as “*Reine Rechtslehre*” describing the life of Hans Kelsen and “Reportage” the life of Egon Erwin Kisch.

Consistent adherence to its chosen principle of “alienating access” is an issue for EJGK. This comes to the fore especially in the very different modes of writing resorted to in the entries concerned with cities. Thus “Algiers,” to cite one example, does not go into the history of Algerian Jewry or the Jewish community of the city of Algiers, but instead informs the reader that the “administrative seat of the French department of Algiers... from 1940 was under the control of the Vichy regime.” “Antwerp,” by contrast, discusses the special features of Jewish Antwerp, and “Birobidzhan” is about the area in the eastern Soviet Union declared an autonomous Jewish region in 1934. “Budapest” begins with the proclamation of the Soviet republic in 1919, goes on to a brief outline of the history of the rise of the city, and concludes with additional detail about the Soviet republic and its suppression. Somewhat differently, “Damascus” is completely taken up with the blood libel of 1840 known as the Damascus affair and the international response which it provoked, while “Hamburg” is a classic-style report on the Sephardic Jews of the city.

The uninitiated reader is also bound to be disappointed by the entries under “Mecca” and “Mexico City.” The former is as uninformative about the city in Saudi Arabia as the latter is about the capital of Mexico. Rather than provide any information about the area where Islam originated, “Mecca” is an article about *The Road to Mecca*, an autobiographical novel by Leopold Weiss; no less surprisingly, “Mexico City” elaborates on the fate of the group of exiled German communists who clustered around Paul Merker during 1941-1946 in Mexico.

Even so, other city name entries do put forth the anticipated kind of summary overviews of the history of their cities’ Jewish communities. Such are the articles on Johannesburg, Marrakesh, Metz, Posen, and Cracow. In “Krakow,” the history of the town’s Jews unfurls in due chronological order, beginning from the earliest settlements and including the brief period when Cracow enjoyed the status of a free city, following this up with notes about Cracow under Habsburg rule until the end of WWI. Similarly, “Leipzig” also sketches an outline of the history of the Jews in the trading town from the earliest traces of a local Jewish community through the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the Weimar Republic, to close with the destruction of the community under the Nazis. The article on Łódź covers the history of the Polish industrial city with its large Jewish working class, and then goes on to the Holocaust and the post-war period. Some city name entries focus on the special significance these cities had for Jewish culture and history overall; thus “Odessa,” where the city is cast primarily as a center of Jewish writers and periodicals.

Other cities, by contrast, are discussed exclusively in terms of their significance in connection with the Holocaust: Lisbon is a vital port of refugee transit, Munich

is DP grounds in the immediate post-war period, Nuremberg is the city of NSDAP Reich Party Conventions and the International Military Tribunal during the Nuremberg trials, and the article on Kovno, after a brief summary of the pre-WWII history of Lithuania's Jews, centers on the murder of Lithuanian and German Jews during 1941-1943, to conclude with some post-war notes.

Other entries in the same cluster take up the history of Jewish migration, such as the entries on Montevideo and Melbourne. "London" and "New York" have the same theme as a centerpiece, accompanied, respectively, by images of the Jewish East End and the Lower East Side.

The entries on Prague, Riga, Thessaloniki, Tangier, Tunis, Vienna, and Vilnius offer substantial, thoroughly informative presentations of the Jewish history of their cities. Of urban Italy, the cities of Mantua, with its flourishing intellectual Jewish life of the early modern period, Livorno, Trieste, and Venice have been included in the EJGK, but not Rome, despite this city's being home to the oldest Jewish community in Europe.

Some of the entries under city names are perfect instances of the *lieu de mémoire* principle in that the toponyms function as references to landmark historical events associated with them – thus making them loci of remembrance for Jewish history. Most of the events are pogroms; this is the case of Kishinev, the urban setting in Bessarabia where anti-Jewish violence erupted in April 1903, leaving forty-nine Jews dead and hundreds more injured; Lviv, the scene of pogroms during the First World War; the Romanian city of Iași, where almost ten thousand Jews were murdered in 1941; Jedwabne, the site of a pogrom in north-eastern Poland in July 1941; and the Polish city of Kielce, where Holocaust survivors were collectively murdered in July 1946. The entries in this list do not concentrate on the historical reconstruction of the details of the pogroms to the exclusion of all other information; thus the entry on Iași also contains a brief overview of the history of the Jews in Romania.

"Warsaw," on the other hand, contains only a few lines about the city's Jewish community prior to 1939; the article is mostly a study of the German occupation during WWII, thus occupying a middle ground between the "factographic" and the "iconic" categories. Many other toponym entries are echoes of significant events connected with the Holocaust; thus "Ravensbrück," "Shanghai," "Sobibór" and "Treblinka," to cite a few.

"Stalingrad," by contrast, is not an article about the city on the Volga or the WWII Battle of Stalingrad; the entry is devoted instead to the literary reworking of the Second World War in Vasily Grossman's epic *Life and Fate*.

Entries connected with music produce a *Verfremdungseffekt* similar to the one evoked by some of the place name articles. Alongside pieces on topics such as

“cantor” or “organ,” which address the role of music in religious life, “Klezmer” adheres to a conventional enough type of encyclopaedia format in describing the development of this secular genre of wedding and festival Eastern European Jewish music up to the time of its most recent revival. Strangely enough, the article on “Music” pure and simple is taken up exclusively with Richard Wagner’s anti-Semitic essay on “*Das Judenthum in der Musik*.” The lexicon also contains an extensive piece titled “Misuk,” an artificial word coined by Bertold Brecht to designate the use of music in epic theatre. The history of jazz, which, according to the EJGK text, has been largely “shaped by the contribution of Jewish musicians,” is also treated with encyclopaedic breadth, from the emergence of jazz in the USA to European jazz and the post-WWII years. The piece titled “*Kabarett*” in the German text describes the development of the cabaret from its beginnings in Berlin and Vienna in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century to the time of the Weimar Republic and the First Republic of Austria, and concludes by taking a glance at the role it had in concentration camps and in exile. “*Operette*” is similarly encyclopaedic in extent and scope, in addition to posing the question about the “Jewish legacy” in this musical genre. There is an entry on the “*Offenbachiaden*,” which treats of the musical theater of Jacques Offenbach; “Polytonality” is largely about the French composer Darius Milhaud. “Mediterranean Style” describes the musical orientation of Jewish composers in 1930s Palestine and in Israel in the 1950s. The entry “*Matthäuspasion*,” on the other hand, deals solely with the rediscovery of this one of Johann Sebastian Bach’s works by Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy and its re-performance in 1829, while “Palestine Orchestra” describes the history of the orchestra founded in 1936 through the efforts of Bronisław Hubermann, which became the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra after the birth of the State of Israel in 1948.

The unprepared reader will be astonished to see that “Anti-Semitism” in the first volume of the EJGK merely references the lemma “Conspiracy” to be found in the last volume, but not “*Judenfeindschaft*,” also included in the EJGK and containing a concise historical overview of hostility toward Jews from antiquity to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Leafing through the first volume, the reader comes across “*Berliner Antisemitismusstreit*” [Berlin Anti-Semitism Controversy], another entry unreferenced elsewhere under any of the obviously related headwords. The sixth volume includes an entry on “*Verschwörung*” [Conspiracy], written by the editor, Dan Diner, and outlining the history of the “anti-Semitism” as a modern neologism. Diner emphasizes the secular character of anti-Semitism in contrast to the “theologically underpinned traditional hostility towards Jews.” According to Diner, the background to the new kind of anti-Jewish hostility was the “misunderstood rejections” of the social upheavals of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, leading to inventions about Jews and conspiracy-theoretical imaginings.

A number of headwords are problematic in various ways. Thus the “Enlightenment” lemma, which gives neither detail about the diversity of the

European Enlightenment movement nor insight into the fundamental significance it had for Jewish history in Europe. Nor does the lemma note the fact that European Jews continued to adhere to Enlightenment principles even after it had been dismissed as outdated or was mocked by non-Jewish intellectuals. The entry limits itself instead to a consideration of anti-Jewish statements to be found in Voltaire's writing, but without placing them in the context of Voltaire's general criticism of religion. The opportunity is thus lost to conceptualize the Enlightenment – in a way befitting the EJGK's self-proclaimed systematic approach – as a locus of remembrance for Jewish history.

Similarly, the entry on "Europe" is largely made up of ideas about being European, and does not address either the problem of Europe as a locus of Jewish history or the concept of Europe in Jewish historiography. This despite the fact that EJGK as a whole was conceived – and is still thought of – as a European project, as is emphatically pointed out by Diner, the EJGK editor, and despite the fact that Diner – who, incidentally, is not the author of the entry – has published in-depth essay discussions of the meaning of Europe for Jewish history.

The editor's summary announcement, in the introduction to the first volume, about excluding all *-isms* fails to be lived up to: besides "Cubism" and "Nationalism," there are entries on "Pluralism" and "Realism." But in substance the EJGK's self-proclaimed exclusion of *-isms* is not actually violated thereby, since "Nationalism" is primarily a bio-bibliographical and historical piece about Hans Kohn, "Pluralism" comprises a similar-structured entry on Horace Kallen, and Hans. J. Morgenthau, a political scientist, forms the focus of "Realism."

While the EJGK's third volume includes, under "Holocaust," a substantial essay on intellectual history and the evolution of concepts, the fifth volume contains the entry "*Schoa*" (corresponding to "Shoah" in English spelling), which makes mention only of the film of the same name, made by Claude Lanzmann. "*Judenfrage*" [The Jewish Question], by contrast, deals exclusively with the work of Karl Marx, but not with the pamphlet authored under this title by Bruno Bauer, the proto-anti-Semitic text that Marx roundly criticized.

To round out the alphabet: "*Żydokomuna*" [Jewish Commune] belongs among the factographic entries. The lemma, tracing the use of the anti-Semitic catchword first coined among the nationalists and the clerics of Poland after the Russian Bolshevik Revolution and then widely used in Europe, concludes the sixth volume of the EJGK.

All in all, this encyclopaedia, which refuses to be an encyclopaedia, is a reference work more appropriate for aimless browsing than for targeted searches. Anyone consulting the EJGK in the hope of quickly obtaining reliable answers to specific questions is likely to be misled by the EJGK's organizing principles, and easily



confused. The outcome, an alienation effect beyond the project's original intention, will usually combine surprise discovery on topics not previously thought about with a sense of frustration about issues one is actually researching.

How meaningful or productive can alienation of this kind be in a reference work? This is a question for readers to answer on their own. Considering the peculiar conception underlying the structure of the EJGK, the practical value of this encyclopaedia derives largely from the complete index provided in the last volume; this is where any attempt to use this encyclopaedia should begin. The index contains both a list of all EJGK articles and a register of all illustrations and maps; most important, it provides a register of people's names 209 pages long, a local index of 86 pages, and a 256-page subject index. A must for a reader looking for specific information.

But anyone prepared to wander along the expanse of Jewish lore like a visitor taking a leisurely stroll through the streets and squares of a great city, or wanting to be surprised by the "complex configurations [...] of interwoven perspectives," as the editor puts it in his introduction to the first volume, can well enter a maze of adventure and discovery in the volumes of the EJGK.

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Alexis Herr, *The Holocaust and Compensated Compliance in Italy. Fossoli di Carpi, 1942-1952*, (Basingstoke-New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), pp. xvi+227.

by Matteo Stefanori

Interpretations of the role of the Italian people in the Shoah have until recently been dominated by the image of *italiani brava gente* [the good Italians]. According to this view, generally accepted both in Italy and internationally, Italian soldiers – the occupation forces in the Balkans no less than the units fighting in North Africa to advance the aims of the fascist state – unlike their Nazi counterparts, perpetrated no atrocities. On the contrary, the claim has often been made that the Italian military did a great deal to help Nazi victims. That is, the general populace did not collaborate with the Nazi program of extermination, but sheltered thousands of the persecuted instead. To demonstrate the veracity of this, the fact is usually cited that the majority of Italy’s Jewry survived the war.

Some three decades of scholarly research have now proven this vision wrong. Historical reality unfolded very differently: the military under Mussolini acted upon orders both violent and harsh, deporting civilians and sending them to concentration camps. Boosted by the burst of activity in connection with the 50th anniversary of the 1938 enactment of the *Leggi razziali* [Racial laws] in Italy, Italian historiography has uncovered the instrumental function which the fascists, as well as society as a whole, performed in hunting down Italy’s Jews. Part of what these findings spelled out was the demonstrated existence of a pre-war culture of local anti-Semitism.

The book by Alexis Herr, an American scholar of the Shoah who focuses on the case of Italy in particular, shows how these findings are now, at last, starting to cross national borders. Taking as a case study the developments at Fossoli di Carpi, a concentration camp located in a village near Modena in northeastern Italy, Herr sets out to dismantle the stereotyped misconception of the *italiani brava gente*. The camp at Fossoli di Carpi operated during 1942-52, serving a variety of purposes during these years. Herr points out that the study focuses on the “ten-year history of Fossoli – the camp from which the Germans transferred Levi to Auschwitz – and its relationship with the neighboring town of Carpi to address how civilians not targeted for annihilation took part in a system set on mass murder and then evaded responsibility for Judeocide after the war” (p. 2). In her brief introduction, the author explains a number of the terms she uses to analyze the attitude of the Carpigiani (the locals at Fossoli di Carpi) to the events of the war. Herr resorts to the notion of “bystanders” to elaborate how by

...scrutinizing local contributions to camp operations, two modes of civilian support of atrocity outside of the perpetrator-victim dichotomy emerge. The most common is the passive action of individuals whose lives

remained separate from all matters concerning the camp. Others came to engage in camp affairs through active action, as individuals seeking or presented with opportunities to gain financial compensation for their contributions to camp functions. Here I speak specifically of economic incentives for cooperating with totalitarian regime set genocide. I call this compensated compliance, or acquiescence for economic gain. (p. 4)

The book is divided into two parts. The first consists of four chapters retracing the history of the camp at Fossoli during the war. The camp opened in 1942 to take in prisoners of war (this was the so called POW era); after the Armistice of September 8, 1943, German authorities and the *Repubblica Sociale Italiana* (RSI) used the camp as an internment facility for civilians and Jews destined for the Nazi lagers. To shed light on the part played by the local authorities and the Carpigiani in the camp's functioning, Herr details how

...local laborers' and businesses' economic partnerships with the camp established during the POW era of Fossoli continued when the camp took in Jews and civilians. The workers and companies carried on as before. Consorzio Agrario provinciale, for example, supplied lumber to build barracks and fuel stoves. (p. 82)

Civilians and local authorities in the Repubblica Sociale both had a share in the Nazi plan. Those making a profit from camp operations were incorporated into a system "that annihilated Jews and thus directly encouraged genocide" (p. 83). A stark parallel is articulated between this kind of active involvement and the silence self-consciously maintained by spectating neighbors: "Carpi's citizens' decision to remain silent – whether for self-preservation," fear, "or economic gain – ultimately encouraged town leaders to carry out Nazi demands" (p.72). The book's first part concludes: "the history of Fossoli shows that genocide happened, in part, because of silent witnesses, compensated compliers and acquiescent followers" (p. 89).

The book's Part II, consisting of two chapters, covers the history of Fossoli during the years following the war. Here the author "examines the postwar political, social and economic conditions that shaped Fossoli's legacy as a symbol of Italian victimization during German occupation" (p. 3). This victimization accounts for the emergence of the *brava gente* image; "The Politics of Blame," one of the chapter headings, is an expression of this. After the end of the war, the Allies turned the camp into a prison for war criminals and RSI fascists, using it later as a camp for refugees and DPs. Herr suggests that this post-WWII shift in camp function helped subject to oblivion what Fossoli had been in the none too distant past; local responsibility for the perpetration of this past would also be blurred with each new round of the camp's functional designations: "we shall see that each incarnation allowed Carpi collaborators and compliers to escape scrutiny and

become members of the ‘brava gente’” (p. 93). This kind of absolution and eschewing of responsibility reflect a more general tendency:

National efforts to obscure Fascist crimes made Carpi authorities’ elision of responsibility possible. Town leaders – who had transitioned from providing for Fossoli’s wartime needs to managing outstanding bills and responding to missing person inquiries – followed suit and blamed the Nazi forces. These postwar occupations and a blanket refusal to accept responsibility supported an overly simplified image of all Carpigiani as victims despite the fact that some had willingly collaborated with Fascist and Nazi forces (p. 99).

During 1947-52, the camp went through a metamorphosis: through the efforts of Don Zeno Saltini, a Catholic priest, it became home to Nomadelfia, a utopian Christian community. The creation in situ of a Catholic humanitarian center marks the ultimate “postwar amnesia blanketing Italian collaboration” during the Shoah: the book cover features a propagandistic postcard showing barbed wire and shacks in the process of being removed in order for accommodations for orphans and believers to be constructed in their place. The monograph concludes with the author’s reflections on the Carpigiani’s awareness of the import of their actions and on what they knew of the Nazi program of extermination:

Many Carpigiani [...] became imbedded in a system set on destruction and mass murder via the Fossoli camp, perhaps without realizing that they were getting their hands dirty. It is debatable how much bakers and laborers with contracts to provision and to work at Fossoli knew about the Jews’ final fate. One thing is for sure: had they wanted to know, they could have found out (p. 144).

This history of the camp at Fossoli draws on essential primary sources (including Italian state archives at Carpi and Modena) along with some of the most up-to-date research and bibliography. Herr deserves special credit for her thorough investigation of Italian responsibility during the Shoah, a topic that has been consistently neglected by international scholarship. The period in question, 1942-52, also makes for an original focus by extending the study both into and beyond the years of the war. At the same time, however, Herr’s near-exclusive concern with the *italiani brava gente* makes it impossible to do justice to other important elements which shaped the history of the camp, such as administrative procedural continuity in various frameworks both during and after the war. Finally, a formal note is called for: in a work centered on a national Italian theme and taking up a local case study, some basic proofreading is in order so as to rectify the numerous instances of misspelled Italian names and common Italian words.

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Rena Molho, *Der Holocaust der griechischen Juden. Studien zur Geschichte und Erinnerung*, (Bonn: J. H. W. Dietz Nachf, 2016), pp. 263.

by Tobias Blümel

The study of the Shoah in Greece, over the course of which about 86% of the country's Jewish population was deported and murdered in German concentration and extermination camps, had been neglected by Greek academia and civil society for decades. Only in the 1990s did Jewish Studies and Holocaust Research emerge as research fields in Greece; through the struggle of the scholars who fought for academic as well as public recognition, it became clear that the missing reappraisal of national history was not caused by an alleged *social amnesia*, but was instead based on a conscious dispossession of history for political reasons. The policy of social reconciliation after the German occupation (1941-1944) and the civil war (1946-1949) did not aim at the inclusion of the tiny minority of Jewish survivors, that consisted of less than 2,000 who had returned from the camps or had survived by hiding, emigrating or receiving assistance from the partisan efforts during the war (ca. 8-9,000). Additionally, the dominating *helleno-christian* doctrine did not leave much space for the ideals of a pluralistic society.

The 1946 Thessaloniki born historian Rena Molho is one of those pioneers of Greek Jewish Studies, always asking uncomfortable questions and never mincing words. The book at hand, *Der Holocaust der griechischen Juden*, is a plain German translation of Molho's various, mainly published essays, articles and book reviews over the last two decades. It first appeared in the renowned Athens edition Patakis in 2015 along with a foreword of the Greek jurist Nikos Zaikos. The translation of Molho's writings is warmly welcomed since public awareness of the faith of the Greek Jews under the German occupation has only recently begun to rise in Germany.

The book is thematically divided into three parts with a total of twelve chapters, concluded by an appendix, bibliography and register. With a critical literature report, Molho introduces her subject and traces back the rocky path of Jewish Studies and Holocaust Research in Greece with all its factional fights and pitfalls, at times with a quite polemical tone (pp. 23-48). A strong emphasis is put on the first part entitled "History and Memory," which spans more than half of the entire book (pp. 23-126). It is here that Molho underlines how, especially in Thessaloniki, even before the German occupation the relationship between Jews and (orthodox) Christians was anything but harmonic (pp. 57-8). What is more, during the war there, was – in contrast to the official national narrative – no collective resistance but rather collaboration with the Germans. The destruction of the Jewish cemetery of Thessaloniki under the initiative of the municipal's administration in 1942 (pp. 63-5), the opportunistic enrichment of orthodox Christian citizens over the course of the expropriation of the Jews by the German military administration

– especially but not exclusively in Thessaloniki – the strong and (mainly) successful civil opposition against the forlorn survivors’ restitution demands after the war and, finally, the Greek amnesty for German war criminals in 1959 (pp. 69-82) are prime examples by which she underlines her thesis. The insecurity and the years of mostly fruitless legal disputes that followed the post-war decade finally drove about 50% of the survivors into emigration.

Exposing the official image of collective national resistance against German barbarity is Molho’s recurrent subject, to which she continues to attend to in the second part of the book, entitled “Published Sources and Books,” as well (pp. 129-79). Opening with a harsh critique of the selective teaching of the Shoah in Greek public schools, which began only since 2005, she concludes that Greek pupils are steered to reproduce the official myths of Greek history politics (pp. 129-38). Though without ignoring the shiny examples of civil courage, officials and clerics who de facto helped the Jews escape “can be counted on one hand” in the end (p. 132). In contrast to the German editor’s blurb, the chapter on the extermination of the Jews of Ioannina is essentially a book review (pp. 139-53) while the controversy surrounding the extermination of the Jews in the Bulgarian occupation zone (pp. 172-179) mainly represents Molho’s introduction to and her commentary on the late testimony/confession of a Bulgarian soldier in 1996 (pp. 175-8).

The book closes with Molho’s reflections on her experiences as a coordinator and interviewer of 57 Shoah survivors in Greece on behalf of the *Shoah Visual History Foundation* (Spielberg) between 1996 and 1999 (pp. 182-217). The guideline for interviewers she provides here is a standard hand out for historians doing practical fieldwork of oral history in Greece.

Rena Molho’s well-researched writings not only include a deep knowledge of the Jewish history of Greece, but they moreover provide an overview on the various themes and facets of Greek Holocaust Research in a way that provides scholarly access to these issues. Additionally, they reflect, sometimes unintentionally, an inside view on the highly politicized inner Greek debate of the last two decades.

Since the book is one of the very few history publications dealing with the Shoah in Greece, the editor should be advised that a final revised edition might not only eliminate the many translation-related misunderstandings (inter alia wrong terming) but could also provide the correct archival reference of some of the historical images (p. 113 and p. 115) and, of course, the book cover, to which there is no reference at all. This is especially quite negligent. (1) The Wehrmacht photos documenting the deportation of the Jews of Ioannina are in the German Federal Archives (cover and p. 113) and the name of the crying young woman on the book cover is the 1925 born Fani Haim. She survived Auschwitz as one of the very few Jews from Ioannina (1,960 before March 25, 1944). Her entire family was

murdered. Later she married, became a mother and died as a grandmother in 2008. (2) The internationally known photo by Horace Abrahams of the liberation of Dachau (p. 115) is in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington DC (USHMM) and some those pictured are known by name as well.

Quite apart from that, the book is not only an enrichment of historical scholarship because Molho always turns to the public with her writings. It is due to the socio-political commitment of historians like her that, in 2015, a chair for Jewish Studies at Aristotle University in Thessaloniki was re-established (since the Metaxas Dictatorship, 1936) and the foundation-stone was laid for the construction of a Holocaust Museum in January 2018. Therefore, as Molho frames it in a brief epigraph to her writings, “A chapter was written but the book is never finished.”

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