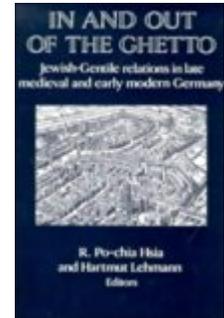


R. Po-chia Hsia, Hartmut Lehmann, eds.. *In and Out of the Ghetto: Jewish-Gentile Relations in Late Medieval and Early Modern Germany*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995. 330 pp. \$69.95, cloth, ISBN 978-0-521-47064-3.



Reviewed by Emily Rose

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A lively and thought-provoking book, *In and Out of the Ghetto* will provide ammunition for the many and varied interpretations of Ashkenazic Jewry in early modern Germany. In what is perhaps stereotypical Ashkenazic style, these well-argued and ably written essays answer questions with more questions, opening many issues rather than closing them. Readers looking for firm conclusions or any sense of narrative development will be disappointed, but intrigued.

This volume offers twenty-three papers originally delivered at a conference in Los Angeles in 1991 (a complete list of contributors appears at the end of this review). They represent new and often contradictory work on German Jewry and as such are exciting to read. The subjects covered are wide-ranging, from Yiddish linguistics and Jews as robbers to more conventional discussions of legal status, employment, and social structure. All offer fresh approaches to modern questions, and as a whole the work "challenges and problematizes one or another strand in the classic pre-1933 model of how to write the German-Jewish past" (p. 151). But, mindful of the need to inte-

grate such variety, the editors suggest three promising common themes for future dialogue: the Jewish lower classes, the constitution of Jewish identity in the Holy Roman Empire, and the question of historical continuity. The editors also achieve coherence by focusing attention on gaps in our sources, desiderata in scholarship, and potentially fruitful new areas to pursue.

A welcome touch and particularly successful are the brief comments by scholars after each section of two or three essays. Specialists effectively offer their own review of the work, point out similarities and contradictions, trace underlying themes, and, refreshingly, sometimes even confess their own uncertainty. Rarely have I seen such useful commentary. Another strength of this work is to open to English-speaking readers a world of foreign-language scholarship, especially German, with which they may not be familiar. Almost half the contributors regularly write in German and have not previously published in English. If only for this reason the book will be attractive to those who work in related fields.

Certainly a major topic throughout this volume is the degree of diversity in Jewish experience across different regions of the German lands, exemplified by the paired essays on Jews in the prince-bishoprics and in the (secular) imperial cities. Most contributors seek to emphasize differences, but the concluding essay argues emphatically for a specifically German development arising not from theology, but "from the deadlock among churches and the rise of mercantilism" (p. 303). The repeated judgment of many essays is that, although Jews were isolated in small, rural enclaves, their survival depended in large measure on long-distance connections and effective means of distribution, including door-to-door peddling. That in itself is hardly surprising, but it is the nature of the interaction, the varied responses to restrictions, and the changing contexts that make the reading so informative.

Some of the essays concerning Jewish demographics, employment, isolation, and assimilation will lend themselves particularly well to undergraduate teaching, as apt examples of divergent historical interpretation. On the other hand, one of the book's difficulties is that it assumes the reader's rather detailed familiarity with the subject matter. For example, the works of Jacob Katz, *Out of the Ghetto: The Social Background of Jewish Emancipation, 1770-1870* (Cambridge, Mass., 1973) and Jonathan Israel's *European Jewry in the Age of Mercantilism, 1550-1750* (Oxford, 1985), two classics that define the subject under consideration in the present book, come in for discussion, debate, and dispute. The reader unfamiliar with them will be at something of a loss.

Richard Popkin offers the Netherlands as a model for possible alternative historical development, and R. Po-chia Hsia highlights "the dynamic and changing nature of Jewish-Gentile relations." Several authors examine the movement into ghettos or isolated quarters and the social, political, and economic motives for pushing Jews together and apart are thoroughly explored, but they pay

little attention to what actually went on inside the Jewish community. If indeed Jews were the quintessential "cattle-raising country bumpkins" (Toch), often gang members and robbers (Ulbricht), perceived as medical quacks lacking university training (Juette), without fixed residence or regular source of income (Guggenheim), and the community was riven by class antagonism, economic inequities, and social insecurities that can hardly be imagined, one would like to know what prepared the Jews to flourish after an emancipation that is portrayed here as gradual and uneven. The continuity of culture and community as well as the continuity of antisemitism deserve, perhaps, to be examined more thoroughly than can be done in the anthology format.

Although the volume begins in late medieval Germany, there is very little about the medieval period included. Most essays begin with, or assume knowledge of, the expulsions in the late fifteenth century. Only Haverkamp's discussion of Jewish quarters (he resists "ghetto," the term of the volume's title), Miri Ruben's work on host desecration and eucharistic piety, and Paul Wexler's review of the origins of Yiddish would be of interest to medievalists. For the early modern period the work is more impressive, the focus sufficiently clear, the methods and approaches of the twenty-three authors certainly diverse. The essayists themselves point to what is new or challenging about their work. Much of it will be controversial. Memorable for nonspecialists will be Otto Ulbricht's essay on Jewish criminality in which he provocatively states: "it will become clear that the Jewish bandit is as important a figure in the Jewish-Gentile relations as the court Jew" (p. 51).

The court Jew is the one figure frequently mentioned but rarely addressed directly in the collection. In his overview Israel tantalizingly suggests that other essayists overestimate the significance of the *Hoffjuden* (court Jews): "I would like to argue rather strongly the opposite. Far from being overstated, the full significance of the *Hoffju-*

den for the overall development of German Jewry has still not been significantly brought out" (p. 299). He and Toch point out their importance in linking small dealers and buyers who roamed the countryside to purchase grain, horses, and military supplies. Ulbricht identifies gang members as former household employees of court Jews. Gershon David Hundert writes on the absence of *Hoffjuden* in Poland because of the general lack of state-managed economic policy there.

Paul Wexler's discussion of the origin of Yiddish is sure to provoke. He argues that Yiddish is not a form of German, and that the southern German lands were settled by two different groups of Jews who developed diverse linguistic profiles. "The term Ashkenaz, now associated with Germany and historically Yiddish-speaking communities, was originally associated with the Slavic lands." He offers a hypothesis that Yiddish is basically a Slavic language and not German and concludes that the mobility of the Jewish population in Germany may have been exaggerated. "Neither the migration routes and chronology of Jewish settlements in northern Europe nor the facts of Yiddish support the western-Eurocentric bias inherent in the Romance theory or a German-Jewish origin" (p. 123). He suggests instead that Northern European Jews came from the Balkans and farther east.

All in all, the essays are presented in a helpful package. Contributors are fully identified by position and with their latest published works and current research interests. The reader will find abstracts of the articles, editors' prefaces, and an introduction by Jacob Katz. Primarily for scholars, the book is heavily footnoted and assumes command of the basic secondary literature. For this targeted audience, no bibliography or suggestions for further reading were thought necessary.

Contents:

An overview by Jacob Katz is followed by the first section: "The Legacy of the Middle Ages," with essays by Alfred Haverkamp, Christopher

Daxelmueller, Otto Ulbricht, and comment by Theodore K. Rabb. "The Social and Economic Structure of German Jewry from the Fifteenth through the Eighteenth Centuries" contains papers by Michael Toch, Stefi Jersch-Wenzel, and commentary by Gershon David Hundert. Paul Wexler, Yacov Guggenheim, Robert Juette, and the comment of Deborah Hertz comprise the section, "Jewish-Gentile Contacts and Relations in the Pre-Emancipation Period." "Representations of German Jewry" includes the contributions of R. Pochia Hsia, Miri Rubin, and the comment of Carlo Ginzburg, and "Patterns of Authority," those of R. Traud Ries, J. Friedrich Battenberg, Christopher R. Friedrichs, with comment by Thomas A. Brady Jr. The concluding comments are from Jonathan Israel, Hartmut Lehmann, Richard Popkin, and Mack Walker.

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