

ELLIOTT HOROWITZ and MOISES ORFALI (eds), *The Mediterranean and the Jews: Society, Culture and Economy in Early Modern Times*, vol. II. Bar-Ilan University Press, Ramat-Gan, 2002. 266 pp. 23 ill. \$38.00. ISBN 965-226-221-8.

This is the second volume of essays published under the title *The Mediterranean and the Jews*, the first having dealt with banking, finance and international trade between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries.¹ The present volume deals with the same transitional phase between the medieval and modern periods, but is a rather more mixed collection of ten essays in sections headed 'Society', 'Culture' and 'Economy', reflecting their origins in a conference held in 1993. That the volume took nine years to appear is underlined by the sparsity of post-1993 references in all but two of the chapters. Whilst the stated aim of the volume is to reflect the multifaceted nature of Jewish existence in the Mediterranean, the lack of substantial introductory comment is a distinct drawback. The introduction is little more than a brief presentation of each piece, and speculates on, but does not develop, the question of how Braudel's concentric configurations of Mediterranean history could be utilised in the field of Sephardi studies.

The 'Society' section opens with Anna Foa's stimulating but rather brief exposition on the varying symbolism of pork in Inquisitorial records. Whilst in Iberia the act of abstaining from pork was often central to Marrano (and Morisco) trials, this was not true in Venice, where a wider range of dietary habits was examined. Foa goes on to discuss the history of abstention from pork, and finds that it was transformed from a religious act to a tool of memory, a reflection of a Jewish past which was used, in Iberia at least, to reinforce Marrano identity. The theme of identity recurs in Elliott Horowitz's extended history of the *Gemilut Hasidim* society of Ferrara. Ferrara's Jewish community consisted both of residents protected by the Este dukes, and exiles from Spain who had been permitted to settle in the city. Using the society's own statutes, Horowitz shows that from its early history at the start of the sixteenth century as a pious (and mixed-sex) society concerned with sickness and death in the community, the confraternity evolved into an elite organisation, excluding women and distancing itself from its original function by the start of the seventeenth century. Membership and religious observance became ends in themselves, and a distinct hierarchy emerged between richer and poorer members. The society went into decline as the start of the seventeenth century heralded the start of papal rule over the city, and many left for less harsh conditions. David Malkiel's study of the Reggios of Gorizia deals with a later period entirely, tracing a father and son's respective responses to Kabbalah and Reform as a microhistory of the transition to modernity between the late eighteenth and mid-nineteenth centuries. The father, Abram Vita, was one of Italy's leading rabbis; the son, Isach Samuel Reggio, would end up being condemned as a heretic as he increasingly embraced the Reform agenda. Malkiel's essay highlights the ambivalence in both men's positions: Abram was a traditionalist, criticising his son's attack on Kabbalah, but nevertheless permitted the playing of music in the synagogue, whilst Isach espoused Reform but opposed radicalism. Through this close study, Malkiel underlines the often painful process of reconciling tradition and modernity at a local and personal level. Unlike the Reggios, Abramo ben Aron Scazzocchio was not renowned for his scholarship. Kenneth Stow's account of his activities as a salaried tax collector and official in Rome in the middle decades of the sixteenth century show him to have been a regular (and not always effective) litigator on behalf his neighbours in the Ghetto as they vied with each other and negotiated with the often conflicting Chris-

¹ A. Toaff and S. Schwarzfuchs (eds), *The Mediterranean and the Jews: Banking, Finance and International Trade (XVI–XVIII Centuries)* (Ramat-Gan, 1989).

tian authorities in Rome. Although Stow's portrait brings to life the voices of Scanzocchio's community, the narrative sections on the cases might have benefited from judicious editing.

The 'Culture' section of the book opens with Harm den Boer's chapter on the literature of the Sephardic Jews of Amsterdam. The writings of Miguel (Daniel Levi) de Barrios in praise of the Spanish king Charles II may well have represented the outpourings of an exiled author who could not detach himself from the Spain where he had suffered persecution, but this issue is not developed, nor is that of Barrios's relationship with his patron, Manuel de Belmonte. The chapter is not connected editorially or by the author to others in the volume, and sits rather uneasily within the collection. Another literary work, Delicado's *Lozana*, published in Rome in 1528, is used by John Edwards to explore depictions of Spanish *conversa* life with special reference to contemporary Cordoba and the world of sixteenth-century Rome in which this fictional heroine moved. Edwards's plausible suggestion that Delicado's work might offer more factual information than has been allowed might have been productively cross-referenced with Stow's chapter. Edwin Seroussi's chapter on Livorno as a centre for exchange between eastern and western Sephardic music from the eighteenth century onwards concentrates on documenting and identifying extant examples. Regrettably it deals hardly at all with the broader issue of music as a modernising force in Judaism, which might have created a dialogue with Malkiel's study. Taken together, the 'Culture' section is rather disappointing.

'Economy' fares only a little better. Alisa Mehuyas Ginio's chapter is distinguished in its almost complete lack of discussion of the title theme, wine production in Jerusalem. Instead, its sketchy outline of the history of the Ginio family (inspired, it seems, by the author's marriage into the family), is based almost entirely on secondary literature or the efforts of other scholars. Rather more substantial is Moises Orfali's chapter. Like Edwards, Orfali concentrates on a female protagonist, this time the successful businesswoman Doña Gracia Mendes, based successively in Portugal, the country of her birth, Antwerp, Venice, Ferrara and, finally, Constantinople. Her biography acts as a microcosm of Jewish existence in the sixteenth century, and the records of her relationship with the city of Ragusa, which form the core of Orfali's article, simply underline the transnational nature of Jewish trade in this period. Indeed, Orfali's study provides one of the few instances of an attempt to contextualise its central theme. (Doña Gracia does not feature in Horowitz's study of Ferrara, despite that chapter ending with an illustration of the Ferrara Bible of 1553, part of whose print run was dedicated to her in recognition of her philanthropic support of the Jewish community there.) The final chapter is Benjamin Ravid's survey of the charters of the Jewish merchants of Venice, meaning here the privileges granted to the Levantine and Ponentine Jewish communities (the origins of both descriptions are outlined) between 1513 and 1797. Although of interest in highlighting the factional nature of Jewish existence in the city, the chapter becomes a commented list of charters, which will presumably find more analysis in Ravid's forthcoming book.

Whilst one does not expect such a volume to present a comprehensive history of Mediterranean Jewry in early modern times (is there such a thing as 'early modern' in Jewish history?), I was disappointed by the lack of editorial intervention in this collection. Rather than force the disparate pieces into three rather unsatisfactory sections, the papers should have been juxtaposed chronologically in order to bring out the ways in which sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Jews in the Mediterranean still had to negotiate political and cultural spaces within what was still for them a medieval world. Here the value of Ravid's inventory becomes apparent, as Venetian Jews continued in a state of political dependence throughout the eighteenth century, whilst in none-too-distant Gradisca, the cultural ferment of the Haskalah was beginning to

make itself felt within the Reggio family. A rearrangement of the chapters might also have brought out more effectively the underlying theme of the constant mobility of many Jews in this period, and the instability of a life dependent on a ruler's beneficence (the case of the Ferrarese Jews is a particularly good example of how tolerance could be withdrawn with a change of regime). Instead it is left to the reader to pick out the broader, Braudelian, significance of these studies, and to draw conclusions which extend beyond the individual microhistories.

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GILYA GERDA SCHMIDT, *The Art and Artists of the Fifth Zionist Congress, 1901: Heralds of a New Age*. Syracuse University Press, Syracuse, New York, 2003. 296 pp. \$49.95. ISBN 0815630301.

At first glance, amidst the heavy ideological hubbub of the Fifth Zionist Congress, a modest exhibition of eleven Jewish artists seems an ancillary subject for investigation. However, as Gilya Schmidt details in *The Art and Artists of the Fifth Zionist Congress, 1901: Heralds of a New Age*, the exhibition was in fact situated at the crux of a critical fault line. Divisions between cultural and religious Zionists rumbled from the movement's outset, with religious Zionists apprehensive that culture would eclipse and possibly replace religion within the movement. By the Second Zionist Congress the movement's leadership already found it necessary to pledge that Zionism would not take any actions conflicting with Jewish tradition (p. 10). In this context, the exhibition organised by Martin Buber and Ephraim Moshe Lilien was a dramatic, *de facto* victory for the cultural Zionists.

Through her study of the art and artists of the congress, Schmidt intends to plumb the sociological forces behind this surging tide of cultural Zionism and, more generally, 'the transition of the Jewish spirit to modernity' (p. xv). While Schmidt does shed light on these forces, her efforts to offer a 'cultural history' at times slacken to a side-effect as she gets enmeshed in almost hagiographical accounts of the artists' lives (p. xv). Thus we are told that the Dutch master Josef Israels 'took up a place as person and as artist just below the angels for those people who knew him' (p. 64). The German impressionist Lesser Ury is rendered in similarly rapturous tones as one 'able to break free—to soar into the wild blue yonder that he described so majestically in his works' (p. 131). Further swooping among the heavens is supplied by Moshe Lilien, whose 'spirit tried to soar above the mundane' (p. 154). If not quite beatified like Israels, Ury, and Lilien, the other artists of the exhibition—Eduard Bendemann, Maurycy Gottlieb, the etcher Hermann Struck, Solomon Kischinewski, the architect Oskar Marmorek, the sculptor Alfred Nossig, and the painters Jehudo Epstein and Alfred Lakos—are still portrayed by Schmidt in glowing, often anecdotal prose. Though the style of these tributes sacrifices something of academic rigour, it does make the book an enjoyable read; one which should kindle enough scholarly interest to fill the lacunae left by Schmidt's analysis.

Most prominent among these deficiencies is a cogent discussion of how the art and artists of the Fifth Zionist Congress might challenge and expand our notion of Jewish art in general. While Schmidt clearly recognises the necessity of such a discussion—turning to it at both the beginning and end of her volume—her ambiguous phraseology clouds the waters of this already murky topic. The 'focus on interiority' that Schmidt reads into the works of almost all the exhibition's major artists is at best a turbid trope (p. 192); perhaps an echo of Jewish aniconism, with its attendant notions of Jews as 'inherently' inimical to the sensual, external world. Even more dubious is