

Bibliographical Reports

Jewish-Christian Relations in Early Modern Germany – A Review

Maria Diemling, Dublin

The complex relationship between Jews and Christians has long been a popular research topic, even if it is sometimes reduced to portrayals of active Christian marginalisation, persecution and stereotyping of Jews and passive Jewish victims of Christian religious and political antagonisms. This trend has also been true for research into Jewish-Christian relations in Early Modern Germany. While it is undoubtedly true that research focusing on Christian discrimination against Jews reflects certain historical realities, this is not the full picture. The following review essay will discuss a number of more recent works which successfully challenge stereotyped versions of the “lachrymose concept of Jewish history”, and suggest some possible areas of research which I believe deserve a closer look. I am not claiming to provide an exhaustive survey and the following overview is clearly guided by my own interests.

Renaissance, Humanism and Christian Hebraism

One of the most interesting aspects of the relationship between Jews and Christians in the Early Modern Period is the intellectual encounter between scholars from both groups towards the end of the fifteenth and the first half of the sixteenth century. Hebraism was, in distinctive ways, an important part of Renaissance culture, Humanist learning and the Reformation. Christian interest in Hebrew was an offshoot of Renaissance humanism, which originated in fifteenth century Italy and slowly spread north. Not only biblical scholars and linguists, but theologians, philosophers, lawyers and physicians also developed an interest in Jewish texts and learning to satisfy their own Christian cultural and religious needs. As Jerome Friedman has noted, “paradoxically, these efforts entailed close intellectual cooperation with Jewish scholars who opposed Christianity in all its forms”.¹

Friedman’s own study on Christian Hebraism in the first half of the sixteenth century, *The Most Ancient Testimony*,² was in many ways pioneering when published in 1983, despite its methodological problems and sometimes stereo-

¹ Jerome Friedman, *The Most Ancient Testimony, Sixteenth-Century Christian-Hebraica in the Age of Renaissance Nostalgia*, Athens/Ohio 1983, p. 1.

² Ibid.

typical generalisations. The period covered in his book, linking the Renaissance with the Reformation, experienced manifestations of different branches of Christian Hebraism. Friedman established the factors that facilitated the amazing development of Hebrew, from being read by merely a handful of Christian scholars around 1500 to being an essential part of established academic study at European universities a few decades later. The vital factors that made this development possible were royal patronage, the support of academic institutions, the new printing presses and, crucially, cooperation between Jews and Christians. His discussion of the different and disparate approaches employed by Michael Servetus, Johannes Reuchlin, Paul Fagius and Sebastian Münster is unified by the rather problematic idea of “nostalgia”, meant to place them within the context of Humanism, Renaissance and Reformation.

Frank E. Manuel’s widely used *Broken staff: Judaism through Christian Eyes*,³ provides in its first chapters a generally useful overview of Christian Hebraism and Christian uses of historical Judaism in the seventeenth century. He offers interesting descriptions of individual Hebraists, which are certainly stimulating for further research, but proves frustrating to anyone wishing to follow up his sometimes rather sweeping statements due to his very economic use of footnotes, omitting any reference to secondary sources.

How did Christian scholars discover Jewish scholarship and to what extent did Jews participate in their exploration? Based on an analysis of the central role of Hebrew printing houses in the dissemination of Hebraism, Stephen E. Burnett is currently working on a book in which the growth and institutionalisation of Hebrew Studies between 1500 and 1650 is examined. He discusses the Christian motives for learning, the means of learning, such as universities and the book trade, and the yield of Hebrew scholarship.

Stephen E. Burnett is also the author of a well-received study on the works of Johannes Buxtorf the Elder, *From Christian Hebraism to Jewish Studies: Johannes Buxtorf (1564–1629) and Hebrew Learning in the Seventeenth Century*,⁴ in which he examined the works of this prolific and influential Christian Hebraist who shaped Christian opinion of Jews and Judaism for the seventeenth century. Detailed studies of individual Hebraists and their works have added much to our knowledge of what ‘made them tick’ and how different their respective motives for engaging with Jewish texts were. As Frank Manuel has acknowl-

³ Frank E. Manuel, *The Broken Staff. Judaism through Christian Eyes*, Cambridge/Mass. – London 1992.

⁴ Stephen E. Burnett, *From Christian Hebraism to Jewish Studies: Johannes Buxtorf (1564–1629) and Hebrew Learning in the Seventeenth Century*, Leiden 1996 [Studies in the History of Christian Thought 68].

edged, “in any effort to appreciate the works of Christian Hebraists, the designations ‘philosemitism’ and ‘anti-Semitism’ quickly betray their hollowness”, because “individual writers, with some exceptions, harbor contradictory motives.”⁵

A Hebraist for whom this statement is undoubtedly true is the often quoted Pietist scholar and jurist Johann Christian Wagenseil (1633–1705), until very recently never fully appraised. The sheer amount of his published work and the fact that most of it was written in Latin clearly deterred scholars from critically engaging with his attitudes towards Jews and Judaism in a systematic manner. Peter Blastenbrei has now published *Johann Christoph Wagenseil und seine Stellung zum Judentum*,⁶ a welcome and very readable slim volume in which he reconstructs Wagenseil’s rather interesting biography (who would have been aware of the wide range of academic interests of this rather forgotten Baroque scholar and the fact that he invented a ‘swimming machine’?) and surveys his whole work for his remarks on Judaism. Students of Jewish history mainly remember Wagenseil for his translation and annotation of the Talmudic book *Sota* into Latin and his refutation of the ritual murder accusation. Blastenbrei reaches the conclusion that Wagenseil was a “philosemite” (a term which would have needed some qualification), arguing with numerous references to Wagenseil’s published works and unpublished letters that he not only had a deep academic interest in Jewish literature, but also cherished his friendships with individual Jews and spoke out against anti-Jewish discrimination. Blastenbrei is rather apologetic about Wagenseil’s increasing hope for a mass conversion of Jews. Even if Wagenseil did not actively engage in missionary work himself, he did, for example, argue that one should try to trigger religious doubts in Jews by skilful argumentation. Although Wagenseil apparently aimed at “an easing” of Christian-Jewish relations, it is difficult to acknowledge somebody as a “philosemite” who, for religious reasons, could not accept Jews as Jews.

Another prolific scholar and Lutheran theologian whose voluminous works are often used as a convenient quarry for information on contemporary Jews, but so far has never been put into context, is Johann Jacob Schudt (1664–1722). Some aspects of Schudt’s quite unique *Jüdische Merckwürdigkeiten* will be dealt with in a forthcoming collection on Jewish life in Early Modern Frankfurt,⁷ but a full critical study of his oeuvre and his agenda is still lacking.

⁵ Manuel, *The Broken Staff*, p. 9.

⁶ Peter Blastenbrei, *Johann Christoph Wagenseil und seine Stellung zum Judentum*, Erlangen 2004.

⁷ Fritz Backhaus, Gisela Engel and Robert Liberles (ed.), *Die Frankfurter Judengasse. Jüdisches Leben in der Frühen Neuzeit*, Frankfurt, forthcoming 2005.

The latest volume offering a fresh perspective on Christian Hebraists is *Hebraica Veritas? Christian Hebraists and the Study of Judaism in Early Modern Europe*,⁸ which presents results of a year of study dedicated to the subject of Christian Hebraism in early Modern Europe at the University of Pennsylvania's Center for Advanced Judaic Studies in 1999/2000. The volume is divided into two parts: the first, "Negotiating Dialogue", offers case studies on the substantial interaction between Christian and Jewish thinkers in the Early Modern Period, while the second, "Imagining Differences", explores ambivalent Christian attitudes towards Jews. Restrictions of space permit me only to mention very briefly some relevant articles in this important collection. Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin's illuminating discussion of the Catholic censorship of Jewish books stresses its role in shaping modern Jewish literacy and in the constitution of new patterns of Jewish self-definition. Ora Limor and Israel Jacob Yuval's essay on Yom Tov Lipmann Mühlhausen's *Sefer ha-Nizzahon*, the popular late medieval anti-Christian polemic, provides a summary of its origins, sources and reception. Lipmann was innovative in his use of philosophical arguments with which he hoped to address 'doubters', Jews who had become dissatisfied with Jewish practices and interpretations of Scripture, in order to prevent them from converting. In his essay on the "Basel-Wittenberg Conflict", Stephen Burnett reassesses the fundamentally different approaches to Hebrew studies in the respective universities, drawing attention to the closely knit and influential circle of Christian Hebraists of the Reformation era who set the trends in the study of Hebrew for decades to come. Burnett reads the conflict as a discussion of the value of Jewish scholarship and its relevance for Christian exegesis. Yaacov Deutsch discusses the specific Early Modern and German genre of "polemical Christian ethnographies", descriptions of Jewish rituals and customs written by converts from Judaism and Christian Hebraists for a Christian audience. He offers a useful characterisation of the genre and discusses the depiction of *Yom Kippur* in these writings, arguing that Christian authors focus on aspects of the holiday that furthered their own Christian and anti-Jewish agenda. Anybody interested in the phenomenon of Christian Hebraists and their intellectual networks could do worse than consult this volume. The broad scope of the articles presented, ranging from a discussion of twelfth-century Hebraism to the collision between Jewish messianism and German Scholarship in the eighteenth century and including articles on Italian, Dutch and English Hebraists, makes it an excellent starting point for an exploration of this subject and of Jewish-Christian relations in general.

⁸ Allison P. Coudert and Jeffrey S. Shoulson (ed.), *Hebraica Veritas? Christian Hebraists and the Study of Judaism in Early Modern Europe*, Philadelphia 2004.

Reformation

The renewed interest in the Scriptures and in Jewish literature in general was also an important aspect of the Reformation, where it adopted an even more pronounced religious aspect. European society underwent enormous religious, political and social changes in the wake of the Reformation. The powerful hegemony of the Catholic Church, which had guaranteed the unity of Western Christendom, disappeared and Jews were no longer the only religious non-conformist group in Europe. Strangely enough, there are hardly any studies which explore in depth how German Jews experienced this enormous upheaval, which they undoubtedly followed with some interest. Much better understood are the attitudes of leading Reformation figures towards Jews, as well as their expectations of immanent conversion.

There is no lack of literature on Luther's well-known attitudes towards the Jews. Scholarly appraisals, however, differ widely, ranging from those who believe that Luther's anti-Jewish ranting is just an expression of the *Zeitgeist*, while others draw a direct line from Luther to Hitler. Peter von der Osten-Sacken provides in his recent *Martin Luther und die Juden: Neu untersucht anhand von Anton Margarithas "Der gantz Jüdisch glaub" (1530/31)*,⁹ an honest summary of Luther's (and some other Reformation figures') opinions on Jews and Judaism. Based on the question of how much Luther was influenced by the writings of Anthonius Margaritha, a contemporary convert from Judaism who described Jewish rites and rituals and translated the *Siddur* into the vernacular, the author follows Lutheran attitudes towards Judaism up to the present time. This is a useful volume, engagingly written from the perspective of a Lutheran scholar, which provides a fresh perspective on a seemingly well-researched topic.

A forthcoming volume, edited by Dean Bell and Stephen Burnett, promises a good overview on the current state of research on *Jews, Judaism and the Reformation in Sixteenth-Century Germany*.¹⁰ The contributions will discuss developments leading to the Reformation, the attitude of important reformers towards Jews, representations of Jews and Judaism and, perhaps most intriguingly, Jewish responses to the Reformation.

⁹ Peter von der Osten-Sacken, *Martin Luther und die Juden: Neu untersucht anhand von Anton Margarithas "Der gantz Jüdisch glaub" (1530/31)*, Stuttgart 2002.

¹⁰ Dean Phillip Bell and Stephen G. Burnett (eds.), *Jews, Judaism and the Reformation in Sixteenth-Century Germany*, Boston 2005 [Studies in Central European Histories].

Conversions

Conversion to and from Judaism is perhaps the most remarkable expression of mutual interest, curiosity and attraction between Jews and Christians. The far more frequent type of religious conversion, Jews opting for baptism, has been explored in depth by Elisheva Carlebach in her magisterial work *Divided Souls: Converts from Judaism in Germany, 1500–1750*.¹¹ Carlebach argues that the prominence of converts such as Victor von Carben, Johannes Pfefferkorn und Anthonius Margaritha in the early sixteenth century is a turning point. Reformation and the confessionalisation of German states encouraged the central role of such converts and the dissemination of their writings, while Josel of Rosheim stands for the tendency to blame converts for all evil which befell Jewish communities. Converts from Judaism also played an important part in Christian apocalyptic expectations. Particularly insightful are the chapters in which Carlebach explores the autobiographies of converts, their social, professional and educational background and the rupture in family ties that a conversion often entailed. The relation between conversion, language and identity demonstrates that new converts were expected to get rid of their specific ‘Jewish language’ as proof of having renounced their former identity. Jewish converts played a major role in the development of a literary genre which used ethnographic tools for religious polemics. Converts writing about their former religion for a Christian audience saw themselves as experts in all matters Jewish, and rivaled Christian Hebraists. Their claimed authenticity of direct observation and personal experience competed with scholarship. Converts from Judaism lost their prominent role as critics of the Jewish religion towards the end of the eighteenth century, when alternative models developed which made acculturation possible without having to give up Judaism.

Some interesting examples of the much rarer cases of conversions from various Christian denominations to Judaism are collected in a volume edited by Martin Mulsow and Richard H. Popkin, *Secret Conversions to Judaism in Early Modern Europe*.¹² However, the editors’ introductory statement that the motivations for conversion to Judaism were very different from that for conversion to Christianity, the latter generally for “social, economic, or political reasons” (p. 1), seems rather apologetic. “In the case of conversions to Judaism, however, it was usually powerful intellectual and personal reasons that motivated the convert to leave the dominant Christian world for the insecurity of the Jewish

¹¹ Elisheva Carlebach, *Divided Souls: Converts from Judaism in Germany, 1500–1750*, New Haven – London 2001.

¹² Martin Mulsow and Richard H. Popkin (eds.), *Secret Conversions to Judaism in Early Modern Europe*, Leiden 2004 [Brill’s Studies in Intellectual History 122].

community.” (pp. 1–2) Elisheva Carlebach’s study refuted the common assumption that converts were usually from lower classes who hoped for an improvement of their social and economical status. Many converts have convincingly outlined their spiritual path, often triggered by equally “powerful intellectual and personal reasons”, to conversion and they paid a high personal price for their baptism, because they found it very difficult to gain ground economically. Prospects for converts improved only when it also became easier for Jews to enter professional careers. The volume includes several fascinating case studies of Early Modern ‘Jews by choice’. For our context, particularly interesting are the contributions by Elisheva Carlebach on Jews from German lands who had previously converted to Christianity and then went to Amsterdam to reverse this step, and by Allison Coudert who examines the case of Johann Peter Späth from Augsburg who after several changes in his religion opted for Judaism in Amsterdam in 1696 and became known as *Moses Germanus*. Amsterdam was a well-known centre for Sephardic *conversos*, but it also attracted Jews from Germany and Poland who wished to retract an earlier baptism and return to the Jewish fold.

Both books focus nearly exclusively on men with a certain educated background. Studies on female converts in the Early Modern Period remain a desideratum. The main problem for finding female voices is that sources are scarce, but painstaking archival research does yield some results which provide surprising insights into the motivations and circumstances of female conversions.¹³

Local histories

Archival sources are the backbone of local histories. Studies on German *Heimatgeschichte*, often written by local experts on the history of their area, have always been very popular. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, German rabbis added histories of their communities to this genre. It is only quite recently that these somewhat parallel worlds are treated as a single entity. Monika Richarz, in the early 1990s, drew the attention to the relatively unexplored early history of the so-called *Landjuden*, Jews living in rural areas.¹⁴

¹³ For some case studies, which discuss female converts and are based on archival sources from different German regions, see Gert Mentgen, “Jüdische Proselyten im Oberrheingebiet während des Spätmittelalters. Schicksale und Probleme einer doppelten Minderheit”, in: *Zeitschrift für die Geschichte des Oberrheins* 142 (1994), pp. 117–139; Wolfgang Treue, “Aufsteiger oder Außenseiter? Jüdische Konvertiten im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert”, in: *Aschkenas* 10 (2000), pp. 307–336; Stefan Litt, “Conversions to Christianity and Jewish Family Life in Thuringia: Case Studies in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries”, in: *LBIY* 47 (2002), pp. 83–90.

¹⁴ Monika Richarz, “Die Entdeckung der Landjuden. Stand und Problem ihrer Erforschung am Beispiel Südwestdeutschlands”, in: *Landjudentum im süddeutschen und Bodenseeraum*.

After being expelled from nearly all urban centres in the fourteenth, fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries (at the outset of the Early Modern Period, only Frankfurt (Main), Worms and Friedberg boasted any Jewish community to speak of), Jews either moved to Northern Italy or eastwards or settled in peripheral rural areas. This was a tremendous change not only in demographic terms, but also economically, legally and culturally, and led to the destruction of traditional communal structures.

Since Richarz's remarks, research on *Landjudentum*, mostly carried out by German historians, has experienced something of a boom. A useful introduction is the volume Richarz edited with Reinhard Rürup, *Jüdisches Leben auf dem Lande*,¹⁵ which includes several articles on demographic, economic and religious aspects of Early Modern rural Jewry. Other volumes, which deserve to be mentioned were edited by Rolf Kießling, *Judengemeinden in Schwaben im Kontext des alten Reichs*¹⁶ and by the same author in cooperation with Sabine Ullmann, *Landjudentum im deutschen Südwesten während der Frühen Neuzeit*.¹⁷ Last but not least, the ongoing research in the context of *Germania Judaica IV* and *Austria Judaica* promises a fuller picture of this period when the results of this international research project are published.¹⁸ The efforts made by Jewish museums in rural areas, such as the Austrian Jewish Museum in Eisenstadt, the Jewish Museum in Hohenems and the Jewish Museum in Fürth and Schnaittach, to name just three of many more institutions dedicated to the history of rather distinctive rural communities, should not be overlooked. They not only reappraise the history of their own area but manage quite successfully to place it within a larger context.

In the following paragraphs I wish to focus on two studies which explore Jewish-Christian relations in the context of these rural settlement patterns in an exemplary way. Claudia Ulbrich's *Shulamit und Margarete. Macht, Geschlecht und Religion in einer ländlichen Gesellschaft des 18. Jahrhunderts*¹⁹ is the

Wissenschaftliche Tagung zur Eröffnung des jüdischen Museums Hohenems vom 9. bis 11. April 1991, veranstaltet vom Vorarlberger Landesarchiv, Dornbirn 1992, pp. 11–21 [Forschungen zur Geschichte Vorarlbergs 11].

¹⁵ Monika Richarz and Reinhard Rürup (eds.), *Jüdisches Leben auf dem Lande. Studien zur deutsch-jüdischen Geschichte*, Tübingen 1997 [Schriftenreihe wissenschaftlicher Abhandlungen des Leo-Baeck-Instituts 56].

¹⁶ Rolf Kießling (ed.), *Judengemeinden in Schwaben im Kontext des Alten Reiches*, Berlin 1995 [Colloquia Augustana 2].

¹⁷ Rolf Kießling and Sabine Ullmann (eds.), *Landjudentum im deutschen Südwesten während der Frühen Neuzeit*, Berlin 1999 [Colloquia Augustana 10].

¹⁸ For more information on this important research project, see (http://www.phil-fak.uni-duesseldorf.de/ijs/germania_judaica/) [last accessed: 16 March 2005].

¹⁹ Claudia Ulbrich, *Shulamit und Margarete. Macht, Geschlecht und Religion in einer ländlichen Gesellschaft des 18. Jahrhunderts*, Wien 1999 [Aschkenas Beiheft 4].

methodologically carefully constructed history of the Catholic and Jewish women and men living in the small village of Steinbiedersdorf (today Pontpierre) close to the German-French border. One of the most interesting aspects of Ulbrich's work is her gender-conscious approach, which she applies most effectively to the fortuitous wealth of documentation (mostly court sources, but also Jewish marriage contracts). The competing legal systems, common law versus local customary law, made it possible that marriage did not change the legal status of women and women appeared in different roles in court. Although the nature of legal sources may distort such a study in implying that this was mainly a culture in conflict, Ulbrich stresses the ability to resolve conflicts and its implications for Christian-Jewish coexistence. Jews in Steinbiedersdorf did not live separately from their Christian neighbours and their contacts were not reduced to business relations and arbitrary encounters. Conflicts involving brawls and issues of honour show that both groups shared the same space in terms of actions and values, class and religious differences notwithstanding. One interesting aspect discussed by Ulbrich is the hospitality enjoyed by Christians in Jewish houses and the sharing of meals. Perhaps the most absorbing parts of her study are her thoughtful portrayals of individual women whose biographies and motivations she reconstructed very convincingly from her mostly legal sources. Servants, Christian or Jewish, are not that often given a prominent place in histories, and Ulbrich's reconstructions of several cases in which unmarried pregnant maids fought for their rights offer important insights into the difficulties these women experienced. A rather different case was that of the Jewish maid Särle who found herself suddenly dismissed when her employer, the widow Perle, became pregnant before she could secure a second marriage (Ulbrich assumes that Särle "knew too much" and had to go). The analysis of the complex relationship between the widow and her loyal servant makes compelling reading.

The author's choice of "Shulamit" and "Margarethe" as the main title of the book offers several layers of interpretation. While the names represent their respective cultures, this choice also implies that these neighbourly relations, so often portrayed as two cultures in conflict, eventually came to a most tragic end. "Shulamit" (and not the German "Sulamith" as in Paul Celan's poem *Todesfuge* or "Schulamit") also alludes, arguably unintentionally, to the intrinsic foreignness of Jewish women.

A very different geographical area is explored by Sabine Ullmann in her *Nachbarschaft und Konkurrenz: Juden und Christen in den Dörfern der Markgrafschaft Burgau 1650–1750*.²⁰ Ullmann combines in her impressive study an

²⁰ Sabine Ullmann, *Nachbarschaft und Konkurrenz: Juden und Christen in den Dörfern der Markgrafschaft Burgau 1650–1750*, Göttingen 1999.

admirable wealth of sources for a multi-faceted micro-history of four villages in the margraviate of Burgau, in which Jews and Christians lived next to each other. After providing a political and legal framework, the author discusses the internal structures of the Jewish community, the district rabbinate and the *Landjudenschaft*. This is followed by an analysis of economic relations between Christians and Jews, a discussion of topographical and social structures and is concluded with a close description of everyday relations between Jews and Christians. The region discussed lies in the so-called *medinat Schwaben*, which owes its origins and development to the antagonism between the Swabian nobility and the Habsburg dynasty. Both rulers claimed power of control over the Jews and their taxes. The acceptance of protected Jews into their territories increased their revenues and strengthened their respective positions in the ongoing conflict about ruling rights typical for the small political entities of the German southwest. This specific situation had direct implications for the legal, fiscal and economic status of the Jews, which Ullmann lucidly illustrates in her comparison of four villages.

Similarly to Ulbrich's conclusions, Ullmann states that conflict within a certain village did not by any means strictly divide between Jews and Christians, but different coalitions of interest transgressed such distinctions. Both authors deal with religious dimensions in this coexistence, such as the problems the common custom of employing a *Shabbes Goye* for domestic services on the Shabbat could involve. Another fascinating aspect discussed by both authors is that of 'honour and shame' and how notions of honour were employed in Jewish-Christian discourse.

Despite offering many fascinating and valuable insights into the life of both Christians and Jews, from the angle of Jewish history both studies are mostly a history from an outside perspective, largely based on non-Jewish sources. Occasionally contemporary Christian misunderstandings of Jewish religious law are uncritically adopted and stated as facts, such as Ullmann's claim that Shabbat ended in winter only on Sunday morning (p. 426) or that Jews were not permitted to eat salted dishes during Pessach (p. 431). These objections notwithstanding, both Ulbrich's and Ullmann's books are important contributions to a better understanding of Early Modern Jewish-Christian relations.

Everyday life

Such local histories do provide a certain insight into the everyday life of Jews and Christians, although the nature of their sources focuses more on conflicts than on normal day-to-day relations. In recent years, Jewish *Alltag* in the Early Modern Period has attracted some scholarly attention and a few conferences explored various issues. Some presentations at such a conference, held in 2000 at

the Center for German Studies at Ben Gurion University, were published in the *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 2002, in which two authors write about Jewish-Christian relations. Stefan Litt offers a fascinating insight into conversion cases of Early Modern Thuringia, arguing that they did not necessarily lead to a complete severing of family relations and that converts could sometimes expect a dowry or an inheritance from their Jewish family. David Warren Sabean compares the differing approaches of defining both incest and prohibited forms of marital union in Jewish and Christian communities in the seventeenth century.

The volume *Geschichte des jüdischen Alltags in Deutschland vom 17. Jahrhundert bis 1945*²¹ is a welcome addition to the four volumes of German-Jewish history edited by Michael A. Meyer and Michael Brenner.²² In the chapter dedicated to the Early Modern Period (1618–1780), Robert Liberles provides a fascinating overview of various aspects of everyday life, a contribution that hopefully will stimulate further research exploring Jewish-Christian everyday contacts. Liberles discusses not only ‘internal’ *Alltag*, such as family structures, occupational patterns or crime rates, but stresses that Jews were not as isolated from Christians as often assumed. They commonly shared houses or drank together in pubs.

Although a history of everyday life seems to imply that this is a ‘history from below’ and does not include upper classes, this is not the case and attention should also be drawn to the recently published findings on the life of Court Jews. Rotraud Ries has edited a useful volume *Hofjuden – Ökonomie und Interkulturalität*²³ together with J. Friedrich Battenberg, in which her introduction in particular provides an excellent overview. Other contributors discuss Court Jews in the context of Jewish communities, their specific family structures and how regional differences affected their lives.

Rites and rituals

One aspect of Jewish-Christian cultural exchange and borrowing which to date has not attracted much scholarly attention for the Early Modern Period is in the area of ritual. It is somewhat surprising that Herman Pollack’s study *Jewish Folkways in Germanic Lands (1648–1806)*,²⁴ published in 1971, has not stimu-

²¹ Marion Kaplan (ed.), *Geschichte des jüdischen Alltags in Deutschland vom 17. Jahrhundert bis 1945*, Munich 2003.

²² Michael A. Meyer (ed.) and Michael Brenner (assistant ed.), *German-Jewish History in Modern Times*, New York 1996–97.

²³ Rotraud Ries and J. Friedrich Battenberg (eds.), *Hofjuden – Ökonomie und Interkulturalität. Die jüdische Wirtschaftselite im 18. Jahrhundert*, Hamburg 2002 [Hamburger Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Juden 25].

lated much research on Jewish and Christian cooperation in and borrowing of popular religious and magical rites, which arguably transversed the strict borders between the two religions. I just want to mention two examples, both of which originated as dissertations at the Hebrew University under the guidance of Roberto Bonfil. They examine certain aspects of Jewish ritual life in a more general context. Elisheva Baumgarten has recently published her important book on *Mothers and Children: Jewish Family Life in Medieval Europe*,²⁵ which provides numerous examples how Jewish parents in medieval Ashkenaz shared similar practices with their Christians neighbours. Her competent discussion of the Hollekreisch naming ceremony is a wonderful example of Jewish borrowing from Christian popular beliefs. Roni Weinstein's meticulous study, *Marriage Rituals Italian Style*, examines Early Modern Jewish marriage rituals and how they merged with cultural and legal elements of their specific historical context.²⁶

Similar case studies focusing on a specific ritual based, for example, on the numerous extant collections of late medieval and Early Modern customs (*sifrei minhag*) and discussed in a cross-cultural analysis would be more than welcome for Early Modern Germanic lands. Questions of Jewish "inward acculturation", to borrow Ivan Marcus' term, have to date not been explored for the period and area under discussion.²⁷

Gender

Another desideratum is research on the history of Early Modern Jewish women and in general a more gender-conscious approach to our subject. Both the works of Claudia Ulbrich and Elisheva Baumgarten (for the High Middle Ages) mentioned above very successfully employ methods developed by gender studies, but they are the exception rather than the rule. The arguably best-known Early Modern German-Jewish woman is Glikl bas Juda Leib, who has recently attracted more scholarly attention, although she has not yet really been

²⁴ Herman Pollack, *Jewish Folkways in Germanic lands (1648–1806): studies in aspects of daily life*, Cambridge/Mass., 1971.

²⁵ Elisheva Baumgarten, *Mothers and Children: Jewish Family Life in Medieval Europe*, Princeton – Oxford 2004.

²⁶ Roni Weinstein, *Marriage Rituals Italian Style: a historical anthropological perspective on early modern Italian Jews*, Leiden 2004.

²⁷ Ivan G. Marcus, *Rituals of Childhood. Jewish acculturation in Medieval Europe*, New Haven – London 1996, is another exemplary study of a Jewish medieval ritual discussed by an anthropological historical approach. I have not been able to include Marcus' very recently published book in this survey, but his *Jewish Life Cycle: Rites of Passage from Biblical to Modern Times*, Seattle 2005 [Samuel & Althea Stroum Lectures in Jewish Studies] will certainly contribute to our understanding of Jewish rituals in Early Modern Germany.

interpreted in terms of gender studies. Natalie Zemon Davis, who is responsible for the discovery of Glikl's historically correct name, discussed Glikl in her insightful study on three *Women on the margins*.²⁸ Regarding Glikl's relations to Christians, Zemon Davis comes to the conclusion that Christians hovered at the margins of Glikl's world, which was limited by Christian restrictions. Monika Richarz edited the volume *Die Hamburger Kauffrau Glikl. Jüdische Existenz in der Frühen Neuzeit*,²⁹ which puts Glikl and her famous memoirs in historical context and discusses linguistic, literary, religious, economic and social aspects. Robert Liberles, to mention just one contributor, examines how Glikl referred to Christians in her book and appears to be surprised that Glikl portrayed many non-Jews in a rather positive light. He argues that Glikl contrasts Christian behaviour with that of fellow Jews who often disappointed her and notes an interesting discrepancy between her personal memories and popular literature that she quotes in her book.

Gendered interpretations of Early Modern history are among the most exciting historiographical works published in recent decades and I am looking forward to seeing similar questions asked in our subject. It would be fruitful to probe halakhic sources from a gender-conscious perspective and to discuss them in a broader cultural context.

Jews on Christians

Liberles's reading of Glikl's memoirs is a rare example of an exploration of Jewish opinions on Christians. While numerous aspects of how Early Modern Christians depicted, imagined and related to contemporary Jews have been explored, research inquiring into what Early Modern Jews made of Christians has so far been largely avoided.³⁰ What were the strategies with which Jews met the challenges of being a religious and ethnic minority in Christian European society? How did they express their own feelings of religious and moral superiority? How did Jews express religious antagonism in their liturgy, in their rituals, in everyday gestures? What defence mechanisms did they develop to protect their identity against the dominant culture and religion? I find it rather condescending to assume that Jews were passive victims of exclusion, persecution and religious polemics, who did not respond to this marginalisation in any way.

²⁸ Natalie Zemon Davis, *Women on the Margins. Three Seventeenth Century Lives*, Cambridge/Mass. – London 1995.

²⁹ Monika Richarz (ed.), *Die Hamburger Kauffrau Glikl: jüdische Existenz in der Frühen Neuzeit*, Hamburg 2001 [Hamburger Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Juden 24].

³⁰ For the Middle Ages, see Israel Jacob Yuval, *"Two Nations in your Womb": Perceptions of Jews and Christians*, Tel Aviv 2000 (in Hebrew).

Elliott Horowitz's masterful study of Purim rituals, "The Rite to Be Reckless: On the Perpetration and Interpretation of Purim Violence",³¹ addresses some of the issues at stake here. His discussion of Purim as a holiday that expressed "ritual reversal, joy, and hostility" and had violent anti-Christian undertones is intriguing, but perhaps even more insightful is his survey of how nineteenth and twentieth century scholars struggled to "come to grips with Purim's complex character". He argues that the history of cultural practices cannot be separated from the history of their interpretation.

Horowitz's survey of the difficulties of later generations of scholars to accept the violent and anti-Christian character Purim celebrations could adopt in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Period is an eye-opener in many ways and certainly explains the reluctance of contemporary scholars to probe historical Jewish antagonism to Christians and Christianity. I wonder if we have already reached the stage in our exploration of the past in general, and in Jewish-Christian relations in particular, where we can acknowledge the many facets of this complex encounter without being apologetic in one way or another.

³¹ Elliot Horowitz, "The Rite to Be Reckless: On the Perpetration and Interpretation of Purim Violence", in: *Poetics Today* 15 (1994), pp. 9–54. A slightly different version, "And It Was Reversed': Jews and their Enemies in the Festivities of Purim", appeared in *Zion* 59 (1994), pp. 129–168 (in Hebrew).