



Jolanta Sujecka

Faculty of 'Artes Liberales', University of Warsaw
Warsaw

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3265-598X>
jolanta.sujecka@al.uw.edu.pl

Introductory Comments

Abstract

The ninth issue of *Colloquia Humanistica* (2020) contains a thematic section entitled *Sephardim, Ashkenazim and Non-Jewish Peoples: Encounters Across Europe*, but in fact the whole issue is devoted to Jewish topics.

In the *Materials, Sources, Archives* section, this time we present four papers which deal with relevant religious texts, literature, biography and, finally, historical documents. In the *Discussion. Presentations. Book Reviews* segment we offer readers two reviews of interesting books, and also one paper which, through the scholar's personal biography, reflects on how snippets of the Jewish past tend to linger on in the form of absent presences.

Keywords: ninth issue of *Colloquia Humanistica*, thematic section *Sephardim, Ashkenazim and Non-Jewish Peoples: Encounters Across Europe*.

The whole ninth issue of *Colloquia Humanistica* is devoted to Jewish topics. The title of the thematic section, *Sephardim, Ashkenazim and Non-Jewish Peoples: Encounters Across Europe*, invites the reader on a journey in time and space across the Balkan, North African and European

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 PL License (creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/pl/), which permits redistribution, commercial and non-commercial, provided that the article is properly cited. © The Author(s), 2020.

Publisher: Institute of Slavic Studies, Polish Academy of Sciences

Editor-in-chief: Jolanta Sujecka

Conception and academic editing of this issue: Aleksandra Twardowska, Katarzyna Taczyńska

paths of their history. Sometimes we come upon horrific images like those related to the Holocaust of Ukrainian Jews in Yurii Kaparulin's extremely interesting paper (*The Holocaust in South Ukraine: The Response of Jewish Survivors from Kalinindorf District after the Occupation*), or the equally interesting analysis of the images of *Deutschjuden* and *Westjuden* in German-language Jewish press between World War I and the end of the inter-war period (Izabela Olszewska).

The thematic section features papers discussing memory in different spatial, methodological and, finally, disciplinary combinations. Muslims and Christians in the traditional accounts of Sephardim from northern Morocco essentially serve to consolidate the identity of the Jews themselves, although they build its multicultural and multireligious context at the same time (Oro Anahory-Librowicz).

Remembrance of the Holocaust is part of intergenerational communication while turning into the transfer of memories from private to public narration as well. The Holocaust testimony of Fanika Lučić also reflects the experience of life in the first, royal, and the post-war, socialist, Yugoslavia as well as during the war in Bosnia and the disintegration of the state (Krinka Vidaković Petrov).

The space of Ottoman Macedonia becomes an excellent illustration of the 19th-century Balkans, open to impetus from the Enlightenment and to the birth of national ideologies in which one indispensable element was the stereotype of the Jew: negative, set within Christian ethical sermons (Sofija Grandakovska).

Remembrance of the Holocaust in Israel is connected with the practice of mass-scale afforestation pursued by the Jewish National Council. An analysis of the two biggest forest complexes in the early State of Israel – *Ya'ar HaMeginim* (Defenders' Forest) and *Ya'ar HaKedoshim* (Martyrs' Forest) – as sites of memory shows us the narrative agency of nature, and also its impact on processes occurring in the collective memory of contemporary Israel (Maria Piekarska).

Another kind of connection between memory and identity is illustrated by an extremely interesting paper about the fluctuating identity of the youngest generation of Polish Jews, known as the “unexpected generation”. Invoked by the author, the context of mixed marriages and their progeny in the Diaspora and in Israel becomes an identity challenge for us all (Joanna Cukras-Stelągowska).

Milan Koljanin outlines the detailed historical context for the Kingdom of Yugoslavia's adoption, in early October 1940, of two antisemitic decrees known as the Korošec decrees, from the name of the education minister of the time, the Slovene Antun Korošec. Hostility towards Jews was much

stronger in territories which had earlier, i.e. before the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes / Yugoslavia was formed, belonged to the Habsburg Monarchy than in former Kingdom of Serbia territories (Milan Koljanin).

The Kingdom of Serbia, previously the Duchy of Serbia, emerged in 1830 from the Ottoman Empire; to this day, different terms are used to differentiate the Serbian population according to culture: Habsburg or Hungarian Serb denotes an inhabitant of the Habsburg Monarchy while Turkish Serb means an inhabitant of the Balkans. Balkan antisemitism was imported in two ways: from enlightened Europe together with the idea of the nation-state, and from Russia with the wave of pogroms (Polonsky, 2010) committed by tsarist soldiers during the Russian-Turkish wars, including the 1877-1878 war that brought Bulgarians limited freedom.

This time, in the ninth issue of *Colloquia Humanistica*, we publish as many as four texts in the *Materials, Sources, Archives* section. Michael Studemund-Halévy offers an extremely interesting profile of Santo Semo, a writer brought up in the Ladino (Judezmo) culture who chose a French-language and European identity, rejecting the Bulgarian and Turkish options as possibilities for his language and identity conversion.

Two authors, Ljiljana Dobrovšak and Ivana Žebec Šilj, present the history of the Alexanders, an influential Jewish family from Zagreb who played a significant role in many national cultures in the region, from Croatia, through Hungary, to the Habsburg Monarchy. The Alexander family produced many brilliant doctors, lawyers, engineers, artists, professors and entrepreneurs. With a cosmopolitan identity, they contributed to the wellbeing of the cities between which they spent their lives: Zagreb, Vienna and Budapest.

Meanwhile, Marta Kacprzak describes and analyses two Sephardic adaptations of *Robinson Crusoe* written by Ben Tsiyon Taragan and published in full, one in Jerusalem in 1897, the other in Constantinople in 1924. The material and its analysis explain the context of the Haskalah, i.e. Jewish Enlightenment, which came about a little later in the Sephardic community (compared to the Ashkenazim), but also illustrate the phenomenon of the birth of a contemporary, secular (based mainly on adaptations of world classics) Sephardic literature.

Adaptations of world classics in fact form the core of Balkan literature from the Middle Ages to the 19th or even 20th century. The Jewish literary context brings awareness of the path of influence as well as building the value of this kind of literature, seemingly derivative but in fact a very important element of the region's culture.

Eliezer Papo analyses the anthology *Leket a-Zoar* published in the vernacular by Rabbi Avram ben Moshe Finci in Belgrade in 1858/1859. It is a selection of texts from the *Zohar*, the most important text of Jewish

mysticism. In addition, the author of this extensive presentation shows us how the traditional culture of Balkan (in this case Bosnian) Jews was set in the region's multireligious culture, open to Muslim and Christian neighbours while preserving its own distinct religious identity.

The final section of this year's issue of *Colloquia Humanistica* contains presentations of two interesting monographs: Alisse Waterston's *My Father's Wars: Migration, Memory, and the Violence of a Century* published in 2014 (Sofija Grandakovska), and Joanna Lisak's *Kol isze – głos kobiet w poezji jidysz (od XVI w. do 1939 r.)* [Kol ishe: The Voice of Women in Yiddish Poetry from the 16th Century to 1939] published in 2018 (Katarzyna Taczyńska). These two monographs share a Jewish theme, but also an issue of great importance for our times: the acting subject in humanist narrative. The authors of both these books stand up for a narrator's full presence, including gender.

Last but not least, the same section also features a very different – memorial – text by Tomasz Kamusella. Presented from the perspective of the scholar's personal biography, these recollections are a form of reflection on snippets of the Jewish past which continue in the form of an absent presence despite the constantly reviving tendency to erase the remembrance of Poles of the Jewish faith.

Jolanta Sujecka
Warsaw, 7 October 2020

References

Polonsky, A. (2010). *The Jews in Poland and Russia: Vol. 1. 1350 to 1881*. Littman Library of Jewish Civilisation.

Uwagi wstępne

Dziewiąty numer „*Colloquia Humanistica*” (2020) zawiera blok tematyczny zatytułowany: *Sephardim, Ashkenazim and Non-Jewish Peoples. Encounters Across Europe*, jakkolwiek cały rocznik jest poświęcony tematyce żydowskiej.

W dziale *Materials, Sources, Archives*, tym razem publikujemy cztery artykuły, które prezentują ważne teksty religijne, literackie, biograficzne, wreszcie dokumenty historyczne. W dziale *Discussion. Presentations. Book Reviews* oferujemy czytelnikom dwie recenzje interesujących monografii, a także artykuł, który poprzez refleksję zawartą w osobistej biografii bada-

cza, zastanawia się, jak fragmenty żydowskiej przeszłości trwają w formie nieobecnej obecności.

Słowa kluczowe: dziewiąty numer “Colloquia Humanistica”, blok tematyczny *Sephardim, Ashkenazim and Non-Jewish Peoples. Encounters Across Europe*.

Note

Jolanta Sujecka, Faculty of “Artes Liberales”, University of Warsaw, Warsaw.

jolanta.sujecka@al.uw.edu.pl

The preparation of this article was self-funded by the author.

The author is the editor-in-chief of the journal.

Publication History

Received: 2020-12-07; Accepted: 2020-12-08; Published: 2020-12-31