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Cromohs

Cyber Review of Modern Historiography

Issue 26

2023

The thematic section 'The Destruction and Preservation of Hebrew Books' included in this issue of *Cromohs* is published with the support of the Department of History and Cultures, University of Bologna, and the Rothschild Foundation Hanadiv Europe.

The thematic section 'Analytical Concepts for Transcultural Settings. Pathways in Global Intellectual History' included in this issue of *Cromohs* is published with the support of the *Graduate School Global Intellectual History*, Freie Universität Berlin.

Published by Firenze University Press

University of Florence, via Cittadella, 7, 50144 Florence, Italy

ISSN 1123-7023 (online)

https://oajournals.fupress.net/index.php/cromohs/

Cromohs is indexed in:

ANVUR – National Agency for the Evaluation of Universities and Research Institute: classe A, DOAJ – Directory of Open Access Journals, EBSCO, UlrichsWeb Global Serials Directory, ERIHPLUS – European Reference Index for the Humanities and Social Sciences, Thomson Reuters Web of Science, Scopus

Cover image:

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Contents

The Destruction and Preservation of Hebrew Books
Ed. by Miriam Benfatto and Elena Lolli

Historians and Their Craft

Analytical Concepts for Transcultural Settings. Pathways in Global Intellectual History
Ed. by Luc Wodzicki

Book Reviews

The Destruction and Preservation of Hebrew Books

Ed. by Miriam Benfatto and Elena Lolli

The Destruction and Preservation of Hebrew Books. New Sources and Methodologies for Studying Catholic Censorship and Other Forms of Dismemberment and Rescue of Hebrew Texts in Late Medieval and Early Modern Italy [1]

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Certain aspects of the history of power are intertwined with the history of knowledge. The history of power also concerns the history of the most widespread vehicle of knowledge: the book.[2] As a result, it involves the production, dissemination, and availability of books, but also their destruction and preservation. This is true in particular of the history of the Hebrew book, both in its printed form and as a manuscript. The Hebrew book is a container of ideas and a vehicle for knowledge, but it is also an artefact—in other words, an object with economic value. The aim of the international conference *The Destruction and Preservation of Hebrew Books. New Sources and Methodologies for the Study of Catholic Censorship and Other Forms of Dismemberment and Rescue of Hebrew Texts in the Late Medieval and Early Modern Italy*,[3] held virtually on 15 November 2021, was to run the gamut of topics concerning the fascinating history and vicissitudes of the Hebrew book and its relationship to the Catholic world, in which it was produced, disseminated, controlled, censored, confiscated, and retained. This thematic section, which presents the conference proceedings, aims to describe a range of topics including the Catholic censorship and expurgation of Hebrew texts, books, and documents, their reuse in book bindings and notary files, and the way Digital Humanities allows us to retrieve otherwise-lost manuscripts or printed books. The methodology adopted here is aimed less at presenting a series of events and more at interpreting specific historical moments to shed new light on the socio-historical context in which they occurred. This approach will enable us to analyse the dialectic between events and protagonists and thus consider the development of censorship

[1] The first section of this introduction was written by Miriam Benfatto (1–3) and the second part by Elena Lolli (4–7).
[2] ROBERT DARNTON, *The Case for Books: Past, Present, and Future* (New York: Public Affairs, 2009).
[3] The conference was hosted by the Department of History and Cultures at the University of Bologna, with the support of the Books within Books – Hebrew Fragments in European Libraries research cluster and the Italian Association for Jewish Studies (AISG), which we thank again for the opportunity they have given us. The organisers were supported in their research projects by Rothschild Foundation Hanadiv Europe.

Cromohs (Cyber Review of Modern Historiography), ISSN 1123-7023, 26/2023

DOI: 10.36253/cromohs-14239

part of the institutionalisation of new measures of control over Hebrew texts in late medieval and early modern Italy. A further objective is to assess how Catholic censorship changed the possibility of producing or destroying culture through the creation, distribution, and destruction of Hebrew books in Italy. Hebrew and non-Hebrew books owned by Jews are considered here not only as objects, but as the protagonists of a particular interaction between readers, book owners, censors, and producers.

The Italian Peninsula assumed a pivotal role in this context, having been the leading centre for Hebrew book production since the fifteenth century and remaining one of the most important centres of Jewish printing up to the eighteenth century. Almost half of the medieval Hebrew manuscripts have Italian provenance and were either copied in Italy or introduced in the Peninsula by immigrants.[4] In Italy, the first Hebrew books were printed (Rashi's commentary on the Pentateuch, Reggio Calabria, 1475) and trade in them developed; Hebrew texts also became standardised, often thanks to Hebrew publishing houses operated by Christians.[5] The Catholic Church has a long history of altering and destroying Hebrew books, starting in the thirteenth century if not earlier.[6] It was believed that banning Jewish texts would facilitate the conversion of Jews who were still 'blinded' by their erroneous doctrines and superstitions. The regulation of Hebrew books was clearly associated with other anti-Jewish measures taken in the same period, such as ghettoization and attempts to bring about their conversion.[7]

In the mid-sixteenth century, assaults on the Talmud had the most extensive effects in Italy, although the Church's attitude towards it was fluctuating and ambivalent.[8] As is well known, Pope Julius III issued a decree in August 1553 condemning the Talmud for being blasphemous and ordering its destruction. This destruction took place about a month later, on 9 September 1553, when a huge pyre of Hebrew books—including copies of the Talmud—was set up in the Campo de'

[4] BENJAMIN RICHLER, 'The Dispersion of Medieval Jewish Manuscripts and Its Significance for Understanding the Phenomenon of Hebrew membra disiecta,' in *"Fragmenta ne pereant": Recupero e studio dei frammenti di manoscritti medievali e rinascimentali riutilizzati in legature,* ed. MAURO PERANI and CESARINO RUINI (Ravenna: Longo Editore, 2000), 75–83.

[5] JOSEPH R. HACKER and ADAM SHEAR, eds, *The Hebrew Book in Early Modern Italy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011).

[6] MAURO PERANI, 'Censura, sequestri e roghi di libri ebraici,' in *Dizionario storico dell'Inquisizione*, eds ADRIANO PROSPERI, VINCENZO LAVENIA, and JOHN TEDESCHI, 4 vols., vol. 1 (Pisa: Edizioni della Normale, 2010), 319–23.

[7] KENNETH STOW, *Catholic Thought and Papal Jewry Policy 1555–1593* (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1977); DOMENICO ROCCIOLO, 'Documenti sui catecumeni e neofiti a Roma nel Seicento e Settecento,' *Ricerche per la storia religiosa di Roma* 10 (1998): 391–452; MARINA CAFFIERO, *Battesimi forzati. Storie di ebrei, cristiani e convertiti nella Roma dei papi* (Roma: Viella 2004); MARINA CAFFIERO, 'Tra due fuochi. Ebrei, Inquisizione e Case dei catecumeni,' in *L'Inquisizione e gli ebrei. Nuove ricerche*, ed. MARINA CAFFIERO (Roma: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2021), 83–110.

[8] KENNETH STOW, 'The Burning of the Talmud in 1553, in the Light of Sixteenth Century Catholic Attitudes toward the Talmud,' *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 34, no. 3 (1972): 435–59. See also: KENNETH STOW, 'The Fruit of Ambivalence. Papal Jewry Policies Over the Centuries,' in *The Roman Inquisition, the Index and the Jews,* ed. STEPHAN WENDEHORST (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 3–17.

Fiori in Rome to be burnt and destroyed.[9] The same treatment was later given to Hebrew books in other cities of the Papal States. Over time, more or less systematic confiscations of Hebrew books have taken place, followed by ritual processions, bonfires, and destruction, along with the persecution of the people who produced them.[10]

The ecclesiastical body in charge of controlling Hebrew books was not the Congregation of the Index, which controlled books in general, but the Holy Office. The role of the Holy Office's Congregation of Cardinals was to protect the purity of the Catholic faith and thus to take action against heresy and heretics. Theoretically speaking, Jews were not part of this category, but they ended up falling under the Inquisition's purview if their views or actions were considered detrimental to Christianity, for example the reading or storage of books deemed heretical and blasphemous.

The Roman Archive of the Holy Office has been open to the public for about twenty-five years; scholars were first allowed to consult the documents stored there in 1998. The then-Prefect of the Sacra Congregatio pro Doctrina Fidei*,* Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (future Pope Benedict XVI), ordered the official opening of the Archive of the Holy Office following the indications of Pope John Paul II (pope from 1978 to 2005).[11] The archive is made up of an extraordinary variety of documents that have allowed scholars to investigate issues regarding the Catholic expurgation and regulation of Hebrew texts and the impact that these interventions have had on Italian Jewish culture and Jewish social life.[12]

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[9] FAUSTO PARENTE, 'La Chiesa e il "Talmud": l'atteggiamento della Chiesa e del mondo cristiano nei confronti del "Talmud" e degli altri scritti rabbinici con particolare riguardo all'Italia tra XV e XVI secolo,' in *Storia d'Italia. Annali 11. Gli Ebrei in Italia*, 2 vols., vol. 1, *Dall'alto Medioevo all'età dei ghetti,* ed. CORRADO VIVANTI (Turin: Einaudi, 1996), 521–643.

[10] ABRAHAM BERLINER, *Censur und Confiscation hebräischer Bücherim Kirchenstaate* (Frankfurt: J. Kauffmann, 1891); WILLIAM POPPER, *The Censorship of Hebrew Books* (New York: Knickerbocker Press, 1899); MARVIN J. HELLER, *Printing the Talmud: A History of the Earliest Printed Editions of the Talmud* (Brooklyn, NY: ImHasefe, 1992); MAURO PERANI, 'Confisca e censura dei libri ebraici a Modena fra cinque e seicento,' in *L'inquisizione e gli ebrei in Italia,* ed. MICHELE LUZZATI (Roma: Laterza, 1994), 287–320; FAUSTO PARENTE, 'The Index, the Holy Office, the Condemnation of the Talmud and the Publication of Clement VIII's Index,' in *Church, Censorship and Culture in Early Modern Italy*, ed. GIGLIOLA FRAGNITO (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 163–93.

[11] Regarding the opening of the Archive, see *L'apertura degli archivi del Sant'Uffizio romano. Atti dei convegni lincei 142* (*Giornata di studio, Roma 22 gennaio 1998)* (Rome: Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, 1998); *L'Inquisizione e gli storici: un cantiere aperto. Atti dei convegni lincei 162 (Roma, 24–25 giugno 1999)* (Rome: Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, 2000); *Le inquisizioni cristiane e gli ebrei. Atti dei convegni lincei 191 (Roma, 20–21 dicembre 2001)* (Rome: Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, 2003); *A dieci anni dall'apertura dell'Archivio della Congregazione per la Dottrina della Fede. Storia e archivi dell'Inquisizione* (Rome: Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, 2011); *L'Inquisizione romana e i suoi archivi. A vent'anni dall'apertura dell'ACDF. Atti del convegno (Roma, 15–17 maggio 2018)*, ed. ALEJANDRO CIFRES (Rome: Gangemi, 2019). At the time of writing, the documents from the historical archives that had been deposited prior to the end of the pontificate of Pius XII (1939–1958) were accessible.

[12] MARINA CAFFIERO, *Legami pericolosi. Ebrei e cristiani tra eresia, libri proibiti e stregoneria* (Torino: Einaudi, 2012).

The relationship between the Catholic Church, Jews, and Judaism is intricate, and the papers collected in this thematic section deal with different aspects of this relationship. They try to integrate the newly discovered sources into the context of existing research by studying the vicissitudes of the Hebrew book. Over the last few years, the story of Hebrew books has sparked growing interest, and this thematic section can therefore offer a unique lens through which to view and analyse some aspects of the complex relationship between Judaism and Christianity.[13]

As has often occurred in the history of culture and circulation of knowledge, large quantities of books have not been destined to be preserved for posterity, having instead been neglected, destroyed or, in some cases, even dismembered and repurposed. Indeed, besides the various ways in which Hebrew books were persecuted, some particular circumstances paradoxically led to their rescue and conservation as well—albeit in a fragmentary form.

Despite the various decrees stipulating the confiscation and burning of Jewish books promulgated by the Catholic Church—especially after the notorious bull *Cum nimis absurdum*, issued by inquisitor-general Paul IV Carafa during the Counter-Reformation as a result of which thousands upon thousands of texts, including rare rabbinic writings, and other irreplaceable volumes were destroyed[14]—many Hebrew documents were miraculously saved due to the fact that, instead of being burned, they were stolen and recycled. A substantial quantity of book fragments were pulled from the flames, rescued, sold to bibliophiles or antiquarian book dealers, and reused as bookbinding material. Even today, therefore, we can still find surviving traces of medieval Hebrew texts, manuscripts, and *maculature* that have been recovered in many archival *chartularia* all over the world.

Judaic scholarship has termed this discovery of thousands of *disiecta membra* in recent decades as European Genizah, by analogy with the corpus of fragments recovered from old Cairo. The Hebrew root g-n-z, from which the word *genizah* is derived, is documented in Semitic languages with the meanings 'hide,' 'store,' and 'bury,' thus indicating the storage of worn religious texts or other Hebraica that contained references to God. Although the underlying assumptions connected to the two practices may be quite opposite—the aim of *bet genizah* is to avoid desecration, while recycling can be seen as maximum profanation—as a matter of fact they both

[13] MAURO PERANI, ed., *Medieval Hebrew Manuscripts Reused as Book-bindings in Italy*, in collaboration with EMMA ABATE (Leiden: Brill, 2022).

[14] For information on the measures taken against Hebrew books in that period see MARCO MORTARA, 'Die Censurhebraïscher Bücher in Italien und der Canon purificationis,' *Hebraïsche Bibliographie* 5, no. 28 (1862): 96–101; ISAIAH SONNE, ed., *From Paul IV to Pius V* (Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik, 1954) [Hebrew]; MEIR BENAYAHU, *Copyright, Authorization, and Imprimatur for Hebrew Books Printed in Venice* (Jerusalem: Machon Ben Zvi and Mossad Harav Kook, 1971) [Hebrew]; KENNETH STOW, 'The Proper Meaning of Cum Nimis Absurdum,' *Jewish Quarterly Review* 71, no. 4 (1981): 251–52; SHIFRA BARUCHSON, *Books and Readers: The Reading Interests of Italian Jews at the Close of the Renaissance* (Ramat-Gan: Bar Ilan University Press, 1993) [Hebrew].

ironically achieve the same effect, namely the partial (but effective) conservation of thousands of fragments of ancient manuscripts.

Soon after the Gutenberg revolution, the shift from scribal production to printed books caused a collapse of the manuscript market.[15] Hand-written works gradually lost their value as texts and they were relegated to being sold as mere material to be recycled. Medieval manuscripts were bespoke, unique artisanal artefacts, individually hand-made using fine animal skin or other valuable materials, produced mostly upon the request of a patron as they were so expensive and time-consuming to create. For these reasons, from the fifteenth century onward many manuscripts were physically recycled and added to pre-existing texts in an effort to repair damaged books. In this way, old manuscripts were brought into an economisation process, no longer valued as carriers of text but rather for the physical qualities of the parchment on which they were written. Manuscript waste was repurposed in various ways according to the new needs of bookbinders, in the form of flyleaves, pastedowns, limp covers, or palimpsests.

The phenomenon of re-employing discarded book materials is also found in other European countries, but not as consistently as in Italy where over 16,000 fragments have been discovered.[16] The primary reason for this quantity is that the Peninsula has been the leading centre of scribal and print culture in the Renaissance and beyond. In the cities of Ferrara, Milan, Mantua, Parma, and Naples and in the Roman papal court, humanistic scholars promoted the production of written and illuminated works in an effort to recreate the aesthetic qualities of the book from classical times, while in the post-Gutenberg age, publishers—especially from Venice and Florence—played a crucial role in producing published texts. At the same time, a rich tradition of both written and printed Hebrew books flourished in many centres of the Peninsula, where the greatest breadth of materials and finest level of execution were achieved—virtuoso showpieces of such magnificence include the *Rothschild Miscellany*, arguably the most lavishly illuminated Hebrew manuscript produced in Renaissance Italy that combines an Ashkenazi expatriate home library with exquisite

[15] Concerning the transition from the market for manuscripts to that for printed books, see GIOVANNI BONIFATI, *Dal libro manoscritto al libro stampato: sistemi di mercato a Bologna e a Firenze agli albori del capitalismo* (Turin: Rosenberg & Sellier, 2008).

[16] There is a vast bibliography on this subject. For the most comprehensive and updated survey on the Italian Genizah, see PERANI, ed., *Medieval Hebrew Manuscripts Reused as Book-bindings in Italy*; MAURO PERANI, 'A trentasette anni dal decollo della ricerca dei frammenti ebraici riusati come legature in Italia. Il tutto nel frammento,' in *Frammenti di un discorso storico. Per una grammatica dell'aldilà del frammento*, ed. CATERINA TRISTANO (Spoleto: Fondazione Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo, 2019), 285–323.

Italianate decoration,[17] and the printed Hebrew bibles of the Soncino and Bomberg families which set the standard for the classical texts of Judaism.[18]

This picture assumes even more relevance if it is considered that, between the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, as a result of persecution or expulsion, Italy received a mix of Jews immigrating from other European countries who carried their manuscripts and scribal knowledge with them, endowing many Italian Jewish communities' libraries with fine collections composed of extensive and heterogeneous repertoires of texts. By the mid-sixteenth century, twice as many Jews resided in Italy as in Eastern Europe (and almost as many as in all of Europe outside the Peninsula), so it is no coincidence that Italy is often termed the 'breadbasket' of Hebrew manuscripts. This denomination is due to the fact that close to half of the extant medieval Hebrew handwritten texts have an Italian provenance, either because they were copied in Italy and belonged to local owners, or because they were brought to the Peninsula by Ashkenazi or Sephardi immigrants.[19] A microcosm of European Jewry in the heart of Western Christendom, Italy was an important centre of book production and therefore the primary setting for the development of an unparalleled intellectual environment that exerted a lasting influence on culture and politics, at the same time reflecting the finest traits of the Jewish intellectual tradition.

Some materials are presented here for the first time, benefitting from a renewed methodological approach that takes into consideration specific phenomena of late medieval and early modern Italy such as the deliberate destruction of Hebrew books, the impact of Catholic control over Jewish culture, and the ways in which it emerged as well as its implications. The methodology adopted here is intended not to merely present a series of events, but rather to interpret specific historical moments in order to shed new light on the socio-historical context in which they manifested. This approach will consider the development of censorship as part of the institutionalisation of new measures of control over Hebrew texts in this period by analysing the dialectic between events and protagonists. A further objective is to assess how Catholic censorship changed the relationship between the power to and possibility of producing

[17] *The Rothschild Miscellany*, facsimile edition, 2 vols. (London: Facsimile Editions; Jerusalem: Israel Museum, 1989).

[18] HACKER and SHEAR, eds, *The Hebrew Book in Early Modern Italy*; GIULIANO TAMANI, ed., *L'attività editoriale di Gershom Soncino: 1502–1527. Atti del Convegno, Soncino, 17 settembre 1995* (Soncino: Edizioni dei Soncino, 1997); ABRAHAM MEIR HABERMAN, *The Printer Daniel Bomberg and the List of Books Published by His Press* (Safed: Museum of Printing Art, Safed & International Union of Printing Workers in Israel, 1978) [Hebrew]; BRIAN RICHARDSON, *Printing, Writers, and Readers in Renaissance Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

[19] For further information, see: BENJAMIN RICHLER, *Hebrew Manuscripts: A Treasured Legacy* (Cleveland-Jerusalem: Ofeq Institute, 1990), 66–67 and 76–77; COLETTE SIRAT, *Hebrew Manuscripts of the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 8–11; BENJAMIN RICHLER, 'Lezione dottorale,' *Materia giudaica* XV–XVI (2010–2011): 14–16; BENJAMIN RICHLER, 'Italy, the "Breadbasket" of Hebrew Manuscripts,' in *The Italia Judaica Jubilee Conference*, eds SHLOMO SIMONSOHN and JOSEPH SHATZMILLER, (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 137–41; MAURO PERANI, 'Italia "paniere" dei manoscritti ebraici e la loro diaspora nel contesto del collezionismo in Europa tra Otto e Novecento,' in *Il collezionismo di libri ebraici tra XVII e XIX secolo*, eds CHIARA PILOCANE and AMEDEO SPAGNOLETTO, supplement, *La Rassegna Mensile di Israel* 82, no. 2–3 (2016): 63–91.

or destroying culture through the creation, distribution, and disruption of Hebrew books. Hebrew or non-Hebrew books owned by Jews are considered not only as objects, but as participants in a particular interaction between readers, holders, censors, and producers.

A range of topics are covered by the essays, such as Catholic censorship and the expurgation of Hebrew texts, books and documents, their reuse in book bindings, and the way Digital Humanities allows us to retrieve otherwise-lost manuscripts or printed books.

The aim of this thematic section is to gather high-quality research papers that present new findings, scientific approaches, and the latest developments on topics related to the history of Catholic censorship, libricide, and the ways Hebrew books were preserved in late medieval and early modern Italy. The different chapters of the thematic section will address a variety of topics that covers the contents of the research presented and discussions held at the conference so as to assure overall coherence and completeness.

As explained by Kenneth Stow, the history of Jewish book control has often involved ignorant, converted censors who took action against their own former co-religionists. As mentioned above, alongside the various ways in which the Hebrew book was persecuted, specific conjunctures have also occurred that, paradoxically, determined its conservation. This peculiar phenomenon will be presented by Mauro Perani and Elena Lolli. Furthermore, Catholic control also included non-Hebrew books owned by Jews, as we will see in the case study outlined by Miriam Benfatto.

Choosing the Lesser Evil: The Holy Office, the Jews and Voltaire. Censorship Notes on La difesa de' libri santi e della religione giudaica *(Venice, 1770)* [1]

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Disciplining Books and Ideas: Old and New Problems for the Catholic Church

In the eighteenth century, the Catholic Church was called on to deal with profound intellectual and cultural changes linked to the Enlightenment movement.[2] A useful lens through which to view how it addressed some of these challenges is the complex system of cultural control it exerted, namely through censorship and the activity of the Holy Office. The repression of books shows that the Catholic Church sought to contrast a specific kind of literature, one which also conveyed new concepts and ideas.[3] In Italy, *philosophique* works became increasingly widespread during the eighteenth century, and this new problem for the Church was added to the older one concerning the Jews and the books they possessed. The case study I present here covers these two issues and concerns the Catholic Church's attitude towards Jews, the Enlightenment and books that conveyed a new approach to religion in the general framework of ecclesiastical control over the circulation of books in late eighteenth-century Italy. The existence of contrasting visions and conflicting interpretations allows us to identify a highly complex institutional censorship system.[4] Some aspects of this system surface

[1] This research was made possible by the support of the Rothschild Foundation Hanadiv Europe. I am grateful to the anonymous reviewers for their careful reading of my manuscript and their many insightful comments and bibliography suggestions.

[2] For an overview of the Catholic Church's response, see DANIELE MENOZZI, 'Il cattolicesimo dal concilio di Trento al Vaticano II,' in *Cristianesimo*, ed. GIOVANNI FILORAMO (Bari: Laterza, 2000), 314–19. In relation also to the second Protestant expansion see UMBERTO MAZZONE, 'La seconda espansione protestante (1648-1789),' in *Storia del Cristianesimo*, 4 vols., vol. 3, *L'età moderna (secoli XVI-XVIII)*, ed. VINCENZO LAVENIA (Rome: Carocci, 2015), 298–318, especially 312–18; VINCENZO LAVENIA, *Storia della Chiesa*, 4 vols., vol. 3, *L'età moderna* (Bologna: Edizioni Dehoniane, 2020), 267–330, especially 297–310.

[3] It should be noted that, as Giorgio Caravale recently stressed, 'L'idea che esistesse un nesso strettissimo tra l'eretico e il filosofo, tra Lutero e Voltaire, tra Calvino e d'Holbach, tra l'eresia protestante e la filosofia del Lumi fu centrale nella cultura censoria dell'epoca' (The idea that there was a very close link between the heretic and the philosopher, between Luther and Voltaire, between Calvin and d'Holbach, and between Protestant heresy and the philosophy of the Enlightenment was central to the censorship culture of the time). GIORGIO CARAVALE, *Libri pericolosi. Censura e cultura italiana in età moderna* (Bari: Laterza, 2022), 87–103 (102). All translations from Italian are mine.

[4] Regarding some aspects of the conflicts and complexities of the institutional system of censorship, see CARAVALE, *Libri pericolosi*; GIGLIOLA FRAGNITO, *La Bibbia al rogo. La censura ecclesiastica e i volgarizzamenti*

Cromohs (Cyber Review of Modern Historiography), ISSN 1123-7023, 26/2023

DOI: 10.36253/cromohs-14233

in the episode described here, a case which offers an example of Catholic control of books dating back to this period. The case study at the centre of this paper concerns a book that was seized in Ancona (a port city in central Italy): *La difesa de' libri santi e della religione giudaica contro le imputazioni e varie dicerie del sig. di Voltaire*, anonymously published in Venice in 1770.[5] I will interrogate the *censure*, that is, the censorship notes that the Roman Holy Office produced and, accordingly, the distinct judgements and opinions expressed on the book's content. The documents consulted for this analysis are held at the Archives for the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith (formerly the Holy Office) in Rome and presented here for the first time.[6]

Almost twenty-five years have passed since scholars were first allowed to consult the Roman Archive of the Holy Office. In January 1998, then-Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger—Prefect of the Sacra Congregatio pro Doctrina Fidei and future Pope Benedict XVI (from 2005 to 2013)—ordered the Archives of the Holy Office to be officially opened in accordance with the proposal made by Pope John Paul II (pope from 1978 to 2005).[7] The archive is composed of an extraordinary variety of documents, including the important documentary collection of the so-called *Censurae Librorum*.[8] As is well known, this collection includes letters of denunciation, votes by those employed at the Holy Office, and reports and acts transmitted to the Sacred Congregation of the Index. It also contains documents regarding the examination and evaluation of books, both manuscripts and printed books, which were subjected to the control exercised directly by the Holy Office. Handwritten or printed copies of the works examined by the Office are often attached to the documentation in question. The *Censurae Librorum* collection therefore contains a rich vein of information about the ways in which censors at the Holy Office performed their tasks. One file in the collection recounts the episodes reported here, thereby allowing us to follow the

della Scrittura (1471-1605) (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1997); MARIO INFELISE, *I padroni dei libri. Il controllo sulla stampa nella prima età moderna*, repr. (2014; Bari: Laterza, 2019).

[5] The full title page reads *La difesa de' libri santi e della religione giudaica contro le imputazioni e varie dicerie del sig. di Voltaire. Contenuta in varie Lettere e Riflessioni corredate ed illustrate con Note critiche, oltre un piccolo Comento estratto da altro maggiore. Opera tradotta dall'idioma francese. Utilissima e necessaria per l'intelligenza delle Sacre Scritture* (Venice: Giuseppe Bettinelli, 1770). The title can be translated in English as *The Defence of the Holy Books and the Jewish Religion against the imputations and various rumours of Mr. Voltaire, contained in various letters, and Reflections accompanied by and illustrated with critical notes, plus a small commentary extracted from another major [one]. Work translated from French. Useful and necessary for the understanding of the Holy Scriptures*.

[6] Henceforth ACDF, SO.

[7] Concerning the opening of the Archive, see *L'apertura degli archivi del Sant'Uffizio romano. Atti dei convegni lincei 142* (*Giornata di studio, Roma 22 gennaio 1998)* (Rome: Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, 1998); *L'Inquisizione e gli storici: un cantiere aperto. Atti dei convegni lincei 162 (Roma, 24–25 giugno 1999)* (Rome: Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, 2000); *Le inquisizioni cristiane e gli ebrei. Atti dei convegni lincei 191 (Roma, 20–21 dicembre 2001)* (Rome: Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, 2003); *A dieci anni dall'apertura dell'Archivio della Congregazione per la Dottrina della Fede. Storia e archivi dell'Inquisizione* (Rome: Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, 2011); *L'Inquisizione romana e i suoi archivi. A vent'anni dall'apertura dell'ACDF. Atti del convegno (Roma, 15–17 maggio 2018)*, ed. ALEJANDRO CIFRES (Rome: Gangemi, 2019). At the time of writing, the documents from the historical archives that were accessible were those that had been deposited prior to the end of the pontificate of Pius XII (1939–1958).

[8] Henceforth CL.

censors as they examined texts. More precisely, we can trace the construction of the—sometimes blurred—boundaries between what was permitted and what was not.[9]

The dissemination of the theories and concepts of the so-called 'increduli' (unbelievers), a term also used to refer to the intellectual representatives known today as Enlighteners, understandably falls into the category of not-permitted. The congregations of the two tribunals of reading, the Index and the Holy Office/Inquisition, implemented various strategies of governance and prohibition (e.g. the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum*, Index of Prohibited Books) aimed at countering the propagation of new ideas, ideas which often came from across the Alps.[10] To exemplify the fight against the *Lumières*, it is important to mention that the Index of Prohibited Books in which many Enlightenment books were gradually included was continuously updated.[11] Furthermore, the Catholic Church was tasked with condemning the new ideas, as it did through the encyclical *Christianae reipublicae* that Clement XIII (pope from 1758 to 1769) published in 1766; here, the 'pestifero contagio dei libri' (pestiferous contagion of books) is strongly condemned because it is considered a vehicle of 'esecrabile errore' (execrable error).[12] The same concern is discernible in the first encyclical of the newly elected Pope Pius VI (from 1775 to 1799), *Inscrutabile divinae sapientiae*, published in 1775. This text reproaches and condemns those 'filosofi sciagurati' (deplorable philosophers) who—along with other inadmissible errors—proclaim that 'l'uomo nasce libero e non è soggetto a nessuno' (man is born free and is subject to no one).[13] In both encyclicals, there is a clear awareness that the new philosophy, this 'funesto contagio' (baleful contamination),[14] is transmitted and takes hold through the reading of books. To cope with the advance of Enlightenment thought and publications, the Catholic Church was also concerned with making a shift from repressive to persuasive techniques, such as by refuting the ideas of the forbidden books listed in the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* and making translations of anti-

[9] The documents on the events described here were taken from ACDF, SO, CL 1779–1780 (1), ff. 1r–119v. For a brief description, see HUBERT WOLF, ed., *Systematisches Repertorium zur Buchzensur 1701-1813*, 2 vols., vol. 1, *Inquisition* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2009), 457–62.

[10] ANDREA DEL COL, *L'Inquisizione in Italia. Dal XII al XXI secolo* (Milan: Mondadori, 2006), 699–740, especially 711–29; STEFANIA VALERI, *Libri nuovi scendon l'Alpi. Venti anni di relazioni franco-italiane negli archivi della Société typographique de Neuchâtel (1769-1789)* (Macerata: EUM, 2006); PATRIZIA DELPIANO, 'Illuminismo,' in *Dizionario storico dell'Inquisizione*, eds ADRIANO PROSPERI, VINCENZO LAVENIA, and JOHN TEDESCHI, 4 vols., vol. 2 (Pisa: Edizioni della Normale, 2010), 761–64. For a general overview of the Enlightenment book trade see MARK CURRAN, *The French Book Trade in Enlightenment Europe I: Selling Enlightenment* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018).

[11] MOGENS LAERKE, *The Use of Censorship in the Enlightenment* (Leiden: Brill, 2009); MARIO INFELISE, *I libri proibiti. Da Gutenberg all'Encyclopedie* (Bari: Laterza 2013), 114–20; CATHERINE MAIRE, 'L'entrée des 'Lumières' à l'Index: le tournant de la double censure de l'Encyclopédie en 1759,' *Recherches sur Diderot et sur l'Encyclopédie* 42, no. 1 (2007): 108–39.

[12] *Enchiridion delle Encicliche*, 8 vols., vol. 1, *Benedetto XIV, Clemente XIII, Clemente XIV, Pio VI, Pio VII, Leone XII, Pio VIII (1740–1830)* (Bologna: Edizioni dehoniane, 1994), 946–55 (946–47).

[13] *Enchiridion delle Encicliche*, 1070–89 (1080–81).

[14] *Enchiridion delle Encicliche*, 1070–89 (1082–83).

philosophique works.[15] In addition to already institutionalised practices, the Church deployed men of letters to defend its intellectual hegemony and *patrimonium fidei*. In Italy, books published to contrast Voltaire's philosophical production included the *Dissertazioni* (1780) by Emanuele da Domodossola, *La religione vincitrice* (1756) and *La verità della Chiesa* (1787) by Antonio Valsecchi, the Italian translations of Claude-François Nonnotte's book *Gli errori di Voltaire* (1773), and a work by Charles-Louis Richard titled *Voltaire fra l'ombre* (1777).[16]

This unprecedented problem emerged alongside the older and more long-standing one concerning the Jews. As is well known, the Catholic Church—including through the work of the Holy Office—carried out a series of operations to control the Jews and their written production, the main aim of which was essentially conversion. The Church's attitude toward Jews in the Papal States is also evident in the establishment of the ghetto and Casa dei Catecumeni (House of Catechumens) during the sixteenth century.[17] Although the Catholic fight against the Talmud is one of the best-known examples in historiography,[18] the campaign against Hebrew books also

[15] PATRIZIA DELPIANO, *Il governo della lettura: chiesa e libri nell'Italia del Settecento* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2007). Also available in English translation: *Church and Censorship in Eighteenth-Century Italy: Governing Reading in the Age of Enlightenment* (New York: Routledge, 2018).

[16] DELPIANO, *Il governo della lettura,* 217–30; DIDIER MASSEAU, *Les ennemis des philosophes. L'antiphilosophie au temps des Lumières* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2000); DARRIN MCMAHON, *Enemies of the Enlightenment. The French Counter-Enlightenment and the Making of Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); PATRIZIA DELPIANO, 'Censure et guerre des livres: l'antiphilosophie, de la France à l'Italie,' in *La traduction comme dispositif de communication dans l'Europe moderne*, ed. PATRICE BRET and JEANNE PEIFFER (Paris: Hermann, 2020), 117–34; PATRIZIA DELPIANO, 'Libri e letture nella cultura antiphilosophique,' in *Il libro. Editoria e pratiche di lettura nel Settecento,* eds LODOVICA BRAIDA and SILVIA TATTI (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2016), 27–38.

[17] Regarding the sixteenth century, see KENNETH STOW, *Catholic Thought and Papal Jewry Policy 1555-1593* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1977). Concerning the eighteenth century, see MARIO ROSA, 'Tra tolleranza e repressione: Roma e gli ebrei nel '700,' in *Italia Judaica. Gli ebrei in Italia dalla segregazione alla prima emancipazione. Atti del III Convegno internazionale. Tel Aviv 15-20 giugno 1986* (Rome: Ministero per i Beni culturali e ambientali, 1989), 81–98; MARIO ROSA, 'La Santa Sede e gli ebrei nel Settecento,' in *Storia d'Italia. Annali 11. Gli Ebrei in Italia*, 2 vols., vol. 2, *Gli ebrei in Italia: dall'Emancipazione a oggi*, ed. CORRADO VIVANTI (Turin: Einaudi, 1997), 1067–87; KENNETH STOW, *Anna and Tranquillo: Catholic Anxiety and Jewish Protest in the Age of Revolutions* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016). For general overviews, see MICHELE LUZZATI, ed., *L'Inquisizione e gli ebrei in Italia* (Bari: Laterza, 1994); MARINA CAFFIERO, *Legami pericolosi. Ebrei e cristiani tra eresia, libri proibiti e stregoneria* (Turin: Einaudi, 2012); SERENA DI NEPI, *Sopravvivere al ghetto. Per una storia sociale della comunità ebraica nella Roma del Cinquecento* (Rome: Viella, 2013); MARINA CAFFIERO, *Storia degli ebrei nell'Italia moderna. Dal Rinascimento alla Restaurazione* (Rome: Carocci, 2014); MARINA CAFFIERO, ed., *L'Inquisizione e gli ebrei. Nuove ricerche* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2021).

[18] FAUSTO PARENTE, 'La Chiesa e il "Talmud": l'atteggiamento della Chiesa e del mondo cristiano nei confronti del "Talmud" e degli altri scritti rabbinici con particolare riguardo all'Italia tra XV e XVI secolo,' in *Storia d'Italia. Annali 11. Gli Ebrei in Italia*, 2 vols., vol. 1, *Dall'alto Medioevo all'età dei ghetti,* ed. CORRADO VIVANTI (Turin: Einaudi, 1996), 521–643; KENNETH STOW, 'The Burning of the Talmud in 1553, in the Light of Sixteenth Century Catholic Attitudes toward the Talmud,' *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 34, no. 3 (1972): 435–59; PIET VAN BOXEL, 'Hebrew Books and Censorship in Sixteenth-Century Italy,' in *Jewish Books and their Readers*, eds SCOTT MANDELBROTE and JOANNA WEINBERG (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 73–99.

involved many other literary works.[19] It is worth mentioning that, in the first half of the eighteenth century, Clement XII (pope from 1730 to 1740) issued an edict on Jews (in 1733) in which the very first clauses focused specifically on Hebrew books; this demonstrates the attempt to ban the Talmud and other works deemed dangerous because they contained material considered offensive to Christianity. This focus reveals the Catholic Church's intense concern for books and the written production of the Jews. Moreover, the edict was republished by Benedict XIV (pope from 1740 to 1758) in 1751 and by Pius VI in 1775, and then again at the end of the eighteenth century (1793).[20]

The Book on Trial: *La difesa de' libri santi*

The book about which the censorship notes were written is not a Hebrew book *stricto sensu*, but it does concern Judaism and the Hebrew Bible. Furthermore, as we will see, it was read by Jews and allegedly written mainly by Jews. Its title page reads *La difesa de' libri santi e della religione giudaica contro le imputazioni e varie dicerie del sig. di Voltaire. Contenuta in varie Lettere e Riflessioni corredate ed illustrate con Note critiche, oltre un piccolo Comento estratto da altro maggiore*. *Opera tradotta dall'idioma francese*. The work appeared in Venice and rolled off the presses of the publisher Giuseppe Bettinelli in 1770,[21] without any indication of the author or translator. The original French version, titled *Lettres de quelques juifs portugais et allemands, à M. de Voltaire*, was published *sine nomine* by the Parisian printer Laurent Prault in 1769 and accompanied by Christian notes. [22] This work was prepared by Antoine Guénée (1717–1803), a French priest and Christian apologist.[23] Soon recognised even by Voltaire himself, who—in a disparaging tone—apostrophised him as 'M. le professeur secretaire des juifs,'[24] Guénée was involved in a fierce counter-attack launched by certain French Catholic clerics, such as Nicolas

[19] ABRAHAM BERLINER, *Censur und Confiscation hebräischer Bücher im Kirchenstaate* (Frankfurt: J. Kauffmann, 1891); WILLIAM POPPER, *The Censorship of Hebrew Books* (New York: Knickerbocker Press, 1899); MAURO PERANI, 'Censura, sequestri e roghi di libri ebraici,' in *Dizionario storico dell'Inquisizione*, eds ADRIANO PROSPERI, VINCENZO LAVENIA, and JOHN TEDESCHI, 4 vols., vol. 1 (Pisa: Edizioni della Normale, 2010), 319–23; CAFFIERO, *Legami pericolosi*, 44–77.

[20] For more on this topic, see ATTILIO MILANO, 'L'Editto sopra gli ebrei di Pio VI e le mene ricattatorie di un letterato,' *La Rassegna Mensile di Israel* 19, no. 2 (1953): 65–80; ATTILIO MILANO, *Storia degli ebrei in Italia*, 2nd ed. (1963; Turin: Einaudi, 1992), 296–96; PAOLO ELIA, 'I fratelli Verri e l'editto di Pio VI,' *La Rassegna Mensile di Israel* 43, no. 3–4 (1977): 133–36.

[21] Regarding the bookmaking activity of Bettinelli's family, see MARIO INFELISE, *L'editoria veneziana nel '700* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 1989), *ad indicem*. For a discussion of the Venice book market, see INFELISE, *L'editoria veneziana nel '700*. The book market did not come to a halt, despite Catholic control. It should also be noted that a number of unauthorised volumes came from the Venetian Republic and that this led the Roman Inquisition, at least from 1762 to 1767, to take action by demanding strict control of the printers. As mentioned above, *La difesa de' libri santi* was printed in Venice. See PATRIZIA DELPIANO, 'Il controllo ecclesiastico della lettura nell'Italia dei Lumi,' in *La censura nel secolo dei Lumi. Una visione internazionale*, ed. EDOARDO TORTAROLO (Turin: Utet, 2011), 65–93, especially 80.

[22] ANTOINE GUÉNÉE, *Lettres de quelques juifs portugais et allemands, à M. de Voltaire, avec des reflection critiques, &c. Et un petit Commentaire extrait d'un plus grand* (Lisbonne-Paris: Laurent Prault, 1769).

[23] FRANK E. MANUEL, *The Broken Staff: Judaism through Christian Eyes* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 234–38. Regarding certain aspects of its reception, see PAUL BENHAMOU, 'Antiphilosophes éclairés et le Juifs,' in *L'Antisémitisme Éclairé: Inclusion et Exclusion depuis l'Époque des Lumières jusqu'à l'affaire Dreyfus*, eds ILANA ZINGUER and SAM BLOOM (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 61–76.

[24] BENHAMOU, 'Antiphilosophes éclairés et le Juifs,' 68.

Sylvestre Bergier (1718–1790) and Henri Grégoire (1750–1831), against the philosopher's view of ancient Judaism.[25]

The Italian version appeared as a free translation of the French edition.[26] The book contains several letters said to have been written by Jews in response to certain issues that Voltaire had raised against the Bible and Jews. Some letters were derived from the *Apologie pour la nation juive* (1762) by the Dutch Jew Isaac de Pinto (1717–1787),[27] whereas the other missives were presumably written by Guénée himself. Voltaire's arguments, which the book criticised and sought to counter, are mainly contained in his works *Traité sur la tolérance (1763), Dictionnaire philosophique (1764)* and *La Philosophie de l'histoire (1765)*.[28] Voltaire responded to Guénée's French text in *Un chrétien contre six juifs ou Réfutation d'un livre intitulé, Lettres de Quelques Juifs Portugais, Allemands, et Polonais* (1777).[29] As is well known, Voltaire was one of the most anti-Semitic philosophers of all Enlightenment thinkers and made considerable efforts to express his negative views of Jews and Judaism.[30]

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[25] MANUEL, *The Broken Staff,* 238–47; JEFFREY D. BURSON, 'The Catholic Enlightenment in France from the Fin de Siècle Crisis of Consciousness to the Revolution, 1650–1789,' in *A Companion to the Catholic Enlightenment in Europe*, eds ULRICH LEHNER and MICHAEL PRINTY (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 63–125; SYLVIANE ALBERTAN-COPPOLA, *L'abbé Nicolas-Sylvestre Bergier, 1718–1790: des Monts-Jura à Versailles, le parcours d'un apologiste du XVIII^e siècle* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2010); ALYSSA GOLDSTEIN SEPINWALL, *The Abbé Grégoire and the French Revolution: The Making of Modern Universalism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

[26] *La difesa de' libri santi* was sometimes wrongly identified as a translation of *Défense des livres de l'Ancien testament* (1767) by Joseph-Guillaume Clémence (1717–1792). For a discussion of some aspects of translating books into Italian during the Enlightenment, see CARAVALE, *Libri pericolosi*, 229–33; PATRIZIA DELPIANO, *Liberi di scrivere. La battaglia per la stampa nell'età dei Lumi* (Bari: Laterza, 2015), 158–64. Further bibliography in note 16 above.

[27] ISAAC DE PINTO, *Apologie pour la nation juive ou Réflexions critiques sur le premier chapitre du VII tome des Oeuvres de Monsieur de Voltaire au sujet des Juifs* (Amsterdam: J. Joubert, 1762). Isaac de Pinto was also a philosopher and economist. Pinto's main work on economics is the *Traité de la circulation et du crédit* (Amsterdam: Marc Michel Rey, 1771). ADAM SUTCLIFFE, 'Can a Jew Be a Philosophe? Isaac de Pinto, Voltaire, and Jewish Participation in the European Enlightenment,' *Jewish Social Studies* 6, no. 3 (2000): 31–51; ADAM SUTCLIFFE, *Judaism and Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 244–45.

[28] As is well known, Voltaire's body of writings was soon listed in the Index. JESÚS MARTÍNEZ DE BUJANDA, *Index Librorum Prohibitorum 1600-1966* (Montréal: Médiaspaul; Genève: Droz, 2002), 928–32.

[29] The first title of Voltaire's response was *Le Viellard du Mont Caucase aux juifs portugais, allemands, et polanais*, later titled *Un chrétien contre six juifs ou Réfutation d'un livre intitulé, Lettres de Quelques Juifs Portugais, Allemands, et Polonais*. AARON GARRETT, 'Human Nature,' in *The Cambridge History of Eighteenth-Century Philosophy*, ed. KNUD HAAKONSSEN, 2 vols., vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 160–233, especially 187; ADAM SUTCLIFFE, 'Voltaire in Context: The Emergence of Antijudaic Rhetoric in the French Early Enlightenment,' in *L'Antisémitisme Éclairé*, eds ZINGUER and BLOOM, 115–24.

[30] The bibliography on the subject is extensive. By way of example, see LÉON POLIAKOV, *Histoire de l'antisémitisme*, 4 vols., vol. 3, *De Voltaire à Wagner* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1968), 103–17; ARTHUR HERTZBERG, *The French Enlightenment and the Jews* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968); MANUEL, *The Broken Staff*, 193–201. It is important to emphasise that the question of Voltaire's anti-Semitism sparks controversy due to its intricate connection with his critique of positive religions, including Christianity. ADAM SUTCLIFFE, 'Myth, Origins, Identity: Voltaire, the Jews, and the Enlightenment Notion of Toleration,' *The Eighteenth Century* 39, no. 2 (1998): 107–26; RONALD SCHECHTER, 'Rationalizing the Enlightenment: Postmodernism and Theories of Anti-Semitism,' in *Postmodernism and the French Enlightenment*, ed. DANIEL GORDON, special issue, *Historical Reflections/Reflexions Historiques* 25, no. 2 (1999): 279–306; DAVID NIRENBERG, *Anti-Judaism: The Western Tradition* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2013).

La difesa de' libri santi is divided into three main sections. The first part mainly contains an apologia for the civil and moral honesty of the Jews, especially Portuguese and Spanish contemporaries, derived from a work by Isaac de Pinto.[31] Indeed, this section appears more as a defence of the merits of Sephardic Jews than of Judaism in general. The main theme is Voltaire's description of the Jewish people as a barbarous, ignorant and superstitious people. *La difesa de' libri santi* argues that a distinction must be made between Spanish and Portuguese Jews, who descend directly from the Tribe of Judah, and other Jews, for example those of Polish and German origins.[32] According to the text, Voltaire should have recognised the significant difference between the elegant and cultured Sephardic Jews and the uncivilised Jews from other nations.[33] Unfortunate as they were, they should not be subjected to further discrimination, especially if it was being called for by the greatest genius of the century, namely Voltaire.[34] The tone of this reaction to Voltaire is often laudatory, but it does not fail to accuse him of being a slanderer. Voltaire's reply, which was included in the text, promised a retraction, but this never happened.[35]

The second part essentially responds to a note that Voltaire had inserted in the *Traité sur la tolérance* regarding the books of Moses.[36] The letters addressed to Voltaire by those who qualify as Polish and German Jews from Amsterdam are intended to defend the authority of the Pentateuch and the memory of Jewish ancestors.[37] Voltaire's note is quoted in its entirety, and the refutation is intended to analyse—point by point—the accusations that Moses could not possibly have written the books of the Pentateuch and the improbability of the events involving the Golden Calf and the ensuing punishment.[38] For example, Voltaire questioned the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch on the basis of the fact that, in Moses's time, it was only possible to write on stone, brick, lead, and wood, but these suppositions in no way eliminate the possibility that Moses accomplished the task.[39] Furthermore, the letters aim to question Voltaire's infamous accusation of the alleged bestiality of ancient Jews. Voltaire argues that sexual immorality was so common among Jews that it led to severe prohibitions against these practices. What Voltaire considered testimony of the inherent depravity of the people of Israel, the letters argue, instead served to protect the Jews from immoral external influences.[40]

The third part deals with various issues relating to the defence of divine revelation and Jewish law, contained in the *Traité sur la tolerance* and *La Philosophie de*

[31] ISAAC DE PINTO, *Apologie pour la nation juive*. This is Pinto's answer to Voltaire's essay *Des Juifs*, included in *Mélanges de littérature, d'histoire et de philosophie* (1756).
[32] *La difesa de' libri santi,* 10–11.
[33] *La difesa de' libri santi,* 11.
[34] *La difesa de' libri santi*, 14–15.
[35] *La difesa de' libri santi*, 23–25.
[36] On Voltaire's toleration of the Jews see: SUTCLIFFE, 'Myth, Origins, Identity.'
[37] *La difesa de' libri santi*, 30–31.
[38] *La difesa de' libri santi*, 32–84.
[39] *La difesa de' libri santi*, 38–41.
[40] *La difesa de' libri santi,* 99–101.

l'histoire. The respectful and almost laudatory tone used in reference to Voltaire, which can be discerned occasionally in the first two sections, in this part gives way to veiled insults. Voltaire is reprimanded for ridiculing Jewish ceremonial laws and being one of those simple men who, 'non avendo mai posto piede fuor dal loro Paese prendono per bizzarrie tutte le usanze forastiere' (having never set foot outside their country consider all foreign customs to be oddities).[41] Most of the defence is directed toward Voltaire's accusations regarding Moses's alleged tolerance of other cults and the idolatry of ancient Jews. These accusations are rejected on the grounds that Voltaire did not understand the true meaning of the biblical accounts.[42] These three main sections, made up of letters, are followed by a last one which was added at the end of the third part and also addressed issues concerning the supposed anthropophagy of the Jewish people and the possibility of making sacrifices with human blood.[43] Voltaire's claims, which are refuted here, mainly derive from the *Dictionnaire philosophique* and the *Traité sur la tolerance*; some excerpts are quoted directly in the text, such as the lines from the entry *Anthropophagi* drawn from the *Dictionnaire philosophique* and its counter-response. This clarifies the actual meaning of the biblical passages that Voltaire maliciously misunderstood by considering treatments of the threat of cannibalism to be evidence of the crime itself.[44]

Ultimately, the book defends the Holy Scriptures against Voltaire's attacks and misinterpretations and is simultaneously a defence of the Jews and their religion more generally.

The Censorship Notes: Extracts from the Reports of the Holy Office

The opinions expressed by those the Holy Office had invited to judge *La difesa de' libri santi* reveal a number of interesting aspects of the censors' attitude towards the themes addressed in the book. We can try to understand this attitude by reading and analysing the *censure*, that is, the censorship notes, or reports, submitted to the Holy Office. I understand the Italian term *censura* (pl. *censure*), usually translated in English with the term 'censorship,' as a specific examination of the contents of a book, and not—or at least not yet—as a complex institutional body with a generally repressive character.[45] I have developed this definition of censorship by interrogating actual censors (or revisers). In this article, I will speak of censorship notes or reports respecting the contemporary meaning of 'judgement' (as per its Latin etymological root: 'judgement,' 'examination'). Censorship is only one part of the Catholic control of books and represents only one of its instruments. One of the aims of this article is to shed light

[41] *La difesa de' libri santi,* 106.
[42] *La difesa de' libri santi,* 112–13.
[43] It is possible that there is a reference to the blood libel/ritual murder libel. On this topic see: HILLEL J. KIEVAL, 'The Blood Libel,' in *Key Concepts in the Study of Antisemitism,* eds SOL GOLDBERG, SCOTT URY, and KALMAN WEISER (London: Palgrave, 2021), 53–64.
[44] *La difesa de' libri santi,* 131.
[45] For a discussion of this term, see INFELISE, *I padroni dei libri,* 20; VITTORIO FRAJESE, *Nascita dell'Indice. La censura ecclesiastica dal Rinascimento alla Controriforma*, 2nd ed. (2006; Brescia: Morcelliana, 2008), 9; HUBERT WOLF, *Storia dell'Indice. Il Vaticano e i libri proibiti*, it. transl. STEFANO BACIN (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2006; Rome: Donzelli, 2006), 9–15.

on what the censors did and how they understood their tasks. As Robert Darnton has observed, the censors 'wrote as men of letters, and their reports could be considered as a form of literature.'[46] Through a reading of the censorship notes, which are part of the history of the Catholic control of book publishing, and by unveiling the activities of censors, I aim to show how the Catholic Church tried to regulate the spread of what it considered a threat.

The book *La difesa de' libri santi* was intercepted in 1776, six years after its publication in Venice, by Tommaso Matteucci (inquisitor in Ancona from 1766 to 1788).[47] Indeed, during an inspection, four copies of the volume were found, all addressed to a Jew in the Ancona ghetto.[48] As was standard practice, when the books arrived in the port they were first taken to customs; next, the forwarding agent sent them to the inquisitor, who proceeded with the inspection.[49] On 9 December 1776, Inquisitor Matteucci sent a copy of the seized book to the Holy Office in Rome, together with a first censorship report drafted by the *consultore* ('consultor') of the Holy Office, Gianfrancesco Macilenti (*fl.* eighteenth century).[50] Macilenti's judgement is quite concise: although the book does not deserve a harsh condemnation, it is not useful.[51] The Inquisition then examined the book and asked three experts for their censorship notes, or opinions, in accordance with consolidated practice: after the complaint or report was sent to the Holy Office, the Inquisition requested the opinions of two consultants, and that of a third one only if there was disagreement between the first two.[52] In July 1778, during the *Feria coram Sanctissimo*, Antonio Agostino Giorgi (1711–1797) provided the first censorship report, but a second opinion was requested from Desiderio Nardi da Cociglia (*fl.* eighteenth century), which arrived at the beginning of 1779. In the same year, a third and last opinion was requested from Gabriele Fabrizi (1725–1800). Finally, the tribunal of the Inquisition expressed itself in the assembly *Feria V coram Sanctissimo* of 17 May 1781, in the presence of Pius VI.[53] The following decision was conveyed: the first part of *La difesa de' libri santi* must be

46 ROBERT DARNTON, *Censors at Work: How States Shaped Literature* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2014), 30–31 (30); 229–43.

47 LUCA AL SABBAGH, DANIELE SANTARELLI, HERMAN H. SCHWEDT, and DOMIZIA WEBER, eds, *I giudici della fede. L'Inquisizione romana e i suoi tribunali in età moderna* (Florence: Edizioni CLORI, 2017), 40; FABIO TARZIA, *Libri e rivoluzione: figure e mentalità nella Roma di fine ancien régime (1770-1800)* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2000), 31.

48 Regarding the Jewish community of Ancona, see LUCA ANDREONI, *Una nazione in commercio: Ebrei di Ancona, traffici adriatici e pratiche mercantili in età moderna* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2019); MARTINA MAMPIERI e LUCA ANDREONI, '«Tutta l'arte de rabini». Un caso di confisca di libri ebraici ad Ancona: controllo e conflitto (1728),' in *L'Inquisizione e gli ebrei,* ed. CAFFIERO, 49–81.

49 DELPIANO, *Il governo della lettura*, 166.

50 I have found no information about Macilenti. The *consultore* is a consultant to the Holy Office cardinals.

51 ACDF, SO, CL 1779–1780 (1), f. 19.

52 This practice was introduced with the bull *Sollicita ac provvida* (1753) by Pope Benedict XIV. The norm is based on the formula *donec corrigatur*, aimed at inducing writers—during the suspension of the decree of condemnation—to correct the texts. See DELPIANO, *Il governo della lettura*, 80–92; DEL COL, *L'Inquisizione in Italia,* 716.

53 The *Feria IV* was held on Wednesdays and was attended only by inquisitor cardinals. The *Feria V coram Sanctissimo* was held the following day, in the presence of the pope.

forbidden; the second was to be allowed after correction; the third part was to be allowed completely. No decree was issued, and the Holy Office asked the inquisitors of various cities to keep any copies of the book that were still in circulation at their offices.[54]

Through an analysis of extracts from the censorship notes, drafted by the experts that the Inquisition had commissioned, it is possible to explore the content of the various assessments of *La difesa de' libri santi*. Furthermore, it also allows us to understand how the authors structured and organised the censorship notes. Some reports were in favour of the book's circulation because it contained an attack on Voltaire's ideas, whereas others were opposed to its circulation because the book also contained a defence of the Jews and their religion. Hence, the Catholic Church was called on to face two problems that emerged and intertwined.

Antonio Agostino Giorgi

Antonio Agostino Giorgi was an Orientalist scholar and librarian. After entering the Augustinian order, Giorgi received holy orders from Cardinal Prospero Lambertini, the future Pope Benedict XIV. He taught 'Sacra Scrittura' (Sacred Scripture) at the Archiginnasio della Sapienza (from 1746 to 1762) and directed the Biblioteca Angelica in Rome (from 1752 to 1797). Beginning in 1772, he served as *consultore* for the Holy Office.[55] Giorgi presented his censorship notes in 1778 and stated that the book was to be allowed.[56] This first censorship report is the longest one and describes the content of *La difesa de' libri santi* in detail. Giorgi declared that it is a 'libro spettante in parte ai costumi, ed in parte ai s.ti libri, e alla religione degli ebrei' (book pertaining in part to the customs, in part to the holy books, and to the religion of the Jews).[57] Giorgi wrote that, thanks to this book, the author 'è giunto a screditare e a coprire di eterno obbrobrio e d'infinita ignominia la portentosa vanità e l'empia audacia del sacrilego derisore de' Santi Libri [:] il Voltaire' (has come to discredit and cover with eternal shame and infinite ignominy the portentous vanity and impious audacity of the sacrilegious mocker of the Holy Books [:] Voltaire).[58] He mentions a number of previous opinions expressed on the book: that of the Roman periodic journal *Efemeridi letterarie*,[59] which adopted a complimentary tone in its review of the French edition, and that of the Apostolic Nuncio in Vienna, Giuseppe Garampi (1725–1792), nuncio from

[54] In the same folder we find the letters of receipt for orders from the inquisitors of Genoa, Piacenza, and Parma (dated June 1781, after the *Feria V* of May 1781). ACDF, SO, CL 1779–1780 (1), ff. 6r–8v.
[55] GUIDO GREGORIO FAGIOLI VERCELLONE, 'Giorgi, Agostino Antonio,' *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, 100 vols., vol. 55 (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 2001), accessed 3 April 2022, https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/agostino-antonio-giorgi_(Dizionario-Biografico); HUBERT WOLF, ed., *Prosopographie von Römischer Inquisition und Indexkongregation 1701-1813*, 2 vols., vol. 1 (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2010), 596–99. Giorgi was part of the group of councillors who were asked to give their opinion on the changes introduced by Benedict XIV's bull *Sollicita ac provvida* (1753). MARIO ROSA, *Riformatori e ribelli nel '700 religioso italiano* (Bari: Dedalo Libri, 1969), 75–76.
[56] The *censura* by Giorgi is contained in ACDF, SO, CL 1779–1780 (1), ff. 22v–35v.
[57] ACDF, SO, CL 1779–1780 (1), f. 22v.
[58] ACDF, SO, CL 1779–1780 (1), f. 22r.
[59] The periodical *Efemeridi letterarie di Roma* appeared between 1772 and 1798.

1776 to 1785. The latter judged the work to be useful for the faithful, in this case as well based on his reading of the French edition. Giorgi produced a sort of collation of the French edition he had at his disposal (the third Paris edition of 1772) and the 1770 Italian edition. Giorgi gave his assurance that the books contained nothing offensive to religion or morality—the conventional categories that demanded a censor's attention. He then described the structure of the work and expressed a general judgement on the first part:

> L'unico universale argomento che vi si tratti è una vivace apologia dei costumi, dell'onestà e delle morali virtù degli ebrei in genere, ma specialmente dei portoghesi e de' spagnuoli, creduti discendenti dalle primiss.e famiglie della Tribù di Giuda sino dai tempi antichissimi della schiavitù Babilonica contro le accuse di Voltaire. Male per tanto si confa a questa prima parte il titolo italiano di = Difesa de Santi Libri etc i quali dall'ebreo, o forse deista, Pinto si suppongono, ma non si difendono.[60]
>
> The only universal argument that it deals with is a lively apologia of the customs, honesty, and moral virtues of the Jews in general, but especially of the Portuguese and Spaniards, who are believed to be descendants of the first families of the Tribe of Judah from the earliest times of Babylonian slavery, against the accusations of Voltaire. This first part is therefore ill-suited to the Italian title of = Difesa de Santi Libri etc which are supposed to be [defended], yet are not, by the Jew, or perhaps deist, Pinto.

Instead, the second part of *La difesa de' libri santi* is 'veramente difesa e difesa illustre de Santi Libri e specialmente del Pentateuco di Moise, non meno che de' costumi degli antichi ebrei a tempo del loro legislatore ora diffamato a torto dall'empio accusatore Voltaire' (truly a defence and an illustrious defence of the Holy Books and especially of the Pentateuch of Moses, as well as of the customs of the ancient Jews at the time of their legislator, now wrongfully slandered by the impious accuser Voltaire).[61] In Giorgi's opinion, the work was ultimately

> Vantaggiosissima alla somma e unica causa della vera religione. [Esclusa] la sola prima parte […] tutto il resto è una vittoriosa difesa della divina rivelazione, e de' sommi libri del Vecchio Testamento contro gl'increduli: giova infinitamente a cautelare il comune de fedeli acciorché non si lascino sedurre dalla lettura degl'empij libri di Voltaire, e degl'altri filosofi del seculo sacrilegj osteggiatori delle divine scritture.[62]
>
> Most advantageous to the highest and only cause of true religion. [Apart from] the first part alone […] all the rest is a victorious defence of divine revelation, and of the supreme books of the Old Testament against unbelievers: it infinitely helps to protect the faithful from being seduced by reading the impious books of Voltaire and the other philosophers of the century, sacrilegious opponents of the divine scriptures.

Giorgi concluded his censorship notes by arguing that the book does not deserve condemnation, since the defence of the Jewish religion concerns 'la pura Mosaica e non la presente superstiziosa' (the pure Mosaic [one] and not the superstitious

[60] ACDF, SO, CL 1779–1780 (1), f. 24v.
[61] ACDF, SO, CL 1779–1780 (1), f. 24v.
[62] ACDF, SO, CL 1779–1780 (1), f. 31v.

present),[63] and he was keen to specify that 'la religione giudaica, che in questa opera si difende, è l'antica e quella che Mosaica puramente si appella, osservata dal medesimo nostro signore G.C. finché egli non istituì la nuova da pubblicarsi per tutto il mondo' (the religion of Judaism, which is defended in this work, is the ancient religion and that which is purely called Mosaic, observed by our Lord J.C. himself until he established the new religion to be published throughout the world).[64]

Desiderio Nardi da Cociglia

The author of the second censorship notes is Desiderio Nardi da Cociglia. He was provincial minister of the Order of Friars Minor and a *qualificatore* of the Holy Office from 1778 onwards.[65] He drafted his report on *La difesa de' libri santi* in 1779 arguing that the book should be forbidden. Nardi divided his report into two parts: the first part described the content of the book while the second part provided his evaluation of it.[66] His opinion on whether *La difesa de' libri santi* should be allowed to circulate is clear from the outset. The report contains numerous comments that condemn inadmissible ideas:

> Questo è un libro che forma un panegirico, ed un continuo encomio della nazione giudaica […]. Cresce però grandemente il sospetto, che con i fini maliziosi si vogliano le copie di questo libro disseminare. Ho detto della nazione giudaica, perché infatti così è e quivi parimente si ravvisa non so che di doloso e fraudolento: perché laddove il titolo del libro porta *Difesa de Libri santi e della religione giudaica*, che si potrebbe intendere dell'antica anteriore alla venuta del NS Redentore; nella prima parte poi del libro si difende l'odierno popolo ebraico, e il di lui costume.[67]
>
> This book is a panegyric and continuous praise of the Jewish nation […]. There is, however, a growing suspicion that copies of this book are being disseminated for malicious purposes. I have said the Jewish nation, for this is indeed the case, and there is also something wilful and fraudulent about it: even though the title of the book is *Difesa de Libri santi e della religione giudaica*, which could be taken to mean the ancient one prior to the arrival of our Redeemer, the first part of the book defends the present Jewish people and their customs.

Nardi's censorship notes state three main reasons why the book should be proscribed. The first concerns the futility of allowing another book against Voltaire:

> Il signor di Voltaire colla sua […] fantasia può inventare favole e frottole per la scena ed il teatro, in cui come poeta vi fa qualche figura: ma quando tratta le materie Teologiche, ed in particolare le appartenenti ai Sagri Libri è un mero copista, ed un ripetente di ciò che anno scritto gl'increduli il passato secolo Spinosa, Hobbes, Bayle. Ora siccome i sofismi di questi disgraziati scrittori sono stati confutati colla maggior

63 ACDF, SO, CL 1779–1780 (1), f. 34v.
64 ACDF, SO, CL 1779–1780 (1), f. 34v.
65 Some biographical information can be found in his own work: DESIDERIO NARDI DA COCIGLIA, *Nuovo compendio storico della vite de' romani pontefici* (Rome: Giovanni Desideri, 1787). WOLF, ed., *Prosopographie*, vol. 2, cxxi. The position of *qualificatore* was entrusted to experienced theologians.
66 The *censura* by Nardi is contained in ACDF, SO, CL 1779–1780 (1), ff. 40v–55r.
67 ACDF, SO, CL 1779–1780 (1), f. 44r.

> robustezza, e dottrina da uomini eccellenti della nostra Cattolica Chiesa non veggo perché si debba far tanto conto di quattro male accozzonate ciarle del Voltaire puro copista e perché si abbia ad aspettare per confutarle l'aiuto d'Ebrei, o veri o mascherati, che nell'antidoto miscelano un pessimo veleno.[68]
>
> Monsieur Voltaire, with his […] imagination, can invent fables and fairy tales for the stage and for the theatre, in which as a poet he makes some impression: but when he tackles theological subjects, and in particular those belonging to the Sacred Books, he is a mere copyist and repeater of what the unbelievers—Spinosa, Hobbes, Bayle—have written in the past century. Now, since excellent men of our Catholic Church have refuted the sophistries of these wretched writers with the utmost robustness and doctrine, I do not see why we have to rely so much on the four ill-conceived jibes of Voltaire, a pure copyist, and why we have to wait for the help of Jews, either real or disguised, to refute them, who mix the antidote with a very bad poison.

The second reason concerns the presence of a defence of the Jewish people:

> Permettere libero corso ad un libro in cui si encomia e giustifica la morale degl'odierni ebrei se non di tutti, almeno degli spagnoli, e portoghesi […] come discendenti /per sogno/ della tribù di Giuda […] sarebbe un dare ansa ai medesimi di insolentire e col permesso di difendere il presente loro costume, e l'antica loro religione […] con danno e grave scandalo dalla Chiesa Cristiana.[69]
>
> To allow free circulation to a book that praises and justifies the morals of today's Jews, if not all [of them], then at least of the Spaniards and the Portuguese […] descendants /in a dream/ of the tribe of Judas […] would mean giving them the pretext of insolence and permission to defend their present customs and ancient religion […] to the detriment and grave scandal of the Christian Church.

Thirdly, Nardi argued that the book should be banned because it contains a criticism of the Vulgate:

> In molti passi dell'opera si critica e censura la nostra Sagra Scrittura Volgata come difettosa e si pretende che i difetti di questa debbano essere emendati e corretti secondo il testo originale ebraico. Si averà dunque da permettere che un libro sì antico sì venerabile come la nostra Volgata […] sia vilipeso e deriso da quattro circoncisi.[70]
>
> In many passages of the work, our Sacred Scripture Vulgate is criticised and censured for being defective and it is claimed that its defects must be amended and corrected according to the original Hebrew text. It will thus be allowed that a book as ancient and venerable as our Vulgate […] be vilified and mocked by four circumcised [men].

As these extracts demonstrate, Nardi's conclusion is sharp: '[Il] mio sentimento è che il libro sia proscritto, come quello che contiene proposizioni false, erroneee, seducenti, offensive' (My opinion is that the book should be proscribed because it contains false, erroneous, seductive, and offensive propositions).[71]

[68] ACDF, SO, CL 1779–1780 (1), ff. 45r–46v.
[69] ACDF, SO, CL 1779–1780 (1), f. 46r.
[70] ACDF, SO, CL 1779–1780 (1), f. 46r.
[71] ACDF, SO, CL 1779–1780 (1), f. 55v.

Gabriele Fabrizi

The third censura was written by Gabriele Fabrizi, a theologian of the Biblioteca Casanatense and author of a book on the same topic as *La difesa de' libri santi* to which he attached letters by certain Portuguese Jews.[72] Fabrizi's censorship notes were composed as a response to Nardi's negative evaluation and presented a few months later, although still in the same year (1779).[73] The text is composed of four parts, called *osservazioni* (observations). Fabrizi argued that the book was suitable for the current times:

> [Il libro] meriterebbe una giusta riprensione. Ma considerando il luogo, le circostanze, ed il tempo in cui fu pubblicata la presente traduzione, e ciò che deve maggiormente premere, trattandosi qui di un libro appartenente ai fonti primigeni della Religione in esso egregiamente difesi contro l'empie dicerie d'un libertino scrittore qual era il defunto Voltaire, mi pare (salvo un migliore giudizio) che l'editore o traduttore italiano sia degno in ciò di qualche scusa.[74]
>
> [The book] deserves a fair reprehension. But considering the place, circumstances, and time in which the present translation was published, and what is even more pressing, since we are dealing here with a book belonging to the primordial sources of Religion and which excellently defends them against the blasphemous rumours of a libertine writer such as the late Voltaire, it seems to me (subject to better judgment) that the Italian publisher or translator is worthy of being excused.

In Fabrizi's opinion, the book could be useful for countering the ideas that were circulating against

> Chiunque ama sinceramente la Santa Religione, e conosce a qual grado pervenuta sia la miscredenza oggidì sparsa in quei Regni fioritissimi dove la Fede trionfava più che mai, non può ch'essere sensibilmente afflitto di tante stragi da essa sofferte; non può allo stesso tempo rendere abbastanza grazie alla divina bontà per tanti buoni libri, i quali vengono scritti da valenti uomini in difesa della Religione con maggiore furore oltraggiata. Il secolo nostro deve in buona parte questa sventurata rivoluzione alle opere libertine, ed empie del Voltaire. Le armi adoperate da codesto distruggitore d'ogn'idea di Religione dirette le vedo quasi sempre contro i monumenti primigenii della Rivelazione.[75]
>
> Whoever sincerely loves the Holy Religion, and knows the degree that unbelief has reached, today widespread in those flourishing kingdoms where Faith has triumphed more than ever, cannot but be sensibly afflicted by the many slaughters suffered by it; he cannot, at the same time, convey sufficient thanks to the divine goodness for so

[72] GABRIELE FABRIZI, *Des titres primitifs de la révélation* (Rome: Pierre Durand, Jean Genereux Salomoni, Venance Monaldini; Paris: Louis Cellot, Veuve Desaint, Louis Cellot; Londres: Pierre Molini, 1772). For further information on Fabrizi, who was possibly a convert from Judaism, see MAURO PERANI, 'Due cippi funerari della metà del Cinquecento dal cimitero ebraico di Ravenna,' in *Il cimitero ebraico di Lugo*, ed. MAURO PERANI, ANTONIO PIRAZZINI, and GIACOMO CORAZZOL (Florence: Giuntina, 2011), 145–60, especially 147–48.
[73] The *censura* of Fabrizi is contained in ACDF, SO, CL 1779–1780 (1), ff. 68v–99r.
[74] ACDF, SO, CL 1779–1780 (1), f. 68r.
[75] ACDF, SO, CL 1779–1780 (1), f. 70r.

> many good books, which are written by worthy men in defence of a Religion that is ever more furiously offended. Our century owes much of this unfortunate revolution to the libertine and impious works of Voltaire. The weapons used by this destroyer of every idea of Religion are almost always directed against the primitive monuments of Revelation.

Fabrizi's main concern was to allow the circulation of a book that could serve as an effective countermeasure against the new ideas spreading at the time:

> Il libro dell'abbate guenee ha procurato e procura […] grandissimo bene. Questo solo che è degno di somma […] venerazione, è il maggiore elogio che potrei fare della *Difesa dei Libri Sacri*, e compensa abbondantemente i piccioli nei, che in esso potrebbero osservarsi.[76]
>
> The book of Abbot guenee has procured and procures […] great benefit. This alone, which is worthy of the utmost […] veneration, is the highest praise I could give to the *Difesa dei Libri Sacri*, and abundantly compensates for the small moles [imperfections] that can be observed in it.

Fabrizi agreed with Giorgi that a book against Voltaire could still serve to dismantle his criticism of the Scripture. However, Nardi did not recognise the book's utility. It seems that the argumentative force of these letters compensates for the defects—the stance in favour of contemporary Jews, above all—characterising *La Difesa*.

The Church and the Lesser Evil: Conflicts and Divisions

During the eighteenth century, the Catholic Church was concerned with shifting from repressive to persuasive techniques, for example by promoting refutations of books listed in the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* and translating anti-*philosophique* works.[77] As we have seen, *La difesa de' libri santi* represents the latter case, as it is the translation of a work arguing against Voltaire's doctrines. Nevertheless, the book attracted the attention of the Inquisition.

This episode offers a good example of the dynamics between two important issues involving the Catholic Church during the eighteenth century. The affair surrounding the condemnation or acquittal of *La difesa de' libri santi* reveals two intertwining issues: the Catholic Church's attitude towards those considered 'increduli' (unbelievers), 'sacrileji osteggiatori delle divine scritture' (sacrilegious opponents of the divine scriptures), and 'scrittori libertini' (libertine writers)—hence a recent, unprecedented problem—and towards the Jews, which instead represented an ancient problem. The Church had to decide whether it was advantageous to allow the circulation of a book that contained a defence of the Jewish religion and Holy Scripture, but which could—at the same time—provide a useful weapon for countering Voltaire's ideas, although it was said to have been written by Jews. In other words, it had to choose the lesser evil. This case is particularly intriguing because it

[76] ACDF, SO, CL 1779–1780 (1), ff. 96v–r.
[77] DELPIANO, *Il governo della lettura*.

enables us to contemplate how censorship priorities shifted amidst intellectual renewal during the Age of Enlightenment.

The matter is complex and the comments included in the censorship notes are conflicting. It appears that the choice fell mainly on proscribing the part that contained the alleged defence of the Jewish religion, especially since this section of the book seems to have been accused of advocating a coeval Jewish religion—that of Sephardic Jews in particular. In fact, as we have seen, only the ancient Jewish religion is somehow respected, albeit specifically in view of its relationship with Jesus. What is noteworthy is not only the choice of the lesser evil, as made explicit by the move to proscribe the first part, correct the second part and accept the third part, but also the existence of competing perceptions. This demonstrates that it was possible for one censor to behave according to the rules of a game that were different from or incompatible with those followed by someone else operating in the same system. I have tried to reconstruct the censorship process by analysing three separate voices within the same Inquisitional system, which may help us to assess the ecclesiastical ability to grasp the cultural challenges surfacing in the eighteenth century. The main problem with the new Enlightenment ideas, from the Church's perspective, was that they challenged the very idea and validity of religion. Hence, it was no longer a question of adopting strategies to encourage the conversion of Jews and—more in general—fighting against the Jewish religion and its doctrine; what was at stake was the very idea of religion, and this cornerstone had to be safeguarded from that which was perceived as a threat.[78]

The episode presented here sheds light on the Catholic Church's responses, expressed through the Inquisition's measures, to new ideas—often coming from the other side of the Alps—and *philosophique* works. In this case, the responses to this new challenge were not unanimous. The complexity of the affair is evident, as are the internal splits and contrasting visions arising from this encounter with Enlightenment ideas. I have tried to capture the tone of what took place 'behind the curtains' of an authoritarian and hierarchical cultural system and the values that guided the Catholic Church's actions. Analysing the censorship notes prepared for the examination and trial of books that had attracted the Holy Office's attention appears to be a very interesting task.[79] This study allows us to learn more about the work of the censors: their points of view, the way they performed their tasks, and their specific responses to debated issues. Censors read to prevent Catholics from reading dangerous books, and their opinions were an essential part of the Church's highly structured apparatus set up to control and discipline culture. In other words, censorship notes are internal material of the Congregation, an entity for which we often see only the outcomes, as in the case of the official banning of books.

[78] Nevertheless, some religious characteristics can be traced in the Enlightenment. See DAVID SORKIN, *The Religious Enlightenment: Protestants, Jews, and Catholics from London to Vienna* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).

[79] Darnton, for example, also took censorship reports into consideration for his important study on censorship in Bourbon France, British India, and East Germany. DARNTON, *Censors at Work*.

Surviving Hebrew Accounts From the European Genizah: the Earliest Ledger of a Jewish Pawnshop in Italy [1]

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Throughout history, the Catholic Church has conducted various campaigns in different locations across Christian Europe, each time creating a complex environment fueling intense controversies around Jewish literary works. This has led to a phenomenon of alteration and destruction of Hebrew books involving confiscation, proscription, censorship, and burning of texts, all with the aim of suppressing works on charges of blasphemy or immorality and promoting conversion away from Judaism. In 1239, Pope Gregory IX issued the bull *Si vera sunt* authorising the confiscation and burning of the Talmud or any other Jewish text considered heretical. Over the next hundred years, this edict triggered a series of incidents involving censorship aimed at eliminating Jewish books. These events culminated in major public burnings in Paris (Place de Grève, 1242) and Rome (Campo de' Fiori, 1553). The widespread censorship of Jewish texts began in the 1550s, during the height of the Counter-Reformation, and continued until 1559 when the Church issued its *Index auctorum et librorum prohibitorum*, a curated list designed to ban works deemed theologically threatening. This list included the Talmud, all related literature, and translations of Jewish prayers.[2]

Such events were neither sudden nor isolated; instead, they marked the culmination of a long history of anti-Semitic allegations rooted in falsehoods and misperceptions propagated by Gentiles or non-Jews. This history dates back to antiquity, when Jews were repeatedly accused of being 'Christ-killers,' associates of the devil, and perpetrators of ritual murder against Christian children. Additionally, during the sixteenth century, Inquisitors cited blasphemy as a reason to target the Talmud and other Jewish texts considered antagonistic to Christianity. Cardinal Inquisitors believed that bonfires served not only to eliminate heretical and lascivious literature but also to control the *pernitiosa Iudaeorum perfidia*.

The escalation of anti-Jewish attitudes and demonisation of Jews were accompanied by a systematic attack on their cultural production. Thousands upon thousands of Jewish books, including rare rabbinic writings and other irreplaceable

[1] This research was made possible with the support of the Rothschild Foundation Hanadiv Europe. I would like to express my gratitude to Professors Judith Olszowy-Schlanger and Mauro Perani for their thoughtful suggestions, support, and the various opportunities they provided.

[2] GIGLIOLA FRAGNITO, *La Bibbia al rogo. La censura ecclesiastica e i volgarizzamenti della Scrittura (1471-1605)* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1997); GIGLIOLA FRAGNITO, ed., *Church, Censorship, and Culture in Early Modern Italy*, Eng. trans. ADRIAN BELTON (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

Cromohs (Cyber Review of Modern Historiography), ISSN 1123-7023, 26/2023

DOI: 10.36253/cromohs-14370

volumes, were burned and destroyed all across Western Christendom, constituting one of the most devastating literary holocausts in the pre-modern era. Despite the destruction of so many works over the centuries, however, a curious stroke of fate allowed a portion of them to escape large-scale suppression and miraculously survive. Instead of being burned or lost forever, many fragments of books were rescued from the flames, stolen, sold to bibliophiles or antiquarian book dealers, and repurposed as binding material for other volumes. As a result, surviving traces of medieval Hebrew texts, manuscripts, or fragments are still being discovered in libraries all around the world. A paradigmatic example of this intentional destruction of Jewish material culture is constituted by a surviving fragment of *Talmud Bavli*, today preserved at the State Archive of Rome (fig. 1).[3] Damaged by fire but saved from outright destruction, it must originally have been part of an entire code of the *Mishna*, probably written in Rome and set on fire during the burning of the Talmud carried out by Roman Inquisition decree in 1553.[4]

Figure 1. Rome, State Archive, Ms. Pergamene, Appendice B, Documenti ebraici, n. 264. Fragment of the Babylonian Talmud, *Yevamot* © Rome, State Archive.

On this occasion, I will focus on this specific juncture resulting in the preservation of Hebrew texts by presenting an outstanding example from the

[3] NELLO PAVONCELLO, *Pergamene ebraiche nell'Archivio di Stato di Roma* (Roma: Tipografia Veneziana, 1989); NELLO PAVONCELLO, 'Il rogo del Talmud in Italia,' *Alef/Dac* 18 (1983): 6–8.

[4] Regarding the burning of the Talmud in Rome see KENNETH STOW, 'The Burning of the Talmud in 1553 in Light of Sixteenth-Century Catholic Attitudes toward the Talmud,' *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 34, no. 3 (1972): 435–459. The text of the decree could be found in SHLOMO SIMONSOHN, ed., *The Apostolic See and the Jews*, 8 vols. (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1988–1990), vol. 6, *Documents: 1546–1555*, 2887–2890 (doc. 3165). On the same topic see also FAUSTO PARENTE, 'La Chiesa e il Talmud,' in *Storia d'Italia. Annali 11. Gli ebrei in Italia*, 2 vols., vol. 1, *Dall'alto Medioevo all'età dei ghetti*, ed. CORRADO VIVANTI (Turin: Einaudi, 1996), 583–598; FAUSTO PARENTE, 'The Index, the Holy Office, the Condemnation of the Talmud, and Publication of Clement VIII's Index,' in *Church, Censorship, and Culture in Early Modern Italy*, ed. FRAGNITO, 163–93.

'European Genizah.' Specifically, I discuss a fragment that contains the earliest account book of a Jewish pawnshop in Italy—and notably, the sole surviving Hebrew loan register from the Bologna area.[5]

In all likelihood it was stolen and subsequently rescued by bookbinders who, in this particular context, acted as 'biblioclasts' to some extent. They physically dismantled old books to repurpose portions of them for economic reasons, as the material used in book production has consistently been one of the most costly components of its manufacture.

In order to frame the context that gave rise to this particular case, a brief analysis of the manuscript recycling process used by early modern *cartularii* or bookbinders is needed. After the spread of the printing press from the middle of the fifteenth century, the book trade underwent a revolution in book manufacturing that was accompanied by changes in sale, circulation, and readership. The handwritten medieval book became obsolete, while the flourishing commercial book trade produced multiple copies of the same work to more effectively meet new reader and market demands.[6] As Europe started to read these printed counterparts, numerous manuscripts were replaced with printed copies; handwritten volumes thus lost their value, and many of them were destroyed or boiled down for glue. At the same time, however, many other older books faced a different death, paradoxically being reborn to a new life: discarded materials such as parchment or paper were cut out, reused, and recycled by *cartularii* or bookbinders. Having collected various manuscripts and rescued them from almost certain destruction, antiquarians and book dealers toured the peninsula seeking to sell the codices by the kilo to bookbinding craftsmen, sometimes already dismembering them to obtain the quantity required by bookbinding practices. Having completed the recycling process in their workshops—in addition to cutting up the manuscripts for covers and end-papers, they could be used to make or mend books—*cartularii* sold them to notaries or entities who needed that material to draw up deeds and documents. This practice should not be underestimated in terms of its economic significance, as in all likelihood bookbinders offered favourable rates for repairs by keeping re-usable materials which, as we have seen, were still valuable.

As custom-made, handcrafted objects, medieval manuscripts were frequently made from durable materials including sheepskin, calfskin, and goatskin as well as other fine materials. As a result, many manuscripts were physically recycled beginning in the fourteenth century in an effort to maintain the structural integrity of these books.

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[5] For a preliminary study on this manuscript see ELENA LOLLI, 'Il più antico registro di prestito ebraico in Italia (1407-1411),' *La Rassegna Mensile di Israel*, forthcoming. Concerning the extant Jewish Italian account books see MAURO PERANI, 'Osservazioni preliminari allo studio del Registro di prestito ebraico conservato nella Badia di Cava dei Tirreni,' *Sefer Yuḥasin. Review for the History of the Jews in South Italy / Rivista per la storia degli ebrei nell'Italia meridionale* n.s. 1 (2013): 101–132; JOSEPH SHATZMILLER, *Cultural Exchange: Jews, Christians, and Art in the Medieval Marketplace* (Princeton: Princeton University press, 2013), 7–21.

[6] For a useful overview on the subject see ANGELA NUOVO, *The Book Trade in the Italian Renaissance*, Eng. transl. LYDIA G. COCHRANE (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

Reusing waste materials served as a cost-saving measure to reduce the consumption of fresh raw materials. A newly produced sheet of parchment was not used when a leftover piece could perform the same function. Consequently, manuscript waste was repurposed for various purposes, such as pastedowns, flyleaves, wrappers, limp covers, and palimpsests, either to reinforce bookblocks or provide support for the boards. In other words, unwanted or worn volumes ceased to be valued primarily as carriers of text and came to be appreciated for the physical qualities of the parchment on which they were written.[7]

Over the centuries, these so-called surviving 'fragments' of older books—which are today precious evidence of valuable information about transmission of medieval texts—thus ended up being scattered across libraries and archives of the world, with the result that at present there are thousands of manuscript pages hidden in post-medieval book bindings: it is estimated that one in every five early modern books contains fragments of medieval manuscripts in its book binding.[8] Despite being enacted since ancient times, this recycling phenomenon was most widespread soon after the invention of printing (especially during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries) involving not only Latin, Greek, or musical manuscripts, but also Hebrew ones.

Although there was awareness in medieval scholarship of Hebrew recycled manuscript components with some earlier forays into this field, it is only in the last few decades that systematic research has been undertaken. Thousands of medieval Hebrew manuscript fragments were uncovered from old book bindings and wrappers all across Europe. This material is often referred to as coming from the 'European Genizah,' a denomination coined by Yaaqov Sussmann in 1976 on the occasion of the congress held in Tel Aviv for the anniversary of the Genizah discovery in Fustat, the old Cairo. The term references the connection between the two discoveries, the Cairo and European ones, which are linked by ananalogous significance.[9]

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[7] For an in-depth study of the re-employment of manuscripts see ELISABETH PELLEGRIN, 'Fragments and membra disiecta,' in *Codicologica*, eds JOHAN PETER GUMBERT, MAX JAN MARIE DE HAAN, and ALBERT GRUYS, 5 vols., vol. 3, *Essays typologiques* (Leiden: Brill, 1980), 70–95; COLETTE SIRAT, 'Il reimpiego dei materiali dei libri ebraici,' in *Vita e cultura ebraica nello Stato estense. Atti del Convegno tenuto a Nonantola (15-17 maggio 1992)*, eds EURIDE FREGNI and MAURO PERANI (Nonantola: Fattodarte, 1993), 37–47; ARMANDO PETRUCCI, *La descrizione del manoscritto. Storia, problemi, modelli*, (Rome: Carocci, 2008), 132–133; MAURO PERANI, 'Morte e rinascita dei manoscritti ebraici: il loro riuso come legature e la loro recente riscoperta,' in *Studi di storia del cristianesimo. Per Alba Maria Orselli*, eds LUIGI CANETTI, MARTINA CAROLI, ENRICO MORINI, and RAFFAELE SAVIGNI (Ravenna: Longo, 2008), 313–336.

[8] JORIEN R. DUIVENVOORDEN, ANNA KÄYHKÖ, ERIK KWAKKEL, and JORIS DIK, 'Hidden library: visualizing fragments of medieval manuscripts in early modern book bindings with mobile macro-XRF scanner,' *Heritage Science* 5, 6 (2017), https://doi.org/10.1186/s40494-017-0117-6.

[9] YAAQOV SUSSMAN, 'Talmudic Remnants in the "European Genizah",' in *The Italian Genizah. Proceedings of the Conference Held Under the Auspices of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities and the Jewish National and University Library, Jerusalem, January 9, 1996 (17 Teveth 5756)*, eds ABRAHAM DAVID and JOSEPH TABORY (Jerusalem: Orhot Press, 1998).

As Mauro Perani has already stressed herein,[10] Italy holds the largest amount of medieval manuscripts fragments thanks to the leading role it played in Europe in the field of culture and book production between the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance.[11] Research into Hebrew fragments took off in Italy in 1981 launched by Giuseppe Baruch Sermoneta, Professor of Hebrew Philosophy at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and has been successfully carried out by Mauro Perani himself. This project has enabled the discovery of many thousands of recycled Hebrew parchments appearing as the covers of Italian, Greek, Latin, liturgical, musical, and scientific books scattered across the various state archives and other ecclesiastical or private libraries and repositories of the Italian peninsula.[12]

In 2007, the Italian research project expanded into Europe with the creation of the *Books within Books: Hebrew Fragments in European Libraries* project. Coordinated by the École Pratique des Hautes Études and headed by Judith Olszowy-Schlanger, the research group has grown over the years by welcoming collaborators and researchers at both European and international levels. The number of manuscript fragments identified in each country and uploaded to the official website database ranges from one in Canada or Australia to several thousands in Italy. To date, current estimates show that about fifty academic and heritage institutions from twenty-five countries have carried out research in 500 libraries and archives, recording over 16,000 new Hebrew manuscript fragments.[13]

In some cases fragments only consist of strips bearing a few words or lines of text; in more fortunate circumstances it is possible to find larger portions of manuscripts, such as entire leaves, folios, or bifolios. This is the case of the hitherto-unknown oldest account book of an Italian Jewish pawnshop that has been excised from the binding of an Italian volume now preserved at the Corpus Christi college in Oxford under shelfmark 469. This paper manuscript, whose transactions cover the

[10] See Mauro Perani's essay in this thematic section (48–59).

[11] It is worth specifying that Italy, as a unified nation, did not exist during the period between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Instead, it was a fragmented collection of various small states, duchies, city-states, and regions, each with its independent governance and archives, including communal, ducal, church, and parochial records. Indeed, this fragmentation contributed to the dissemination and concealment of manuscripts and cultural artifacts, which were often under the control of different authorities and institutions in various parts of the Italian peninsula.

[12] The bibliography on this subject is vast. Convenient overviews can be found in MAURO PERANI and SAVERIO CAMPANINI, *I frammenti ebraici di Bologna. Archivio di Stato e collezioni minori*, Inventari dei Manoscritti delle Biblioteche d'Italia CVIII (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1997); MAURO PERANI and SAVERIO CAMPANINI, *I frammenti ebraici di Modena. Archivio Storico Comunale*, Inventari dei Manoscritti delle Biblioteche d'Italia CX (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1997); PERANI, '*Morte e rinascita dei manoscritti ebraici*,' 313–336; ANDREAS LEHNARDT and JUDITH OLSZOWY-SCHLANGER, eds, *Books within Books: New Discoveries in Old Bookbindings*, European Genizah Texts and Studies 2 (Leiden: Brill, 2014); MAURO PERANI, ed., *Medieval Hebrew Manuscripts Reused as Book-bindings in Italy*, with the cooperation of EMMA ABATE (Leiden: Brill, 2022); MAURO PERANI and EMMA ABATE, 'Bibliography of the "Italian Genizah" and "European Genizah" 1915–2021,' *Instrumenta BwB* 3, 2021 available online at https://pdfhost.io/v/NTDgSWAsR_PeraniAbate_BwB_Bibliography_2021pdf.pdf.

[13] The project database is freely available (upon registration) at Books Within Books (www.hebrewmanuscript.com).

years 1407–1411,[14] was detached from its host volume at the behest of the college librarian at that time, Robert Proctor (1868–1903), who later became a bibliographer and book collector expert on incunabula and early typography. Together with J. G. Milne, Proctor used to recover manuscript and printed binding waste from volumes kept at the Corpus Christi college library, usually with the purpose of reconstituting previously scattered texts. In 1891, he obtained permission to dismember the boards of the volume that housed the ledger, the quires of which were not assembled together in a modern binding until the beginning of the twentieth century.[15]

Towards the end of Coxe's *Catalogus Codicum MSS Collegii Corporis Christi* there are some handwritten annotations.[16] Here, MS 469 is listed as 'Proctor fragments. WP.iv.34, 27 leaves—Hebrew.'[17] While there are many volumes with 'WP' shelfmarks in Corpus Special Collections, unfortunately there does not seem to be anything with the shelfmark WP.iv.34, so the question of what fragments this volume originally contained, and its provenance, remains unanswered. Proctor kept a record of which volumes in the library specific fragments had been taken from; however, since the college's shelfmarks have changed, it is now difficult to identify the host text.[18] According to J. G. Milne's *The Early History of Corpus Christi College, Oxford*, during their undergraduate days at Corpus Christi, Milne (CCC 1886–1890, later CCC Librarian 1933–1946) and Proctor 'spent wet Sunday afternoons by the grace of the Librarian in making a list of all that we could find. The list was not quite finished when I went down; but Proctor [CCC 1886–1890] remained in Oxford at the Bodleian for over two years and worked on at it, with the result of many valuable finds, though even so there was still more to be done when he was lost on the Alps in 1903.'[19]

Due to the absence of documentation, it is nearly impossible today to trace the precise origin, provenance, or movements of manuscripts and their fragments which may once have been part of personal collections and changed hands multiple times. However, in our specific case, even without tracing the movements of the codex in detail, the main outlines of its story are quite clear. The book covers of the host volume, which was purchased in an unspecified location in Italy by Corpus Christi college (or rather, received through donation from unknown benefactors) around the

[14] Contrary to what is reported in the manuscript description in the Corpus Christi College Library catalogue, the dating of the document cannot be attributed to the chronological span from 1408 to 1410. Instead, its origin predates this range. Upon consulting the register, I have verified that the record-keeping actually commenced at least a year earlier, in 1407, and that the most recent transactions date back to the year 1411.

[15] PETER E. PORMANN, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Hebrew Manuscripts of Corpus Christi College, Oxford* (Oxford: D. S. Brewer, 2015), 111.

[16] The annotations can be found in the copy of the catalogue available for consultation in the library office of Corpus Christi College, Oxford.

[17] HENRY OCTAVIUS COXE, 'Catalogus Codicum MSS Collegii Corporis Christi,' in *Catalogus codicum mss. qui in collegiis aulisque oxoniensibus hodie adservantur*, 2 vols., vol. 1 (Oxonii: e typographeo academico, 1852).

[18] ADAM SMYTH, *Material Texts in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2018), 148–149.

[19] JOSEPH GRAFTON MILNE, *The Early History of Corpus Christi College, Oxford* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1946), 51. I am extremely grateful to Harriet Patrick (Assistant Archivist, Corpus Christi College Library, Oxford) for providing this valuable information.

end of the nineteenth century, were reinforced by filling them with other documents, namely the loose sheets of the account book under consideration. The scraps of paper which had originally formed the ledger were glued together to create a cardboard-like material designed to give a hardcover book its rigidity. Indeed, as stated above, stiff bindings generally used to house older texts which were often made of recycled materials, such as unbound pages from older tomes or registers.

The manuscript in question contains a Jewish account book—which has actually turned out to be the earliest surviving Hebrew ledger from Italy—kept by several providers of consumer lending that operated out of a Jewish pawnshop in medieval Bologna. The city—already at that time the seat of the *Alma mater studiorum*, the oldest university in the world, as well as one of the most important transit nodes in international commerce of the period—offered various small-scale credit services in keeping with a trend common in late medieval Europe.[20]

We should bear in mind that, before the appearance of the *Monti di pietà* in the Italian Peninsula from the 1560s onwards, increasing production growth caused a sharp decrease in the availability of precious metals while the demands of the microeconomic system had created alternative mechanisms for the circulation of value. In this context, small-scale consumer loans, generally based on pledges, assumed a fundamental role in medieval economic life and rapidly became the most widespread mode of granting credit.

People from various social backgrounds used to bring their personal belongings to pawnshops and exchange them for cash, often with an implicit understanding of the interest rate. Creditors extended loans to a diverse clientele, contingent on a specific interest amount and secured by pledges that could be sold in case of default. The clientele of the loan bank primarily comprised humble customers, including farmers and small artisans. However, members of the middle and upper classes of Christian society also availed themselves of the services offered by Jewish moneylenders. Additionally, there were instances of clerics and nuns using these services, at times in defiance of Church laws, and even pledging sacred objects.

The fragmented codex in question consists of fifty-four paper leaves and is written in Hebrew and Judeo-Italian—an ancient language in danger of extinction

[20] For a comprehensive bibliography on pawnbroking business in late medieval Bologna, see MARIA GIUSEPPINA MUZZARELLI, 'I banchieri ebrei e la città,' in *Banchi ebraici a Bologna nel XV secolo*, ed. MARIA GIUSEPPINA MUZZARELLI (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1994), 89–157; MUZZARELLI, ed., *Verso l'epilogo di una convivenza: gli ebrei a Bologna nel XVI secolo* (Florence: Giuntina, 1996); MUZZARELLI, 'I banchi ebraici, il Monte Pio e i mercati del denaro a Bologna tra XIII e XVI secolo,' in *Bologna nel Medioevo*, ed. OVIDIO CAPITANI (Bologna: Bononia University Press, 2007), 977–1016; MUZZARELLI, 'Gli ebrei a Bologna nel XVI secolo,' in *Storia di Bologna*, 4 vols., vol. 3.1, *Bologna nell'Età moderna. Istituzioni, forme del potere, economia e società*, ed. ADRIANO PROSPERI (Bologna: Bononia University Press, 2008), 857–891; MASSIMO GIANSANTE, *L'usuraio onorato. Credito e potere a Bologna in età comunale* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2008); MAURO CARBONI, 'Converting Goods into Cash: an Ethical Approach to Pawnbroking in Early Modern Bologna,' *Renaissance and Reformation* 35, no. 3 (2012): 63–83; MUZZARELLI, "'Per ussire de affanno": il credito informale, improprio, nascosto,' in *Reti di credito. Circuiti informali, impropri, nascosti (secoli XIII-XIX)*, eds MAURO CARBONI and MARIA GIUSEPPINA MUZZARELLI (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2014), 11–26.

which features a non-Jewish base language using a Hebrew writing system. Sublanguages or dialects of Judeo-Italian had their own unique linguistic features, vocabulary, and pronunciation influenced by the local Italian dialects of the regions in which Jewish communities were situated. Additionally, they incorporated Hebrew and other Jewish linguistic elements for religious and cultural purposes. As with Judeo-Italian as a whole, these sublanguages have largely disappeared as living languages but continue to be of historical and cultural significance in understanding the linguistic diversity of Italian Jewry. The language used in the register under investigation is the Italian of the time, that is, the vernacular (i.e. Emilian dialect), which is inserted into the Hebrew text and written in Hebrew characters.[21]

In several cases, the folios feature vertical cuts in the middle of the page or trimmings made on one or two sides to suit the new needs of the bookbinder. Despite the cuts and lacerations, the register showcases the typical formulas that Jewish moneylenders used to write in the opening and closing colophons, basically biblical quotations with wishes for success and good fortune.[22]

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[21] Regarding Judeo-Italian see MARIA LUISA MAYER MODENA,'Le parlate giudeo-italiane,' in *Storia d'Italia. Annali 11. Gli ebrei in Italia*, 2 vols., vol. 2, *Dall'emancipazione a oggi*, ed. CORRADO VIVANTI (Turin: Einaudi, 1997), 939–963; MARIA LUISA MAYER MODENA, 'La composante hébraïque dans le judéo-italien de la Renaissance,' in *Vena Hebraica in Judaeorum Linguis. Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference on Hebrew and Aramaic Elements in Jewish Languages (Milan, October 23-26 1995)*, eds SHELOMO MORAG, MOSHEH BAR-ASHER, and MARIA LUISA MAYER MODENA (Milan: Università degli studi di Milano, Dipartimento di Scienze dell'Antichità; Jerusalem: The Hebrew University, The Jewish Oral Traditions Research Center, The Center for Jewish Languages and Literatures, 1999), 93–107; MARIA LUISA MAYER MODENA, 'Il giudeo-italiano: riflessioni sulle fonti,' in *Atti del XVI° Convegno internazionale dell'Associazione Italiana per lo Studio sul Giudaismo, Gabicce Mare (Pu), 1-3 ottobre 2002*: *Le lingue degli ebrei. Tradizioni e metodologie*, ed. MAURO PERANI, special issue, *Materia giudaica* 8, no. 1 (2003): 65–73; MICHAEL RYZHIK, 'I cambiamenti nel giudeo-italiano in corso del Cinquecento: le prediche,' in *Il mio cuore è a Oriente. Studi di linguistica storica, filologia e cultura ebraica dedicati a Maria Luisa Mayer Modena*, ed. FRANCESCO ASPESI, VERMONDO BRUGNATELLI, ANNA LINDA CALLOW, and CLAUDIA ROSENZWEIG (Milan: Cisalpino, 2008), 527–545; MARCELLO APRILE, *Grammatica storica delle parlate giudeo-italiane* (Galatina: Congedo Editore, 2012); PIERO CAPELLI, 'Giudeo-lingue e giudeo-scritture?' in *Contatti di lingue - contatti di scritture. Multilinguismo e multigrafismo dal Vicino Oriente Antico alla Cina contemporanea*, eds DANIELE BAGLIONI and OLGA TRIBULATO (Venice: Edizioni Ca' Foscari-Digital Publishing, 2015), 161–176; AARON D. RUBIN, 'Judeo-Italian,' in *Handbook of Jewish Languages*, eds LILY KAHN and AARON D. RUBIN (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 297–364; MARIA MADDALENA COLASUONNO, 'Modern Judeo-Italian in the Light of Italian Dialectology and Jewish Interlinguistics through Three Case Studies: Judeo-Mantuan, Judeo-Venetian, and Judeo-Livornese,' in *Jewish Languages in Historical Perspective*, ed. LILY KAHN (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 122–156; MARIA LUISA MAYER MODENA, *Vena hebraica nel giudeo-italiano: dizionario dell'elemento ebraico negli idiomi degli ebrei d'Italia*, with the cooperation of CLAUDIA ROSENZWEIG (Milan: LED, 2022).

[22] Regarding colophons in Hebrew manuscripts see MALACHI BEIT-ARIÉ, 'Colophons in Hebrew Manuscripts: Source of Information on Book Production and Text Transmission,' in *Scribi e colofoni: le sottoscrizioni di copisti dalle origini all'avvento della stampa. Atti del Seminario di Erice, 10. Colloquio del Comité international de paléographie latine, 23-28 ottobre 1993*, eds EMMA CONDELLO and GIUSEPPE DE GREGORIO (Spoleto: Centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo, 1995), 495–504; MAURO PERANI, 'I colofoni dei manoscritti ebraici: tipologia, formule e caratteri specifici,' in *Colofoni armeni a confronto. Le sottoscrizioni dei manoscritti in ambito armeno e nelle altre tradizioni scrittorie del mondo mediterraneo. Atti del Workshop, Bologna, 12 e 13 ottobre 2012*, eds ANNA SIRINIAN, PAOLA BUZI, and GAGA SHURGAIA (Rome: Pontificio Istituto Orientale, 2016), 347–382.

In the *incipit* of the account book, the lender wrote the following header in the shape of a triangle with the vertex facing downward (fig. 2).[23]

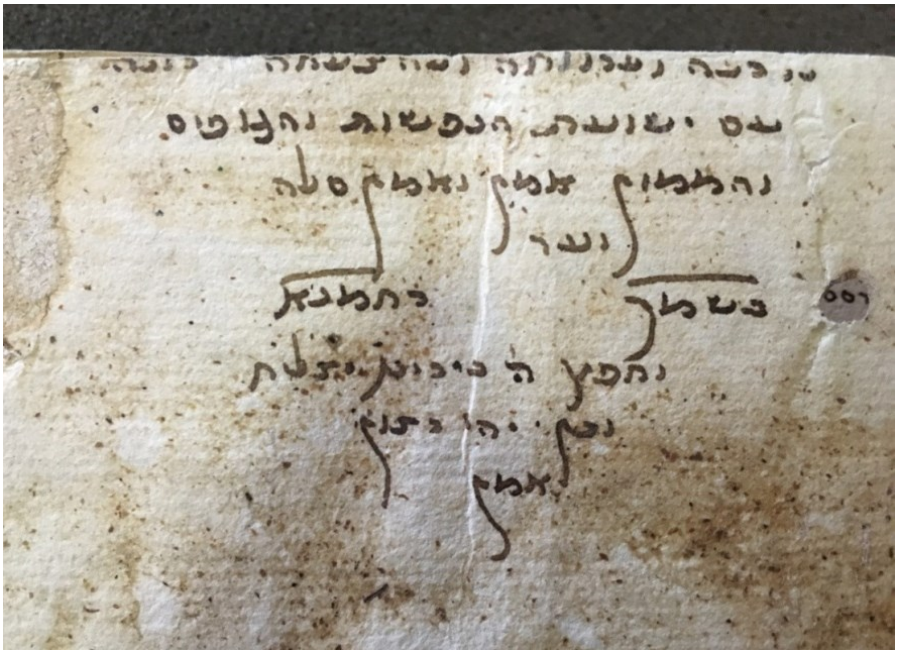

Fig. 2 - Courtesy Corpus Christi College Library, Oxford Ms. 469, f. 1r. Opening colophon. Photo credit: Elena Lolli.

[...][ברכה ויכלה] ולרווחה ולהצלחה [כולה מרובה]
עם ישועת הנפשות והגופים
והממון אמן ואמן סלה
ועד
בשמך רחמנא
וחפץ ה' בידינו יצלח
וכן יהי רצון
אמן

'[…] [Blessing for good business activity], health and [great success]. / With the salvation of souls, bodies and in wealth, amen and so be it forever and ever. / In your merciful name *the will of the Lord will be fulfilled through us*.[24] / And so be the divine will, Amen.'

[23] Quotations from the Bible or other sources are in italics; textual *lacunae* and interpretation hypotheses have been placed in square brackets.
[24] Adaptation from Isaiah 53:10.

As in the *incipit*, the closing colophon once again contains formulas of blessing with the date when the copying was completed (fig. 3)—unfortunately, the names of the copyists are not mentioned.[25]

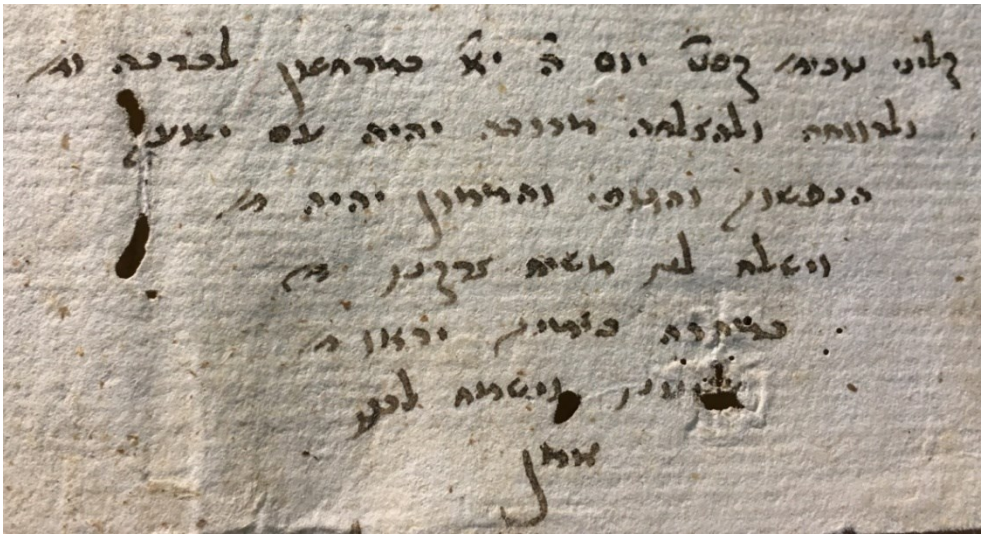

Figure 3. Courtesy Corpus Christi College Library, Oxford Ms. 469, f. 54v. Closing colophon. Photo credit: Elena Lolli.

קלינ׳ נובימ׳ קס״ט יום ה׳ י״א במרחשון לברכה ומ׳
ולרווחה ולצלחה מרובה יהיה עם ישועת
הנפשות והגופי והממון יהיה[26]
וישלח לנו משיח צדקנו[27]
במהרה בימינו יראו
עינינו וישמח לבנו
אמן

'Kalends[28] of November 1409, *yom Ḥamiši*, 11 *Merḥšwan*. May blessing, success, well-being and great prosperity come with the salvation of souls and bodies and with wealth. / May the Messiah send us our justice, / soon in our days *may our eyes see and our hearts rejoice*,[29] Amen.'

The type of paper has a composition characteristic of the fifteenth century, with a coarse grain. This means that the manuscript is written on a thick and difficult-to-

[25] There are several different handwritings, each with its own strongly individual character. For an in-depth palaeographic study, please refer to my article: LOLLI, 'Il più antico registro,' forthcoming.
[26] The word is followed by a graphic filler which resembles a stunted *ḥet* with a slash.
[27] See previous note.
[28] The first days of the month in the ancient Roman calendar (Latin: *kalendae*).
[29] See *Siddur Sefard, Maariv, The Shema* 29.

bend paper with barely visible chain lines. In several leaves I found a watermark depicting a mythological creature, that is, a two-legged winged reptile identifiable as a basilisk or dragon (fig. 4). These representations, dated between the last twenty years of the fourteenth century and first decades of the fifteenth, can be consulted in the first volume of Briquet (nos. 2628–2682).[30] I also found a high rate of response in Piccard's impressive repertoire, the consultation of which allowed me to identify not only more than four hundred similar watermarks, but above all to identify identical ones dating back to the period 1400–1425, some of which from Bologna.[31] This type of trademark was used beginning from the second half of the fourteenth century in the area between the cities of Cremona, Verona, Ferrara, and Bologna and had been produced by either the Pioraco or Fabriano paper mills operating in what is now the Marche region.

The account book was written in the Bologna area. This is supported by the places of origin of loan recipients including city centres, suburbs, and countryside locations such as, for example, 'da Michele,' that is, the parish of Saint Michael, as well as 'da Castenaso' or 'da Varignana,' small villages in the metropolitan area of Bologna. All of these elements point to the fact that only creditors active in Bologna or its surrounding areas could have been familiar with such small places or remote districts.

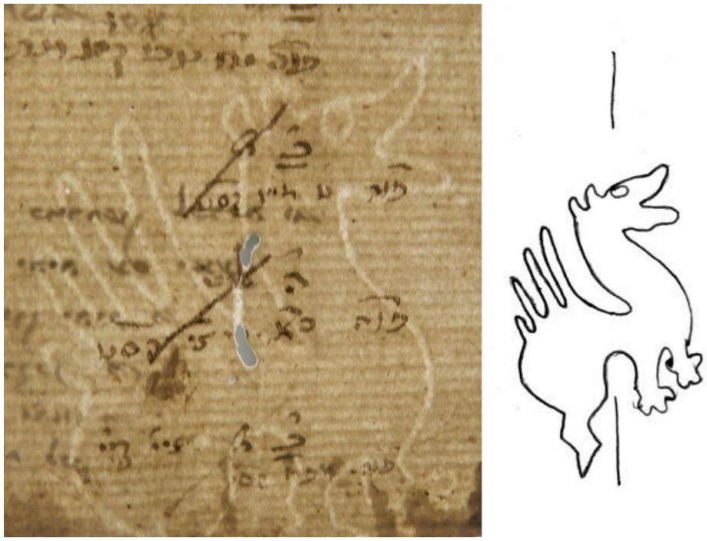

Figure 4. Courtesy Corpus Christi College Library, Oxford Ms. 469. Watermark next to the facsimile of Briquet and Piccard. Photo credit: Elena Lolli.

[30] CHARLES-MOÏSE BRIQUET, *Les filigranes. Dictionnaire historique des marques du papier dès leur apparition vers 1282 jusqu'en 1600*, 4 vols., vol. 1 (Paris: Picard, 1907), 191–192.

[31] GERHARD PICCARD, *Die Wasserzeichenkartei im Hauptstaatsarchiv Stuttgart*, 17 vols. (Stuttgart: 1961–1997). The database can be consulted online at https://www.piccard-online.de/start.php. See in particular the following illustrations: DE5580-Clm14115_130 (1413, Bologna); DE4620-PO-124014 (1414, Bologna); DE8100-HBVI5_999 (1415–1417, Bologna); DE8100-HBVI75_31 (1418–1422, Bologna).

The loan register served as an *ante litteram* database used by lenders to keep a record of their existing loans. It is organised into three columns providing the following information: a) details about the borrower, including their name, patronymic, place of origin or hometown, and profession; b) information about the loan itself, such as the loan amount and agreed-on repayment date; and c) a comprehensive description of the items used as collateral to secure the loan. A large number of words in Judeo-Italian and Judeo-Emilian appear, mainly used to indicate the items left in pledge as security for the repayment of loans. The inventory includes household utensils, silver sets, books, farm tools, weapons, jewels, precious metals, gemstones, and even some sets of knightly armour. In particular, a vast quantity of clothing was left as a pledge, including tunics (יופיטי = giuppetti), overgowns (יורניי = giornee), cloaks (גבאני = gabani), hose (קלצי = calzi), shirts (קמישי = camise), and dresses (קוטי = cotte). These items served as indicators of the individual's social standing in a society accustomed to interpreting visible signs of rank. As northern Italy started to prosper during the Middle Ages, its affluence manifested in the high-quality clothing, textiles, and goods found in everyday households, effectively transforming them into valuable commodities that frequently substituted for conventional currency. The Jewish pawnshop to which the account book refers, like any major business in medieval Italy, would have originally maintained multiple ledgers of different types and functions. One of these would likely have been a cash book in which the lender recorded all financial transactions, including descriptions of the types of currency involved when loans were repaid. This explains why our register only includes the currency in which the loan was disbursed, rather than the repayment currency.

This ledger is dedicated to debtors' accounts. Specifically, it serves a dual purpose, functioning as both a borrowers' ledger and a loan register. Each loan account begins with the borrower's name, the amount advanced, recorded witnesses, and sometimes guarantors. This information is followed by a description of the items pledged as collateral and details of the borrower's repayment or repayment on their behalf. This register should have been maintained for each loan issued, offering an easily accessible record of the management of individual loans. All transactions were conducted in cash. When an account was settled, the entry was canceled using oblique lines. No totals or balances are provided, making it impossible to determine interest rates. Calculations were likely performed using an abacus or counters.

Jewish moneylenders adopted a technical language full of legal formulas borrowed from the rabbinic normative tradition with its Talmudic debates and conclusions which came to them through the legal compendia of Maimonides. The economic rebirth of Europe from the first centuries after the year 1000 and in particular from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries onward brought profound economic changes to the Jews living in Christian Europe and Talmudic law, complemented by the vast halakhic compendium of Maimonides, was well equipped to address an increasingly commercial world. Thanks to this comprehensive cultural and halakhic background, Jewish creditors were able to adapt Jewish law to new

economic and social demands. In particular, they embraced Maimonides's teachings related to Talmudic partnership regulations as well as innovative forms of commercial agency that also involved rules for drafting new contracts and contractual standards for the proper management of businesses. In this regard, our account book is no exception as it showcases different formulas referring to financial transactions, such as specific expressions repeated in almost all the entries in an abbreviated form, i.e. פו״ה [פדה וקבל המשכון] (He/She paid and took back pawn) or ופז״ה [ופדה זהב הזה] (And he/she collected this money).

A critical edition of the manuscript holds significant promise for enriching our understanding of various historical facets. It will provide invaluable insights into Jewish economic history by revealing details about lending practices and economic interactions within medieval Italian Jewish communities. Additionally, it will illuminate the history of medieval bookkeeping, offering glimpses into how financial transactions were recorded and organised during that era. Moreover, the manuscript may unveil the dynamics of credit relationships and financial networks that transcended religious boundaries. A reconstruction of material culture, including collateral for loans and the physical setup of pawnshops, is also on the horizon along with a deeper comprehension of historical accounting practices. In sum, this critical edition will serve as a comprehensive resource, advancing our knowledge of the economic, cultural, and financial aspects of medieval Italy and shedding light on the development of the accounting practices that continue to influence financial history today.

Censorship: Books, the Halakhah, and Jewish Continuity, A Synoptic Overview

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When he condemned the Talmud in 1558, the Udinese jurist Marquardus de Susannis referred to a compilation of three otherwise unnoted Venetians, Benedict Valerio, Marcus Centani, and Franciscus Longo.[1] Their work, composed in 1553, had persuaded him that the Talmud corrupts the true meaning of the law and the prophets. Its deliriums prove the Jews' blindness and insanity and have made of them 'carnal Idumeans.' No wonder Justinian prohibited *deuterosis* in his Novel 146, which, de Susannis, as others, took to mean the Talmud (in fact, it was probably midrash, or even, as per Fausto Parente, a Greek translation of the Pentateuch that did not square fully with the Septuagint).[2] De Susannis's perceptions were 'the common opinion,' a legal as well as emotional term, albeit de Susannis himself had taken the time to read what others were saying. He likely also read the condemnations in the 1555 *De sola lectione* (of the Bible) by the Jesuit Francisco de Torres. In the same tones, the theologian of Valencia Juan Luis Vives (1494–1540) wrote to say that the fabulous and blasphemous nature of the Talmud was common knowledge.[3] Anxiety, joined with repulsion, was everywhere; and this widespread negativity may help explain why, exceptionally, the Venetians did not delay in following papal orders. On 21 October 1553, barely a month after the order issued by the Inquisition to burn the Talmud (12 September 1553), the Doge followed suit, repeating the demand for Padua four days later.[4]

Further stimulating the Venetian order was a report issued the same October day by three otherwise unknown *frati*, Don Leonardo, a canon regular, a brother

[1] MARQUARDUS DE SUSANNIS, *De Iudaeis et Aliis Infidelibus* (Venetiis: apud Cominum de Tridino Montisferrati, 1558), 113r–115r, Part III, chap. 1, pars. 48–50. (This work is available online).
[2] FAUSTO PARENTE, 'The Index, the Holy Office, the Condemnation of the Talmud, and Publication of Clement VIII's Index,' in *Church, Censorship and Culture in Early Modern Italy*, ed. GIGLIOLA FRAGNITO (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 163–93 = FAUSTO PARENTE, 'La Chiesa e il "Talmud": l'atteggiamento della Chiesa e del mondo cristiano nei confronti del "Talmud" e degli altri scritti rabbinici con particolare riguardo all'Italia tra XV e XVI secolo,' in *Storia d'Italia. Annali 11. Gli Ebrei in Italia*, 2 vols., vol. 1, *Dall'alto Medioevo all'età dei ghetti*, ed. CORRADO VIVANTI (Torino: Einaudi, 1996), 521–643.
[3] KENNETH STOW, 'The Burning of the Talmud in 1553 in the Light of Sixteenth Century Catholic Attitudes Toward the Talmud,' *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 34, no. 3 (1972): 435–59, esp. 445.
[4] Most recently on Venice, see BENJAMIN RAVID, 'The Venetian Government and Hebrew Books,' in *'IR ḤEFṢI-VAH: Studi di ebraistica e giudaistica in onore di Giuliano Tamani*, eds MICHELA ANDREATTA and FABRIZIO LELLI (Livorno: Salmone Belforte, 2021), 501–38.

Cromohs (Cyber Review of Modern Historiography), ISSN 1123-7023, 26/2023

DOI: 10.36253/cromohs-14238

Thomas, a Dominican, and Juan Battista di Freschi Olivi, a theologian. We know only their names. Whereas de Susannis referred to the Talmud in an all-inclusive sense, however, these three gave jurisconsults particulars, saying that they took cognizance of the opinion of three *utriusque iuris*, the Reverendissimo domino Vettor da Pozzo, Vicar of the Patriarch of Venice, Don Annibale Grisonio, and the priest Lacomo Liunnerio. From them they had learned that the Talmud is called the *Scithasider*, the six orders of the Babylonian Talmud, divided into texts called *mishnaioth* in Hebrew, along with questions covering a part of ten works called *Ghemara* in Hebrew, with many comments, questions and additions. The name Talmud also applied to a Jerusalem Talmud, 'qual è molto breve.' Need one say that they had no inkling of what they were talking about? And it became worse: 'Per ciascaduna parte di quello se intende ogni una delle ditte cose, che si contieneno in ditto volume da per se com Misnaioth, da per se cioè i ditti texti Pirtheavoth (!)' Even Moritz Stern, who first published this gibberish, could not follow it.[5] We are reminded of the words of Johannes Reuchlin who, in his 1510 confrontation with the legist Ulrich Zasius, said that the Talmud is a book that everybody criticizes, but no one has read—which, he admitted, included himself.[6]

We should not be surprised. Look at what Giuseppe Petrai says about censors in his own day, in his 1896 *Anecdotes of Rome*: how fatuous they were, removing words like 'aristocracy' lest anyone take offense or become angry.[7] What happened to rabbinic literature was an exaggeration of this kind on steroids. Petrai's *reductio ad absurdum* is a good window into what was happening centuries earlier, which helps explain why the Talmud's *assumed* perniciousness was blamed for obstructing Jewish conversion. In the words of the Jesuit Francisco de Torres, closely paraphrasing anti-Pope Benedict XIII: 'The prime cause of Jewish blindness […] is a certain perverse doctrine that was formulated after Christ and which the Jews call Talmud […] We have decreed that no one […] should presume to hear, read, or teach that doctrine.'

A blanket condemnation. Did it matter what exactly the Talmud contains or that Pope Benedict said he had the Talmud examined? The inquisitional decree of 1553 went a bit further than both, saying that 'nothing would be more conducive to their [the Jews'] illumination' than *burning* the work, which would remove 'the veil from their eyes.' The determination was great. So was the apprehension. In the words of de Torres: 'If you do not interdict' all the remaining commentaries of the Jews, 'I fear you will be charged with their blindness at the horrible judgment of the last day.' Removing the books will open their eyes. They will understand that the rabbis are not the *duces de femore Judae* (Gen. 49:10). Allowing the Jews the Talmud and commentaries makes one

[5] MORITZ STERN, *Urkundliche Beiträge über die Stellung der Päpste zu den Juden* (Kiel: H. Fiencke, 1893), 106–108, no. 105, with no. 104 being the Doge's decree. The text is cited here precisely as it is in Stern, including Stern's added exclamation point.

[6] JOHANNES REUCHLIN, *Recommendation Whether to Confiscate, Destroy and Burn All Jewish Books: A Classic Treatise Against Anti-Semitism*, Studies in Judaism and Christianity, ed. and trans. PETER WORTSMAN (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 2000); the *Augenspiegel,* 133. For a favorable view of Reuchlin, see DAVID H. PRICE, *Johannes Reuchlin and the Campaign to Destroy Jewish Books* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

[7] GUISEPPE PETRAI, *Roma aneddotica*, repr. (1896; Rome: Colosseum, 1987).

guilty of 'allowing them that which teaches them insanity."[8] De Torres was fantasizing. And yet he was not alone in imagining Jews actively claiming sovereignty for themselves, a sovereignty which would counter that staple of Christian theology, the assertion that the Shiloh of Gen. 49 had indeed been realized in Christ, the messiah. De Susannis spoke at length, negating further Jewish claims to sovereignty of any stripe. Antonio Ricciullo in the eighteenth century was still harping on the theme. Jews, themselves (sometimes) referred to the Babylonian Geonim as possessing the powers of rulers, but in the sixteenth century they knew well that the Geonic period was long past.[9]

The Talmud's supposed *deliria*, need one say, were those of its accusers. 'These people are ignorant,' protested Bartolomeo Valverde, chaplain of Philip II, in 1584. 'Those who have been entrusted with the matter [of a new Index],' he said, 'are completely unskilled in Greek and Hebrew letters and ignorant in judgment.'[10] As Piet von Boxel has shown, Valverde, who *was* skilled, was also not a lone voice.[11] But the die had been cast. The full condemnation of the Talmud and other—especially so-called magical—works named in *Cum Hebraeorum militia* by Clement VIII in 1593, which was reinforced by putting the Talmud on the Index, in 1596, occurred, not coincidentally, the same year that Jews were definitively ousted from places in the Papal State outside Rome, Ancona, and the Comtat-Venaissin.

An opposing school of thought initiated in thirteenth-century Iberia, to culminate in Ramon Martí's 1278 *Pugio fidei*, had little chance of winning. The book's first third is a theological-philosophical discourse on Christian truth; the second is devoted to showing Judaism has been corrupted by a demon, invented by Martí, called Bentamalion; and the last 'proves' based on midrashic texts (which Baer denied and Lieberman sustained as real) that the true rabbis believed in Christ. That is, rabbinic literature, properly pruned, could promote conversion.

Martí himself was reserved. His work is neither messianic nor delusional about mass conversion. He speaks of fruit that will slowly ripen: of the pomegranate going from pungent to sweet. The *Pugio* and its claims faded from view, however. In *Esti doctoris gentium* of 1415, Benedict XIII made no reference to a positive use of rabbinic texts. Indeed, the *Pugio* itself so faded that in the early sixteenth century Petrus Galatinus was able to plagiarize and tout its arguments as his own, undetected. Still, he

[8] STOW, 'The Burning,' 441, citing de Torres, *De sola lectione*.
[9] On this theme, see my forthcoming 'An Illicit Community: Some Stories Don't Change,' in the *festschrift* for Thomas and Elizabeth Cohen, ed JOHN HUNT, et al. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2023). See ANTONIO RICCIULLO, *Tractatus de iure personarum extra ecclesiae gremium existentium, cui propter argumenti similitudinem annexus est alter Tractactus de Neophytis* (Romae: sumptibus Io. Angelo Ruffinelli et Angeli Manni, 1622), 110–111, lib. 2, cap. 40.
[10] STOW, 'The Burning,' 448.
[11] PIET VAN BOXEL, 'Robert Bellarmine Reads Rashi: Rabbinic Bible Commentaries and the Burning of the Talmud,' in *The Hebrew Book in Early Modern Italy*, eds JOSEPH R. HACKER and ADAM SHEAR (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 121–32.

and others were the vanguard of what Fausto Parente called the 'two strata' approach, which was also an atrium to censorship.

Enter that late fifteenth-century Johannes Reuchlin. Reuchlin, with his argument that the Talmud was useful (for missionizing, of course), has been credited with opening a humanistic, more tolerant approach to Jews. But if anything, humanists, certainly many leading ones, were the Jews' enemies. Members of the humanist camp, including Platina, the founder of the Vatican Library, spearheaded the movement to canonize Simonino of Trent.[12] Indeed, Reuchlin's famous reference to 'Jewish humanity' turns out to originate in a passage from the late thirteenth-early fourteenth-century canonist Giovanni d'Andrea who, in turn, was drawing on Gratian's *Decretum, de poenitentia, dist. 2, c. 5, par. 5,* titled *Caritas*.[13] *Caritas* speaks of the need to recognize the humanity of those who are *proximi,* and one might think this line of reasoning was beneficial to relations with Jews. Yet as adopted by d'Andrea, and then Reuchlin and others, what one has is a rewording of Pauline ideas or, as Augustine states in his otherwise vitriolic tract *Adversus Judaeos*, to achieve their conversion. Jews are to be approached with the 'sweetness of lips.' References to *Caritas* might also be a trap. In the earlier fourteenth century, Oldradus da Ponte cited the canon in a *consilium* in which he urged expelling Jews whose 'behavior' could no longer be corrected, namely, by their ultimately becoming Christians. With respect to these Jews, *Caritas* had failed.[14] Slightly milder, but still pointed, in the seventeenth century, Giacomo Pignatelli, also citing *Caritas,* wrote to say that Jews had rights, but their conversion through exploiting severe canonical limitation was foremost. We might add that when papal letter after papal letter, as well as Marquardus de Susannis, say that Christianity receives Jews out of *Caritas*, the reference, following Stephan Kuttner, is to the justice on which the world stands. But the reference was also to justice, humanity—and, by interpretation—conversion bundled together. Aquinas, for example, linked humanity to the power to reason, which he then tied to Christian belief. By definition, the *proximi* of the canon, who were *homines naturae nostrae,* must be—or about to become, as in the case of the

[12] See KENNETH STOW, 'The Catholic Church and the Jews,' in *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, 8 vols., vol. 7*, The Early Modern World, 1500–1815,* eds JONATHAN KARP and ADAM SUTCLIFFE (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017),15–49.

[13] GIOVANNI D'ANDREA, *Novella in Decretales Gregorii IX*, on bk 5, title 6, *De Iudaeis*; Reuchlin, in his *Augenspiegel,* trans. WORTSMAN; GRATIAN, *Caritas:* 'Non illi tantum proximi nostri credendi sunt, quos nobis gradus sanguis iungit, sed proximi nostri credendi sunt omnes homines naturae nostrae, sicut dixi, participes.'

[14] GIACOMO PIGNATELLI, *Consultationum Canonicarum pro publico usu quotidiano, ad eminientiss. ac reverediss. Principem Iacobum Rospigliosium S. R. E. Card.* (Romae: 1668), tom. 7, 192. Pignatelli has a fierce diatribe against Christian service to Jews, including the matter of Christians purchasing kosher meat. Yet Pignatelli is a 'moderate' who fully supports the presence of Jews in Christian places and guarantees their rights as *cives.* He himself cites the canon *Caritas*, applying its general statement to Jews—he had been preceded by Oldradus da Ponte and Johannes Reuchlin—but not to favor Jews; rather, he goes on to posit that 'papam Iudaeorum tutorem esse,' 'the pope is the Jews' guardian.' Oldradus, as Pignatelli had to have known, followed his citation by saying Jews could be expelled, with which Pignatelli disagrees. OLDRADUS, *consilium* 264 in NORMAN ZACOUR, *Jews and Saracens in the Consilia of Odradus da Ponte* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1990), 62.

Jews in Pauline thinking—Christians. Which is to say that when Reuchlin invoked Jewish humanity, he was not turning over a new leaf.

In a similar conversionary context, we mention Pico della Mirandola who, through Kabbalah, as argued by Wyrszubski, developed an entire midrashic exegesis to demonstrate Christ's messiahship. Others were Adriano Fino (Hadrianus Finus), Robert Bellarmine and Sixtus of Siena, the latter, like Tommaso Campanella, arguing both to burn and to exploit the 'good parts' of rabbinic writings, especially the 'true' kabbalah. The most forceful exponent was Andrea Maes (Masius), who claimed: 'No book is more appropriate to convince the Jews than the Talmud; to assert the opposite is ridiculous. I myself had begun to collect materials (from the Talmud) for a book that would have won the Jews for Christianity. But in my great indignation at your [inquisitional] bungling, I threw it all into the fire.' Maes would also have objected to the Froben edition of the Talmud in Basle in 1578, whose accompanying Christological interpretations so mangled the text that it was never put on sale.[15]

One might suggest that, however much negative views of the Talmud were driven by fantasy, so, too, was the hope, moving in the opposite direction, that Talmudic materials might persuade masses of Jews to convert—for instance, as expressed in the writings of Paul of Burgos, Paolo Sebastiano Medici, and Giulio Morosini (regardless of the latter two's vitriol). Equally hopeful was another convert, Fabiano Fioghi, who translated prayers like the Ave Maria and Office of the Blessed Virgin into Hebrew. Ludovico Carrito drew on the Kabbalah to say that 'there are three lights,' clearly intimating the Trinity. Or '*Yavo Shiloh ve-Lo'* = *Yeshu*. The use of this expression was so widespread that it entered de Susannis's manual of Jewry law.[16]

Hebrew censors themselves were most often converts employed by printers of Hebrew books, charged with producing a text clean enough to pass muster with (the all too often ill-prepared) Christian censors. Much has been written. Yet we must be wary. None of these convert-censors were the Jews' 'friends.' Nor, as per Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, do I see them as mediators, creating Jewish space. Krakotzkin's book is thorough and must be read.[17] Yet it is difficult to see where people devoted to increasing Jewish conversions, as were so many learned converts, were also working for Jewish benefit; these were not 'career-converts' like Heine, Mahler, and Strauss. Toaff, for example, points to Antonio Costanzi, in the mid-eighteenth century, whom he calls the last of the censors. However, Toaff also makes a strong case that Costanzi is the horror of a priest, the volcano, who enters the cell of Anna del Monte and literally rapes her psychologically with his dances, his use of a crown above her head, and his pouring of water on her body in the presence of ten other priests—and Anna, as I

15 All cited in STOW, 'The Burning.'
16 See on these writers in KENNETH STOW, *Catholic Thought and Papal Jewry Policy, 1555-1593* (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary-KTAV, 1977).
17 AMNON RAZ-KRAKOTZKIN, *The Censor, the Editor, and the Text: the Catholic Church and the Shaping of the Jewish Canon in the Sixteenth Century,* Eng. trans. JACKIE SIMON FELDMAN (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007).

have shown, really existed, her underlying story no doubt is true.[18] Costanzi was not a censor devoted to preserving texts for Jewish use. Were there exceptions to the rule? Perhaps. That, however, is the point: exceptions! Besides, censors who were converts like the Modenese Camillo Yagel de Correggio and his son Ciro in the early seventeenth century, as Federica Francesconi has shown, directed their labors to erasing aspersions and bringing out what they saw as positive references to Christianity. If anybody was working to make room for a 'Jewish space,' it was Rabbi Nathanel Trabotti, who had been coopted into working with these two.

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A word on periodization. Actual attacks on rabbinic literature were sporadic in the thirteenth and early fourteenth century: Paris, Barcelona, Pope John XXII, and the Inquisitor Bernard Gui, with Benedict XIII a flash in the pan. A sustained assault dates from Reuchlin's battle with Zasius, in 1510, through the final condemnation by Clement VIII in 1593/1596. Nevertheless, suspicion of Jewish literature was a permanent feature in Christianity. It had to be.

Christianity is built on two foundations: the belief in Jesus as savior and the supersession of Judaism. From the first, therefore, Christianity was forced to challenge Jewish textual interpretation, dependent as it was on winning its challenge. How else to interpret Paul's saying in Romans 9 that the true inheritors of Abraham are his spiritual offspring? Jews had always understood descent literally, physically. Jews did not read Isaiah as predicting a coming messiah (as Fausto Parente sustains it should be read, accepting Christian exegesis like that of Mowinkel). Isaiah's source of salvation, his 'seed of Jesse,' was King Hezekiah, as H. L. Ginzburg meticulously explained in class (a similar warning applies to reading Zechariah's reference to 'my servant Branch, *'avdi tsemah*' [chapter 3] as anything but a contemporary vision of the post-exilic [the Babylonian exile of 586–536 B.C.E.] divine restoration of the high priesthood, the subject of the entire chapter, and the newly rededicated Jerusalem cult). This meant that Christians—ignoring the true *peshat,* the simple meaning—had to square *their* reading of Isaiah with *their* concept of the text, to wit, Mowinkel. Or accuse the Jews of g falsification which happened already in the indisputably literary dialogue of Justin Martyr with Trypho the Jew, in 135. Irving Resnick tells us that Justin Martyr (ca. 100–ca. 165) claimed he found verses supporting Jesus's messianic pretensions in Ezra and Jeremiah, which were unknown to his Jewish interlocutor, leading Justin to declare that the Jews deleted these passages from the Scriptural text?[19] The idea that Jews were perverting scripture textually and interpretatively recurs in the ninth-century Agobard

[18] ARIEL TOAFF, 'Giovanni Antonio Costanzi. Ultimo censore di libri ebraici a Roma (1745-1756 ca.),' in *Minchat Yehudà. Saggi sull'Ebraismo Italiano in memoria di Yehudà Nello Pavoncello*, eds ANGELO PIATTELLI and MYRIAM SILVERA, special issue, *La Rassegna Mensile di Israel* 67, no. 1–2 (2001): 203–21. On Anna del Monte, and her trials in the Roman Casa dei Catecumeni, in 1749, see KENNETH STOW, *Anna and Tranquillo, Catholic Anxiety and Jewish Protest in the Age of Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016).

[19] IRVING RESNICK, 'The Falsification of Scripture and Medieval Christian and Jewish Polemics,' *Medieval Encounters* 2, no. 3 (1996): 347–80.

of Lyons and three centuries later in the convert Petrus Alphonsus. It also underlies Justinian's Novel 146 prohibiting *deuterosis*, an edict with echoes in de Susannis, as well as in Hugo Grotius's *Remonstrantie* in Protestant Holland (1615), although Grotius uses the Novel to justify prohibiting the Talmud—I suspect to avoid using solely Catholic and papal reasoning.[20]

Yet if so many believed Jews perverted Scripture, what grounds is there for saying that Augustine persuaded the entire Christian world that, because Jews *preserved* the true biblical text, they should be sustained in Christendom?[21] Fortunately, this is a problem for those who speak of an Augustinian theory. What really sustained Jews in Christendom was not Augustine, but a Pauline theology that made a Jewish presence and ultimate conversion integral to Christian teaching. Both of these concepts were supported by a fully articulated body of canons that existed by no later than the tenth century, many of which were derived from the pre-existing Justinianic body of law. The first ones to cite Augustine's acclaimed citation of Psalm 59:12 were the thirteenth-century popes, beginning with Innocent III. However, they were using Augustine as no more than a proof-text. For Augustine himself, the Jews, beyond being bearers of Scripture, were the essence of carnality confronting—and opposing—to Christian spirituality; they were also *capsarii*, slaves, permanently subservient and lacking in public authority.[22] To return to our specific topic, what this means is that we should reject the commonly voiced assertion that the thirteenth-century attack on the Talmud was a product of the discovery that Jews were not transmitters of biblical verity. That 'discovery'— however incorrect—had been a staple for centuries.

How, then, to interpret what happened? If we correctly jettison the idea that a sharp awakening to Jewish textual perversion made an attributed Augustinian vision of reality no longer applicable, we must look elsewhere. And, as I have argued, despite many competing interpretations, if we broaden our perspective to look at developments in Paris, in the schools and university as a whole, then another—logical—explanation unfolds.[23] Namely, as Karl Morrison masterfully wrote, Paris was the hub of an approach that demanded that Christian life, teaching, and law be biblically rooted. A non-biblically based legal-theological system would threaten that approach. One thinks immediately of the Talmud. However, such a system also existed

[20] *Remonstrantie* par. 16, which allows books deemed not blasphemous. However, the Talmud is blasphemous, it turns out. The *Remonstrantie*, never applied, are a Protestant version of de Susannis, including both accepting the 'reality' of ritual murder, although Grotius finds that none of the evil things said about Jews are decisive. He leans on Roman Law, but with a good dose of the canons. He also wants it to be clear that Jews are a religion, not a *societas* which exercises even a modicum of political power, regarding which, he cites the Code, bk 1, title 9, law 1. Jews, therefore, must register their marriages before civic authorities. See DAVID KROMHOUT and ADRI K. OFFENBERG, eds, *Hugo Grotius's Remonstrantie of 1615* (Leiden: Brill, 2019).

[21] 'Sustained,' not 'tolerated,' whose Latin root, *tolerare,* means to privilege, not to be confused with 'tolerance.'

[22] See on Augustine's participation in the evolution of repressive legislation, CAPUCINE NEMO-PEKELMAN, *Iudaeorum Querellae… La législation relative aux Juifs, de la fin de l'Empire Romain au début de Moyen Age occidental (IVe-VIIe siècles)* (PhD diss., Université Paris X Nanterre, 2005).

[23] On Paris as a bastion of biblical primacy, see KARL F. MORRISON, *Tradition and Authority in the Western Church, 300-1140* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969).

within the Christian orbit, and it should have been the object of a Parisian attack. I am speaking of the newly edited canon law of the *Decretals*, which was a collection principally (not exclusively) of edited papal edicts. Yet the *Decretals* could not be attacked head on. Those Parisians who challenged the papacy directly learned the hard way: I am referring to the Spiritual Franciscans, epitomized by the tract of 1258 of Guillaume de St. Amour, *De periculis novissimorum temporum,* which viewed the pope in Rome as the Antichrist. Guillaume was excommunicated, and the radicals fled (to feature, actually in a toned-down version, in Umberto Eco's *Name of the Rose*).[24]

Yet an indirect attack could be—and was—made, a 'discreet warning,' by impugning that other non-scriptural legal structure that was the Talmud. Not, however, by the mendicants, as popularly thought. But by the 'seculars' at the University, whose Chancellor and the Bishop of Paris at the time of the Talmud's burning, William of Auvergne, was one of King Louis IX's closest advisors. A name-count of the signatories to Eudes de Chateauroux's 1248 condemnation reveals a clear majority of seculars (Parisian Masters) who voted that the Talmud was a *nova* [not the biblical] *lex,* as, by implication, the *Decretals* were as well. The Masters were also concerned with blasphemy and, as Fausto Parente correctly notes, Gregory IX was as well. Did he realize that there was a hidden agenda? Perhaps, but Innocent IV did, and perfectly. Following, or perhaps preceding his commentary on the *Decretals,* Innocent wrote that it was for blasphemy or 'heresies in their own law' that his predecessor, Pope Gregory, ordered the Talmud burned. Revealingly, Innocent spared the books Jews claimed they needed; Jews themselves were not heretics nor, as de Susannis once more explains in detail, could they, as Jews, ever be.[25]

When attacks continued, the authors were kings. As the 1007 Anonymous wrote (backed up by Meir ben Simeon, likely in just these years; see my *Levi's Vindication*), the Pope obeys the Law; the King is capricious.[26] But as a royal initiative, the attacks—which, note, had always been Parisian-centered (if not Parisian-limited)—were destined to lose steam. The debates, the protocols, and the details are of importance, but they should not distract us from the real crux: the unverbalized censure of non-scripturally based papal law.

As for Innocent's decision to return books, it was not out of kindness. Rather, it opened the door to those taking a midway position. It may also have responded less to Jewish entreaties than to those of the one person who played a central role in both forming the *Decretals* and then leading the way at Barcelona in 1263 and after: Raymond Penyaforte, paving the way also for future Reuchlins. Return the books, so that we

[24] The writings of the Spiritual Franciscans such as Peter John Olivi are even more radical than Eco dares to make them; see ERNST BENZ, *Ecclesia spiritualis: Kirchenidee und Geschichtstheologie der franziskanischen Reformation* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1934). As for the arabesque library in the novel, its model is surely the maze of stairways found in the library of the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome whose odd routes so clearly match Eco's description.

[25] On Innocent IV and charges against the Talmud, see BENJAMIN Z. KEDAR, 'Canon Law and the Burning of the Talmud,' *Bulletin of Medieval Canon Law* 9 (1979): 79–82.

[26] KENNETH STOW, *Levi's Vindication* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press; Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2017).

may exploit them, was the idea, especially knowing that extraordinary scholars such as Ramon Martí and his aides knew how to carry off the maneuver. It has been cogently argued that Barcelona spearheaded a conversionary campaign.[27] Martí himself, in fact, had modest expectations, but he did have hopes.

Linking Penyaforte to both Paris and Barcelona, one may object, that should have come to light before, but seeing the link requires first accepting my interpretation of the Parisian attack. Regardless, one has to explain why a person as close to Gregory IX as Raymond Penyaforte, who had assembled the *Decretals* by 1234, a time so close to the burnings of seven years later, would not have cautioned that burning rabbinic literature might be damaging, precluding his (Penyaforte's) eventual success at the grand Dispute in Barcelona, in 1263, and its aftermath. The Parisian episode thus ended because the pope wanted it to end—just as its ending was justified by Barcelona, which initiated what would eventually turn into a conversionary flood.

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Yet up to now, we have talked in sweeping theoretical terms. What was happening on the ground? I leap over centuries (Luca Andreoni argues well that the politics of censorship remained unchanged from the 1590s until 1753) and turn to the writings of Tranquillo Corcos (1660–1730), the signal intellectual and leadership-figure during the entire Roman ghetto period. I turn not to his response regarding the censorship worked by the vitriolic converted preacher, Lorenzo Virgulti, following the 1728 confiscation of books in Ancona, which Andreoni and Martina Mampieri have analyzed thoroughly.[28] Rather, I wish to focus on other of his writings, in which Corcos was not defending 'suspect' books, but 'using' them outright. Corcos knows a great deal; I would wager large chunks of the Talmud itself, but concealed well from view that his response to challenges by Gioachino Stefani,[29] who claimed Jews must devolve property strictly according to biblical procedure, was approved by the censor Giovanni Pastrizio;[30] but, then, as Federica Francesconi unties the package for seventeenth century Modena, almost everything can be read two ways.[31] Corcos thus makes reference to Maimonides and the *Tur* of Yaacov bar Asher. However, he disguises his direct knowledge by telling readers he is citing Bartolocci's grand *Bibliotheca*. Somehow, he also gets away with citing the Protestant Buxtorf. To be sure, as Corcos writes in

[27] See ALEX. J. NOVIKOFF, 'Toward a Cultural History of Scholastic Disputation,' *American Historical Review* 117, no. 2 (2012): 331–64.

[28] LUCA ANDREONI and MARTINA MAMPIERI, '"Tutta l'arte de Rabini": un caso di confisca di libri ebraici ad Ancona: controllo e conflitto (1728),' in *L'Inquisizione e gli ebrei. Nuove ricerche*, ed. MARINA CAFFIERO, with the participation of GIUSEPPINA MINCHELLA (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2021), 49–81.

[29] Corcos's polemic against Stephani is *Informazione del Rabino Tranquillo V. Corcos ebreo romano per provare che l'ebreo può far testamenti e disporre delle sue facoltà* (Romae: typis R. Cam. Apost., 1699), a copy of which is found in Archivio medievale e moderno, fondo AMM, Università degli ebrei di Roma, Archivio Storico della Comunità Ebraica di Roma, henceforth ASCER, b. 1Ud, 2 inf. 2, fasc. 05.

[30] Pastrizio is mentioned by RICHARD GOTTHEIL, *s.v.* 'Christian Hebraists,' in *Jewish Encylopedia,* vol. 6, 300–304, as someone known only to Steinschneider.

[31] FEDERICA FRANCESCONI, '"This passage can be read differently…" How Jews and Christians censored Hebrew texts in early modern Modena,' *Jewish History* 26, no. 1–2 (2012): 139–60, esp. 151.

his reply to Virgulti, everything to which he, Corcos, referred had been 'censored' (*scassato*), but Corcos also no doubt knew exactly what was missing: just follow the formulae used by censors for two centuries and fill in the blanks, especially for passages known by heart.

However, caution had its limits, and in his response to the attacks of Paolo Medici, with whom Corcos tangled in a *Memoriale* of 1697, he throws prudence to the wind.[32] Apart from the abovementioned Rashi (actually Shlemo Yarhi, a fourteenth-century mathematician Corcos confuses with Rashi), Corcos cites Levi ben Gershon, Rashba'a, Solomon ibn Gabirol, as Avicenna, Ovadia Bertinoro, Abraham ibn Ezra, Midrash Raba on Bereshit, the recent Yohanan Treves, Avraham Saba, whose *Zror haMor* was notorious for calling priests demons, the *Mahzor Kolbo* (which he does not mention as among the books confiscated in 1728),[33] Avudraham, Ovadia Sforno, Yosef Caro, and the *Ma'avar Yaboq* of Aharon Berechiah Modena. These are not authors, including Corcos's near contemporaries Treves and Aaron Berechiah, that one can cite without understanding the context, that is, the Talmud itself (or extracts of it). It is worth noting that Corcos could also cite Luther and Calvin, Augustine, Robert Bellarmine, Origen, Tertullian, and Paul of Burgos, as well as Alfonso Tostado (via Abravanel).[34]

The entire apparatus of prohibition and censorship thus proved to be highly porous. Andreoni also points to Jewish exploitation of ambivalences such as the one, for example, which led to the return of so many books in 1728. And, already in 1510, Reuchlin noted that any book was easily available from Ottoman lands; no doubt not easy to accomplish, but possible, just as it was possible to travel there to study. Van Boxel cautions that, by this time, the works circulated freely, if with censorial intervention, because the conversionary hopes pinned on mining texts had waned.[35] A hope based on books, perhaps—but not the papally directed conversionary program itself, at least with respect to individuals represented by those who like Anna del Monte and over twenty others during the mid-eighteenth century, the *fattori* were ordered to deliver to the *Catecumeni*, as the Roman House of Converts was called by the Jews of Rome's ghetto. Regardless of the ultimate return of so many volumes, the

[32] *Alla Sacra Congregatione del S. Officio per l'Università degli Ebrei, Memoriale* (Romae: Typis Rev. Apost., 1697) (copy from ASCER).

[33] See https://footprints.ctl.columbia.edu/. This project, Footprints, at Columbia University, lists all the books censored in Italy that could be found, a list that is remarkably limited; indeed, it does not include most of the titles Corcos mentions in responding to Medici.

[34] Corcos twice cites Abulense, that is, Abulense of Avila, no doubt referring to *Alphonsus Tostatus*, *Tostatus Abulensis*, and in Spanish as *El Tostado* or *El Abulense* (ca. 1410–3 September 1455), a theologian, and one not always uncontroversial with respect to papal power, who wrote commentaries on the historical books of the Bible and whose commentaries were used by Abravanel. Corcos may have known of Tostado from reading Abravanel. See SOLOMON GAON, *The Influence of the Catholic Theologian Alfonso Tostado on the Pentateuch Commentary of Isaac Abravanel*, The Library of Sephardic History and Thought (New York: KTAV, 1993). The problem is that as a *Speculum* 70, no. 4 (1995): 910–11 review puts it, Gaon shows the great similarities, but one cannot say definitively—or with direct proof—that Gaon is correct. The reviewer notes that Tostado is highly influenced by Abraham ibn Ezra.

[35] VAN BOXEL, 'Robert Bellarmine Reads Rashi,' efenc121–32.

confiscations themselves, first, in Ancona and, then, in Rome three years later, had to have created anxiety—and doubt.[36] Add to this the repressive initiatives of Benedict XIV as he facilitated 'offerings' of children for baptism during the 1740s, followed by crushing restrictions at the hands of Pius VI in 1775. Laxity, if any, therefore, was likely a function of indecision on the part of the Inquisition whether to burn or exploit, together with the perennial—indeed, canonically mandated—need for pragmatism with Jewish communities, regardless of periods of high tension and pressure.

In the event, the question of specific books and their contents pales if we realize that, in depriving Jews of their literature, the popes had a more ominous intention which becomes clear by looking at the subjects of Corcos's responses. Not his reply to Paolo Medici, which is traditional polemic. Nor the defense of *tefillin* and *mezuzot* in his *Pergamene*, a text that deserves serious inspection for its mystical content, which is likely not, as has been ventured, standard kabbalah but rather ideas of the high medieval *hasidei Ashkenaz*. The crunch comes in Corcos's response to Gioacchino Stephani on inheritance. It comes again in Corcos's defense of Jewish marital law in the sad Pallorella case, where previous adultery, even under the most extenuating circumstances, made marriage for the errant widow to her adulterous lover halakhically illegal. What Corcos was defending, perhaps reluctantly, in the Pallorella instance is the right of Jews to govern their lives according to the halakhah, which—without the Talmud—cannot be done. And to bolster his case, he cites the approval of the 1524 Charter of Daniel da Pisa but, even more, a constitution by Sixtus V from 22 October 1586, both of which specify that Jews may observe 'rites, constitutions, *and* laws.' Corcos knew full well that, as of 1621, the Rota had commanded Jews to live strictly by *ius commune*. And canonists like Antonio Ricciullo had said Jewish law was 'dead.'[37] Here, of course, in denying the halakhah legitimacy, was the ultimate form of censorship and deprivation—a 'logical' development of all that had come before.[38] That it occurred at the moment of the nadir of papal-Jewish relations should be no surprise.

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We end, however, by asking whether modernity has brought with it signal change. Perhaps; the Talmud is no longer prohibited, whether for Jews or anybody else. Nonetheless, in the Vatican Library it is pure accident alone that enables readers to put their hands (physically) on this work. One must climb to a balcony and turn left toward its very end. Only somebody looking for these tomes would run across them. Ambivalence, if not more, seems to flourish still today.[39]

[36] ASCER, b. Ub1 1 inf. 2, loose folios.
[37] RICCIULLO, *Tractatus de iure personarum extra ecclesiae gremium existentium*, 111–112, lib. 2, cap. 40.
[38] See STOW, *Anna and Tranquillo*, for greater detail on the effects of the 1621 decision.
[39] Did not, after all, Pope John Paul II tell the Jews in their synagogue that 'you are our elder brothers,' a passage which, much more than he wished, surely, recalled this passage's formulation by Paul in Romans 9, who said 'the elder shall serve the younger.'

Causes, Methods, and Manifestations of the Destruction of Hebrew Manuscripts

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This study attempts to explain the multiple reasons for the destruction of Hebrew manuscripts. The reuse of medieval Hebrew, Christian, or non-religious manuscripts is part of an epochal phenomenon caused by the spread of the printing press. While the phenomenon is general, however, in the case of Hebrew manuscripts it reached a tremendous Jewish-only conjuncture, namely the persecution and burning of Jewish books by the Inquisition and the burning of the Talmud ordered by Pope Julius III in 1553, followed by the Church's policy change towards Jews under Pope Paul IV's ruthless rule.[1]

1. Aspects of the Reuse of Medieval Hebrew Manuscripts

The dismemberment and reuse of medieval Hebrew manuscripts represents an epochal phenomenon, a consequence of the ever-increasing spread of the printing press (figs. 1–2). Moreover, Hebrew books faced a particularly tragic conjunction: the intentional destruction and burning of sacred texts, including the Talmud, under Pope Julius III in 1553. This occurred alongside economic and religious restrictions as well as the degradation of personal freedom for Jews under Pope Paul IV; formerly known as the fiercely ruthless cardinal of the Inquisition, Gian Pietro Carafa was elected pope from 1555 to 1559. These measures led rabbis to cease teaching their disciples due to a complete lack of copies of the Talmud.

Megillat Vienetz, a text describing a pogrom against the Jews of Frankfurt launched in 1614, informs us of the seizures and looting of Jewish books that occurred on that occasion. It is reported that those handling the books on their way to destruction were in the habit of separating the paper books, destined to be burnt,

[1] For a general overview of the topic see MAURO PERANI, 'Censura, sequestri e roghi di libri ebraici,' in *Dizionario storico dell'Inquisizione*, eds ADRIANO PROSPERI, VINCENZO LAVENIA, and JOHN TEDESCHI, 4 vols., vol. 1 (Pisa: Edizioni della Normale, 2010), 319–323. For an updated bibliography regarding the Italian and European Genizah, please refer to MAURO PERANI and EMMA ABATE, 'Bibliography on the "Italian Genizah" and "European Genizah"1915–2021,' in *Medieval Hebrew Manuscripts Reused as Book-bindings in Italy*, ed. MAURO PERANI with the cooperation of EMMA ABATE (Leiden: Brill, 2022), 282–305.

Cromohs (Cyber Review of Modern Historiography), ISSN 1123-7023, 26/2023

DOI: 10.36253/cromohs-14237

from those in parchment, as selling parchment to bookbinders proved to be a lucrative affair.[2]

It should also be noted that, while the Church was responsible for destroying a vast number of Hebrew books, at the same time Christian intellectuals and ecclesiastics saved numerous Hebrew manuscripts from destruction by acquiring them for their libraries. Notable among these guardians of the Hebrew written heritage are Giovanni Bernardo De Rossi, whose library was acquired by the Palatina Library of Parma after his death; Cardinal Domenico Grimani, who acquired the Pico della Mirandola Library; Cardinal Casanate; Cardinal Federico Borromeo; and several others.[3]

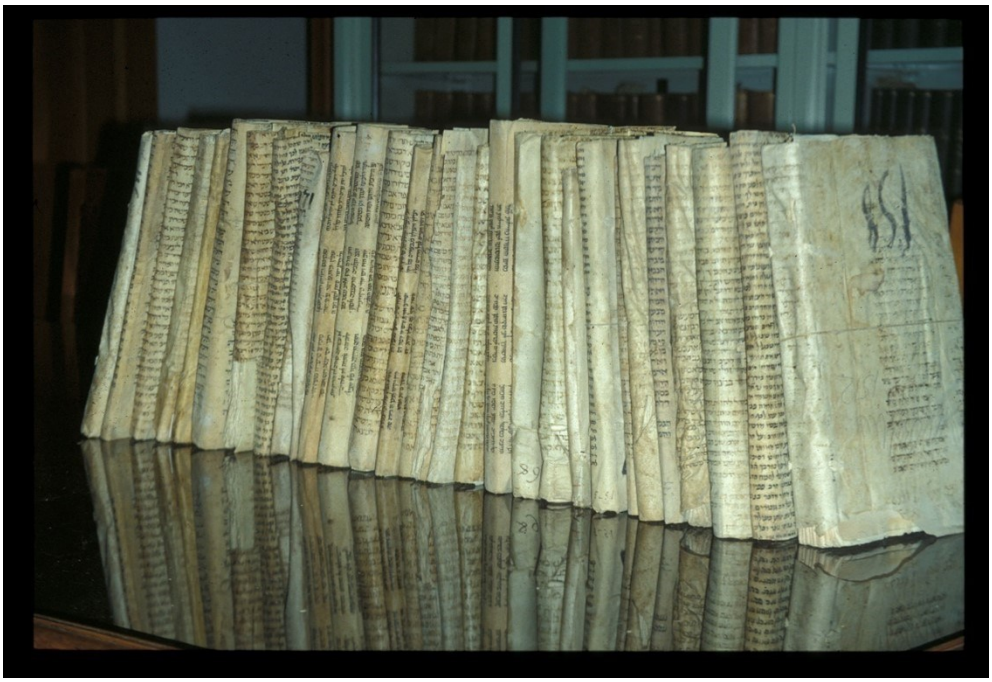

Figure 1. Municipal Archive of Bazzano (Bologna). Registers from the sixteenth century, bound with medieval Hebrew manuscripts containing the Talmud and other texts. Credits: Mauro Perani.

[2] MAURO PERANI, 'A trentasette anni dal decollo della ricerca dei frammenti ebraici riusati come legature in Italia. Il tutto nel frammento,' in *Frammenti di un discorso storico. Per una grammatica dell'aldilà del frammento*, ed. CATERINA TRISTANO (Spoleto: CISAM, 2019), 285–323; MAURO PERANI, 'The Italian Genizah Project founded by Prof. Josef Baruk Sermoneta zal in 1981. An Updated Report after 37 Years of Researches,' *Zakhor* 2 (2018), 265–284.

[3] See BENJAMIN RICHLER, *Guide to Hebrew Manuscript Collections* (Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 2014).

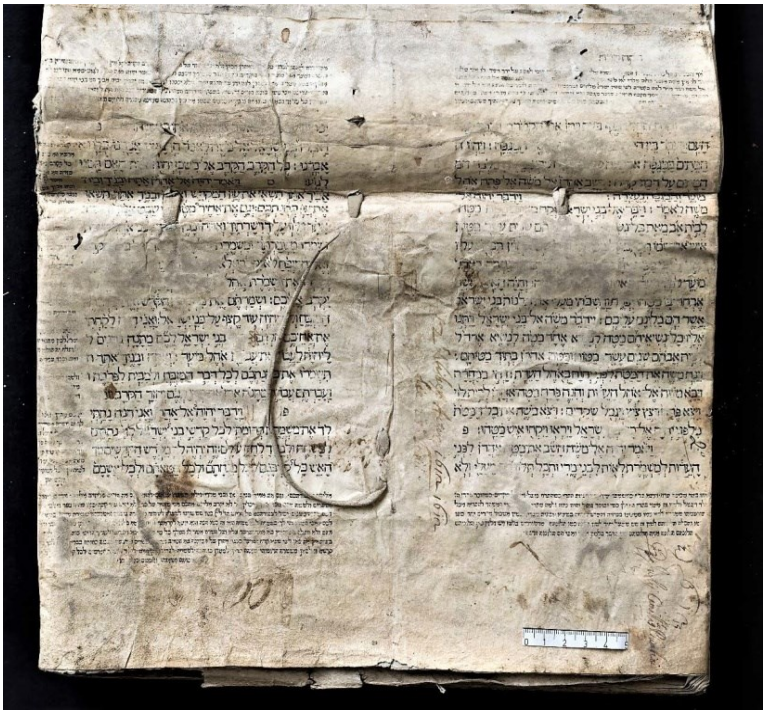

Figure 2. A bifolio from the Bologna *editio princeps* of the Torah, printed on parchment, surfaced on 25 January 1482. It was dismembered and repurposed as a binding for a register in the Notarial Archives of Cento, Ferrara, identified as fr. Heb. 25. Credits: Mauro Perani.

2. Causes of the Destruction and Consequent Scarcity of Medieval Hebrew Manuscripts

Throughout history, the reuse of cultural heritage materials has been a continuous and common practice. When any cultural good was no longer of interest, reusing its material support for other purposes was considered a normal practice enacted in all civilisations. Historical sources tell us that, among the vast amount of confiscated and looted Hebrew books destined for the stake, those on parchment were removed and taken to be sold to bookbinders.[4] According to Colette Sirat, only 5 percent of the manuscripts produced by Jews in Europe between the beginning of the second millennium C.E. and the Middle Ages still exist today.[5]

The scarcity of medieval Hebrew manuscripts can be attributed to a multifaceted set of factors. Firstly, the intense and exhaustive use of manuscripts for study and prayer contributed to their wear and eventual destruction. Unlike in the

[4] MAURO PERANI, *Colligere fragmenta ne pereant. Aspetti della liturgia medievale nei frammenti dell'archivio storico comunale. Norcia, Rocca della Castellina, 15 luglio–31dicembre 1997*, documentary exhibition catalogue (Norcia: Comune di Norcia), 43–45.

[5] COLETTE SIRAT, *Hebrew Manuscripts of the Middle Ages*, trans. NICHOLAS DE LANGE (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

Christian world, the absence of *scriptoria* in the Jewish community limited the systematic reproduction and preservation of these texts. Moreover, manuscripts not held in secure abbeys faced precariousness in terms of their preservation. The deliberate and systematic destruction by the Church and the Inquisition, aimed at suppressing Jewish culture, further contributed to this loss. Additionally, the reuse of parchment codices, both Hebrew and non-Hebrew, in bookbinding processes as part of market circuits played a role in diminishing the availability of original manuscripts. Lastly, the legislation of the Genizah, a repository for sacred Jewish texts, also had implications for the preservation and scarcity of Hebrew manuscripts. Together, these factors form a complex narrative pointing to the challenges and deliberate actions that led to the diminished presence of medieval Hebrew manuscripts. Below, I delve more deeply into some of these dynamics.

2.1 The Legislation of the Genizah

Since ancient times, Jews have been required to store sacred scriptures in a place inaccessible to the public. This practice applies to all sacred texts in Hebrew, whether manuscript or printed, but particularly the Pentateuch scrolls containing the sacred tetragrammaton thousands of times. For millennia, Jews have adhered to a religious law mandating that manuscripts of sacred texts, or texts written in the holy language that could contain the tetragrammaton, be stored in a deposit known as *genizah* to avoid profanation. Typically, after a certain period, the texts deposited in the Genizah were buried in cemeteries. Over centuries, the Genizah rule has actually represented a form of systematic destruction of Hebrew manuscripts and scrolls carried out for ritual reasons to prevent the profanation of sacred texts, particularly the Sifre Torah.[6]

2.2 The Intense Use of Manuscripts for Study and Prayer

Another cause of the destruction of the Hebrew manuscript is the intense use Jews made of their sacred books for prayer and study, gradually leading to the manuscripts' deterioration. The degradation of Hebrew manuscripts can thus be attributed to their extensive use by the Jewish community, as the repeated handling of and frequent engagement with these sacred books resulted in a gradual deterioration of the manuscripts over time. As the manuscripts performed a crucial role in religious practices and intellectual pursuits, their pages experienced wear and tear that ultimately impacted their physical condition. While reflecting the profound significance of the manuscripts in Jewish life, this intense use paradoxically also contributed to their inevitable destruction. The wear incurred through the genuine and dedicated utilisation of these manuscripts for spiritual and educational purposes sheds light on the complex interplay between reverence for the sacred texts and the physical constraints of their material form.[7]

[6] MAURO PERANI, 'Death and rebirth of Hebrew manuscripts,' in *Medieval Hebrew Manuscripts*, ed. PERANI, 48–49.
[7] PERANI, 'Death and rebirth,' 48–49.

2.3 The absence of *scriptoria* in the Jewish world

The limited production of manuscripts in the Jewish world can be attributed to distinctive methods of reproduction. In contrast to the Christian world characterised by numerous *scriptoria* equipped with teams of scribes and copyists dedicated to manuscript reproduction, the Jewish tradition did not adopt such a large-scale practice. Jewish scribes operated in a more solitary fashion, often working from home. This individualised approach to manuscript creation involved a father-son dynamic in which a son would assist his father in the meticulous process of copying texts. Unlike the collaborative efforts carried out in Christian *scriptoria*, the Jewish method emphasised an intimate and familial approach, leading to a more personalised but less prolific production of manuscripts. The uniqueness of this approach sheds light on the cultural and practical distinctions between the two traditions in the realm of manuscript production.[8]

2.4 The precariousness of Hebrew manuscript preservation

The historical mobility of the Jewish people has played a significant role in the challenges involved in preserving textual heritage. Continuous instances of mobility, whether driven by forced expulsions from settled lands or undertaken voluntarily, created precarious conditions for the conservation of important texts. The nomadic nature of Jewish communities, frequently on the move throughout history, presented obstacles to the careful preservation of fragile belongings, particularly sacred scriptures. Constant relocation made it difficult to establish stable environments conducive to the protection of these precious manuscripts. The wear and tear incurred during the journeys, whether compelled or voluntary, resulted in premature deterioration of the texts. This persistent state of mobility became a defining factor in the historical context of Jewish communities, shaping the difficulties they have encountered in safeguarding and conserving their textual heritage.[9]

2.5 The Systematic Destruction Perpetrated by the Church and the Inquisition

To elucidate the scarcity of Hebrew manuscripts that have endured to the present day, it is crucial to underscore a final and undeniably significant cause: the systematic destruction of the Jewish book heritage carried out over centuries by the Church. This historical pattern of intentionally dismantling and obliterating Jewish texts represents a deeply impactful factor contributing to the limited preservation of Hebrew manuscripts. Over an extended period, the Church engaged in deliberate measures to suppress and eliminate Jewish literary and cultural contributions. This systematic destruction, fuelled by various historical and religious factors, has left an indelible mark on the availability of Hebrew manuscripts. It underscores the complex historical dynamics between different religious and cultural communities, highlighting

[8] PERANI, 'Death and rebirth,' 49.
[9] MAURO PERANI, 'Death and rebirth,' 49.

the profound impact of intentional actions on the preservation of cultural and intellectual artifacts. The recognition of this systematic destruction is integral to understanding the challenges and losses faced by the Jewish literary tradition over the centuries.[10]

3. Hebrew Books 'Kidnapped' and Saved from Burning en route to the Vatican Apostolic Library

Giacomo da Lugo, a former vicar of the Inquisition, relates that, in 1574, Rome asked Cardinal Paleotti of Bologna to send nine Hebrew manuscripts, stolen (rescued) from the flames, to the Vatican Apostolic Library with the specific request that the books be handled with the utmost care. Below is an example of the instructions:

> Si sono abrugiati quelli libri hebrei che se gl'era dato ordine che s'abrugiassero, il che s'ha per ben fatto. [Si riferisce, quindi, della risposta di Roma, da cui si raccomanda che] li nove pezzi d'essi libri che dice che Mons Rev.mo Card. Paleotti gl'ha consignato per la Libreria Apostolica di S.S. sarà bene che V. P.tà vegga mandarli quanto prima sicuramente e di maniera ben confitionati che non patiscano per viaggio. Il restante di sette libri hebbrei quando essi avranno finito di satisfare al debito che hanno lì con il Depositario o sia Thesoriero della Camera Apostolica si potranno restituire ad essi hebrei.[11]

In a fascinating twist, the instructions elucidate that, while the Hebrew books earmarked for burning were duly destroyed, nine of particular value were singled out for preservation. These were to be consigned by Cardinal Paleotti to the Apostolic Library, emphasising the importance of their safekeeping. The instructions underscore the urgency of their being transferred promptly and securely to prevent any damage during travel. Furthermore, seven Hebrew books, confiscated but spared from destruction, were slated to be returned to the Jewish community upon the settlement of taxes owed to the Confessor or Treasurer of the Apostolic Chamber. This historical account offers a glimpse into a unique instance in which, amidst the

[10] MAURO PERANI, 'Confisca, censura e roghi di libri ebraici a Bologna nella seconda metà del Cinquecento,' in *La cultura ebraica a Bologna tra Medioevo e Rinascimento. Atti del convegno internazionale, Bologna, 9 aprile 2000*, ed. MAURO PERANI (Florence: Giuntina, 2002), 103–116; PERANI, 'Death and rebirth,' 49–50.

[11] 'Those Hebrew books ordered to be burned were duly destroyed. [And he refers to instructions from Rome with the request that] nine of these books of particular value to be consigned by Monsignor Rev. Cardinal Paleotti to the Apostolic Library of his holiness and that it will be good for your mercy to send them as soon as possible, safely and in a well-confectioned manner [so] that they do not suffer from travel. The remainder of seven Hebrew books, confiscated but retained from destruction, are to be returned to the Jews after due and complete settlement of the tax levied and owed to the Confessor or Treasurer of the Apostolic Chamber.' See PERANI, 'Confisca, censura e roghi di libri,' 103–116.

tumultuous period of book burnings, certain valuable Hebrew manuscripts found an unexpected sanctuary in the Vatican Apostolic Library.[12]

4. The Commercial Circuits of the Parchment Codex Market: Reuse in Hebrew, Christian, and Other Manuscripts

The commercial circuits of the parchment codex market, encompassing both Hebrew and Christian manuscripts among others, as well as their subsequent reuse, constitute a multifaceted dynamic in the historical context of manuscript transmission. These circuits served as intricate pathways through which parchment, the material foundation of these manuscripts, exchanged hands for various purposes. The trade not only involved the sale of existing manuscripts but also contributed to the practice of reutilising parchment to create new manuscripts or book bindings. The interconnectedness of these markets played a crucial role in the recycling and repurposing of valuable materials. Additionally, this cross-cultural exchange of parchment codics reflects the economic and material practices shared between different religious and linguistic communities, offering insights into the collaborative aspects of manuscript production and dissemination in historical contexts. Exploring the complexities of these commercial circuits unveils a tapestry of cultural interplay, economic interests, and the sustainable repurposing of material resources within the intricate web of manuscript transmission.[13]

5. Studying Dates of Reuse and their Connection With Anti-Jewish Persecution

Examining the timelines associated with the dismemberment and recycling of Hebrew parchment codices provides a valuable method for reconstructing the peaks of reuse in the realm of Hebrew manuscripts (fig. 3). This analytical approach allows researchers to discern patterns and trends in the repurposing of these manuscripts over time. By scrutinising the specific instances in which parchment codices were disassembled and their materials repurposed, scholars gain insights into periods of

[12] MAURO PERANI, 'Italia "paniere" dei manoscritti ebraici e la loro diaspora nel contesto del collezionismo in Europa tra Otto e Novecento,' in *Il collezionismo di libri ebraici tra XVII e XIX secolo*, eds CHIARA PILOCANE and AMEDEO SPAGNOLETTO, supplement, *La Rassegna Mensile di Israel*, vol. 82, no. 2–3 (2016): 63–91.

[13] For further information on the topic, please refer to the following studies: MAURO PERANI, 'Codicum hebraicorum fragmenta. I manoscritti ebraici riusati nelle legature in Italia,' in *Fragmenta ne pereant. Recupero e studio dei frammenti di manoscritti medievali e rinascimentali riutilizzati in legature*, eds MAURO PERANI and CESARINO RUINI (Ravenna: Longo, 2002), 51–74; MAURO PERANI, 'Iter Hebraicum Italicum. L'Italia crocevia dei viaggi dei manoscritti ebraici per le rotte e i paesi del Mediterraneo,' in *Quod ore cantas corde credas. Studi in onore di Giacomo Baroffio Dahnk*, ed. LEANDRA SCAPPATICCI (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2012), 103–127; MAURO PERANI, 'Ebraisti e bibliofili europei a caccia di manoscritti ebraici in Italia fra Sette e Ottocento: Bernard de Montfaucon e David Kaufmann,' in *Patrimonio culturale condiviso: viaggiatori prima e dopo il Grand Tour*, ed. FIAMMETTA SABBA, Ebook/Collection *Atti di Convegni* 2 (Naples: Associazione culturale *Viaggiatori*; Bologna: Dipartimento di Beni culturali, Università degli Studi di Bologna, 2019), 193–211, available in digital open access at https://www.academia.edu/41296438/Patrimonio_culturale_condiviso_viaggiatori_prima_e_dopo_il_Grand_Tour.

heightened reuse. This historical detective work involves delving into the nuances of manuscript lifecycles, revealing crucial moments when manuscripts faced dismantling for various reasons such as economic considerations or shifts in cultural practices. Through this meticulous examination of chronological data, a narrative emerges which captures the ebbs and flows in the recycling practices of Hebrew manuscripts. Such a nuanced understanding enhances our comprehension of the life histories of these manuscripts and the broader cultural, economic, and historical contexts that influenced their reuse.[14]

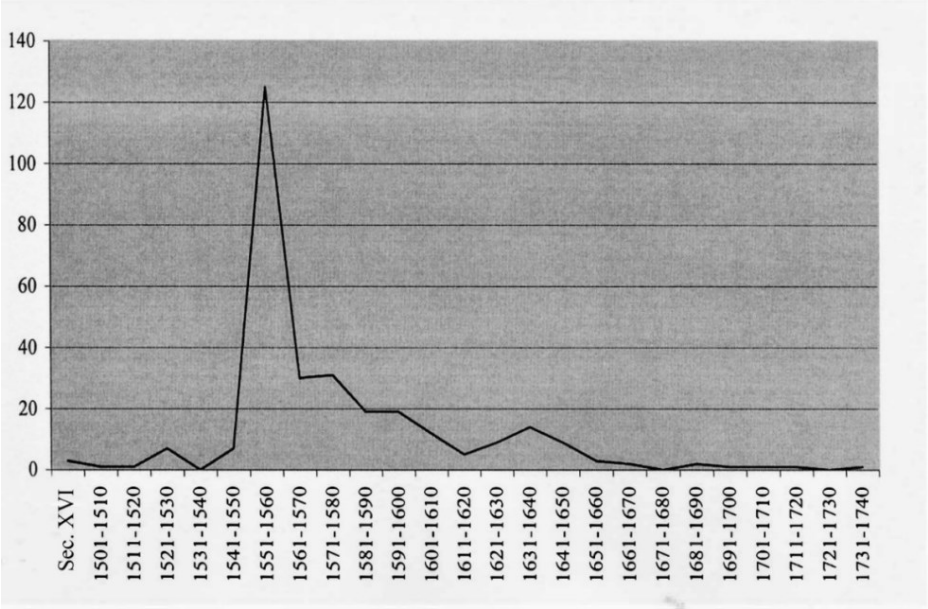

Figure 3. Diagram of the seizure and destruction of the Talmud, with the peak of reuse in the years following the burning of the Talmud ordered by Pope Paul III in 1553. Credits: Mauro Perani.

6. Copies of the Talmud Stolen from the Flames and Sold to Book-binders for Parchment Reuse

The discovery of over 370 Talmud sheets in Italy unveils a significant historical narrative, revealing a peak period of intense reuse of Talmudic codices (fig. 3). This surge in repurposing occurred prominently between 1554 and 1560, right after the infamous burning of the Talmud at Rome's Campo de' Fiori in September 1553. Remarkably, 170 Talmud codices were resurrected through meticulous efforts by reassembling the 370 Talmudic fragments. This process of reconstruction is particularly noteworthy, as it saved a substantial portion of the Talmudic heritage

[14] MAURO PERANI, 'Morte e rinascita dei manoscritti ebraici: il loro riuso come legature e la loro recente riscoperta,' in *Studi di storia del cristianesimo. Per Alba Maria Orselli*, eds LUIGI CANETTI, MARTINA CAROLI, ENRICO MORINI, AND RAFFAELE SAVIGNI (Ravenna: Longo, 2008), 313–336.

that would otherwise have been lost forever. The reuse of these fragments as bindings not only contributed to the preservation of the textual content, but also stands as a testament to the resilience of cultural artefacts in the sense that they were able to find new life even in the aftermath of deliberate attempts at their destruction. The successful restoration of these Talmud codices illuminates the intricate interplay between destruction, reuse, and preservation in the historical journey of sacred texts.[15]

7. The Reuse of Parchment Hebrew Codices as Bindings for Printed Books

The prevalent practice of binding printed books with Hebrew manuscripts is underscored by the discovery of 385 such instances at the Estense and University Library of Modena alone. This discovery sheds light on the widespread use of Hebrew manuscripts as coverings for printed books. The sheer volume, totalling over 1,300 Hebrew fragments, emphasises the significance of this practice in historical bookbinding traditions. Each bound book represents a unique convergence of printed content and the repurposed material of Hebrew manuscripts, contributing to a rich tapestry of textual amalgamation. This archival evidence not only highlights the practicality of reusing materials in historical book production, but also reflects the interplay and cultural exchange evident in the bindings of these books. The multitude of Hebrew fragments found in this collection serves as a testament to the enduring life and utility of these manuscripts beyond their original context, contributing to a broader understanding of the dynamic history of bookbinding practices.[16]

8. Noteworthy Examples of Reuse

The discovery of sheets from a singular Hebrew manuscript both in Italy and at the Leipzig University Library represents a fascinating case. Initially, it was presumed that a second-hand dealer responsible for selling Hebrew codices to be disassembled and repurposed as book bindings had also distributed sheets to locations in Italy and Germany. Upon closer examination, however, a more nuanced narrative emerged. In instances where two or more sheets from the same Italian manuscript are found dispersed across diverse locales, countries, or even continents, it becomes apparent

[15] MAURO PERANI, 'I manoscritti ebraici, le loro vicissitudini e la loro «morte». A proposito dei frammenti di Bazzano,' in *I frammenti ebraici di Bazzano. Un piccolo tesoro nella «Genizah italiana». Atti del Forum internazionale, Bazzano (Bologna), 25 maggio 2000*, ed. MAURO PERANI (Florence: Giuntina, 2001), 193–199; FAUSTO PARENTE, La Chiesa e il 'Talmud,' in *Storia d'Italia. Annali 11. Gli Ebrei in Italia*, 2 vols., vol. 1, *Dall'alto Medioevo all'età dei ghetti*, ed. CORRADO VIVANTI (Turin: Einaudi, 1996), 521–643; MAURO PERANI, 'Nuovo inventario dei frammenti di manoscritti medievali della Mishnah, della Tosefta e del Talmud rinvenuti nella "Genizah italiana",' in *Una manna buona per Mantova. Man Tov le-Man Tovah. Studi in onore di Vittore Colorni per il suo 92° compleanno*, ed. MAURO PERANI (Florence: Leo S. Olschki Editore, 2004), 333–363.

[16] MAURO PERANI, '385 Printed Books of the Fifteenth to Eighteenth Centuries, Bound with Medieval Hebrew Manuscripts in the Estense Library,' in *'Genizat Germania' – Hebrew and Aramaic Binding Fragments from Germany in Context*, ed. ANDREAS LEHNARDT, European Genizah Texts and Studies 1 (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 217–275.

that these parchment sheets were not disassembled and sold separately. Rather, they had originally functioned as the bindings—either internally or externally—of books acquired in Italy.[17]

A noteworthy illustration of such reuse was detailed in a 2017 study by Donatella Melini and Roberta Tonnarelli Corsi. Their research highlights the discovery of parchment fragments from Hebrew manuscripts repurposed to reinforce the adhesive elements in the restoration of wooden components of violins or violas, as illustrated in figure 4.

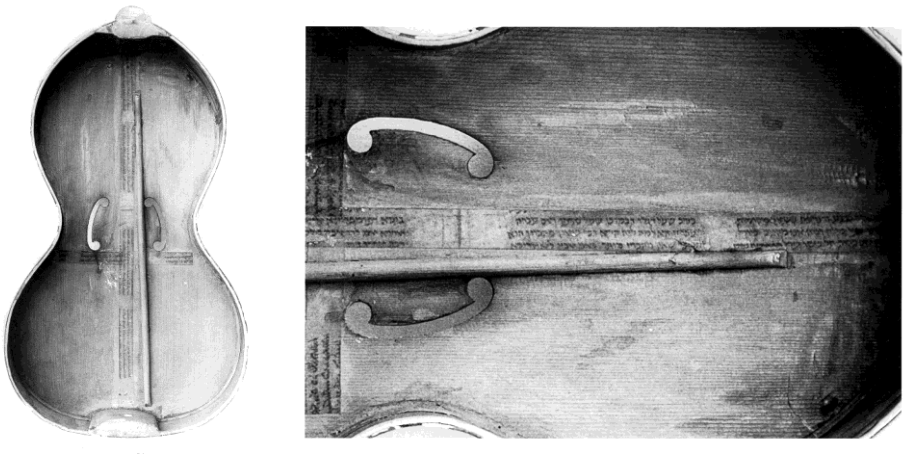

Figure 4. Fragments of Hebrew manuscripts in parchment were reused to reinforce the gluing of the wooden parts of violins or violas during a restoration. Credits: Donatella Melini and Roberta Tonnarelli Corsi.

Conclusions

The varied investigation of medieval Hebrew manuscript destruction and reuse reveals a rich tapestry woven of historical, cultural, and religious threads. The epochal phenomenon of manuscript reuse, catalysed by the invention of the printing machine, becomes especially prominent in the Jewish context; this particular significance is attested to by the deliberate persecution and burning of Jewish texts following Inquisition and papal decrees, such as the burning of the Talmud in 1553. The interconnected dynamics, ranging from intentional destruction and looting during historical events such as the Frankfurt pogrom to the intentional preservation of Hebrew manuscripts by Christian intellectuals, highlight the intricate interplay of destruction and salvation within the historical narrative.

[17] For a comprehensive reconstruction of the story, please refer to MAURO PERANI, 'Juridical Books Bound in 16th-Century Bologna with Folios from a 12th-Century Manuscript of Halakhot Gedolot, Found in Bologna and in Leipzig University Library,' in *Medieval Hebrew Manuscripts*, ed. PERANI, 282–305.

The causes contributing to the scarcity of medieval Hebrew manuscripts are diverse and intertwined. The intense use of manuscripts for study and prayer, the absence of *scriptoria* in the Jewish world, precarious preservation conditions, systematic destruction by the Church and Inquisition, market circuits of parchment codices, and the legislation of the Genizah collectively form a narrative of challenges and deliberate actions that led to the diminished presence of original manuscripts.

Furthermore, the systematic destruction perpetrated by the Church emerges as a significant factor, highlighting the intentional efforts to suppress Jewish culture and intellectual heritage. The challenges posed by continuous Jewish mobility further contribute to a nuanced understanding of the factors leading to the scarcity of Hebrew manuscripts.

The historical accounts of Hebrew books 'kidnapped' and saved from burning to be sent to the Vatican Apostolic Library, the commercial circuits of parchment codices, the study of reuse dates in connection to anti-Jewish persecutions, and the discovery of Talmudic fragments reused as book bindings add layers to the narrative, illustrating the resilience and adaptability of cultural artifacts in the face of destruction.

In essence, this comprehensive study illuminates the intricate and sometimes paradoxical relationship between destruction and preservation, providing valuable insights into the broader historical, cultural, and religious contexts that have shaped the fate of medieval Hebrew manuscripts.

Historians and Their Craft

An Interview with Martin Mulsow

ANDREW MCKENZIE-MCHARG
Australian Catholic University

Martin Mulsow is an intellectual and cultural historian whose research has scoured the early modern period for those zones of nonalignment characterised by political dissidence, religious heterodoxy, and learned eccentricity. His work thereby intimates an alternative genealogy of modernity by suggesting unexpected lineages that traverse the political underground, the social margins, and the academic periphery. After an American sojourn as the Professor of History at Rutgers University in the mid-2000s, Mulsow returned to Germany in 2008 to take up the dual position of Professor for Cultures of Knowledge in Modern Europe at the University of Erfurt and of Director of the Gotha Research Centre. Drawing inspiration from the collections preserved in the famed ducal library in Gotha, he has continued his explorations of the more obscure corners of intellectual and cultural history by shedding light on the early modern fascination with the orient, the counter-'public sphere' of Enlightenment secret societies, the clandestine publication of pornography, and the erudite enthusiasm for numismatics. Like his work more generally, these investigations stimulate broad reflections upon how the margins and the mainstream, materiality and media, and modernity and the early modern relate to each other.

It would be conceivable in an interview such as this one to limit the exchange to the themes that dominate your research and the methodologies that you thereby apply. However, my hope is to complement the* Fachgespräch *with questions motivated by an interest in your own intellectual biography—and I believe that there is no need for any embarrassment on my part if my questions touch upon your family background, career path, and intellectual friendships as such an inquiry mirrors the contextualisation that you seek to achieve in your own historical exhumations of those eccentric and non-conformist early modern scholars for whom you clearly feel a large degree of sympathy. Yet as a point of departure, I wanted to begin by touching upon the more theoretical ideas underpinning your work. In the course of reacquainting myself with your work over the last weeks, I made a list of the following figures and their corresponding approaches because it was evident to me that they recur throughout your writings: (i) Carlo Ginzburg and the insights of microhistory, (ii) Dieter Henrich and the idea of a constellation, (iii) Ian Hunter and the notion of a persona, (iv) the Cambridge School and its contextualism. Can you elaborate upon what they mean

Cromohs (Cyber Review of Modern Historiography), ISSN 1123-7023, 26/2023

DOI: 10.36253/cromohs-14908

to your research? And are there other ideas that I've missed but that deserve to be mentioned?

The path of my thinking leads from more systematic philosophy through the history of philosophy to a very broadly conceived history of ideas or knowledge—in the past one would have said *Geistesgeschichte*. It has been a relatively long path, with a lot of twists and turns; if I were to talk about all the sources of inspiration and instruction that have pushed me down this path and determined its direction, we would end up with a story in which actual encounters with my direct academic teachers would give way to encounters with books whose authors then, in a later phase, gradually became my acquaintances and friends. It starts with Ernst Tugendhat, for whom I exchanged Tübingen for Berlin as the place of study because I admired the seriousness and uncompromising nature evident in his philosophical search and in his turn to analytical philosophy; in Berlin I was also fascinated by Michael Theunissen, a completely different thinker whose thinking intimated the wide, mostly unarticulated perspectives that could encompass the philosophies of Hegel and Kierkegaard, and Freud and Marx. I wrote my seminar papers with them. When I was in Munich, I primarily wanted to hear Dieter Henrich as a theorist of self-consciousness and an interpreter of Hegel; the appeal of his ideas about constellations as small, incredibly productive philosophical networks only dawned on me very slowly, at a time many years later when I was already more of a historian. This process arose out of observing as an outside onlooker his Jena project, in which constellation research was developed and applied. But in Munich, in a manner completely at odds with my own plans, I suddenly fell under the spell of the Renaissance. In its roster of professors, Munich had strengths in the intellectual history of the Renaissance. I found myself drawn to these professors for a number of reasons: I was enthusiastic about painters like Leonardo and Botticelli; I sympathised with the spirit of optimism of early humanism from reading Cassirer; and I also harboured the hope of discovering the prehistory of German idealism in the writings of Nicholas of Cusa and Campanella. There, at the Renaissance Institute, I became absorbed with the work on a dissertation devoted to the natural philosophy of the Renaissance; although it was submitted to Henrich, it was in fact inspired by Stephan Otto and Eckhard Keßler, the professors at the Renaissance Institute. At that time, I was increasingly influenced by the Italian style of research, such as that practiced by Cesare Vasoli, the great scholar with whom I was able to exchange ideas during my months in Florence. This style is characterised by many footnotes, exhibits a high degree of philological precision, and cultivates a different view of the genesis of modernity by tracing a path leading from humanism and heterodox Aristotelianism via the naturalism of the libertines to the Enlightenment. It was only thanks to this perspective that I was able to discover my later themes.

However, my indirect teachers were no less important, especially in the late phase of my doctorate and then in the post-doc period. It was the books by Robert Darnton and

Peter Burke, by Anthony Grafton and Carlo Ginzburg, and later also by Jan Assmann, which shaped my own way of researching and writing—all historians whom I only got to know later and who have all become friends. You are right to mention Ginzburg's microhistory and Henrich's constellation research, but they are embedded in the other influences I mentioned. The Cambridge School, on the other hand, was something I noticed only marginally and relatively late, even though I clearly remember my visit to John Pocock in Baltimore. I really appreciate Ian Hunter and his group of Australian colleagues; they always come with great suggestions of which the theorisation of the philosophical persona is just one of many.

What I would also like to mention is my 'training' in sociology, which took place during my *habilitation*. Ulrich Beck was appointed to his chair at Munich in 1992, and I attended his seminars from the beginning and learned a tremendous amount there. His ideas about the reflexivity of today's 'second' modernity, about the risk society and the change in our descriptive categories still intrigue me and influence my own thinking. Beck wanted to make me his assistant, but I had to decline because I was in the final stages of writing my *habilitation*. I miss him—he died unexpectedly at the beginning of 2015—and regret that I can no longer talk to him about the current world situation and how best to understand it.

In his book* History: Its Purpose and Method *(1950) the Dutch historian Gustaaf Renier suggested that historians should reframe their understanding of their work and what mediates their relationship to the past by recognising how it is more appropriate to speak of traces rather than sources. Reading your work, I was recently struck by how much of it is devoted to reconstructing the past from 'traces' (indeed, you often use this very word). If we play through the possibilities with your topic of choice, namely the Radical Enlightenment, then we are presented with two alternatives, first: 'What are the sources of the Radical Enlightenment?' and second: 'What are the traces left behind by the Radical Enlightenment?' It seems to me that by asking the first question one ends up with something similar to Jonathan Israel's project, which tends to identify an ultimate source and point of origin (Spinoza!) and which remains focused on ideas conveyed and carried by text, in part because, in keeping with the notion of 'sources,' texts seem to 'flow.' If, alternatively, one asks: 'What are the traces of the Radical Enlightenment?' then the result is something approximating far more closely the kind of history that you have attempted: less unitary, more episodic, and dependent on nuanced, fine-grained detective work. Might this be one way to characterise your research and its relationship to the intellectual projects of others such as Israel?

It's true that whenever and wherever I discover traces, I am seized by an urge to comprehend the entirety that once existed and now has been lost. Unwritten books of which only the table of contents exists, suppressed writings, theorists who died young

before they could fully develop their intellectual programs—all of this clearly triggers a reflex in me to engage with this kind of material or these kinds of people. This may have something to do with the fact that I have a very vivid historical imagination, but it also originates in my appreciation for detective work, which uses a wide variety of clues to piece together a story as it happened (even though I don't read detective novels myself). I don't have to mention how Carlo Ginzburg has emphasised the concept of traces in his microhistory, which I admire. To this day I am also colossally impressed by what Robert Darnton demonstrated in his book *The Business of Enlightenment*, where he was able to infer the name and history of the printer's assistant who accidentally left a fingerprint on a copy of the *Encyclopédie,* and, more broadly, to reconstruct from letters and invoices the conversations that took place in the back rooms of the Societé typographique de Neuchatel, the publishing house which printed the work.

You are absolutely right in identifying in the evidence left behind by the Radical Enlightenment the historical traces that have captivated me for a long time. When I first became acquainted with the field of clandestine literature and those researchers devoted to its excavation—this was at a four-week, intensive seminar that Richard Popkin organised in Leiden in the spring of 1990 and that focused on the famous *Treatise of the Three Impostors*—I noticed that, apart from Winfried Schröder's important dissertation, there was almost no research on the German aspect of this story. I had stumbled upon an almost entirely uncultivated section of this field. So many figures whose lives had played out beyond the semi-familiar Halle Early Enlightenment around Christian Thomasius also remained veiled in obscurity. I thus have devoted much time in the subsequent decades to rescuing these figures from this obscurity and presenting the results in many books, essays and anthologies. This work has been very exciting. It never occurred to me to want to reduce everything to a single denominator. I believe that reconstructing certain trends, patterns, preferences, and central episodes corresponds to the highest level of abstraction that can be reached. Going beyond that would be pointless and would unnecessarily reduce the diversity of the era.

One more point about traces. As you've noted, the term imparts a sense of what has been lost, of incompleteness and therefore of what has to be inferred from the evidence we are able to recover. It is clearly necessary for historians to develop a sense for the way we can be tempted into a lop-sided or distorted picture of the past by what is bequeathed to us as evidential traces. An obvious and, for intellectual historians, fundamental example of such a bias can be identified in the fact that much thinking occurs socially through conversations and discussions—yet, with exceptions created by the somewhat artificial situation in which someone records a conversation, this thinking leaves no direct traces (in contrast to the thinking that unfolds and then is conserved by writing books and texts). As I understand it, the idea of the intellectual constellation is very attuned to how

thinking as a whole depends largely on human interaction that most often leaves behind no direct evidence and whose effects therefore have to be inferred. (Clearly letters and correspondence are the mode of writing that comes closest to capturing this dialogic, social dimension of thought.) But it's not just the mode of communication that (pre-)structures the kinds of traces left to us, but also what is communicated. I wonder whether that is one message of your **Prekäres Wissen*****, which has recently been translated into English and published by Princeton University Press as*** **Knowledge Lost: A New View of Early Modern Intellectual History*****; namely, that the knowledge associated with the Radical Enlightenment was endangered from the outset in a way not true of more orthodox knowledge. Are we liable to underestimate the impact of the Radical Enlightenment because the knowledge into which it was 'encoded' was more precarious and less likely to survive?***

I am interested in what has been lost, but even more interested in the strategies and tactics that have been devised to save thoughts from such a fate and that offer these thoughts some prospect of survival even when thinkers find themselves in a difficult position and their thoughts are not welcome in society. This is the double meaning of my concept of 'precarious knowledge': it comprehends both the state of being endangered and the effort to avert the danger and secure what is endangered for the future. Incidentally, the concept of 'precariousness' was introduced to me through a conference in Konstanz, which was about 'figures of precariousness,' inspired by the debates about precarious working relationships. I then experimentally applied this to my figures from the clandestine underground and gradually understood how well the sociological-economic notion of a 'clandestine precariat' fits the Radical Enlightenment.

This approach induces a shift in the traditional perspective on Radical Enlightenment, which is based more on content-related, doxographic categories. By contrast, the approach I've tried to develop zeroes in on the dangerous situations, practices of dealing with them, and generally the materiality of what has been handed down. It even moves a little away from the focus solely on radical thinkers; rather, you suddenly see these thinkers in their parallelism with and their (by no means always intentional) proximity to spies, alchemists, black marketeers—all types who cannot simply go public with their knowledge and have to hide from law enforcement. This proximity raises completely new questions.

Your observation that thinking is mostly based on the interaction between people contains a deep truth. Thinking is indeed embedded in emotions, attitudes, intentions—and various forms of communication. Not taking this into account—this belief connects me with the Cambridge School—would mean an enormous reduction and distortion of what communication intends to convey. But reconstructing the original speech situations is not easy. Faced with this challenge, one is grateful for any guidance supplied by

linguistics, anthropology, or the sociology of knowledge. Searching in this way for the epistemic situations in which Radical Enlightenment emerged, one actually arrives at results that are characterised by precarity and fragility. One realises that it is only possible to reconstruct miniscule parts of what was once there. This does not have to entail an untenable inflation in the impact attributed to the radical fringe of the Enlightenment. But you do begin to grasp how this fringe, even if it was a fringe, possessed a philosophical importance and a historical significance of which some contemporary mainstream figures were doubtless aware—even if the voice of prudence advised them to keep schtum and avoid discussion of it.

There is a natural tendency to treat the Radical Enlightenment as some kind of historical entity that set itself apart from a moderate, mainstream form of the Enlightenment, which itself was distinct from a conservative orthodoxy. In fact, one might be inclined to speak of intellectual currents, although I wonder to what degree the notion of an intellectual current belongs to the same conceptual and metaphorical scheme as the notion of historical sources. Be that as it may, you're clearly careful about hypostasising the notion of the Radical Enlightenment; if in this differentiation between moderate and radical we pluralise the notion of Enlightenment, your writings almost seem to recommend a further pluralisation—and perhaps even fragmentation—when it comes to the Radical Enlightenment. I imagine that you are also careful about using this term to categorise and pigeon-hole historical figures, given your alertness to role-playing, intellectual experimentation, and persona-splitting. In other words, it's not as if there was some merry band of committed, self-identifying radical Enlighteners destabilising the old order from the underground. Can you say a few words about the status of the Radical Enlightenment, also as it relates to individual thinkers?

How isolated radical thinkers were around 1700, how little they were personally connected to their like-minded contemporaries and kindred spirits and how difficult it was for them to talk to others about their heterodox ideas—all of this became clear to me when chance pieces of evidence enabled me to imagine the situation in which such thinkers often found themselves; an opinion expressed too freely exposes them to a genuine risk, and although it was possible under certain conditions to obtain forbidden writings from others, these writings were anonymous or pseudonymous and withheld any direct information about the identity and location of the author. I realised that in every radical's head there was a mental map made up of the many small territories where one could expect some higher degree of toleration and where one even might be able to secretly print one's own writings—and that this map extended even further to include more distant destinations if one had to emigrate completely—as was the case with Christian Gottlieb Prieber, who ended up living among the Cherokee Indians or Johann Friedrich Bachstrom, who found refuge for some time in Istanbul. So you are right when you say that it is rather misleading

to talk about currents here. Radical Enlightenment is more fragmented than you think; almost every case has its own individual conditions of emergence.

By the way, the publisher suggested the subtitle *Zweifler und Verzweifelte um 1700* (*The Sceptical and the Desperate around 1700*) for my new book *Aufklärungs-Dinge* (*Enlightenment Things*), which I was happy to adopt. It's not always about radicals in the classic sense, but rather about those figures who were irritated by the difference between reality and appearances in this era and by all the change that this era forced upon them. Such experiences might have unfolded in the attempt to navigate the entirely new market for journals and magazines, to chart a path in court society, or to find sure ground in interpreting the Bible. Here again, I'm interested in how people reacted to the irritations, and, using frontispieces and the title pages of books and journals, I'm trying to understand how they made sense of the world and their historical situation.

Lately I've taken to referring to the small groups of those who shared an affinity for radicalism—groups that emerged in the form of student associations or circles of friends—as 'resonance relationships.' Anyone who has different, unusual opinions is looking for resonance, for a reaction to the feelings and ideas that they would otherwise always have to deny to the outside world. I also try to use this terminology to describe later social movements such as the Illuminati.

And maybe I can mention another concept that I'm currently trying to develop. One can ask how a radical idea that only found rare and isolated expression in the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century could participate in something like a 'circulation' of ideas. To do this, I use the idea of the food chain, or even better: the food web. The transmission of radical writings is not linear, running directly as a vector from free spirit to free spirit. Instead, the situation is far more complicated; for example, an orthodox collector acquires such manuscripts in order to get to know the 'enemy' better or because of an attraction to manuscripts whose value is enhanced by their extreme rarity; the collection then ends up in other hands or is visited by students who secretly copy the blasphemous texts because they fall for the allure of what is forbidden—until finally a copy falls into the hands of a kindred free spirit and spurs him or her on to develop daring new thoughts.

In considering your own network, one can add to the name of Jonathan Israel a long list of other colleagues who count as intellectual comrades—Tony Grafton, Winfried Schröder, etc. I suspect that the field of early modern history was where your paths first crossed. I'm interested in knowing more about how you arrived at this field in the first place. Who was it that stoked your interest and pushed you in this direction in the first place? And without wanting to pre-empt your answer, I'd like to hear more about a figure who has interested me and whom you've already mentioned, namely Richard Popkin. Recently I was going through the Finding Aid

for his papers, now preserved at the William Andrews Clark Memorial Library in California, when I came across your name. Can you talk more about the role he played in your intellectual journey?

Research on the early modern period, when I came across it through my interest in the Renaissance in in the years around 1990, had arrived at a particular juncture. By the late 1970s and 1980s, the previous generation represented by Klaus Garber, Wilhelm Kühlmann, Wilhelm Schmidt-Biggemann and others had laid solid foundations for German research into this period. The history of philosophy and literature in the early modern period had become a terrain that, with its baroque scholarship, its late humanistic Latinity, and its now-forgotten genres, contained a huge amount of previously unknown material whose individual items could now be more accurately and fully contextualised. I spent almost every day of the 1990s in the Bavarian State Library in Munich and immersed myself in these unknown worlds. The exchange with like-minded friends such as Helmut Zedelmaier and Ralph Häfner, with whom I had formed a discussion group, was very important back then.

At the same time, I read books, often from Anglophone countries, but also by French or Italian historians, that applied anthropological or sociological terminology to early modern sources in an exciting way. I have already mentioned Robert Darnton, who was inspired by Clifford Geertz. Peter Burke was particularly fascinating for me in this respect because he made a whole wealth of theoretical elements—also from linguistics—available for early modern historians in a manner that was both original and respectful of the source material. Such elegance was not something I derived from German authors. I modelled my own work on this scholarship by non-German historians and tried to combine their style with the sophistication of German scholarship and the rigor of Italian historiography, as evident from their elaborate footnotes. I was also helped by Anthony Grafton's books, which demonstrated this sort of graceful scholarship in a dizzyingly perfect way. It was all just a matter of not being afraid: not being afraid of the mountain of difficult-to-read Latin-language sources and not being afraid of the intimidating perfection of the models. What helped me was the fact that the German-speaking world around 1700 was so rich that I was able to try out the desired syntheses of theory and source work in my own way to my heart's content. This can perhaps be seen most clearly in my book *Die unanständige Gelehrtenrepublik* (*The Indecent Republic of Letters*).

By the way, the books of my intellectual heroes—Darnton or Burke, Grafton or Ginzburg or Chartier—were all published by the Wagenbach Verlag, mostly in the series known as the 'Small Cultural Studies Library.' In this respect, I am a child of the Wagenbach-culture—something I once told the publisher Klaus Wagenbach. I am proud that I am now publishing with the Wagenbach Verlag and, in doing so, following in the footsteps of my role models.

You mention Richard Popkin. I have already referred to his Leiden seminar, which marked a crucial moment in my intellectual development. I always viewed my essay on Peter Friedrich Arpe, an avid, early eighteenth-century collector of condemned theological works, at the time as my 'journeyman's piece.' But what I also experienced for the first time with Popkin is real scholarly generosity. This had never happened to me in my inner academic world: that someone would freely share the treasures of their own knowledge and put you in touch with a whole bunch of colleagues who could help you work on a topic. That was a formative experience. And to see how Popkin himself had the gift of rediscovering attitudes and connections that no one before him had noticed, that had been completely forgotten, was also incredibly impressive. It's easy to follow the beaten path; Popkin showed me how gratifying it could be to deviate from it.

Your research ranges across time from the Renaissance to the Late Enlightenment. Thus, you feel intellectually at home in the early modern. Are you in a position to say what qualities this period possesses that speak to you? Is it because research into this period occurs on the basis of an inheritance of materials that encourages or allows approaches that cannot be applied so easily in earlier or later periods? Every period can stake some claim to being decisive historically, but are there aspects of the early modern that, at least for you, made the historical investigation of it appear more urgent?

I think that the early modern period stands in an interesting intermediate position. It is still full of strangeness compared to our modernity—and that is what particularly appealed to me; I tend to find everything overly close and familiar to us uninteresting—but on the other hand, the early modern is close enough to modernity to still be relevant to the features and achievements of the society we inhabit. My contact with Ulrich Beck, but also with Winfried Schulze, gave me the courage to occasionally draw these connections—although still too rarely and usually very hesitantly.

I have already mentioned that my immersion in the world of books from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries took place in a manner oblivious to disciplinary boundaries. As a philosopher, you are actually trained to only take 'pure' theory seriously and to concentrate on the 'big' ideas. Everything else is ignored as irrelevant. I consciously strove to rid myself of this constraint; doing so felt like a liberation, and the reward was that I was suddenly faced with an overwhelming wealth of sources and topics. That's still how I see it today. Carlo Ginzburg once said in an interview that for him researching a completely new and unknown field was akin to skiing in fresh snow. I'm not a skier, but I can completely comprehend this feeling. That's how I feel too. In the last fifteen years, inspired by the holdings of the Gotha Library and the Gotha Archives, I have delved into the areas of oriental studies, alchemy, and numismatics. These are all specialised disciplines in which I cannot ever hope to become a real expert. But if you have acquired certain basic knowledge, if you know colleagues and friends whom you can impose upon and annoy

with questions, and if you have grasped the way in which researchers think through these fields, then you can achieve a lot—especially by importing trends and insights into these disciplines that are not known or common there. Thus, in my new book *Fremdprägung. Münzwissen in Zeiten der Globalisierung* (*Foreign Coinage. Numismatics in Times of Globalization*) I have tried to introduce the ideas of global and entangled history into numismatics—an undertaking which will hopefully generate some excitement and prompt some rethinking in this field. I really enjoy doing something like that. In the history of alchemy, I am attempting something similar.

In all of this I feel a kinship with Jan Assmann. He comes from the opposite direction, so to speak—from research on Egyptian antiquity—and has given us early moderns a whole range of new insights about 'our' specific period by going beyond the boundaries of his discipline, by tracing the lines extending from antiquity into the seventeenth or eighteenth century, and by thus properly illuminating the knowledge that we have been dealing with. His way of writing—focused and factual yet also autonomous; conscious of theory yet also jargon-free and understandable—remains an aspirational ideal for me. And without the distant perspective from antiquity, I think the understanding of modern times remains shallow.

When it comes to your upbringing and your socialisation into an academic historian, I am curious to know when it was that you first discovered your passion for history in general and for early modern intellectual history in particular? Was the Mulsow household like one of those early modern scholarly dynasties in which learning was part of the air you breathed? Or was some kind of journey necessary and perhaps even an act of defiance in which you overcame an original estrangement to 'book learning'?

The 'Mulsow household' was not one heavy with the smell of books or learning. Rather, it was the other way around: the unknown world of literature and philosophy was what brought me out of that household. Petrarch with his Greek books, which he adored but could not read, has always been emblematic for me. As already mentioned, the journey was not initially heading towards history as its destination; rather, at first it pointed in the direction of philosophy and literature. The idea of becoming a writer wasn't far from my mind either. The magic that comes from old, original books took hold of me in my sixth or seventh semester. At that time, the muse of history gave me an unexpected nudge when my eyes were suddenly opened to the greatness of highly learned works like Ernst Robert Curtius's *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*. A little later I bought my first old book, a collection of exempla by a Jesuit from 1650, in a Berlin antiquarian bookstore on Potsdamer Strasse. What fascinated me even more than the content (which was barely accessible to me at the time because it was in Latin) was the pigskin-leather binding, which was drawn over wood and which bore the traces of fire and water, of distant wars and catastrophes. Books carry their history with them.

By the time I had finished my master's thesis (on Leibniz's philosophy of language and Hegel's conceptual logic), I had reached the point where I no longer wanted to struggle with the thankless task of building a bridge between Hegel's system and analytic philosophy. (At this time, Robert Brandom was yet to develop his philosophy; perhaps if his works had then been available, I would have persisted and pursued a different kind of academic career.) As a result, I was open to history, initially in the form of the 'prehistory' of German idealism, but that soon took on a life of its own. A key moment for me was the late phase of my work on my doctorate on Telesio's natural philosophy. In Rome, I discovered the manuscripts of Telesio's student Antonio Persio—hundreds of unedited and practically unknown pages. That's when it struck me for the first time: the urge to do belated justice to something that had been overlooked, lost, and whose original ambition had never been realised. But I couldn't really appreciate what it meant to edit and annotate a huge work like Persio's *De natura ignis et caloris*. I wanted to do that at first, but then I realised that I would have completely overextended myself. Nevertheless, I suddenly understood how research could generate interesting topics for further research.

Only then did my 'Wagenbach'-education in the cultural history of the early modern period slowly begin, accompanied by my years in the senior seminar of Winfried Schulze, who taught history in Munich at the time and gathered an interesting and lively circle of young historians around him. Before that moment, I had never studied history; now I was able to throw myself with enthusiasm into this field, while catching up on everything that I had missed until then.

I wanted to touch upon the affinity you feel towards the themes and figures that feature prominently in your scholarship. Something that has always interested me is the relationship between the individual personalities of scholars and the scholarship to which they devote themselves. In some case, this relationship can be quite impersonal, as when for example the Doktorvater prescribes to the student the topic for a dissertation. In other cases, one encounters deep personal investment; the connection for the researchers is almost emotional or perhaps even grows out of his or her faith. Both scenarios entail certain risks, but clearly this second scenario characterises your own relationship to research—indeed, it is not possible to produce books that are as stimulating and engrossing as yours if your attitude is one of relative indifference towards the subject matter. Which brings me to the affinities between your own situation and many of the protagonists of your research. Thus, to cite one example, I often think there is something very eclectic about your own approach that seems to chime with the eclecticism of the early modern philosophers that interest you. Furthermore, a period of academic* Wanderschaft *was necessary because the German university scene was not immediately accommodating to a* Philosophiehistoriker*. Clearly, the excitement and passion about knowledge and learning is something you can also sympathise

with, but the precariousness of their existence was not entirely unknown to you. To finish on a personal note, I recall the conference on 'Wilde Geschichten' that you organised shortly after your arrival at Schloss Friedenstein in Gotha, where you took up the position of director of the Research Centre. Looking around the room on that occasion, I was struck by how the scholars assembled in the room resembled in some ways the protagonists of the stories they told. Can you say something more about these affinities to the figures that inspire your research and that inhabit your books?

I recently gave a lecture on exactly this topic because it interests me too. Why do you feel an affinity for certain people or topics, what makes you stick with them for a long time? I think this is also an interesting—in a sense psycho-historical—question for my protagonists three or four hundred years ago. But as far as I'm concerned, I don't want to psychologise too much. Your observations are certainly correct: there are certain affinities of mine with the eclectic (in the methodological), with the unsteadiness of constantly being on the move, with the precarious status of one's own academic existence. On the other hand, one could also say that I come from a secure middle-class background anchored in a stable political order, so it is precisely the chance offered by my historical research to step outside this zone of bourgeois comfort that has appealed to me and continues to do so. You rightly mentioned the conference at which I asked the participants to tell the wildest stories possible. Perhaps that corresponds to a methodological precept: it is precisely the extreme points, the most reviled books, the cruellest of fates, the craziest characters that reveal the most about the society. Such characters tend to expose the sensitivities, the hidden chasms, the peculiarities of the social world they inhabit (at least for as long as that social world tolerates them). And there is a not unimportant side-benefit for the historian who chooses to piece together these stories, namely that these stories engage us because of their drama and their danger.

***I mentioned in passing the years spent outside of Germany, particularly in the United States, where you held a chair at Rutgers. This experience, combined with your familiarity with scholarship from elsewhere, has undoubtedly given you a sense for the different academic cultures, each with their distinctive virtues and vices, pros and cons. Can you say anything about this and how it has enriched your own research? And to what degree does it inform your latest work* Überreichweiten: Perspektiven einer globalen Ideengeschichte?**

Yes, you are absolutely right; my experiences in America have certainly opened new perspectives. I was already familiar with the American form of humanities and always appreciated it, especially the way American scholars made their scholarship generally accessible in the form of well-written and exciting texts. But what has probably had the most lasting influence on me is the shift in perspective away from Eurocentricity. My seminars at Rutgers involved participants from different cultures and continents. I also

spent a lot of time in Princeton at the Institute for Advanced Study, where I had already spent a year in 2002/2003. There I became increasingly fascinated by research into late antiquity and Islam, and I developed such close contact with the late Patricia Crone, the Islamic scholar, that my new book *Überreichweiten. Perspektiven einer globalen Ideengeschichte* (*Overlapping Interferences* [Martin acknowledges that finding the right translation is tricky]*: Perspectives on a Global History of Ideas*) is dedicated to her memory. At that time, together with Jonathan Israel, we were concerned with the question of whether there were paths of transmission for the ideas of early Islamic materialists and free thinkers that extended into the Europe of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, in other words into the time of the Radical Enlightenment. This experience of posing questions whose scope spans millennia and many different cultures was completely new to me. Back then, I had long conversations with the Iranian and Islamic scholar Kevin van Bladel in order to become acquainted with perspectives from the other side and to lay the foundations for more precise inquiries. All of these reflections from fifteen years ago have been incorporated into my book, enriched with other detective-work within the context of the cultures of India, Indonesia, China, Africa and Latin America. I am firmly convinced that the history of ideas in the twenty-first century can no longer retain its Eurocentrism, just as I am also convinced that we must increasingly modify our view of modern Europe in the light of the climate crisis and the transformed temporalities that it imposes on us.

Analytical Concepts for Transcultural Settings

Pathways in Global Intellectual History

Ed. by Luc Wodzicki

Analytical Concepts for Transcultural Settings. Pathways in Global Intellectual History

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Introduction

While intellectual history—and its cousins, conceptual history and the history of ideas—can look back on a long pedigree, the field of global intellectual history is of comparatively recent origin. One of its main challenges consists in capturing the multifaceted and diverse character of the global past while operating within a disciplinary framework that is premised on the dominance of Anglophone scholarship and a Western worldview. This tension, between an anti-Eurocentric agenda and institutions that tend to reproduce forms of Eurocentrism, has been with this new field from its inception.

In a recent article on the state of the art of global history, Francesca Trivellato has argued that reflecting on the ways we study global history is more important than defining what it *actually* is.[1] Concepts that help mediate between historical reality and present-day interpretations play a crucial role in this process. The study of the past demands attention to the voices of historical actors and requires historians to respect, understand, and take seriously the systems of thought from which they originate. This imperative casts a spotlight on the intricate tension between analytical concepts, often rooted in Western or colonial epistemologies, and actors' concepts, whose meaning is no longer transparent to us but requires careful unpacking.[2] Historians are thus tasked with achieving a balance between specialised knowledge that is sensitive to historical contexts and accessibility to a broader academic audience, compounded by the necessity of employing English as the lingua franca of global history.

In the broader field of global history, therefore, scholars of global intellectual history often take on the role of mediator. This role is crucial in navigating the delicate interplay between global narratives and local realities. Abstracting historical realities into more generalised categories is particularly vital in global history due to the vast temporal and spatial scales involved. But since many of the concepts—such as 'empire,' 'migration,' 'religion,' or even 'enlightenment'—need to encompass diverse experiences

[1] FRANCESCA TRIVELLATO, 'The Paradoxes of Global History,' *Cromohs: Cyber Review of Modern Historiography* (2024), https://doi.org/10.36253/cromohs-15297.
[2] MARGRIT PERNAU, 'Provincializing Concepts: The Language of Transnational History,' in: *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 36, no. 3. (2016): 483–99; JAN IFVERSEN, 'Traveling Concepts. On the Road with Margrit Pernau,' *Contributions to the History of Concepts* 19, no. 1 (2024): 1–12.

Cromohs (Cyber Review of Modern Historiography), ISSN 1123-7023, 26/2023

DOI: 10.36253/cromohs-15310

and perspectives, they become so broad and general that they risk flattening historical reality in ways that make the specificity of each case invisible.

Thus, the first task of the global intellectual historian is to ensure that the voices of historical actors are heard, even when their concepts and narratives do not neatly align with the historian's own analytical frameworks. This role is pivotal in bridging the gap between the multifaceted expressions of local thought and experience and the concepts and narratives of present-day historians that are not able to capture such non-conforming realities.

From this follows an equally important second mediation role: the task of contextualising and correlating diverse local contexts without succumbing to the pitfalls of essentialisation. In this role, global intellectual historians must carefully reconstruct the interconnected but distinct nature of local realities, ensuring that each is understood and represented in its own right. This includes a deep engagement with the cultural, linguistic, and situational nuances of actors' concepts, ensuring that even notions that appear legible to us are not stripped of their local significance. These concepts are rooted in specific vernacular contexts but can also be employed in communicative situations that may diverge from their typical local meanings. Thus, the historian's task is not only to trace the threads of these local narratives as they weave into the global fabric but also to preserve their unique texture and colour, ensuring that the global historical tapestry reflects the rich and varied hues of human experience across time and space.

In their classical forms, intellectual history, history of ideas, and conceptual history may struggle to address these matters adequately. Originating primarily for the exploration of European or Anglophone contexts, these approaches traditionally extended their scope beyond these realms mainly for comparative purposes. This origin implies that adapting to new methodological and theoretical challenges requires a willingness to critically reevaluate and possibly revise their foundational principles. Since the publication of Samuel Moyn and Andrew Sartori's seminal book *Global Intellectual History* (2013),[3] and the inception of the journal with the same name (2016), the field has undergone a rapid evolution. The dialogue between Rosario López, a representative of a new generation of intellectual historians, and the late J. G. A. Pocock, is a particularly enlightening example.[4] López, reviewing Moyn and Sartori's contributions, agrees that while global intellectual history is expanding in practice, it needs more theoretical reflection within the discipline. She criticises the enduring influence of the classical Cambridge School for its text-centric approach and its focus on the political significance of texts, ideas, and thinkers, suggesting that this has led to a limited and somewhat insular view. López advocates for a reimagined, inclusive, understanding of 'context' to overcome these barriers.

[3] SAMUEL MOYN and ANDREW SARTORI, eds, *Global Intellectual History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013).

[4] ROSARIO LÓPEZ, 'The Quest for the Global: Remapping Intellectual History,' *History of European Ideas* 42, no. 1 (2016): 155–60; J. G. A. POCOCK, 'On the Unglobality of Contexts: Cambridge Methods and the History of Political Thought,' *Global Intellectual History* 4, no. 1 (2019): 1–14.

Pocock also recognises the necessity to overcome the Eurocentric biases inherent in traditional intellectual history but insists on the central role that context should continue to play in global intellectual history; meaning 'the ongoing conversation within a vocabulary and idiom formed by a society or constellation of societies for the purpose of asserting, empowering, and discussing itself.' For Pocock, context is to be seen from the perspective of political thought and theory and is strongly cultural or civilisational ('spatio-temporal contexts constructed by identifiable societies'). In his vision, global intellectual history is a narrative about how previously separate civilisations, each with their own political languages, systems, values, etc., from around 1500–1700 CE, slowly come into contact and influence each other.

This exchange expresses the two most significant differences between Pocock and López when attempting to think of intellectual history in global contexts or writing it as global intellectual history: (1) The vision that global intellectual history is a grand narrative of intellectual integration, significantly shaped by Europe, versus global intellectual history as a discipline that is paradigmatically, methodologically, and theoretically open and seeks to undermine the prior assumption. (2) The emphasis on the weighty importance of political (including intellectual) culture on one hand versus the emphasis on the innovative power of the actors on the other, that may undermine not only the political culture we place them in but, with that, also our very vision of that political culture.

Reflecting on these insights, scholars of global intellectual history are increasingly called upon to confront a difficult challenge: has global intellectual history reached a juncture where it can acknowledge the interconnectedness of ideas and people, and not force such ideas into the traditional containers of nation, culture, or civilisation? As long as it is understood as an extension of the Cambridge School, global intellectual history risks limiting itself to examining whether historical interactions are predominantly between cultures or civilisations as abstract constructs, or between individuals entrenched within these frameworks. To be sure, it is undeniable that constructs such as religion, language, nationality, and political affiliation have historically possessed substantial and tangible significance for individuals. But traditional intellectual history has been hesitant to acknowledge the degree to which actors themselves have already been able to challenge, confront, and even transcend these large and essentialising categories. Such challenges extend not only to grand categories such as culture or civilisation, but also to more concrete categories that nevertheless bear the traces of Western normativity.

What analytical language does global intellectual history require to make it possible for historical actors, as it were, to 'talk back'? How to create a vocabulary that is able to capture and make legible such alternative narratives without diluting their distinctiveness? This dual responsibility underscores the importance of the work of global intellectual historians in fostering a more inclusive, nuanced, and interconnected understanding of global history, where diverse perspectives are not just acknowledged but are integral to the construction of comprehensive global narratives.

In this thematic section of *Cromohs*, scholars who worked together in the *Graduate School Global Intellectual History* at Freie Universität Berlin contribute to this larger problematic by placing particular emphasis on two aspects: 'Analytical Concepts for Transcultural Settings.' They have chosen this title to highlight two challenges for global intellectual history today. First, how we perceive history globally is subject to constant change, requiring a degree of analytical flexibility, which should also be reflected in the way we write and work about it; and second, the established terminology of the field is not always able to capture the multiple perspectives of historical actors, and therefore, a more dynamic and inclusive approach to conceptualise this experience is needed. The authors speak of 'transcultural settings' in order to suggest that cultural and political boundaries frequently did not coincide and cannot necessarily be located on a modern map.

In this vein, the contributions in this thematic section emphasise the global intellectual historian's role in weaving the threads of transcultural settings and analytical flexibility into the fabric of global history. They approach this task by focusing on particular concepts and illuminating, questioning, or even reshaping them in light of a particular case study within the authors' field of expertise. Paulina Dominik's exploration of Seyfeddin Thadée Gasztowtt's life uses the analytical lens of *biography* to underscore the critical role of individual actors in shaping *global moments*, thereby reinforcing our understanding of the personal dimensions and of individual agency within global intellectual exchanges. Daniel Kolland's interrogation of the concept of *modernity* continues this conversation. He inquires when, how, why, and where intellectuals around the turn of the twentieth century used the concept of modernity, revealing semantic and pragmatic differences between the historical concept and our contemporary 'macro-periodisation.'

Sébastien Tremblay's contribution, drawing on the potential of *queerness* for global history, further amplifies the need for analytical concepts that transcend fixed categories and embrace the fluidity of identities and experiences. Luc Wodzicki's study of the *transculturality* of virtue in the early modern Mediterranean takes up this thread and serves as a reminder that shared intellectual cultures existed beyond the rigid boundaries often assumed by traditional historiography. Leonie Wolters' analysis of M. N. Roy's assertions of equivalence as a form of *translation* reveals a cosmopolitan practice of equating ideas across disparate contexts. Her focus underscores the importance of understanding the ways in which ideas are adapted and recontextualised in different cultural and political settings, offering valuable insights into the construction of global narratives.

Together, these reflections underscore the importance of thinking about intellectual history as series of transcultural engagements, and of the need to adapt our analytical apparatus to that. Each article, in its own way, challenges conventional perspectives, seeking to arrive at a deeper, more nuanced understanding of the interconnected world we inhabit.

Just 'a Strange Polish Muslim'? Seyfeddin Thadée Gasztowtt, the 1905 Global Moment and Biography in Global Intellectual History

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In his work[1] *La Pologne et l'Islam* ('Poland and Islam'), Seyfeddin Thadée Gasztowtt (1881–1936), the travelling activist of Polish origin, sketched an intriguing plan for the independence of the country of his ancestors:

> A free Poland, with a federation of Slavic people rallied around it, will emerge from the smouldering ruins of this empire of blood and ice. Delivered by the intimate union of the Polish and Muslim armies, it [Poland] will become the most loyal ally of Turkey. We can already see this future come to life thanks to the Polish patriots' intransigence and the Japanese army's victory![2]

The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth disappeared from the map of Europe in the last quarter of the eighteenth century following a series of partitions at the hands of the neighbouring states: the Russian and Austrian Empires and the Kingdom of Prussia.[3] For Gasztowtt and many of his compatriots, the issue of Poland's independence was central to their political activism. During his lifetime, Gasztowtt became a roving activist for this cause.

In metaphorical language, Gasztowtt puts forward a scenario in which Poland would regain sovereignty from the Russian Empire thanks to an Ottoman military intervention resulting from Polish-Muslim political cooperation. As an independent state, Poland would become the Ottoman Empire's closest ally. The timing of this statement was not coincidental. Gasztowtt points to Japan's victory in the 1904–1905 war against Russia. He also refers to the events of the 1905 Russian Revolution, which also encompassed the lands of Russian-controlled Poland and marked a watershed moment in the history of post-partition Poland-Lithuania.

[1] I am grateful to my former colleagues from the *Graduate School Global Intellectual History* of the Freie Universität Berlin and the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin: Daniel Kolland, Sébastien Tremblay, Leonie Wolters and Luc Wodzicki as well as to Alekos Lamprou, Nazan Maksudyan, Esther Möller, Deirdre Moore, Noring Neuve, Inger Marie Okkenhaug, Abel Solans, Anna Laura Turiano and Yair Wallach for their feedback on various drafts of this paper. I would also like to thank the two anonymous peer reviewers for their comments on this paper and the Max Weber Programme of the European University Institute for its institutional support.

[2] THADÉE GASZTOWTT, *La Pologne et l'Islam: notes historiques* (Paris: Société française d'imprimerie et de librairie, 1907), 211.

[3] I refer interchangeably to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth or by its shorter version Poland-Lithuania when I speak of the geographical location. When I speak of 'Poland' as a hypothetical idea, while discussing geopolitical projects, I simply use the word 'Poland.'

Cromohs (Cyber Review of Modern Historiography), ISSN 1123-7023, 26/2023

DOI: 10.36253/cromohs-14648

The research agenda of the *Graduate School Global Intellectual History* of the Freie Universität Berlin and the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin points to a simple yet crucial premise for the burgeoning field of global intellectual history: 'No ideas without people—taking this simple insight seriously means that we will have to interrogate biographies, social backgrounds and personal interests […] to gain a differentiated understanding of intellectual exchange.'[4] The authors of this research agenda emphasise the role of historical actors and their agency in better understanding transregional and cross-cultural transfers of concepts and ideas.

Taking these basic tenets as a starting point, the following pages discuss the opportunities offered by a biographical approach to global intellectual history. To illustrate my ideas, I concentrate on the case study of Seyfeddin Thadée Gasztowtt. Colonial and ministerial archives are full of accounts of roaming Muslims who circulated across the southern coasts of the Mediterranean and, at one time or another, aroused the interest of colonial authorities. The case of Gasztowtt, a third-generation Polish émigré born and raised in Paris, is nonetheless remarkable. In the light of European colonial expansion in the first two decades of the twentieth century, he tied the issue of Poland's independence to the Ottoman Empire and, more broadly, to the Muslim and non-Western world. He acted as a travelling transcultural mediator in the territories of today's Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, and Turkey.

In this paper, I first reflect on biography as an approach to global history. I then engage with the notion of a global moment. Finally, I focus on Gasztowtt's case and his activism in the former provinces of the Ottoman Empire in North Africa in the wake of Japan's victory over Russia in 1905.

My chief contention is that focusing on mobile individuals who crossed national, imperial, or regional boundaries, and operated in transcultural settings helps when examining so-called global moments. Thanks to the biographical approach, we can better grasp the key dialectic of how historical actors were shaped by such watershed events and were, at the same time, productive in them. Focusing on individual life stories can help us understand how major turning points in international history become global moments. These moments gain global significance only by virtue of activists like Gasztowtt seizing them and employing them in the service of their respective causes.

Global History and Biography

The field of global history increasingly recognises that biography can be a useful approach for interpreting border-crossing processes and examining the dynamics of the past. Over a decade ago, Tonio Andrade encouraged scholars of global history to use a biographical approach. He advocated for global history to be populated by 'real people' who 'inhabited' and 'lived through' the structures and large-scale processes that

[4] 'Research Agenda: Actors and their strategies,' *Graduate School Global Intellectual History*, accessed 10 July 2023, https://www.gih.global-history.de/research-agenda/actors/index.html.

were the main point of interest of global historians.[5] Sebastian Conrad has argued that following individual lives leads to 'fascinating insights into processes of global change and how they frame the space for individual agency. Not least, micro-perspectives are able to reveal the heterogeneity of the past and the stubbornness of historical actors.'[6] Recently, there has been an increased interest in mobile individuals, whose lives and trajectories have been alternately described as 'global ways of life' (*Globale Lebensläufe*), 'transnational lives,' or 'lives beyond borders.'[7] The recent volume *Global Biographies: Lived History as Method* engages with methodological discussions involving the ability of biographies to open up questions of time, space, and self in global history.[8] 'Lives beyond borders' is an analytical perspective that guides historical research about the global past by acknowledging that historical actors are an interface between global, national, and local frames of reference.[9] Biography offers an opportunity to illuminate, nuance, and complicate narratives that evolve on different scales of analysis. This genre also allows for the inclusion of a greater range of geographical spaces.

This paper contends that placing mobile historical actors in the foreground elucidates cross-cultural intellectual transfer and entanglement processes. Biography allows us to track historical actors' intellectual trajectories and identify the key factors responsible for major shifts in their directions. Following individual life stories gives us insight into historical actors' ideas and the strategies they used to pursue their agendas. Biographies of exiles and migrants are particularly useful in this regard. The biographical approach provides a unique perspective to explore the ongoing interplay between individual agency and the impact of the surrounding structures.

Global Moments and Mobile Biographies

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, a global consciousness emerged throughout much of the rapidly globalising imperial world. The development of information and communications technologies since the mid-nineteenth century aided

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[5] TONIO ANDRADE, 'A Chinese Farmer, Two African Boys, and a Warlord: Toward a Global Microhistory,' *Journal of World History* 21, no. 4 (2010): 573–91 (574, 591).

[6] SEBASTIAN CONRAD, *What is Global History?* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016), 131.

[7] BERND HAUSBERGER, ed., *Globale Lebensläufe: Menschen als Akteure im weltgeschichtlichen Geschehen* (Vienna: Mandelbaum Verlag, 2006); DESLEY DEACON, PENNY RUSSELL, and ANGELA WOOLLACOTT, eds, *Transnational Lives: Biographies of Global Modernity, 1700–Present* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); MADELEINE HERREN and ISABELLA LÖHR, eds, *Lives Beyond Borders: A Social History, 1880–1950*, *Comparativ* 23, no. 6 (2013). See also: ELLEN FLEISCHMANN, "'I only wish I had a home on this globe": Transnational Biography and Dr. Mary Eddy,' *Journal of Women's History* 21, no. 3 (2009): 108–30; JOHN-PAUL A. GHOBRIAL, 'The Secret Life of Elias of Babylon and the Uses of Global Microhistory,' *Past & Present* 222 (2014): 51–93. The most notable contribution to the biographies of mobile actors who operated in various trans-imperial contexts has so far come from early modern historians. See NATALIE ZEMON DAVIS, *Trickster Travel: A Sixteenth-Century Muslim Between Worlds* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2006); EMMA ROTHSCHILD, *The Inner Life of Empires: An Eighteenth-Century History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011); MILES OGBORN, *Global Lives. Britain and the World, 1550–1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

[8] LAURA ALMAGOR, HAAKON A. IKONOMOU, and GUNVOR SIMONSEN, eds, *Global Biographies: Lived history as method* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2022).

[9] ISABELLA LÖHR, 'Lives Beyond Borders, or: How to Trace Global Biographies?' in *Lives Beyond Borders*, eds HERREN and LÖHR, 6–20 (18).

the faster circulation of information and ideas through increased flows of people and new media in the form of telegraphs, newspapers, periodicals, and postal services.[10] These developments contributed to and allowed for the emergence of specific and global forms of challenge and resistance to the status quo.[11]

The period of globalisation between the 1880s and 1930s incited a reimagination of social and political structures. One of the characteristics of these changes was the rise of oppositional political movements and the establishment of networks whose goal was to undermine the imperial world order. This was a period when multiple alternative visions of the global status quo were proposed and typically discussed and negotiated between networks extending beyond the boundaries of nation-states and cultural spheres.[12]

Conrad and Sachsenmeier suggest that a better understanding of the transnational character of these debates can be achieved by examining both the temporal and spatial dimensions of this conjecture: the global moment. Global moments are 'specific events […] that had at least some degree of impact on most societies in the world and the global movements connected to them.'[13] They represent 'the major turning points in international history that altered both the power configuration and legitimacy claims of the world order.'[14] Characteristic during this phase of globalisation, they sparked international networking, and 'allowed oppositional movements to connect with forces and political actors across a variety of social and cultural settings.' As such, they represented 'focal points for a whole set of different hopes and anxieties that coalesced around the notion of an interconnected future.'[15]

One archetypical global moment is the victory of Japan over Russia in the 1904–1905 war. As scholar Rotem Kowner asserts:

> If the Russo-Japanese War carried any global significance, it lay not in its origins, in the actual warfare, in the diplomatic alliances, or in financial support obtained during the war, but in its repercussions. Although these were associated directly with the decline

[10] SEBASTIAN CONRAD and DOMINIC SACHSENMAIER, 'Introduction: Competing Visions of World Order: Global Moments and Movements, 1880s–1930s,' in *Competing Visions of World Order: Global Moments and Movements, 1880s–1930s*, eds CONRAD and SACHSENMAIER (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 1–25 (13); ILHAM KHURI-MAKDISI, *The Eastern Mediterranean and the Making of Global Radicalism, 1860–1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 16.
[11] KHURI-MAKDISI, *The Eastern Mediterranean,* 16.
[12] CONRAD and SACHSENMEIER, 'Introduction,' 9.
[13] CONRAD and SACHSENMEIER, 'Introduction,' 9.
[14] CEMIL AYDIN, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia. Visions of World Order in Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian Thought* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 6.
[15] CONRAD and SACHSENMEIER, 'Introduction,' 12–13. For examples of works which approach global history through an investigation of global moments, see CONRAD and SACHSENMAIER, eds, *Competing Visions of World Order*; AYDIN, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism*; EREZ MANELA, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

> of Russia and the rise of Japan, they had a wide-ranging effect on numerous nations, regions, and spheres.[16]

Japan's defeat of Russia in 1905 was interpreted throughout the non-Western world—from the Ottoman Empire, Egypt, and Iran to India and China—as the first victory of an Asian, 'yellow' race nation against a major 'white' and Christian European empire. In short, it symbolised a defeat of the 'West' by the 'East' and hence established a consciousness of the era as the 'awakening of the East.'[17] Following the war, non-Western commentators wrote numerous articles that either hailed Japan's victory as belying Western claims of permanent racial and cultural superiority or debated the possible lessons their societies could draw from Japan's modernising reforms.[18]

The Japanese victory marked a major turning point in the history of anti-Western critiques.[19] The outcome of the war called into question the legitimacy and sustainability of the Eurocentric imperialist world order. It gave a spur to anti-Western internationalisms like Pan-Islamism and Pan-Asianism, the notions of Muslim and Asian solidarity formulated as responses to European imperialism and Orientalist discourses on race used to justify colonial expansion. The moment of enthusiasm associated with Russia's defeat allowed Pan-Islamism and Pan-Asianism to gain geopolitical currency. It made them the focus of discussions as potential alternatives to the existing global status quo.[20]

The 1905 global moment constituted a point of departure for various anti-imperialist trajectories. Focusing on Seyfeddin Thadée Gasztowtt's case study, the following sections demonstrate how concentrating on mobile individuals who were active in transcultural settings is a productive approach to such watershed moments.

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[16] ROTEM KOWNER, 'Between a Colonial Clash and World War Zero. The Impact of the Russo-Japanese War in a Global Perspective,' in *The Impact of the Russo-Japanese War*, ed. ROTEM KOWNER (London: Routledge, 2007), 1–25 (4).

[17] AYDIN, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism,* 91–92; AYDIN, 'A Global Anti-Western Moment? The Russo-Japanese War, Decolonization, and Asian Modernity,' in *Competing Visions of World Order*, eds CONRAD and SACHSENMAIER, 213–36 (229).

[18] AYDIN, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism,* 71–92; AYDIN, 'A Global Anti-Western Moment?'. Pankaj Mishra has skilfully weaved together the reactions to the news of the Japanese victory from various figures across the non-Western world. In the following years, these individuals were to become spokesmen for national causes in their respective countries: from Chinese revolutionary Sun Yat-Sen to the Indian pacifists Mohandas Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore to the future founder of the Republic of Turkey, Mustafa Kemal. See PANKAJ MISHRA, *From the Ruins of Empire: The Intellectuals who Remade Asia* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2012), 7–9. For a general overview of the reactions to the Japanese victory from various places on the globe, see KOWNER, 'Between a Colonial Clash and World War Zero,' 15–20. For the impact of the 1905 Japanese victory in the Muslim world, see KLAUS KREISER, 'Der japanische Sieg über Russland (1905) und sein Echo unter den Muslimen,' *Die Welt des Islam* 21, no. 1–4 (1981): 209–39. For the impact of the Japanese victory in the Ottoman context, see RENÉE WORRINGER, 'Rising Sun over Bear: The Impact of the Russo-Japanese War upon the Young Turks,' in *«L'ivresse de la liberté». La révolution de 1908 dans l'Empire ottoman,* ed. FRANÇOIS GEORGEON, Collection Turcica 18 (Paris: Peeters, 2012), 455–84. For the impact of the Japanese victory on the rise of nationalism in British Egypt and India, see STEVEN G. MARKS, '"Bravo, Brave Tiger of the East!" The Russo-Japanese and the Rise of Nationalism in British Egypt and India,' in *The Russo-Japanese War in Global Perspective: World War Zero,* eds JOHN W. STEINBERG et al., vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 609–27.

[19] See Chapter 4 of AYDIN, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism,* 71–92.

[20] AYDIN, 'A Global Anti-Western Moment?', 223.

Individual stories can serve as a lens through which to study the complexity of transregional entanglements during an era of high imperialism. Accordingly, I examine the impact of the 1905 moment on Gasztowtt's physical and intellectual trajectory and I shed light on how Gasztowtt sought to influence this moment and became one of its makers.

From Paris to North Africa: Gasztowtt's 1905 Global Moment and Transcultural Entanglements in the Making

Throughout the nineteenth century, Poles staged several uprisings to regain independence. None of these movements succeeded. Born and raised in Paris, Gasztowtt was a descendant of the wave of Polish political emigration whose representatives settled in France following the failure of one such armed rebellion against the Russian Empire, the 1830–1831 November Uprising.[21] The idea of Poland's independence was kept alive within the Polish community in Paris. Members of this community regarded themselves as heirs to the nineteenth-century tradition of Polish Romantic nationalism.[22] Romantic nationalists advocated for an active fight towards the liberation of all oppressed peoples and promoted the idea of the brotherhood of all nations.[23]

This ideological background was passed on to Gasztowtt during his upbringing in the Parisian Polish community. These ideas were a key source of inspiration for his intellectual stance. However, as he laid hold of this legacy, he readjusted previous ideas to contemporary circumstances. Confronted with the realities of the colonial expansion shaping the world order at the turn of the twentieth century, Gasztowtt did not see the issue of Poland's independence as separate from the developments of the age of high imperialism. Instead, he regarded it as an integral part of a larger cause that he hailed as the struggle for 'the liberation of the oppressed nations.'[24] Gasztowtt's first political manifesto challenged the existing imperialist world order. He initially published it on the pages of his youth monthly *A l'Assaut!* ('Attack!') in 1901–1902; his text envisioned the creation of a league of oppressed nations. This was to be a political alliance of various nationalist movements around the globe, basing their cooperation on common disenfranchisement and shared aspirations for national independence.[25] With the League of Oppressed Nations, Gasztowtt sought to inspire a movement to

[21] On the nineteenth-century Polish political emigration, see SŁAWOMIR KALEMBKA, *Wielka Emigracja: Polskie Wychodźstwo Polityczne w Latach 1831–1862* (Warsaw: Wiedza Powszechna, 1971); JERZY BOREJSZA, *Emigracja Polska po Powstaniu Styczniowym* (Warsaw: Polskie Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1966).
[22] IWONA H. PUGACEWICZ, 'Budowanie identyfikacji narodowej w Szkole Polskiej w Paryżu u schyłku XIX wieku,' in *Poza paradygmaty. Pedagogika Międzykulturowa, Księga pamiątkowa dedykowana prof. T. Lewowickiemu*, eds ALINA SZCZUREK-BORUTA and EWA GRODZKA-MAZUR, 2 vols, vol. 2 (Toruń: Wyd. Adam Marszałek, 2012), 277–97 (281–83).
[23] For Polish Romantic nationalism, see ANDRZEJ WALICKI, 'The Three Traditions in Polish Patriotism and Their Contemporary Relevance,' in *Polish Paradoxes*, eds ANTONY POLONSKY and STANISŁAW GOMUŁKA (London: Routledge, 1990), 21–39; BRIAN PORTER, *When Nationalism Began to Hate: Imagining Modern Politics in Nineteenth-Century Poland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 15–37.
[24] GABRIEL DAUCHOT and THADÉE GASZTOWTT, 'Manifeste,' *A l'Assaut!* 1 (July 1901), 2.
[25] THADÉE GASZTOWTT, 'Vers l'indépendance,' *A l'Assaut!* 2 (August 1901), 17–18.

work towards undermining the imperialist global status quo and replacing it with a world of nation-states. Although Gasztowtt's league never succeeded, this project was the first expression of his opposition to the imperialist world order.

To realise his mission, Gasztowtt sought to establish relations with members of various political émigré groups present in Paris. At the turn of the twentieth century, Paris was a space where the paths of Polish and Ottoman emigrations crossed and mutual sympathies and support were openly expressed. This was not a coincidence. The Ottoman Empire was—alongside France and Britain—a chief destination for nineteenth-century Polish political émigrés. These stateless Poles fled to Istanbul, hoping to secure Ottoman support for regaining national independence. Despite the absence of a sovereign state, Polish-Ottoman relations in that period were characterised by far-reaching political cooperation; Polish and Ottoman interests converged against a common Russian danger. Istanbul became a key centre of Polish political emigration in the four decades from the early 1840s until the 1877–1878 Russo-Ottoman War because of the welcoming attitude of Ottoman statesmen.[26] Throughout that period, Polish émigrés also participated in enterprises connected to the nineteenth-century Ottoman modernising reforms of the Tanzimat Era (1839–1876).[27]

The Polish and Ottoman communities in Paris remembered this recent history of cooperation. Inspired by this, Gasztowtt developed relations with the exiled members of the Young Turk opposition against the authoritarian rule of Sultan Abdülhamid II (r. 1876–1909), most notably with the group's leader Ahmed Rıza (1858–1930).[28] These contacts, along with his discovery of the history of the Polish presence in the Ottoman Empire and the Polish-Ottoman cooperation against Russian expansionism in Eastern Europe, were crucial in the development of his activism and his intellectual stance.

While Gasztowtt took his first steps as a political activist and advocate for Poland's independence in Paris in 1901, Japan's 1905 victory over Russia and the 1905 revolution in Russian-controlled Poland represented a major turning point in his physical and intellectual trajectory. The repercussions of these events were equally important for the so-called Polish question: the issue in international politics of whether Poland should be reinstated as a state. The outbreak of the Russo-Japanese

[26] On Istanbul as a space for political activism for the nineteenth-century Polish emigration, see PAULINA DOMINIK, 'From the Polish Times of Pera: Late Ottoman Istanbul through the Lens of Polish Emigration,' in *History Takes Place: Istanbul. Dynamics of Urban Change*, eds ANNA HOFMANN and AYŞE ÖNCÜ (Berlin: Jovis, 2016), 92–103.

[27] On the activities of the Polish emigration in the nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire, see ADAM LEWAK, *Dzieje Emigracji Polskiej w Turcji 1831-1878* (Warsaw: Instytut Wschodni, 1935); KAZIMIERZ DOPIERAŁA, *Emigracja Polska w Turcji w XIX i XX wieku* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Polonia, 1988); MUSA GÜMÜŞ, *Osmanlı Modernleşmesinde Yabancılar: Leh ve Macar Mülteciler* (Istanbul: Libra, 2019).

[28] For the Young Turk movement before the 1908 revolution, see ŞÜKRÜ M. HANIOĞLU, *The Young Turks in Opposition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); HANIOĞLU, *Preparation for a Revolution: The Young Turks 1902–1908* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001). On Ahmed Rıza, see ERDAL KAYNAR, *L'héroïsme de la vie moderne: Ahmed Rıza (1858-1930) en son temps* (Leuven: Peeters, 2021).

War stirred up excitement in the lands of former Poland-Lithuania, especially in the Russian partition. Polish independence circles at home and in exile saw Japan (Russia's foe) as a potential ally for their cause; they took various initiatives in the hope of turning the conflict to the advantage of the issue of Poland's independence.[29] Japan's victory exposed Russia's military weakness, and the 1905 revolution, which broke out amid the conflict with Japan, reawakened hopes for liberation among Poles. The events of 1905 in Russian-ruled Poland were simultaneously part of the democratic revolution in the Russian Empire and driven by aspirations for national independence. Given the intensity of the socially and nationally oriented struggle, the issue of Poland's independence returned to the international arena and it became an object of interest for the European Powers and their public opinion.[30]

A constellation of global and local developments conditioned fundamental changes in Gasztowtt's discourse. These events prompted him to redefine his political agenda, which until then had been focused on the issue of Poland's independence and a broadly defined anti-imperialist cause. They inspired him to tie Poland's independence to a concrete geopolitical project. The atmosphere of enthusiasm connected to the 1905 moment, which marked the strengthening of anti-colonial movements and energised visions of an alternative world order among non-Western societies, represented a moment of opportunity that Gasztowtt seized to achieve his political goals.

During this period, Gasztowtt travelled extensively. This was the beginning of a self-imposed exile in the Muslim Mediterranean, which was to last until he died in Istanbul in 1936. His travels in North Africa included an extended stay in Tunisia in 1905–1908, several trips to Algeria in 1906 and a 1908 trip across North Africa—southwards to the Ottoman province of Tripolitania and on to Egypt—with Istanbul, the Ottoman capital, as his destination. He arrived in Istanbul on the eve of the 1908 Young Turk Revolution.

As a site of imperial rivalry among the Ottomans and the Great Powers, North Africa was an interconnected space where cross-border migrations and intellectual transfers both frustrated and assisted imperial projects while enabling the envisioning of new types of solidarities that surpassed national and imperial categorisations.[31] One of these attempted solidarities was Pan-Islamism, a vision of Muslim unity around the Ottoman sultan-caliph and an expression of the struggle against European imperialism.

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[29] EWA PAŁASZ-RUTKOWSKA, 'Polish-Japanese Co-operation during the Russo-Japanese War: The Role of Józef Pilsudski and Roman Dmowski,' *Rocznik Orientalistyczny* 52, no. 1 (1999): 5–14.

[30] On the 1905 Revolution in Russian-controlled Poland, see most notably ROBERT E. BLOBAUM, *Rewolucja: Russian Poland, 1904–1907* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995); WIKTOR MARZEC, *Rising Subjects: The 1905 Revolution and the Origins of Modern Polish Politics* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2020).

[31] For works that support this claim, see KHURI-MAKDISI, *The Eastern Mediterranean*; JULIA A. CLANCY-SMITH, *Mediterraneans: North Africa and Europe in an Age of Migration, 1800–1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011); GAVIN MURRAY-MILLER, 'Empire and Trans-Imperial Subjects in the Nineteenth Century Muslim Mediterranean,' *The Historical Journal* 63, no. 4 (2020): 958–79; MURRAY-MILLER, *Empire Unbound: France and the Muslim Mediterranean* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022).

In light of European colonial expansion in the non-Western world, Pan-Islamism grew as a movement and gained currency among Muslims both within and outside of the Ottoman Empire.[32] After the French conquest of the Maghreb (Algeria in 1830 and Tunisia in 1881) and the British invasion of Egypt in 1882, the populations of Algeria, Tunisia, Tripolitania, and Egypt reversed their earlier trend of weakening their ties to the Ottoman Empire for more autonomy. The Ottoman state began to be seen by many local observers as the only protector from European colonial expansion. Meanwhile, Sultan Abdülhamid II sought to enhance loyalty towards the Ottoman state as the centre of the Caliphate. By posing as the caliph of all Muslims, he intended to overcome his diplomatic isolation among the European Powers and curb the aggressive Western imperialism that threatened the very existence of the Ottoman state.[33] The 1905 Japanese victory gave a boost to transnational ideologies, such as Pan-Islamism.

Gasztowtt's presence in Tunisia coincided with a growing discontent among the local Muslim elites with the protectorate's practices, which legally favoured French settlers (*colons*). The five years between 1906 and 1910 saw the development of a patriotic movement in Tunisia centred around a Pan-Islamic and pro-Ottoman outlook.[34] These sentiments were on the rise among the circles attached to the Zaytuna Great Mosque—one of the first universities in the history of Islam—and among those Tunisians who received a Western-style education, who formed the Young Tunisian movement.[35]

By 1905, Tunis had become Gasztowtt's new base. Seeing representatives of the circles grouped around the Zaytuna Mosque and the Young Tunisians as fellow companions in the struggle against European imperialism, Gasztowtt developed relations with both.[36] Among them, contacts with Shaykh Ṣāliḥ al-Sharīf (al-Tūnisī, 1869–1920) had a major impact on Gasztowtt's trajectory. Descendant of an *ʿulamāʾ* (religious scholar) family from Kabylia in Algeria and Pan-Islamist, he was a professor at the Zaytuna university-mosque in Tunis when he and Gasztowtt met in September 1905.[37] Gasztowtt called him one of his 'wisest and best friends.'[38] In the fall of 1906,

[32] On Pan-Islamism, see most notably AYDIN, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism*; AYDIN, *The Idea of the Muslim World: A Global Intellectual History* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2017); NIKKI R. KEDDIE, 'Pan-Islam as Proto-Nationalism,' *The Journal of Modern History* 41, no. 1 (1969): 17–28; JACOB LANDAU, *The Politics of Pan-Islam: Ideology and Organization* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990).
[33] KEDDIE, 'Pan-Islam as Proto-Nationalism,' 19; LANDAU, *The Politics of Pan-Islam,* 36–69.
[34] MAHMOUD ABDELMOULA, *Le mouvement patriotique de libération en Tunisie et le panislamisme (1906–1920)* (Tunis: Éditions MTM, 1999), 10, 37, 77–81; TAOUFIK AYADI, *Mouvement reformiste et mouvements populaires à Tunis (1906–1912)* (Tunis: Imprimerie officielle de la République tunisienne, 1986), 37, 142.
[35] For the Young Tunisian movement, see: AYADI, *Mouvement reformiste*; NICOLA A. ZIADEH, *Origins of Nationalism in Tunisia* (Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 1969).
[36] THADÉE GASZTOWTT, 'En Pays d'Islam (Correspondance),' *Bulletin Polonais littéraire, scientifique et artistique* (*BPLSA*) 235 (15 February 1908), 48; Paris, Archives du Ministère des Affaires Étrangères [The Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of France] (AMAE) 432 Turquie – Panislamisme 1904–1911: Annex to the telegram from Tunis – No 13 – About Mr Gasztowt (Thadée Arthur) (07.04.1908).
[37] THADÉE GASZTOWTT, 'Correspondance de Tunis,' *BPLSA* 222 (15 January 1907), 12–13.
[38] GASZTOWTT, 'Correspondance de Tunis,' 12–13.

Ṣāliḥ al-Sharīf set off on self-imposed exile to the Ottoman lands as a protest against French rule in Tunisia.[39] If we are to believe Gasztowtt, Ṣāliḥ al-Sharīf was 'a friend of Poland,' who was knowledgeable of the Polish plight and informed of the Polish-Ottoman historical contacts.[40] Gasztowtt would later collaborate with Ṣāliḥ al-Sharīf and another self-exiled shaykh and former Hanafi *qāḍī* (judge) of Tunis Ismāʿīl al-Ṣafāʾiḥī (1856–1918) in Istanbul after the 1908 Young Turk Revolution.[41] During the First World War, Ṣāliḥ al-Sharīf and Ismāʿīl al-Ṣafāʾiḥī were to play a leading role in the Ottoman-German Pan-Islamic propaganda efforts and became spokesmen for Maghrebi independence.

Gasztowtt's experiences in North Africa and the connections he developed there were critical to reformulating his anti-imperialist agenda. He grasped the existing trends in the region and mobilised them to pursue his political agenda, while he searched for alternative, non-European alliances for Poland's independence. This outreach was motivated on the one hand by his growing disillusionment with Europe's inertia—especially that of France—towards Poland's independence, and on the other by his first-hand experience of the realities of French rule in Tunisia and Algeria.

During his stay in Tunisia and travelling activism across the Muslim Mediterranean, Gasztowtt acted as a spokesman for Poland's independence. He sought to establish relations with representatives of local movements opposed to European rule and Ottoman statesmen present in the region, sounding out attitudes towards the Polish question and verifying the potential for political cooperation. Gasztowtt aimed to form a transregional political entanglement between the Polish question and the Muslim world. To achieve this, he advocated a joint Polish-Muslim cause (*la cause polono-islamique*[42]) against European imperialism and acted as a Pan-Islamic agitator.

Unexpected Alliances: Muslims and Poles against European Imperialism

Gasztowtt's experiences in North Africa after the 1905 Japanese victory led him to reposition Poland geopolitically and culturally towards the Muslim world. In May 1906, he launched his flagship campaign for the common Polish-Muslim cause against West European and Russian imperialism.[43] This campaign remained central to his rhetoric throughout the following decade. While the recent history of nineteenth-century Polish-Ottoman cooperation against Russia was an essential point of reference for

[39] GASZTOWTT, 'Correspondance de Tunis,' 13–14. ABDELMOULA, *Le mouvement patriotique*, 96; ARNOLD H. GREEN, *The Tunisian Ulama 1873-1915: Social Structure and Response to Ideological Currents* (Leiden: Brill, 1978), 235; JAMES MCDOUGALL, *History and the Culture of Nationalism in Algeria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 81.

[40] GASZTOWTT, 'Correspondance de Tunis,' 13.

[41] AMAE 432 Turquie – Panislamisme 1904–1911: On Ismāʿīl al-Ṣafāʾiḥī and Ṣāliḥ al-Sharīf (22.02.1907). See also ABDELMOULA, *Le mouvement patriotique*, 90–91; GREEN, *The Tunisian ulama*, 179–80, 223, 281.

[42] GASZTOWTT, *La Pologne et l'Islam,* 139.

[43] THADÉE GASZTOWTT, 'La presse arabe et l'opinion musulmane sur la Pologne,' *BPLSA* 214 (15 May 1906), 129–33.

Gasztowtt's ideological outlook, he reworked this legacy in accordance with the geopolitical conditions of the era, the heyday of imperialism. Blurring the intellectual boundaries between Eastern Europe and the Middle East, he advocated for a joint Muslim-Slav alliance under Ottoman and Polish leadership and proposed this in his *La Pologne et l'Islam*:

> Who knows, perhaps the alliance of Turkey, the head of the Muslim world, with Poland, who is soon to become the moral leader of the Slavs, and with the Hungarians and the confederated Scandinavians, which in the past was advocated by our Polish statesmen, will soon be revived?[44]

La Pologne et l'Islam allows us to trace the geopolitical and cultural repositioning of Poland in Gasztowtt's vision of a world order. The text was published in 1907 and inspired by his stay in North Africa. It is a comprehensive work on the historical contacts from the fourteenth to the second half of the nineteenth century between Poland (the Kingdom of Poland, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and the Polish political emigration after the demise of a sovereign state) and the Muslim world, which for Gasztowtt was essentially synonymous with the Ottoman Empire. To account for Poland's long-standing ties with the Muslim world, Gasztowtt dedicated a separate chapter to the presence of the Tatar minority in the lands of former Poland-Lithuania since the fourteenth century. By examining the history of contacts, he sought to demonstrate that the Poles and the Muslims had been united for centuries by a long-standing friendship and through their shared interests.[45] *La Pologne et l'Islam* was addressed above all to a Muslim audience. Gasztowtt sought to shape an image of Poland as a country friendly to the Muslim world, promote Polish-Muslim political cooperation, and demonstrate that the Polish nation was a viable ally in the joint struggle against European imperialism. He offered copies of *La Pologne et l'Islam* to the members of the local movements opposed to European rule and to the Ottoman statesmen he met during his stay in Tunisia and his subsequent tour of North Africa.[46]

Gasztowtt's disillusionment with what he assessed as European inaction towards, or even European betrayal of, the Polish question was at the core of his advocacy of a joint Polish-Muslim cause. He expressed similar ideas in *La Pologne et l'Islam* and the Paris-based émigré monthly *Bulletin Polonais* ('The Polish Bulletin'), directed primarily at a Polish audience. He wrote about the 'hatred, treason, ingratitude and guilty indifference of the European Powers.'[47] His advocacy for political cooperation was based on his conviction that the Poles and Muslims shared common interests vis-à-vis European colonial expansion.[48] Drawing parallels between the partitions of Poland-Lithuania, on the one hand, and the 1877–1878 Russo-Ottoman war (as a result of which the Ottoman Empire lost most of its possessions in the

[44] GASZTOWTT, *La Pologne et l'Islam,* 347.
[45] GASZTOWTT, *La Pologne et l'Islam*, 7.
[46] AMAE 432 Turquie – Panislamisme 1904–1911: Report of the consul general of France in Tripoli Alric to the Minister of Foreign Affairs Pichon – About Mr Gachtoft, a Pan-Islamist (04.05.1908).
[47] THADÉE GASZTOWTT, 'Correspondance de Tunis,' *BPLSA* 232 (15 November 1907), 310.
[48] GASZTOWTT, *La Pologne et l'Islam*, 319.

Balkans), the 1881 French occupation of Tunisia, and the 1882 British invasion of Egypt on the other, Gasztowtt asserted that 'the chief European governments had always plotted against Turkey and the Muslim nations, just as they had crushed Poland or allowed for it to be crushed.'[49]

Gasztowtt's project of a Muslim-Polish, and by extension a Muslim-Slav, alliance was a protest at what he regarded as unequal treatment by the Great Powers towards Polish independence and the Ottoman Empire, which had been increasingly becoming a target of European colonial aspirations. The realisation of the alliance would both ensure a balance of powers in the region directly exposed to Russian territorial expansion and form a viable counterweight to European colonialism. Gasztowtt's stay in North Africa was fundamental in bridging the Eastern European and Muslim experiences of imperialism: the stateless Poles, the Muslims who lived under European rule, and the Ottoman state were, in his eyes, victims of the same imperialism. Thus, he called for their cooperation on both the diplomatic and military levels.[50]

Gasztowtt eagerly juxtaposed the alleged inertia of Western European statesmen and public opinion towards Poland's independence with the expressions of sympathy and solidarity he encountered first in Paris among the exiled Young Turks and subsequently during his travels in North Africa.[51] During his travels across North Africa he reported on various instances of sympathy for Poland's independence. He maintained, however, that he encountered the greatest familiarity with the Polish question among the Ottoman state dignitaries he met in Tripolitania.[52] For him, the interests of both Poland and the Ottoman Empire were interconnected thanks to the Ottoman statesmen's earlier support of Poland's independence and the sympathetic attitudes towards Poles on the part of the Young Turks in exile and other Ottoman dignitaries.

The Young Turk leader Ahmed Rıza's stance best illustrates this point. Ahmed Rıza highlighted the commonality of Polish and Ottoman political interests on the pages of his Parisian fortnightly *Mechveret. Supplément Français* ('Consultation. A Supplement in French') by describing the Poles and the Ottomans as 'two brave peoples who were warmed up by the same sacred fire and who often showed solidarity to defend the same cause of justice.'[53] Although Ahmed Rıza recognised that Poland's independence could not be achieved in the immediate future, he asserted that, as an Ottoman, he wished it not only as an act of justice but also as a development that was in the best interests of his country.[54]

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[49] GASZTOWTT, *La Pologne et l'Islam*, 341.
[50] THADÉE GASZTOWTT, 'Correspondance de Tunis,' *BPLSA* 222 (15 January 1907), 16; GASZTOWTT, *La Pologne et l'Islam,* 7.
[51] THADÉE GASZTOWTT, 'La presse arabe et l'opinion musulmane sur la Pologne,' 132.
[52] THADÉE GASZTOWTT, 'En Pays d'Islam IV (Correspondance),' *BPLSA* 238 (15 May 1908), 126. I examine the engagement of Gasztowtt's interlocutors in North Africa with the issue of Poland's independence in my monograph that is currently in preparation.
[53] A[HMED]. R[IZA]., 'Manifestation déplacée,' *Mechveret* 107 (1 December 1900), 3.
[54] A. R., 'Manifestation déplacée,' 3.

Furthermore, Ahmed Rıza regularly called for Polish-Ottoman cooperation against Russia's expansionism. In 1903, he asserted the need for a political alliance between the Ottomans, Poles, and Hungarians.[55] He reiterated this idea at the outbreak of the 1904–1905 Russo-Japanese war when he dubbed the Russian Empire the common enemy of the Ottomans, Poles, and Hungarians. He regarded their cooperation as the *sine qua non* condition for maintaining regional security, which was the critical sphere of Russia's territorial expansion in the West.[56] Ahmed Rıza's attitude was pivotal in Gasztowtt's advocacy for the aforementioned political alliance at this particular moment.[57] In turn, his activism favouring a Polish-Muslim rapprochement and his commitment to the Ottoman Empire prompted Ahmed Rıza to endorse Gasztowtt's political projects. In a 1907 article, he agreed with Gasztowtt that the Poles and the Ottomans shared interests and enemies.[58] In the same article, Ahmed Rıza called for a political union of the Ottoman Empire, 'Scandinavia, Poland, and Hungary,' and expressed his satisfaction that Gasztowtt had championed the exact same cause.[59] The Young Turk leader's stance demonstrates that Gasztowtt's ideas fell on fertile ground. Ahmed Rıza's outlook must, in turn, be read against the backdrop of the more general disillusionment of the Young Turks with the West and the Great Powers' international politics at the turn of the century.[60]

In his drive to advocate for a joint Polish-Muslim cause, Gasztowtt went as far as to reinvent the image of Poland and Poles as a country and society culturally attached to the Muslim world. In one of his correspondences, he concluded his account of a stroll through the bazaars of Tunis with a reference to Poland-Lithuania's cultural heritage, writing: 'Poland is truly a country of the Near East!'[61] His arguments ranged from the 'Ottomanisation' of the fashions worn by the Polish-Lithuanian nobility through the centuries-long presence of Tatar Muslims in the country of his ancestors to finding contemporary cultural affinities.[62]

During his travels in North Africa, Gasztowtt acted as a transcultural mediator who translated between different social, political and cultural contexts. He sought to connect the Muslims of these territories and his Polish compatriots in favour of a common struggle against the Eurocentric imperialist global status quo, which he had deemed unjust since the earliest years of his activism in Paris. Gasztowtt's writings represent examples of cross-cultural communication, in which he sought to demonstrate to his target audiences—Muslims and Poles—that both groups were culturally close, shared a common predicament, and should take joint political action.

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[55] A.R., 'Magyars et Arméniens,' *Mechveret* 136 (15 February 1903), 4.
[56] A.R., 'Légitimes souhaits,' *Mechveret* 150 (1 April 1904), 3.
[57] GASZTOWTT, 'La presse arabe et l'opinion musulmane sur la Pologne,' 133.
[58] A.R., 'Les Polonais et les Turcs,' *Mechveret* 194 (1 December 1907), 3–4.
[59] A.R., 'Les Polonais et les Turcs,' 3–4.
[60] ERDAL KAYNAR, 'Les Jeunes Turcs et l'Occident, histoire d'une déception programmée,' in *«L'ivresse de la liberté»,* ed. GEORGEON, 27–64.
[61] THADÉE GASZTOWTT, 'En Pays d'Islam II (Correspondance),' *BPLSA* 236 (15 March 1908), 72.
[62] GASZTOWTT, *La Pologne et l'Islam,* 320–28*,* 336–40.

A Pan-Islamic Agitator

Parallel to the championing of Polish-Muslim political cooperation, Gasztowtt's travels in North Africa marked the beginning of his advocacy for Pan-Islamism. His writings reported on a strong pro-Ottoman sentiment prevalent in North Africa. While in Algeria in 1906, Gasztowtt assessed the emergence of a shared Algerian identity as the chief outcome of French colonial rule. He highlighted a growing loyalty to the Ottoman sultan despite earlier animosities between Ottoman authorities and Algerians, reflected in Algerian efforts to gain more autonomy before the French occupation. Similarly, when sharing his experiences in Tunisia, Gasztowtt asserted that the 'Tunisian people placed their only hope in the Ottoman sultan and his army.'[63] His visit to Egypt in the summer of 1908 made him conclude that although the colonial system in Egypt was less oppressive, the Egyptians were 'partisans of a federation with the Ottoman Empire.'[64] Gasztowtt seized on pro-Ottoman sentiments, which expressed opposition to European rule, and a budding national movement. He sought to use these Pan-Islamic sympathies in the region to develop his political agenda.

The relations he forged with the advocates of Muslim-Ottoman solidarity in North Africa were crucial for his intellectual embrace of Pan-Islamism as an integral element of his political discourse. French colonial reports stress that during his stays in Tunisia and Algeria, Gasztowtt maintained contacts mainly with 'the local circles.'[65] A 1906 French report on foreign suspects and Pan-Islamic propaganda in Tunisia quotes Gasztowtt's name in relation to a Pan-Islamic agitator of Algerian origin, Khoualdia Salah (1880–after 1914).[66] After working for the Ministry of Colonies in Algiers (1901) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Tunis (1903), Khoualdia Salah moved between Tunis, Tripoli, Malta, Cairo, Istanbul, and the Hejaz and had been under the observation of French agents on the basis of his Pan-Islamic activism since 1904.[67] Khoualdia Salah drew closer attention from the French authorities in 1906 after he published a series of Pan-Islamic pamphlets in French and Arabic distributed across North and Sub-Saharan Africa. He signed them as 'Salah Ben Essaïd Omar el Khalidi el Hossaïni' and used the important-sounding title 'President of the Central Committee of the Islamic Union in Istanbul.' Khoualdia Salah claimed that the goal of European governments was to subjugate the Muslim peoples and to put an end to Islam by weakening believers and creating divisions among them. He urged his coreligionists to

63 Nantes, Centre des Archives Diplomatiques de Nantes [The Centre of Diplomatic Archives in Nantes] (CADN) Tunisie 1TU/1/V 989: Review of the Muslim press – Ministry of Colonies – Minister of Foreign Affairs to the Resident General of France in Tunis (01.07.1908): Algeria-Tunisia, 11–14.
64 THADÉE GASZTOWTT, 'En Égypte et chez nos amis les Turcs,' *BPLSA* 243 (15 October 1908), 275.
65 AMAE 432 Turquie – Panislamisme 1904–1911: Annex to the telegram from Tunis – No 13 – About Mr Gasztowt (Thadée Arthur) (07.04.1908).
66 AMAE 26 Tunisie – 1 X 1906 – 15 III 1907: Political Affairs: Report on the foreign suspects and Pan-Islamic propaganda in the Regency of Tunis (September 1906), 45.
67 On Khoualdia Salah see MOSTEFA HADDAD, 'Un pionnier du movement national algérien oublié: Khoualdia Salah ou la difficulté de l'intelligentsia "indigene" à s'exprimer au debut du siècle,' *Revue d'histoire maghrebine* 61–62 (1991): 67–75; ARTHUR ASSERAF, *Electric News in Colonial Algeria* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 85–88.

unite their forces around the Ottoman sultan-caliph Abdülhamid II.[68] Khoualdia Salah's brochures were printed in Paris and brought to Tunisia by Gasztowtt, he also helped with their distribution.[69] The manifesto alarmed the colonial authorities, who arrested Khoualdia Salah after catching him circulating the brochures in Tangier. He was accused of collaborating with the Ottomans against the French authorities and expelled from Algeria and Tunisia.[70]

Khoualdia Salah influenced Gasztowtt's Pan-Islamic discourse and he drew inspiration from his manifesto.[71] In the conclusion of *La Pologne et l'Islam,* Gasztowtt urged his readers, echoing the former's manifesto:

> Muslims, […] it is your turn to brace together around the Ottoman dynasty—the founder of the only great Muslim power who has victoriously resisted the attacks of your common adversaries; unite around the Sultan of Turkey, Caliph of Islam, and those of you who find yourselves under the European yoke are going to enjoy a bright future. […] Unite and do not listen to the agents of the division who are sent among you under thousands of pretexts but with a sole goal: to dominate you and crush you more easily by separating you from Turkey and the Sultan, your Caliph.[72]

Gasztowtt sought to enhance the status of the Ottoman Empire and the Ottoman sultan-caliph through his writings, just like his itinerant activism. The external threat—European colonial expansion—defined his key argument for promoting Muslim unity.[73] By embracing Pan-Islamic rhetoric, Gasztowtt sought to shape popular notions of Muslim-Ottoman solidarity as part of his commitment to the liberation of oppressed nations he had advocated since the first years of his political activism in Paris. The notion of Muslim solidarity provided him with a chance to put his anti-imperialist grievances into concrete geopolitical terms.

Gasztowtt's advocacy of Muslim unity was appealing to some of the North African Pan-Islamists. His position as a European who supported their cause added leverage to their grievances. In the spring of 1907, while in Cairo, Gasztowtt's series of articles in which he criticised the French administration in Algeria and Tunisia and called for Muslim unity were published by the leading Pan-Islamic newspaper *al-Muʿayyad* ('The Supporter'). Gasztowtt's activism in North Africa alarmed the French colonial authorities and diplomats; articles in *al-Muʿayyad* made the French *chargé d'affaires* in Egypt caution against the dangers of Europeans involving themselves in

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[68] AMAE 432 Turquie – Panislamisme 1904–1911: Subfolder Khoualdia Salah 1905–1906: Manifesto of the Central Committee of the Islamic Union (collected on the 28 February 1906); AMAE 433 Turquie – Panislamisme 1912–1918: Minister of Interior Affairs to the Minister of Foreign Affairs – No 27 – On the Central Committee of the Islamic Union (06.03.1914) – Manifesto of the Central Committee of the Islamic Union (24.09.1905).

[69] AMAE 433 Turquie – Panislamisme 1912–1918: Minister of Interior Affairs to the Minister of Foreign Affairs – No 27 – On the Central Committee of the Islamic Union (06.03.1914).

[70] AMAE 432 Turquie – Panislamisme 1904–1911: About Khoualdia Salah, a Pan-Islamist – Consul General in Cairo to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (10.06.1908).

[71] THADÉE GASZTOWTT, 'Correspondance de Tunis,' *BPLSA* 222 (15 January 1907), 15–17.

[72] GASZTOWTT, *La Pologne et l'Islam*, 344–45.

[73] GASZTOWTT, *La Pologne et l'Islam*, 344.

Pan-Islamic propaganda. European criticism of the French administration and endorsement of Ottoman hegemony over the Muslim lands in North Africa could easily be used by the Ottoman state propaganda and Muslim activists to add prestige to their cause vis-à-vis the colonial administration.[74]

Gasztowtt's advocacy of Muslim unity was a strategic political move. His embrace of Pan-Islamism demonstrates the growing appeal of the Ottoman Caliphate and the notion of Muslim solidarity as an expression of opposition to European domination in North Africa. He seized the existing trends and used them to pursue his political agenda. He promoted the notion of a united Muslim front. This, in turn, was crucial for his advocacy of a Muslim-Polish/Slav political alliance that was to bring independence to Poland and become a counterweight to European imperialism. The enthusiasm surrounding the 1905 moment in the Muslim Mediterranean had a formative influence on Gasztowtt's intellectual trajectory. It incited him to tie together the Eastern European and Muslim experiences of imperial oppression. By taking up the Pan-Islamic discourse as an expression of his anti-imperialist critique, Gasztowtt took advantage of this moment.

Throughout his activism, Gasztowtt relentlessly fashioned himself as an 'international nationalist,' advocating for a world order of nation-states. However, by embracing Pan-Islamism and championing a Muslim-Slav alliance as a response to European colonial expansion following Japan's victory over Russia, Gasztowtt tied the issue of Poland's independence to the Ottoman imperial project and practised 'an anti-imperialist imperialism'[75] of sorts. His case demonstrates the complex relationship between nationalism, anti-imperialism, and imperialism in this period.[76]

Thadée Becomes Seyfeddin

Gasztowtt's travels across post-1905 North Africa not only influenced his political agenda, they also had a lasting impact on his private trajectory. Movement across and within cultural and political systems opens spaces to reimagine the self. During his travels, Gasztowtt reinvented his persona. He converted to Islam and adopted a Muslim name: Seyfeddin, which translates as 'the sword of religion' [i.e., Islam] or 'religion's soldier.'[77] We first learn of this in an interview for the *Tanin* ('The Resonance') newspaper in the summer of 1908. Gasztowtt gave the interview a few weeks after his arrival in Istanbul. He was introduced as follows: 'The author of the book "Poland and Islam," Mr. Gaştoft, is a Pole who converted to Islam.'[78] Since this

[74] AMAE 432 Turquie – Panislamisme 1904–1911: The French chargé d'affaires in Cairo Le Vicomte Dejean to the Minister of Foreign Affairs Stephen Pichon – No 224 – About Mr Gasztowftt, a Pan-Islamic agitator (17.06.1908). I examine Gasztowtt's connections with North African advocates of Pan-Islamism extensively in my monograph that is currently in preparation.

[75] CEMIL AYDIN et al., 'Rethinking nationalism,' *The American Historical Review* 127, no. 1 (2022): 311–71 (331).

[76] For an insightful analysis of this topic, see Sebastian Conrad's contribution 'Empire and Nationalism' in AYDIN et al., 'Rethinking nationalism,' 327–32.

[77] *Redhouse Turkish/Ottoman-English Dictionary* (Istanbul: Redhouse Yayınevi, 1968), 1008.

[78] İZZET MELIH, 'Lehistan ve İslamiyet,' *Tanin* 10 (28 Temmuz 1324/10 August 1908), 4.

was one of the first pieces of information that Gasztowtt gave, we can surmise that he was eager to disclose this new element of his identity while in the Ottoman Empire. However, he was more reserved about announcing his religious conversion to his Polish compatriots. Gasztowtt never mentioned becoming Muslim in any of his writings. In addition, although he signed his articles for the Ottoman press as Seyfeddin, he would only use the initial for this name (S. Thadée) in his publications addressed to Polish audiences.

Gasztowtt's conversion to Islam was not an exceptional case. During this period, one finds other European converts who were ardent defenders of the Ottoman Empire and the Ottoman Caliphate. The Englishmen Abdullah Quilliam (1856–1932) and Marmaduke Pickthall (1875–1936) are notable examples of Turcophile converts. Quilliam was granted the title of the first Shaykh al-Islam of the British Isles by Sultan Abdülhamid II. Pickthall was, in turn, a partisan of the Young Turks and argued for Ottoman Turkish supremacy in the Muslim world.[79]

Conversion to Islam was not a new phenomenon in the Polish context either. Gasztowtt was aware of the nineteenth-century émigré converts from former Poland-Lithuania. After the failure of the 1848–1849 Hungarian Revolution, a large group of Polish and Hungarian soldiers sought refuge within the Ottoman borders. Ottoman statesmen offered the newcomers the opportunity to convert to Islam to become Ottoman subjects and avoid extradition to Russia and Austria, respectively.[80] Most Poles dismissed this idea, claiming that a change of religion was tantamount to rejecting their Polishness. The leadership of Polish emigration in Paris protested at the proposal, arguing that the issue of faith could not be treated as a bargaining card in political matters. Eventually, a group of roughly thirty Poles—mostly of higher military rank—converted to Islam in the hope that this step would allow them to continue serving the cause of Polish independence in exile.[81] Their decision was largely condemned by émigrés in France and the Ottoman Empire.[82] Gasztowtt's attitude towards their step

[79] See for instance JAMIE GILHAM, *Loyal Enemies: British Converts to Islam, 1850-1950* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); GEOFFREY NASH, 'Abdullah Quilliam, Marmaduke Pickthall and the Politics of Christendom and the Ottoman Empire,' in *Victorian Muslim. Abdullah Quilliam and Islam in the West*, eds JAMIE GILHAM and RON GEAVES (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 79–96; RON GEAVES, 'Abdullah Quilliam (Henri de Léon) and Marmaduke Pickthall: Agreements and Disagreements between Two Prominent Muslims in the London and Woking Communities,' in *Marmaduke Pickthall: Islam and the Modern World*, ed. GEOFFREY P. NASH (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 72–88.

[80] The event was a turning point for the Polish presence in the Ottoman Empire. It caused a short-term international crisis between the Ottoman Empire, Tsarist Russia, and Habsburg Austria. Russia and Austria insisted on the extradition of the Polish and Hungarian refugees, respectively, and the Sublime Porte refused to comply with this demand. Because of the Revolution's failure, nearly 900 Polish refugees settled in the Ottoman Empire. They were soldiers of all ranks and professions, who pursued careers in various fields after settling down in the Ottoman borders. See for instance BAYRAM NAZIR, *Osmanlı'ya Sığınanlar – Macar ve Polonyalı Mülteciler* (Istanbul: Yeditepe Yayınevi, 2006).

[81] SELIM DERINGIL, *Conversion and Apostasy in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 159–175; JERZY ZDANOWSKI, 'From Religious Conversion to Cultural Assimilation: Some Remarks on the Fates of Polish Immigrants in the Ottoman Empire (1831-1849),' in *Conversions islamiques: identités religieuses en Islam méditerranéen/ Islamic Conversions: Religious Identities in Mediterranean Islam*, ed. MERCEDES GARCÍA-ARENAL (Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 2001), 444–55.

[82] ZDANOWSKI, 'From Religious Conversion,' 449–50.

is revealing. In *La Pologne et l'Islam,* he praised these men's services to Poland and the Ottoman state. He referred to them as 'Muslim Poles' and argued for their sincerity in converting to Islam.[83] This former generation of Polish converts may have inspired his own choice later.

Gasztowtt's decision to convert to Islam can be read as an act of cultural transgression resulting from emigration and consequent cultural contact.[84] In his case, we can speak of a double emigration. He belonged to a third generation of Polish émigrés in France. The Polish community in Paris was an important centre of Polish culture where a specific type of émigré identity was cultivated among its members. However, Gasztowtt's travels in North Africa marked the beginning of his lifelong self-imposed exile. While his activism in the Muslim Mediterranean was primarily motivated by political reasons, his sojourn in the Maghreb and, subsequently, the Ottoman capital, can be read as an expression of his search for identity and place in a fragmented world. The Poland of Gasztowtt's ancestors cherished in his family home was no more than an idea. In this respect, his conversion can be seen as an attempt to forge a sense of belonging. In this reading, Islam was the cement for Gasztowtt's fragmented identity and an expression of his search to fill gaps in his background.

Gasztowtt's conversion to Islam can also be read as a political step. Given that the advocacy of Pan-Islamism was at the centre of his discourse, embracing Islam may have been a strategy to gain standing and credibility among the Muslims he intended to influence to realise his political agenda. As Seyfeddin Gasztowtt, he was no longer a Frenchman of Polish origin and a friend of Muslims or a Westerner who supported a Pan-Islamic cause. Instead, he became both a Pole and a Muslim, a former outsider who, by embracing Islam, was determined to become an insider. Both motivations are equally possible and by no means mutually exclusive. Gasztowtt continued to be known as Seyfeddin for the whole period that he lived in the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Turkey.

Istanbul was the last stop of Gasztowtt's travels in the Muslim Mediterranean. He arrived in the Ottoman capital shortly before the 1908 Young Turk Revolution, which overthrew Sultan Abdülhamid II's authoritarian regime and marked the reinstatement of the Ottoman constitution. Given his earlier connections to the exiled Young Turks, Gasztowtt cooperated with the new political regime and sought to become its virtual spokesman while pursuing his political objectives. Once the overarching goal of his activism was fulfilled and Poland regained independence in 1918, his contacts and knowledge of the political realities in the region proved indispensable for the

83 GASZTOWTT, *La Pologne et l'Islam,* 184–185, 196, 269–270.

84 On cultural transgression, see HOMI K. BHABHA, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 2007), 55; TADEUSZ PALECZNY, 'Transgression as a Result of Cultural Contact,' *Politeja* 44 (2016): 231–50 (232, 234–35); LAILA ABU-ER-RUB et al., 'Introduction: Engaging Transculturality,' in *Engaging Transculturality. Concepts, Key Terms, Case Studies*, eds LAILA ABU-ER-RUB et al. (Oxford: Routledge, 2019), xxiii–xliv (xxiv). On cultural transgression in the Polish context, see AGNIESZKA AYŞEN KAIM, *Ludzie dwóch kultur: Wybrane przypadki transgresji kulturowej Polaków w Imperium Osmańskim w XVII, XVIII i XIX wieku* (Warsaw: Instytut Slawistyki PAN, 2020).

diplomatic service of a newly established Polish state, and he was appointed as the First Secretary of the Polish Delegation of the Sublime Porte.[85]

Conclusion

There are as many ways to interpret a transboundary life as there are ways to live one. Just as historical actors know more about their own lives than historians ever can, historians often grasp more about the context of those lives than the actors themselves. In this paper, I share my reflections on how biography can benefit the writing of global intellectual history. This is not to say that the only or most productive way to approach global moments is through stories of individuals. Neither will all individual stories work equally well for this endeavour. However, focusing on individuals helps us better understand how global moments come into being. This approach gives us insight into how historical actors were both produced by and, at the same time, actively involved in these watershed events. Admittedly, the project of a Muslim-Slav-Hungarian-Scandinavian alliance put forward by Gasztowtt in 1906 did not materialise. However, the events surrounding the 1905 moment prompted him to imagine such a political alliance and were the driving force of his activism.

The micro-level analysis offered by biography allows for a fuller comprehension of cross-cultural connections and the transfer of concepts and ideas. More broadly, we see the role played by individuals in the process of globalisation. The biographical approach is a way to apprehend the different ways in which global change reveals itself in local contexts. It allows the complexities of individual agency and strategies employed by actors to come to light. It underscores that ideas and practices cannot be dissociated in our study of the past.

In an era politically and intellectually defined largely by the East-West dichotomy and the discourse of Eastern inferiority, Gasztowtt's advocacy of Poland as geopolitically and culturally tied to the Muslim world and the emphasis he placed on what he regarded as the shared cultural heritage of Poles and Muslims complicates our understanding of the European gaze towards the East in the period under scrutiny.

Finally, focusing on individuals shows that watershed events impacted not only the public lives of historical actors but also had the potential to influence and change their private lives. This personal aspect can only be examined through a biographical approach and should not be seen as less important. Both public and private were strongly interconnected and are equally significant for our understanding of the past.

[85] I examine these subsequent stations of Gasztowtt's life in my monograph that is currently in preparation.

Global Performances of a Belated Concept: Revisiting Modernity Through Concept History [1]

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This article traces the trajectory of French, German, English, and Ottoman-Turkish fin de siècle concepts of *modernity* to contrast them with *modernity* as a category for analysis and periodisation that many contemporary historians and social scientists use to demarcate a point in time they identify as a caesura in history. In this most conventional usage, 'modernity' began when humankind embarked on a world-historical transition to a condition that has more or less persisted until the present day; *modernity* is used to designate a historical period *and* a condition with new and unprecedented attributes.[2]

Three aspects in particular have complicated using *modernity* as an analytical concept to theorise, discuss, or even select, the historical phenomena commonly understood as representing 'modernity.' Firstly, the indeterminateness of the *modernity* word itself, which, strictly semantically speaking, means nothing but 'nowness' or 'newness.' This vagueness is further exacerbated by the sheer plethora of often mutually exclusive qualities that scholars and intellectuals have identified as characteristic of this 'nowness.'[3] Secondly, *modernity* is a highly normative and politically charged concept. Because the claim to be part of this 'world-historical transition to a new stage of history' has been at the heart of most bids for intellectual, social, and political authority and national sovereignty and legitimacy across the globe during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, *modernity* is not just descriptive, it is highly prescriptive. Marking any specific phenomenon as part of 'modernity' always is an implicit political statement with repercussions for interpretations of the present. This may, of course, be applicable to most analytical concepts—none of which are, after all, inherently objective, universal, or metahistorical research tools but historically

[1] More than the footnotes of this article may reveal, the ideas and arguments of this article have been shaped by years of discussion and constructive disagreement with Margrit Pernau. For comments and invaluable feedback on the manuscript, I am grateful to Paulina Dominik, Christin Sander, Alp Eren Topal, Luc Wodzicki, the participants of the 'South Asia and Beyond' colloquium headed by Margrit Pernau and Frederik Schröer at the Max Planck Institute for Human Development, and, of course, to the anonymous reviewers at *Cromohs*. I also owe gratitude to Alex Holmes for her attentive copy-editing.
[2] For the sake of clarity, I will graphically keep the concept (*modernity*) and the historical phenomenon that this concept is supposed to describe ('modernity') apart in this paper.
[3] Conventional benchmarks for 'modernity' are, among others: nationalism, rationalisation, industrialisation, democratisation, globalisation, social alienation, ecological catastrophes, colonialism, secularisation, individualisation, mass society, scientificisation, urbanisation, capitalism, and technologisation.

Cromohs (Cyber Review of Modern Historiography), ISSN 1123-7023, 26/2023

DOI: 10.36253/cromohs-14516

contingent and socially constructed.[4] However, the concept of *modernity* is particularly precarious because it is not only a macro-concept subsuming many other analytical concepts (civil society, industrialisation, democracy, etc.) but also, thirdly, because in many readings the universal blueprint for humankind's so-called transition to 'modernity' continues to be exclusively those myriad transformations that happened in regions around the northern Atlantic.[5] This scheme, which implies that there is one original north-Atlantic 'modernity' and many derivates thereof across the world,[6] has either prompted many 'non-Western' historians to reject the concept altogether[7] or provoked counter-definitions, such as the controversial multiple modernities programme.[8] It is on account of *modernity*'s problematic amalgam of indeterminacy, Eurocentrism, and normativity that scholars have characterised it in exasperation as a 'sphinx,'[9] a 'gesture of the powerful,'[10] an 'essentially contested concept,'[11] or even as merely 'performative.'[12]

While the following pages can in no way claim to solve this definitional quagmire, they approach it with a historical perspective by recovering *modernity* as an actor's (emic) category via global concept history: when, how, why, and where in the world did intellectuals at the turn to the twentieth century actually use the *modernity* concept.[13] This 'empiricist intervention' into 'modernity'/*modernity* scholarship unearths *modernity*'s historical meanings and performances in Western Europe and—

[4] FELIX BERENSKOETTER, 'Approaches to Concept Analysis,' *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 45, no. 2 (2017): 151–73.

[5] For more explicit reiterations of this Eurocentric narrative: JOHN JERVIS, *Exploring the Modern. Patterns of Western Culture and Civilisation* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999); PETER CONRAD, *Modern Times, Modern Places* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999); STEPHEN GAUKROGER, *Civilization and the Culture of Science*: *Science and the Shaping of Modernity, 1795–1935* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022); STEPHEN E. TOULMIN, *Cosmopolis. The Hidden Agenda of Modernity* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992); DAVID HARVEY, *Paris, Capital of Modernity* (London: Routledge, 2006).

[6] PARTHA CHATTERJEE, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World. A Derivative Discourse?* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).

[7] For example, TABISH KHAIR, 'Modernism and Modernity,' *Third Text* 55 (2001): 3–13.

[8] SHMUEL N. EISENSTADT, 'Multiple Modernities,' *Daedalus* 129, no. 1 (2000): 1–29. For criticism on this research program see FREDERICK COOPER, *Colonialism in Question. Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 114–40.

[9] ZVI B.-D. BENITE, 'Modernity. The Sphinx and the Historian,' *The American Historical Review* 116, no. 3 (2011): 638–52.

[10] DIPESH CHAKRABARTY, *Habitations of Modernity. Essays in the Wake of Subaltern Studies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 19.

[11] WOLFGANG KNÖBL, 'Beobachtungen zum Begriff der Moderne,' *Internationales Archiv für Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Literatur* 37, no. 1 (2012): 63–77 (77).

[12] DONALD L. DONHAM, 'On Being Modern,' in *Critically Modern. Alternatives, Alterities, Anthropologies*, ed. BRUCE M. KNAUFT (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 241–57 (241).

[13] For introductory texts on concept history, see: ERNST MÜLLER and FALKO SCHMIEDER, *Begriffsgeschichte Zur Einführung* (Hamburg: Junius Verlag, 2020), 30–50; BERENSKOETTER, 'Approaches'; REINHART KOSELLECK, 'Begriffsgeschichte und Sozialgeschichte,' in REINHART KOSELLECK, *Vergangene Zukunft. Zur Semantik Geschichtlicher Zeiten* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1989), 107–30. For introductions on *global* concept history, see foundational texts in *Global Conceptual History. A Reader*, eds MARGRIT PERNAU and DOMINIC SACHSENMAIER (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016).

more importantly—beyond.[14] It provides conceptual self-reflexivity and correctives to anachronistic ex-post projections by revealing semantic and pragmatic differences between the historical *modernity* concept and the 'macro-periodisation' device that is the contemporary analytical concept. Lastly, and somewhat in contradiction to the objective of finding differences, the article asks whether some of the main characteristics of the analytical concept (indeterminacy, Eurocentrism, and normativity) can also be found in the historical *modernity* concept.

This strict analytical focus on a single term does, however, present two major methodological issues. Firstly, with regard to social and political history: engaging with the socio-political lexica with which historical actors have been labelling those structural changes conventionally described by scholarship as 'modernity' is, of course, not meant as alternative to studying historical phenomena themselves. In fact, considering that conceptual history and social (extralinguistic) history are separate entities following different temporalities of change, it would be erroneous to assume that 'modernity' needed the *modernity* concept for it 'to happen.'[15] Secondly, with regard to intellectual and conceptual history: the article's (semasiological) approach, which exclusively investigates the meanings and usages of single words, departs from previous studies that approach it as a recognisable and definable phenomenon that predated and was independent of the *modernity* word.[16] Clearly, the semasiological focus on a single term potentially renders the present study analytically blind to such earlier expressions. As a matter of fact, this article will even heuristically sideline concepts from the same lemma such as *modernisation*, *modernism*, and the adjective *modern*—even if they are inextricably linked to *modernity* and have been used interchangeably by some historical actors.

All these caveats notwithstanding, this narrow semasiological approach still is particularly suited to offer new insights into the actual trajectory of the historical *modernity* concept for a number of reasons. First of all, it can be especially productive for abstract concepts, such as *modernity*, where the reconstruction of the 'thing' to which they originally referred is analytically thorny—or even risks reinscribing the very anachronistic projections and contestations that had rendered *modernity* so difficult for historians to grasp in the first place. Furthermore, as this article follows the dictum of historian of concepts Reinhart Koselleck that concepts are 'both causal factors and

[14] This 'empiricist intervention is inspired by: COOPER, *Colonialism in Question*; LYNN M. THOMAS, 'Modernity's Failings, Political Claims, and Intermediate Concepts,' *The American Historical Review* 116, no. 3 (2011): 727–40.

[15] On the modalities of conceptual change see HELGE JORDHEIM, 'Against Periodization. Koselleck's Theory of Multiple Temporalities,' *History and Theory* 51, no. 2 (2012): 151–71 (163–66).

[16] For two excellent intellectual histories of *modernity* as idea and concept regardless of the term see: CHRISTOPHE CHARLE, *Discordance des temps. Une brève histoire de la modernité* (Paris: Colin, 2011); JAVIER FERNÁNDEZ SEBASTIÁN and GONZALO CAPELLÁN DE MIGUEL, 'The Notion of Modernity in Nineteenth-Century Spain. An Example of Conceptual History,' *Contributions to the History of Concepts* 1, no. 2 (2005): 159–184. For a conceptual history of *modernity* applying an onomasiological approach see: MARGRIT PERNAU, 'Die Gefühlte Moderne. Emotionen und Begriffsgeschichte in Nordindien, 18701920,' *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 44, no. 1 (2018): 54–78.

indicators of historical change,"[17] it approaches linguistic and extralinguistic reality—while not reducible to one another—as inextricably interwoven. Put differently, even if 'modernity' did not need the historical concept to materialise, the paper still asks if, how, when, and especially where *modernity* might have actually precipitated 'modernity.' More generally, concepts may cause historical change in two ways: via reification and performance. Reification 'highlights that, by giving meaning to "things," concepts do not just make these things intelligible, they actually make things, that is, in the words of Michel Foucault they "systematically form the objects of which they speak."'[18] Just as any conceptualisation of objects constitutes a way to construct an abstracted and general theory about them—and all connected phenomena—so does the *modernity* concept constitute a historically first attempt of theorising a universal and purely temporal 'state of world-historical newness and contemporaneity.' To understand how and if these acts of theorising historical time affected society, it is pertinent to study the political performance of *modernity*, that is, how historical actors used this concept to (publicly) challenge or defend social, political, or intellectual orders. Ultimately, what drives this semasiological focus on a single concept is, in the apt words of Pablo Sánchez Léon, 'a struggle against ontology in the definition of any historical subject or historiographical object.'[19] Hence, giving centre-stage to the historical contestations, ambivalences, or even absences of the *modernity* concept not only offers a clearer picture of past paradigms and discussions, but also takes us a long way in de-essentialising *modernity* as category.[20]

To recapitulate the objectives of this article, it follows the trajectory of the historical *modernity* terms/concepts across intellectual circles in fin de siècle Paris, Berlin, New York, Istanbul, and Ankara from the 1860s until the 1920s. This article thereby neither claims to offer a new global intellectual history of ideas and theorisations of *modernity*, nor does it present a temporal-turn inspired account of a new historical consciousness, let alone a new interpretation of Ottoman-Turkish 'modernity.'[21] Its aims are much more modest and even experimental. Next to uncovering the meanings and multi-local performances of *modernity* concepts (*modernité*, *die Moderne*, *modernity, yeñilik*, and *ʿaṣrīlik*), the article examines if, and to what extent, attributes of the contemporary analytical concept, such as semantic indeterminacy, eurocentrism, and normativity were also inherent to the historical concept—and if they even might have been conducive to *modernity*'s transregional circulation and popularity.

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[17] REINHART KOSELLECK, 'Basic Concepts in History,' Eng. Transl. MICHAELA RICHTER, *Contributions to the History of Concepts* 6, no. 1 (2011): 1–37 (8).

[18] BERENSKOETTER, 'Approaches,' 168. Citation from MICHEL FOUCAULT, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1974), 49.

[19] PABLO SÁNCHEZ LEÓN, *Popular Political Participation and the Democratic Imagination in Spain*: *From Crowd to People, 1766–1868* (Cham: Springer International, 2020), 329.

[20] It also this somewhat presentist agenda that explains the exclusion of other words from the same lemma such as *modernism*, *modernisation*, or *modern*, which have either historiographically faded into the background or are, like *modern*, mere relational, temporal qualifiers for nouns.

[21] On the temporal turn see: ZOLTÁN BOLDIZSÁR SIMON and MAREK TAMM, *The Fabric of Historical Time* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023); A. R. P. FRYXELL, 'Time and the Modern. Current Trends in the History of Modern Temporalities,' *Past & Present* 243 (2019): 285–98.

Ultimately, the proliferation of *modernity* concepts in the very late Ottoman Empire, a so-called periphery of 'modernity,' may provoke alienation effects that should not only prompt historians to revisit still prevalent Eurocentric conceptions of *modernity* and 'modernity' but also problematise the relationship between historical and analytical language.

A Belated Concept: A History of *Modernity*

Any sketch of the history of the *modernity* term needs to start with its creator Charles Baudelaire (1821–1867). A full century after philosophers across Europe had begun discussing the concept of historical progress that is often described as the intellectual bedrock for 'modernity,' the art critic and poet Baudelaire invented the word *modernity* (*modernité*) arguing that 'there appears to be no better word to express the idea at issue.'[22] The issue was the relationship between the historical ('fashion') and the timeless ('poetic') in art. By underlining that art ought to consist in equal parts of '*modernity*, i.e., the transitory, fugitive, and contingent,' and of 'the eternal and immutable,'[23] Baudelaire problematised notions of artistic universality and timelessness. The purely temporally determined concept *modernity* allowed him to theorise aesthetic norms while consciously eschewing formal definitions, as well as to make a radical claim for 'nowness.' Baudelaire's concept of *modernity* was indicative of new sense of historicity, which, firstly, assumes that just as every form of art, every age was by default different from preceding and succeeding ages, and secondly, that characteristics of the present age are worthy of artistic consideration and, in fact, should be actively espoused. Contemporaneity became normative.

That indeed this '"modernity," which is visible all across Paris,' had become '*the* object' of many prominent litterateurs one generation after Baudelaire was observed by critic and writer Jules Lemaître (1853–1914).[24] Lemaître nevertheless visibly struggled to pinpoint *modernity*'s meanings:

> It is easy to grasp this neologism, but it takes an effort to determine what it represents, because the modern changes imperceptibly, and then the modern is displaced or mixed with what it is not modern or not anymore. Modernity is primarily, if you want, in the entirety and in the detail of exterior life, in the manner of painting, which is peculiar to our times.

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[22] CHARLES BAUDELAIRE, 'Le Peintre de la Vie Moderne: IV La Modernité,' *Le Figaro* 916 (26 November 1863): 4. For the concept of *progress* see: REINHART KOSELLECK, 'Fortschritt,' in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historische Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, eds OTTO BRUNNER, WERNER CONZE, and REINHART KOSELLECK, 9 vols, vol. 2 (Stuttgart: Ernst Klett, 1975), 351–423; ROBERT A. NISBET, *History of the Idea of Progress* (New Brunswick, NJ: Routledge, 1980); LUCIAN HÖLSCHER, 'Time Gardens: Historical Concepts in Modern Historiography,' *History and Theory* 53 (2014): 577–91. For the historical co-constitution of notions of *modern age/Neuzeit* see REINHART KOSELLECK, '"Neuzeit." Zur Semantik moderner Bewegungsbegriffe,' in KOSELLECK, *Vergangene Zukunft*, 300–48; FRANÇOIS HARTOG, *Regimes of Historicity. Presentism and Experiences of Time* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015).

[23] BAUDELAIRE, 'La Modernité,' 5. Italics from the original.

[24] JULES LEMAÎTRE, *Les Contemporains. Études et portraits littéraires* (Paris: H. Lècene et H. Oudin, 1887), 48. Italics are mine.

At the end of one page of often mutually exclusive qualifications, Lemaître summarised, 'Modernity, it is a thing both very vague and very simple.'[25] His vain efforts to designate *modernity* show, firstly, that semantic indeterminacy characterised the concept from its very inception and, secondly, that *modernity* had nevertheless become a valuable and appealing aesthetic concept in Parisian artistic milieus.

Across the borders in Imperial Germany, *modernity* (*Moderne*) temporarily transcended aesthetic discourse as it became a battle cry for adherents of literary naturalism. This current, which promised a 'scientific, literary, artistic, and social renovation of the world,'[26] rallied around a heroic and defiant *modernity* as allegorically female and entangled with concepts of revolution, progress, and reform.[27] In contrast to Baudelaire's *modernity*, which had highlighted—and valorised—art's invariable historicity and presentness, the naturalists stressed historical progress, anticipating notions of artistic and social avant-garde as they hailed the poet as agent of history, a 'trailblazing prophet of the future.'[28] Poetry was the arena for a 'social, national, religious-philosophical and literary struggle,' between old and new.[29]

While the German-language naturalist literary movement was already declared bankrupt by 1904, *modernity*'s associations with swift transformations continued—albeit confined again to more aestheticist registers.[30] English playwright Ashley Dukes, for example, defined the 'hallmark of modernity' as being 'in touch with, or in advance of, the thought of their own time'; the 'modern' artist 'breaks new paths, offers new forms and modes of expressions.'[31] Critics of *modernity*, on the other hand, were quick to diagnose a 'malady of modernity' i.e., of obsessively following the fashions of the time.[32] A critic in New York observed a 'slavery to the present' that made contemporary intellectuals, who 'change their ideas like neckties,' so superficial, erratic, ignorant of the past and therefore incapable of sound scholarship that 'we "moderns" are provincial, in the temporal sense.'[33] To conclude, these examples—from the 1860s to the early interwar period—suggest that while many fin de siècle writers found the *modernity* word meaningful and even normative, they themselves were aware of the fuzziness and indeterminacy of the concept. The linchpin holding these various *modernity* utterances together was that turn-of-the-century writers used it to describe—

[25] LEMAÎTRE, *Les Contemporains*, 48–49.
[26] MICHAEL G. CONRAD, *Münchener Flugschriften. Die Moderrne* (Munich: M. Poeßl, 1891), 4.
[27] EUGEN WOLFF, 'Die Moderne. Zur "Revolution" und "Reform" der Litteratur,' supplement, *Deutsche academische Zeitschrift* 3, no. 33 (26 September 1886).
[28] '"Durch!",' *Allgemeine Deutsche Universitäts-Zeitung* 1 (January 1887), 10. See also HANS-ULRICH GUMBRECHT, 'Modern, Modernität, Moderne' in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, eds BRUNNER, CONZE, and KOSELLECK, vol. 4 (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1978), 93–131 (122).
[29] '"Durch!",' 10.
[30] With the hope, however, that 'modernity might come to its senses.' See SAMUEL LUBLINSKI, *Die Bilanz der Moderne* (Berlin: Siegfried Cronbach, 1904), 5.
[31] ASHLEY DUKE, *Modern Dramatists* (London: F. Palmer, 1911), 18.
[32] RENÉ DOUMIC, 'La Manie De La Modernité,' *Revue des Deux Mondes* 148, no. 4 (1898): 925–26.
[33] '"We Moderns," A New Attempt to Define the Meaning of Modernity,' *Current Opinion* 66 (February 1919): 117–18.

at times polemically, at times approvingly—a particular mindset of living in a watershed era and, moreover, of being affirmative of change.[34]

Even though the *modernity* term clearly had entered the vocabularies of fin de siècle intellectuals in Western Europe and the United States, a closer and comparative look at the historical occurrences of the *modernity* word suggests a rather peripheral status in said vocabularies. Quantitative and qualitative comparisons of *modernity* with concepts from a very similar semantic cluster, i.e., concepts expressing historical change, newness, and transformation such as *modern civilisation*, *progress*, *revolution*, or *development* offer a clearer picture of *modernity*'s discursive marginality of which, so far, only few historians have taken note.[35]

Quantitatively, the *Google Ngram Viewer* can offer a first sense of *modernity*'s marginality until the last third of the twentieth century.[36] Allowing for a comparative view of historical occurrences, the *Ngram Viewer* confirms that, compared to concepts such as *modern civilisation*, *progress*, or *development*, the English word *modernity* was well-nigh absent in the twentieth century.[37] While *modernité* and *die Moderne* have slightly different trajectories, they echo the English word's long inconspicuousness and its abrupt surge toward the end of the second millennium.[38] It is, moreover, elucidating to contrast the trajectories of the words *modernity*, *modernism*, and *modernisation* with each other on the *Ngram Viewer*. Occurrences of *modernism*(*e*), which was mainly a technical concept in literature and Christian reformism both in English and French,[39] markedly spiked during the fin de siècle, whereas *modernization*/*modernisation* usages took off in the 1940s. References to *modernity*/*modernité*, in contrast, only surged towards the 1970s—and further rocketed in subsequent decades.[40] This sudden proliferation of

34 GUMBRECHT, 'Modern,' 121. This meaning of *modernity* was most manifest in an eponymous review article in which the author considered himself and contemporaries as uniquely poised to snatch a 'look upon the changing face of existence.' LOUIS W. MILES, 'Modernity,' *The Sewanee Review* 19, no. 4 (1911): 422–29 (422).

35 This has been noted in passing by: KNÖBL, 'Beobachtungen'; JOHN D. KELLY, 'Alternative Modernities or an Alternative to "Modernity". Getting Out of the Modernist Sublime",' in *Critically Modern*, ed. KNAUFT, 258–86; SEBASTIAN CONRAD and JÜRGEN OSTERHAMMEL, 'Introduction,' in *An Emerging Modern World: 1750–1870*, eds SEBASTIAN CONRAD and JÜRGEN OSTERHAMMEL (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018), 3–31; CHRISTOF DIPPER, 'Max Weber, Ernst Troeltsch und die "Entdeckung Der Moderne",' in *Das Jahr 1913: Aufbrüche und Krisenwahrnehmungen am Vorabend des Ersten Weltkriegs*, eds DETLEF MARES and DIETER SCHOTT (Bielefeld: transcript, 2014), 95–118.

36 While references to Google's *Ngram Viewer* in understanding the trajectory of the *modernity* word are popular in secondary literature, historians seldomly commented on how rare this concept actually was: FRIEDRICH JAEGER, WOLFGANG KNÖBL, and UTE SCHNEIDER, 'Einleitung,' in *Handbuch Moderneforschung*, eds FRIEDRICH JAEGER, WOLFGANG KNÖBL, and UTE SCHNEIDER (Stuttgart: Springer, 2015), 1–16 (1); CHARLE, *Discordance des temps*, 18.

37 GOOGLE, *Books Ngram Viewer*, 'Modernity, modern civilization, progress, development,' (American English 2019), accessed 10 February 2023; GOOGLE, *Books Ngram Viewer*, 'Modernity, modern civilisation, progress, development,' (British English 2019), accessed 10 February 2023.

38 GOOGLE, *Books Ngram Viewer*, 'Modernité, civilisation moderne, progrès, développement,' (French 2019), accessed 10 February 2023.

39 ADAM J. LOEPPERT, *Modernism and the Vatican* (London: Kessinger, 1912). For an overview of the modernism discussion in the Protestant Church, see ELDRED C. VANDERLAAN, 'Modernism and Historic Christianity,' *The Journal of Religion* 5, no. 3 (1925): 225–38; GUMBRECHT, 'Modern,' 124–25.

40 This explosion was also noted in JAEGER, KNÖBEL, and SCHNEIDER, 'Einleitung,' 1.

modernity can be explained, first, by the word's emancipation from Cold-War modernisation theory,[41] a theory in which *modernity*, together with 'tradition,' had replaced colonialism's conceptual pair 'civilisation' and 'barbarism.'[42] Second, the new omnipresence of *modernity* was the function of a new epochal consciousness. Since the 1980s, *modernity* became meaningful as analytical concept to postmodernist philosophers, sociologist, and cultural theorists who sought to make sense of an era they considered as having abruptly ended, i.e., 'modernity.' It was only this interdisciplinary scholarship that constructed 'modernity' as the story of rise and fall of a coherent historical condition, period, or project.[43] Hence, far from being a fin de siècle buzzword, the 'fetishism of modernit*ies*'[44] is a phenomenon of recent origins.

Qualitative analyses suggest in a similar vein that the *modernity* concept was absent in abstract and normative descriptions of the socio-political historical realities. *Modernity* was semantically and pragmatically too confined to literary and aestheticist discourses to become a contemporary epochal self-designation. It did not figure in the vocabularies of those nineteenth-century and fin de siècle scholars, scientists, and philosophers who, along with their interpretations of the world, were later declared paradigmatic and constitutive of the 'project of modernity,' such as Georg Wilhelm Hegel, Auguste Comte, Karl Marx, John Stuart Mill, Émile Durkheim, Herbert Spencer, or even Max Weber.[45] *Modernity* also remains absent in less classical scholarly surveys of the late nineteenth century.[46] Omnipresent in these surveys are, in contrast,

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41 GERARD DELANTY, 'Modernity,' in *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology*, ed. GEORGE RITZER (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007), 3069–71; COOPER, *Colonialism in Question*; CORNELIA KLINGER, 'Modern/Moderne/Modernismus,' in *Ästhetische Grundbegriffe: Historisches Wörterbuch*, eds KARLHEINZ BARCK et al., 7 vols, vol. 4 (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 2002), 121–67.

42 DEAN C. TIPPS, 'Modernization Theory and the Comparative Study of Societies. A Critical Perspective,' *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 15, no. 2 (1973): 199–226 (206).

43 BERNARD YACK, *The Fetishism of Modernities*: *Epochal Self-Consciousness in Contemporary Social and Political Thought* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 8; THOMAS, 'Modernity's Failings,' 730. For these contemporary engagements with modernity, see for example: JERVIS, *Exploring the Modern*; MARSHALL BERMAN, *All That is Solid Melts into Air. The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Penguin Books, 1988); PETER OSBORNE, *The Politics of Time*: *Modernity and Avant-Garde* (London: Verso, 1995); BRUNO LATOUR, *Nous n'avons jamais été modernes*: *essai d'anthropologie symétrique* (Paris: La Découverte, 1991); DAVID HARVEY, *The Condition of Postmodernity*: *An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*, repr. (1989; Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1995); ZYGMUNT BAUMANN, *Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000); KARSTEN FISCHER, ed., *Neustart des Weltlaufs? Fiktion und Faszination der Zeitwende* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1999); FREDERIC JAMESON, *A Singular Modernity*: *Essay on the Ontology of the Present* (London: Verso, 2002).

44 YACK, *The Fetishism of Modernities*, 8.

45 On the 'project of modernity' see for example JÜRGEN HABERMAS, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*: *Twelve Lectures* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990). The absence of the *modernity* concept among the classical sociologists in France, USA, UK, and Germany (with the exception of Georg Simmel but also he uses it is a purely aesthetic concept) has been noted in WOLFGANG KNÖBL, 'Soziologie,' in *Handbuch Moderneforschung*, eds JAEGER, KNÖBL, and SCHNEIDER, 261–74 (261–62). Another exception is Nietzsche who used the word *Modernität* (instead of *die Moderne*) to discuss the 'shortcomings' of his period. FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE, *Götzen-Dämmerung oder wie Man mit dem Hammer philosophirt* (Leipzig: C.G. Naumann, 1889), 89–90.

46 See the following (less known) scholarly surveys of the nineteenth century, which barely contained the *modernity* word: JAMES BOYD, *Progress of One Hundred Years and Review of the 19th Century* (Philadelphia: A. J. Holman & Co, 1901); ARTHUR GEORGE SEDGWICK, *The 19th Century*: *A Review of Progress* (London: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1901); PAUL DUPUY, *La question morale à la fin du XIXe siècle* (Paris: Schleicher Frères,

concepts such as *decadence*, *development*, *evolution*, *degeneration*, *revolution* and above all *progress* and *modern civilisation*.

Lastly, *modernity*'s confinements to aesthetic discourse also accounts for its quasi-absence in justifications of turn-of-the-century Euro-American colonialism.[47] It did not feature, for example, in Jean Mélia's heavily colonialist manifesto, which postulated the task to civilise Algeria as postwar France's new 'destiny.'[48] Similarly, *modernity* was absent in Evelyn Baring's *Modern Egypt* (1908),[49] the infamous thousand-page justification of British imperialism. These absences prove exactly wrong historiography's truism that 'empirically speaking, *modernity* has often been used as a transparent justification for the West's predatory and imperious mission civilisatrice.'[50] Rather, and strictly empirically speaking, the single most referenced concept of European colonialist discourse until well into the twentieth century was *civilisation*.[51]

To summarise, *modernity* was marginal in West-European languages at the turn of the twentieth century. Not only did the French neologism *modernité* struggle to travel beyond Paris, but once it did reach London,[52] Berlin, or New York, it often retained

1897); ÉDOUARD DRIAULT, *Les problèmes politiques et sociaux à la fin du XIXe siècle* (Paris: F. Alcan, 1900); MICHEL SALOMON, *Le spiritualisme et le progrès scientifique. Étude sur le mouvement philosophique au XIXe siècle* (Paris: B. Bloud, 1902); HIPPOLYTE FIERENS-GEVAERT, *La tristesse contemporaine. Essai sur les grands courants moraux et intellectuels du XIXe siècle* (Paris: F. Alcan 1899). One should also note the total absence of the *modernity* word in a reader of 'canonical' fin-de-siècle texts (in English translation) by Oxford University Press: ROGER LUCKHURST and SALLY LEDGER, eds, *The Fin De Siècle*: *A Reader in Cultural History, C. 1880–1900* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

47 Nevertheless, there were, of course, instances when *modernity* was seen as tantamount to European achievements. Traveling writers described, for example, 'European clothes as the hallmark of progress and modernity' in Japan (LAWRENCE J. L. DUNDAS, *A Wandering Student in the Far East* (Edinburgh: W. Blackwood, 1908), 13), or they noted, 'Alexandria has become thoroughly imbued with modernity,'[47] when they saw limousines made in France (ARCHIE BELL, *The Spell of Egypt* (London: Page Company, 1916), 60). Similarly, observers used the *modernity* concept in representations of non-European societies as mired in tradition. An example is a description of al-Azhar Madrasa in Cairo as a place where 'One feels the religious East of the 7th century; shut away from the whirlwind of modernity that rushes us along with inevitable swiftness.' CLAYTON SEDGWICK COOPER, 'A visit to the mohammedan Oxford,' *The New York Times*, 7 February 1915, 24.

48 One of the key concepts of the book is 'francisation.' JEAN MÉLIA, *La France et l'Algérie* (Paris: Plon, 1919). See also ALEXIS MARIE GOCHET, *La France coloniale illustrée*: *l'Algérie et les autres colonies françaises considerées au point de vue historique, géographique, ethnographique et commercial* (Tours: A. Mame, 1895).

49 In contrast, the word *civilisation* can be found ninety times. EVELYN BARING, LORD CROMER, *Modern Egypt* (London: Macmillan and Co, 1916). The same tendencies, an overabundance of *civilisation* references and an absence of the *modernity* word, can be found in GEORGE LLYOD, *Egypt Since Cromer* (London: Macmillan and Co, 1933).

50 RICHARD WOLIN, '"Modernity". The Peregrinations of a Contested Historiographical Concept,' *The American Historical Review* 116, no. 3 (2011): 741–51 (741).

51 BRETT BOWDEN, *The Empire of Civilization*: *The Evolution of an Imperial Idea* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009); NELE MATZ, 'Civilization and the Mandate System Under the League of Nations as Origin of Trusteeship,' in *Max Planck Yearbook of United Nations Law*, eds ARMIN VON BOGDANDY and RÜDIGER WOLFRUM (Leiden: M. Nijhoff, 2005); BRUCE MAZLISH, *Civilization and its Contents* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004).

52 When Henry James (1843–1916), for example, praised Matthew Arnold in 1884 as 'a poet of this age, of the moment in which we live, of our "modernity",' he used *modernity* in quotation marks and only by reference to a 'new school of criticism in France,' one of his readers, Anglican clergyman and writer Richard Frederick Littledale (1833–1890), was so intrigued by this neologism that he called upon the Philological Society to lexically 'fix it' through a lexicon entry. HENRY JAMES, 'Matthew Arnold,' *The*

its connection to French artistic life,[53] was met with ridicule,[54] and rarely transcended literary and aesthetic debates[55]—and even in this discourse, it remained peripheral.[56] Characterised by semantic blurriness and indeterminacy, *modernity*, with the exception of the German-language naturalist movement, at no time became a normative rallying cry for social, intellectual, or political renewal and barely figured in the numerous nineteenth-century (global) public discussions or controversies around science, society, religion, gender, or democracy. Put in a nutshell, if we follow historian of concepts Reinhart Koselleck in defining key concepts as 'indispensable to any formulation of the most urgent issues of a given time,'[57] then it was certainly no key concept in nineteenth and early twentieth-century West-European languages. It seems *modernity* was, historically speaking, hardly constitutive of 'modernity.'

Modernity in the 'Peripheries'

The fact that *modernity* was not a key concept in West-European languages at the turn of the twentieth century also fundamentally changes how historians of non-European societies can study receptions of the concept of *modernity*, as well as local conceptions thereof. To start with, it changes perspectives on a more fundamental, even political, level for Ottoman-Turkish historiography, where it has been an—albeit unwritten—assumption that there was no Turkish-language equivalent for *modernity*.[58] Against the backdrop of *modernity*'s marginality in West-European discourses, this alleged absence ceases to be a sign of Ottoman backwardness as it 'acquits' Muslim and Turkish-speaking intellectuals from either the charge of parochialism or from having consciously rejected appropriations of *modernity*. Furthermore, on a more analytical level, it allows historians of non-Western societies to move beyond highly problematic

English Illustrated Magazine 1, no. 4 (January 1884): 241–46 (244); 'Notes and News,' *The Academy* 609 (5 January 1884): 8.

53 English and German-language authors often used the French original. See for example CHARLES GRAY SHAW, *Christianity and Modern Culture*: *An Essay in Philosophy of Religion* (Cincinnati, OH: Jennings and Graham, 1906), 20.

54 See a devastating review in New York-based *The Nation* of an American-English translation of Belgian painter Alfred Stevens' collection of aphorisms, *Impressions sur la Peinture* (1886), in which the anonymous critic particularly objected to Stevens' and the American editor's omnipresent references to *modernity*: *The Nation* 1142 (19 May 1887): 433.

55 Even SAMUEL LUBLINSKI's *Bilanz der Moderne* (*Modernity's Balance Sheet*; Berlin: Siegfried Cronbach, 1904), which offered a panoramic assessment of Germany's political, social, economic, and intellectual conditions, ultimately described *modernity* (die Moderne) as a mere literary phenomenon.

56 *Modernité*, next to being left aside by heavy-weight literary critics such as Ferdinand Brunetière (1849–1906) (FERDINAND BRUNETIÈRE, *L'évolution des genres dans l'histoire de la littérature* (Paris: Hachette, 1890); FERDINAND BRUNETIÈRE, *Questions de critique* (Paris: Lévy, 1897); FERDINAND BRUNETIÈRE, *Études critiques rur l'histoire de la litterature française* (Paris: Hachette, 1907)), was mostly absent in French survey works on nineteenth-century literature (see for example: GEORGES MEUNIER, *Le bilan littéraire du XIXe siècle* (Paris: Charpentier, 1898); GEORGES PELLISSIER, *Le mouvement littéraire au XIXe siecle* (Paris: Hachette, 1900); HENRI BÉRALDI, *La reliure du XIXe siècle* (Paris: L. Conquet, 1895); EMMANUEL DES ESSARTS, *Anthologie scolaire des poètes français du XIXe siècle* (Paris: C. Delagrave, 1891); EUGÈNE GILBERT, *Le roman en France pendant le XIXe siècle* (Paris: E. Plon 1900); GEORGE ATHÉNAS and MARIUS-ARY LEBLOND, *L'idéal du XIXe siècle* (Paris: Félix, 1909).

57 KOSELLECK and RICHTER, 'Basic Concepts in History,' 3.

58 While I have nowhere seen such a total statement in Ottoman historiography, there is a notable absence of reflections about possible Ottoman translations for *modernity*.

Eurocentric juxtapositions, such as between Western societies and 'those [other] societies and cultures in which there was no terminology for modernity in the Western sense of "theories of modernisation" and/or which exist in a tension with Western modernity.'[59] Freed from the burden of explaining a lack of indigenous *modernity* concepts, it should now be a priority for area-studies historians to reconstruct the semantic fields via which non-European intellectuals discussed historical changes and the laws of history; the concepts and theories which were the bedrock for 'modernity.' Even though the last years have seen excellent new studies on this issue, much more remains to be done.[60]

Furthermore, it turns out that Turkish-speaking Ottomans were convinced they had a word for *modernity*. In 1900, one of the most accomplished late-Ottoman lexicographers used the word *yeñilik* to translate *modernité*.[61] On the one hand, *yeñilik*, which means in the most general sense 'newness,' 'novelty,' or 'innovation,' was semantically indeed a match. On the other hand, it was not an awkward neologism like *modernité* but had a much broader—and even trivial—pragmatic scope and was sometimes used in the plural (*yeñilikler*). This pairing of *yeñilik* and *modernité* is a reminder that, first, words do not actually need to be equivalent for historical actors to see and declare them as such.[62] In fact, it is often this translational entanglement on the part of historical actors (the translators) themselves that creates equivalences between words—equivalences that are, however, never total and sometimes only

[59] JAEGER, KNÖBL, and SCHNEIDER, 'Einleitung,' 4. Translation is mine.

[60] For studies on transformations of 'time regimes' in the nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire see: ALP E. TOPAL, 'Political Reforms as Religious Revival. Conceptual Foundations of Tanzimat,' *Oriente Moderno* 101, no. 2 (2021): 153–80; ÖZGÜR TÜRESAY, 'The Political Language of Takvîm-i Vekayi: The Discourse and Temporality of Ottoman 'Reform' (1831-1834),' *European Journal of Turkish Studies* 31 (2020): 1–45; AVNER WISHNITZER, *Reading Clocks, Alla Turca*: *Time and Society in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2015); ON BARAK, *On Time*: *Technology and Temporality in Modern Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013); VANESSA OGLE, *The Global Transformation of Time*: *1870–1950* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015); DANIEL KOLLAND, 'The Making and Universalization of New Time. A History of the Late Ottoman-Turkish Magazine *Servet-i Fünûn* (1891-1914)' (PhD diss., Freie Universität Berlin, 2021). For studies on other regions or even with a global scope see SEBASTIAN CONRAD, '"Nothing is the Way it Should Be". Global Transformations of the Time Regime in the Nineteenth Century,' *Modern Intellectual History* 15, no. 3 (2017): 821–48; PRATHAMA BANERJEE, *Politics of Time. 'Primitives' and History-Writing in a Colonial Society* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006); MARGRIT PERNAU, *Emotions and Modernity in Colonial India. From Balance to Fervor* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2020); STEFAN TANAKA, *New Times in Modern Japan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004); MARGRIT PERNAU et al., eds, *Civilizing Emotions*: *Concepts in Nineteenth-Century Asia and Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); MARGRIT PERNAU, 'Fluid Temporalities: Saiyid Ahmad Khan and the Concept of Modernity,' *History and Theory* 58, no. 4 (2019): 107–31.

[61] ŞEMSEDDĪN SĀMĪ, *Ḳāmūs-ı Fransevī*: *Türkçe'den Fransızca'ya Lügat Kitabı* (Istanbul: Mihrān Maṭbaʿası, 1900), 1461. Scholars of Ottoman history have barely made this connection between *yeñilik* and *modernity*. Monica Katiboğlu is the exception that proves the rule even if she does not further discuss the implications of this connection, 'Specters and Circulation of Meaning: Edebiyat-ı Cedide on Modern Literary Language,' *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 40, no. 2 (2020): 361–71 (365).

[62] MARGRIT PERNAU, 'Provincializing Concepts. The Language of Transnational History,' *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 36, no. 3 (2016): 483–99; LYDIA HE LIU, *Translingual Practice. Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity in China, 1900-1937* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995).

ephemeral. In this instant, the alignment of *yeñilik* with *modernité* seems to have been the work of Ottoman litterateurs, who were thoroughly immersed in French intellectual and artistic debates and therefore familiar with this still rather technical term. What is most striking about this translational entanglement is that *yeñilik*'s alignment with *modernité* was less on the level of semantics but of pragmatics, i.e., how and in what discursive contexts the word was used. *Yeñilik* entered aesthetic discourse being touted as new ideal signalling newness.[63] Legitimising new forms and conceptions of literature and poetry, it served an ideological purpose in the acrimonious discussions around the controversial heavily France-leaning New Literature movement (*edebīyāt-ı cedīde*; 1896–1901).[64] Furthermore, a second result of *yeñilik*'s convergence with *modernité* is that it meant more than just newness but *historical* newness. As Turkish-writing authors used *yeñilik* to make normative claims in the name of the progress of history, it became one of the numerous Ottoman-Turkish concepts of historical time that had been crystallising since the second half of the nineteenth century—most notably *teraḳḳī* (progress), *temeddün* (civilising), *medenīyet-i ḥāżıra* (modern civilisation), *tekāmül* (evolution), and *inḳılāb* (revolution).[65] Nevertheless, in stark contrast to the Ottoman concept for *progress*, which was fiercely debated as it emerged in the 1860s,[66] the *modernity* concept, on account of remaining initially confined to literary debates, hardly provoked controversy.

Even if the new presence of the *modernity* concept in late-Ottoman literary discourse was a function of the hegemony of French intellectual life, its emergence should not be analysed through historiographical lenses such as European diffusion.[67] Rather, its popularity and intelligibility reveal social and intellectual similarities between Ottoman Turkish-Muslim and West-European intellectual elites, who used *modernité/yeñilik/Moderne* to make very similar claims to historical newness.[68] The fact

[63] For example: 'The *yeñilik* in his way of expressing himself.' HAMDI BEYZADE OSMAN ADIL, 'Wanda,' *Müṭāla'a* 22 (December 1896): 2; 'In fact, it is undeniable that there is a kind of *yeñilik* to these works; every writer shows such a *yeñilik*.' MENEMENLIZĀDE MEḤMED ṬĀHIR, 'Yeñi Edebīyāt-ı Cedīde,' in *Ṣervet-i Fünūn Ceride-yi Muṣavveresiniñ Evlād-ı Şuhādā ve Maʿlūlīn-i Gazā ʿOsmānīye Menfaʿatine Maḫṣūṣ Nüsḫa-yı Mümtāżesi*, ed. AḤMED İḤSĀN (Istanbul: ʿĀlem Maṭbaʿası, 1313 [1897]), 57; 'They cannot deny that these works were a change, a *yeñilik* in our literature.' AḤMED ŞUʿAYB, 'Muṣāḥabe-yi Edebīye 61: Ṣoñ Yazılar,' *Ṣervet-i Fünūn* 482 (June 1900): 214; 'There awoke a progressive idea called *yeñilik*.' AḤMED RĀSIM, 'Sāde Yazalım,' *Mecmūʿa-yı Ebużżiyā* 82 (March 1899): 1698; 'I have found everything, modern life, *yeñilik*, it's all in my hand, I describe it.' AḤMED RĀSIM /JEAN RICHEPIN, *Uhlan Ḳārısı (Mam'selle Napoléon)* (Istanbul: A. Asaduryan Şirket-i Mürettibiye, 1318 [1900]), 55; '*Yeñilik* fashion.' AḤMED RĀSIM, 'Teraḳḳī ve Tekāmül,' *Maʿlūmāt* 354 (May 1898): 2.

[64] For more on these discussions, FAZIL GÖKÇEK, *Bir Tartışmanın Hikâyesi. Dekadanlar* (Istanbul: Dergâh, 2007); KOLLAND, 'The Making and Universalization of New Time,' ZEYNEP SEVINER, 'Thinking in French, Writing in Persian: Aesthetics, Intelligibility and the Literary Turkish of the 1890s,' in *Ottoman Culture and the Project of Modernity: Reform and Translation in the Tanzimat Novel*, eds MONICA M. RINGER and ETIENNE CHARRIÈRE (London: I.B. Tauris, 2020), 19–36.

[65] On these concepts see KOLLAND, 'The Making and Universalization of New Time.'

[66] AḤMED MIDḤAT, *Teraḳḳī* (Istanbul: Ḳırk Anbār: Istanbul, 1306 [1888/9]), 2–4.

[67] For critique of this paradigm see SEBASTIAN CONRAD, 'Enlightenment in Global History. A Historiographical Critique,' *The American Historical Review* 117, no. 4 (2012): 99–127.

[68] On this new elite in Istanbul see ZEYNEP UYSAL, *Metruk Ev. Halit Ziya romanında modern Osmanlı bireyi* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2014), and AVNER WISHNITZER, 'Beneath the Mustache. A Well-Trimmed History

that *yeñilik* quickly transcended aestheticism ultimately dispels notions of imitation. Beyond being used to both describe a sense of breathless and frantic transformations and affirmation of change,[69] *yeñilik* gained new socio-political stakes once young officers dismantled the autocratic regime of Abdülhamid II (1876–1908/9) in 1908, along with its censors. *Yeñilik* became, along with *teraḳḳī* (progress) and *medenīyet-i ḥāżıra* (modern civilisation), part of the vocabulary of political actors who sought to save the empire by mobilising the public for an empire-saving 'revolution' (*inḳılāb*).

Yeñilik's semantic indeterminacy allowed it to become a normative claim-making device for different ideological movements and to become ideologised. Just as, for example, Hüseyin Cahid (Yalçın; 1875–1957), the editor of the new ruling party's mouthpiece, promised that his party would finally end a century-long dialectic 'confrontation between *yeñilik* and oldness [*eskilik*],'[70] so did the early nationalist Turkist Modern Life movement (*yeñi ḥayāt*) promise 'to cut down in wrath the old values in this time of renewal,'[71] and 'to sweep away all kind of prevalent oldness and to bring *yeñilik* in its stead.'[72] Although Turkists praised *yeñilik* as 'expression and cause of the new scientific, artistic and philosophical ideals that have invaded the minds,'[73] and thereby a Europe-inspired 'state of nowness,' they followed a decidedly anti-Westernist agenda aiming for nationalist renewal. Hailing themselves as 'the champions [*mücāhid*] of *yeñilik* who bestow upon our [Turkish] pure soul a force that allows it to bravely persist in the darkness of present and future,'[74] Turkists aimed at dislodging earlier generations of Ottoman intellectuals, such as Hüseyin Cahid. They denounced them as 'cosmopolitan' (*ḳozmopolit*) and 'imitators of the West' (*garb muḳallidleri*). All this suggests that *yeñilik* became embedded in the Ottoman political sphere—and thereby ideologised—to an extent that the French turn-of-the-century *modernité* concept had not.

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of Facial Hair in the Late Ottoman Era,' *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 61, no. 3 (2018): 289–326. For more specialised studies on this social formation, albeit in the Arabic-speaking Eastern Mediterranean, see KEITH WATENPAUGH, *Being Modern in the Middle East. Revolution, Nationalism, Colonialism, and the Arab Middle Class* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); LUCIE RYZOVA, *The Age of Efendiyya. Passages to Modernity in National-Colonial Egypt* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2014). For a more theoretically informed discussion on the effects of global capitalism on the well-nigh contemporaneous emergence of similar subjectivities across the globe in the nineteenth century see ANDREW SARTORI, *Bengal in Global Concept History. Culturalism in the Age of Capital* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008).

[69] See especially 'Yeñi bir Moda Tecrübesi,' *Servet-i Fünūn* 1032 (March 1911): 434; YAʿḲŪB ḲADRĪ, 'Netāyic,' *Rübāb* 14 (May 1912): 143–45.

[70] ḤÜSEYIN CĀHID, 'Oñ Beş Günde,' *Ṭanīn* 253 (16 May 1909): 1.

[71] ALI CANIB and MEHMED Z. GÖKALP, 'Yeni Lisan (No. 2),' in *Genç Kalemler Dergisi*, ed. ÇETIN PARLATIR (Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi Basımevi, 1999), 105–109 (109).

[72] İsmāʿīl Mestān, 'Genç Türklük Emeli Yaşayabilecek mi?,' *Ḥaḳīḳat* 73 (June 1911): 1. For *yeñilik*, see above all the journal *Yeñi Felsefe Mecmuʿası* (New Philosophical Review; 1911–1913).

[73] ALI CANIB, 'Gençlik Kavgası: "Milli" daha doğrusu "Kavmi" Edebiyat ne Demekdir? (13 Mayıs 1327),' in *Genç Kalemler Dergisi*, ed. PARLATIR, 166.

[74] KĀẒIM NĀMĪ, 'Yeñi Aḫlāḳ,' *Yeñi Felsefe Mecmuʿası* 2 (August 1911): 18.

While such statements need to be taken with a grain of salt and ultimately remain preliminary and conjectural,[75] it is heuristically rewarding to continue this thought experiment by looking at a later Turkish translation for *modernité*: *ʿaṣrīlik*. The word was part of a whole cluster of new concepts based on the lemma *ʿaṣır* (age, epoch) that sociologist and Turkism's chief ideologue Ziya Gökalp (1876–1924) coined between the years 1911 and 1916. These neologisms were *ʿaṣrī* (*modern,* 'according to the age'),[76] *ʿaṣrīyet* (*modernism*, '"according to the age"-ness'), and *muʿāṣırlaşmaḳ* (*modernisation*, 'to become contemporary').[77] These neologisms allowed the anti-imperialist Turkist Gökalp to promote social and economic transformations in line with—and for the time being, perceived as—superior Western models while shunning concepts of change such as 'Europeanisation' (*Avrupalılaşmaḳ*) or 'Westernisation' (*garblılaşmaḳ*), which had become omnipresent after the horrendous defeat in the First Balkan War (1912–1913). In other words, Gökalp used these neologisms to decolonise developmental visions in Ottoman society by abstracting social, intellectual, and economic conditions from Western Europe, i.e., the societies that were perceived as representative of the progress of their 'age,' and to translate these specific conditions through temporalisation into a desired and potentially universal 'state of historical nowness' that every society across the globe could reach. Hence, Gökalp did not coin a neologism to translate *modernity* in order to embrace Eurocentrism, but to dispel it.[78]

It is a reminder of the inseparable, yet complicated, relationship between social and conceptual history that the artificial neologism *ʿaṣrīlik*, the new translation for *modernity*, did not catch on right away. It proliferated only against the backdrop of the 'cataclysmal events'[79] during and after the First World War that led to the end of the Ottoman Empire and the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923.[80] *ʿAṣrīlik* became a battle cry—and truly Koselleckian key concept—for a war-weary but thoroughly radicalised (Ottoman) Turkish-Muslim urban elite, which aimed for an

[75] Especially since these statements are especially based on word searches in Google Books, JSTOR, and Archive.org.

[76] There are in fact a few scattered earlier occurences of the adjective *ʿaṣrī* in Ottoman-Turkish. It was also popular in contemporary Arabic writings such as in the Cairo-based periodical *al-Manār*, however. See for example: FLORIAN ZEMMIN, *Modernity in Islamic Tradition. The Concept of 'Society' in the Journal al-Manar (Cairo, 1898–1940)* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018), 204.

[77] Gökalp introduced these neologisms with the French original in parenthesis in MEHMED Z. GÖKALP, 'Yeni Hayat ve Yeni Kiymetler: (26 Temmuz 1327),' in *Genç Kalemler Dergisi*, ed. PARLATIR, 236–39; GÖKALP, 'Türkleşmek, İslāmlaşmaḳ, Muʿāṣırlaşmaḳ,' 5 *Türk Yurdu* 46 (August 1913): 401–404. Eventually, *muʿāṣırlaşmaḳ* was complemented by *ʿaṣrīleşmek* as translation for *modernisation*, whereas *ʿaṣrīyet* was more or less replaced by *ʿaṣrīlik*, as (uncommented) conceptual translation for *modernity*. The first usage seems to be: ẒIYĀ GÖKALP, 'Millī Terbīye: 4,' *Muʿallim* 4 (October 1916): 101.

[78] For an example of such a usage, see MEḤMED ŞEMSEDDĪN, *Māżīden Atīye* (Istanbul: s.n., 1919), 282–83.

[79] HANS-LUKAS KIESER, KEREM ÖKTEM, and MAURUS REINKOWSKI, eds, *World War I and the End of the Ottomans*: *From the Balkan Wars to the Armenian Genocide* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2015).

[80] More generally, on the 'language engineering' of late Ottoman intellectuals and especially the Turkish Republic, see GEOFFREY L. LEWIS, *The Turkish Language Reform*: *A Catastrophic Success* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

unconditional, top-down 'revolution' (*inḳılāb*) of a 'people' (*ḫalḳ*) they deemed stuck in the 'Middle Ages' (*ḳurūn-ı vusṭa*).[81] To reformers, *ʿaṣrīlik* was socio-politically and ideologically more useful than the *yeñilik* concept, which evoked one-dimensional heroic imaginations of historical newness, because it was more prone to theorisation.[82] *ʿAṣrīlik* allowed them to more accurately conceptualise and diagnose the perceived asynchronicities between 'chronological' and 'historical' time in Turkish society. Turkish intellectuals argued that 'in order to be considered modern [*ʿaṣrī*], it is not just enough to be living in the twentieth century,'[83] and warned that Turkish society was only part of the 'contemporary age' (*ḫāl-i ḥāżır*) in the sense of empty, abstract time of chronology. *ʿAṣrīlik*, in the sense of 'the aspirational and evolutionary vision' to be part of global progress time was totally absent, however.[84] Against the backdrop of the famous slogan 'to reach beyond the level of modern civilisation' (*muʿāṣır medenīyet sevīyesinin üstüne çıḳmaḳ*), *ʿaṣrīlik* was not only an ideal but an imperative for the newly founded Turkish Republic.

Nevertheless, *ʿaṣrīlik*'s vague definition of 'following the universal progresses of humanity to create forms of government, society, and labour that confirm to the needs of time,'[85] left room for a host of—at times mutually exclusive—interpretations of the concrete meanings of this key concept. As state power was monopolised in the hands of Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk; d. 1938), it was the intellectual circles closest to him that acquired the prerogative of interpreting the concrete meaning of this '"according-to-the-age"-ism.' Their often sociologically grounded interpretations paved the way for the abolishment of the caliphate, the promotion of state feminism, laicism, the introduction of the Latin alphabet, Bauhaus-like architecture, and a new civil code.[86] That these visions of *ʿaṣrīlik* were often inspired by Western models was not lost on most public intellectuals. Veteran journalist Ahmed Rasim (1864–1932), for example, derided '*ʿaṣrīlik*, that is *modernité* [sic],' as just the most recent label for a pro-Western attitude that previous generations of critics had denounced as 'foppish *yeñilik* and Frankish imitationism,' teasingly adding, 'this word "modern" is on everyone's lips.'[87]

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[81] For social and political histories of this 'revolution' see: RYAN GINGERAS, *Eternal Dawn*: *Turkey in the Age of Atatürk* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019); SEVGI ADAK, *Anti-Veiling Campaigns in Turkey*: *State, Society and Gender in the Early Republic* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2022); SIBEL BOZDAĞAN, *Modernism and Nation-Building*: *Turkish Architectural Culture in the Early Republic* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001); HALE YILMAZ, *Becoming Turkish*: *Nationalist Reforms and Cultural Negotiations in Early Republican Turkey, 1923–1945* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2013).

[82] At least until the 1920s, however, *yeñilik* remained the most popular translation for *modernité*/*modernity*. *İngilizce-Türkçe Lügat* (Istanbul: Fratelli Ḫā'im, 1924), 344; *Fransızca'dan Türkçe*: *Küçük Ḳāmūs-ı Fransavī* (Istanbul: Maʿārif Maṭbaʿası, 1928), 900.

[83] ʿALĪ CĀNIB, 'Edebiyātta ʿaṣrīlik,' *Nedīm* 8 (March 1919): 103.

[84] ḪASAN ḪIKMET, '*ʿAṣrīlik vs. Ḫāl-i Ḫāżır,' *Sebīlü r-Reşād* 581 (January 1924): 131.

[85] ḪASAN ḪIKMET, '*ʿAṣrīliğiñ Maʿanası,' *Sebīlü r-Reşād* 559–60 (September 1913): 130.

[86] For a sociologically grounded debate on society in accordance with 'modernity' see: MEḤMED ZEKERĪYA, 'İctimāʿī Mesʾeleler: ʿAṣrī Milletler Hangileridir?,' *Büyük Mecmūʿa* 1 (March 1919): 2–3.

[87] AḤMED RĀSIM, 'Cumhūrīyet'iñ ilk (birinci) Bahārı,' *Akşām* 1961 (March 1924): 2.

Similarly, oppositional groups contested the Kemalist regime's 'abuse' (*sūʾ-i istiʿmāl*) of the *modernity* concept.[88] Writers of the Islamist weekly *Sebīlü r-Reşād* (Straight Path; 1908–1925) tried to undo the regime's co-optation of the concept and to save it by arguing 'true modernity' (*ḥaḳīḳī ʿaṣrīlik*) was only feasible with and through Islam.[89] In the increasingly autocratic atmosphere of the Turkish Republic, the struggle over the meaning of *ʿaṣrīlik* was an uphill battle for Islamic modernists, however. Because they could not prevent its growing association with 'secularism' (*laʾiḳlik*) in jurisprudence and education[90] and with what they perceived as female 'immorality,'[91] they eventually denounced "'*ʿAṣrīlik*" [which] has become synonymous with catastrophe, degeneration, and downfall."[92] Hence, while *Sebīlü r-Reşād* began treating *ʿaṣrīlik* as an enemy concept until censorship closed down the journal in 1925, a radicalised and paternalistic elite around Mustafa Kemal's Republican People's Party formulated with *ʿaṣrīlik* its own *mission civilisatrice*: the transformation of Turkish-Muslim society according to Western models. Finally, this Turkish example shows, firstly, how malleable the *modernity* concept was content-wise and that, consequently, it could have theoretically also served proponents of political Islam as rallying cry. Secondly, the example illustrates the primacy of political power in such semantic struggles. Thirdly, when intellectuals in the early Turkish Republic discussed the social and political structures and attributes of 'modernity,' they actually did so with the *modernity* concept.

Conclusion: Towards A Global History of the *Modernity* Concept

While the article has shown that the *modernity* term appealed to fin de siècle intellectuals around the world, it juxtaposed the limitedness of West-European *modernity* words to aestheticist contexts in opposition with Turkish translations of *modernity*, which became widely used socio-political concepts. While the translational association with *modernité* certainly played a part in intellectually invalidating *yeñilik*, this first Turkish translation for *modernity* quickly gained a life of its own and became a battle cry for historical newness and 'revolution.' *Yeñilik*'s new prominence was owed to the swift galvanisation of the Ottoman public sphere, as intellectuals tried to react to the catastrophes that shook the Ottoman Empire after 1908. The politicisation and ideologisation of the Ottoman-Turkish *modernity* concept further increased as a new translational equivalent was coined: *ʿaṣrīlik*. While *yeñilik* was used by intellectuals as a

[88] For the use of 'abuse' see: ḤIKMET, '*ʿAṣrīliğiñ Maʿanası,' 131.

[89] For one of the most comprehensive arguments for this unity of Islam and modernity see YAHYA ʿAFĪF, 'İslāmīyet ve Aṣrīlik,' *Sebīlü r-Reşād* 618 (September 1924): 305–308.

[90] MEḤMED EMĪN, 'Aḫlāḳ Telaḳḳīsinde ʿAṣrīlik,' *Büyük Mecmūʿa* 2 (March 1919): 19; 'Türkler ʿAṣrī bir Millet Midir?,' *Zamān* 261 (December 1918): 2; AḤMED NAʿĪM, 'Bizde Dīn ve Devlet,' *İslām* 11 (November 1918): 1; ḤASAN ḤIKMET, 'Laʾiḳlik–ʿAṣrīlik,' *Sebīlü r-Reşād* 555–56 (August 1923): 91–93; MEḤMED ʿAḲĪF, 'Ḥasbiḥāl,' *Sebīlü r-Reşād* 612 (August 1924): 209.

[91] For example, 'Dāru l-Fünūn'lu Ḫanımlarla Beyleriñ Dans Ḥādiseleri,' *Sebīlü r-Reşād* 636 (January 1925): 187–190.

[92] ḤIKMET, '*ʿAṣrīliğiñ Maʿanası,' 131.

claim to historical newness, *ʿaṣrīlik* allowed them to absolutise historical time; the concept was supposed to offer a purely temporal theorising space for socio-political visions beyond Western models. Because *ʿaṣrīlik* was originally coined to replace concepts such as 'Westernisation' (*garblılaşmaḳ*), it was very popular among anti-imperialist Turkist and Islamist intellectuals in the early Republic. That *ʿaṣrīlik* nonetheless became—at least implicitly—synonymous with conditions in Western Europe was therefore no foregone conclusion but the function of political power, i.e., of the authoritarian single-party era (1923–1945). Kemalist intellectuals forged the *modernity* concept into a weapon for the conceptual arsenal of the 'Turkish revolution,' whose radicalness would serve as both example and deterrent to other colonial and post-colonial, non-Western societies.[93]

In a more general sense, what do these mostly semantic and conceptual engagements with *modernity* as concept reveal about 'modernity' as a historical phenomenon and/or period? The answer cannot be straightforward and will vary for Europeanists and area studies scholars. As the paper revealed that the *modernity* word/concept was quasi-absent in intellectual, social, cultural, or political negotiations in Western Europe long after its coinage in 1863, the answer for Europeanists would be that 'modernity' transpired without the historical *modernity* concept. Instead, when nineteenth and early twentieth-century political and intellectuals leaders theorised, discussed, and sought to change the conditions of their age, they did this via a host of other concepts such as *modern world*, *age of progress*, *modern times*, *decadence*, or (*modern*) *civilisation*.[94] It was these concepts that were, to put it again in the words of Reinhart Koselleck, the 'indicators and factors of change.'

While these findings with regard to the historical concept in no way need to disqualify *modernity* as analytical concept, let alone nullify narrations and analyses of events, processes, or upheavals that scholars theorised through the *modernity* concept, they still should give historians pause. Above all, these insights should sharpen the awareness of historians to the striking differences between *modernity* as historical concept and the analytical concept that describes and thereby reifies 'modernity' as historical period and 'world-historical transition.' Being reminded that the analytical concept only recently became popular and is underpinned by concerns of the late twentieth century helps to de-ontologise and de-naturalise them. Furthermore, as the West-European and especially the Ottoman-Turkish examples have shown, *modernity* was at no point in its history a semantically tangible concept free from power relations, let alone a universal or objective one. In fact, the moment *modernity* transcended aestheticist discourse, this semantically indeterminate concept became a discursive and

[93] For Republican Turkey as model to other regimes in the wider region see AMIT BEIN, *Kemalist Turkey and the Middle East: International Relations in the Inter-War Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); ADEEB KHALID, 'Backwardness and the Quest for Civilization: Early Soviet Central Asia in Comparative Perspective,' *Slavic Review* 65, no. 2 (2006): 231–51; NATHALIE CLAYER, FABIO GIORNI, and EMMANUEL SZUREK, eds, *Kemalism: Transnational Politics in the Post-Ottoman World* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2018).

[94] For more on this, see KOSELLECK, '"Neuzeit".'

more often than not Eurocentric weapon appropriated and used to exclude others by the most powerful actors (social class, state, or internationally, those nations/empires self-identifying as the 'civilised world'). In a similar vein, also as a historiographical category *modernity* either continues to be implicated in Eurocentric interpretations of history, which take West-European experiences as a blueprint. Alternatively, it falls victim to arbitrariness—well-nigh anything could be declared conducive of 'modernity'—and 'buzzwordification.' This trend has culminated in monographs which have promised to shed light on haunting,[95] paper,[96] plebeian,[97] provincial,[98] protestant,[99] perverse,[100] or hygienic[101] modernities. Having said this, a proper discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of *modernity* as analytical concept lies beyond the scope of this paper. Furthermore, lest we forget, discussions on semantics ultimately risk remaining nominal unless they inspire new vistas of the past.

Setting reflections on the analytical concept aside, the example of the very late Ottoman Empire has shown that historians with global or area studies perspectives, in contrast to Europeanists, might not be able to ignore the *historical modernity* concept if they are interested in the actual concepts that propelled social and political change—because in Istanbul and Ankara, 'modernity' did happen with the *modernity* concept. This finding, in turn, allows for two conclusions: firstly, it corroborates temporal-turn scholarship that argues for the global spread of new and globalised ways of interpreting time and history towards the turn of the twentieth century.[102] *Modernity*, easily compatible with and building on preexisting concepts of historical time such as civilisation, evolution, revolution, or progress not only allowed Turkish-writing intellectuals to theorise 'states of historical nowness' but also to make normative claims with it. Moreover, the fact that they used *ʿaṣrīlik* to describe and invalidate secular *and* (modernist) Islamic orders suggests that *modernity*'s semantic indeterminacy and contestability were no obstacles to its global circulations. Instead, they arguably propelled it rendering *modernity* politically more adaptable and useful. Similarly, Ottoman-Turkish translations for *modernity* should be less characterised as transmissions of meaning but rather as transfers of temporal claims, chiffres, or even shibboleths. The article's second conclusion, or rather hypothesis, is that it was no semantic coincidence that the *modernity* concept first gained such a socio-political

95 MICHAEL D. FOSTER, 'Haunting Modernity. Tanuki, Trains, and Transformation in Japan,' *Asian Ethnology* 71, no. 1 (2012): 3–29.
96 NILE GREEN, 'Paper Modernity? Notes on an Iranian Industrial Tour, 1818,' *Iran* 46 (2008): 277–84.
97 IL'JA GERASIMOV, *Plebeian Modernity*: *Social Practices, Illegality, and the Urban Poor in Russia, 1905-1917* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2018).
98 JENNIFER JENKINS, *Provincial Modernity*: *Local Culture and Liberal Politics in Fin-De-Siècle Hamburg* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003).
99 HARALD FISCHER-TINÉ, STEFAN HUEBNER, and IAN TYRRELL, eds, *Spreading Protestant Modernity*: *Global Perspectives on the Social Work of the YMCA and YWCA, 1889–1970* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2021).
100 See the eponymous book series published by Duke University Press.
101 RUTH ROGASKI, *Hygienic Modernity*: *Meanings of Health and Disease in Treaty-Port China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014).
102 See note 60 above.

significance on the so-called peripheries of 'modernity.' The concept allowed Turkish intellectuals a way to conceptualise (and consequently address) their own perceived temporal 'otherness,' i.e., 'backwardness' (*geri kalmışlık*). The *'aṣrīlik* concept shows how historical newness was grasped, theorised, claimed, and translated into action across an early-twentieth-century world under conditions of West-European hegemony—albeit irrespective and in spite of 'the West.' While much more comparative research is needed, this article has shown that any history of the performances of the *modernity* concept needs to write it as a global story.

Queerness—What Would the Queers Do? Analytical Concepts, Fluidity, and the Potential of Queer Semantic Fields for Global History

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In 2017, queer activists in Russia began to alert the international community about new forms of concentration camps in the North Caucasus, releasing information on the incarceration and torture of queer individuals following top-down queerphobic policies by the authoritarian regime of Ramzan Kadyrov.[1] As the issue attracted international attention, journalists started questioning the Chechen leader. Kadyrov denied reports of human rights violations, retorting that such abuse could not take place in the south Russian republic because: 'we don't have those kinds of people here. We don't have any gays. If there are any, take them to Canada.'[2] For Kadyrov, the use of 'gays' seems to be synonymous with all other forms of non-heteronormative desires and sexualities. This type of discourse is obviously not unique to the Russian Federation but historians specialised in Russian history have highlighted how queer politics has become an important tenet of culture wars beyond the Euro-American world, where populist or authoritarian leaders, such as Vladimir Putin, contrast a fundamentalist Christian vision of the world with a so-called 'decadent western civilisation.'[3] Dan Healey examines how so-called 'anti-propaganda laws' that muzzle queer activists in Russia are parts of an anti-Western and would-be anti-imperialist rhetoric, a counter-model to homonationalist discourses in the Global North.[4] Leaving aside the bad faith arguments of populist leaders, what does that mean for historians writing a global history of queerness? Is queer history an imperialist project? Is using concepts such as gay and lesbian to describe experiences in the Global South a new form of cultural universalism? How can we write the story of gay Chechen men if they do not necessarily define themselves as gay?

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[1] DAVID FRANCE, *Welcome to Chechnya* (USA: HBO Films, 2020); JOSHUA YAFFA, 'Chapter 2: Beware of Dragons,' in JOSHUA YAFFA, *Between Two Fires. Truth, Ambition, and Compromise in Putin's Russia* (New York: Tim Duggan Books, 2020): 77–121.

[2] ADAM TAYLOR, 'Ramzan Kadyrov says there are no gay men in Chechnya — and if there are any, they should move to Canada,' *The Washington Post,* 15 July 2017.

[3] DAN HEALEY, *Russian Homophobia from Stalin to Sochi* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017). This is not only the case in the Russian Federation. For similar discourses in North America see ANNIKA BROCKSCHMIDT, *Amerikas Gotteskrieger: Wie die religöse Rechte die Demokratie gefährdet* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 2022).

[4] DAN HEALEY, 'Introduction: 2013 – Russia's Year of Political Homophobia,' in HEALEY, *Russian Homophobia*, 1–24.

Cromohs (Cyber Review of Modern Historiography), ISSN 1123-7023, 26/2023

DOI: 10.36253/cromohs-14502

Global historians are wary of the universalisation of concepts.[5] Mapping dis/entanglements and dis/connections, they try to break free of diffusionist and colonial framings where ideas are born at the centre and circulated to the peripheries.[6] One example of a diffusionist model of history would be David Armitage's research on the USA Declaration of Independence and its influence on political revolutions around the globe.[7] This hazard is at the core of the tension between world history and global history. Scholars interested in writing the latter are no strangers to postcolonial critiques of their project.[8] In short, writing a global history of ideas or a global conceptual history needs to consider the dangers of universalism, otherwise a global history of ideas becomes nothing more than an empty neocolonial vessel reproduced in scholarly disguise.[9]

Echoing these critiques of global history, queer history is not necessarily an all-encompassing project linking all queer experiences across the world. Evolving out of gay and lesbian history, queer history investigates sexualities at the margin, while also highlighting how deviances from the norm can also be found at the centre of dominant parts of society, and thereby questioning the idea of norms themselves.[10] Like global history, queer history is a story of in-between, circulation, and entanglements. Unsurprisingly, the implications share the dangers of the global history project. In other words, how can we assess semantic fields linking different examples of queerness together across language, time, and space and how can we discuss queerness without falling prey to diffusionist tropes? Furthermore, by discussing queerness as a form and as a methodology, queer historians also need to provincialise Euro-American queerness. This means assessing power structures behind both the preponderance of Euro-American concepts and categories—for example gay, lesbian or trans—and readings of the queer past anchored in a Euro-American genealogy of queerness i.e., a narrative of queer supposedly started in Europe and being tied to European older

[5] CHRISTOPHER L. HILL, 'Conceptual Universalization in the Transnational Nineteenth Century,' in *Global Intellectual History*, eds ANDREW SARTORI and SAMUEL MOYN (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013): 134–58.

[6] SEBASTIAN CONRAD, *What is Global History?* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016).

[7] DAVID ARMITAGE, *Declaration of Independence: A Global History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008).

[8] KATJA NAUMANN, 'Long-Term and Decentred Trajectories of Doing History from a Global Perspective: Institutionalization, Postcolonial Critique, and Empiricist Approaches, Before and After the 1970s,' *Journal of Global History* 14, no. 3 (2019): 335–54; SAMIR AMIN, *Global History: A View from the South* (Dakar: Codesria, 2011); PAMELA CROSSLEY, 'Why Do Expectations Persist that Global History Should Be History?,' *Cromohs: Cyber Review of Modern Historiography* 2021, https://doi.org/10.36253/cromohs-12614; GABRIELA DE LIMA GRECCO and SVEN SCHUSTER. 'Decolonizing Global History? A Latin American Perspective,' *Journal of World History* 31, no. 2 (2020): 425–46.

[9] MARGRIT PERNAU, 'Global History - Wegbereiter für einen neuen Kolonialismus?,' *Connections. A Journal for Historians and Area Specialists*, accessed 6 May 2023, http://www.connections.clio-online.net/debate/id/diskussionen-572

[10] Birgit Rommelspacher, a psychologist, and educator, uses the term 'dominance society' to describe a social system which establishes hierarchies based on various forms of difference such as class, gender, and race. In this system, the dominant group is largely oblivious to their position of power and view themselves as equals, while remaining ignorant of the existence of their own hierarchies. See BIRGIT ROMMELSPACHER, *Dominanzkultur: Texte zu Fremdheit und Macht* (Berlin: Orlanda Frauenverlag, 1995).

concepts such as Urnings, homophiles, etc.[11] Concepts and experiences of queerness from the Global South also need to be deprovincialised, meaning that queer historians need to understand other actor-based concepts linked to intimacy, sexuality, gender, and desire beyond the Euro-American world. They must realise how sexual and gendered mores elsewhere are not necessarily queer, in the sense of being marginalised and outside the norm, once they are localised.[12] A global queer history and a global history of concepts are thus not that different in their use of analytical concepts.[13] Drawing connections beyond different actor-based concepts, analytical concepts allow discussions of various historical actors synchronically and diachronically—even against the grain—without universalising concepts or using diffusionist models. Analytical concepts form the fabric of a semantic web that allows us to map entanglements beyond problems of translation and beyond anachronism.[14]

In this article, I argue that global historians can learn from the fluidity and murkiness offered by queer theory and from interdisciplinary queer readings of history.[15] Queerness as an analytical concept provides a link between historical experiences. This link, created by historians according to their research question, is an important methodological tool. Relational, entangled—and disentangled—across time and space, historical actors then enter into conversation with one another without using the same concepts, without defining themselves similarly and without being aware that they are part of a broader community. A queer Black queen, such as Marsha P. Johnson in New York City during the Stonewall uprisings, and a white German lawyer, such as Karl Heinrich Ulrichs arguing for the rights of sexual misfits in Munich in 1867, did not necessarily have the same conception of their sexualities or of sexuality in general. They surely did not use the same concepts to reflect on what constitutes the queer subject throughout history.

Writing the history of queer misfits implies understanding codes and looking for what was silenced, erased, and deemed taboo. This is not without dangers. As Laura Doan warns us, looking for ancestral genealogies to confirm categories of identities in the present would be paradoxical for intellectuals trying to question and deconstruct

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[11] This is the narrative brought forward by Robert Beachy. See ROBERT BEACHY, *Gay Berlin. Birthplace of a Modern Identity* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2014). For a summary of the era in Germany see CLAYTON J. WHISNANT, *Queer Identities and Politics in Germany: A History 1880–1945* (New York: Harrington Park Press, 2016).

[12] TOM BOELLSTORFF, MAURO CABRAL, MICHA CÁRDENAS, TRYSTAN COTTEN, ERIC A. STANLEY, KALANIOPUA YOUNG, and AREN Z. AIZURA. 'Decolonizing Transgender. A Roundtable Discussion,' *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly* 1, no. 3 (2016): 419–39.

[13] MARGRIT PERNAU and DOMINIC SACHSENMAIER, 'Introduction. Global History, Translation and Semantic Changes,' in *Global Conceptual History: A Reader*, eds MARGRIT PERNAU and DOMINIC SACHSENMAIER (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016): 1–28.

[14] MARTIN FUCHS, 'Reaching out; or, Nobody Exists in One Context Only: Society as Translation,' *Translation Studies* 2, no. 1 (2009): 21–40. For a visual example see SÉBASTIEN TREMBLAY, 'Visual Collective Memories of National Socialism: Transatlantic HIV/AIDS Activism and Discourses of Persecutions,' *German History* 40, no. 4 (2022): 563–82.

[15] On queer readings see CHRISTOPHER EWING and SÉBASTIEN TREMBLAY, 'Introduction. Queer Imprints,' in *Queer Media in the German Speaking World: New Approaches to Print Sources*, eds SÉBASTIEN TREMBLAY and CHRISTOPHER EWING (London: Palgrave Macmillan, forthcoming 2024).

categories in the present.[16] This is why, contrary to gay and lesbian history, queer history goes beyond the—also valid—impulse of identity politics. The idea is not to fix what was, but to show how mobile categories of analysis allow multiple readings of the past both diachronically and synchronically. These sorts of readings of what was and what is fluid should inspire global historians. Enthused by queerness as an analytical concept and queer readings across time and space, global historians could translate the conditional aspects of queer history, that is, the contextualisation and localisation of analytical concepts. They could then write a history of ideas with global pretences without falling prey to universalisms. By understanding the disruptive potential, but also the possible historiographical cohesion, heuristically offered by queerness as an analytical concept, global historians can appreciate multilinguistic, multitemporal, and multidimensional historical events or underline power structures at the core of their area of research. A reflection on queerness and fluidity thus contributes to other foci of global history.

This essay is an intervention divided in three sections that build upon each other. I first define what I mean by queer readings of the past and queerness as an analytical concept for the writing of queer history. I highlight the empirical repercussions of such an endeavour and emphasise how fluidity helps the creation of semantic fields. The second section uses a concrete example from my research on queer memories and queer experiences of National Socialism. By showing the frictions in collective memory and the writing of a queer history of German fascism and its commemoration, I stress the potential of queerness as an analytical concept by accentuating how its fluidity enables a democratisation of memory, allowing a much better diachronic analysis of the past. The memory of the Nazi persecutions of queer individuals has become something of an 'international property' and a vital component to the performative aspects at the heart of modern queer politics in Germany and abroad. Thus, the continued integration of queer history into that cultural memory—and the discussions and debates surrounding it—acts as a signifier on a more global scale through multidirectional identification processes and metaphors by non-German queer activists and politicians.[17] Finally, the third section goes global, furthering the historical potential of fluidity across space and examining the synchronic prospective offered by analytical concepts, such as queerness, and then presenting its benefits for the writing of global history.

Queerness as an Analytical Concept. The Potential of Fluidity

Historians working on queer history have long been on the lookout for silence in the archives. Against the grain, they have first written what they believed was a genealogy

[16] LAURA DOAN, 'Queer History / Queer Memory. The Case of Alan Turing,' *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 23, no. 1 (2017): 113–36.

[17] MICHAEL ROTHBERG, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization*, Cultural Memory in the Present (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009); ALEIDA ASSMANN, 'The Holocaust: A Global Memory? Extensions and Limits of a New Memory Community,' in *Memory in a Global Age: Discourses, Practices and Trajectories*, eds ALEIDA ASSMANN and SEBASTIAN CONRAD (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 97–117.

of sexualities, desires, and intimacies at the margin. Understanding the various codes used by their historical actors, they knew that, for example, a German woman calling another *Freundin* (a female friend), could actually mean more than friendship.[18] Soon, this gay, lesbian, or more recently trans history evolved beyond the idea of adding more voices to our writing of history.[19] Queer history is about questioning the need of fixed sexual and gender-specific categories and binaries in order to understand sexualities at the margin, but also about questioning the main categories at the core of societies' conception of gender and sexuality.

Methodology-wise, this search for queerness, for norms, and things outside the norm has pushed queer historians to read the archive differently. To paraphrase Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, these readings can be both reparative or paranoid—they can be both on the lookout for erasure and hidden suffering (paranoid readings), or an assessment of pleasure (reparative readings) through centuries of silence.[20] In doing so, historians of queerness have not only learned the codes of the past, but also to question their own constructions.[21] This has taken many forms, from deeper empirical research to reflections on positionality and the temporality of doing queer history.[22] Through the institutionalisation of queer history and a certain longing of queer historians to belong to more canonical parts of the discipline, the form taken by queer history has evolved into its own language, its own subfield, with its own framings and institutions.[23] Nonetheless, queer paradoxically remains a fluid category. It marks a possible in-between, an amorphous space of possibilities between sexualities and gender expressions. Coming from outside the norm, it questions and deconstructs sexual and gender norms, eventually breaking free from binary models of analysis.[24] This is not without similitude to the transformation of global approaches to history, where ideas of core and peripheries, of postcolonial reparative and paranoid readings

[18] *Die Freundin* was also the name of a magazine for queer/lesbian women published during Weimar. The magazine can also be read in a queer lens, expanding it taxonomy beyond cis lesbian desires. See ELIZABETH SCHOPPELREI, 'Speculative Formations: Trans Poetry, Taxonomies, and Communities in the Lesbian Magazine *Die Freundin* (1924-1933),' in *Queer Media in the German Speaking World*, eds TREMBLAY and EWING.

[19] JENNIFER V. EVANS, 'Why Queer German History?,' *German History* 34, no. 3 (2016): 1–14.

[20] EVE KOSOFSKY SEDGWICK, 'Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading; or, You're So Paranoid, You Probably Think This Introduction is About You,' in *Touching Feeling*, ed. EVE KOSOFSKY SEDGWICK (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003): 123–51.

[21] JUSTIN BENGRY, 'Can and Should we Queer the Past?,' in *What is History, Now? How the Past and the Present Speak to Each Other*, eds HELEN CARR and SUZANNAH LIPSCOMB (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2021): 48–65.

[22] CAROLYN DINSHAW, LEE EDELMAN, RODERICK A. FERGUSON, CARLA FRECCERO, ELIZABETH FREEMAN, JUDITH/JACK HALBERSTAM, ANNAMARIE JAGOSE, CHRISTOPHER S. NEALON, and TAN HOANG NGUYEN, 'Theorizing Queer Temporalities: A Roundtable Discussion,' *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 13, no. 2–3 (2007): 177–95; RACHEL CORBMAN, 'Does Queer Studies Have an Anti-Empiricism Problem?,' *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 25, no. 1 (2019): 57–62.

[23] DAVID L. ENG and JASBIR K. PUAR, 'Introduction. Left of Queer,' *Social Text* 38, no. 4 (2020): 1–24.

[24] For an example, see the history of heterosexuality as a concept from the perspective of queer history: HEIKO STOFF, 'Heterosexualität,' in *Was ist Homosexualität? Forschungsgeschichte, gesellschaftliche Entwicklungen und Perspektiven*, eds FLORIAN MILDENBERGER et al. (Hamburg: Männerschwarm, 2014), 73–104.

of the past, have rendered possible the analysis of global entanglements beyond binary spatial models of analysis, e.g., inside and outside empires.[25] To put it another way, queer history and global history already echo each other with their critical stance on centres and peripheries, and by offering a deconstruction of siloed analysis through the investigation of historical entanglements of genders and sexualities outside binaries, and transregional transfers outside a division of the world in clearly defined regional containers.

However, discussing the limits of a purely oppositional queer theory criticising norms for the sake of antinormativity, Robyn Wiegman and Elizabeth A. Wilson nuance the now established anti-identarian posture of canonical queer thinkers.[26] Yet Wiegman and Wilson also state that 'the bifurcation of the workings of a norm into centre and periphery is the conceptual miscalculation that underwrites the seeming good sense of antinormativity. In imagining the norm as a device that divides the world into centres and peripheries, antinormativity misses what is most engaging about a norm: that in collating the world, it gathers up everything.'[27] Choosing to investigate descriptors frequently associated with 'norm' as a concept—such as domination, homogenisation, exclusion, identity—Wiegman and Wilson highlight that the potential of exploring norms lies in their dynamism and fluidity.[28]

Inspired by the search for queerness in the archive and its fluidity, global historians can similarly write a global conceptual history beyond binaries and fixed categories, on the lookout for amorphous analytical concepts to draw broader semantic fields. This fluidity is not a synonym for vagueness, but an invitation to go beyond actor-based concepts and identify connections across language, space, and time, while still using the words and communication networks of their historical actors.

Inspired by queerness, a global history of concepts draws connections through differences without imposing a model.[29] It provincialises, but also deprovincialises, alternating between the global, the local, and eventually, the glocal. Before moving to the global, the next section demonstrates the relevance of this fluidity and opening of categories of analysis for a history of concepts in a regional or national context.

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[25] See here the important discussion of modernity beyond inside/outside divisions in: MONICA JUNEJA, 'Viewing Europe, or Where and What is the "Outside",' in *Why Europe, Which Europe? A Debate on Contemporary European History as a Field of Research*, 23 October 2022, accessed 6 May 2023, https://europedebate.hypotheses.org/1462.

[26] ROBYN WIEGMAN and ELIZABETH A. WILSON, 'Introduction: Antinormativity's Queer Conventions,' in *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 26, no 1 (2015): 1–25 (4).

[27] WIEGMAN and WILSON, 'Introduction,' 18.

[28] WIEGMAN and WILSON, 'Introduction,' 2.

[29] On the globalisation of queer see the important scholarship on queer geographies: JON BINNIE, 'Locating Queer Globalization,' in *The Globalization of Sexuality*, ed. JON BINNIE (London: Sage, 2004): 32–49; ARNALDO CRUZ-MALAVÉ and MARTIN F. MANALANSAN IV, 'Introduction: Dissident Sexualities/Alternative Globalisms,' in *Queer Globalizations: Citizenship and the Afterlife of Colonialism*, eds ARNALDO CRUZ-MALAVÉ and MARTIN F. MANALANSAN IV (New York: New York University Press, 2002): 1–10; KATIE KING, '"There Are No Lesbians Here": Lesbianisms, Feminisms, and Global Gay Formations,' in CRUZ-MALAVÉ and MANALANSAN, eds, *Queer Globalizations*, 33–45.

Analytical Concepts for Better Clarity. Identifying Queer Victims of the Nazis

Following years of political and historiographical debates, the German Bundestag officially commemorated queer victims of the Nazis in the plenary room of the Reichstag in 2023. January 27 is usually a substantial event in the German political calendar. This has to do with the German reason of state being linked to *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (coming to terms with the Nazi past) but also with the performative aspect of memory at the centre of modern German life.[30] Actors and actresses were hired for the occasion to read testimonies.[31] In the days prior to the event, experts in the field of law and history discussed and historicised German queerphobia in one of the houses of the Bundestag.[32] The emphasis on queer victims did not eclipse or relativise other atrocities committed by the Nazis or the historical differences between the persecution of queer Germans and other Nazi crimes. For example, the fifteen thousand queer men[33] deported in concentration camps were not faced with automatic murder by the regime unless they were also Jewish, Roma, or Sinti. This does not erase the fact that they were horribly treated and murdered through the inhumane Nazi apparatus, but there was no concerted genocide of men 'deported for homosexuality,' which would have echoed the antisemitic and racist Nazi politics of exterminations targeting Jewish, Roma, and Sinti deportees.

Remembered alongside other groups of victims, for example, Jewish victims of the Holocaust, queer non-Jewish victims were honoured in this manner for the first

[30] On *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* as reason of state see MANUELA BAUCHE, PATRICIA PIBERGER, SÉBASTIEN TREMBLAY, and HANNAH TZUBERI, 'From Opferkonkurrenz to Solidarity: A Round Table,' in *Memory Culture 2.0: From Opferkonkurrenz to Solidarity*, ed. MIRJAM SARAH BRUSIUS, special issue, *Bulletin of the German Historical Institute London* 44, no. 2 (2022): 32–85. See also MAX CZOLLEK, *Versöhnungstheater* (Munich: Hanser, 2023).

[31] TILMANN WARNECKE, 'Jannick Schümann übers Erinnern an queere NS-Opfer "Ich zittere jedes Mal, wenn ich daran denke",' *Tagesspiegel*, 27 January 2023, accessed 6 May 2023, https://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/der-bundestag-erinnert-an-queere-ns-opfer-eine-gedenkstunde-die-nachhallt-9251664.html; SARAH BÖTSCHER, 'Begriff "queere" Opfer des NS-Regimes sorgt für Diskussionen,' *MDR Aktuell*, 27 January, 2023, accessed 6 May 2023, https://www.mdr.de/nachrichten/deutschland/politik/holocaust-gedenktag-sexuelle-orientierung-queer-100.html. See also 'Bundestag rückt queere Nazi-Opfer in den "Mittelpunkt" und sorgt damit für Empörung,' *Focus*, 27 January 2023, accessed 6 May, 2023, https://www.focus.de/politik/deutschland/debatte-um-queere-ns-opfer-im-mittelpunkt-des-holocaust-tages_id_184189739.html.

[32] The jurist Anna-Katharina Mangold and the historian Martin Lücke delivered poignant speeches regarding queer persecutions in the Marie-Elisabeth-Lüders-Haus of the German Bundestag. 'Verfolgung, Widerstand und Selbstbestimmung queerer Menschen in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart,' *Stiftung Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas*, 26 January 2023, accessed 6 May 2023, https://www.stiftung-denkmal.de/aktuelles/gedenken-bedeutet-handeln/.

[33] These are estimated numbers: RÜDIGER LAUTMANN, WINFRIED GRIKSCHAT, and EGBERT SCHMIDT, 'Der Rosa Winkel in den Nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslagern,' in *Seminar: Gesellschaft und Homosexualität*, ed. RÜDIGER LAUTMANN (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 1977), 325–65. See also the analysis of Andreas Pretzel regarding ways to investigate these persecutions: ANDREAS PRETZEL, 'Verfolgung und Selbstbehauptung — homosexuelle Männer während der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus,' in *Forschung im Queerformat: aktuelle Beiträge der LSBTI*-, Queer- und Geschlechterforschung*, ed. BUNDESSTIFTUNG MAGNUS HIRSCHFELD, Queer Studies 6 (Bielefeld: transcript, 2014), 47–58 (51–54).

time, greatly irking right-wing pundits.[34] As previously mentioned, remembering one aspect of Nazi atrocities does not relativise the pain or the particularities of the suffering experienced by other victims. A former editor of the conservative tabloid *BILD* nonetheless denounced the event as queer propaganda and a relativisation of the Holocaust while participating in a contemporary debate on so-called 'wokeness' imported from the United States of America.[35] Simultaneously, conservative commentators—as well as some scholars—denounced the ideas of 'queer victims' of the Nazis. They condemned the use of 'queer' as an anachronism, a presentism imposed on the past and an identarian instrumentalisation of suffering.[36] The former Green MP Volker Beck also declared that 'there were no *queer* victims of Nazism.'[37] This of course shows a fundamental misunderstanding of history as a discipline.

In the history of sexualities, queerness is often used as an analytical concept. That does not mean that queer historians think that their historical actors woke up one day in the early modern period, let us say in the South German town of Würzburg, and declared to each other that they felt 'queer.' Sexual historical concepts such as homo- or hetero- sexualities have a history of their own. Even sexuality itself has its own conceptual history. The idea of sex beyond reproduction is indeed a relatively new understanding of bodily pleasure and encounters in the Euro-American world. If a peasant named Martha in Würzburg had sex in the early modern period, she was not necessarily naming her relationships with her husband 'sexuality,' nor 'heterosexuality.' However, few would argue that heterosexuality cannot be a useful analytical concept to investigate early modern sexuality in Europe.[38] 'Queer is an anachronism because there was no such thing as *queers* in the past' is one of these sentences similar to 'there are only two genders' that may sound convincing, but, beyond their populist appeal, do not reflect scholarly debates and literature. There are myriad studies of sexuality in the early modern period; if historians are already and convincingly using a framework

[34] For a great introduction to queer Holocaust history read ANNA HÀJKOVÀ, *Menschen ohne Geschichte sind Staub: Homophobie und Holocaust* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2021).

[35] See for example the column by right-wing pundit JUDITH BASAD, 'Wie Politiker den Holocaust-Gedenktag für ihre ideologischen Zwecke missbrauchen,' *Pleite Ticker*, 27 January 2023, accessed 6 May 2023, https://archive.ph/2023.01.29-135714/https://pleiteticker.de/wie-politiker-den-holocaust-gedenktag-fuer-ihre-ideologischen-zwecke-missbrauchen. Basad had previously twitted about it. Her tweet—on the platform now known as X—is gone following judicial complaints according to German Law regarding hate speech: https://twitter.com/JSevincBasad/status/1619308179724324866.

[36] FREDERIK SCHINDLER, '"Queere" Opfer des Nationalsozialismus? Aus historischer Perspektive ist das Quatsch,' *Die Welt*, 24 January 2023, accessed 6 May 2023, https://www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/plus243387555/Nationalsozialismus-Historiker-erklaert-die-ideologischen-Wurzeln-der-Homosexuellen-Verfolgung.html.

[37] VOLKER BECK, tweet, 13 August 2022, https://twitter.com/Volker_Beck/status/1558216916589854720. Emphasis by me. Beck, himself a gay man known for his political campaigns for equality is not denying that there were no queer victims but refuses to use the word 'queer.' Concordantly to this essay, queerness would not be a concept he uses to describe himself, but could still be used as an analytical concept to describe his non-heteronormativity.

[38] HEIKO STOFF, 'Heterosexualität,' 73–104.

considered anachronistic by right-wing pundits, then we can surely do the same with queerness.[39]

Historians of sexualities in Germany have focused on the rise of queer politics in the country, beginning with the Wilhelmine era and ending in the twentieth century. They argue that criminalisation of male-male sexualities during the Prussian regime facilitated scientific and political emancipation through resistance, leading to the creation of a male queer subject and the eventual destruction of the movement by the Nazis.[40] The second part of the twentieth century is often divided into different movements, such as the so-called 'homophile movement' of the 1950s and 1960s, the *Schwulenbewegung*—the more or less gay movement—of the 1970s, and the institutionalisation of queerness following the HIV/AIDS crisis. However, this chronology erases the ambivalence that many queer men felt about their identities and sexualities, leading to a binary view between 'radicals' and 'assimilationists.' It also silences the fluidity of sexual identities. Most of these men had sex with other men, sometimes exclusively, sometimes not. Some of these men fought for social change together, or completely despised each other and were in permanent conflict. Sexual identities could be at the core of these men's politics, or solely an act of naming and listing their sexual experiences. In other words, queerness was expressed and conceptualised in many ways.

Rather than relying on periodisation, historians can use queerness as an analytical concept, bringing together different historical actors and semantic fields to reveal similarities and differences between movements. In this way, they would follow the work of global historians already using conceptual history for writing and understanding the entanglements in the archive.[41] By mapping queerness as an analytical web of historical diversity instead of imposing fixed categories, historians can link different moments in time and prove that queer men were part of a community. There is no clear linguistic shift between one political representation of queerness and another, but examining the concept as an analytical tool can help scholars create a richer understanding of queer history. While no man during the 1950s is recorded as waking up one day and simply deciding to stop calling himself 'homophile,' historians can still link different moments in time and show that multiple homophile activists —a term used by some queer activists around the 1950s in the USA and West Germany[42]—were indeed part of the same community as Marxist gay liberationists in the same countries in the 1960s and 1970s, even if both gay

[39] FRANZ X. EDER, *Sexuality in Premodern Europe: A Social and Cultural History from Antiquity to the Early Modern Age*, Eng. trans. JACOB WATSON (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2023); Gary Ferguson, *Same-Sex Marriage in Renaissance Rome: Sexuality, Identity, and Community in Early Modern Europe* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2016). This is also true for other periods of European History: JACQUELINE MURRAY, 'Historicizing Sex, Sexualizing History,' in *Writing Medieval History*, ed. NANCY PARTNER (London: Hodder, 2005), 133–52.
[40] ROBERT BEACHY, *Gay Berlin*.
[41] PERNAU and SACHSENMAIER, 'Introduction.'
[42] And in many other countries.

liberationists and homophiles often shunned each other.[43] They were part of a community of queerness. In other words, by employing semantic fields and analytical concepts, historians can illustrate entanglements beyond political divides.

Some subfields have attempted to address these issues. Historians of emotions have drawn on what caused men to fall in love, the desires they expressed, the fears they had, or the shame they buried. This approach allows for a nuanced and detailed genealogy of queerness, specifically of male-male sexualities, without imposing modern-day labels onto people from the past. Historians can observe categories of analysis without dictating terms to their subjects. Benno Gammerl's book, *Anders Fühlen* (feeling differently) is an excellent example of this methodology. By combining oral history with his own research in the archives, Gammerl traces the fears transcending various episodes of queer politics in postwar West Germany. Gammerl brings together homophile men from the 1950s and 1960s with gay activists from the 1970s and 1980s, ultimately re-periodising West German queer history by analysing moments of emotional affinity rather than political unity. Studying the sexual itself and investigating men cruising for sex, Christopher Bollas instead coined the term 'homosexual arena.' For example, a gay man urinating in a pissoir in the street of Berlin known for being a meeting ground for sex would recognise the public toilet as a part of an arena.[44] For the unaware soul wandering near the urinal, the space would merely be a place for relieving oneself. Police surveillance in these places would eventually also link all men having sex with men together.[45] All in all, Bollas' arena gives historians a form of connection through space and contextualisation. Using conceptual history, it is possible to hunt for queerness by drawing semantic fields. This approach would bring the same results as Gammerl and Bollas, but focuses on discourse produced by, and not about, historical actors.

Because queer theory does not suggest queer as a new identity, but rather as a deconstruction of identities, it underlines the fluidity beyond fixed categories of analysis. It also points out that sexual identities, if useful for an analysis, are plural and can change throughout one's life. Looking for queerness in the past also helps us to nuance generalisation and fixed periodisation. In the case of Germany in the second part of twentieth century, Craig Griffiths has done a wonderful job looking at homophile and gay overlaps in his book *The Ambivalence of Gay Liberation*.[46] Benno Gammerl has done the same in German regarding the artificial distinction between a radical or assimilationist queer politics.[47] Beyond the German context, but remaining

[43] CRAIG GRIFFITHS, *The Ambivalence of Gay Liberation: Male Homosexual Politics in 1970s West Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 44–46.
[44] CHRISTOPHER BOLLAS, 'Cruising in the Homosexual Arena,' in *Being a Character Psychoanalysis and Self Experience*, ed. CHRISTOPHER BOLLAS (London: Routledge, 1992), 144–64.
[45] Urinals and other spaces used for public sexual encounters were also heavily surveyed by police authorities. Men arrested for sodomy or indecency in these places were regrouped together under the law.
[46] GRIFFITHS, 'The Ambivalence of Gay Liberation.'
[47] BENNO GAMMERL, *Anders Fühlen. Schwules und lesbisches Leben in der Bundesrepublik: Eine Emotionsgeschichte* (Munich: Hanser, 2021).

in the Euro-American world, Lauren Jae Gutterman looks convincingly at the queerness of heterosexuality in her book on heterosexual marriage as a emancipatory space for queer women in the postwar USA.[48]

Using queerness as analytical concept in the writing of history therefore allows historians much more nuance in their diachronic or synchronic analysis of the past. As previously stated, an analytical concept is not the same as an actor-based concept; it is not a concept used by historical actors, but a concept valuable to historians reading the archive and analysing historical sources. This is convenient for creating semantic fields and making sense of the past, possibly linking political discourses. It also helps beyond language barriers. For example, it is possible in the case of transatlantic history to use queerness to discuss social movements in conversation within and beyond given national contexts, for instance, the German *Schwulenbewegung* and gay liberation in the USA. *Schwul*, also a pejorative epithet, became a word reminiscent of the anglophone 'gay' in Germany in the 1970s. *Schwul* has its own semantic history, like 'gay' in English or '*pédé*' in French, yet they are all forms of male queerness politicised in the 1970s in the Euro-American world. Analytical concepts let historians investigate their sources beyond actor-based concepts. For example, the Gay Liberation Front Cologne was not politically aligned with the Gay Liberation Front New York even if they shared a name. The group based in the United States was known for its Marxism, and the one in North Rhine-Westphalia, a reformist alliance of activists, mainly refused to use *Schwul*, opting instead for the English word 'gay.' They were still both 'queer' groups in the sense that they were fighting for the rights of non-heteronormative men, albeit in different ways.

Coming back to the original example, it is very helpful to use queer as an analytical concept when examining the persecution of queer men by the Nazis. Once again, this is not to say that these men were calling themselves queer. Most of them were not calling themselves 'homosexual' either. Queer allows historians to respect these men and their right to self-expression. It allows nuance. It allows a better analysis. It is literally the opposite of an anachronism. Looking at Nazi Germany through the scope of queerness facilitates a deeper analysis of the period. Through the opening of historical analysis beyond categories created by the perpetrators, historians can use analytical concepts such as queerness to not only map the fluidity of male-male sexualities, desires, and intimacies, but also to draw connections between oppressions, democratising memories of the era.[49] Queer historians have done so by looking at the entanglements of structural violence and lesbian oppression during German fascism.[50]

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[48] LAUREN JAE GUTTERMAN, *Her Neighbor's Wife: A History of Lesbian Desire Within Marriage* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019).

[49] Insa Eschebach argues that the opening of categories enables a democratisation of memory culture. INSA ESCHEBACH, 'Queere Gedächtnis: Zivilgesellschaftliches Engagement und Erinnerungskonkurrenzen im Kontext der Gedenkstätte Ravensbrück,' *Invertito – Jahrbuch für die Geschichte der Homosexualitäten* 21 (2019): 49–73.

[50] LAURIE MARHOEFER, 'Lesbianism, Transvestitism, and the Nazi State: A Microhistory of a Gestapo Investigation, 1939–1943,' *The American Historical Review* 121, no. 4 (2016): 1167–95.

Through an analysis of different expressions of queerness before and during this period, they have also revisited concepts of the past to identify and narrate trans experiences of violence at the hands of the regime.[51]

All in all, as debates and queer scholarship on contemporary German history reveal, an analysis based on conceptual fluidity leads to conceptual historians drawing more efficient semantic fields. In turn, these semantic fields have changed how queer history has been written in Germany, beyond fixed actor-based concepts, leaving more place for entanglements and ambivalence. On the lookout for a broader scope of experiences in the archives, queer historians of modern and contemporary Germany are now writing new genealogies of queerness, revealing new paths for the discipline—for example, a new history of interrelated social movements that were previously invisible in the archive.[52] This national example is not the only path offered by using queerness as an analytical concept. Shimmers of queerness are even more appealing for a transnational perspective.

Entangled, Different, yet Similar. Global Queer Semantic Fields

During the last decades, queer history and the history of sexualities, like many other subfields of the discipline, have had their transnational, and eventually, their global turns.[53] Researching sexual entanglements without taking categories of analysis anchored in European concepts as point of departure has brought its share of methodological inquiries. Critiques voiced by scholars from the Global South have pointed out that provincialising European sexualities, desires, and intimacies also means questioning universal claims anchored in concepts such as homosexuality, gay, lesbian, or trans. It also means deprovincialising other concepts such as Hijra or Two-Spirit.[54] Yet the potential of queer theory, focusing on in-betweens and the murkiness of categories and identities, can help historians pursuing to write a global history of sexualities.

Using queer as an analytical concept here helps to put different realities in conversation with one another without only relying on concepts native to the Euro-American world. During my visit of an autonomous festival for radical queer politics

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[51] ZAVIER NUNN, 'Trans Liminality and the Nazi State,' *Past & Present* 260 (2023): 123–57; KATIE SUTTON, 'Sexology's Photographic Turn. Visualizing Trans Identity in Interwar Germany,' *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 27, no. 3 (2018): 442–79. See also BODIE ASHTON, 'The Parallel Lives of Liddy Bacroff: Transgender (Pre)History and the Tyranny of the Archive in Twentieth-Century Germany,' *German History* 42, no 1 (2024): 79–100.

[52] SÉBASTIEN TREMBLAY, *A Badge of Injury. The Pink Triangle as Global Symbol of Memory* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2024); JAKE W. NEWSOME, *Pink Triangle Legacies. Coming out in the Shadow of the Holocaust* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2022).

[53] MARGOT CANADAY, 'Thinking Sex in the Transnational Turn: An Introduction (AHR Forum Transnational Sexualities),' *The American Historical Review* 114, no. 5 (2009): 1250–57.

[54] MARGRIT PERNAU, 'Provincializing Concepts: The Language of Transnational History,' *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 36, no. 3 (2016): 483–99; CLAIRE PAMMENT, 'De/Colonizing Hijra,' *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly* 8, no. 2 (2021): 265–69; JASON RITCHIE, 'How Do You Say "Come out of the Closet" in Arabic? Queer Activism and the Politics of Visibility in Israel-Palestine,' *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 16, no. 4 (2010): 557–75.

in Amsterdam in 2016, a workshop on trans rights in Europe evolved into a rich discussion on the uses of the concept 'trans' to define similar experiences of gender non-conformity or queerness by people coming from the Global South.[55] The instigator of this exchange emphasised the colonial difficulties of having to use Euro-American concepts, such as 'trans,' to describe their experience of not conforming to the gender identity and gender binary imposed on them at birth.[56] They reminded everyone how societies outside of the Euro-American world have different conceptions of gender identity, more than two genders, and how what would be considered trans and marginal in the Euro-American world would not necessarily be marginalised elsewhere. This can also be illustrated with the critique by Two-Spirit activists in North America, irritated by settlers describing Two-Spirit experiences as 'trans' with an Indigenous twist.[57]

A focus on analytical concepts can help scholars highlight power imbalances between various experiences of queerness across the globe. Countries in the Northern Atlantic have predominantly focused on their own local queer origin stories, in effect reproducing a Euro-American understanding of queer history and of queerness. This is apparent in the literature on both side of the Atlantic. In the United State, the Stonewall myth centres a diffusionist model where a revolt in New York enlightens the rest of the world.[58] In Germany, a counter-narrative represents fin de siècle Berlin as the birthplace of queerness, of a so-called 'homosexual identity,' based on the criminalisation of same-sex desire, intimacy, and sexualities.[59] Differentiating between actor-based concepts while underlining multilinguistic semantic fields relevant to queerness can challenge these narratives, exposing their creation in and limitations to the Euro-American world. In other words, queerness as an analytical concept offers historians an enormous potential for disruption, emphasising the lacunae of a global intellectual history written in the Global North. This is necessary as these narratives—the Stonewall myth or the German invention of homosexuality—seek to construct an artifice, the idea that there is an identifiable origin of queerness. Provincialising Euro-American experiences of queerness by including them in a global history, or a fluid and decentred/broader semantic field of non-normative sexualities and gender

[55] The statement echoes similar discussions in academic journals. See JEFF ROY, 'Translating Hijra into Transgender Performance and Pehchān in India's Trans-Hijra Communities,' *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly* 3, no. 3–4 (2016): 412–32. On the use of concepts such as trans for solidarity see GEE IMAAN SEMMALAR, 'Unpacking Solidarities of the Oppressed: Notes on Trans Struggles in India,' *WSQ: Women's Studies Quarterly* 42, no. 3–4 (September 2014): 290.

[56] For a critique of western queer spaces see YV E. NAY 'The Atmosphere of Trans* Politics in the Global North and West,' *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly* 6, no. 1 (2019): 64–79.

[57] EVELYN BLACKWOOD, 'Native American Genders and Sexualities: Beyond Anthropological Models and Misrepresentations,' in *Two-Spirit People: Native American Gender Identity, Sexuality, and Spirituality*, eds SUE-ELLEN JACOBS, WESLEY THOMAS, and SABINE LANG (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2005): 284–96; MARGARET ROBINSON, 'Two-Spirit Identity in a Time of Gender Fluidity,' *Journal of Homosexuality* 67, no. 12 (2020): 1675–90.

[58] ELIZABETH ARMSTRONG and SUZANNA M. CRAGE, 'Movements and Memory: The Making of the Stonewall Myth,' *American Sociological Review* 71, no. 5 (2006): 724–51.

[59] ROBERT BEACHY, 'The German Invention of Homosexuality,' *The Journal of Modern History* 82, no. 4 (2010): 801–38.

expression, eventually exposes the artificial (and often Euro/American-centrist) aspect of these origin stories.

If gender and sexualities have other signifiers outside of the Euro-American world, should we refrain from using concepts anchored in the Anglo-American Atlantic such as queerness? Surely, if a gender identity or expression of sexuality is not marginalised somewhere else, the focus on queerness, a deviation of the norm, becomes obsolete? On the contrary! Using analytical concepts allows global historians to assess their own position and provincialise the Euro-American world in their own writing, once again with the help of semantic fields. Wary of universalisation, they can avoid diffusionist models of queer history and focus on the fluidity offered by queerness. Historians already do this in European history between eastern and western divides. For example, Dan Healey and Francesca Stella reflect on possible concepts useful for a broader analysis of Soviet queerphobia across language.[60] By emphasising the fluidity of queerness, the possibility of change, and the refusal of fixed categories, historians of gender and sexuality can try to draw semantic fields of synchronous actor-based concepts focused on norms, while acknowledging that they change over time.

They can do so by criticising the hyperreal aspects of gender and sexuality in the Euro-American world. This entails an investigation of gender expressions and the construction of sexual concepts across time and space, and not research of sexuality and gender abroad as they evolved in the Euro-American world. Taking the Euro-American world as point of departure, this fluid study of queerness abroad could base its analysis in Europe or North America while provincialising its fundamental concepts through semantic fields, allowing a dialogue between spaces. This conversation can take multiple forms. For instance, it could look at the imposition of cultural norms on sexuality and gender expressions through empires, showing the transformation of actor-based concepts abroad and the marginalisation of what used to not be outside the norm.[61] This angle of research would not only highlight the entanglement of queerness and coloniality, but could also complexify conceptual constructions of the non-European space as alien to queerness.[62] This epistemological exchange could also imply a deprovincialisation of sexual and gender specific concepts, where historians start their study of gender and sexuality in the Global South and use their study to

[60] DAN HEALEY and FRANCESCA STELLA, 'La dissidence sexuelle et de genre en URSS et dans l'espace postsoviétique: introduction,' *Cahiers d'histoire russe, est-européenne, caucasienne et centrasiatique* 61, no. 2–3 (2021): 251–82.

[61] SHANE DOYLE, 'Pandemics and Soft Power: HIV/AIDS and Uganda on the Global Stage,' *Journal of Global History* 15, no. 3 (2020): 478–92; JENNIFER BRIER, 'AIDS, Reproductive Rights, and Economic Empowerment. The Ford Foundation's Response to AIDS in the Global South, 1987–1995,' in *Infectious Ideas: U.S. Political Responses to the AIDS Crisis*, ed. JENNIFER BRIER (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009): 122–55.

[62] MARC EPPRECHT, *Heterosexual Africa? The Story of an Idea from the Age of Exploration to the Age of AIDS* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2008); SÉBASTIEN TREMBLAY, 'Homosynchronism and the Temporal-Memory Border: Framing Racialized Bodies, Time, and Mobility in German Queer Printed Media,' *SCRIPTS Working Papers*, working paper 21 (Berlin: Cluster of Excellence 2055 'Contestations of the Liberal Script (SCRIPTS),' 2022).

better understand the construction of socio-cultural categories in the Euro-American world.[63] This provincialisation and deprovincialisation of gender specific concepts and concepts of sexual identity can only be done by assessing power structures and asymmetries inherent to the use of analytical concepts. To put it differently, the idea is not to find queerness abroad, but to use a concept such as queerness to link synchronous historical experiences lived, expressed, or imagined differently depending on regional contexts.

However, using queerness as 'just' an analytical concept does not exonerate scholars and activists in the Euro-American world, as the danger of reproducing colonial asymmetries through a search for queer experiences in other settings remains. Waltzing between provincialising queer experiences in the Euro-American world and deprovincialising concepts from the Global South is never an innocent endeavour; it is not a scholarly exercise that takes place in a vacuum. In *The Gay Girl in Damascus Hoax*, Andrew Orr exposes the ultimate danger of universalising experiences of queerness abroad for political gains in the Euro-American world, demonstrating how Thomas MacMaster, a white man from the United States of America, created and dissimulated the fake queer biography of a young girl supposedly living in Syria.[64] This hoax, which went viral, illustrates the longing for examples abroad to feed rudimentary political domestic discourse about other countries' usually complex assemblages of sexual politics.[65] Looking for queerness abroad cannot be coupled with a desire to reproduce the colonial gaze. Orr points out that the success of the MacMaster hoax highlights Evren Savcı's warning

> that the dominance of the English language and American and British concepts in queer studies and activism creates a false sense of universality in scholars and activists' imaginations that erases differences in meaning and objectives and which unconsciously essentialises language as a marker of distinct cultural groups.[66]

Analytical concepts, such as queerness, still provide the transnational and multilinguistic approach to the circulation of knowledge so dear to global historians and so necessary to understanding a globalised world where activists and scholars alike are debating, criticising, or supporting international struggles of liberation. Here, a multilingual approach to research goes beyond simply studying language in its textual form. Incorporating visual languages into our analysis helps us to create a conceptual history of sexualities from a global perspective, which can lead to a new understanding of social movements. Visuals add a new dimension to our understanding and allow us

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[63] For a great example of deprovincialising concepts see Léa Tosold's suggestion to use Maria Beatriz Nascimento's notion of Quilomba in the context of memory politics: LÉA TOSOLD, 'The Quilombo as a Regime of Conviviality: Sentipensando Memory Politics with Beatriz Nascimento,' *Mecila Working Paper Series,* working paper 41 (São Paulo: The Maria Sibylla Merian Centre Conviviality-Inequality in Latin America, 2021).

[64] ANDREW ORR, *The Gay Girl in Damascus Hoax: Progressive Orientalism and the Arab Spring* (Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2023).

[65] ORR, 'The Gay Girl in Damascus,' 145.

[66] ORR, 'The Gay Girl in Damascus,' 11. Orr is referring to EVREN SAVCI, *Queer in Translation: Sexual Politics and Neoliberal Islam* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2021), 11–14.

to identify new connections and pathways for analysis. It is indeed possible for historical actors to use similar visual concepts without necessarily using similar textual ones.[67] By incorporating visual concepts, we can thus better understand social movements which are part of similar conversation locally or on the world stage or map the circulation of knowledge, even when there are no shared written communication networks or shared actor-based concepts.

One symbol connected to German queer history exemplifies this claim. The pink triangle, a symbol invented by the Nazis to brand queer men in concentration camps, was recuperated by queer activists in 1970s West Germany and then in multiple places across the world. By focusing on this symbol, we can come to various conclusions.

First, activists in Europe and North America used the horrors of the Nazi dictatorship to advocate for their cause, despite linguistic divides. They used a shared political language rooted in common fears of collective destruction and trauma, evoked by the tragic fate of the queer victims of the Nazi dictatorship. Notwithstanding linguistic and political differences, activists were able to frame their struggle beyond their local context. Second, without necessarily using the same taxonomy, or without employing the same concepts, they referred to queerness, sexual identities, and gender expressions that could be fixed or fluid, but were nevertheless entangled. Third, the story of the pink triangle serves as a powerful example by connecting emotions, collective memories, and political communication. Through examining the trajectory of the pink triangle, we can track the associated fears surrounding sexual identities beyond looking for words that could be lost in translation. Recent scholarship in the history of concepts has linked visual languages with a history of emotions analogous to Gammerl's work.[68] Following these new methodologies on the affective power of visuals, it is possible to see how searching for certain symbols both synchronically and diachronically creates new semantic fields. The pink triangle illustrates once more this way of looking for queerness as an analytical concept by focusing on the visual. It has become a symbol of queer resistance and remembrance due to its multilayered appeals to memory. It serves as a reminder of the persecution of queerness during the Nazi dictatorship and is a symbol commonly used among queer activists and organisations. The rebaptism by queer activists of rue Alexis Carrel, named after a known eugenicist, to rue du Triangle Rose (Pink Triangle Street) during a conference in Paris in 1992 is one among many examples of its use as a symbol of recollection and commemoration.[69] In more recent years, it has also been used by groups supporting queer individuals fleeing concentration camps in Chechnya, indicating the symbol's

[67] On visual concepts see IMKE RAJAMANI, 'Pictures, Emotions, Conceptual Change: Anger in Popular Hindi Cinema,' in *Global Conceptual History*, eds SACHSENMAIER and PERNAU, 307–35.
[68] MARGRIT PERNAU and IMKE RAJAMANI, 'Emotional Translations: Conceptual History Beyond Language,' *History and Theory* 55, no. 1 (2016): 46–65; MARGRIT PERNAU and LUC WODZICKI, 'Entanglements, Political Communication and Shared Temporal Layers,' *Cromohs: Cyber Review of Modern Historiography* 21 (2018): 1–17.
[69] TREMBLAY, *A Badge of Injury*, 84.

adoption and highlighting the ongoing struggles of queer individuals worldwide for recognition, rights, and safety.[70]

The initial draft of a report on sexual minorities that was prepared for the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations even referred to the pink triangle as a so-called 'patent of nobility' for queer politics in the twentieth century.[71] This kind of interpretation could lead historians to believe and reproduce globally diffusionist models of Euro-American queer history. Indeed, the triangle has been incorporated in the visual language of various queer organisations across the world, including Malaysia and Hong Kong. In other words, by finding pink triangles existing outside of the Euro-American world, would historians not be simply emphasising the diffusion of the symbol from the queer Atlantic to the rest of the world?

No. By creating semantic fields related to the pink triangle and queerness, a deeper understanding of global queer politics can be obtained, thereby highlighting the power dynamics between the Global North and Global South. The use of the pink triangle has gained significance as a global political symbol and its use by different groups reflects the diversity and complexity of queer movements worldwide. Hence, we can identify similarities as well as differences in political discourse by studying the symbol's exposure, providing insights into globally prevalent queer entanglements. We can then do so without falling prey to diffusionist models of global intellectual history.

The symbol of the pink triangle is not a 'patent of nobility' but a signifier, a proof of global entanglements. To put it another way, identifying the pink triangle is not only a proof of queerness in Malaysia, but an example of the circulation and adoption of actor-based concepts from the Euro-American world in service of political rhetoric elsewhere. Beyond the diffusion of Euro-American concepts and examining the adoption of referents from the Euro-American world, scholars using queerness as an analytical concept emphasise that groups such as Pink Triangle in Kuala Lumpur are not necessarily only adopting sexual identities from elsewhere to define themselves. They refer politically, willingly, and even perhaps strategically, to other actor-based historical concepts. Once again detecting queerness through semantic fields and a study of the reception of Euro-American concepts, this transaction also pinpoints the agency of historical actors in the Global South, while identifying global entanglements.

Conclusions

Are there 'gays' in Chechnya? There's certainly queerness in the South Caucasian republic. Following the opening of the poignant documentary *Welcome to Chechnya* by US. filmmaker David Frances at the Berlinale in 2020, the protagonists of the films—a group of Russian activists helping queer individuals to leave Chechnya and providing them with shelter—came on stage to the applause of a sold-out movie theatre in east Berlin. Present on that day, I noticed one of them was wearing a pink triangle as a

[70] TREMBLAY, *A Badge of Injury*, 226.
[71] TREMBLAY, *A Badge of Injury*, 194.

brooch. They also mentioned the Nazi persecutions of queerness while discussing the horrors of the Kadyrov regime. If queer is an English word with its own background and form, then using it as an analytical concept, finding queerness in the archive, does not equal imposing a Euro-American actor-based concept on historical actors elsewhere. Tracing connections, we can assess queerness and find solidarity.

Queerness, through its amorphous form, permits a merging of different historical voices and allow scholars to write an intellectual history synchronically and diachronically. It does so by allowing fluid semantic fields of actor-based concepts, inviting historians to question and provincialise sexual concepts of identity and gender expression beyond fixed categories. In perpetual dialogue and constant movement, the writing of a global intellectual history inspired by queer history is not only about adding voices on the margin to bigger diffusionist narratives and genealogies, but an invitation for historians to deconstruct fundamental historical concepts at the base of their inquiries. In a more local context—such as the memory of Nazi atrocities and the persecution of same-sex desires, sexualities, and intimacies—this opening of fixed categories implies a democratisation of memory culture and opening of categories created by perpetrators. It adds nuance to historical research and calls for better analyses in the archives. In a global perspective, it broadens the global historians' multiperspectivity, enables a reflection on epistemological power in the archive, and unveils power asymmetries. Learning from queer history, global historians can assess global entanglements and write a new intellectual history beyond fixed categories without giving prominence to European concepts.

The Transculturality of Virtue in the Early Modern Mediterranean: A Case Study in Florentine-Ottoman Relations [1]

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Introduction

Italian-Ottoman relations during the era of Sultan Mehmed II (r. 1449–1451 and 1453–1481) have long attained an exemplary status in studies on the early modern Mediterranean. The particularly diverse cultural interests of the conqueror of Constantinople, his unique position as a ruler 'between East and West,' and his patronage of Italian artists excellently demonstrate the interconnected nature of the basin.[2] In the last years, the decade-long mythologisation of Mehmed II has already given way to a systematisation of his political, cultural, and intellectual agendas, and the actors that helped shape it, thanks in large part to numerous insights from Ottoman studies.[3] Regarding the intellectual dimension of the Ottoman court, new research has confirmed and refined previous theses on a heterogeneous culture that is highly capable of adaptation and connection.[4] The Sultan engaged with the world outside his empire on his own terms but with a great capacity for understanding the

[1] For comments on this article, I am grateful to the other authors in this thematic section, particularly Leonie Wolters and Daniel Kolland. I am also indebted to Frederik Schröer, as well as two thorough and kind anonymous peer-reviewers. Additionally, I would like to extend my thanks to Alexandra Holmes for doing the language editing on all our articles and to the team of *Cromohs*, especially to Emanuele Giusti for copyediting our articles with great care.

[2] FRANZ BABINGER, *Mehmed der Eroberer und seine Zeit* (München: F. Bruckmann, 1959); HALIL İNALCIK, 'Mehmed the Conqueror (1432-1481) and his Time,' *Speculum* 35, no. 3 (1960): 408–27; NESLIHAN ASUTAY-EFFENBERGER and ULRICH REHM, eds, *Sultan Mehmet II. Eroberer Konstantinopels – Patron der Künste* (Köln: Böhlau, 2009); JOHN FREELY, *The Grand Turk: Sultan Mehmet II - Conqueror of Constantinople, Master of an Empire and Lord of Two Seas* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2009); JULIAN RABY, 'A Sultan of Paradox: Mehmed the Conqueror as a Patron of the Arts,' *Oxford Art Journal* 5, no. 1 (1982): 3–8; Caroline Campbell and ALAN CHONG, eds, *Bellini and The East. Boston, Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, 14 December 2005 – 26 March 2006*; *London, National Gallery of Art, 12 April – 25 June 2006*, exhibition catalogue (London: National Gallery Company, 2005).

[3] HALIL İNALCIK, *Fatih Sultan Mehemmed Han: İki Karanın Sultanı, İki Denizin Hakanı, Kayser-i Rum* (Istanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası, 2019); GÜLRÜ NECIPOĞLU, 'Visual Cosmopolitanism and Creative Translation: Artistic Conversations with Renaissance Italy in Mehmed II's Constantinople,' *Muqarnas* 29 (2012): 1–81; ÇIĞDEM KAFESIOĞLU, *Constantinopolis/Istanbul: Cultural Encounter, Imperial Vision, and the Construction of the Ottoman Capital* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2009); CEMAL KAFADAR, *Between Two Worlds: The Construction of the Ottoman State* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

[4] HUSEYIN YILMAZ, *Caliphate Redefined: The Mystical Turn in Ottoman Political Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018); CHRISTOPHER MARKIEWICZ, *The Crisis of Kingship in Late Medieval Islam: Persian Emigres and the Making of Ottoman Sovereignty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019); MARINOS SARIYANNIS, *A History of Ottoman Political Thought up to the Nineteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2019); OSCAR AGUIRRE-MANDUJANO, *Occasions for Poetry: Imagination and Literary Language in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, forthcoming).

Cromohs (Cyber Review of Modern Historiography), ISSN 1123-7023, 26/2023

DOI: 10.36253/cromohs-14743

legitimising regimes around him. As a consequence, studies of Renaissance Italy must re-evaluate their sources in this new light. This requires methodological decisions on approaching a critical reading of Italian sources while seriously considering Italian engagement with the Ottoman Empire.

As a case in point, I aim to connect this task with the theme of the thematic section, 'Analytical Concepts for Transcultural Settings,' in two ways. Firstly, I intend to provide a specific example of how Renaissance humanism and the intellectual culture of the Ottoman court came together and mutually influenced each other through the actions of individuals. For this, I choose the previously understudied political communication between early Medici Florence and the court of Mehmed II. As I will show, conceptions of virtue ethics played a central role here by construing political actions as ethical conduct. The feasibility of such interaction was significantly based on the indirectly shared heritage of virtue ethics from classical antiquity, manifested through different genealogies for Italians and Ottomans. Secondly, I believe the concept of transculturality can be useful in describing and understanding early modern Mediterranean culture in general, and specifically between the Italian city-states and the Ottoman court. Although the term transculturality has been historically employed in various contexts, its theoretical and empirical foundations are still in need of concrete studies. Based on my analysis in this article, I propose understanding transculturality not as a permanent condition but as a process actively propelled by the actors involved, creating a state of cultural in-betweenness observable by historians.

Incorporating global intellectual history as an analytical framework proves particularly practical here, as it enables us to comprehend the linguistic, political, philosophical, and rhetorical bases on which the actors themselves captured, articulated, and negotiated their Mediterranean encounters. By doing so, we can prevent transculturality from becoming an anachronistic approach, allowing us to imbue the concept with meaning directly derived from the actors' own perspectives and understandings.[5]

This shift is crucial because, until recently, there was no intellectual dimension to the history of early Ottoman-Italian encounters. In many instances, the historiography focused either on Renaissance Italian perceptions of Ottoman culture and warfare,[6] or highlighted the role of practices, material cultures, and aesthetic cultures

[5] See the *Introduction* to this thematic section by SEBASTIAN CONRAD and myself, see also: WOLFGANG WELSCH, *Transkulturalität: Realität – Geschichte – Aufgabe* (Wien: new academic press, 2017).

[6] ALMUT HÖFERT, *Den Feind Beschreiben: 'Türkengefahr' und europäisches Wissen über das Osmanische Reich 1450-1600* (Frankfurt: Campus, 2003); NANCY BISAHA, *Creating East and West: Renaissance Humanists and the Ottoman Turks* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004); MARGARET MESERVE, *Empires of Islam in Renaissance Historical Thought* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008); MUSTAFA SOYKUT, *Italian Perceptions of the Ottomans* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2011).

in diplomacy, trade, and cultural exchanges.[7] Intellectual entanglements were considered only when they illuminated these aspects. Moreover, a methodological Eurocentrism often dominated in interpretation.[8] The intellectual culture of Italian humanism is and has long been researched in greater detail than contemporary thought and ideas in the early Ottoman Empire and its sources. This research often fetishised the idea of the Renaissance and thus imposed a specific temporality on the Ottomans, making them appear to imitate a humanist understanding of the world they inhabited and therefore a latecomer to developments taking place elsewhere. The reign of Mehmed II marked a political, ideological, and intellectual turning point for the Ottomans, but it was not oriented towards Renaissance humanism. Instead, Mehmed II centralised the Ottoman Empire and adapted its political philosophy accordingly, moving from the aspiration to be *primus inter pares* in a tribal federation towards rulership modelled on other more universalist examples in the Islamic world, guided by Arabic and Persian philosophies.[9] Remarkably, Mehmed II's court became 'a dynamic seedbed of intellectual change and scientific investigation,' where 'scholars could posit numerous and disparate doctrinal positions, each referencing particular texts, through which the scholars gave their own syntheses based on their own unique perspectives.'[10] An intellectual elite grew at the imperial court, crossing the paths of academia and politics in their careers, which opened up rich possibilities for engaging with the world around them. Although this article is based on Florentine materials and consequently focuses on Italian actors, I acknowledge the growing body of publications on the intellectual culture of the early modern Ottoman Empire. Incorporating them at the actor level is beyond the scope of this current work, yet their potential to enrich and refine future research remains significant.

The Florentines felt this Ottoman sea-change and they profited from it. A handful of galleys every year sailed between Florence and Constantinople carrying goods, with Florence maintaining a consul in Constantinople, presenting gifts to the Sultan, and forging anti-Venetian alliances. Admittedly, the Florentines represented a minor actor in the Italian peninsula to Mehmed II. Yet, Florentine-Ottoman relations have received disproportionately little attention in research compared to, for

[7] CLAIRE NORTON and ANNA CONTADINI, eds, *The Renaissance and the Ottoman World* (London: Routledge, 2013); ZOLTÁN BIEDERMANN, ANNE GERRITSEN, and GIORGIO RIELLO, eds, *Global Gifts: The Material Culture of Diplomacy in Early Modern Eurasia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); TIMOTHY MCCALL and SEAN ROBERTS, 'Art and the Material Culture of Diplomacy,' in *Italian Renaissance Diplomacy: A Sourcebook*, eds MONICA AZZOLINI and ISABELLA LAZZARINI (Toronto: Brepols, 2017), 214–33.

[8] ULRICH BECK and EDGAR GRANDE, 'Jenseits des methodologischen Nationalismus: Außereuropäische und europäische Variationen der Zweiten Moderne,' *Soziale Welt* 61, no. 3–4 (2010): 187–216.

[9] HÜSEYIN YILMAZ, 'Books on Ethics and Politics: The Art of Governing Oneself and Others at the Ottoman Court,' in *Treasure of Knowledge: An Inventory of the Ottoman Palace Library*, eds GÜLRÜ NECIPOGLU, CEMAL KAFADAR, and CORNELL H. FLEISCHER (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 509–26; YILMAZ, *Caliphate Redefined*.

[10] EFE MURAT BALIKÇIOĞLU, *Verifying the Truth on Their Own Terms. Ottoman Philosophical Culture and the Court Debate Between Zeyrek (d. 903/1497-98 [?]) and Ḫocazāde (d. 893/1488)* (Venice: Edizioni Ca' Foscari, 2023), 3–4.

example, Venice.[11] While the question of how the Florentines could establish such a stable connection to the Ottoman court is yet to be answered, taking the intellectual dimension into account allows for a unique insight: during the reign of Sultan Mehmed II, those humanists in charge of the Florentine chancellery and the Ottoman court engaged in a debate about what constituted virtuous rule. This debate was conducted not only as one would imagine—through comprehensive treatises by scholars, extensive correspondence, or even a purposeful discussion—but also took place in the rhetorical framework (itself shaped by the debate) for diplomatic and political communication. Although there were crucial differences between Ottoman and Florentine conceptions of virtue, what united them was a mutual recognition of the importance of ethical leadership, personal conduct, and the pursuit of wisdom in governance. The shared acknowledgement of these values facilitated interactions and negotiations, allowing each to recognise a form of virtuous conduct in the other, even when expressed through different cultural lenses.

In the following, I will present three arguments in three steps, which together are intended to provide a revisionist impulse to studies of early modern Mediterranean intellectual culture. Initially, I will delve into the distinct nature of virtue ethics and its place in fifteenth-century Florence and the Ottoman Empire. It is crucial to recognise that virtue ethics represented merely one facet of a vast intellectual landscape but was particularly pertinent within diplomatic communications for framing and legitimising mutual claims. This is because, within both Italian and Ottoman political thought, the ideal of virtuousness as a demand was intrinsically linked to virtuousness as a duty. Secondly, through letters from the Florentine state archives, I will demonstrate how virtue emerged as the linchpin of Florentine-Ottoman political dialogue. These correspondences and the humanists who penned them illustrate the subtlety with which Italians and Ottomans could engage with each other and negotiate their needs with refined precision. In the final step, I will integrate these insights and examine them through the lens of transculturality. In doing so, I will reference Thomas E. Burman's concept of 'deep intellectual unity,'[12] which moves beyond the simple binary of similarity and divergence, and argue that the essence of the Florentine-Ottoman relationship lies in the shared reinvigoration of a Mediterranean legacy. Ultimately, I aim to outline implications for further explorations of Mediterranean transculturality through the prism of Italian-Ottoman relations.

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[11] ERIC R. DURSTELER, 'On Renaissance Bazaars and Battlefields: Recent Scholarship on Mediterranean Cultural Contacts,' *Journal of Early Modern History* 15, no. 5 (2011): 413–34; E. NATALIE ROTHMAN, *Brokering Empire: Trans-imperial Subjects between Venice and Istanbul* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012); ERIC R. DURSTELER, *Venetians in Constantinople* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008).

[12] THOMAS E. BURMAN, 'The Four Seas of Medieval Mediterranean Intellectual History,' in *Interfaith Relationships and Perceptions of the Other in the Medieval Mediterranean: Essays in Memory of Olivia Remie Constable*, eds SARAH C. DAVIS-SECORD, BELÉN VICÉNS, and ROBIN J. E. VOSE (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), 15–48.

The Nature of Virtue

In the late Middle Ages and the dawn of the early modern period, Italian, Greek, and Ottoman thinkers redefined virtue as one of several key political ideas. Though the exact interpretation of virtue varied by context, it consistently emphasised the moral qualities of the soul. These qualities were seen as essential for ethical leadership, personal integrity, and wise governance. My examination of virtue's transcultural dimensions begins with the pivotal moment of Constantinople's fall in 1453—a watershed event that prompted a spectrum of interpretations. For instance, Cosimo de' Medici (1389–1464), the politically dominant figure in Florence, discussed the occurrence with his humanist friends and advisers, Poggio Bracciolini and Matteo Palmieri. They found it regrettable but predictable, believing that great empires fall when their time comes and that 'peoples of virtue [*virtus*] take the lead and aim to guide their destiny [and they will] emerge victorious from every battle.'[13] Cosimo undoubtedly considered himself among the virtuous, but in this case, he likely had Sultan Mehmed II in mind, whose virtue many observers thought surpassed that of the late Byzantine empire. The history written for the Ottoman Sultan by the Greek historian Kritovoulos of Imbros (c.1400–c.1460) notes that Mehmed was distinguished and destined for success by his *ἀρετή*—virtue. Kritovoulos also explained a special intention in his writing: to make the Sultan's qualities known not just to an Ottoman audience but also to a Greek-speaking one, a significant endeavour since a considerable portion of Mehmed II's subjects were now Greek.[14] But, indeed, the addition of virtue was not unique to Kritovoulos: Ottoman writers such as Tursun Bey, too, used it to describe the Sultan, adding to our lexicon *fazîlet* (virtue, broadly speaking) and *adalet* (the central virtue of justice).[15] Virtue was evidently a widespread currency of appraisal, but did all those mentioned really speak of the same concept? No, and yet, yes.

Each reference to virtue represents a specific concept, not only linguistically but also culturally.[16] Cosimo was undoubtedly influenced by the vigorous debates among Florentine humanists, which I will discuss further below. As suggested by the Latin root '*vir*,' *virtus* carries a semantic reference to manliness (and by extension, creative power),[17] that in Cosimo's time was additionally influenced by older Greek and Latin conceptions linking virtue predominantly to excellence of character and intelligence. While Kritovoulos would have agreed with this, he modelled his writing

[13] Bryn Mawr College Library, MS 47 [POGGIO BRACCIOLINI, *Miseria Humanae Conditionis*], 2v–3r.
[14] KRITOVOULOS OF IMBROS, *History of Mehmed the Conqueror*, Eng. transl. CHARLES T. RIGGS (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1954), 3–4; Kritovoulos use of virtue/ἀρετή happens also in the form of ενάρετες, the introduction's Greek text can be found in: KRITOVOULOS OF IMBROS, *Critobuli Imbriotae Historiae*, Eng. transl. DIETHER REINSCH (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1983), 3–7.
[15] MARINOS SARIYANNIS, 'The Princely Virtues as Presented in Ottoman Political and Moral Literature,' *Turcica* 43 (2011): 121–44.
[16] MARGRIT PERNAU and DOMINIC SACHSENMEIER, 'History of Concepts and Global History,' in *Global Conceptual History: A Reader*, eds PERNAU and SACHSENMEIER (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 1–28.
[17] SILKE SCHWANDT, *Virtus. Zur Semantik eines politischen Konzepts im Mittelalter* (Frankfurt: Campus, 2014).

on an ancient Greek prototype, Arrian's *The Anabasis of Alexander*, evoking an *ἀρετή* concept closely linked to the superiority (aristos/ἄριστος) of one person. On the other hand, Tursun Bey, in his history of Mehmed II, *Tarih-i Ebu'l Feth'*, was one of the first to compile virtue ethical debates from various Islamicate sources into one comprehensive Ottoman political treatise, including both classical Islamic and contemporary courtly discussions; these emphasised virtue as fulfilling one's duties to Allah and to one's subjects through honesty, justice, compassion, humility, and patience.[18] Taken together, the meaning of virtue was far from universal. Yet, had the authors engaged in a direct conversation, they would have agreed on several commonalities. This includes the conviction that virtue was a concept that connected the ethical and political realms. And it includes the authorities who had previously discussed virtue in these terms. Plato (*Aflaton*) and Aristotle (*Aristu*) would have been relevant names for all, even though they might have placed different weight on them historically, philosophically, and in significance. That many contemporary interpretations of virtue were based on interpretations that, among others, drew upon these ancient Greeks, was generally undisputed, even if the extent to which any text or idea discussed truly stemmed from the Greek philosophers might not have always been evident to contemporaries.[19]

Consequently, a connection persisted in political thought between soulcraft and statecraft across various locations and languages around the Mediterranean. This means that the actors shaping political thought not only attributed special importance to the character and judgement of rulers but also viewed the emphasis, education, learning, and practice of moral and intellectual virtues as a particularly crucial part of any political enterprise.

The exploration of this intellectual connection, even though not necessarily evident to every participant, reveals significant historical insights. It prompts an examination of how diverse Mediterranean actors engaged with this shared intellectual heritage upon encountering each other. Did they use, from their perspective, the same concepts as within their usual sphere? Or did they adapt these for a possibly different audience? Can we, therefore, discern intellectual currents across the sea, possibly influences, a dialogue, or should the old notion of the divided sea maintain its validity?

Turning our attention to Italy, we immediately encounter an analytical challenge in this endeavour. In terms of virtue, the Italian context has been far more thoroughly researched than the Ottoman, with virtue long being known as a central

[18] KENEN INAN, 'On the Sources of Tursun Bey's Tarih-i Ebu'l Feth,' in *The Ottoman Empire. Myths, Realities and 'Black Holes'*, eds EUGENIA KERMELI and OKTAY ÖZEL (Piscataway Township: Gorgias Press, 2012), 75–110.
[19] HÜSEYIN YILMAZ, 'Books on Ethics and Politics.'

concept of Italian humanism.[20] Just a few years ago, James Hankins published a voluminous monograph on the *Virtue Politics* of Italian humanists. Contrary to classical streams of humanism research, he argued that the cornerstone of political stability and legitimacy for Renaissance humanists was virtue. Nobility, more than being hereditary, was evident in a ruler's actions, which were determined by his virtues; conveniently, something the humanists could teach him.[21] Hankins' work was generally met with enthusiasm, but among the criticisms raised was that Hankins did not sufficiently investigate the significance of the social and professional standing of humanists, as well as their relationships with powerful patrons, in the formulation of their political theories. This oversight led to an incomplete analysis of the interactions between humanist thinkers and their socio-political environment.[22] But it is this environment that allows me to bring Italians and Ottomans closer together.

In Florence, as other studies have shown, virtue was indeed a thoroughly practical matter, largely because it was ideologically closely linked to political legitimacy. The fulfilment of the cardinal virtues (or the pursuit of religious virtues) was not only part of a government's representative repertoire; they were also meant to be exemplified in practice. Thus, the treatises of well-known humanists like Petrarch, Coluccio Salutati, Leonardo Bruni, and many others contain implicit suggestions on how rulers could embody virtue.[23] In doing so, these humanists admired the Roman Republic and drew a connection between the virtuousness of the rulers and the stability of the social order in the city and state. But humanists were not mere passive observers of daily events; they were themselves part of the political machinery. As political subordinates, they promoted, demanded, adapted, and legitimised local politics. In Florence, this latter relationship is particularly evident because many chancellors of the Republic were also prominent humanists who were expected to use their skills for the internal and external legitimisation of the Republic or its respective governments.[24] It was these humanists, who were so convinced that virtue was the answer to the question of good and stable political relations, who would also be responsible for the shaping of the Florentine-Ottoman communication.

In the introduction, I mention that the dominance of Renaissance humanism in the study of Ottoman-Italian relations often led to the assumption that Mehmed II was an eclectic admirer of the same. It is important to briefly discuss that this assumption carries a strong teleological component. Italian humanism is rightfully

[20] JOHN G. A. POCOCK, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975).
[21] JAMES HANKINS, *Virtue Politics: Soulcraft and Statecraft in Renaissance Italy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2019.
[22] HANAN YORAN, 'Virtue Politics and its Limits: A Review Essay,' *The Historian* 84, no. 1 (2022): 49–68.
[23] GARY IANZITI, *Writing History in Renaissance Italy: Leonardo Bruni and the Uses of the Past* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2012); LAWRENCE ROTHFIELD, *The Measure of Man: Liberty, Virtue, and Beauty in the Florentine Renaissance* (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2021).
[24] ROBERT D. BLACK, *Benedetto Accolti and the Florentine Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

closely associated with the project of the rebirth of antiquity and, as such, occupies an important place in the narrative of European history. Did the Ottomans, then, need the humanists to discover antiquity for themselves? This question alone is problematic because it essentially incorporates the Ottomans into a humanistic version of history, rather than striving to understand the Ottoman perception of the world and its history on its own terms. For some time, Western scholars argued that Mehmed II was an exception among Ottoman sultans to explicitly highlight his seemingly European orientation.[25] Current Ottoman studies vehemently contradict this view, and a focus on virtue ethics can show us why.[26]

Let us begin with a general observation: unlike the political dwarf of Renaissance Florence, the Ottoman Empire was an empire expanding across two continents, encountering various traditions of political legitimisation. Due to the complex nature of the sources, the political-philosophical appearance of the empire can change depending on the angle from which it is viewed. In this regard, it is certainly worthwhile to keep in mind Christopher Markiewicz's observation that the empire was part of a series of successor states to the Mongols, Chinghissid Ilkhanates, and lastly Timurids, who struggled for means, ways, and ideas to legitimise their rule, utilising the ideas of sovereignty held by their predecessors and promoted by their neighbours. Markiewicz, through the example of the scholar Idrīs-i Bidlisī, portrays an era in which the Islamic world and its history of ideas were more dynamic and intertwined than long assumed. Bidlisī worked on and brought ideas about kingship, the universe, and faith to competing Islamic courts.[27] How central Bidlisī was to Ottoman political thought remains a matter of debate,[28] but he serves as an entry point into the intellectual climate at the court of Mehmed II during what Hüseyin Yilmaz calls the 'Age of Excitement.' Yilmaz clarifies that Mehmed II's reign represents a kind of intermediary step between the somewhat indecisive early Ottomans, politically reliant on tribal alliances, and the more clearly ideologically defined Ottomans of the sixteenth century, inclined intellectually to Sufism and mysticism. He helps us understand the texture of this transitional phase by pointing out that at and around the court, there were 'juridical, Sufistic, administrative, and philosophical' perspectives discussing rule and its legitimisation. Consequently, we encounter a series of changing concepts like *dawla* to *devlet* (state), sultanate, caliphate, or virtue—each undergoing a multidimensional shift in meaning.[29] This shift in meaning was driven by many scholars, who developed, in competition with each

[25] BABINGER, *Mehmed der Eroberer;* RABY, 'A Sultan of Paradox.'
[26] METIN MUSTAFA, *The Ottoman Renaissance and the Early Modern World, 1400-1699* (Sydney: Centre for Ottoman Renaissance and Civilisation, 2022).
[27] CHRISTOPHER MARKIEWICZ, *The Crisis of Kingship in Late Medieval Islam. Persian Emigres and the Making of Ottoman Sovereignty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).
[28] ALI ANOOSHAHR, 'The Crisis of Kingship in Late Medieval Islam: Persian Emigres and the Making of Ottoman Sovereignty by Christopher Markiewicz (review),' *Journal of the Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association* 8, no. 2 (2021): 361–63.
[29] YILMAZ, *Caliphate Redefined*, esp. 95.

other, a vast repertoire into which the Sultan intervened, and orchestrated through patronage and commissions of classical Islamic treatises.[30]

From this intellectually rich starting point, one should not be misled; Mehmed II faced legitimatory challenges that required ideological openness but also made sultanic centralisation indispensable. I suspect that virtue ethics played a mediating role in this. Initially, Ottoman rulers had referred to the cardinal virtues, which were meant to distinguish them as *primus inter pares* among other tribes and demonstrate a predominantly secular leadership.[31] Under Mehmed II's rule, the Ghazi warriors, who had previously supported the empire, were increasingly pushed back in favour of an imperial elite that was inclined to Arabic and then Persian traditions.[32] With this elite came more sophisticated traditions of virtue, portraying the Sultan as a dispenser of virtues to the world. This is exemplified by the systematisation of Tursun Bey, even if it was completed only after Mehmed II's death. Tursun was the first Ottoman author to explain the concept of *nizam-ı alem* (order of the world), in which the Sultan is given the role of a perpetual organiser who preserves the world from chaos. In this vision, virtues are a foundation; on one hand, the Sultan's own, which he radiates into the world with the help of his viziers, and on the other hand, those of his subjects, which he awakens and leads to flourish. Gottfried Hagen has pointed out that *nizam-ı alem* should neither be understood as descriptive ('realistic') nor as a counter-image ('idealistic'). Instead, he proposes that *nizam-ı alem* designates a permanent discourse of legitimacy, to which anyone speaking 'about' and 'to' it contributed.[33] Or, as Mehmed II's vizier Sinan Pasha wrote in his *Ma'ârifnâme*, 'every place has an order that comes with it, and so every province needs a law that befits it.' The order of the world (*cihanın nizamı ve alem intizamı*) is best secured when mutual protection and respect are instigated among people that naturally differ, and virtue was the basis for that.[34]

Tursun Bey certainly does not reflect 'the' ideology of Mehmed II, but he can help us understand an important point: In communications with various old, new, and potential subjects, and in the succession struggle for legitimatory claims in the East and West, virtue ethics offered Mehmed II a potentially universal language that still promised him ideological coherence and control.

This angle reveals two significant insights. First, virtue was not only an integral part of political philosophy and the political language in both Florence and the

[30] ABDURRAHMAN ATÇIL, *Scholars and Sultans in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016); BALIKÇIOĞLU, *Verifying the Truth on Their Own Terms*.
[31] KAREN BARKEY, *Empire of Difference. The Ottomans in Comparative Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).
[32] This point will be challenged or refined by the forthcoming work of AGUIRRE-MANDUJANO, *Occasions for Poetry*.
[33] GOTTFRIED HAGEN, 'Legitimacy and World Order,' in: *Legitimizing the Order: Ottoman Rhetoric of State Power*, eds MAURUS REINKOWSKI and HAKAN KARATEKE (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 55–83.
[34] Quot. in SARIYANNIS, *A History of Ottoman Political Thought up to the Nineteenth Century,* 54–55.

Ottoman Empire but also facilitated the articulation of the relationship between rulers and the ruled. Moreover, it allowed individuals engaged in each region's intellectual culture to influence this dynamic. However, this overlap does not shed new light on Renaissance humanism or the Ottoman perspective. The political relevance of virtue ethics across borders, and its potential to permeate discourses both geographically and culturally, can only be discerned by carefully observing and contextualising how the actors employed it with each other and navigated the possibilities it gave them.

Florence, the Ottoman Court, and the Quest for Virtue

Following the fall of Constantinople and throughout the thirty-year reign of Mehmed II, the Republic of Florence maintained favourable relations with the Ottoman court. While neither party viewed the other as indispensable in terms of trade, extensive correspondence found in the Florentine state archives attests to a robust and carefully cultivated relationship between them. This association was not without risks for the Florentines. Other Italian states and the papacy called into question the republic's Christian allegiance during periods characterised by papal calls for crusades and the lengthy Venetian-Ottoman War (1463–1479). Excessively pursuing either of these alliances could result in the Sultan's disfavour and jeopardise Florentine merchants and ships in the Bosporus.[35] Existing studies have examined specific aspects of this relationship, including Florentine chancellor Benedetto Accolti's anti-Ottoman politics, the *El Gran Turco* print presented to the Sultan by Florentine merchants, and the portrait medal of Mehmed II commissioned by the Medici and crafted by Florentine artist Bertoldo di Giovanni.[36] But these studies often overlook the Ottoman perspective and fail to establish a comprehensive framework that transcends a purely political and economic interpretation of Florentine interests.[37]

Part of the reason for this overlook lies in the political orientation that can be found among many Italian and Florentine humanists. Driven by the need to explain their present, but also by sheer political necessity and a degree of fear, many were proponents of the idea of launching an anti-Ottoman crusade.[38] Accordingly, in many of their public writings, humanists portrayed the Ottomans as a barbaric, or at least dangerous, people from the East, who could only be civilised to a limited

[35] MIKAIL ACIPINAR, *Osmanli Imparatorlugu ve Floransa: Akdeniz'de Diplomasi, Ticaret ve Korsanlik 1453-1599* (Istanbul: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2016).
[36] ROBERT D. BLACK, *Benedetto Accolti and the Florentine Renaissance*; ALBERTO SAVIELLO, 'El Gran Turco als 'maskierter' Tyrann. Ein Topos druckgraphischer Darstellungen osmanischer Sultane im 15. und 16. Jahrhundert,' in *Islamic Artefacts in the Mediterranean World: Trade, Gift Exchange and Artistic Transfer*, eds CATARINA SCHMIDT ARCANGELI and GERHARD WOLF (Venice: Marsilio, 2010), 217–30; EMIL JACOBS, 'Die Mehemmed-Medaille des Bertoldo,' *Jahrbuch der Preußischen Kunstsammlungen* 48 (1927): 1–17.
[37] A notable exception is LORENZO TANZINI, 'Il Magnifico e il Turco. Elementi politici, economici e culturali nelle relazioni tra Firenze e Impero Ottomano al tempo di Lorenzo de' Medici,' *RiMe. Rivista dell'Istituto di Storia dell'Europa Mediterranea* 4 (2010): 282–89.
[38] JAMES HANKINS, 'Renaissance Crusaders: Humanist Crusade Literature in the Age of Mehmed II,' *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 49 (1995): 111–207.

extent.[39] There is no doubt that humanists spoke differently in public within the Italian peninsula than they did in diplomatic contacts with the Ottoman court. In a remarkable study that takes Renaissance Florence as its starting point, Sean Roberts points out this contradiction.[40] At the core of his research is Francesco Berlinghieri's famous print work, the *Geographia*, a contemporary interpretation of Ptolemy. This book, made possible by the contributions of emigrants from Ottoman territories, circulated among Italian elites and was even chosen as a gift for the Ottoman court. Intellectually and materially, Roberts argues, the book represents a shared Mediterranean interest in luxury goods, past knowledge, and intellectual sophistication. Yet, Roberts cautions against the notion of speaking about a 'transcultural Renaissance'; the anti-Ottoman ideological divides, he says, were too deep, not only among the humanists but even within the *Geographia* itself. This observation is helpful here, since Roberts seems to confuse transculturality as an analytical concept with the notion of a culturally and politically harmonious Mediterranean. But as I show now, in their letters to the Ottomans, the same humanists who advocated for crusade engaged deeply with the Ottoman mindset, fostering transcultural virtue, in fact.

This perspective begins with Cosimo's adviser, Poggio Bracciolini. In the fateful years from 1453 to 1458, Bracciolini was the Florentine chancellor. Undoubtedly, his most important task was to provide the Republic with a degree of continuity amid the frequently changing political waters.[41] Another of his tasks was to give the Republic its voice, representatively, but also diplomatically. The Florentines might have been surprised but, probably also because the Venetians initially fell out of favour with Mehmed II, the Sultan seemed willing to greet Florentine merchants in Constantinople and strengthen their previously weak position in the city.[42] The community was modest, numbering less than fifty individuals, yet the opportunity was significantly beneficial.[43] The first preserved communication that Bracciolini's chancellery had with the Ottoman court humbly accepted this honour. A letter from 1455 conveyed the Florentines' appreciation for the benevolence [*benivolentia*] they received from the Sultan. Bracciolini had chosen the word carefully. He followed fellow humanist Leonardo Bruni in studying its meaning in ancient texts, and these led him to assert that benevolence should serve as the foundation of any communal or political relationship, if it relied upon the virtue of the superior.[44] Indeed, to

[39] MESERVE, *Empires of Islam*; SOYKUT, *Italian Perceptions of the Ottomans*.
[40] SEAN ROBERTS, *Printing A Mediterranean World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013).
[41] WILLIAM SHEPERD, *The Life of Poggio Bracciolini* (Liverpool: Green and Longman, 1837).
[42] HALIL İNALCIK, 'Ottoman Galata, 1453-1553,' in *Première rencontre internationale sur l'Empire Ottoman et la Turquie Moderne. Recherches sur la ville ottomane: le cas du quartier de Galata*, ed. EDHEM ELDEM (Istanbul-Paris: IFEA-Isis, 1991), 17–116.
[43] Francesco Pagnini del Ventura quotes a lost page of Benedetto Dei in FRANCESCO PAGNINI DEL VENTURA, *Della decima e di varie altre gravezze* (Florence: s.n., 1765), vol. 1, book 2, 203.
[44] OUTI MERISALO, 'The *Historiae Florentini Populi* by Poggio Bracciolini. Genesis and Fortune of an Alternative History of Florence,' in *Poggio Bracciolini and the Re(dis)covery of Antiquity: Textual and Material Traditions*, eds ROBERTA RICCI and ERIC L. PUMORY (Florence: Firenze University Press, 2020), 25–40.

Bracciolini, benevolence could insert reciprocity even in hierarchal relationships.[45] The following words thus assured the Sultan that the hierarchy was clear, since '[we praise your benevolence], not as much as your illustrious virtue deserves, but as much as we are able to give thanks to Your Highness.' It is speculation to think here about the semantics that benevolence opened in Bracciolini's mind, but, if he followed Bruni closely, he saw benevolence and virtue fostering a meaningful relationship between a ruler and his subjects, that would allow all parties involved to develop their own virtue further. The Florentines made it clear that they were subjects, for they signed their letter '*tam civibus quam subditis*'—meaning 'both citizens and subjects.'[46]

How would Mehmed II have interpreted this message; did he even receive or understand it? It is not known who exactly received the early letters from Florence or how they made their way to the court (at that time in Bursa). However, the mechanisms surrounding Mehmed II suggest that the letter was understood with nuance, albeit possibly with different cultural emphases. While the Sultan did not speak Latin, both recent and older studies show that the Ottoman court's communication was facilitated by the presence of multilingual staff. These individuals often served in the practical administrative service of the Sublime Porte and were also engaged intellectually through translations or their own works. It remains uncertain whether the letter was first translated into Greek and then for Mehmed II. Nonetheless, it can be experimentally read against the backdrop of one of the more prominent classical works at Mehmed II's court, Niẓām al-Mulk's *Siyasat-Nama*.[47] Al-Mulk, whose name can be read as 'orderer of the king,' also left a significant impression on Tursun Bey. For al-Mulk, the central task of the Sultan and his viziers was to prevent the world from drifting into chaos, for which purpose he let his virtue (*faẓilet*) radiate into society. Within this grand mission, al-Mulk also provided very practical advice: the Sultan should be generous (*sehâvet*), as he was, after all, the 'head of the household of the world.' This generosity also allowed him to maintain a closer bond and balance among rival groups; a notion that we also find directly in Tursun Bey's discussion of the royal virtues.[48] As distant descendants of the Aristotelian discussion of *philia*/benevolence (φιλία/εὔνοια), the meanings of *benivolentia* and *sehâvet* are by no means identical. Yet both virtue concepts refer to the social function of hierarchical benevolence to foster a communal and political bond among people. It is therefore

[45] As he argues in POGGIO BRACCIOLINI, *Historiae de Varietate Fortunae* (Paris: Typis Antonii Urbani Coustelier, 1723), epistola XXXVI, 248–50.
[46] The letters I refer to are in the *Archivio di Stato di Firenze* [ASFi]. This one is in Signori, Missive, 39, 171r–72v. The quot. is '[...] de quo agimus non quantas meretur vestra inclita virtus, sed quantas possumus gratias Celsitudini vestre.'
[47] SARIYANNIS, *A History of Ottoman Political Thought up to the Nineteenth Century*, 45–46; NIZAM AL-MULK, *The Book of Government or Rules for Kings: The Siyar al Muluk or Siyasat-nama of Niẓam al-Mulk*, Eng. transl. HUBERT DARKE (London: Routledge, 2015).
[48] TURSUN BEY, *Târîh-i Ebü'l-feth*, ed. MERTOL TULUM (Istanbul: Fetih Cemiyeti, 1977), 18–21.

significant that the Florentine message would have been understood on a deeper level of meaning, which set the tone for communication to come.

But the Florentines did not just rely on Mehmed II's translation apparatus to make themselves understood. While subsequent letters concerning trade also invoked the Sultan's benevolence and virtue,[49] a copy of Leonardo Bruni's *History of the Florentine People* was sent to the Ottoman court, clearly outlining the political visions of the Florentine Republic. The backstory of this unusual gift likely includes Cosimo de Medici making some domestic enemies, leading to Poggio Bracciolini's chancellorship not being renewed.[50] His successor, Benedetto Accolti, was a proponent of a new crusade idea and thus at least less reliable in communications with the Ottomans.[51] However, the merchants needed to strengthen their position in Constantinople and would eventually require permanent representation, a consul, as they also informed Cosimo.[52] In 1458, a record from the Florentine authority responsible for overseas trade, the *Consoli del Mare*, notes 'to make a gift to the Turk,' which was to cost around 150 ducats.[53] The representative and political dimension of this gift suggests that it was Leonardo Bruni's *History of the Florentine People*, found in the register of the Topkapı Sarayı as *Risālatun fī bayāni madīnati Fulūrindīn*.[54] There, the book was used for learning about the customs of various places, an important tool for Mehmed II in aiding him to cautiously integrate them into his empire. Accordingly, the palace library was a place where the administrative forces of the site could further their education.[55] Through Bruni's book, they could learn about the intentions the Florentines pursued using virtue ethics. Bruni's main theme in the book was civic harmony, and the belief that virtue was key to achieving it. Bruni, a skilled translator of Aristotle, was also a political pragmatist. He candidly admits in his work that Florence was not free from internal conflicts, but emphasises that the virtue of its citizens and mutual goodwill could always ensure the flourishing of the republic. For Bruni, virtue could create unity across class and political boundaries and maintain order; a fitting attitude to also convey to the Ottomans. It suggested not

[49] ASFi, Signori, Missive I Cancelleria, 42, fol. 92v: 'benivolentia persequatur […] in iuriis tutos ac secures et quam famam de virtutibus vestris accipimus.'
[50] ASFi, Signori, Consulte e Pratiche, 54, fol. 49v–50r.
[51] ROBERT BLACK, *Benedetto Accolti & the Florentine Renaissance*, esp. Chapter 9 'Accolti's history of the first crusade and the Turkish Menace,' 224–85.
[52] ASFi, Mediceo Avanti il Principato, 137, fol. 76: '[…] un consolo sia perhonore della nostra Signoria e de merchantanti […].'
[53] ASFi, Consoli del Mare, 3, fol. 115v: 'Item, che si faccia un' presente al Turco.'
[54] This can be found in the Inventory of the Ottoman Palace Library (1502/3–1503/4), Ms. Török F. 59, 201 that has been edited as *Treasure of Knowledge: An Inventory of the Ottoman Palace Library*, eds GÜLRÜ NECIPOGLU, CEMAL KAFADAR, and CORNELL H. FLEISCHER (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 139.
[55] See the elaborations on Topkapı Sarayı in EMINE FETVACI, *Picturing History at the Ottoman court* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2013), 13.

that partnership must be conflict-free, but that a virtuous community would ultimately be resilient through a perpetual willingness to uphold virtue.[56]

In 1461, shortly after the book likely reached Constantinople, the Florentines were granted the right to establish a consul there.[57] This consul would soon need to call upon the ideal of virtuous solidarity. In 1463, he received news from Florence that the political situation in Italy prevented the dispatch of galleys to Constantinople, greatly displeasing the Sultan.[58] As a reaction, the Sultan demanded tributes from the captain and crew of a Florentine galley who happened to be in the harbour and he required Florentine merchant Carlo Martelli to submit to him, offer praises, and organise an official celebration of his recent victories.[59] The celebration, as Benedetto Dei recorded in his diary, was intended to symbolise mutual benevolence but also unmistakably demanded submission.[60]

Considering this incident, the Florentines sought to mend their relationship with the Sultan. An idea emerged when Benedetto Dei learned of Mehmed II's search for a portraitist. The Florentines decided to present the Sultan with a set of fine prints exploring the relationship between rule and virtue.[61] Among these prints was an engraved portrait depicting a long-bearded man dressed in luxurious attire, reminiscent of a Byzantine emperor, particularly when compared to Pisanello's portrait medal of John VIII Paleologus.[62] This engraving bore an inscription in a somewhat uncertain handwriting, identifying the figure as *El Gran Turco*, the Grand Turk, or the Sultan (Ill. 1). The print seemed to imply the Sultan's transition to a new Byzantine emperor.[63] However, this transition came with new expectations, as depicted in a further print, the *Trionfo della Fama*.[64] Both prints complemented each other, with the Trionfo depicting a triumphal chariot bearing the newly conquered territories and a hero walking alongside it.

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56 IANZITI, *Writing History in Renaissance Italy*; see also LEONARDO BRUNI, *History of the Florentine People*, Eng. transl. JAMES HANKINS and CANON D. G. W. BRADLEY, 3 vols. (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2006–2007), vol. 1, book 4, 26–40.

57 RICHARD A. GOLDTHWAITE, *The Economy of Renaissance Florence* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 184.

58 ASFi, Signori, Legazioni e Commissarie, Missive e Responsive, 77, n. p.

59 'E mando' al chonsole de' Fiorentini a dire e a chomandare che tutti i fiorentini faciessino fuohi e festa, chome suoi amici e benvolenti.' Quot. in BENEDETTO DEI, *La cronica dall'anno 1400 all'anno 1500*, ed. ROBERTO BARDUCCI (Florence: Francesco Papafava, 1984), 161.

60 DEI, *La cronica dall'anno 1400 all'anno 1500*, 161–62; discussed in FRANZ BABINGER, *Lorenzo de' Medici e la corte ottomana* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1963), 311.

61 Most of these prints have been put into *Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Kütüphanesi*, inv. H. 2153. The print is fol. 144r. For the origin of the print in Florence see DAVID LANDAU and PETER MARSHALL, *The Renaissance Print, 1470-1550* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 91–94; Julian Raby, 'Mehmed II Fatih and the Faith Album,' *Islamic Art* 1 (1981): 42–49.

62 JULIAN RABY, 'Pride and Prejudice: Mehmed the Conqueror and the Italian Portrait Medal,' *Studies in the History of Art* 21 (1987): 171–94.

63 For the identification of the elements and a more detailed description see NECIPOĞLU, 'Visual Cosmopolitanism and Creative Translation,' 19.

64 Images of this print can be found in NECIPOĞLU, 'Visual Cosmopolitanism and Creative Translation,' 20.

Figure 1. Antonio del Pollaiuolo, Engraving *El Gran Turco*, Berlin, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett. © Kupferstichkabinett, Jörg P. Anders, CC BY-SA.[65]

[65] Please note that this image does not show the exact sheet given to Mehmed II, but a copy from the same printing plate.

The *Trionfo* symbolised a victory of virtue over fortune, but it also marked a decisive moment of transition, requiring the hero to act even more virtuously to preserve his fame.[66] Africa, Europe, and Asia were depicted as conquered territories, signifying the Sultan's responsibility for these regions. The book *Fiore di virtú*, popular in Florence, further specified the scene with the triumphal chariot as an embodiment of the virtue of humility. The successful conquest, as depicted in the book, represented a triumph of virtue and a test of virtue, demanding a demonstration of modesty, grace, and benevolence.[67] Therefore, *El Gran Turco* transcended a mere portrait and instead affirmed legitimate rulership contingent on virtuous governance, providing an elegant expression of the Florentines' willingness and expectations towards Mehmed II.

In the subsequent years, virtue ethics served as a refined method for the Florentines to communicate their needs and desires to the Ottoman court. In 1465, Bartolomeo Scala assumed the position of Florentine chancellor, and he was closely connected to the members of the Florentine Platonic academy. Scala advocated integrating the novel Neoplatonist currents into political communication.[68] While virtue ethics had already assigned significant importance to the soul, Neoplatonism further emphasised its role in perception, comprehension, translation, and the creation of ideal forms, perceiving the virtues as a necessary path for the individual to find the One, or God.[69] Neoplatonism found great popularity among Florentine humanists, partly due to the patronage of the Medici family, and its influence was not unnoticed at the Ottoman court either. Mehmed II had the works of Plethon, a proponent of Neoplatonism, translated.[70] On the other hand, it is important to recognise that Mehmed II's patronage cannot be neatly categorised into just Neoplatonic and Aristotelian. Even as mystical concepts, which appeared open to Neoplatonism, gained prominence during his reign, the emphasis was on mastering the discourse rather than committing to a specific philosophical tradition.[71] This is highlighted by Mehmed II's dialogues with the Greek scholar Amiroutzes.[72] While these

[66] For the Trionfi see ALDO S. BERNARDO, *Petrarch, Laura, and the Triumphs* (New York: State University Press, 1974); for an English translation see https://petrarch.petersadlon.com/trionfi.html (accessed 5 May 2021).
[67] Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze, Magl. A. 6.44 [*Fiore di virtù*], 32r.
[68] ALISON BROWN, *The Medici in Florence: The Exercise and Language of Power* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1992); ALISON BROWN, *Bartolomeo Scala, 1430-1497, Chancellor of Florence: The Humanist as Bureaucrat* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979).
[69] STÉPHANE TOUSSAINT, "'My Friend Ficino": Art History and Neoplatonism: From Intellectual to Material Beauty,' *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz* 59, no. 2 (2017): 147–73; SOPHIA HOWLETT, *Marsilio Ficino and His World* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).
[70] MARIA MAVROUDI, 'Translations from Greek into Arabic at the Court of Mehmed the Conqueror,' in *The Byzantine Court: Source of Power and Culture*, eds AYLA ÖDEKAN, NEVRA NECIPOGLU, and ENGIN AKYÜREK (Istanbul: Koç University Press, 2013), 195–207; MARIA MAVROUDI, 'Ελληνική φιλοσοφία στην αυλή του Μωάμεθ Β [Greek Philosophy at the Court of Mehmed II],' *Byzantina* 33 (2014): 151–82.
[71] ANNA AKASOY, 'The Adaptation of Byzantine Knowledge at the Ottoman Court after the Conquest of Constantinople,' *Trivium* 8 (2011): 43–56; ANNA AKASOY, 'Plethon's Nomoi: A Contribution to Polytheism in Late Byzantine Times and its Reception in the Islamic World,' *Mirabilia* 2 (2002): 224–35.
[72] GEORGE AMIROUTZES, *The Philosopher, or On Faith*, Eng. transl. JOHN MONFASANI (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2021).

Neoplatonic interests and acquisitions were primarily driven by the Ottoman desire to expand knowledge and communication skills, they provided fertile ground for Bartolomeo Scala's letters and the soul became a prominent topic in Ottoman-Florentine exchange.

One such letter, dating back to 1467, was composed during a time when a plague decimated the number of Florentine merchants in Constantinople. With usually three galleys arriving in the Ottoman capital every year, an interruption of the traffic meant Florence faced economic disturbances.[73] Scala's task was to persuade the Sultan to protect the goods of the deceased Florentines abroad. The letter highlights that among all the princes, they trusted only Mehmed II to uphold justice, as his famed justice extended throughout the world constantly.[74] This emphasised the Sultan's role as a ruler continuously expanding his realm through virtue. Furthermore, the letter invoked a Neoplatonist motif, expressing the Florentines' enduring gratitude and vowing that their souls would never forget the Sultan's benevolence if he granted them this favour, writing that 'Our immortal gratitude is yours, and never shall our souls forget, if you do us this benefit.'[75]

This connection drawn by Scala between immortality and the soul introduced a new dimension, presenting actions in relation to virtue beyond the immediate moment as part of a larger, timeless project. Subsequent formulations in other letters from the following years echoed this theme (the extent to which Marsilio Ficino's ideas influenced political communication through Scala's work remains an area for detailed exploration). For example, a letter to the Sultan in 1469, dealing with the transfer of power from Pierfrancesco de Medici to Lorenzo de Medici, concluded '[Our] soul, assuredly matched, to cherish and elevate your empire's Majesty, will forever be present.'[76] Although the Ottoman response letters have not been preserved, the Florentine correspondence frequently alludes to them. For instance, in one case, the Florentines express their sentiment about Mehmed II's last letter, stating, that 'the gracefulness of your last letter has put us in awe.' Additionally, it is alleged that Mehmed II's message was characterised by 'great erudition [in the *studia humanitas*] and showed every wisdom [*sapientiae*].'[77]

Virtue ethics shaped the Florentine-Ottoman relationship by imbuing their political actions with profound ethical meanings. During Lorenzo de Medici's lifetime, this virtue-based communication reached its peak, demonstrating an

[73] ASFi, Consoli del Mare, 7, fol. 65v.
[74] This letter is printed in GIUSEPPE MUELLER, *Documenti sulle relazioni delle città Toscane coll'Oriente Cristiano e coi Turchi fino all'anno MDXXXI* (Florence: M. Cellini e C., 1879), 206–207.
[75] '[…] immortalles gratias, neque sit aliqua unquam oblivion tale ex animis nostris beneficium deletura.'
[76] ASFi, Signori, Minutari, 9, 87r: 'Animus certe par ad redamandum te et colendam Maiestatem imperii tui nunquam deerit.'
[77] ASFi, Signori, Minutari, 10, 532v-533r: 'Gratissimae litterae tuae extiterunt nobis, plenisimae omnis humanitatis et omnis sapientiae […].'

exceptional capacity on the side of the Florentines to convey subtleties and translate them into practical political actions. In April 1478, the Pazzi Conspiracy shook Florence. It involved various Italian powers in an assassination attempt that injured Lorenzo de Medici and claimed the life of his brother Giuliano. Although Lorenzo managed to maintain his power, the situation remained precarious; to assert himself, all conspirators had to be captured and condemned.[78] One of the assassins, Bernardo Bandini Baroncelli, sought refuge in Constantinople with his relatives. To address this peculiar situation and to persuade Mehmed II to deliver Baroncelli to Florence, the Florentines chose Antonio de Medici, Lorenzo's nephew, as the Orator at the Sultan's court, providing him with concrete instructions.[79]

Notably, the letter assigned a smaller role to traditional diplomatic rituals and instead emphasised the way Antonio was to deliver certain messages. His instructions specified that he should portray the assassin as a 'turbatore,' a disturber of the established order, appealing to the qualities of the Sultan, whose 'marvellous virtue and justice' Antonio was to praise.[80] Additionally, Antonio was to highlight the Sultan's role as a dispenser of justice between the people and God and promise that the Florentines will praise 'his mind of His most excellent Majesty towards us and even more so towards God and His Justice.'[81] Following Antonio's oration, Mehmed II handed over Baroncelli. This act was acknowledged by the Florentines, who already had Antonio say that they believed 'the good and righteous will raise his justice to the heavens: we certainly, to whom this great demonstration belongs even more.'[82]

This example is particularly intriguing because, more specifically than before, it uses virtue as a framework to describe shared fields of action. The assassin is depicted as a 'turbatore,' disrupting not only the Florentine but also the Ottoman order. To preserve the common order, and for the benefit of his Florentine subjects, the Sultan intervenes by delivering the prisoner. In a multiperspective interpretation, the relationship between virtue and order thus becomes simultaneously a manifestation of Florentine Neoplatonism and an expression of the Ottoman *nizam-ı alem*.

It is only a marginal note in this brief article, but the letter of thanks sent by the Florentines to the Sultan was accompanied by a medal that materialised rhetorical elements previously used by the Florentines, as well as the virtuous connection between Florentines and Ottomans. Bertoldo di Giovanni, one of the Medici's favoured artists, created this medal at the request of Lorenzo de Medici. As a

78 LAURO MARTINES, *April Blood. Florence and the Plot Against the Medici* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2003).
79 ASFi, Signori, Legazioni e Commissarie, 20, 66v–68r.
80 ASFi, Signori, Legazioni e Commissarie, 20, 66v–68r: '[…] piu maravigliosa virtú et exemplo che questa iustitia et dimonstratione […].'
81 ASFi, Signori, Legazioni e Commissarie, 20, 66v–68r: '[…] la mente della excellentissima Maesta sua verso di noi et molto maggiormente verso di Dio et della sua Iustitia.'
82 ASFi, Signori, Legazioni e Commissarie, 20, 66v–68r: 'Tucti e buoni inalzeranno in cielo la sua iustitia: noi certamenta, a cui piú apartiene questa tanta dimonstratione […].'

medium, the Renaissance portrait medal was intended to convey the virtue of the depicted individual.[83] As such, it was used as a token of esteemed friendship between rulers and also within humanistic circles. In addition to a portrait of the Sultan, this specimen contains a complex representation of Mehmed II and his qualities. As a reference to the shared interest in Neoplatonism, the ruler is depicted holding his own ascending soul in hand. We know with certainty that this refers to the Ficinian transmigration of souls because the artist used the same motif in a depiction of that at the Medici Villa *Poggio a Caiano*.[84] Furthermore, the medal shows Mehmed II riding a triumphal chariot on which three women are inscribed with the names of his most important conquests GRETIE / TRAPESVNTY / ASIE [Greece / Trebizond / Asia] (Fig. 2).

Figure 2. Bertoldo di Giovanni, Portrait Medal of *Mehmed II. Fatih*, Berlin, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Münzkabinett. © Münzkabinett, Karsten Dahmen, CC BY-SA.[85]

The medal thereby embodies elements from both Antonio de Medici's oration and the letter that followed Baroncelli's extradition, which reads 'You, supreme and greatest emperor, have greatly contributed to your most excellent glory, by showing all that you delight not less in the splendour of justice and virtue than in the glory of commanding and conquering.'[86] The medal therefore immortalises Mehmed II's virtuous soul, encapsulating the Neoplatonic element. Through the conqueror's

[83] BIRGIT BLASS-SIMMEN, 'The Medal's Contract. On the Emergence of the Portrait Medal in the Quattrocento,' in *Inventing Faces: Rhetorics of Portraiture between Renaissance and Modernism*, eds MONA KÖRTE, RUBEN REBMANN, JUDITH ELISABETH WEISS, and STEFAN WEPPELMANN (Berlin: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2013), 29–43.

[84] A depiction of this *Allegoria della Notte o della Morte e i Carri del Sole o dell' Anima* can be found in the online catalogue of Le Gallerie degli Uffizi: https://catalogo.uffizi.it/it/29/ricerca/detailiccd/1414418/ (accessed 14 March 2024).

[85] Please note that this image does probably not show the exact medal given to Mehmed II, but one of several copies.

[86] 'Tu quoque, summe et maxime imperator, non parum excellentissimae gloriae tuae consuluisti, qui demonstravisti omnibus, non minus declectari te iustitie et virtutis splendore quam imperandi et vincendi gloria' (letter to 'Magno Turcho' from 11 May 1480, quoted in MUELLER, *Documenti*, 230).

triumphant chariot, it also revisits earlier components of Florentine-Ottoman communication and underscores the interrelation among virtue, conquest, and justice. In the medal, I see a material ode not only to the virtue of the Sultan, but also to the virtuous nature of the Florentine-Ottoman relationship.

What then does this intellectual portrayal of Florentine-Ottoman relations, defined by a focus on virtue ethics, reveal? The pivotal role of virtue ethics as a bridge between distinct cultural and intellectual traditions stands out. The interaction between Florentine humanists and the Ottoman court, especially through the medium of carefully crafted communications and symbolic gifts, underscores a transcultural dialogue rooted in a profound appreciation for the virtues that guide just rulership. This dialogue extended beyond mere political alliances, touching on deep philosophical currents that influenced both realms; the philosophical sophistication allowed for political nuance. The Ficinian concept of soul transmigration, subtly inscribed in the gift to Mehmed II, alongside the narrative of virtuous governance depicted through Bruni's *History* and the rich correspondence, illustrate a shared intellectual endeavour to understand and implement the ideals of virtue in governance. Practically, virtue ethics provided Florentines and Ottomans a framework to ethically reinterpret political actions, enhancing the stability of their relationship by fostering a shared sense of unity and purpose.

The Transculturality of Virtue and Transculturality in the Mediterranean

Through this prism, the Florentine-Ottoman relationship adds to our understanding of Mediterranean transculturality through the capabilities, awareness, and willingness of the actors to discover, reveal, and develop shared intellectual structures to endow their actions and encounters with meaning. Thus, transculturality becomes an activity, a potential that must be continuously activated to maintain its significance.[87] Although virtue ethics was available to Italians and Ottomans as a more or less fragmentary reservoir from the beginning (if there is such a thing) of their dialogue, it only unfolded its utility in use, and even then, piece by piece, through cautious approaching, probing, and (as in the case of Neoplatonism) collaborative enhancement. This endeavour does not downplay the conflicts that repeatedly disrupted various connections at sea, nor does it gloss over the crusading ideals of some humanists or the realpolitik backdrop, the sheer political and economic necessity for the Florentines to engage with and, in some ways, adapt to the Ottomans; transculturality is not about portraying an overly rosy picture. As an analytical concept, it helps us better understand the multidimensionality of Mediterranean relational networks without imposing cultural boundaries where none exist.

How might this change our perspective on the shared nature of early modern Mediterranean culture? In the following, I aim to nuance my findings by referencing

[87] MARGRIT PERNAU and LUC WODZICKI, 'Entanglements, Political Communication, and Shared Temporal Layers,' *Cromohs: Cyber Review of Modern Historiography* 21 (2018): 1–17.

other recent studies on Italian-Ottoman relations that have come to form a vignette for the exploration of the Mediterranean basin as a whole.[88] My reflections are also shaped by exchanges with members of the COST Action 'People in Motion,' a network led by Giovanni Tarantino that has significantly advanced Mediterranean studies in recent years.[89]

In a standout essay written over a decade ago, Eric R. Dursteler notes that while the diversity of modern research has revealed the potential to look beyond the long-assumed cultural dichotomy of a divided vs. a shared Mediterranean, the necessary conceptual work is still pending.[90] Refined, transculturality might be one helpful approach in that. Although researchers frequently use transculturality to describe elements, phenomena, themes, and even texts and other forms of expression that conventional connections, encounters, and narratives between cultures fail to account for, the analytical definition of transculturality remains highly ambiguous.[91] Gerrit Jasper Schenk suggests that 'transculturality can […] not just be understood as the entanglement of simultaneous but spatially separate cultures, but also of cultures separated by time but existing in the same area.'[92] For the Mediterranean region, Schenk's definition proves particularly useful, as it adds to the notion of encounter the notion of time, or, historical layers that the actors use whether they are aware of it or not.[93]

This idea is reflected in Thomas E. Burman's concept of Mediterranean deep intellectual unity.[94] To be sure, Burman himself was inspired by Olivia Remie Constable's work on the development and spread of the *funduq* as a Mediterranean model for hospitality. Constable argues that inns descended from or related to the *funduq* could be found throughout the entire Mediterranean region in the late Middle Ages, and travellers would recognise them, lending a sense of cohesion to the region.[95] As I understand it, Burman's concept of deep intellectual unity embraces this sense of resemblance. For intellectual culture, it emphasises the recognition value of the familiar in the unfamiliar; combining the primacy of communication and

88 FRANCESCA TRIVELLATO, 'Renaissance Italy and the Muslim Mediterranean in Recent Historical Work,' *The Journal of Modern History* 82, no. 1 (2019): 127–55.
89 For more information see the webpage of the COST Action People in Motion: Entangled Histories of Displacement across the Mediterranean (1492-1923), https://www.peopleinmotion-costaction.org/ (accessed 09 May 2024).
90 ERIC R. DURSTELER, 'On Bazaars and Battlefields: Recent Scholarship on Mediterranean Cultural Contacts,' *Journal of Early Modern History* 15, no. 5 (2011): 413–34.
91 WOLFGANG WELSCH, *Transkulturalität*, 12; MARY LOUISE PRATT, 'Arts of the Contact Zone,' *Profession* (1991): 33–40.
92 GERITT JASPER SCHENK, 'Historical Disaster Experiences: First Steps toward a Comparative and Transcultural History of Disasters across Asia and Europe in the Preindustrial Era,' in *Historical Disaster Experiences: Towards a Comparative and Transcultural History of Disasters across Asia and Europe*, ed. GERITT JASPER SCHENK (New York: Springer, 2017), 11.
93 PERNAU and WODZICKI, 'Entanglements, Political Communication, and Shared Temporal Layers.'
94 THOMAS E. BURMAN, 'The Four Seas of Medieval Mediterranean Intellectual History.'
95 OLIVIA REMIE CONSTABLE, *Housing the Stranger in the Mediterranean World: Lodging, Trade, and Travel in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

understanding with the history of somewhat related words, concepts, ideas, and stories, as well as their expressions such as texts, poems, or books, or even 'classics.' In short, deep intellectual unity explores the emergence, occurrence, and use of common reference points across the sea. As a result, it improves our understanding of Mediterranean culture by suggesting our actors not as an end point but as the constant makers of this unity, and therefore as active agents, or co-creators even, in our own historiographical project. Virtue might well provide a case study for this endeavour, but it adds an important nuance: reconfiguring the conventional spatial boundaries of Italian and Ottoman intellectual histories does not mean writing them into one history. It means taking the potential for interconnectedness seriously and developing it together with the actors.

From this vantage point, I now use the case of virtue ethics to reflect on the potential of writing a transcultural intellectual history of the Mediterranean on three levels: contemporary consciousness, material culture, and actors. While the notion of contemporary consciousness might initially appear to be somewhat cumbersome, its examination—particularly the awareness and mutual acknowledgement among actors of their shared intellectual frameworks and the synchronous moment they collectively navigate—is paramount. The Renaissance occupies a teleologically pivotal role within European historical narratives, akin to the Enlightenment, and scholars, including Walter G. Andrews, with the noblest of intentions, endeavoured to unearth an Ottoman Renaissance.[96] Current studies reveal that due to numerous intersections, there exists a tangible risk of obfuscating critical facets of Ottoman culture, or more specifically, its cultural policy, by the mere identification of such intersections.[97] Therefore, contemporary consciousness directs us researchers away from the pursuit of common epochal descriptions (e.g., early modern)[98] towards the voices of actors themselves, and instead involves recognising how they interpreted the interplay of cultural, philosophical, and ethical ideas that both connected and distinguished their societies, emphasising the active ongoing process of creating and interpreting shared meanings within their historical context.

A notable example of such a study has recently been presented by Giancarlo Casale, who offers a novel interpretation of Mehmed II's intellectual agenda of sovereignty. Casale argues that Mehmed II, contrary to his predominant reputation of presenting himself as an Islamic conquering hero, aspired to a model of sovereignty similar to Akbar's *Sulh-i Kull*, with a common origin in the conceptual

[96] WALTER G. ANDREWS, 'Suppressed Renaissance. Q: When Is a Renaissance Not a Renaissance? A: When It Is the Ottoman Renaissance!' in *Other Renaissances*, eds BRENDA DEEN SCHILDGEN, GANG ZHOU, and SANDER GILMAN (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 17–34; NESLIHAN ASUTAY-EFFENBERGER and ULRICH REHM, eds, *Sultan Mehmed II. Eroberer Konstantinopels – Patron der Künste* (Köln: Böhlau, 2009).

[97] See next paragraph.

[98] SAID ALI YAYCIOGLU, 'Ottoman Early Modern,' *Journal of the Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association* 7, no. 1 (2020): 70–73; SEBASTIAN CONRAD, 'Enlightenment in Global History: A Historiographical Critique,' *The American Historical Review* 117, no. 4 (2012): 999–1027.

worlds of post-Mongol Iran and Central Asia of the Timurids. But Casale also draws parallels to the historiography of the Italian Renaissance to interpret Mehmed II's cultural policy as being inspired by a particular current of Renaissance philosophy, the *Prisca Theologia*, which served in many ways as the Ottoman equivalent of Akbar's *Sulh-i Kull*.[99] The intellectual framing enabled by *Prisca Theologia* was very much in the awareness of many Italian humanists, and especially Neoplatonists like Plethon, who worked in both Italy and the Ottoman Empire.[100] While Mehmed II sought legitimacy that appealed to diverse groups, humanists saw what they could see, and researchers followed suit. Instead of searching for common epochs, we should be aware of how the cultural positioning of our actors might already be shaped by transcultural flows. Renaissance humanists absorbed and further developed the virtue discourses taken from the Ottomans, even benefiting from their knowledge; yet, the Ottomans have not found their place in the intellectual history of the Renaissance. Mehmed II, in turn, benefited from the currents of Italian humanists in developing his idea of sovereignty, but he carefully integrated these into a broader concept of rulership. Reading such clusters of transculturality through the lens of the actors as contemporary consciousness allows us a more nuanced understanding of intense cultural exchange, since it foregrounds the meaning that actors give in clusters the researchers excavate.

Similar thoughts have already been expressed for a history of material culture. Overlooking many moments of material encounters between Ottomans and Renaissance Italy, Claire Norton and Anna Contadini suggested searching for aesthetic meta-frameworks that would make it possible to decipher, reread, and thus apply the 'common language of expressing legitimacy and authority' formulated between Ottomans and Italians.[101] That this would not be possible without a deeper understanding of intellectual cultures had already been shown by Gülrü Necipoğlu and, in a certain sense, Çiğdem Kafescioğlu.[102] Necipoğlu spoke of a 'visual cosmopolitanism' through which Mehmed II absorbed Timurid, Persian, Arabic, and Byzantine influences. Discussing this 'crossroads of cultures' perspective on the Ottomans, not only in terms of their entanglement of intellectual and material elements but also regarding their geographical expansion into the Mediterranean, remains an important desideratum for future research. However, if we understand individual pieces like the print *El Gran Turco* or the medal by Bertoldo di Giovanni as part of a larger discourse—and here it could be many discourses, among which virtue ethics is only

[99] GIANCARLO CASALE, 'Mehmed the Conqueror between *Sulh-i Kull* and *Prisca Theologia*,' *Modern Asian Studies* 56 (2022): 840–69.
[100] LÁSZLÓ BENE, 'Constructing Pagan Platonism: Plethon's Theory of Fate and the Ancient Philosophical Tradition,' in *Georg Gemistos Plethon. The Byzantine and the Latin Renaissance*, eds JOZEF MATULA and PAUL RICHARD BLUM (Olmütz: Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci, 2014), 41–71.
[101] CLAIRE NORTON, 'Blurring the Boundaries,' in *The Renaissance and the Ottoman World*, eds NORTON and CONTADINI (London: Routledge, 2013), 3–22.
[102] ÇIĞDEM KAFESCIOĞLU, *Constantinopolis/Istanbul. Cultural Encounter, Imperial Vision, and the Construction of the Ottoman Capital* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2009).

one—it becomes evident that the aesthetic culture was not, simply speaking, designed towards commonalities and yet culturally distinct, but often involved the conscious, strategic, and nuanced negotiation of an in-between space, which can only be understood as part of complex exchange processes and as an actor-based attempt at intellectual transculturation.

This brings us to the final point, namely the role and transculturality of the actors themselves. Actors are a vague term; I understand them to be the people who actively engaged in transculturality; who created, negotiated, or even resisted it. The early modern Mediterranean was full of people who moved between cultures, even when living a stationary life. Whether they were connected by family, engaged in trade, or lived off their intellectual capacities; whether they painstakingly opened up other cultures and languages or, like many Greeks, were already born between cultures and could capitalise on it.[103] Studies by E. Nathalie Rothman and Eric R. Dursteler have impressively shown how such 'transimperial' subjects—to use Rothman's term—moved not between but simultaneously within multiple cultures, adapting the rules of these cultures to their own rules, whether they were skillfully translating dragomans, negotiating trading fees as brokers, or Greek philosophers seeking employment either at the Ottoman or an Italian court.[104] It is a temptation in my consideration of virtue ethics to extend the concept of a transimperial subject further, at least experimentally. Can a Florentine humanist who, without leaving Florence and without a deep understanding of Ottoman legitimacy culture, inscribes himself into that Ottoman discourse of virtue, be a transimperial subject? Or is an Ottoman scholar who engages with Florentine Neoplatonism not equally partaking in and shaping two discourses? The Mediterranean enables forms of intellectual affiliation and resemblances that are not immediately apparent to either the actors or the researchers; indeed, that neither the actors nor we might fully grasp in their entire complexity. But, by their referencing, discovering, utilising, and modifying, the actors create transculturality by endowing it with relevance. And this relevance can also become visible to researchers.

Taken together, these three aspects, in the context of Mediterranean transculturality, highlight a factor emphasised particularly by Thomas E. Burman: while shared historical reference points—such as virtue ethics—provide a significant common foundation for actors, the concept of deep intellectual unity can only be fully grasped if we acknowledge and take the actors seriously as continual creators of this unity. This entails respecting their contemporary self-perceptions and avoiding the

[103] EMRAH SAFA GÜRKAN, 'Mediating Boundaries: Mediterranean Go-Betweens and Cross-Confessional Diplomacy in Constantinople, 1560-1600,' *Journal of Early Modern History* 19, no. 2–3 (2015): 107–28.

[104] ROTHMAN, *Brokering Empire: Trans-imperial Subjects between Venice and Istanbul;* ERIC R. DURSTELER, *Renegade Women: Gender, Identity, and Boundaries in the Early Modern Mediterranean* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011); E. NATHALIE ROTHMAN, *The Dragoman Renaissance: Diplomatic Interpreters and the Routes of Orientalism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2021).

imposition of assumed overlaps upon them. It also requires us to earnestly consider material culture as an integral part of intellectual culture (and vice versa). From this vantage point, it becomes evident that transculturality should transcend a mere 'neither, nor' framework. Transculturality represents a constructive and creative process of negotiating cultural boundaries, even when these boundaries are not fully recognised by the actors involved.

Conclusion

In this article, I suggested the use of transculturality as an analytical concept to better understand the history of Florentine-Ottoman relations. As the example of virtue ethics has revealed, it is helpful to think of transculturality not as a state, but as an actor-driven process of creating a form of cultural in-betweenness. Two insights are particularly important to me, as they highlight what Mediterranean transculturality entails. Firstly, that the actors do not necessarily know when they are leaving their familiar cultural terrain, because many of the cultural boundaries that seem obvious to us are fluid for them. And secondly, following from this, that we as historians must be very careful in our analytical statements about the nature, shaping, and change of Mediterranean culture. Burman's concept of intellectual unity can be helpful in connecting these two points, as it reminds us equally of the resemblances perceived by our actors, as well as the larger structures that may underlie these resemblances, which we as historians can and should unearth. The example of the Florentines and the Ottomans illustrates how the shared 'heritage' of virtue ethics, while following its own traditions—which need not be neglected or abandoned—similarly allowed the actors to approach each other and empathise with their respective intellectual cultures and thus their political and social dimensions. In this process, the transculturality of virtue ethics was actively created through successful communication. The Florentines utilised their conceptions of virtue up to nuanced Neoplatonism just as successfully as the Ottomans understood it as part of the *nizam-ı alem*.

The concept of transculturality presented in the article also offers a valuable analytical framework for understanding the broader complexities of Mediterranean history. The Mediterranean stands out as a unique contact zone in history[105] due to its deep-rooted influence on Western historical consciousness.[106] Mediterranean history is grappling with this heritage;[107] that is why an approach from intellectual history may help to clarify some of the pressing problems students of the region face. Transculturality invites us to critically evaluate to what extent seemingly common terms, concepts, and ideas, as well as texts, sources, and lineages, form part of a

[105] DAVID ABULAFIA, 'Mediterraneans,' in *Rethinking the Mediterranean*, ed. WILLIAM V. HARRIS (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 64–93; DAVID ABULAFIA, 'Mediterranean History as Global History,' *History and Theory* 50, no. 2 (2011): 220–28.
[106] GEORGE STAUTH and MARCUS OTTO, *Méditerranée. Skizzen zu Mittelmeer, Islam und Theorie der Moderne* (Berlin: Kulturverlag Kadmos, 2008).
[107] MATTHEW D'AURIA and FERNANDO GALLO, eds, *Mediterranean Europe(s). Rethinking Europe from its Southern Shores* (London: Routledge, 2022).

shared Mediterranean repertoire, but also to what extent the actors themselves create and claim this repertoire ad hoc. This challenges conventional understandings of cultural boundaries and interactions within the Mediterranean basin, with several implications for the broader field. While research has long aimed to redefine cultural interactions not as something that happens between cultural blocks but rather between people, understanding the myriad ways in which people engage with the broader backbones of culture is something that an approach from intellectual history can help us understand. In fact, this study elevates the role of intellectual exchange in shaping Mediterranean history by suggesting that the co-construction and development of political and philosophical ideas and concepts played a crucial role in fostering mutual understanding and respect, potentially leading to more stable and cooperative relationships between different societies. Therefore, by highlighting the intellectual contributions of the Ottoman Empire to Renaissance humanism and vice versa, it is worth challenging anew Eurocentric narratives that have traditionally dominated Mediterranean history. The call for a more inclusive approach that recognises the contributions of non-European cultures to the development of shared intellectual traditions and the shaping of the Mediterranean world is not new. Yet, finding new ways and concepts, such as transculturality, to approach this methodologically is a task with which we can only proceed when experts from different regions read each other's work and take the task of integration seriously.

Lost in Anti-Imperialist Translation: The Universal Contexts of M. N. Roy (1887–1954)

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Decades before Thomas Friedman wrote that the world is flat,[1] the Indian anticolonial revolutionary, international communist, and humanist thinker M. N. Roy (1887–1954) made an international career out of arguing that there were no meaningful cultural or political differences between Asia, North America, and Europe. Assuaging historians' fears about the disappearance of context from intellectual history when it goes global,[2] Roy's assertions of equivalence between places both geographically and temporally disparate bring contexts back into view in two ways. First, they draw attention to what I call contingent contexts, consisting of both texts and situational factors, such as political and personal circumstances, that can explain an actor's arguments when operating between cultural spheres.[3] Their contingency emphasises the tactical nature of such contexts created by actors moving in and out of them, who were often forced to improvise.[4] I argue that such contingent contexts help to explain Roy's bold assertions of equivalence that at first glance strike the reader as unlikely, and that they are in general more suitable for global intellectual history than the national contexts intellectual historians have often operated within.[5]

Second, the essay draws on translation studies in order to argue that contexts were at stake in the arguments made by historical actors such as Roy. This means that context is placed on the actor's level, where it does not do the work of explaining their

[1] THOMAS L. FRIEDMAN, *The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005).
[2] See the introduction to this thematic section: LUC WODZICKI and SEBASTIAN CONRAD, 'Introduction: Analytical Concepts for Transcultural Settings. Pathways in Global Intellectual History,' *Cromohs: Cyber Review of Modern Historiography* 26 (2023): 72–75.
[3] In my book, I refer to similar contexts as cosmopolitan because they were largely comprised of actors self-consciously operating between places and interested in the differences between them. LEONIE WOLTERS, *Cosmopolitan Elites and the Making of Globality* (London: Bloomsbury, 2024).
[4] Whereas strategies have an institutional base, or a proper place, to operate from, tactics are improvised in the moment, dependent on surroundings, and located between the self and the other, not properly belonging to either one: '[…] because it does not have a place, tactic depends on time—it is always on the watch for opportunities that must be seized "on the wing."' MICHEL DE CERTEAU, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), xix.
[5] Christopher Hill has cautioned against 'adding together' national contexts in order to conceive of a global intellectual field, not in the least because national contexts were not actually separate, and the very vocabulary with which to think about the relationship between them was created in their interaction. CHRISTOPHER HILL, 'Conceptual Universalisation in the Transnational Nineteenth Century,' in *Global Intellectual History*, eds SAMUEL MOYN and ANDREW SARTORI (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 134–58 (153).

Cromohs (Cyber Review of Modern Historiography), ISSN 1123-7023, 26/2023

DOI: 10.36253/cromohs-14558

arguments, but rather functions as a resource that they were able to offer to their audiences. The feat of offering large, diffuse contexts such as 'India' to audiences presumably unfamiliar with them was a key aspect of the role played by Roy during his global career, most famously as a member of the Communist International in the 1920s when he often spoke, not merely for India, but for the colonised world in general.[6] Roy's speaking for such large contexts can only be understood with reference to his contingent contexts, where both are co-created in argument. In bringing both together, the essay uses a productive tension between the universal claims made by Roy,[7] and the attention to detail and specificity inherent in the context concept.[8] Context itself was implicated in universalist arguments, both in their argumentative content as well as the circumstances of their enunciation.

Roy has become quite a familiar figure in global history as both an itinerant individual and as a prime example of a universalist thinker who came to adopt European Enlightenment values as valid everywhere.[9] Because he moved between different universalist idioms, historians have debated which of these was most fundamental to Roy's thought. His biographer Kris Manjapra has referred to the Bengali practice of 'Brahmo exegesis,' which also allowed the Bengali philosopher Rammohun Roy (1774–1833) to argue about the equivalence of the religious texts of Hinduism, Christianity, and Islam.[10] The other obvious universal thought system Roy engaged with was dialectical materialism. About his Marxist writings, it has been argued that Roy was a highly 'schematic' thinker, more universalist than even Lenin,[11] who simply 'asserted' that Marxist economic models described the situation in India[12] rather than arguing their finer points.[13] According to Roy himself, it ultimately was the 'quest

[6] See for example NICOLA POZZA, 'Le monde en révolutions ou le parcours désorientant de M. N. Roy,' *Études de lettres* 2–3 (2014): 343–66; BRIGITTE STUDER, *Reisende der Weltrevolution: Eine Globalgeschichte der Kommunistischen Internationale* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2020).

[7] According to Duncan Bell, such claims are the proper subject of global intellectual history, since it focuses '[…] on enunciations of universality, on attempts to cognitively encompass a given world (of whatever physical scale).' DUNCAN BELL, 'Making and Taking Worlds,' in *Global Intellectual History*, eds MOYN and SARTORI, 254–79 (257).

[8] PETER BURKE, 'Context in Context,' *Common Knowledge* 28, no. 1 (2022): 157–64.

[9] In fact, Roy featured in Dipesh Chakrabarty's standard work on the perils of universalism as an example of an Indian thinker who embraced European Enlightenment values as universal. DIPESH CHAKRABARTY, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 4.

[10] KRIS MANJAPRA, *M. N. Roy; Marxism and Colonial Cosmopolitanism* (New Delhi: Routledge, 2010), 13.

[11] SANJAY SETH, *Marxist Theory and Nationalist Politics: The Case of Colonial India* (New Delhi: Sage, 1995), 62, 99, 102.

[12] SUDIPTA KAVIRAJ, 'The Heteronomous Radicalism of M.N. Roy,' in *Political Thought in Modern India,* eds THOMAS PANTHAM and KENNETH L. DEUTSCH (New Delhi: Sage, 1986), 209–35 (232).

[13] Similarly and much more recently, Vivek Chibber has attempted to undermine the foundations of Subaltern Studies, or Postcolonial Theory more generally, by arguing that the development of capitalism did not take fundamentally different courses in Europe and in India, thereby destabilising claims of irreducible differences between them. VIVEK CHIBBER, *Postcolonial Theory and the Specter of Capital* (London: Verso, 2013).

for freedom' that motivated his actions throughout his life.[14] Since the nineteenth century, there had been a rich Bengali tradition of comparative thought between India and Europe, where many thinkers formulated theories of universal knowledge that saw Indian modes as more universal than European counterparts, or at least pushed back against colonial assumptions of the universal validity of European thought.[15]

The goal of this essay is not to decide which of the universalist thought systems Roy operated with was the most fundamental to his thinking, or to biographically address how Roy came to swap out one universalist belief system for another.[16] Rather, Roy's ability to use conceptions of contexts, claiming and then leveraging an underlying layer of common meaning, highlights the dynamic and situational nature of his universalist approach. As a thinker, he is particularly suited not only to bring out the contingent contexts that actors in transcultural settings found themselves operating in, but also to show how they operated between contexts, in the same way that translators operate between languages. Moreover, they could offer full contexts 'in translation'—even if part of their argument was that these contexts were, in fact, not different at all.

Roy's assertion of equivalences did not emerge in a vacuum. His peer group, Indian revolutionaries who left British India during the early twentieth century to fight for independence abroad, were confronted with assertions of Western universality and Indian particularity at every step of their way, most obviously when it came to racial discrimination.[17] Questioning or mocking their interlocutors' assumptions of Indian difference was an anti-imperialist practice in its own right, and an activity engaged in by many Indian revolutionaries abroad.[18] After all, a key element of the imperialist mindset was that the authority to decide the dividing lines of difference from an ostensibly neutral outside point of view was largely reserved for white men.[19] Roy went beyond the making of comparisons and habitually found instances that were, in

[14] Roy's student, friend and biographer Sibnarayan Ray titled his five-volume biography of Roy 'In Freedom's Quest.' See for example SIBNARAYAN RAY, *In Freedom's Quest: A Study of the Life and Works of M. N. Roy,* 5 vols, vol. 1, *(1887-1922)* (Calcutta: Minerva Associates, 1998).

[15] WILHELM HALBFASS, *India and Europe: An Essay in Understanding* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1988), 419–33; DAVID KOPF, *The Brahmo Samaj and the Shaping of the Modern Indian Mind* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 60.

[16] Beyond Manjapra's biography, this has been addressed in several biographical essays, for example ISABEL HUACUJA ALONSO, 'M.N. Roy and the Mexican Revolution: How a Militant Indian Nationalist Became an International Communist,' *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 40, no. 3 (2017): 517–30; MICHAEL GOEBEL, 'Geopolitics, Transnational Solidarity or Diaspora Nationalism? The Global Career of M.N. Roy, 1915–1930,' *European Review of History: Revue européenne d'histoire* 21, no. 4 (2014): 485–99; CHRISTOPHER BALCOM, 'From Communist Internationalism to a 'New Humanism': On M.N. Roy's Confrontation with Fascism,' *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 46, no. 2 (2023): 353–69.

[17] ADAM MCKEOWN, *Melancholy Order: Asian Migration and the Globalization of Borders* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008); RENISA MAWANI, 'From Migrants to Revolutionaries: The Komagata Maru's 1914 "Middle Passage",' in *Viapolitics: Borders, Migration, and the Power of Locomotion*, eds WILLIAM WALTERS, CHARLES HELLER, and LORENZO PEZZANI (Durham: Duke University Press, 2022), 58–83 (60–61).

[18] See for example CLEMENS SIX, 'Challenging the Grammar of Difference: Benoy Kumar Sarkar, Global Mobility and Anti-Imperialism Around the First World War,' *European Review of History: Revue européenne d'histoire* 25, no. 3–4 (2018): 431–49.

[19] MANU GOSWAMI, 'Imaginary Futures and Colonial Internationalisms,' *The American Historical Review* 117, no. 5 (2012): 1461–1485 (1484).

separate times and places, expressions of the same underlying phenomenon. In an example from the early 1930s, when Roy was stuck in a colonial Indian prison, his close friend, the German communist and orientalist August Thalheimer (1884–1948), inquired about Indian philosophy and logic. Roy responded that he needed to be set straight: 'I don't quite see what he means by "the special form of Indian logic." In my view, there has been much imagination in this respect on the part of the Sanskritists and Orientalists of Europe.'[20] Asserting the equivalences would become an almost kneejerk response to the assumptions of difference Roy was faced with.

To capture how Roy's assertions made use of context, this essay employs the concept of translation metaphorically. Instead of translating between natural languages, Roy translated between contexts that appeared distinct. His assertions of equivalence between, for example, ancient India and contemporary Latin America, had argumentative power only because his audiences could be reasonably assumed to expect that there were in fact meaningful differences between them. With his equivalences, then, Roy created a context, such as India, in a particularly accessible way that only he was able to offer to his audience. In doing so, he did not transform specific concepts, but contexts in full. Widening our view of translation in this way allows us to capture equivalences that were so universalist they eschewed the serious usage of non-European languages at all. The hierarchy between languages was obviously shaped by colonial power differentials,[21] and would become a part of Roy's universalist attitude to the extent that, towards the end of his life, he would ask a befriended poet why he would write in a 'patois' like Bengali.[22] His decisions when not to use languages were as much part of the contexts used and created by Roy as his decisions to use them and to resort to more literal translation.

Broadly conceived, translation is at hand when equivalences are coined, supported by some universality of meaning or value underlying assumptions about and encounters with difference.[23] Lydia Liu has stressed that translation is not a process involving the search for neatly fitting and mutually operational equivalences across two languages, but rather involves the creation of such equivalences by translators.[24] As Philip Balboni and Henry Clements have recently theorised, translation in its metaphorical sense is a process that emphasises its own continuous necessity; just as a translator dissolves the difference between contexts and yet maintains the necessity for

[20] M. N. ROY, *Letters from Jail* (Dehradun: Renaissance, 1943), 25.
[21] EINAR WIGEN, *State of Translation: Turkey in Interlingual Relations* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2018), 11.
[22] RAY, *In Freedom's Quest*, vol. 4, part 2, *From Anti-Fascist War to Radical Humanism (1947-1954)* (Calcutta: Minerva Associates, 2007), 389–90.
[23] LYDIA H. LIU, 'The Question of Meaning-Value in the Political Economy of the Sign,' in *Tokens of Exchange; The Problem of Translation in Global Circulations*, eds LYDIA H. LIU, STANLEY FISH, and FREDRIC JAMESON (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 1–19.
[24] LYDIA H. LIU, *Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity. China, 1900-1937* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 16.

translation between them,[25] Roy argued for sameness and yet assumed a heightened ability to diagnose it. Because Roy and his writings have mainly been historicised as communist, this essay uses examples of his translations from beyond his communist period. The first considers his work on race and culture in ancient India, written in Mexico the late 1910s, while the second is concerned with writings on the psychology of fascism from the 1940s.

Anti-Imperialist Talent

Roy's first writings contained an assertion of equivalence that helped him to find a new patron when he and his first wife Evelyn Trent (Roy/Jones, 1892–1970) found themselves at a loose end in Mexico City between 1917 and 1919. Their revolutionary work for an independent India had been sponsored by imperial Germany in hopes of weakening the British Empire, but this source of support dried up after Germany lost the First World War. Luckily, the anti-US Mexican government was 'looking for talent' among the Roys' circles of United States socialists and bohemians who had come to Mexico in order to escape being drafted into the war.[26] Among his Mexican writings, Roy's book *La India: su pasado, su presente, y su porvenir* (1918) has often gone unmentioned,[27] or is swiftly dealt with as either 'an encyclopaedia entry of sorts'[28] or a publication 'denouncing British colonialism in India.'[29] Yet, contextualised in the limited sphere of anti-US cultural activity in Mexico City and specifically relating to the interests of the Mexican politician and intellectual José Vasconcelos (1889–1959), the book's relevance becomes quite clear.

Vasconcelos was central to the little cosmos in Mexico City that the Roys inhabited. He was active in the field of education, moved between the US and Mexico, and is now mainly remembered as the author of *La raza cósmica: misión de la raza iberoamericana* (1925).[30] This book argued that racial mixing was '[…] providential, progressive, and beneficial for Mexico and Spanish America.'[31] In 1919, Vasconcelos was working on a book called *Estudios indostánicos* (1920), in which he engaged with the ideas of Rammohun Roy, Swami Vivekananda, and Rabindranath Tagore.[32] Laura Torres has written that *Estudios indostánicos* formed a key touchstone on the way to Vasconcelos' race conception in *La raza cósmica*, since it was in India that Vasconcelos found his '[…] racial model in keeping with his plan of a "brown" utopia for Latin

[25] PHILIP BALBONI and HENRY CLEMENTS, 'Modern Translations,' *History of the Present. A Journal of Critical History* 12, no. 2 (2022): 241–69 (262–63).
[26] DAN LA BOTZ, 'American "Slackers" in the Mexican Revolution: International Proletarian Politics in the Midst of a National Revolution,' *The Americas* 62, no. 4 (2006): 563–90 (584).
[27] It is, for example, not discussed in the biography by Kris Manjapra.
[28] HUACUJA ALONSO, 'M.N. Roy and the Mexican Revolution,' 524.
[29] GOEBEL, 'Geopolitics, Transnational Solidarity or Diaspora Nationalism,' 488.
[30] ILAN STAVANS, *José Vasconcelos: The Prophet of Race* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2011), 115–17.
[31] MARILYN GRACE MILLER, *Rise and Fall of the Cosmic Race: The Cult of Mestizaje in Latin America* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004), 27–30.
[32] LAURA J. TORRES-RODRÍGUEZ, 'Orientalizing Mexico: *Estudios indostánicos* and the Place of India in José Vasconcelos's *La raza cósmica*,' *Revista Hispánica Moderna* 68, no. 1 (2015): 77–91 (85).

America.'[33] This article argues that it was Roy who offered a key element for Vasconcelos' theories.

The India Roy described was as diverse as Latin America, both in terms of climatic zones as well as peoples. The latter had been created through the mixing of conquering races—notably Greeks and Muslims—with an original population.[34] The mixing of Dravidians and Aryans in particular had given India its particular genius, wrote Roy: 'From the virility of the Aryans and the mental energy of the Dravidians originated the great family of Indo-Aryans, who gave birth to the universal philosophy of Vedanta.'[35] The version of Hinduism propagated by Swami Vivekananda, *Vedanta*, already had adherents all over the world, including in Mexico City, by the time Roy was there, and thus formed a discourse he could tap into.[36] By tracing the origins of *Vedanta* to racial mixing, Roy addressed the interests of Mexican readers interested in *Vedanta* and India. Yet, rather than serving exotic difference, he offered a suggestion of familiarity. His translation, in other words, offered the Indian past as being very close to the Latin American present. This had appeal to an audience positively interested in *Vedanta* because it allowed them to imagine that Latin America too could be the birthplace of an equally powerful philosophy.

It is quite clear that Roy's version of racial mixing as a force for good was written for a Latin American audience. While the idea of Aryanism was a part of orientalist knowledge, claiming a common descent for Northern Indians and Europeans, it generally excluded South Indians or Dravidians and Muslims, although there were different variations.[37] Roy's version, where the non-Aryans contributed the more noble elements to a shared, highly developed civilisation, was quite unusual.[38] In tracing the origins of *Vedanta* to the combination of Aryan and Dravidian ingredients, Roy made the case that all Aryans, both Asian and European, were excessively aggressive people, and it was only due to their mixing with Dravidians that India had known this superior philosophy since 'approximately ten centuries before Jesus Christ.'[39] Because Aryans outside of India had not mixed with other races, they had lost none of their aggressiveness and had been unable to gain the same level of insight into the nature of reality.[40] The mixed-race sages of ancient India, however, had been able to create *Vedanta* for the good of all of humanity. Roy's view of racial hierarchy, where unmixed Aryan populations were considered inferior to mixed ones, corresponded to a Mexico that saw its white Northern neighbour as obsessed with racial purity as well as being

[33] TORRES-RODRÍGUEZ, 'Orientalizing Mexico,' 82.
[34] M. N. ROY, *La India, su pasado, su presente y su porvenir* (Mexico City, n. p., 1918), vii.
[35] ROY, *La India*, xiii.
[36] TORRES-RODRÍGUEZ, 'Orientalizing Mexico,' 85.
[37] TONY BALLANTYNE, *Orientalism and Race: Aryanism in the British Empire* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 18–55; 169–87.
[38] More commonly, the non-Aryan was seen as the 'primitive within.' PRATHAMA BANERJEE, *Politics of Time: 'Primitives' and History-writing in a Colonial Society* (Oxford; New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006), 8–9.
[39] ROY, *La India*, xvi.
[40] ROY, *La India*, iii.

militarily aggressive. The notion of *mestizaje*, or the idea that the mixing of races was a positively distinguishing feature of Latin American societies, had been put forward by several thinkers there. In the revolutionary years between 1910 and 1917, the ideal of a mestizo Mexican identity also served to distinguish the present from pre-revolutionary times, when Mexico was seen as being ruled in the interest of Europeans.[41] *Mestizaje*, then, had been in the air for some time before Roy wrote about it and made it a part of *Vedanta*'s genesis.

Even though Roy was not mentioned by name in Vasconcelos' work, it seems inevitable that his presence and work had an effect on *Estudios indostánicos*. Like in Roy's book, *Estudios indostánicos* held that the spiritual genius of India was shaped by the mixing of its original inhabitants, the Dravidians, with their Aryan conquerors. Where the Dravidians supplied elements more valued by Vasconcelos, such as 'ideas about the immortality of the soul, transmigration and the omnipresence of Brahma,' the Aryans brought rather technical additions to the table, notably Sanskrit and the caste system.[42] For Vasconcelos, the mixing itself was what became the positive force in history, in a way that could be abstracted from an Indian context. He focused on the climates conducive to mixing—which he held to be temperate ones, like those that could be found in Mexico—as well as the skin colour of mixed populations: in this book as well as later works, Vasconcelos' 'cosmic' race was meant to be brown-skinned.[43] This made Vasconcelos' ideal into the opposite of the North American and British Anglo-Saxon space, where racial mixing was prohibited and white supremacy the norm.[44] It is significant that it was in India that Vasconcelos found his '[…] racial model in keeping with his plan of a "brown" utopia for Latin America.'[45] Roy's bold assertion of the equivalence of racial mixing in India's past and Latin America's present argued that both were positive processes, with brown skin a distinguishing feature of its outcome, white skin marking those people who had missed out on its benefits. This assertion only comes into its own when placed into the narrow context of Mexican orientalists, or even just of Vasconcelos as a potential reader.

The contingent context of Roy's arguments about racial mixing went beyond the textual. It was also formed of the joint presence of Roy and Evelyn Trent in Mexico City, which would have made a strong impression: 'A young U.S. woman (Trent) and a handsome Indian (Roy), both radicals, appeared as a sort of avant-garde canvas of what new notions of beauty and social solidarity ought to be. It was *mestizaje* at its best.'[46] Significantly, Evelyn signed the articles she published in Mexico City Evelyn

[41] STAVANS, *José Vasconcelos*, 5.
[42] Quoted in TORRES-RODRÍGUEZ, 'Orientalizing Mexico,' 82.
[43] Quoted in TORRES-RODRÍGUEZ, 'Orientalizing Mexico,' 81–82.
[44] His celebration of racial mixing did not mean Vasconcelos did not adhere to any sense of hierarchy between races at all—his ideas have been described as insisting on a 'whitening' of Latin American populations, and excluding the continent's Black population. MILLER, *Rise and Fall of the Cosmic Race*, 30, 44.
[45] TORRES-RODRÍGUEZ, 'Orientalizing Mexico,' 82.
[46] MAURICIO TENORIO-TRILLO, *I Speak of the City: Mexico City at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2013), 277.

Trent-Roy, which, among the readership of the English-language pages of *El Heraldo de México* where her writing appeared in serialised form, clearly associated her with one of the few Indians in town. The articles' content also addressed racial mixing. Evelyn described it as an essential feature of contemporary Mexican life, but also used it to address her own status as a foreigner there. In *Mexico and her People* (1919), she wrote that the 'real Mexican' was middle-class and mestizo, 'of swarthy skin and hazel eyes,' separated both from the Indian peasants as well as the aristocracy (representing imperialist interests) who, if they had any mixed blood, would be sure to hide it.[47] About most foreigners in Mexico, she wrote that they remained aloof from this eclectic Mexican life,[48] for a simple reason that set them apart from herself and her kind of foreigners:

> At bottom of this ill-concealed intolerance is racial prejudice, which makes the European and North American feel in his heart that the Mexicans, not being altogether of the godlike Aryan race, are destined to be the hewers of wood and drawers of water for those that unquestionably are.[49]

It was precisely in the absence of racial prejudice, and therefore an openness to cultural and racial mixing, that Evelyn diagnosed the dividing line between true and false Mexicans, as well as between friendly and pernicious foreigners.

In these contingent contexts of intellectuals and readers in Mexico City, Roy and Evelyn self-consciously operated between contexts, working with the ways in which these could be assumed to be different. In the case of Roy, something he could specifically offer was a context assumed to be distant and exotic, yet desirable—ancient India. The transformative potential of his arguments, and thereby their role as translations, lay in offering this context as more familiar than it might appear at first sight. Paradoxically, his authority to make this offer relied in part on his own foreignness, or even exoticism, in Mexico City, which his assertions of equivalence could destabilise but not erase. Because Roy had offered ancient India as a context where racial mixing had taken place in certain ways, Vasconcelos could draw on this for his further theories of the benefits of *mestizaje* in Latin America, allowing for a much wider picture of inferior, racially pure societies versus superior, mixed ones. In global encounters, contexts do not merely explain, but they also form a part of that which was at stake in intellectual arguments.

Fascists Everywhere

Roy's equivalences both predated his engagement with doctrinaire communism and outlasted it. It was during the 1940s, while grappling with the brutal phenomenon of fascism, that Roy made some of his boldest claims of equivalence. These claims can be illuminated by Roy's contingent context, as well as showing how he continued to

[47] EVELYN TRENT-ROY, 'Mexico and her People Chapter I,' *El Heraldo de México*, 22 September 1919, n.p.; EVELYN TRENT-ROY, 'Mexico and her People Chapter III,' *El Heraldo de México*, 6 October 1919, n.p.
[48] EVELYN TRENT-ROY, 'Mexico and her People Chapter VII,' *El Heraldo de México*, November 3 1919, n.p.
[49] TRENT-ROY, 'Mexico and her People Chapter VII.'

assert equivalences between contexts that his audiences would have thought of as different, destabilising the dividing lines between them. While the suitability of the concept of fascism for some branches of Hindu nationalist thought and practice has been made plausible by historians,[50] Roy's assertions about the Indian nationalist movement as fascist—and Gandhi and Nehru as individual fascists—are far outside the scope of how historians have characterised either movement.[51] Roy asserted that European fascisms and Indian nationalism were equivalent at a time when his political influence was waning. He had been a member of the Indian National Congress, but he was expelled in 1940 for wanting India to support Britain in the Second World War, in opposition to the then still neutrally positioned leadership.[52] Outside India too, Roy's networks had dwindled because he had become too oppositional for the doctrinaire communists of the day, and the war meant that those alternative communists he was in contact with had '[…] perished or been scattered to the four ends of the world.'[53] Roy's diagnosis of Indian nationalism and European fascisms as equivalent allowed him to interpret his own marginalisation positively—if it was fascist, being excluded from the nationalist mainstream placed him on the right side of history.

Roy's thinking about fascism as a global force has drawn more attention in recent years,[54] but his use of the theories of the German Jewish humanist-Marxist psychoanalyst Erich Fromm (1900–1980) in an Indian context has not been explored. In 1945, with European fascism on the brink of defeat, Roy published several texts explaining how Hindu nationalism and European fascisms were all expressions of the same human psychological problem: the fear of freedom. This idea stems from the work of Fromm, with whom Roy shared a social circle in 1920s Berlin, which included several members of the Frankfurt School.[55] Fromm's 1941 bestseller *Escape from Freedom* had argued that authoritarian regimes, such as those in Germany and Italy, had acquired their popularity because they provided a refuge from individual freedom and responsibility in modern societies, where people no longer relied on received structures and belief systems but had to make their own sense of life.[56] Additionally, Fromm saw a link to the authoritarianism engendered by Protestant doctrines of predestination,

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[50] Particularly for Italian fascism and Indian intellectuals, see MARZIA CASOLARI, *In the Shadow of the Swastika: The Relationships between Indian Radical Nationalism, Italian Fascism and Nazism* (London: Routledge, 2020). On psychology and practice, see BENJAMIN ZACHARIAH, 'Rethinking (the Absence of) Fascism in India, c. 1922–1945,' in *Cosmopolitan Thought Zones: South Asia and the Global Circulation of Ideas*, eds SUGATA BOSE and KRIS MANJAPRA (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 182–98.

[51] For a methodical refutation, see MICHAEL ORTIZ, '"Disown Gandhi or Be Damned": M.N. Roy, Gandhi and Fascism,' *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 21, no. 3 (2020), https://doi.org/10.1353/cch.2020.0033.

[52] By 1942, the Indian National Congress would assume an anti-war stance. MANJAPRA, *M. N. Roy*, 129.

[53] New Delhi, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (NMML), Catalogue 70: M. N. Roy Papers Section 1, Bertram Wolfe Correspondence, Letter from Bertram Wolfe to M. N. Roy, 5 April 1949.

[54] ORTIZ, '"Disown Gandhi or Be Damned"'; BALCOM, 'From Communist Internationalism to a 'New Humanism"; DISHA KARNAD JANI, 'The Concept of Fascism in Colonial India: M.N. Roy and The Problem of Freedom,' *Global Histories* 3, no. 2 (2017): 121–38.

[55] MANJAPRA, *M. N. Roy*, 70; RAY, *In Freedom's Quest*, vol. 4, part 2, 326.

[56] LAWRENCE J. FRIEDMAN, *The Lives of Erich Fromm: Love's Prophet* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 65, 104–106, 118.

which asked individuals to completely give up their sense of individual choice. The step to fascism was only small, as individuals gave up their freedom of choice just as unquestioningly under that system to follow a strong leader.[57] Fromm's universalist account of human psychology and development would receive criticism from anthropologists,[58] but for Roy, it provided a universal psychological idiom for a theory of Indian nationalism that painted his adversaries in a shocking light.

In two publications, *The Problem of Freedom* (1945) and *Jawaharlal Nehru* (1945), Roy set out to diagnose the Indian masses with the thoroughly modern condition of a 'fear of freedom,' while at the same time maintaining castigations for their backwardness. One opening for doing so had been provided by Fromm's direct link between the authoritarianism of European Reformation thought, demanding absolute submission to God, and that of the contemporary Nazi movement, demanding obedience to the leader. Roy then diagnosed a similarity between Reformation-era Europe and contemporary India.[59] India's present, Roy argued, was like Europe's past in all the bad ways—only worse—while the fear of freedom described by Fromm as a particularly modern phenomenon could also be found there. While in Fromm's work, the fear of freedom was an essential attribute of modern, individualistic people who resented the responsibility that came with their emancipation, in Roy's text it was an aspect of an unchanging Hinduism that guided the majority in the past as much as in the present.[60]

But Roy wanted both the sixteenth- as well as the twentieth-century aspects of Fromm's theory for India's present. Within a picture of stasis for the majority, Roy added a note of dynamism for the middle classes, as Fromm had identified the lower middle class as particularly prone to Nazism.[61] Roy saw the Indian urban middle classes as the 'social basis' for an Indian form of fascism. It was among these classes that an unmooring from 'traditional' roles and patterns had occurred when they moved to emerging cities, enjoyed new forms of education, and manned the colonial government machinery. These changes entailed a 'slight advance toward the concept of individual freedom.' When their employment prospects dimmed at the beginning of the twentieth century, 'the old tie was gone but there was no future,' and the only way to escape from new-found freedom was into older cultural certainties.[62] In Roy's hands, neither tradition nor modernity could serve as a bulwark against the fear of freedom.

Apart from his diagnosis of the masses, Roy included near identical psychological portraits of both Gandhi and Nehru that shed light on the ways in which his assertions created a need for his own role and the insights he could offer. According to Roy, both Gandhi and Nehru were precisely the kind of figures, from classes whose

[57] FRIEDMAN, *The Lives of Erich Fromm*, 105–106.
[58] FRIEDMAN, *The Lives of Erich Fromm*, 118.
[59] M. N. ROY, *The Problem of Freedom* (Calcutta: Renaissance, 1945), 12.
[60] ROY, *The Problem of Freedom*, 14.
[61] FRIEDMAN, *The Lives of Erich Fromm*, 113.
[62] ROY, *The Problem of Freedom*, 14.

lives had been profoundly changed in recent years, who might succumb to the modern type of fear of freedom identified by Fromm. He identified Gandhi's 'uprootedness' with his having lived in Britain and South Africa, where he had become a 'lonesome individual, frightened by the specter of freedom, [who] found refuge in submission to an authority […].'[63] Roy cast Gandhi's appeal to religious values as a response to modernity rather than as traditional. Furthermore, he implied that Gandhi had been unable to embrace the freedom of living an uprooted life—unlike Roy himself.

In order to cast Nehru in a similar role, Roy had to take a different tack. After all, Nehru's leftist ideas and more secular style were closer to Roy's own. There was something modern about Nehru, but Roy argued that this came with the same problem as Gandhi's modernity; neither Nehru nor Gandhi were able to bear the weight of their personal responsibility for their lives and beliefs. As such, their espousal of any ideology was suspect—including those closer to Roy's heart, such as socialism or communism—having been adopted for the wrong reasons and thereby compromising their very nature. '[Nehru's] apparent advance towards Socialism and Marxism was the typical groping of the lonesome individual of the twentieth century' or 'the modern man's search for God, who is eventually found in Fascism.'[64] What held all of these ideas together, whether they were meant to describe the masses, Gandhi, or Nehru, was their opposition to how Roy saw himself: as a 'modern' individual, strong enough to bear the weight of his own freedom. It was as such an individual, asserting the authority to assess which instances from past and present were like others, easily creating order in a large and chaotic world, that Roy positioned himself.

There were specific instances of Roy trying to find new audiences with his arguments about fascism. Around 1945, Roy and some of his political colleagues in the minor party he was then leading got in touch with the British Labour Party to advance their own design for a constitution for soon-to-be independent India. In a letter, Roy and his colleagues urged British Labourites to '[…]consider it for your upcoming meeting with [viceroy] Wavell.'[65] Part of this campaign was an article of Roy's, in which Gandhi's Congress party came in for heavy-duty accusations of fascist politics; here, the equivalence was between Wavell's support for Gandhi and that of general Paul von Hindenburg for Hitler—the common element being a lack of majority vote, as there had been no universal franchise at the time of the 1937 provincial elections.[66] In the article, Gandhi was not just a typical modern individual, fearful of his new freedoms; he was as dangerous as Hitler. As an attempt to gain a foothold in a party to whom Roy and his associates were unknown, this was an attention-grabbing, if unsuccessful, move.

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[63] ROY, *The Problem of Freedom*, 15.
[64] ROY, *The Problem of Freedom*, 41.
[65] Manchester, People's History Museum (PHM), Labour Party, International Department, India, Letter from Tarkunde to Phillips, LP/ID/IND/2/37i.
[66] PHM, Labour Party, International Department, India, 'Lord Wavell Playing the Hindenburg of India? – Subtle Plan to Perpetuate Exploitation of Indian People – Indian National Congress Playing with Distributed Cards' LP/ID/IND/2/23ii.

In the post-Second World War international humanist realm, Roy's engagement with psychology was conducive to new contacts, yet the version of 'India' he had to offer was not what interlocutors in Europe were generally looking for. To begin with, engaging with Fromm's ideas had placed Roy into a wider international conversation and ensured his future work was noticed and appreciatively cited by Fromm himself.[67] Beyond Fromm, Roy corresponded with and published the work of French intellectuals, such as Raymond Aron (1905–1983) and the Christian humanist André Brissaud (1920–1996). While Brissaud had an interest in Indian humanism, it proved to be quite different from that which Roy's universalist psychology had to offer, as Brissaud planned on travelling to India to record a documentary named 'The Meaning of the Divine.'[68] In 1953, Roy's Indian humanist organisation became a founding member of the International Humanist and Ethical Union, even though Roy was not able to attend the inaugural congress.[69] At the founding congress, British eugenicist and biologist Julian Huxley (1887–1975) spoke of the hopes he had for a contribution to a humanist religion from South Asia, in the shape of '[…] communicable techniques for attaining satisfying kinds of mystical experience, such as are recorded for Yoga […].'[70] Little could have been further from Roy's humanist ideas, which drew quite exclusively on European intellectual history and considered Hinduism anathema. The India he had to offer to European humanist audiences did not correspond to their expectations of difference, but Roy continued assuming the role of confounding such expectations, and destabilising the lines of division between contexts.

Conclusion

Just as the perspective from an aeroplane, and the bird's eye view it provides, was the privilege of extremely few people in this period, possessing the confident authority to claim the ability to see the key similarities across widely ranging contexts was a similarly rare commodity.[71] Roy assumed such a perspective to the extent that the intellectual field where he felt comfortable moving approached the elusive thing that historians sometimes refer to as a 'global context.' Analytically, such a context would be much too unwieldy or even impossible to work with, and the notion has rightfully confounded intellectual historians. Yet, when turning the spotlight back on an actor ostensibly operating in such a context, the utter specificity of the ways in which he did so, and the opportunities this created for him, become clear. The example of M. N. Roy and his equivalences offer context to his political and personal circumstances,

[67] Fromm cited Roy's *Reason, Romanticism, and Revolution* (1952) in his 1955 book *The Sane Society* as 'a thorough and brilliant analysis' of what he conceptualised as the problem of 'rootedness.' INNAIAH NARISETTI, 'Introduction,' in *M. N. Roy: Radical Humanist. Selected Writings*, ed. INNAIAH NARISETTI (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2004), 2.
[68] NMML, Catalogue 70: M. N. Roy Papers Section 1, Brissaud Correspondence, Letter from André Brissaud to M. N. Roy, 29 April 1949.
[69] HANS VAN DEUKEREN, 'From theory to practice—a history of IHEU 1952-2002,' in *International Humanist and Ethical Union 1952-2002; Past, present and future*, eds BERT GASENBEEK and BABU GOGINENI (Utrecht: De Tijdstroom, 2002), 15–104 (18).
[70] VAN DEUKEREN, 'From theory to practice,' 20.
[71] See PETER ADEY, *Aerial Life: Spaces, Mobilities, Affects* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 1–11.

which he used in his arguments to interest new audiences, across a variegated life in which new opportunities were generally welcome and occasionally indispensable. This contingent context involved bodily presence in a specific space just as much as the intellectuals and texts they were engaging with. In fact, such limited contexts did not pre-date the arguments they now illuminate, but were created with them.

Without insights from translation studies, the shifting sands of context in global intellectual history, and the role it played in transcultural encounters as they were made, would remain invisible. The analytical use of translation yields the insight that context in global intellectual history can never be a given entity, and that it relies on and recreates notions of different contexts—and the differences between them. The making of such equivalences is easily overlooked, especially in thought as universalist as Roy's, because he posits the pre-existence of these instances of sameness. When their assertion is nevertheless considered as an act of creation, we can appreciate the transformative power they potentially had on the assumptions of difference among their audiences. In the case of Roy, whose interlocutors often, like himself, self-consciously operated between contexts, his writings tried to shift where they assumed the dividing lines of difference between contexts were. A global context, then, ceases to be something approaching the whole world, but rather pertains to the ways in which universal arguments were made credible, mobilising not only the personal authority to present evidence from different parts of the world, but also the differences between them.

Book Reviews

Convicts: A Global History

Clare Anderson
(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022)
[ISBN: 9781108814942]

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When seen through the lens of the twenty-first century, the history of punishment can be described as a chronicle of confinement and incarceration. The adjectives that immediately come to mind are related to immobility, enclosed spaces, and inertia. However, this has not always been the case. Since the early modern age, governments have transported convicts across seas and lands to meet the states' needs in terms of labour demands, managing troublesome individuals, and as a means of colonising 'uninhabited' lands or new frontiers.

In *Convicts: A Global History*, Clare Anderson aims to unfold a comprehensive account of convicts' transportation, drawing on her twenty-five years of research in the field. In the book, she underscores the similarities which had characterised convicts' transportation in both European and non-European empires between the fifteenth and the early twentieth century. While in her previous research, Anderson focused exclusively on the British empire, in *Convicts* she attempts to explore the movement of convicts on a global scale, drawing upon her research in French, as well as Spanish and British archives. She further draws on secondary literature, expanding the geographical analysis to include the Chinese, Japanese, and Russian empires.

In the book, the scholar consistently employs the terms 'circulation,' 'connections,' 'multi-directional,' and 'multi-staged' as recurring motifs to describe the complex and dynamic patterns of movement among convicts. In fact, her first and central argument challenges the conventional view of the history of punishment, which, influenced by Michel Foucault's ideas, has emphasised the static nature of punishment through the development of prisons and penitentiaries in the nineteenth century and the end of pre-modern forms of punishment. On the contrary, Anderson contends that punitive mobility coexisted with incarceration, and she underscores that during the nineteenth century 'transportation, deportation and exile were more globally expansive than at any point in world history' (16–17), making it a significant aspect of her argument.

The second key argument throughout the book is that convict transportation not only preceded and coexisted with other forms of exploitative mobility, such as enslavement and indenture, but also persisted and intersected with them. In places like

Cromohs (Cyber Review of Modern Historiography), ISSN 1123-7023, 26/2023

DOI: 10.36253/cromohs-14898

Mauritius and in the eighteenth and early nineteenth-century Caribbean, convicts worked alongside slaves and indentured labourers. In some cases, the shortage of free or enslaved workers instigated convict transportation. The British administration itself acknowledged the proximity and interchangeability of these forms of exploitative labor, as judiciously articulated by the Colonial Secretary, Frederick John Robinson, 1st Viscount Goderich (1782–1859). He underscored that, in such circumstances, convict transportation more closely resembled a slave trade, wherein convicts were treated as 'articles of merchandize' rather than as criminals undergoing legal sentences (142–43).

According to Anderson, the enduring practice of 'punitive pluralism' (139) in the nineteenth century stemmed from a convergence of factors common among states and empires. First and foremost, there was a prevailing consensus that convicts were deemed 'too valuable' to be executed or locked into jails. Their uncertain legal status and inherent flexibility were regarded as pivotal factors that positioned convicts as an excellent source of cheap labour. As a result, convicts were transported over vast distances to inhospitable and undesirable locations, fulfilling governmental demands and serving colonial objectives (chapter 3). In the book, examples of these practices include convicts' employment in the sugar estates in the Caribbean, the deportation of undesirable convicts to the Australian colonies, and the imperial ambition to colonise new frontiers, such as Hokkaido Island in the Japanese empire.

Additionally, governments saw convict transportation as an effective means of inflicting severe punishment and acting as a deterrent against crime. In the Andaman Islands, for instance, officials believed that Hindu prisoners endured hardship during their transportation to the islands due to their religious beliefs, which prohibited Hindus from crossing the *kala pani* under the risk of losing their caste affiliation.[1] Consequently, the British Indian Government viewed the prospect of transporting prisoners to the Andamans as an effective deterrent against crime (chapter 6). Nevertheless, the daunting challenge faced by punitive mobility was to simultaneously impose severe punishments, deter crime, fulfil labour requirements, and establish new colonies. Since meeting all these requirements proved unattainable, critics of punitive mobility frequently underscored the absence of severe punitive measures, especially expressing concerns regarding the effectiveness of penal colonies (chapter 5).

To grasp this intricate framework of punitive mobility, Clare Anderson employs a networked approach commonly known among scholars as 'carceral circuitry' (11). In *Convicts* she does not adhere to a geographical or chronological division; instead, she focuses on various major themes, basing her analysis on the interconnectedness of punitive practices and the circulation of knowledge among actors: states as well as prisoners. As a consequence, the book is divided into two distinct parts: in its initial

[1] The term *kala pani*, which translates to 'black water' in Hindi, signifies the prohibition of crossing vast seas in Hinduism. The immediate consequence of such an act was the loss of caste, which made this taboo especially significant for members of higher castes who risked losing their social status.

section (chapters 2–6), the book delves into the 'when,' 'why,' and 'how' empires and states transported convicts overseas. In the second section (chapters 7–11), Anderson shifts her focus to the role of convicts in shaping medical and ethnological knowledge and on the circulation of punitive practices among states and resistance strategies among convicts.

After addressing the 'when' and 'why' in detail in chapter 2 and providing a comprehensive list of penal colonies where convicts were transported from the fifteenth to the twentieth centuries, Anderson's subsequent chapters (3–6) delve into the intricacies of convict relocation. This section revolves around two fundamental concepts: that of 'multi-staged' and 'multi-directional.' In the nineteenth century, convict transportation became a multi-directional process. It was not merely a centre-periphery movement; rather, convicts were transported from territories within the empires, and sometimes even between different empires, as exemplified by the case of the French, Spanish, Dutch, and British Caribbean islands. Furthermore, as explored in chapter 5, convict transportation consisted of multiple stages; it involved transitions between various statuses, including confinement in solitary cells and labour-intensive assignments, ultimately leading to semi-free conditions. These stages were designed with the goal of rehabilitating inmates and facilitating their reintegration into civil society upon the completion of their detention period. The effectiveness of the stages system had come under scrutiny as early as 1840 by the Molesworth Committee. Furthermore, the author herself, in her concluding remarks, expresses a critical perspective. Anderson is particularly sceptical about the feasibility of punitive mobility effectively administering both severe punishment and meeting labour demands while *simultaneously* rehabilitating the prisoners (395).

The second section (chapters 7–11) of the book has been structured by the author around two further notions: those of 'circulation' and 'connection.' As a matter of fact, the circulation of convicts within the empires and between empires meant the circulation of ideas, knowledge, and practices, including those related to prisoner management. The latter issue takes centre stage in chapter 7, where the author delves into the circulation and exchange of practices concerning punitive mobility. Some strategies of penal punishment, such as Walter Crofton's system of progressive classification of prisoners in Ireland, spread to other penal colonies and states. In 1872, the establishment of the International Penitentiary Congress elevated the discourse on topics such as corporal punishment, convict treatment, and the conditions of women to an international level.

Of particular interest are the issues outlined in chapters 8, 9, and 10. In each of these cases, Anderson examines the transmission of knowledge and the role and individual agency of prisoners in facilitating its acquisition. In the realm of sciences, natural and botanical expeditions consistently included stops at penal colonies, where inmates were made available to scholars for flora and fauna classification or inland excursions (chapter 8). Similarly, inmates served as a convenient conduit for

experimentation in the fields of medicine, sociology, and statistics, as they constituted a readily controlled group for large-scale experiments.

Despite the remarkable effort to integrate the practice of transporting prisoners among various empires, thereby creating a comprehensive portrayal of punitive mobility, the author's background naturally influences the book. This results in a more detailed examination of occurrences related to the transportation of prisoners within the British Empire, with a notable focus on the Andaman Islands and the Caribbean. Nevertheless, *Convict: A Global History* accomplishes its objective by situating the history and exploitation of convict labour within the broader context of forced migration and colonisation. Clare Anderson successfully reevaluates the history of punishment, challenging Foucault's narrative and providing a new perspective on prisoner transportation during the nineteenth century. The book represents a significant contribution to the study of punitive mobility and its role in the global historical perspective of labour and colonialism.

Pursuing Empire: Brazilians, The Dutch and the Portuguese in Brazil and the South Atlantic, c.1620-1660

Cátia A.P. Antunes, ed.
(Leiden: Brill, 2023)
[ISBN. 9789004528468]

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Having deconstructed the nation-state as the basis for historical analysis, it is no surprise that historians have turned to empires as the next targets for a healthy revisionism. This new approach emphasises the porous boundaries of empires, their interactions, the imperial failures at mercantilist exclusivity, and the existence of persistent cross-imperial commercial ties, even during periods of hostility. No group of scholars has done this revision better than the early modern historians of trade and commerce whose studies of imperial interaction, cross-cultural and cross-religious contact, and the groups and individuals involved in these activities has renovated our vision of early modern empires, and perhaps the rise of the fiscal-military state as well. One of the foremost of these scholars has been Cátia Antunes, the editor of this excellent volume which provides a series of essays on Dutch activity in the South Atlantic from the late sixteenth century to about 1660, but with a concentration on the conquest and occupation of Brazil (1630–1654). The story is by necessity complex because the Dutch republic was at first in the sixteenth century a commercial partner with Portugal, then after 1581, a potential enemy of Habsburg Portugal until in 1641 it separated from the Iberian Habsburg monarchy. In that year, the Dutch Republic and Portugal became allies and commercial partners, but only in Europe, while the two countries remained competitors for colonies and commerce in Brazil, West Africa, and Asia.

With the contributions of ten other scholars, Antunes provides an excellent short introductory essay that places the chapters in context, and a discussion of the principal lines of inquiry that have characterised the study of the southern Atlantic system. Her emphasis on the development of commodity chains in the southern Atlantic and the involvement of Africans and people of African origin, or creole populations in the commercial and maritime activities provides the reader with a narrative that goes beyond a Eurocentric description of colonial trade. The volume's inclusion of chapters on

Cromohs (Cyber Review of Modern Historiography), ISSN 1123-7023, 26/2023

DOI: 10.36253/cromohs-14928

everyday life in the Brazilian colony deviates from the usual focus on government institutions and commerce, and is a welcome departure from the traditional historiography.

Imperial politics, however, is not forgotten. Francisco Bethencourt presents a thoughtful comparison of the Iberian and non-Iberian empires that seeks to demonstrate their differences. For example, the Iberian construction of ecclesiastical frameworks that paralleled secular government contrasted with the English and Dutch colonies, where these structures were mostly absent. Bethencourt admits certain similarities between the Iberian and northern European colonies, but he is also aware that it is difficult to discern if what is really at stake is not difference or similarity, rather than degree or chronology. For example, the reader might ask if Bethencourt's assertion that the Portuguese seignorial system with its donatarial grants in Madeira, Angola, and Brazil was really distinct from the 'capitalist trade-based system of the British North Atlantic' (15)? Such a description would have been surprising to proprietaries like the Duke of York, William Penn in Pennsylvania, and the Calvert family in Maryland who held powers very similar to the Portuguese grantees of the previous century. Ultimately, both the Portuguese and the English crowns (and the French for that matter) abandoned this form of privatisation of colonial development in favour of royal authority, or royally authorised companies, so while the timing was distinct, this technique of settlement shared many elements in common, and its ultimate suppression was similar.

Bethencourt is more convincing in his emphasis on inter-imperial adaptability of policies and exchange of techniques of rule and in the difference between the Portuguese and Dutch commercial strategies and the differences in emigration to their colonies which always placed the Dutch at a disadvantage. He concludes, however, by emphasising the effectiveness of the Portuguese Roman Catholic missionaries as a key to Portuguese success in Brazil. Still, the existence of various Tupi conversions to Calvinism, and the successful Dutch alliances with Tupi speakers and Tapuyas in Brazil as well as with indigenous peoples in New Netherlands as has been shown by Mark Meuwesse's *Brothers in Arms* (2012) leaves room for doubt that this explanation is sufficient to account for Dutch failure in Brazil.

In another chapter on politics, José Manuel Santos Pérez looks at how Spanish and Portuguese imperial integration took place. He discusses the specific political adjustments made in Hapsburg Brazil to assure that it would serve as a bulwark protecting the flow of silver from Perú to Spain, and by exploring Brazil's own potential to also become a source of mineral wealth. The chapter reveals, however, that despite early attempts by Philip II and Philip III to make Portuguese Brazil more like the Spanish Indies, and the efforts of king Philip IV to make Brazil profitable by eliminating contraband and corruption, or by discovering new mines, Brazil's defence and development remained a costly endeavour

even before the Dutch occupation of Pernambuco in 1630, and was especially so thereafter.

The heart of the volume are the three chapters on commercial relations between Portugal and the United Provinces. Filipa Ribeiro da Silva draws on the extensive literature on Dutch maritime activity. She emphasises not imperial rivalries, nor the actions of the Dutch East and West India Companies, but instead focuses on the often trans-imperial and cross-religious collaboration of private merchants and firms involved in financing, shipping, and contracting with the state monopolies in the colonial trades. Drawing on her own research on West Africa and the extensive literature on the Dutch West India Company (WIC) in Brazil and the Caribbean, she demonstrates how private merchants worked out strategies of collaboration with, or evasion from, the state monopoly, often by collaboration between Dutch Calvinist merchants, Portuguese Sephardi and Iberian Catholic merchants in arrangements that ignored religious and ethnic differences.

Those relationships are made clear in the two other essays on commerce. Antunes's own chapter covers much of the same period and reaches similar conclusions while focusing specifically on Brazil from the end of the Twelve Years' Truce (1609–1621) between the Dutch Republic and Hapsburg Spain to the reestablishment of an independent Portugal in 1668. She emphasises, however, that the Dutch had been involved in a Brazil trade well before Portugal became part of the Iberian Hapsburg monarchy, and they continued to do so after the WIC surrendered its colony in Brazil in 1654. This trade was often done with cross-religious partnerships or collaboration between Jews and Christians. Christopher Ebert and Thiago Krause follow up with a chapter on the post-1654 period when state sponsored monopolies in both the United Provinces and Portugal sought to control that trade and much contraband which increasingly involved Brazilian gold and tobacco. This illegal commerce went to Dutch factories and settlements on the Mina coast in West Africa. Much of Dutch trade with Brazil remained indirect through Portugal, but still profitable because both countries found it, and the trade of Portuguese salt for Baltic commodities carried by the Dutch, profitable. As a group the chapters on commerce drive home their common emphasis on the cross-imperial trade and the important role of non-state participants who often seemed to ignore religious and national origin differences.

As a unit the chapters on everyday life are less cohesive in their conclusions. Anne B. McGinness examines the much-touted religious tolerance of Dutch Brazil where demography forced the Dutch to make concession to the Portuguese Roman Catholics and where Jews also enjoyed religious freedom. While she holds that the Dutch Reformed Church ministers were more interested in converting Catholics than native peoples, she still presents enough evidence of Dutch missionary activity and conversions of the Tupi to call into question Bethencourt's previous explanation of the Dutch comparative failure in that regard. Her argument that increasing restrictions on Catholics after 1642 made

religion a principal cause of the rebellion against Dutch control is based on the chronicles of the Portuguese resistance written mostly by churchmen. The fact that the price of sugar was declining after 1638, that many of the planters, and especially the leaders of the revolt, were deeply indebted to the WIC and were encouraged to revolt by the new Portuguese king all suggest a possible alternative explanation to the focus on religious conflict.

Bruno Romero Ferreira Miranda's chapter on the daily life of soldiers employed by the WIC draws on his extensive research on the military history of the period, but also incorporates government reports and published as well as unpublished journals and diaries kept by the soldiers themselves about their lives. In general, pay was late, food was scarce, many sought additional employment to improve their conditions, and while the WIC maintained a defined set of military regulations, these were more honoured by evasion or exception than by compliance. Conditions got worse over time as the WIC found that the Brazilian colony became increasingly unprofitable as the Portuguese revolt progressed after 1645 and other sources of sugar developed in the Caribbean. The soldiers employed were a motley collection of people of different national origins—Dutch, Germans, Scandinavians, French, mestiços, and Indians. Promotion depended on personal ties and patronage. Those who did best had non-military artisan skills—carpentry, bricklaying, construction—that were in demand by civil society.

Marco Antônio Nunes da Silva also examines daily life in Dutch Brazil, but turns to the documentation provided by the Lisbon Inquisition, and therefore to deviance from orthodox Catholic behaviour, the presence of Jews in the colony, and to Portuguese interactions with the Dutch Calvinist clergy and laity. After a lengthy and somewhat superfluous introduction on the role of central power in the Portuguese empire versus that of local authority, the author turns to the issues of the more common interactions of Catholics, Jews, and Calvinists. Nunes da Silva presents some interesting details from Inquisitorial trials, and concentrates on interfaith relations like marriages, business arrangements, and conversions, but offers no general conclusion. Unlike McGinness, he gives little attention to the emphasis on religious differences and conflict by the leaders during the rebellion, or by the Portuguese clerical authors who later chronicled it as a justification of the Portuguese revolt in 1645.

The volume concludes with an informative epilogue by Amélia Polónia that summarises each chapter and seeks to place its content within the framework of the book as well as within the rich historiography of early modern empires. Her up-to-date bibliographic references are a guide to readers, and her essay could serve as either an introduction or a review of this book which demonstrates the ways in which the previous histories of early modern state-controlled European imperial expansion, studied empire by empire, is being creatively rethought with a new emphasis on individuals, groups and social sectors that ignored or surmounted imperial, religious, and ethnic boundaries.

La Renaissance de Tacite
Commenter les *Histoires* et les *Annales* au XVI[e] siècle

Kevin Bovier
(Basel: Schwabe Verlag, 2022)
[ISBN 978-3-7965-4606-8]

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With the aim, reiterated in both the introduction and the conclusion, of filling a gap in the body of studies on the modern reception of Tacitus's work and being 'motivé par l'absence d'une étude d'ensemble de ces commentaires' (14), Kevin Bovier traces the reception of the *Annals* and *Histories* from 1515 to around 1570 with philological meticulousness. While most scholarly attention, starting with Giuseppe Toffanin's seminal work (1921), has been on the phenomenon of Tacitism between the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, Bovier shifts his focus to Tacitus's reception before his political and moral re-use. Through the prism of the humanist commentaries and annotations to the editions—and manuscripts—of the two main Tacitan works, *La Renaissance de Tacite* aims to answer the question 'comment les Histoires et les Annales de Tacite passent-elles du statut d'ouvrages inconnus à la fin du Moyen Âge à celui d'œuvres majeures à la fin du XVIe siècle?' (17). To respond to a problem encompassing both the history of ideas and the history of the reception of classical antiquity, Bovier takes the circuitous route of the history of philology and the history of the book, considering the role and practices of humanistic exegesis, the historical actors involved in these practices, their objectives, as well as their readers.

Drawing upon the work of Valéry Berlincourt (2013) on the reception of Statius, particularly in terms of the methodological approach to humanist philology, and upon Lucie Claire's recent studies on the Renaissance reception of Tacitus, Bovier unfolds his analysis in six chapters, organised both chronologically and thematically. Chapter 1 explores Tacitus's *nachleben* leading up to the humanist recovery of his works, starting with *Germania*, first published as an appendix in 1472. The topic is discussed concisely, with the narrative focusing mainly on the first *annotated* edition of the *Histories* and *Annals* from 1515 by Filippo Beroaldo the Younger (during this period, these works were not recognized as separate entities). Bovier does not merely compare the manuscript text to the changes made by Beroaldo, but provides readers with a

Cromohs (Cyber Review of Modern Historiography), ISSN 1123-7023, 26/2023

DOI: 10.36253/cromohs-14892

comprehensive analysis of the printed work in its entirety, complete with a detailed colour image of the edition under consideration.

This method is also evident in chapter 2, a sort of 'meet the humanists' session. Similar to his treatment of Beroaldo, Bovier provides a detailed bio-bibliographical account of the relevant humanists, an analysis of their commentaries and annotations on Tacitus, and their corrections; all accompanied by a precise bibliographical description of the reference edition and high-resolution images. In this way, the reader can follow, humanist by humanist, the exegetical as well as hermeneutical work unfolding in the 1517 commentaries by Andrea Alciato (1492–1550); in the *Castigationes* and *Thesaurus* of 1533, and its 1544 re-edition by Beatus Rhenanus (1485–1547); in the *Annotatiunticulae* of 1541 by the humanist Emilio Ferretti (1489–1552); in the annotations dated 1556 by the lesser-known Vincent de la Loupe (?); in the *Notae* drawn up between 1559 and 1560 by Marcus Vertrarius Maurus (1525/1530–?), the first to distinguish between *Annals* and *Histories*, and finally in the annotations—the only manuscripts studied by Bovier—of the humanist Giovanni Ferrerio (1502–1579), dated 1567–1568.

The general presentation of commentators and editions serves as preparation for the reading of chapters 3 and 4, where Bovier examines the humanist practices underpinning the above-mentioned commentaries and their implications for Tacitan reception. The third chapter, 'corriger et éclaircir' (101), deals in particular with the formal aspects of commentaries, the humanist's connection to the manuscript, and the broader relationship to sources for the purpose of *emendatio*, *emendatio ope codicis* or *emendatio ope ingenii*. Bovier emphasises the continuity in the edits made by the commentators, with Rhenanus and Maurus standing out for their exceptional proficiency in using antiquarian or literary material to elaborate conjectures consistent with the correction of the Tacitan text. They also shared a preference for *coniectura* over *divinatio* when proposing interpretations of Tacitus's corrupted passages. By comprehending the modifications and corrections made by the commentators in chronological succession, Bovier is also able to 'donner aperçu de la fortune des conjectures humanistes dans les éditions' (168): the reception of Tacitus's work is closely tied to the fortune of its editors. On the other hand, the commentators themselves do not hesitate to use, alongside manuscripts, the edition prepared by their predecessors.

In Chapter 4, 'approfondir' (207), Bovier moves away from purely exegetical-philological issues for the first time to discuss the in-depth analysis crafted by humanists in their commentaries. In the transition from textual exegesis to humanistic hermeneutics, Bovier underscores that, while the insights are eclectic and difficult to categorise, there emerges a common interest shared by almost all commentators in matters of law, due to their legal training—with the exception of Beatus Rhenanus. It is indeed through the historiographical category of legal humanism—*humanisme juridique*—that Bovier expounds 'les approfondissements à caractère juridique qui se trouvent dans les notes' (223). Beyond examples of pure legal history, such as Tacitus's

accounts of the *confaerratio*, Bovier dwells on historical topics. This is evident in the comments on the ancient Helvetians—were they Gauls or Germans?— and, even more interestingly, in the annotations to Tacitan passages concerning Jews and Christians. These annotations are decisive in scrutinizing Tacitus's presumed or real impiety. Bovier recalls how 'dans le cas où Tacite faillit dans sa tâche d'historien, le commentateur doit alors intervenir pour rétablir la vérité, tant évangélique qu'historique' (252).

From chapter 5 onwards, the focus shifts to, if we may say so, the reception of the reception of Tacitus. In the first part, Bovier questions the self-fashioning of the commentators—how they present themselves as scholars, antiquarians, or patriots, both in the peritext of the works analysed in chapter 2, and within the commentaries themselves. In the second part, however, the focus turns to the horizon of the commentators' expectations and the actual readers of their annotated editions. Hopes about the type of audience vary from commentator to commentator, with an awareness also of the difficulties of Tacitan Latin. While some, like Alciato, only hope for scholarly readers, others, like de la Loupe, expect an audience that is not necessarily learned. In this sense, one of the most fascinating aspects of the chapter is the exposure of two cases of reading and reusing the commentaries analysed earlier. The first involves the margin notes of one M. de Tongres, found by Bovier in a copy of the 1519 re-edition of Tacitus annotated by Alciato. Bovier's narrative, hitherto rigidly philological and almost didactic, gives way to a kind of micro-history, recounting the story of the two young owners and readers of Tacitus's work: two students, the first of whom died around the age of twenty in a duel, the second the heir to the book and the narrator of his companion's events. The second example of reading and interpretation concerns the university reception of the commentaries on Tacitus's work, thanks to the well-known notes of the humanist Francesco Robortello (1516–1567). Of course, Bovier acknowledges the limits of a reception based on isolated cases, but one cannot but appreciate the effort to condense, in a single volume, both the reception of Tacitus's *Annals* and *Histories* and the reception of humanist annotations to Tacitus. The chapter concludes by returning to the central theme of Tacitus's reception in the sixteenth century, Tacitism. What knowledge did the humanists, editors, commentators, and readers of Tacitus have of the anacyclosis and *similitudo temporum* between the past described by the Roman historian and their present? In other words, what understanding did they have of those key terms that allowed the transition from Tacitus to Tacitism? Once again, Bovier chooses to trace his authorities in chronological order, answering the question case by case. However, excluding Ciceronian references to the *historia magistra vitae*, only one of the commentators, Ferrerius, speaks openly of *Similitudo temporum nostrum*. This shows how this early exegetical and humanistic reception of Tacitus is both independent of and preparatory to the later interpretations of scholars like Justus Lipsius (1547–1606): there would be no Tacitism without the exegetical work of correction, commentary, and edition that the humanists analysed by Bovier carried out on Tacitus's works.

This is precisely what Kevin Bovier states in chapter six as a conclusion. The hermeneutic evolution leading from a Ciceronian reading of history to Tacitism would, in fact, be the combination of the reception of the *Annals* and the *Histories* with the 'nombreux troubles politiques et religieux qui agitaient l'Europe à cette époque et qui poussaient les intellectuels à chercher des remèdes dans le passé' (301). It is Rome's past as recounted by Tacitus and those who, from Beroaldo to Ferrerio, contributed to its *Renaissance*.

It is evident that *La Renaissance de Tacite* is the reworking, the *labor limae*, of a rich dissertation on Tacitus's reception. This, however, does not compromise its readability but offers a condensed presentation, in about three hundred pages, of a rich body of observations. Here, one can appreciate the philological gifts of both Tacitus's commentators and Bovier himself. Despite minor unavoidable oversights—Florence is not 'occupée' (56) in 1529–1530, but besieged—the volume successfully combines exegetical and bibliographical concerns with historiographical problems. Together with the equally recent *Marc-Antoine Muret lecteur de Tacite* by Lucie Claire (2022), *La Renaissance de Tacite* is an important work that delivers what it promised: 'combler une lacune dans la recherche sur la réception de l'historien romain à la Renaissance' (297).

Futuristic Fiction, Utopia, and Satire in the Age of the Enlightenment: Samuel Madden's Memoirs of the Twentieth Century *(1733)*

Giulia Iannuzzi
(Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2024)
[ISBN 9782503606026]

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Since the 1980s, or the advent of New Historicism, much of the research on the literature of the eighteenth century can be referred to as scholarship of recovery. A lot has been lost, ignored, or forgotten. As scholars of the period, we find old texts, bring them to light, and show why they merit attention or how they change our picture of the course of literary history.

This new edition of Samuel Madden's *Memoirs of the Twentieth Century* (1733), which comes with a sizable introduction by Giulia Iannuzzi, puts before us a work of fiction that has received scant attention even by specialists of the eighteenth century. One of the reasons is that Madden, an Irish writer, clergyman, and philanthropist, destroyed most of the 1,000-copy print run for reasons that remain uncertain, so that only 18 first editions are now listed in the catalogues of North American and European libraries. And yet the text has earned the honour to be considered the first instance of what is called 'future fiction,' a kind of creative literature that imagines the state of the world in time to come, much as utopias, since Thomas More, tell of unreal places that are far away geographically. The point of origin, for many, is the French writer Louis Sebastian Mercier's *L'An deux mille quatre cent quarante* (1771), on which lots of arguments about conceptions of history and futurity have been hung. It is no stretch, therefore, to say that Madden's abortive experiment lets us rethink the course of literary and intellectual history. How was the future envisioned in the early eighteenth century? How was it marshalled to critique the culture and politics of the present? How was it posited as a plan or model to strive for in the future? This new edition makes widely available the first footprints, so to speak, on what is now a busy thoroughfare.

The long excursus at the front of the book, written by Iannuzzi, is as detailed and descriptive as any reader could wish it. In fifteen chapters and 120 pages, this section lays out the context quite rigorously and comprehensively. It is almost a monograph, at least in length, but without a central argument, apart from the claim that 'this work of fiction is an exceptionally fascinating piece of early eighteenth-century literature and an important—albeit hitherto rather obscure—chapter in the

Cromohs (Cyber Review of Modern Historiography), ISSN 1123-7023, 26/2023

DOI: 10.36253/cromohs-15348

history of the futuristic imagination' (17). Iannuzzi considers, among much else, the history of science fiction and utopian literature; understandings in early modernity of history and futurity; the life of the author, an Irishman who was loyal to British interests; his connection with well-known thinkers and writers of the day, including George Berkeley, Jonathan Swift, and Samuel Johnson; his engagement with myriad sources and precursors, from accounts of natural history to narratives of exploration; the main targets of the book's satire, in particular the Jesuits; and the conditions of publication, including the question of why the author would suppress his own creation. For Iannuzzi, there are two explanations: one is that Madden, unnamed on the title page, had lost his anonymity, and that he deemed it unseemly for a member of the clergy to be seen wading into issues of politics; the other, congruent with the first, is the current events had made matters sensitive, and that the author feared the anger of England's de facto Prime Minister, Robert Walpole.

Let me describe Madden's narrative, since so few have read it. The text includes a dedication and not one but three prefaces by a fictive editor who has received a pack of letters from the future. These letters, addressed to the Lord High Treasurer, the editor's five-times great grandson, will be written in the 1990s by British diplomats who are stationed in such cities as Rome, Paris, Moscow, and Constantinople. They have been carried by a ghost, or spirit—'my good *Genius*'—to the year 1728, then recast by the editor in the English of the eighteenth-century (157). The letters show a world in which Britain rules the oceans and runs global trade and commerce. Stanhope, an agent in Constantinople, writes that 'our glorious *George* VI. hath by the Success of his Arms oblig'd his Enemies to accept the Terms he was pleas'd to prescribe them'; the British King has 'taught all the Powers in *Europe* the Respect and almost Dependence they owe us' (163). The villains are the Jesuits, who control parts of Europe, Asia, Africa, and South America. As Stanhope puts it, 'they have been able to divide and distract the *Protestant* Powers, to corrupt and pervert some of them, perfidiously and atheistically to break thro' Oaths, and the most solemn and sacred Engagements, and to embrace the *Romish* Communion' (177). Some of the letters, far fewer, tell of the state of Britain. Madden's perspective was that of a clergyman of the Protestant Ascendancy, a Whig who believed in Britain's eminence, and that comes through in the letters. The text as a whole should be read as a kind of frame story in which the three prefaces are of a piece with the letters. Playful and facetious, the voice of the editor instils a sense of caution and unsureness as to how to interpret what follows. Just how sincere or ironic are Madden's predictions? We cannot be expected to accept at face value the story by Clare, in Moscow, that a Lapland ritual can bring warm sunshine to cold climates, though he tells us he has seen 'the Clouds break into a small Aperture, as regularly as if one would draw the Curtains of a Bed,' so that 'there were about three Acres thus enlightened, while all the rest of the Garden about them, as well as the whole Country, was covered with a dark misty Fog' (186). A letter on protocol to slow the plague in the Ottoman Empire—a system that has saved 'many millions' in Turkey—sounds more like a candid proposal, one that Britain would do well to follow (233). And one assumes Madden means it when a letter from London

tells of noble families that have faltered, judging that, 'all the empty noise, and pomp, and shew of Life, which Men aim at with such infinite expense and folly, is not worth one action greatly generous, humane, or honest' (268).

It will not be unkind, I hope, to conclude that *Memoirs of the Twentieth Century* is one of those texts that is, perhaps, less fun to read than to discuss. The same has been said of some of the greatest works of literature, for instance Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* (1759–1767), though I would not put *Memoirs* at that high level. The fiction of the time could be placed in two categories. The first is for writing that seems old and strange, writing that is interesting (if it is indeed interesting) because it is so different, so archaic. The second is for narratives that come across as modern or familiar. *Memoirs*, without a doubt, fits better in the former. It is a 'novel,' according to Iannuzzi, but readers should not expect a story in the vein of Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) or Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* (1740). There is no plot. There are no characters. There is, instead, lots of detailed description and explanation, as is the case with all utopian and dystopian literature. What makes the *Memoirs* intriguing, for me, is the way it plays with the future. Free of the dictates of what we now call 'science fiction,' Madden was free, as well, of the genre's tendency to dream up new inventions that structure human existence. His is a future of not gizmos and gadgets but cultures and politics. What determines the progress of history, in Madden's account, is not new and strange machines but rather the exchanges and influences wrought by travel and commerce. That, in itself, is compelling, given the obsession, in the actual twentieth and twenty-first centuries, with the latest and greatest technologies. The oddness of Madden's narrative—its divergence from later science fiction—should remind us that the virtue of the genre is that it can show us a wide variety of possible futures. I would not want the outcome that Madden imagines for the twentieth century, but the *Memoirs*, at least, affirms both the power of the creative imagination and the freedom we have to think up and plan for many new worlds to come.

Knowledge Lost:
A New View of Early Modern Intellectual History

Martin Mulsow
transl. H. C. Erik Midelfort
(Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2022)
[ISBN 978-0-691-20865-7]

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Knowledge Lost sets out to present a new view on the history of early modern knowledge, and it lives up to this bold claim. The only point to be mentioned in this respect is that this view is, strictly spoken, no longer as new as it could be. The present English volume is a very well-executed, faithful, and full translation of Mulsow's German-language monograph *Prekäres Wissen* of 2012,[1] but it has not been revised or updated in the process. This does not detract from the quality of either the scholarship or the book, but for the following it should be clear that a decade went by since the research under review.

The introduction states that the book, working from specific cases, 'does not pretend to offer universal claims in some abstract space' (23ff.). While this is certainly true in the sense that the book very closely details a number of specific case studies, it would be taking modesty too literally to conclude that no general theses could be inferred from those cases.

Mulsow is focusing on a series of events and texts all centred on various forms of what he terms 'precarious knowledge' (4), that is, knowledge that is endangered in its survival. This knowledge is endangered because its carriers are put in danger by it: manuscripts may get lost, printed books be banished and burned, and authors and readers marginalised, socially excluded, or prosecuted. What is at stake here is thus not any kind of knowledge, but clandestine, heterodox, critical, and radical knowledge, theories and hypotheses which ran counter to established systems of belief and authority and thus were deemed dangerous and unreliable by early modern society at large.

Mulsow attempts to uncover situations in which the precarity of knowledge has left traces that allow us to glimpse how it led to fragility, marginality, and even the loss of the knowledge in question. In line with (the early) Bruno Latour, Lorraine Daston,

[1] MARTIN MULSOW, *Prekäres Wissen: Eine andere Ideengeschichte der Frühen Neuzeit* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2012).

Cromohs (Cyber Review of Modern Historiography), ISSN 1123-7023, 26/2023

DOI: 10.36253/cromohs-14735

or Steven Shapin, he endeavours to pursue a social history of knowledge, where the abstract 'knowledge' itself is much less in focus than the social conditions in which it is produced and communicated, as well as the individuals involved in these processes. The case studies meant to illustrate these conditions and processes are primarily drawn from Italy and the Holy Roman Empire between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries (with mentions of England, France, and the Netherlands but to a lesser extent). The individual chapters are divided into four thematically interconnected sections.

Section 1, 'Tactics of the intellectual precariat,' begins with the German freethinker Theodor Ludwig Lau, who, in 1719, attempted suicide after being jailed for publishing heterodox and supposedly atheistic writings ('The Clandestine Precariat'). Lau tried to defend himself by arguing that his persona as a public speaker in the scholarly debate needed to be separated from his private persona, and that his heterodox statements did not reflect his private beliefs, albeit with only limited success. Starting with Lau, other roughly contemporary figures holding equally dangerous views, such as François La Mothe le Vayer, Hermann Samuel Reimarus, Adriaan Beverland, Giulio Cesare Vanini, and Peter Friedrich Arpe are connected, and the rhetorical and visual (3, 'Portrait of the Freethinker as a Young Man') strategies by which they, like Lau, tried to conceal or justify their views are analysed. These names reappear throughout the book in various constellations.

Mulsow sees the attempt to sharply distinguish speaker roles as an indicator of the first steps towards the modern concept of the 'public sphere' around 1700. He further establishes that the underground world in which these clandestine thinkers operated was not a personal network of individuals, but rather a loose assemblage of texts by people who most of the time didn't even know each other by name (109).

Section 2, 'Trust, Mistrust, Courage: Epistemic Perceptions, Virtues, and Gestures' tries to flesh out the social formations of the 'knowledge bourgeoisie' and the 'knowledge precariat' as the major groups within which the dynamics of knowledge transfer related to precarious knowledge took place (163ff.). Important in this respect is the observation that being a part of the knowledge precariat did not necessarily translate into socially or economically precarious conditions, although such conditions could all too easily emerge. To maintain secrecy and to establish safe modes of communication for their theories, the knowledge precariat had to rely on a number of codes and dissimulation techniques which included the use of emblems in seventeenth century Venice (and beyond) and the adoption of a conscious philosophical quietism (7, 'Harpocratism: Gestures of Retreat') to avoid endangering oneself. These techniques are also illustrated by tracing the origin of the famous enlightenment motto 'sapere aude' to Johann Georg Wachter.

Wachter, a follower of Spinoza who, precisely because of these views, could not find permanent employment, nevertheless succeeded in 1740 in drafting the design for a commemorative medal struck by the Aletophile Society of Berlin bearing the motto as a coded reference to his heterodox convictions. This medal, in turn, firmly anchored

the motto in Enlightenment discourse, paving the way for Kant's use of the phrase in 1784, thus drawing attention to the importance of precarious knowledge like Wachter's as a 'subhistory' of the Enlightenment (233).

Section 3, 'Problematic transfers,' deals with problems in information communication resulting from the—often ephemeral—materiality of the storage units of precarious knowledge, especially when they only existed in manuscript form. The most impressive case study in this section is the deduction of the outline of the early philosophy of Erhard Weigel from the 1650s, reconstructed after an overview sheet that survives only in the form of a painting by Pietro della Vecchia.

Weigel, who later became a professor at Jena and one of Leibniz's academic teachers, and who, in his later writings, championed a strictly rationalized approach to philosophy in line with Lutheran orthodoxy, emerges here as a philosopher operating with cabalistic, gnostic, and hermetic presuppositions, mixed with his later *more geometrico* approach. His later philosophy became purely geometric, stripped of everything his Lutheran university would consider heterodox, making recovery of these foundations possible only through the painting, as the manuscript sheet depicted therein has not survived. Once again, many elements that were considered dangerous and, therefore, precarious knowledge, reveal themselves as a hidden groundswell of Enlightenment ideas. This new perspective also sheds light on the problems encountered in the travel and transmission history of the objects encoding such knowledge.

Section 4, 'Communities of Fascination and the Information History of Scholarly Knowledge,' widens the focus by integrating three case studies dealing with topics that encourage a broader view of the intellectual communities involved in numismatics and orientalist subjects in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Numismatics evolved as a highly politically charged science in the seventeenth century, due to the massive investments of the French king Louis XIV. This created ample opportunities for eager scholars to profit both scientifically from the Paris collections and financially from the Crown treasury.

By following Andreas Morell and Johann Michael Wansleben in their work on behalf of the French king and the precarity their confession and independent choices put them in, Mulsow sheds light on the instrumental use that governments could make of precarious knowledge and its producers to further their own agenda. Through the example of the Hamburg scholar Johann Christoph Wolf's collection of notebooks and annotated reference works, he minutely details the working mechanism of the production of orientalist theses and books in the early eighteenth century, and how and why precarious kinds of knowledge became integrated into these processes.

There are a few minor quibbles directed at the publisher that should be mentioned. While the quality of the translation is very high, its closeness to the original sometimes seems to give the text a subtly quaint tone. However, this may be the subjective impression of a reviewer trying to purge his own English of Germanisms.

More annoyingly, although the valuable index of names and places has been retained, there is no bibliography at the end of the book. All references must be extracted directly from the footnotes. As in the original, there is no subject index. Some of the images are quite small, making it difficult to discern the features described in the text (see chapter 7, 'Harpocratism'), and all images are in black and white only.

So, what are the theses of this book? That precarious knowledge and precarious scholars undergird a lot of what is often framed as 'the Enlightenment,' that there was no heterodox underground network but many isolated scholars struggling with orthodoxy on their own, albeit in distant connection to each other; and that it pays to look for details within the larger picture. The book succeeds in demonstrating all of these points, along with the usefulness of the category of 'precarious knowledge.' It is great that this important book has finally been translated into English, hopefully ensuring broader accessibility to its theses.

Bianco su Nero.
Iconografia della razza e della guerra d'Etiopia

Vanessa Righettoni
(Macerata: Quodlibet, 2018)
[ISBN 9788822902368]

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Bianco su Nero is an archival exploration of the visual narratives adopted by the Italian fascist regime before and during the occupation of Ethiopia, specifically from the autumn of 1934 to the autumn of 1936. The central theme of the volume is the analysis of the images deployed by the regime through its propaganda to represent Benito Mussolini's expansionist projects, and the strategic necessity of a coherent communication plan to win public support. The array of images analysed in the fascist context and ideologies are explored within the international political panorama from the Geneva Conference in 1932 onwards, as well as the visual popular context of the period.

Methodologically speaking, the primary focus of this archival research lies on visual sources from Italian journals and periodicals of the 1930s, along with occasional references to the international press. Worth noting is the extensive use of *veline*—notes from the fascist government to the press intended to provide specific indications, such as titles, contents, and tones, for delivering news. The corpus also comprises Italian and international advertising, pictures, and paintings, aimed to further compare and elucidate the visual suggestions that influenced the collective imagination of the Italian population during the Second Italo-Ethiopian War.

Spanning five chapters, an introduction, and Federica Rovati's foreword, this work engages in a chronological analysis of the use of images in the Italian press to argue that issues of race, gender, and European imperialist dynamics were strategically shaped to garner support from public opinion in favour of the colonial agenda. Overall, the work identifies three different temporal stages of Ethiopia's invasion—the preparation, the offensive, and the initial occupation—to show the reader the key role of visual communication.

The first chapter provides an overview of the international political landscape in early 1935 and the visual and communication means that the Italian press deployed to accelerate the preparation of public opinion for the invasion of Ethiopia. Beginning with accurate references to the complex colonial negotiations that had involved

Cromohs (Cyber Review of Modern Historiography), ISSN 1123-7023, 26/2023

DOI: 10.36253/cromohs-15210

France, the United Kingdom, and Italy since the Tripartite Treaty of 1906, the author focuses on the political debate aimed at delegitimising the United Kingdom and Haile Selassie in the eyes of the Italian population. Furthermore, a wide use of racialised and stereotyped iconographic representations (particularly from Ennio de Rosa, Gobbo, and Walter Molino) showcases the narrative deployed to justify the invasion of Ethiopia. This narrative extensively refers to concepts such as enslavement, tribal brutality, and cannibalism, thereby adhering to the established imaginary set by European colonial powers. While discussing the role played by the various international actors that might have had an interest in Ethiopia, the author identifies the core of the fascist propaganda's communication strategy as a 'civilising mission' aimed at the 'savage,' the 'primitive,' and the 'barbarian,' and as a war of liberation in favour of the same subjects against other 'corrupt' and 'immoral' foreign forces.

The second chapter compares various visual sources and pinpoints a connection in the representation of sensuality and contamination from a racialised perspective. Starting with an examination of the Italian press reaction to the League of Nations' sanctions after Italy invaded Ethiopia in 1935, the author introduces a brief case study focused on the character of Josephine Baker, the 'Black Venus.' This case study serves to showcase the exotifying approach that the Italian press used to tangle colonial and erotic components and make 'the overseas adventure itself' (66) increasingly appear as a sexual experience. Righettoni shows that the communication choice of juxtaposing the conquest of the feminine body and colonial territories was so effective in visual and popular culture that it became an issue in 1936 when racial laws were implemented to discourage 'miscegenation' in Italian East Africa.

The third chapter revolves around the legacy of the First Italo-Ethiopian War, with emphasis on the battle of Adwa in 1896. In an attempt to link the memory of the fallen during the first colonial invasion with the values of the fascist campaign, this narrative elevated the native Ascari soldiers as a symbol of Italian revenge in the colonial context. The author does not fall short in exploring the ambivalence within this narration, which needed the Ethiopian Italian soldier to be the bearer and narrator of Italian nostalgic memory while also embodying a racially, culturally, and cognitively inferior alterity. Therefore, the Italian press shaped the representation of the Ascaris as living proof of the success of the 'civilising' intervention inherent in the fascist expansionist project.

The fourth chapter joins the dots of the ambivalent imaginaries of East Africa produced by the Italian press between January and May 1936, and retraces how fascist propaganda celebrated the Italian colonialist project and its values. Through the analysis of a wide array of pictures and illustrations, the author recovers the parallelism drawn between the United Kingdom and Ethiopia on one side, and the Italian mission on the other, resulting in a contrast between barbarity and civilisation that served to further boost public support for the fascist expansionist project. The chapter resumes the discussion of concepts of liberation and civilisation and further explores the manipulation and adaptation of visual material performed by the press to convey these

concepts.

The fifth and last chapter broadens the analysis to include other sources of visual information, such as cinema and architecture. It marks the beginning of a new debate concerning the production of audio-video material for shaping public opinion in Italian East Africa. The author discusses Roberto Chiarini and Telesio Interlandi's ideas of producing politicised visual and educational content, displaying the fear of racial contamination that influenced the selection of audio-video material for the occupied territories, as well as the ambivalent 'civilising' aims of the regime in East Africa. Additionally, Righettoni traces the beginning of colonial architecture in Italian East Africa, illustrating the now-established ambivalence between purity and contamination: on the one hand, the rationalist controversy of the pure stereometry of the Roman fascist architectural style, and on the other, the need of contamination with indigenous and European settlements, as well as research on the environmental and weather conditions in East Africa.

The first thematic thread that ties all the chapters together is the implications of the racial discourse in the Italian regime, intended to draw and strengthen the dichotomy between coloniser and colonised. The author describes different visual strategies implemented to depict Ethiopians with dehumanised parodies. The exaggerated stereotypes of 'negritude' were corroborated by a large amount of material (anthropometric data, detailed anthropological and ethnographic accounts) collected by colonial explorers and anthropologists with the clear intent of promoting a racist perception of Ethiopia. This work does not shy away from addressing the use of anthropology during colonialism and the role anthropologists played in supporting racial theories. Emphasis is placed on the work of Lidio Cipriani, a supporter of the regime and the colonial agenda, who produced a relevant number of documents and materials meant to scientifically prove the intrinsic inferiority of the colonised person and classify categories of different phenotypes connected to specific cognitive abilities. In the press, such a message was also conveyed through the extensive use and manipulation of images produced by European colonisers throughout the entire African continent.

The gendered representation of the colonised is the second significant theme of this work. Indeed, the descriptions and depictions of masculine and feminine East African bodies played a vital and malleable role in the regime's propaganda: the masculine presence was portrayed as disempowered and submissive to promote the early stages of the colonisers' migrations in East Africa, powerful yet subjectable during the armed conflict, and domesticable as living proof of the 'civilising' intervention implemented by the regime. Similarly, the feminine essence was depicted as sensual and captivating, objectified and conquerable, repulsive and impure; her body symbolically fulfilled the fantasies of land to occupy, colonise, and own. Righettoni successfully highlights the juxtaposition of the Ethiopian land with the Ethiopian woman in the idea of occupation conveyed by the Italian press. Retracing this obsession with colours and shapes offers theoretical grounds to conceptualise the fascist idea of racial purity and

strongly reminds the reader of another 'Venus' in literature, Saartje Baartman, whose body was obsessed over, misused, and constantly reinvented in Europe, including during fascism.

Bianco su Nero offers a compelling analysis of the political, social, and popular layers in the Italian scenario of the fascist regime and effectively encases the narrative of the Italian press in both national and international representations of racialised imaginaries. The volume also highlights the ambivalent representation of the Italian colonial projects and their cause-and-effect connection with the Italian press. Furthermore, it pays commendable attention to the entanglement of political and popular visual culture and their reciprocal influence. The anthropological domain, explored through the lens of Lidio Cipriani and with a fleeting citation of Marcel Griaule, could have been more extensively represented to further contextualise topics covered in this work, like 'human zoos' (which persisted in itinerant and permanent exhibitions in Europe until the late 1950s), racial discourses connected to purity of race and miscegenation, or the occupation and the colonial question. Nevertheless, Righettoni's work offers a wealth of interdisciplinary suggestions and merits recognition for contributing to reigniting the often-silenced debate on Italian colonialism, its propaganda, and its legacy.

Race et histoire dans les sociétés occidentales (XV^e^-XVIII^e^ siècle)

Jean-Frédéric Schaub and Silvia Sebastiani
(Paris: Albin Michel, 2021)
[ISBN: 9782226253866]

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The two authors of *Race et histoire dans les sociétés occidentales (XV^e^-XVIII^e^ siècle)* explain at the outset that their work is a 'livre d'histoire,' delving into the role played by the conceptualisation of racial categories in shaping and perpetuating power dynamics in modern Europe (79). This preliminary statement, along with the terms 'race et histoire,' may initially evoke associations with the anthropological research of Lévi-Strauss and, more recently, post-colonial studies. These perspectives are occasionally seen as diverging from the historiographic tradition of political history and the history of ideas, to which this work truly belongs. It can be said that Schaub and Sebastiani employ Michel Foucault's genealogical research method. Although not explicitly referenced, the influence of Foucauldian teachings, and perhaps the work of Giorgio Agamben, is clearly discernible through the adoption of a perspective where the genealogy constructed by the authors focuses on the forms and mechanisms used to wield power, resulting in the development of representations of race and the (pseudoscientific) concept of racism. Characterising Europe's social and political regimes over the four centuries in question as 'racist' may seem anachronistic, given that the term 'racism' originated much later. Moreover, this assertion may appear incorrect, considering our contemporary understanding that race is an untenable category. It was not race that produced power practices; rather, these practices gave rise to the category, created with the aim of establishing and preserving social relations of dominance. The genealogical perspective centres on social conflict, where the desire to resolve such conflict translated into the persecution of groups or peoples who were kept subjugated through racialised policies. Navigating these horizons, Schaub and Sebastiani present an innovative book by choosing a point of view that allows for a new history of both the concept of race and modern Europe.

The volume offers a history of the concept of race and the practices that gave rise to it, unfolding in two distinct parts with different approaches. Chapters 1–4 trace the political history of European societies, illustrating the formation of racial categories and how their use shaped the social and political structure between the fourteenth and

Cromohs (Cyber Review of Modern Historiography), ISSN 1123-7023, 26/2023

DOI: 10.36253/cromohs-15165

eighteenth centuries. Chapter 5–6 analyse the history of Enlightenment thought on race, a coherent choice given that the history of ideas is the history of how societies and individuals grappled with the past and envisioned the future. These two approaches, though distinct, are complementary and provide new depth to our understanding of the emergence of racist theories. The concept of race has on the one hand been denied in the name of universal theories of human rights, and on the other defended in the name of practices and hierarchies legitimised by that very notion.

Schaub examines how, between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries, the invention of race was a political resource justifying racialised societies founded on dominance, oppression, and terrifying violence. This modern idea and practice were distinct from that of the ancient world. Race was an imaginary structure devised to defend the power of elites determined to safeguard their superiority, deny equality, and impose the subordination of groups represented as different and, consequently, dangerous. Schaub identifies four characteristics of colonial and territorial conquest, allowing for a long periodisation reaching back before the fifteenth century. These characteristics include a) the dominion exercised by the conquering power, b) the more or less forced migration of populations, especially males, c) the construction of conditions of hierarchy and social superiority, and d) the corresponding formation of a varied but homogeneous ideology of legitimisation. The temporal horizon is thus extended to include the conquests of Wales and Ireland, as well as Eastern Europe, along with the overseas settlements of Aragon, Genoa, and Venice. While the conquest of the Americas undoubtedly marked a new era, it is emphasised that it 'demeure un chapitre de l'histoire mediévale de l'Europe' (remains a chapter in European medieval history) (159). Furthermore, the meaning of the Iberian mechanism of racialisation is shown to be contingent upon the European context (165). Schaub revisits John Elliott's thesis on the centrality of Spanish politics in European political life, a proposition Elliott himself advanced based on Edgar Quinet and Jules Michelet (excluding Alexis de Tocqueville) in his work *La France espagnole. Les racines hispaniques de l'absolutisme français*. In *Il faut défendre la société*, Foucault suggested that a war of races erupted in seventeenth-century France and England, where two social groups belonging to the same society sought to assert themselves by affirming the inferiority of the rival. In other words, a racial conflict emerged among physiologically homogeneous groups. Schaub extends the chronology of this thesis. The self-representation of the Spanish aristocracy as a superior race was rooted in notions of purity and qualities transmitted through bodily fluids such as milk, blood, and sperm, holding tangible rather than metaphorical value (123). The perceived defect of the group that was defeated and judged inferior was likewise invisible, transmitted through these same bodily fluids. The purity of blood, serving as the foundation for the exclusion of Jews and Muslims from Iberian societies and the marginalisation of *conversos*, aimed to secure the exercise of power over groups that were homogeneous by religion but heterogeneous in an imperceptible characteristic attributed to them. The difference or lack of blood purity was believed to render individuals incapable of virtue.

This resulted in the formation of a stably infamous group within society. The internal racial conflict endowed race with a sense of natural fixity, governing selection and excluding those deemed dangerous and subsequently racialised. In instances where the radical approach of eliminating a hostile group through genocide or expulsion proved unsuccessful, the method for handling conflict with alterity sought to naturalise relationships that were both inclusive and exclusive: 'Exclure ceux qui s'assimilent: voilà une des meilleurs définitions possibles du racisme' (To exclude those who assimilate: that is one of the best possible definitions of racism) (144). However, in certain cases, social arbitrariness could override the exclusion factor in this selection process. Alteration, one of the modes of genealogical dynamics primarily oriented towards degeneration, could also move in the opposite direction. The state of exception was a characteristic structure of the early modern state, and the control of social mobility remained within the discretion of the elites. This mechanism is examined in the context of Spain, encompassing both the formation of the aristocracy of immaculate blood and the monarchy that supported it, as well as in relations with 'stained' groups—Jews and Muslims. In both instances, it was not the absence of purity that barred ascension to the aristocracy, but the fullness of infamy, perceived as real due to its transmission through blood. Virtue was not lacking, as it was potentially attainable by education, but faith was absent. This absence, that *conversos* were accused of concealing, was thought to give rise to despicable personalities. As *conversos* became objects of necessary suspicion and persecution, the persecution itself was perceived as rightful, given its sacred nature. The suspicion that their faith was not sincere was indeed a certainty. Their original religion persisted and, perhaps unbeknownst to them, became an immutable guilt. An important role in the deployment of these practices was played by the Inquisition, an unsurpassed and indispensable tool for combating the invisible, capable of controlling a dynamic that was contradictory (136 ff). Accused of being tied to their original faith and condemned accordingly, *conversos*, over time—a key category—had nevertheless distanced themselves from their former religion and tended to integrate at least partially into Christian society. However, as Prudencio de Sandoval wrote in the biography of Charles V, they remained dangerous. Racialisation, therefore, was felt as a necessity when the perception of alterity diminished (151–53).

However, the inquisitorial gaze was not the sole perspective. The historical culture of the time did notice the phenomenon of diminishing Jewish alterity, interpreting it in various ways.[1] The political strategy of dominance did not go uncontested, as Burckhardt reminds us; however, this dynamic is somewhat underexplored by Schaub and Sebastiani. In the late sixteenth century, amid the turmoil of religious wars, European reflection on tolerance began, aiming to prevent

[1] YAACOV DEUTSCH, '"A View of the Jewish Religion". Conceptions of Jewish Practice and Ritual in Early Modern Europe,' *Archiv für Religionsgeschichte* 3, no. 1 (2001): 273–95. Cfr. LEON OF MODENA and RICHARD SIMON, *Les Juifs présentés aux Chrétiens. Cérémonies et coutumes qui s'observent aujourd'hui parmi les Juifs, par Léon de Modène, traduit par Richard Simon, suivi de Comparaisons des cérémonies des Juifs et de la discipline de l'Eglise, par Richard Simon*, eds JACQUES LE BRUN and GUY G. STROUMSA (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1998).

oppression, expulsion, or genocide for the cause of religion from being the sole forms of social organisation. Efforts were made to recognise the possibility of coexistence of different religions and to deny the right— acknowledged and imposed by St Augustine on the Christian state—to resort to violent conversion, which, in turn, generated simulation. A new idea of sovereignty was needed, as asserted by Jean Bodin. In the mid-seventeenth century, Thomas Hobbes argued that the power of the state was exercised over individuals recognised as equals by natural law. Europeans may have been superior to other peoples, such as Asians, Africans, and Americans, in terms of their capacity to produce 'arts,' Hobbes noted. However, he also argues, this requires explanation and should not be accepted as a natural fact: why, that is, did this hierarchy appear when all men had 'animae' and faculties of the same kind?[2] Already in those decades, a contradiction began to emerge. The need to eliminate the persistence of the conditions of conquest in the name of the universalism of sovereignty was in conflict with the political need to recognise states of exception instrumental in denying that universality. A different way of thinking about politics began to take shape, as later seen in the Enlightenment. However, this aspect, perhaps due to an excess of coherence on the part of the authors, is kept outside the scope of the book (480).

The political construction of American alterity was in continuity with the experience of invisible and religious alterity. The continuity lay not in the substitution in social imagination of Africans and Indians for *conversos* but in maintaining the exclusion mechanism based on the naturalistic category of blood. This mechanism now transmitted not impurity and the inferiority of faith but physiological impurity. Between the sixteenth and eighteeth centuries, there was a shift from a 'métaphysique du sang' (metaphysics of blood) to an effort of classification (190), from an ethno-religious principle to the naturalistic classification of humanity as a species based on skin colour and the *reticulum mucosum*. For Schaub and Sebastiani, this transition was not a sudden change. The genealogical thesis that the alterity and inferiority of some and the superiority of others were produced by political practices and objectives is evident in the enslavement of Native Americans and Africans. They were deported and placed below every other social stratification. Imperial institutions sanctioned a social regime of inhumanity through the visible and chromatic difference, rather than the invisible.

In the two chapters on Native Americans and African alterity, particular attention is given to childhood as the locus of the visibility of interbreeding. The fate reserved for *mestizo* children is key to understanding the racial nature of the discrimination imposed on the descendants of the indigenous people. *Mestizaje* is also discussed through the analysis of *pinturas de castas*, representations flourishing in Mexico in the late seventeeth and eighteenth centuries, in which a 'social body which has become opaque' becomes intelligible again. The depictions of family relationships show the variety of intermixing that occurred between Europeans, Africans, and

[2] THOMAS HOBBES, *De corpore*, I, i,7.

Native Americans. At the bottom of the social hierarchy was the indistinction produced by mixed unions; at the top was the indistinction of whites, as no difference was perceived between Europeans born in America and those born in Spain, since what mattered was blood, not the place of birth. The two worlds faced each other. The case of African populations deported to America was even more dramatic. Recalling Act no. 12 passed by the Virginia Assembly in December 1662, which established that the child of an African slave mother was born a slave, Schaub concludes that, without prejudicing the Christian conception, the black humanity of plantations was judged closer to great apes than to whites (305). The racial definition based on skin colour went beyond the distinction between social status and freedom. Even in societies where hierarchies were based on skin colour, the emancipation of women and men of colour was possible. Free people of colour were created—individuals whose nature was inevitably uncertain and who could aspire to full humanity only after six generations of uninterrupted reproduction with whites.

Hence, in this reconstruction, the shift towards the Enlightenment era does not lead to the affirmation of universal values and morally cosmopolitan ideals. Instead, it takes place through the classification of humanity as a natural species, within which the hierarchy of varieties was conceptualised to support the incomplete humanity of Black Africans and Native Americans. Thomas Jefferson perhaps best symbolised this separation between culture and politics: as the authors remind us through the words of historian Winthrop Jordan, Jefferson 'hated slavery' but believed Black people to be 'inferior to White men' (467).

Sebastiani introduces the issue with a meticulous analysis of the historiographical landscape. Current debates on the Enlightenment seem to have returned to early twentieth-century historicism, when Benedetto Croce and Friedrich Meinecke looked upon eighteenth-century theories of natural rights with impatience. Now, however, these theories are judged too fragile, both by the tradition initiated by the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944) by Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer and by post-colonial studies. Enlightenment culture proves incapable, in the first case, of containing the utilitarian and anti-humanistic dimension of technology and, in the second case, of preventing colonialism and slaveholding by European states. Sebastiani rightly notes that these critiques have not received historically relevant responses and analyses the 'lourd héritage historiographique' (heavy historiographical legacy) of the eighteenth century (322), following Richard Popkin rather than George Mosse. According to Popkin, Western racist ideologies originated within universalist ideologies. Far from being separated from the Enlightenment, the issue of race was rooted in eighteenth-century intellectual reflection, where one again finds the sense of *pinturas de castas*—that is, that Europeans, wherever born, were superior in brain and beauty to every other race and distant from animality.

The racialisation of Africans as slaves is chronologically close to the appearance in Europe of orangutans ('men of the woods'), transported from Africa on the same ships as the slave trade. The questions that arose pertained to the contiguity between

human varieties and animal races, and the definition of humanity. The problem of races raised the issue of the correlation between humanity and animality, but according to Sebastiani, the race theory formulated by Hume and Voltaire did not mark a break between the eighteenth and seventeenth centuries. Multiple formulations of polygenism had already circulated in the seventeenth century, gaining widespread popularity in the eighteenth century. Voltaire, after observing the *reticulum mucosum* of a Black person, became convinced that 'la race des nègres est une espèce d'hommes différente de la nôtre, comme la race des Espagnols l'est des lévriers' (the race of negroes is a species of men different from ours, like the race of the Spanish is different from greyhounds).[3] This membrane, independent of external environmental conditions, was seen as clear evidence that there exists in every human species a specific principle that distinguishes them.

Africans were deemed physiologically inferior in beauty, intelligence, and attention capacity. 'C'est par là que les nègres sont les esclaves des autres hommes' (That is why the negroes are the slaves of other men). Although not yet founded on the observation of a *reticulum mucosum*, the colonial experience had also shown the analogous inferiority of Native Americans through a surprising reasoning that reveals the confusion of natural history and history—a confusion that Voltaire was not alone in experiencing. Native Americans, 'aisément vaincus partout, n'ont jamais osé tenter une révolution, quoiqu'ils fussent plus de mille contre un' (easily defeated everywhere, have never dared to attempt a revolution, even though they were more than a thousand to one).[4] Alongside Voltaire appears Hume and his essay *Of National Characters*. Compared to Europeans, according to Hume, the inability of Africans to produce culture could only originate from a different natural structure. Contiguity with animality was a way to address the question of the nature of humanity. An example is found again in Voltaire, where albinos, 'petits, faibles, louches' (small, weak, cross-eyed), were placed below Black Africans and Khoekhoe (then known as 'Hottentots') and above monkeys, 'comme un des degrés qui descendent de l'homme à l'animal' (as one of the steps descending from human to animal).[5]

The 'tournant anthropologique des Lumières' (the Enlightenment's anthropological turn) is the characteristic in which Sebastiani finds the novelty of the Enlightenment. It is not a defence of or a search for anti-Enlightenment but a study in something of a silhouette of the Enlightenment, conducted specifically on the issue of race, tracing its cultural and political history. This novelty consisted in inserting humanity into the natural order and placing individuals and societies in history. On the one hand, there was the fixity of nature; on the other, the diversity that had arisen over time. The comparison between the natural history of societies and the natural history of humanity began around the mid-century, with Buffon and Montesquieu—and perhaps the analysis of the *Esprit des loix* should have been pursued farther—and their

[3] VOLTAIRE, *Essai sur les mœurs*, ch. CXLI, ed. RENE POMEAU, 2 vols. (Paris: Garnier, 1963), vol. 2, 305.
[4] VOLTAIRE, *Essai sur les mœurs*, ch. CXLV, vol. 2, 335.
[5] VOLTAIRE, *Essai sur les mœurs*, ch. CXLIII, vol. 2, 319.

readers in Britain and France. The comparison and convergence of these two perspectives is original and brings out new categories of civilisation, perfectibility, and reproduction. Humans are placed in the classification system of the natural world, alongside the camel and the monkey, and in the system of moral and historical causality, which no longer has a religious anchor but a physiological and anthropological one (388–89). The rejection of the biblical Adamic monogenism seemed to offer the possibility of thinking in a materialistic way about moral diversity, opening the way to the denial of human psychic homogeneity. Inserted into a context dominated by such categories, polygenism acquired a new temporal dimension, accounting for the development, in different autonomous degrees, of the original potential for civilisation, improvement, and degeneration of each human group. The logic of comparison produced, alongside relativism, a theory of progress, which, in turn, was 'l'une des matrices de la racialisation' (one of the matrices of racialisation) (349). Voltaire argued for the divine origin of polygenism to counteract the ideas about transformative energy that Buffon and Diderot were introducing. According to Buffon, there was no continuity among races because the absence of thought and speech constituted a radical break. In this argument, Buffon engaged with Rousseau, who in the *Discourse on Inequality* (1755) considered the orangutan close to humans, praising its sociability, which, for him, was not originally present in humans. This discussion was probably influenced by the fact that in the eighteenth century, the orangutan was known only in captivity, while it seems that in different conditions and in its natural habitat, it is far from a gregarious animal.[6] The analysis of the various definitions of humanity by Linnaeus and Buffon shifts towards the anthropological sphere in Germany, with much attention to Kant and less to Lessing.

However, the discussion about the homogeneity of human nature was contentious and found a moment of extraordinary depth in the controversy that involved Rousseau, Helvétius, and Diderot for more than twenty years. For them, this discussion became a search for differences that separate individuals from each other, which, besides being derived from education, are considered natural but not racial. 'Individuum est ineffabile, woraus ich eine Welt ableite' (The individual is ineffable, from which I derive a world), wrote Goethe to Lavater, and perhaps the expression could be valid for Diderot. Reflecting on the specificity of the individual was the way to think about freedom, and for Diderot, natural rights could only be social.

> Par-tout, des superstitions extravagantes, des coutumes barbares, des loix surannées étouffent la liberté. Elle renaîtra, sans doute, un jour de ses cendres. A mesure que la morale et la politique feront des progrès, l'homme recouvrera ses droits. Mais pourquoi faut-il, qu'en attendant ces tems heureux, ces siècles de lumière et de prospérité, il y ait des races infortunées à qui l'on refuse jusqu'au nom consolant et honorable d'hommes libres, à qui l'on ravisse jusqu'à l'espoir de l'obtenir, malgré l'instabilité des événemens?

[6] SARA D. EDWARDS and CHARLES T. SNOWDON, 'Social Behaviour of Captive, Group-Living Orang-utangs,' *International Journal of Primatology* 1, no. 1 (1980): 39–62; MARLEN FRÖHLICH et al., 'Orangutans Have Larger Gestural Repertoires in Captivity than in the Wild - A Case of Weak Innovation?,' *iScience* 24, no. 11 (2021), https://doi.org/10.1016/j.isci.2021.103304.

> Non, quoi qu'on en puisse dire, la condition de ces infortunés n'est pas la même que la nôtre.[7]

Enlightenment culture, for the first time, presented historical reflection with the question of the 'terrible why' of political life and institutions[8] without stopping at the narrative of 'how.' To address the question of why there was slavery, Raynal's *Histoire philosophique et politique des établissements et du commerce des Européens dans les deux Indes* combined the two perspectives of the natural history of societies and humanity, excluded the racial thesis, and recognised the importance of moral causes. Skin colour is the result of external circumstances, and thus, 'cette organisation est aussi parfaite dans les nègres que dans l'espèce d'hommes la plus blanche' (this organisation is as perfect in blacks as in the whitest species of men)[9]. Race was a false notion, and slavery had been created by the desire for domination.

> Hâtons-nous donc de substituer à l'aveugle férocité de nos pères les lumières de la raison, et les sentimens de la nature. Brisons les chaînes de tant de victimes de notre cupidité, dussions-nous renoncer à un commerce qui n'a que l'injustice pour base, que le luxe pour objet.[10]

[7] GUILLAUME-THOMAS FRANÇOIS RAYNAL, *Histoire philosophique et politique des établissements et du commerce des Européens dans les deux Indes* (1780³), XI, 24, eds ANTHONY STRUGNELL, GIANLUIGI GOGGI, and KENTA OHJI, 4 vols., vol. 3 (Ferney-Voltaire: Centre international d'étude du dixhuitième siècle, 2020), 178: 'Everywhere, extravagant superstitions, barbaric customs, and outdated laws stifle freedom. It will undoubtedly be reborn one day from its ashes. As morality and politics progress, humanity will reclaim its rights. But why must it be that, while awaiting these happy times, these centuries of light and prosperity, there are unfortunate races to whom even the consoling and honourable name of free men is denied, from whom even the hope of obtaining it is taken away, despite the instability of events? No, whatever may be said, the condition of these unfortunate ones is not the same as ours.'

[8] This facet of the historical culture of the Enlightenment was highlighted by Johann Gustav Droysen. See BENEDETTO BRAVO, *Philologie, histoire, philosophie de l'histoire. Étude sur J.G. Droysen historien de l'antiquité* (Warsaw: Zaklad narodowy imienia Ossolinskich wydawnictwo Polskiej Akademii Nauk, 1968), 258–59.

[9] RAYNAL, *Histoire des deux Indes*, XI, 10, vol. 3, 124.

[10] RAYNAL, *Histoire des deux Indes*, XI, 10, vol. 3, 179: 'Let us hasten, then, to replace the blind ferocity of our fathers with the light of reason and the feelings of nature. Let us break the chains of so many victims of our greed, even if it means giving up a trade that has only injustice as its foundation and luxury as its object.'