

The Veil of Moses

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The Veil of Moses

Jewish Themes in Russian Literature
of the Romantic Era

By

Mikhail Weisskopf

Translated by

Lydia Wechsler

Edited by

Judith Robey



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PREFACE TO THE ENGLISH EDITION

The Russian edition of this book was published in Moscow at the end of 2007. As one of my readers commented, it deals with a topic that remains somewhat exotic for Russian readers, who still feel the residual effects of the “Soviet taboo concerning everything Jewish.” Another fragment from the same review confirms this offensive attitude: the review’s generally positive tone makes the following “Freudian slip” all the more remarkable. While discussing the content of *The Veil of Moses*, the reviewer states: “The depiction of the Jews in [Russian] literature of the 1830s–40s was consistent with the realities of life at that time. In the chapter ‘Literary Templates’ the author presents a typology of Jewish images. Werewolves, vampires, blasphemers, smugglers, spies, etc.—these were the central Jewish types in the literature of that period.” In other words, this reader took these images to be accurate depictions of Jewish life.

Views of this kind suggest that the book’s topic is still relevant in Russia. Hopefully it will prove useful to a Western audience as well. From a historical-political standpoint, the book’s main focus is the first half of the reign of Nikolai I, during which Russian classical literature came into being and achieved worldwide recognition. During this time we see not only the rise of Pushkin, but also the entire creative life of Lermontov and Baratynsky; most of Tiutchev’s poetry; the triumph of Gogol; the debuts of Nekrasov, Fet, and Turgenev; and the rise of Russian historical novels, physiological sketches, and literary criticism mostly driven by ideology. This period is marked by the victory, hegemony, and eventual stagnation of the Russian Romantic Movement, which the “natural school” then supplanted. This period extends from the mid-1820s until the early 1840s¹ and provides the basic framework for our research, which takes occasional forays into adjacent time periods but never extends beyond the beginning of 1848, the era of European revolutions and the corresponding radicalization of censorship in Russia (the so-called gloomy seven years).

We should preface this with a reminder to the reader that in Muscovy and the northern Slavic lands that gave rise to Greater Russia, Jews were almost

¹ Philologists prefer to identify this period as the “1830s,” giving it the same expansive timespan. See V. E. Vatsuro, “Poeziia 1830-kh godov,” in *Istoriia russkoi literatury* (Leningrad, 1981), 2:362–63.

unknown, in contrast to the southern and more ancient, pre-Mongolian Kievan Rus, as well as Lithuanian Rus (“Ruthenia,” which in the 14th century encompassed part of the southern Russian territories, including Kiev). But even in the south the surviving data on the Jewish population are sketchy and often either questionable or downright unreliable, as A. I. Pereswetoff-Morath has shown.² Information on contacts—or, to be exact, conflicts—between Jews and Christians can be found for the most part in church literature (including hagiographic material) or church-related literature, all of which had very little connection to reality and sought to denounce Judaism. It therefore stands to reason that Pereswetoff-Morath named his book on anti-Jewish polemics in Medieval Russia “A Grin Without a Cat.” This same anti-Jewish canon was adopted in both Muscovy and the Russian North and Northwest. There may be some truth to the accepted belief that the northern Russian epos retained a vague memory of the Jewish-Khazar presence in the south, as captured in the heroic folk epic about Sadko and the “Jewish Heroes,” but these texts had as little to do with the reality of Russian life as, say, the spiritual verse about Theodore Tiro defending Jerusalem from an overwhelming “Yid force” and almost drowning himself in the Jewish blood he spilled.³ The rejection of the Jews in Muscovy was shaped by both anti-Semitic Russian Orthodox tradition and the general tendency toward cautious isolationism that characterized the pre-Petrine era of Russian History. This isolationism was only interrupted from time to time out of pragmatic considerations, as was the case in the individual instances (enumerated by Pereswetoff-Morath) in which Jews entered Muscovite Russia in the 15th century, including among their number several Jewish diplomats, whom Ivan III enthusiastically employed. (As the author rightly notes, Ivan was not only a defender of Orthodoxy, but also a savvy politician.)⁴ During his reign in the final third of the 15th century, when a certain “Skharia” entered Novgorod along with a group of Jewish merchants from Ruthenia, the so-called “Heresy of Judaizers” arose and soon spread to Moscow, taking hold among highly influential circles in Russian society (echoes of this “heresy” were heard again in the mid-16th century).

² A. I. Pereswetoff-Morath, “A Grin Without a Cat,” in *Adversus Judaeos: Texts in the Literature of Medieval Russia (988–1504)* (Lund, 2002). A totally different approach is taken by Andrei Arkhipov, *Po tu storonu Sambationa: Etiudy o rusско-еврейских kul'turnykh, iazykovykh i literaturnykh kontaktakh v X–XVI vekakh* (Berkeley, 1995). The author draws in particular upon a toponymy of the Kiev region.

³ P. V. Kireevskii, *Sobranie narodnykh pesen P. V. Kireevskogo* (Leningrad, 1982), 1:228–29.

⁴ A. I. Pereswetoff-Morath, op. cit., 22, 26–27.

For a very long time the Grand Prince turned a blind eye to these heretics, but at the beginning of the 16th century the movement was crushed. The Church's fight against it escalated into an all-too-familiar anti-Semitism, even though some Jewish merchants would, from time to time, continue to visit Muscovy even under Ivan's successor, Vasily. Further contacts took place primarily under military circumstances, including the extermination of Polish Jews by Russian troops and the forced deportation of christened Jews into the Russian heartland under the reigns of Ivan the Terrible and Aleksei Mikhailovich during the Russian-Polish wars. By the middle of the 17th century, when Muscovy had annexed Left-Bank Ukraine, the latter was almost entirely devoid of Jews because they had been either exterminated or driven out by Bohdan Khmel'nitsky's Cossacks. Later on Russian troops had several encounters with Jews, such as the suppression of the "haidamak" movement in the 18th century; however, in Greater Russia itself there were almost no Jews, with the exception of Jewish converts, who made up a significant part of Peter the Great's administration. The situation remained fundamentally unchanged until the final decades of the 18th century, when, during the last three partitions of Poland, Russia received a huge number of Jewish subjects together with the annexed territories. These territories expanded even more at the beginning of the next century, following the victory over Napoleon and the creation within the Russian Empire of the Polish Kingdom. The number of new subjects increased accordingly. At first Russia's burgeoning secular literature showed little interest in the lives of these people. Only after several decades, when literature had become the main repository of Russia's cultural heritage, did Jews, along with other faiths and peoples, enter Russian literature's scope of attention.

Of course we should not overestimate the importance of Jews for Russian culture. In spite of the fact that by the 1840s half of the world's Jewish population lived in the Russian Empire, for Russian Romantics the Jewish theme remained marginal. Yet references to this topic—albeit mainly in passing or according to fashion—in the final analysis foretold the subsequent literary and existential fate of Russia's Jews. Anticipating the chief future currents in Russian letters, this era created, as a byproduct, the main stereotypical images of Jews (with all of their permutations), rooted in Christian traditions.⁵

⁵ On the portraits of Jewish characters in Russian literature of the 19th century, see the well-known feuilleton by Jabotinsky entitled "Russkaia laska" (V. Zhabotinskii, *Fel'etony* [Berlin, 31922], 128), as well as the introductory article by B. Gorev (Goldman), "Russkaia literatura i evrei," in L'vov-Rogachevskii, *Russko-evreiskaia literatura* (Moscow, 1923);

But prose, poetry, and drama of the Romantic era existed in a state of constant interaction with national journalism, which to a large extent reflected the government position on the Jewish question. Journalism both hindered and facilitated the formation of literary stereotypes. It therefore requires closer historical study, even though the latter cannot replace full-scale historical research.

For obvious reasons the historical background remains an integral component of this study. Indeed, Nikolai I and his administration, in contrast to writers of their day, paid ever-increasing, even excessive attention to the Jews, something unprecedented in Russia. Suffice it to say that Jews were the subject of half of the statutes adopted during Nikolai's reign. The present study presupposes a reader who is familiar with at least the broad outlines of this era. As to the social, economic, and political history of the Jews in Russia, I have relied mainly on the classic studies by S. M. Dubnov⁶ and Iuly Gessen,⁷ as well as on contemporary monographs by John Klier,⁸ Michael Stanislawski, and Benjamin Nathans.⁹ I have also taken into account the archival studies of D. Feldman.¹⁰ Some more specialized studies have also proved essential: first and foremost, the excellent

see also D. Zaslavskii, "Evrei v russkoi literature," *Evreiskaia letopis'* (1923), collection 1, pp. 59–89; P. Berlin, "Russkaia literatura i evrei," *Novyi zhurnal*, 1963, no. 71:78–98. Recent published works of particular note include *Russkie pisateli o evreikh i zhidakh*, compiled by G. S. Zelenina, with an epilogue by M. Iu. Edel'shtein (Moscow, 2005). S. M. Ginzburg wrote on the subject of Jews in fiction during the time of Nikolai I in his "Zabytaia stranitsa," in S. M. Ginzburg, *Minuvshee. Istoricheskie ocherki, stat'i i kharakteristiki* (Petrograd, 1923), 15–19. See also my entry "Russkaia literatura" in *Kratkaia evreiskaia entsiklopediia* (Jerusalem, 1994), 7:494–500. The Jewish character in Russian dramaturgy, including during Nikolai's reign, was studied in the very valuable work of V. Levitina, *Russkii teatr i evrei* (Jerusalem, 1988). A later period is covered in the book by Gabriela Safran, *Rewriting the Jew: Assimilation Narratives in the Russian Empire*. Stanford University Press, 2001.

⁶ S. M. Dubnov, *Noveishaia istoriia evreiskogo naroda. Ot Frantsuzskoi revoliutsii do nashikh dnei*, vol. 2. (Moscow, 2002).

⁷ Iu. Gessen, *Istoriia evreiskogo naroda v Rossii*, 2 vols. (Leningrad, 1925–1927).

⁸ John Doyle Klier, *Russia Gathers Her Jews: The Origins of the "Jewish Question" in Russia, 1772-1825* (Dekalb, IL, 1986), subsequently translated into Russian by N. Luzhetskaia (Moscow, 2000). The translation is significantly fuller than the original English edition of 1986, including archival documents.

⁹ Benjamin Nathans, *Beyond the Pale: The Jewish Encounter with Late Imperial Russia* (Berkeley, 2002). I used the Russian translation by M. Lokshina ("Za chertoi. Evrei vstrechaiutsia s pozdneimperskoi Rossiei" [Moscow, 2007]).

¹⁰ D. Z. Fel'dman, *Stranitsy istorii evreev Rossii XVIII–XIX vekov: opyt arkhivnogo issledovaniia* (Moscow, 2005).

research by D. Elyashevich on the fate of Jewish publications in Russia,¹¹ and by I. Petrovsky-Shtern on the Jews in the Russian army.¹²

It is easy to see that the above-mentioned authors belong to different, to some extent conflicting, trends of Jewish historiography. Practically all Russian-Jewish scholars of the 20th century—beginning with S. Ginzburg, Dubnov, and Gessen—interpret the era of Nikolai I in an uncompromisingly negative light, whereas in the last several decades several Western scholars such as Stanislawski, the late Klier, Petrovsky-Shtern, Nathans, and others have added to this picture a number of significant corrections, which have led to a deeper and more multivalent assessment. In their descriptions, as well as in the archival work of contemporary Russian specialists in Jewish studies, all of 19th-century Jewish history, including during the Nikolaevan period, presents a field of various interrelated social and administrative factors as well as conflicting ideologies both within and from outside of the Jewish community. I fully embrace this multidimensional and extremely fruitful approach and try to adhere to it as much as possible.

Nevertheless, this approach raises serious concerns when scholars in the grip of a revisionist fervor use it a priori for the notorious “destruction of stereotypes,” with little regard for their factual value. Some of the above-mentioned scholars pointedly identify with the well-known view of Salo Baron, who in the 1920s attacked what he viewed as the “lachrymose” conception of Jewish history.¹³ One of the firmest opponents of this conception is Petrovsky-Shtern. In his book on the Jews in the Russian army he observes, however, that Baron’s opposition to the “lachrymose” tradition does not extend to the topic of Jewish recruiting—on the contrary, on this subject Baron completely agrees with the generally accepted tenets of the lachrymose conception of Jewish history.

In this particular case I, too, side with this tradition. Indeed, how can you put a noble spin on the treatment of Jews during the Nikolaevan period when its inhuman cruelty is clearly etched in the national consciousness, as witnessed in memoirs by Jews and non-Jews alike? Below I include, among other texts, a fragment from the memoir of the famous Russian thinker Alexander Herzen (who was, to say the least, far removed from Jewish sensibilities). A chance encounter with Jewish children who were

¹¹ D. A. El'iashevich, *Pravitel'stvennaia politika i evreiskaia pechat' v Rossii, 1797–1917* (St. Petersburg, 1999).

¹² I. Petrovskii-Shtern, *Evrei v russkoi armii* (Moscow, 2003), 45.

¹³ Salo Baron, “Ghetto and Emancipation,” *Menorah Journal*, 1928, no. 14:526.

drafted into Nikolai's army placed him in the same "tearful" state of mind that some historians criticize today.¹⁴ If those historians prefer not to accept the lamentations of Jewish people, then let them verify them using similar texts by (non-Jewish) Russians. The entire second volume of *Lamentations of the Northern Territory*—a well-known folk collection published by E. V. Barsov (Moscow, 1882)—is devoted to "Lamentations of Recruits and Soldiers." Their heartrending, tragic tonality is no different from that of the funeral laments in the first volume. If this was the attitude of Nikolai's Russian subjects toward their own army, we can only imagine how much worse the same fate was for Jews, not to mention their children. For the Jewish population of Russia "rekrutchina" (conscription) became the main emotional content and logical epitome of that reign—despite all of the regime's unquestionable achievements in other areas and all of its good intentions. For the overwhelming majority of Jews these intentions unraveled to create a very grim reality. To quote S. Vermelle's words about Nikolai's reign: "Since the slaughter by Herod, history has not known such governmental slaughter of children as was undertaken by that damned Tsar. We are talking about the well-known Cantonists, about the removal of children from their parents and sending them to serve as soldiers in the remote central and Siberian provinces, where they were forced by means of torture and clever ruses to renounce the faith of their fathers and convert to Russian Orthodoxy. This period in Russian-Jewish history occupies a place in the national memory beside the Spanish Inquisition."¹⁵

The Russian contemporary scholar O. Minkina wholeheartedly agrees with such an assessment, summarizing it in this way: "The era of Nikolai I has earned its place in Jewish historical memory and the historical record as a time of persecution and hardships."¹⁶

It is possible that Nikolai's subjects were somehow, mysteriously, deeply mistaken in their assessment of their own situation and actually lived much better than they thought. But they were not aware of this, and it is our

¹⁴ Not all historians, of course. Nathans, who also rejects the "lachrymose" approach on the whole, at the same time does not dispute the tragic nature of the Jewish *rekrutchina* (conscription regime), for evidence of which he points to Stanislawski's book. Still, this question is far from central to Nathans's concerns: he is much more focused on the socio-economic side of Jewish history in Russia and deals mainly with the post-Nikolaevan period.

¹⁵ S. Vermel', *Evrei v Moskvu. Sbornik materialov*, ed. Iu. Snopov and A. Klempert (Moscow, 2002), 30. On conversion to Christianity as one of the goals of *rekrutchina*, see also M. Stanislawski, *op. cit.*, 15.

¹⁶ O. Minkina, "Zhandarm i tsadiki: Kapitan Vasil'ev v poiskakh rossiiskogo Bar-Kokhby," *Lechaim*, May 2008, no. 5 (193): 46.

obligation to take into account their point of view. Extensive archival materials, published by Elyashevich, Minkina, Feldman, and their colleagues, likewise fail to provide any basis for faulting the Jews of this period for their lack of optimism. Not all stereotypes can be or should be debunked. A case in point is the generally accepted interpretation of Russian serfdom or of the anti-Jewish legislation of the Nikolaevan era—even though our conceptions of this reality have been, and continue to be, subject to all sorts of corrections.

However that may be, this book is not first and foremost about the history of the Jews, but rather about the history of attitudes toward them, as reflected in Russian literature. In other words, it is a history of ideas that found their journalistic, literary, poetic, and theatrical embodiment. Like the ideas themselves, their literary and journalistic existence experienced changes caused by a variety of circumstances, including the political climate, the evolution of genres, foreign literary influences, and the variable socio-cultural needs of Russian society. The collective picture that emerges is a multi-colored one that exhibits some striking differences between some authors. In some cases, mainly in journalism, philo-Semitic tendencies (prompted by Enlightenment ideas or religious attitudes) occasionally broke through. In a word, consensus on this topic has often eroded—but despite the many layers of opinion, a consensus remains on the basis of an ancient tradition that has survived.

Unlike Bryan Cheyette, who in his book devoted to the Jewish theme in liberal English literature left out the most odious “literary anti-Semites”—Ezra Pound and Wyndham Lewis¹⁷—I have endeavored to make my list as complete as possible. The truth is that in the Russian poetry and fiction of the Romantic era (in significant distinction to journalism of the period) the “non-anti-Semites” are rather rare, and here we see no appreciable gap between the elite and their imitators that would justify discrimination toward the latter. In any case, the Jewish theme in Russia under Nikolai I was not so rich with names as to afford us the luxury of being selective. The impetus for attempting to be as thorough as possible in creating this collection of all available material came from Louis Harap’s book on the image of the Jews in American literature,¹⁸ Florian Krobb’s *A Beautiful*

¹⁷ Bryan Cheyette, *Construction of “The Jew” in English Literature and Society: Racial Representations, 1875–1945* (Cambridge, 1993), xii.

¹⁸ Louis Harap, *The Image of the Jew in American Literature* (Philadelphia, 1974, 1978).

Jewess,¹⁹ which encompasses 70 literary compositions written in German over several centuries, and John Klier's monograph on the Jewish topic in the Russia of Alexander II.²⁰ As for the evolution of the Jewish topic under corresponding German conditions, the most useful resources for me were research by Wolf-Daniel Hartwich on the anti-Semitism of German Romantics²¹ and a very extensive work by Ritchie Robertson analyzing the Jewish question in German literature over a period of almost 200 years.²²

How comprehensive is the material collected herein? My intention has been that it be as comprehensive as possible—with respect to the period encompassing the mid-1820s to the beginning of the 1840s. Texts from periods preceding or following this one were used selectively, with preference given to those that are the most representative (this applies as well to the city *Vedomosti* newspapers). I should also specify that opposing voices from the Jewish side were presented only when they were reflected in the pages of Russian publications.

In addition to a great number of books, I examined a large body of Russian literary and society periodicals, a significant number of religious and university publications, and almost all of the almanacs that were published during this period in the Russian Empire.²³ Upon completion of the Russian edition I was able to find a number of texts that broadened and added precision to the subject at hand. They are all reflected in some form within this book, which in this respect is much more complete than the previous Russian version.

Long quotes, especially of poetry or stylistically archaic passages that are difficult to translate precisely, have at times been paraphrased slightly. As in the Russian edition, here too almost all of the included texts' censorship

¹⁹ Florian Krobb, *Die schöne Jüdin: jüdische Frauengestalten in der deutschsprachigen Erzählliteratur vom 17. Jahrhundert bis zum Ersten Weltkrieg* (Tübingen, 1993).

²⁰ John Klier, *Imperial Russia's Jewish Question, 1855–1881* (Cambridge, 1995).

²¹ Wolf-Daniel Hartwich, *Romantischer Antisemitismus: Von Klopstock bis Richard Wagner* (Göttingen, 2005).

²² Ritchie Robertson, *The "Jewish Question" in German Literature, 1749–1939: Emancipation and Its Discontents* (Oxford, 1999).

²³ A rather disappointing source is *Sistematičeskii ukazatel' literatury o evreiaĭkh na russkom iazyke so vremeni vvedeniia grazhdanskogo shrifta (1709) po dekabr' 1889 goda* (compiled by Bramson L., Brutskus Iu., et al.) (St. Petersburg, 1893). Most of the information collected here covers the years of reform and the decades that followed (there is also some valuable information on the 18th to the beginning of the 19th century), but the representation of the Nikolaevan period is meager and fragmentary. Most of those gaps have been filled by A. Rogachevskii: "Evreiskaia tema v russkoi literature pervoi poloviny XIX v. Bibliograficheskie zametki." *Vestnik Evreiskogo universiteta*, 1992, no. 1:232–36.

background (which, judging from Elyashevich's book and Klier's article on the subsequent period, requires careful analysis)²⁴ remains outside the scope of this study. Nevertheless, it seems to me that the volume of material employed here itself carries "statistical weight."

²⁴ John Klier, "1855–1894 Censorship of the Press in Russian and the Jewish Question," *Jewish Social Studies* 47, no. 3/4 (1986): 257–68.

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

Throughout the course of this book, the Russian word *zhid* and most of its permutations (i.e., *zhidovin*, the somewhat less-flattering appellative *zhidok*, the adjectival forms *zhidovskii*, *zhidovskaia*, etc.) have been rendered as either “Yid” or “Jew/Jewish.” The Russian term is very “slippery”: depending on the context, it may be intended in a sharply pejorative sense, or it can verge on synonymy with the proper Russian term for “Jew,” *evrei* (literally, “Hebrew”). For this reason, I have used both terms to translate forms of “zhid”: “Yid” where the original appeared pejorative or condescending, and “Jew” or “Jewish” where the context appeared neutral or even positive. Also, for sake of consistency, the terms *otechestvo* and *otchizna* (both properly denoting “fatherland”), like the term *rodina*, have been rendered throughout, when referring to Russia or Israel, as “motherland” (consistent with the prevalent native conception among Russians and Jews) and occasionally as “homeland.” The exceptions to this are where *otechestvo* refers to Germany (per the dominant German notion of the *Vaterland*) and in the journal titles *Notes of the Fatherland* (for *Otechestvennye zapiski*) and *Son of the Fatherland* (for *Syn otechestva*).

As in the case of these latter two, the English titles of Russian serial publications generally follow those presented in the *Handbook of Russian Literature*, ed. V. Terras (New Haven, 1985), xv–xvii. The titles of books, poems, plays, etc. also generally follow those supplied in the *Handbook*—or, if unattested therein, those supplied in the *Reference Guide to Russian Literature*, ed. N. Cornwell and N. Christian (London, 1998). Transliteration of Hebrew follows, for the most part, the general-purpose style given in *The SBL Handbook of Style*, ed. P. H. Alexander et al. (Peabody, Mass., 1999), §5.1.2.

Among the more frequently cited serial publications, I have employed the abbreviations *LfR* for *Library for Reading* (*Biblioteka dlia chteniia*) and *JMPE* for *Journal of the Ministry of Public Education* (*Zhurnal ministerstva narodnogo prosveshcheniia*).

Citations from the Bible are given according to the Revised Standard Version.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

The Apostle Paul's doctrine of replacing "the Law of Moses" with the Christian gospel, and the Jewish people themselves with the Church, largely rested upon a metaphorical interpretation of several biblical verses concerning the revelation at Sinai:

When Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets of the Testimony in his hands, he was not aware that his face was radiant because he had spoken with the LORD. When Aaron and all the Israelites saw Moses, his face was radiant, and they were afraid to come near him. . . . Afterward all the Israelites came near him, and he gave them all the commands the LORD had given him on Mount Sinai. When Moses finished speaking to them, he put a veil over his face. But whenever he entered the LORD's presence to speak with him, he removed the veil until he came out. And when he came out and told the Israelites what he had been commanded, they saw that his face was radiant. Then Moses would put the veil back over his face until he went in to speak with the LORD (Exod 34:29–30, 32–35).

As is well known, Paul reinterprets this passage by manipulating it with a very clever and multidimensional rhetorical move. In his Second Letter to the Corinthians he says that Christ

made us competent as ministers of a new covenant—not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. Now if the ministry that brought death, which was engraved in letters on stone, came with glory, so that the Israelites could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of its glory, fading though it was, will not the ministry of the Spirit be even more glorious? . . . And if what was fading away came with glory, how much greater is the glory of that which lasts! Therefore, since we have such a hope, we are very bold. We are not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face to keep the Israelites from gazing at it while the radiance was fading away. But their minds were made dull, for to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. It has not been removed, because only in Christ is it taken away. Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts. But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away (2 Cor 3:6–8, 11–15).

Yet something entirely different emerges from the above-quoted passage from the book of Exodus. Moses *removed* the veil precisely when he *interpreted the Torah*—those same "letters" to which Paul refers—for the sons of Israel (and when he stood before God). In other words, he declared the Truth with an unveiled face; and he *covered* his face precisely at the moment

when he fell silent after delivering the “letters” that he had received from God: “When Moses finished speaking to them, he put a veil over his face” (Exod 34:33).

In contrast, Paul's version has Moses covering his face with a veil in order to hide from the Jews the end of what was “fading away” (literally, the limits of “this world,” but in a figurative sense, its dissolution as anticipated by the apostle) and the beginning of eternity, the Absolute, reflected in Moses's face. Playing off of this markedly ambiguous phrase, Paul immediately reminds the reader that “the glory” (i.e., the radiance) reflected in Moses's face was a “fading” (or transient) phenomenon. This is why in the next phrase—“And if what was fading away came with glory, how much greater is the glory of that which lasts!”—both the literal and figurative meanings of “fading away” are sophisticatedly woven into a third: that which is “fading” or transient here serves to point to the former, obsolete (i.e., Mosaic) Covenant, whereas “that which lasts” becomes the New Covenant, which is now granted a monopoly for eternity (so also in Rom 10:4 Paul says “for Christ is the end of the Law”).

In this brilliant manipulation the veil of Moses is identified with the Torah itself, and the Torah is identified as a collection of deadly letters, engraved on dead stone and counterposed to “the Spirit.” In other words, in this new negative sense the veil of Moses, as well as the Torah itself, is depicted as hiding from the Jews the light of Christ. Yet at the same time these same “deadly letters” appear as before in a halo of “glory”—albeit a temporary and fading one, which will have to yield its place to the radiance of eternal truth. Substitutions of this kind form the entire basis of the Church's relationship to Jewish Scripture and, in the final analysis, to the people of Israel. On the one hand the New Testament is a direct *continuation* of the Old Testament, but on the other hand it also decisively *does away* with it.

Paul's interpretation predetermined the transmission of Jewish images within the church tradition and as a result exercised considerable influence on the secular culture of the new era. The veil of Moses, removed only by Christ, was compared with the curtain in the Jewish temple, which according to Matthew 27:51 was torn at the moment of the Crucifixion. To those who still follow the Law of Moses that curtain remains whole, or the veil has not been lifted; it still eclipses their gaze and “covers their hearts.” Based on this allegory,¹ the Synagogue was personified in Medieval art as

¹ To which is devoted a vast art-historical literature of psychoanalytical speculation. See, for example, B. M. Britt, “Concealment, Revelation, and Gender: The Veil of Moses in the

a woman with a band over her eyes; the Jewish people were viewed as a nation of the blind.

But like all visual metaphors of this kind, this one is ambivalent and therefore open to other interpretations. The veil, which according to Paul hid the Christian Truth from the Jews, also safely obscured their own image from Christian eyes. Russian culture of the 19th century was no exception to the general rule of ignorance concerning the Jewish people. This work is dedicated to understanding how “the Jewish question” was framed during one of the most fateful stages in Russia’s history.

Bible and in Christian Art,” in *Rewriting Moses: The Narrative Eclipse of the Text* (Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 402) (London, 2004), 82–115.

CHAPTER ONE

THE RELIGIOUS-HISTORICAL CONTEXT

A Parade of Phantoms

In Russia the Jewish theme is not only connected with the Holy Scriptures, it is inseparable from them. In the first place, Russian Orthodox exegesis, like Catholic exegesis, requires one to view the Old Testament primarily as a compilation of Christological prophecies, allegories, and omens. The topics and the events of the text are also viewed as foreshadowings and prototypes of evangelical stories and Christian truths (e.g., the Exodus from Egypt represents triumph over passions; Abel, Isaac, Moses, and Joseph in the pit or prison are prototypes of Christ, etc.). Here is a far-from-complete list of “fore-images” of the Mother of God found in the Old Testament by Irenaeus, John Chrysostom, Epiphanius, and other Church Fathers: the uncultivated land in Genesis 2; the Garden of Eden; the foremother Eve; Noah’s ark and the dove (even though the same ark is also viewed as a prototype of the future Church); the foremother Sarah; Jacob’s ladder; the burning bush; the pillar of cloud that led the Jews out of Egypt; Aaron’s rod; mount Horeb’s stone giving forth water; the tabernacle and the Temple of Jerusalem; the censer and its lid; the Red Sea (partly because Mary is “the sea that conceptually drowned Pharaoh”); Gideon’s fleece; the “emperor’s throne” (the throne of Solomon); and the furnace into which Daniel was cast.¹ Recognizing the positive personal qualities of some Old Testament heroes, the Church Fathers recast them in a new and edifying light by identifying them as prototypes of Christian moral ideals; thus: “Saint Gregory said that in the patriarchs one can see perfect embodiments of all the virtues. Abel teaches us about innocence; Enoch—purity of heart; Noah—holding firm to the truth; Abraham—total obedience; Isaac—purity of married life; Jacob—constant forbearance

¹ *Skazaniia o zemnoi zhizni Presviatoi Bogoroditsy* (Moscow, 1904), 20–35.

under duress; Joseph—forgiveness; Moses—gentle treatment of rebels; Job—f forbearance in the face of the greatest difficulties.”²

The potentially “providential” aspects of situations and figures in the Old Testament included negative ones, as can be seen in the examples of those that anticipate the deicide. Among these we must include first and foremost the patriarch Judah—the forefather of the Jewish people (or, to be exact, the surviving tribe), by whose advice his brother Joseph was sold into slavery for only 20 pieces of silver. With this act Judah became a prototype of Judas Iscariot, and the latter, in turn, became a negative symbol of Judaism as a whole. (The figure of Joseph also carried a negative charge in this anti-Semitic mythology: his martyrdom was coupled with his cruelty as a ruler who robbed and enslaved the people of Egypt.)

In any event, such interpretations have turned the living, full-blooded history of the Jewish people into a parade of phantoms sleep-walking toward an unknown goal. This is how, for example, Metropolitan Filaret of Moscow interprets the story of Balaam, who blessed the people of Israel against his will and compared Israel to a sleeping lion and lioness (Num 24:5–6, 9): “In (the image of) the sleeping Lion, the King of the animal world, whom no one is allowed to disturb, Balaam saw Christ, King of Heaven and Earth, The Son of God, who slept the sleep of death and Whom no one had the power to resurrect but He Himself, by His divine power” (Filaret does not say a word about the lioness); and “in (the image of) the nation of Israel, visible to mortal eyes, the prophet was given a vision of the spirit of the Church of God and Christ, so it is not surprising that he describes its beauty with such delight.”³

The lay reader was of course quite familiar, from secular periodicals, with this system of church “decoding.” For example, *LfR*, in reviewing “Letters concerning Eastern Catholic Church Worship” (St. Petersburg, 1838), recounts in detail many allegorical interpretations: “The Church, during the three weeks before Lent, sets on our lips a lament of the Babylonian captives which penetrates the heart with its touching melody and longing for home.” But there is no mention of the Jews: “Babylon is a hodgepodge and an image of a mixture of the many passions and sins that prevail

² Quoted from a newspaper review of the book *Sviashchennaia istoriia Vetkhogo i Novogo Zaveta . . . s ob’iasneniiami, vziatymi iz Sviash. Pisaniia i skazanii Sv. Otsov* (St. Petersburg, 1839): *Severnaia pchela*, 1840, no. 81.

³ “Slovo po osviiashchenii khrama Sviatitelia Nikolaia, chto v Tolmachakh,” Nov. 25 1834, spoken by the member of the Synod, Metropolitan Filaret of Moscow,” *Khristianskoe chtenie*, 1835, part 1:62.

in the world and captivate and enslave the inattentive soul. Jerusalem, the City of Peace [a widespread—and mistaken—etymology of the word ‘Yerushalayim’—M.W.], represents the condition of the soul, gathered back from dispersion and having turned back to God—the world of the sinless or those cleansed by a repentant conscience.” “After a horrifying picture of the flood of our lusts,” God, through the voice of the Church, is calling “the repentant soul (...) out of the pagan land of Haran, from its sins, into the Promised Land of eternity, and commanding it to become a stranger in the world, as Abraham was”—and so on, following the same allegorical method and replete with references to “Judaic intrigues and Judas’s treachery.”⁴

In his discussion of the nature of ancient Hebrew poetry, Nadezhdin—a critic who received a theological education—states: “Jesus Christ lies at the foundation of the Old Testament, which was a foreshadowing of Him. (...) The one and only foundation of Hebrew poetry was faith in the coming Messiah; this is why it is primarily prophetic in character.”⁵ Such “pre-figurative” approaches within Russian literature, including Nadezhdin’s, often clash with aesthetic theories, Orientalist pursuits, and the desire to create a self-sufficient Jewish exotic. It is true that the ancient Jews were credited invariably with faith in one God, but as we will see, the image of this faith underwent a negative revision in Romanticism that was rooted in the Christian tradition.

According to this tradition, after the birth of Christ the very existence of the Jews had lost any positive meaning, for the promised Messiah had already arrived, and the Old Testament “preface” had now given way to evangelical revelation. “Ancient” Israel had given way to the “New” Israel, the Universal Church. (Russian patriotism has introduced some significant variations to this formula.) In other words, the “Eternal Jew,” however entertaining his historical fate might have been, remained a notorious anachronism whose only good use was to prove the truth of the Holy Scripture—as well as to serve as a living handbook to Church history and proof of its decisive victory over the Synagogue. Even in the review of a rather pro-Jewish book by J.-B. Capefigue, *Filosoficheskaiia istoriia iudeev ot upadka doma Makkaveev do nashego vremeni* (St. Petersburg, 1837),⁶ the

⁴ *Biblioteka dlia chteniia*, 1838, 27:57–58.

⁵ N. Nadezhdin, “Ne dlia g. Shevyreva, a dlia chitatelei. Poslednee slovo ob ‘Istoriia poezii,’” *Teleskop*, 1836, pt. 34, no. 11:427.

⁶ In the original: *Histoire philosophique des Juifs, depuis la décadence des Machabées jusqu’à nos jours* (Paris, 1834).

primary value of the Jewish faith is seen in the fact that “it is destined to be a living witness of Christian virtue and faith.”⁷

The Church Dispute with Judaism

We might well ask why the majority of the Jewish people ignored the prototypical meaning of their own books and the exhortations of their prophets by denying, and even crucifying at the hands of the Romans, the “Messiah” who had come. According to accepted belief, the cause was national pride (i.e., the belief in their immutable status as the chosen people), stubborn materialism (the “golden calf”), and a fateful worldliness that, according to Apostle Paul, caused the Jewish people to wallow in pharisaical literalism, unable to understand the sacral, spiritual, and purely visionary essence of Scripture, which had prepared salvation for all mankind. Over time something was added to the “veil of Moses” that covered Jewish sight: a densely-textured cloth of rabbinical interpretations. “The main reason that makes arguing with Jews about faith so difficult is their sensual way of thinking and inability to rise up to the purity of understanding that reveals the absurdity of Talmudic faith and the superiority of Christianity”—this lament was sounded in a *JMPE* article in 1838. The article itself—“On Judaism”—begins with the following words: “Here, by the term Judaism, we mean not the ancient, pure, and providential religion that was given to the Jewish nation through Moses and the Prophets by God Himself, and which became the foundation and root for Christianity, but the dark, impure, and pitiful confession of faith invented by the Jews for themselves as they moved away from the true meaning of the divinely inspired Scripture.”⁸

The Nikolaevan era already boasted a special ecclesiastical-polemical literature on this particular subject, although it was not very comprehensive: it mostly consisted of translations and writings inherited from the 18th or beginning of the 19th century. In 1838 *JMPE* gave it this preliminary summary: “There is very little written about Judaism or against the Jews, even though there are enough reasons for such a subject—in addition to the fact that we have so many Jews, and Judaism on many occasions has

⁷ In *Severnaia pchela*, 1837, no. 83.

⁸ *ZhMNP*, 1838, pt. 19, no. 7:503, 505. On the Polish and *Maskil* sources of these views see Iu. Gessen, op. cit., 226–27.

been the reason for ignorant schisms. Our entire literature on this subject consists of four books: (1) *The Golden Book of Rabbi Samuel*, which does quite a good job of presenting the unfortunate condition of today's Jews as a state of exile for their rejection of Messiah; (2) *The Cry of the Judean Daughter*, an ironic work whose goal is to exonerate the Jews of the terrible suspicion that they had used the blood of martyred Christian babies for a superstitious rite of some kind; (3) *Christian Conversations with a Jewish Woman on the Coming of the True Messiah*,⁹ which is the best of the books, but still insufficient; and, finally, (4) the recently published *A Refined Path to Understanding the True Faith*, in which one of the converted rabbis [i.e., O. Temkin—M.W.] wonderfully shatters Jewish faith in the Talmud by uncovering the controversies and absurdity of the latter."¹⁰

It is worth making some corrections and additions to the list.¹¹

The Golden Book, first translated in 1778,¹² dates back to the 11th century, in light of which its connection to the condition of "today's" Jews appears questionable. In 1830 a French translation was also published in Kiev under the title *An Addendum to the Book by Rabbi Samuel, in Response to the Jewish Objection that New Testament Writers Attributed to Jesus Christ Old Testament Prophecies That Had Nothing to Do with Him*.

In 1772, in Pochaev Lavra in Volhynia, an anonymous Polish book translated into Church Slavonic was published and became the foundation for

⁹ This is a clear misprint; it should be: *A Christian Conversation with a Jew on the Coming of the True Messiah, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, from the Beginning of the World to the Promised People*.

¹⁰ "On Judaism," op. cit., 507. The full title of the last book is *Put', ochishchennyi k poznaniiu istinnoi very. Sobrannyi iz knig sviashchennykh, iz tolkovanii talmudicheskikh i iz knig kabbalisticheskikh odnim iz evreev, po imeni Osherom Temkinym, dlia ispravleniia synov che-lovecheskikh* (St. Petersburg, 1835). The author, however, was not a rabbi, but rather a small merchant from Mogilev (on the Dnieper). He was baptized in 1832 and, according to the laws of that time and despite the book's subtitle, was no longer considered Jewish when this compilation was published; see *The Jewish Encyclopedia* 14:798.

¹¹ In the post-reform period, in addition to the flood of secular anti-Semitic works (such as the well-known book by Ia. Brafman), we should add a work by the priest I. Pravikov, *Uchenie Vekhogo Zaveta o pravoslavnoi Troitse (v oblichenie i vrazumlenie iudeev). Poleznoe i vsiakomu veruiushchemu* (Kiev, 1862), as well as multitudes of missionary leaflets by the convert A. Alekseev (Wolf Nahlas): "Torzhestvo khristianskogo ucheniia nad ucheniem talmuda, ili Dushepoleznyi razgovor s iudeem o prishestvii Messii" (St. Petersburg, 1859); "Bogosluzheniia, prazdniki i religioznye obriady nyneshnikh evreev" (Novgorod, 1861; reissued in 1865); "Obshchestvennaia zhizn' evreev, ikh nravy, obychai i predrassudki, s prilozheniem biografii avtora" (Novgorod, 1868); and similar texts.

¹² Full title: "Zlatoe sochinenie Samuila Marokkanskogo, ravvina iudeiskogo, zakliuchaiushcheesia v pis'makh k Isaaku, ravvinu Kordubskommu, v oblichenie iudeiskogo zab-luzhdeniia," trans. [into Russian] from Latin by the hieromonk Valaam (Glovatsky). Latter editions: St. Petersburg, 1782, 1786, 1827, 1837.

accusations of blood libel and various other judophobic slurs in Russia: *Talmudic Fables, Received from the Jews Themselves and Disclosed through the New Heresy of the Sabbatai-Tseivians* [i.e., Sabbateans—M.W.], or *Anti-Talmudists*. After the incorporation of Volhynia into Russia the book was republished there in 1794,¹³ but before that in 1787 in Petersburg, according to Burmistrov, a translation from Polish was published in Russian under the title *Jewish Rites Observed Monthly by the Sabbatai-Tseivians*. Then in 1800 *The Rites* were published again in Smolensk.¹⁴

The “ironic” book by Leib Nevakhovich *The Cry of the Judean Daughter*, published in 1803, is not an anti-Jewish tract, but rather an apology for the Jews written in a sentimental-enlightened (*Maskilim*) spirit and directed against Polish innuendos. But only three years after this “Cry” Nevakhovich converted to Christianity, becoming a Lutheran. (Many Jews preferred Lutheranism to Orthodoxy because it eschewed icon-painting and various forms of “idolatry.”)

Other polemical and missionary writings published in Russia at the beginning of the 19th century were: *A Letter from Rabbi Ishmael to Moses, the Law Giver, Written at the Time when Christ the Savior Died on the Cross* (St. Petersburg, 1804); *Jewish Letters to Voltaire, with Commentaries by Abbot Denh*, translated from French by V. Smirnov and I. Snegirev in 6 parts (Moscow, 1808–17); *Rabbi Assa’s Messiah, or An Indictment of the Jews with Regard to Religion and Morals, Made with the Use of Reason and Faith*, translated from German by A. Bazhenov (Moscow, 1809).

In 1829 and again in 1836 a work was republished in Moscow titled *A Conversation of Justin the Martyr and Philosopher with Tryphon the Hebrew on the Truth of Orthodox Law, Written to M. Pompei*, first translated from the Greek in 1797 in St. Petersburg. In 1846 in Vilnius a Haskala essay by Abram Solomonov was published, entitled *Thoughts of an Israelite*, and three years later a book by the archimandrite of Israel entitled *A Survey of False Religions: Pagan, Neo-Jewish, and Mohammedan*. The following

¹³ Gessen, op. cit., 198–99.

¹⁴ See Gessen, *ibid.*, 101–2 (here see G. R. Derzhavin’s contribution toward disseminating the rumor of a blood libel). K. Burmistrov, with a reference to the famous “Jewish Rage” by G. Pikulsky (where the text is used), presumably traces the book to Jan Serafimovich, a Polish convert of the beginning of 18th century. See K. Burmistrov, “‘Basni Talmudovy, ot samikh zhidov uznannye’: K genealogii iudofobskikh nastroenii kontsa XVIII–nachala XIX v.,” *Prazdnik, obriad, ritual slavianskoi i evreiskoi kul’turnoi traditsii*, 362–72 (Moscow, 2004). See also in the same collection (p. 373) the translation—edited and commented on by V. Mochalova—of an anonymous Polish text from the 18th century that “circulated among Christians and reflected an understanding of Jewish Holidays.”

works are dedicated to typological-allegorical interpretations of the Old Testament: *A Short Reference Guide to Readings of the Old and New Testaments* by the archimandrite Ambrose (Serebrennikov) (Moscow, 1826); *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis* (St. Petersburg, 1816); and *An Outline of Biblical Church History* by Metropolitan Filaret of Moscow (Drozdov), which was published multiple times. See also Portuis, Bishop of London, *A Short Survey of Basic Arguments and Testimonies, Irrefutably Affirming the Truth and Divine Origin of Christian Revelation* (St. Petersburg, 1834) and *A Commentary on Song of Songs by the Blessed St. Theodoret, bishop of Cyrrhus* (Moscow, 1840).¹⁵ Much time was given to the downfall of Judaism by the magazine *Christian Readings*,¹⁶ and in 1835 *JMPE* favorably retold for its bureaucratic flock an article published one year earlier, in September of 1834, entitled “A View of Today’s Jews”:

What they hold in their hands is an empty shell that has long been missing its contents. Where is their Temple? Where is their priesthood? Where is the sacrifice? Without a Temple, priesthood, and sacrifices, what kind of religion is it? . . . Today’s Jews do not understand the clearest [i.e., “typological”—M.W.] passages of the Scripture, they deny their fathers’ traditions, neglect the interpretations of the ancient teachers of Israel, and choose to follow the teachings of the later rabbis, most of whom have insufficient knowledge.¹⁷

The mere existence of Jewish biblical exegesis, supplemented by an enormous body of rabbinical texts—the Talmud first and foremost—was greeted with anxiety and extreme irritation not only on the part of Christian tradition, but also by its secular adherents.¹⁸ (As for the mystical

¹⁵ See also *Sto chetyre istorii Vekhogo i Novogo Zaveta, In a New Two-part Edition, According to the Gibner System*, compiled P. Ianovskii, corrected and improved by the Censor of Spiritual Books, Archpriest S. Platonov (St. Petersburg, 1839). There were other rewritings of Old Testament books, including the ones interpreted through Catholic doctrine, as well as popular versions—such as the one compiled by the priest Krasnopevtsev, *Bibleiskaia istoriia v pol’zu detei*.

¹⁶ “Rassuzhdenie protiv iudeev i iazychnikov o tom, chto Iisus Khristos est’ istinnyi Bog,” *Khristianskoe chtenie*, 1832, no. 47; “Oblichenie Sviatomuchenika Ippolita na iudeev,” idem, 1841, pt. 2; “O religii patriarkhal’noi,” idem, 1847, pt. 2; etc. The journal also supplied detailed descriptions of different Old Testament statutes that were interpreted in the same typological light, and its “Voskresnoe chtenie” (“Sunday Reading”) devoted a great deal of attention to the topic of rituals.

¹⁷ A. Kraevskii, “Obozrenie russkikh gazet i zhurnalov za vtoruiu polovinu 1834 goda,” *ZhMNP*, 1835, pt. 6, no. 5:304–5.

¹⁸ On the medieval genesis of this cautious antagonism, see especially Sander Gilman, who points out that, according to such a view, “Not only do Jews speak differently from Christians but they think differently. The Talmud is taken over and over again as the exemplary text where the blindness of the Jews is manifested.” Taking Scripture literally, “they eschew allegory if it permits them to see prefigurations of Christianity in the Old

Kabbalah literature, Russian Romantics held a different attitude—one more fearful and respectful.) The only comfort was found in the fact that the Talmud was written in Aramaic and not in the Holy Language (i.e., Hebrew), which, as it was believed, the Jews had forever lost as a living means of communication. On the subject of the loss of Hebrew, Nadezhdin wrote: “The ancient word written in Hebrew died on the lips of the Jews, and the language itself left them. . . . In its place the Greek language, the medium of the New Testament, was chosen by Providence to take the place of the Jewish (language). . . . Hebrew was a national language; Greek by that time had become the language of the world.”¹⁹

The carefully emphasized squalor and wretchedness of the main body of contemporary Jewry in both Romantic literature and beyond appeared to testify as convincingly to the Christian truth as to the lifelessness of the State of Israel, which had permanently become the “Holy Sepulcher”—a collection of graves and ruins, a petrified repository of Christian miracles. In this respect I would cite the very characteristic tirade of Evgeny Grebenka, the hero of whose story “Jerusalem” describes the desolation of the Holy Land and summarizes with great pleasure: “Jesus Christ predicted the destruction of Jerusalem—and it came true. The Church Fathers constantly pointed to the dispersion of the Jews as living proof of the validity of His teaching and prophecies.”²⁰

Going back to the very origins of Russian literature is the “Sermon on Law and Grace,” by Metropolitan Hilarion of Kiev (11th century), fully built upon a comparison of both Testaments—naturally in favor of the New. This faith in the eternal superiority of the New Testament over the Old—in the “Truth” over its “shadow”—not only took hold throughout Russian culture, but in some cases also took the form of a total rejection of the Jewish Bible. This animosity toward the Bible, occasionally reminiscent of the denial of the Jewish God in the Manichean heresy, was supported by the Bogomil impulses of Eastern Christianity: Orthodoxy came to Rus from the Balkans, which at the turn of the first and second millennia were consumed with the Bogomil movement, whose origin was Manichean. These inclinations, as is very well known, already gained prominence in one of the most important literary monuments of medieval Orthodoxy—the Kiev-Pechersk Patericon—specifically, in the “Tale

Testament.” (Sander L. Gilman, *Jewish Self-Hatred: Anti-Semitism and the Hidden Language of the Jews* [Baltimore, 1986], 24–25).

¹⁹ N. Nadezhdin, in the above-mentioned essay, p. 428.

²⁰ E. P. Grebenka, *Tvori: U tr'okh tomakh*. (Kiev, 1981), 3:449.

of Nikita the Hermit" (where the demon who deceived the hermit gave him thorough knowledge of the Old Testament and forced him to forget the New). The truth is that with all of its typological meaning, the Old Testament remained an intrinsically Jewish book, in many respects diverging dramatically from the Gospels. For this reason it was initially considered to be a dangerous text in Russia, forbidden to secular readers in whom it could—and did—awaken heretical thinking.

At the same time, a number of Old Testament stories such as the Creation; the stories of Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, the Flood, and the misfortunes of Joseph and Jonah; the legends of David and Solomon; the tragedy of Job—had always had a great appeal for the Russian reader. This appeal was reinforced during the period of secularization: it is enough just to mention the multitude of spiritual odes of that time, along with the many versions of the ever-popular Psalter, with its abundant layers of allusion. Naturally, in its search for majestic precedents and analogies, Russian imperial-patriotic rhetoric much more often appealed to the Lord of Sabaoth ("Hosts") than to Christ, finding its inspiration in the seemingly "abolished" Old Testament rather than in the Gospels, which did not suit the needs of the government because of their principled focus on replacing earthly kingdoms with the Kingdom of Heaven. In his review of the Russian edition of my book, Vadim Parsamov noted that this focus on Sabaoth developed in Russian monarchist rhetoric during the 15th century, "when Ivan the Terrible's namesake, his grandfather Ivan III Vasilievich, had already earned the sobriquet 'the Terrible.'"²¹ This Old Testament tradition is the origin of Russia's cultural tendency to draw analogies between its tsars and ancient biblical heroes (e.g., Peter the Great and such ancient Jewish heroes as Moses, Joshua, Samson, David, and others). This is also the source of Russian militarism's sacred pathos, which was on display during the Napoleonic wars, when the Gospels' commandment to love one's enemies was less compelling than during times of peace, and the only part of the New Testament that received any emphasis was the Apocalypse. Out of this background (albeit with some adjustments, reflecting the specific religious context during Alexander's time) Russia's first hymn to the Russian Empire arose: "Kol' slaven nash Gospod' v Sione" (How glorious our Lord in Zion . . .).

The typological potential of the Jewish Scriptures—as interpreted within the framework of strictly New Testament associations—was constantly

²¹ *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie*, 2008, no. 91.

projected onto the realities of Russian life.²² Not long before the period on which we are focused here, the following works appeared: the drama *Deborah* by A. A. Shakhovskoi (1810), and *The Maccabees* by P. A. Korsakov (staged in 1813 and published in 1815).²³ Both fully projected biblical Jewish history onto the image of Orthodox Russia as the New Israel (which was later taken up by the doctrine of “Official Nationality”). Touching on this topic in a book on Pushkin, Boris Gasparov reminds us that the defeat of Napoleon “was portrayed as the fall of Babylon and the victory of Israel; this image found support in the Russian cultural consciousness in the belief in a Messianic aura surrounding Moscow as the New Rome or New Jerusalem. . . . The real-life basis for this image was the enemy’s brief victory—the capture and destruction of the Holy city—followed by its miraculous liberation. This parallel allowed for the identification of Moscow with Jerusalem, and of Paris with ‘Babylon’ ”²⁴

In truth, pious patriots in other countries also eagerly identified their motherlands with Israel, but in general none went so far as to connect this sacral metaphor to a nationalized image of the Lord Himself: no one ever spoke of a special “French” or “American” God, as was common practice in Russia, where the “Russian God” was seen as the official protector and patron of the Empire.²⁵ Thus, on the occasion of Russia’s successful expulsion of Napoleon, Glinka wrote “A Song of Gratitude to God, Redeemer of Russia” with the biblical epigraph: “The Lord of Hosts is with us; the God

²² Such an expanded interpretation was possible thanks to the traditional conviction that the Bible’s historical material about the Jews (including the New Testament texts) prefigures the story of the fate of mankind on earth. Thus “the Second Song of Moses contains insights into the future, directly related to the history of the Jews and indirectly to the history of all mankind. The same double meaning is seen in all the visions of the prophets, even in the last word of the Savior concerning the destruction of Jerusalem—which all Church teachers unanimously interpret as a prophetic description of the end of the world” (N. Nadezhdin, [Retsenziia na ‘Istoriiu poezii’ S. Shevyreva], *Teleskop*, 1836, pt. 31, no. 4:690).

²³ Significantly, from the standpoint of Russian theater itself, these works were already somewhat of an anachronism: as M. Odessky noted at the time, “the golden age of biblical pageants (the last third of the 17th to the first quarter of the 18th century) has long since passed” (M. Odesskii, “Ukroshchennyi messianizm: ‘Ruf’ V. V. Izmailova—bibleiskaia intsenirovka dlia detskogo teatra,” *Quadrivium: K 70-letiiu prof. V. Moskovicha*. [Jerusalem, 2006], 147).

²⁴ B. M. Gasparov, *Poeticheskiĭ iazyk Pushkina kak fakt istorii russkogo literaturnogo iazyka* (St. Petersburg, 1999), 94. Parsamov points out the pragmatic role of ancient Kiev as the “New Jerusalem” (Parsamov, *ibid.*).

²⁵ On how this cliché was parodied in Russian poetry of the 1820s, see B. M. Gasparov, *ibid.*, 98. To some extent Poland is an exception here in that nationalists at the time compared their nation to a crucified Christ.

of Jacob is our defender.” This image of Jacob—i.e., Israel—is transferred triumphantly to Russia (now God’s chosen people), and the biblical “God of Hosts”—i.e., (the God of) Sabaoth—is presented as the national deity: “the God of Jacob is the God of Russia.”²⁶

Thus the Jews, according to Christian dogma, forever lost their right to monopolize the Old Testament and its interpretation: this right now went to the Church. In accordance with the medieval conception, the Jews had gone from being the people of the Bible to being the people of the Talmud; the Russian Empire had inherited the Old Testament virtues of the Israelites.

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The appearance of such compositions should be attributed to the ideological shifts that took place during Alexander’s time, which was caught up in a desire to realize religious models that themselves contradicted the era’s Enlightenment impulses. At first the Enlightenment attitude dominated. In keeping with it, Alexander began dealing right away with his Jewish subjects, intending, in the German-Austrian manner, to reform their daily life, instilling in them an appreciation for science, agriculture, and what he and his associates considered to be other socially useful activities (the statute of the year 1804).²⁷

Theosophical pressure that would dominate much later was never absent from Russian society, even in the years of State Enlightenment. By the last quarter of the 18th century in Russian Masonic circles a strong pull began to develop toward Christianized Kabbalah and related mystical traditions.²⁸ We see it reflected clearly in the works of M. Kheraskov and

²⁶ See “Rifma, obrashchennaia k Bogu: Antologiiia russkoi molitvennoi poezii” chap. 3, *Poeticheskie molitvy XIX veka* (St. Petersburg, 2005), 32–33.

²⁷ See in full John Klier, *Russia Gathers her Jews*, 116–43 (chap. 5: “A Phantom in the Air: The Statute of 1804”).

²⁸ For specifics see K. Burmistrov and M. Endel, “Kabbalah in Russian Masonry: Some Preliminary Observations,” *Kabbalah: Journal for the Study of Jewish Mystical Texts* 4 (1999): 9–59; M. Endel, “Ob odnom kabbalisticheskom kodekse v russkoi masonskoi literature,” *Tirosh: Trudy po iudaike* 4 (2000): 57–66; K. Burmistrov, “Kabbalisticheskaia ekzegetika i khristianskaia dogmatika: evreiskie misticheskie kontseptsii v uchenii russkikh masonov kontsa XVIII veka,” *Solnechnoe spletenie* 18–19 (Jerusalem, 2001): 150–57; M. Endel, “Original’nye kabbalisticheskie kontseptsii v masonskom kodekse ‘O sfirot’ (kon. XVIII v.),” *Tirosh: Trudy po iudaike* 5 (Moscow, 2001): 37–50; K. Burmistrov and M. Endel, “Sefer

other “freemasons.”²⁹ An interest grew in Jewish allegory, anthroponyms, and toponymy, some aspects of which I have already pointed out. Thus, in the epic poem of the eminent Masonic author Semen Bobrov, “The Wandering Blind Man, or The Ancient Night of the Universe” (1807–1809), the following characters can be found: a hero by the name of *Nesham* (from the Hebrew *neshama*, “soul”); his father *Mizrakh* (from the Hebrew *mizrah*, “east”: a key concept in Masonic symbolism); his daughter, the seductress *Tava* (from the Hebrew *Ta’ava*, “lust”); the tempter, named *Ramay* (“Deceiver”); and the hero’s mentor, or “guide,” *Zikhel’* (a distortion of the Hebrew *sekhel*, “reason,” “sense”). The action unfolds in places like *Assur* (from the Hebrew *Ashshur*, “Assyria”), *Misraim* (in Hebrew *Mitsrayim*, “Egypt”), *Yavan* (“Greece”), and so on.³⁰

An enthusiasm for Freemasonry and Theosophy arrived via England and other Protestant countries³¹ in which, at the end of the 18th century, a growing movement was calling for the return of Jews to Zion in the hope of their subsequent conversion to the Christian faith. One political push for this idea was General Bonaparte’s appeal to the Jewish people, published in *The Monitor* during the Palestinian campaign of 1799. (The Jews themselves, however, did not respond in the least to his repatriation

ietsira’ v evreiskoi i khristianskoi traditsiakh,” *Judaica Rossica* 2 (2002): 49–80; K. Burmistrov, “Vladimir Solov’ev i russkoe masonstvo: kabbalisticheskie paralleli,” *Tirosh: Trudy po iudaike* 6 (Moscow, 2003): 33–50; K. Burmistrov and M. Endel, “The Place of Kabbalah in the Doctrine of Russian Masons,” *Aries: Journal for the Study of Western Esotericism* 4, no. 1 (2004): 27–68; K. Burmistrov, “Kabbala v kosmogonii russkikh masonov kontsa 18 v.,” *Rossia i Gnosis. Materialy Konf. VGBLL*, 21–23 April 2003 (Moscow, 2004), 95–102. See also my book *Suzhet Gogolia* (Moscow, 22002), 25–26.

²⁹ S. L. Baehr, *The Paradise Myth in Eighteenth-Century Russia: Utopian Patterns in Early Secular Russian Literature and Culture* (Stanford, CA, 1991), 130ff. On Masonic allegories in Russian Literature of the 18th century, see also O. M. Goncharova, *Vlast’ traditsii i Novaia Rossiia’ v literaturnom soznanii vtoroi poloviny XVII veka.* (St. Petersburg, 2004), 52; M. Weisskopf, *ibid.*, 35.

³⁰ See S. Bobrov, *Drevniaia noch’ Vselennoi, ili Stranstvuiushchii slepets. Epicheskoe tvorenie.* (St. Petersburg, 1807), pt. 1, p. 11; pt. 2, book 3, p. 4. V. Korovin in his book about Bobrov speculates that in creating these names the author “consulted L. N. Nevakhovich, a member of the Jewish community and the author of an apologetic review of ‘Khersonida’” (V. Korovin, *Semen Sergeevich Bobrov: Zhizn’ i tvorchestvo* [Moscow, 2004], 188). Generally speaking, this is certainly possible, but in this case it is doubtful, since the transliteration of *Zikhel* points to a German source: in the Ashkenazic Hebrew dialect this name would be pronounced *Seykhel*.

³¹ K. Burmistrov has kindly called my attention to a Russian translation of the book by von Lon (a representative of the Prussian King in Frankfurt) in which alchemy is closely connected with Kabbalah, and which is titled *Rassuzhdenie ob istlenii i sozhzhenii vsekh veshchei* (Moscow, 1816). The publisher N. S. Vsevolzhsky appended to this work a list of *sefirot* (p. 157) in both languages—Hebrew and Russian. The name of the book, like many of the terms that appear in it, is also given in Hebrew (albeit with some mistakes).

appeal.) The mixing of religious and political policies, as well as the ensuing convocation by Napoleon of the “Great Sanhedrin” in Paris (1807), significantly impacted the attitude toward Jewish people in Russia. If the idea of the “Sanhedrin” at first awakened anti-Jewish apocalyptic feelings, then after the war of 1812 it fostered a completely different and much-unexpected situation, when interest in historical Jewry sparked an unprecedented increase in the distribution of the Bible and every imaginable kind of biblical commentary.³² (Incidentally, the educated elite continued to read the Bible in French.) Moreover, the administration devoted serious attention to modern Jewry. As is well known, precisely during this period of Prince A. N. Golitsyn’s theosophic activity and work in the Bible Society, the authorities undertook great efforts to “civilize”—that is, to baptize—Jews.³³ In this effort pietistic and Enlightenment concerns with contemporary Israel were motivated by both a humanitarian paternalism and an aggressive judophobia.³⁴

At the same time, paradoxically, one factor that stimulated these fiduciary efforts was the selflessness with which the Jewish people assisted the Russian Army during Napoleon’s invasion, supplying it with intelligence,

³² For more details on this subject see M. I. Rizhskii, *Istoriia perevodov Biblii v Rossii* (Novosibirsk, 1978), 130–55. See also “O rasprostraneniі bibleiskikh obshchestv,” *Sionskii vestnik* 2 (May 1817): 185–201; *ibid.*, 3 (June 1817): 390–409; Prof. of Kharkov University A. G. Mogilevskii, “Rech’ o pol’ze, proistekaiushchei iz chteniia sviatogo Pisaniia,” *Ukrainskii zhurnal* 8 (1824): 2; *ibid.*, “O studentskom bibleiskom obshchestve” pt. 1, no. 3:147–50; no. 6:295–98.

³³ In this context it makes perfect sense that Russia had not been affected by the intense anti-Semitic campaign of 1819, led by radical nationalists in nearby Germany and accompanied by pogroms against the Jews. Soon afterward, a young conservative Zagoskin in *Sorevnovatel’ prosveshcheniia i blagotvoreniiia*, attempting to show the superiority of Russian life over Western life, condemned “enlightened Germany,” where “they beat Jews for the mere fact that they are Jews.” (The condemnatory spirit of our hero is sharpened by the fact that he himself was beaten, having been mistaken for a Jew: “Your face looks somewhat Jewish.”) See M. N. Zagoskin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* (St. Petersburg, 1902), 2:1483.

³⁴ The latter decisively dominates in the translated Polish article by St. Stashits [Stanisław Staszic], “Otchego evrei vredny obshchestvu i kak mozžno sdelat’ ikh poleznymi”: *Vestnik Evropy*, 1816, no. 8:280–88; no. 9:57–60; no. 11:217–34; no. 13:36–56. The author, dispirited by the laziness and wretchedness of his native Poland, places the blame for all of its misfortune on the Jews: their pervasive and deleterious activities crush any economic initiative among the Poles—this is why the latter surprise onlookers with their “boneheaded callousness . . . aversion to industry and merchantry.” Staszic calls for a complete deportation of Jews from the villages, a ban on Jewish clothing and “jargon,” and their forced assimilation while they are simultaneously kept carefully segregated. He considers the creation of a ghetto, where Jewish life must be under total police control, the most solid solution to this problem. The article ends with a weepy “petition from a loyal subject” to Alexander for “protection from the Jews.”

information, and provisions.³⁵ Some of them, such as Shneur Zalman, the founder of the Chabad movement, had to flee, in order to save themselves from the combined French and Polish forces, into the inner provinces of Russia.

This patriotic behavior was curiously on display in official publications. In 1813 Nikolai Grech (Gretsch), in his literary journal *Son of the Fatherland*, translated from German a speech by one such refugee—the “Jewish scholar” Markevich—, delivered by him in Dorpat (Tartu) on Rosh ha-Shanah, the Jewish New Year (August 26, 1812). The speaker, in a climax of goodwill toward Russia, blamed the satanic Frenchmen for their part in the centuries-long sufferings of the Jewish people in exile, contrasting them—together with the Poles—with the radiant Russian Empire, as if the latter had given the Jews equal rights. His panegyric to Russia as the new Canaan was full of Old Testament allusions: “From no other people have we suffered more,” declares Markevich, “nor has any other single nation dealt with us more unjustly, than those bloodthirsty French.” At times annihilating multitudes of Jews and robbing the survivors, the French finally exiled them from their country, after which the Jews found refuge in Poland—where they were in turn bitterly oppressed. But the Lord God had mercy on them and brought the Jews over to Russia, entrusting their fate

to a nation that has never taken part either in the subjugation of our land or in the destruction of our city—nor in the desecration of our holy sites, nor, generally speaking, in all of our sorrowful fate; to such people as this who entertain humanitarian feelings toward all of their neighbors, regardless of their religion. . . . *Russia has adopted us and given us rights equal to those of her other loyal subjects. . . . We have been compensated many times over for the loss of Palestine by the benevolence of the Russian Empire*, where peace and unity reign; yet now, to our great sorrow, our Motherland and benefactor has suffered greatly from the common enemy of mankind. . . . Let us pray

³⁵ See S. M. Ginzburg, *Otechestvennaia voina 1812 goda i russkie evrei*; also the collection by F. Kandel' *Kniga vremen i sobytii* (Moscow, 2002), 1:281–86. During the war of 1812–13 a Jewish banker, Abram Peretts, gave all of his capital to organize provisions for the Russian army (although the Treasury delayed payments, which forced him to announce bankruptcy) (*Kratkaia evreiskaia entsyklopediia* [Jerusalem, 1992], 6:396). See also D. E. Fishman, *Russia's First Modern Jews: The Jews of Shklov, Reappraisals in Jewish Social and Intellectual History* (New York, 1995), 126. In 1812–13 Alexander I in a decree thanked Jewish delegates present at the Russian Army Headquarters with “profound goodwill for their diligent and earnest service” (O. Minkina, “‘Evreiskoe dvorianstvo’ na rubezhe dvukh epokh,” *Lechaim*, February 2008, no. 26:48. Some Hasidim, incidentally, preferred Napoleon, but unless I am mistaken, this split is not reflected in the Russian press.

to the Most-High, imploring God Almighty with a humble heart and warm tears, for His mercy and deliverance of *Russia, our land, that He might protect the soldiers of Russia, our brothers. . . . O God! Protect and shield Your faithful Russia (which now serves as the Promised Land)*.³⁶

In the same issue, following this speech of the “Jewish scholar,” the editor presents an article by “a certain famous English man of letters” entitled “Bonaparte and the Emperor Julian.” Among the many significant parallels drawn between these two enemies of Christianity, the author points out that both “falsely promised to restore the Jewish nation” and “both of them had nefarious and unholy intentions, which they failed to carry out.”³⁷ Earlier a somewhat similar accusation was made against Napoleon by the Holy Synod after this “false Messiah” and “forerunner of the Antichrist” appealed to the so-called Sanhedrin in Paris to determine the citizenship status of the Jews in France. The first foreign tract to directly tie together the goals of Julian the Apostate, on the one hand, and the ideas of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, on the other, was the voluminous work by the abbot Augustin de Barruel, *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire du jacobinisme*, which was published in Russia twice in the early 19th century, appearing anonymously in Russian translation. In its mystical worldview and paranoiac conspirology, this anti-Masonic essay, with its claim to documentary authenticity, anticipated *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.³⁸ The author accuses d’Alembert and Voltaire—despite the anti-Semitism of the latter—of the blasphemous intention of returning the Jews to Zion and restoring the Temple in Jerusalem. It is true that the problem here lay not with the Jews themselves, but rather with the Satanism of all these Masons and Enlighteners (who dreamt, according to Barruel, of replacing Christianity with the “natural” religion of the Old Testament God as the Protector of social equality).³⁹ Misgivings were

³⁶ *Syn otechestva*, 1813, no. 5:209–20 (emphasis mine). In the West enlightened Jews gave the name “New Zion” to Frankfurt, Hamburg, and Vienna. On the *Maskil* of Vilna (today’s Vilnius), Hillel Aaronovich Markevich (whom Grech calls “Hillel-Aaron”), see the publication by O. Minkina in *Arkhiv evreiskoi istorii* (Moscow, 2005), 2:331–70, as well as John Klier, op. cit., 160 and n. 45 (Russian version: pp. 264–70), and S. M. Ginzburg, op. cit., 88.

³⁷ *Syn otechestva*, *ibid.*, 222.

³⁸ See Chezare Dzh. de Mikelis [Cesare G. de Michelis], “*Protokoly sionskikh mudretsov*”: *Nesushchestvuiushchii manuskript, ili Podlog veka* (Moscow, 2006), 70–72, 77 (translated from Italian).

³⁹ See *Zapiski iakobintsev, otkryvaiushchie vse protivukhristianskie zloumysleniia i tainstva masonskikh lozh, imeiushchikh vliianie na vse evropeiskie derzhavy* (Moscow, 21807), 1:113–14, 119; 3:47–49, 54–55. On the idea of a Jewish-Masonic conspiracy see D. Béresniak,

expressed in completely different circles as well. Even more closely anticipating the future *Protocols* was an article by the famous Polish Enlightenment figure Staszic, who openly accused the Jews of grievous conspiracy: “Thus it is known that they create secret societies, secret orders; that their union is the best-organized of all, which makes it extremely dangerous: it undermines the most important elements of nations and governments.”⁴⁰ As throughout the treatise, these accusations are made with both an administrative fervor to enlighten and the eschatological anxiety that so characterized the times.

As for Barruel’s revelations, despite the rather long-lived anti-Voltairean mood that prevailed after the war of 1812, they failed to alarm and, as far as I am aware, for the most part went unheeded; indeed, during this period the maligned Masons were treated with more than goodwill. The heart-rending apocalyptic pathos of such denunciative essays nonetheless fits well with the spirit of the new era. It is understandable that Christian propaganda, unfolding in the Jewish milieu soon after the victory over “the enemy of mankind,” would take on messianic overtones, conditioned by eschatological expectations and the attempt to “prepare the way” for Christ’s immanent arrival; yet this messianic vigor was constantly mixed with the same inescapable Enlightenment atmosphere that had prevailed since the beginning of Alexander’s reign.

In 1817, at the initiative of the English missionary Lewis Way, a devout philo-Semite, under the aegis of the Russian government, a special Society of Israelite Christians was created, the responsibility of which was to provide moral, economic, and legal assistance to converts.⁴¹ Like many of his countrymen, Way dreamed of a Jewish repatriation to Palestine (the idea horrified Catholics like Barruel), yet his pro-Zionist aspirations did not receive any support among Russian bureaucratic and Church circles—although in my view the idea did find supporters as a purely secular plan, the well-known project of P. I. Pestel,⁴² the leader and ideologue of

Juifs et Francs-Maçons (Paris, 1989), chap. 7 (pp. 147–63): “Juifs et Francs-Maçons vu par leurs ennemis communs.”

⁴⁰ St. Stashits, *ibid.*, *Vestnik Evropy*, 1816, no. 513:44–45.

⁴¹ See Iu. Gessen, *op. cit.*, 1:180–81, 192; John Klier, *op. cit.*, 167 (Russian version: p. 269). On the Imperial decree concerning the establishment of the Society see *Sionskii vestnik*, 1817, book 2, 203–16.

⁴² “The second way . . . is to support the Jews in the establishment of their own separate state, in some part of Asia Minor. For this we must establish a gathering site for the Jewish people and provide them with a relief army. If all the Russian and Polish Jews would gather together in one place they would number more than two million. For such a number of people, seeking a Fatherland, it would not be difficult to overcome any

Russian noble revolutionaries (the Decembrists). Still, the authorities preferred administrative measures aimed at bringing Jews together with the local Christian community. On the other hand, despite the highly appealing resonance of Markevich's patriotic identification of the Promised Land with Russia, his attitude failed to resonate with his coreligionists. The same representation of Russia in 1819 was presented to Russian readers by P. V. Pobedonostsev in his comparison of Alexander I with Moses, who brought the Jews out of Egypt. In his journal Pobedonostsev translated a French article entitled "On the Jewish People," a brief survey of Jewish history that noted: "Out of all the European States of today, Holland is the only country in which the Jewish people still live in great numbers, with fewer moans over the burden of taxation and no complaints about the government." He zealously adds to this statement a patriotic, visionary correction, assuring readers that

[i]n the Russian Empire, too, the Jews enjoy many privileges. Alexander, with his great love for mankind, looked mercifully upon this people trampled by injustice and superstition. . . . They began to live under the protection of Russian laws, taking their children to sanctuaries of learning, standing alongside Russians, dedicating themselves to commerce and agriculture, and in time they received the privilege of distinction that is achieved by heroic deeds marked by love for the Motherland—distinctions earned through education and diligence. The Israelites, the ancestors of today's Jews, saw in Moses a deliverer from the persecution that they had suffered in Egypt—and during their wandering in Arabia they ate manna every morning and gave thanks to God. Now their descendants see in Alexander I a true Benefactor, enjoying the peace and happiness dispensed from His throne—and they bless their lot.⁴³

The translated article concludes with another royalist sentiment: "Finally, in 1784 Louis XVI freed the Jews from the heavy and humiliating tax that he collected from them in Strasbourg." The goal of this remark was to credit the emancipation of the Jews to the monarchy, not to the French Revolution. N. Grech maintained a steady interest in the Jewish topic and in 1820 published another translated article (unsigned and entitled "On the Condition of the Jews") in his journal *Son of the Fatherland*:

hurdles—what Turk would be able to resist them?—and traversing all of European Turkey they would then reach Asia, and there, after taking enough land, they could establish a Jewish State" (Pavel Pestel', *Russkaia Pravda*, 1993, p. 170.) See also Iu. Gessen, op. cit., 2:17–18; O. I. Kiianskaia, *Iuzhnoe obshchestvo dekabristov: liudi i sobytiia: Ocherki istorii tainykh obshchestv 1820-kh godov* (Moscow, 2005), 118–39.

⁴³ *Novyi panteon otechestvennoi i inostranoi slovesnosti* (1819), pt. 3:232.

For some time the moral and political condition of the Jews has attracted the attention of the friends of mankind. The Jews, ever since their exile from Judea by the Romans, have been driven from one country to another while purchasing their refuge with gold: outcasts, forbidden to own real estate, they have often been driven to making a living through monetary trade and abuse as well as deception and trading in prohibited goods, even engaging in crime.

And what was the result? Their intellectual faculties diminished, their sensibilities deteriorated, and their morals were corrupted. Here, in short, is the history of the Jewish people from the time of their diaspora throughout the world; here is a very unfortunate picture of their present condition in some parts of Europe!

The article has some liberal overtones. The unknown author also points to the inspiring example of France—not its King, but its revolutionaries, who in 1791 gave equal rights to all Jewish citizens: “The Constitutional Convention granted all the Jewish people living on French soil rights as citizens of the State. Since then they have received a new life in France, their social well-being has improved; they have abandoned those customs and habits that conflicted with their obligations as citizens. They have served under the flag, achieved success in the sciences, become selfless tradesmen and honest clerks—in other words, they have turned into citizens without relinquishing their Jewishness.”

This publication, however, is not free from missionary motives, and with quiet enthusiasm it continues to recount the establishment in 1809, in England, of the “Society of Enlightened People for Inviting Jews to the Christian Faith,” focusing in even greater detail on “an extremely zealous member of the Society, Lewis Way, an Anglican Priest.” “In 1817 and 1818 he traveled throughout Europe, gathering information on the Jews’ moral and political condition, as well as their religion, in order to determine the most effective means of educating and reforming them.” In Berlin he became convinced “that the moral corruption of some Jews is a direct result of their persecution, and not because of any characteristic spiritual shortcomings. In the government, which with fair moderation permits all citizens regardless of their religion to hold government positions, they comport themselves in the administration as in society, in a manner deserving respect.” Way’s assessment in the quoted article concerning the need “to grant the Jews civil and political freedom” sounded premature for a state that was more inclined to repression than to unbridled liberalism, and was far from considering freedom of any sort even for the native (non-Jewish) population.

The journal presents very somber descriptions of Way's travels into distant Russian pales: "In those countries especially he had the opportunity to observe these people, whose history dates back to the first centuries of creation; formerly adept in the arts and strong in battle, yet today submerged in humiliation, idleness, and poverty, resulting in a useless and shameful existence among the nations to whom their way of life is a detriment." The article ends with mention of the book written by Way about his talks with European ministers: "He has one goal: to restore those people oppressed by the weight of persecution, and to grant freedom, a livelihood, and life to several million people exiled from a great social clan."⁴⁴

An essential feature of this period was the new abundance of so-called mystical literature. Perhaps its most authoritative representative was Johann Heinrich Jung (known by his assumed name Heinrich Stilling), whose work was instrumental in the creation of the Holy Alliance for confronting the coming Antichrist.⁴⁵ Jung-Stilling devoted much attention to the Jewish topic, framing it in accentuated judophilic tones—something quite novel at that time for both the Russian and non-Russian reader. In his allegorical novel *Das Heimweh*—(Longing for the Homeland, translated into Russian by F. Lubianovsky, 1817–18)—Jung-Stilling, like Lewis Way, predicted the return of the Jews to the Promised Land, where they would establish their own state. Jung-Stilling writes that God, through the mouths of the prophets, prophesied the gathering of the Jewish people from the four corners of the Earth and their resettlement in the land that had been promised for eternity to their ancestors and descendants. "Thus, in time, and perhaps very soon, Palestine will come into the hands of the Christians and will be returned to the Jewish people, who, being naturally very gifted in commerce, will create there a great commercial city that,

⁴⁴ "O sostoiianii evreev." Trans. (into Russian) by P. Gvozdev, *Syn otechestva*, 1820, pt. 63, no. 29:97–106.

⁴⁵ On this period, and especially on Jung-Stilling, see G. Florovskii, *Puti russkogo bogosloviia* (Paris, 1937), 130–69, 147, 198, 247; there Florovsky (pp. 401–2) also discusses the impact of Jung-Stilling's "Siegsgeschichte der christlichen Religion" on Russian national sectarianism. See also Aleksandr Etkind, *Sodom i Psikhheia: Ocherki intellektual'noi istorii Serebriianogo veka* (Moscow, 1996), 144ff. (including an extended bibliography); D. I. Chizhevskii, "Neizvestnyi Gogol'," *Novyi zhurnal*, 1951, no. 27:139–41; I. Vinit'skii, *Nechto o privedeniakh: Istorii o russkoi literaturnoi mifologii XIX veka* (Moscow, 1998), 106. Among recent works, see also the informative book by V. S. Parsamov, *Zhozef de Mestr i Aleksandr Sturdza: Iz istorii religioznykh idei aleksandrovskoi epokhi* (Saratov, 2004), 62–64.

becoming a very profitable venue, will attract industry from all parts of the world.”⁴⁶

It is not hard to imagine the reaction to such utopian imagery—which became increasingly popular among Protestant thinkers in the first part of the 19th century—by the contemporary Orthodox reader, who was firmly convinced that patristic teaching denied the Jews any rights to Zion, which had forever become the moral property of the “New Jerusalem,”⁴⁷ and which was a figurative prototype of the sought-for Heavenly Kingdom. The allegorical tradition of the Church was taken up by such famous Romantic poets as Ivan Kozlov: “O no—the heart knows the riddle, / We cannot be deceived: / in the heavenly motherland awaiting the martyrs / is the Promised Land”,⁴⁸ and Nikolai Iazykov: “Who, O Lord, can attain / the heights of Your Zion?”⁴⁹ And in his poem “A Dove (from the Psalms of David)” the Pietist Fedor Glinka, who after the Decembrist uprising was sent north to Petrozavodsk, mournfully portrays his exile as the Babylonian captivity and his dream of freedom as a longing for the spiritual Jerusalem:

I would fly to mount Zion,
Where grace forever shines,
To cling to the highest Throne,
And find rest from this life.⁵⁰

The author made fewer allowances for contemporary Jewry and undoubtedly would have been shocked by the profane application of these allegorical interpretations of biblical texts to their real-life context—the Jewish people overcome with nostalgia for the earthly, not empyrean, Zion.⁵¹ Indeed, in Pushkin’s poem “In vain did I run to the heights of Zion . . .” the sinner’s flight to Zion is not a plan to take up residence and settle down.

⁴⁶ Johann Heinrich Jung-Stilling, *Toska po otchizne* (Moscow, 1817), pt. 3:22.

⁴⁷ See, for example, Avraam S. Norov’s description of his visit to Jerusalem: “A son of the Far North, I . . . entered Jerusalem as if it were my motherland, so close to my heart” (A. Norov, *Puteshestvie po Sviatoi Zemle v 1835 godu* [St. Petersburg, 31854], 90).

⁴⁸ Ivan Kozlov, *Sobranie stikhotvorenii* (St. Petersburg, 1833), pt. 2:251.

⁴⁹ N. M. Iazykov, *Polnoe sobranie stikhotvorenii* (Moscow, 1934), 359.

⁵⁰ *Severnaia pchela*, 1827, no. 87.

⁵¹ See his record of a conversation with another Decembrist—the converted Jew G. A. Peretts—who told Glinka that his father, Abram Peretts, dreamt about the creation of a Jewish state in the Crimea or in the East. In response Fedor Glinka stated, “Well, then, do you want to bring on the end of the world? They say that it is written in the Scriptures (at that time I did not yet know the Scriptures) that when the Jews acquire their freedom, the world will end” (John Klier, *ibid.*, 185–86 [Russian version: p. 310]).

Beyond its reinterpretation via spiritual and political allegories, the Jewish Bible had little relevance for contemporary life and fell out of favor. In the West the old impulses of Marcion were continually merging with the French-Enlightenment hatred of the Old Testament and animosity toward the “Chosen People,”⁵² going back to Voltaire and Holbach. Jung-Stilling began his fight against this complex judophobia in his most notorious work, *The Victorious History of the Christian Faith (Die Siegesgeschichte der Christlichen Religion*, 1799), devoted to interpreting the book of Revelation. This book was translated into Russian in 1815 by A. Labzin, one of the most prominent activists of Russian Masonry and the publisher of the pietistic journal *Zion’s Herald (Sionskii vestnik*, published in 1806 and 1817–18).

Here Jung-Stilling heatedly denounces a generalized “enemy of the Bible, who makes the Jewish people duller, more superstitious, and more hostile than other peoples, only to degrade the dignity of the Old Testament. . . . The Israelites, without question, had the most ancient writers and writings, the oldest established religion, and achievements in a whole range of arts long before Greek culture had emerged from its infancy; and as an unbiased friend of mankind is well aware, all wisdom, all mythology, all moral teachings, and all the rules of a virtuous life among the eastern nations were adopted from the Israelites, along with the distant, disfigured rays of God’s revelation to the Israelites.” “The Old Testament is the foundation of the New; Israel is the root of the true Church; if Christ was an Israelite according to the flesh, and the first Christians were from the seed of Abraham, then the first citizens of the New Jerusalem must be Israelites; like the Old, so too the New Jerusalem must become the main city of Israel.”⁵³

After emphasizing the Jewish genealogy of Jesus and his followers, Jung-Stilling turns to the topic of the biological, blood relationship of today’s Christians to the Jews. Alluding to the Fourth Book of Ezra, the Church Fathers, and Gibbon, he claims that the ten tribes of Israel, taken to Assyria, then “went further north, northeast, and northwest, to unpopulated lands where they could serve God in peace. Therefore today’s Christian nations may have come from those ten tribes. . . . Indeed, the peoples from whom today’s Europeans descended came from these countries, so it may very well be that the remnant or spawn of the race of Abraham is

⁵² See Ritchie Robertson, op. cit., 22–23.

⁵³ G. Iung-Shtilling, *Pobednaia povest’, ili Torzhestvo very khristianskoi* (St. Petersburg, 1815), 105, 346–47.

now in Tibet under the rule of the Dalai Lama. According to this line of thinking, the great majority of the ten tribes would have settled in Russia, Poland, Bohemia, Hungary, Greece, Germany, the Northern Lands, Great Britain, France, Spain, Portugal, and Italy.”

As you can see, Jung-Stilling completely abandons the purely allegorical interpretation of “Israel,” insisting on its original and literal meaning. Reconciliation of the contextual meaning of the “Old Testament” and traditional Christian exegesis is achieved by means of a direct, “sensual” identification of both “Israels,” thereby making possible a Christian repatriation to the Holy Land: “If we are descended from Israelite flesh, then the great comforting promises made by the Old Testament prophets to Israel apply to us as well, and the Jews are in essence our brothers according to the flesh. And if they ever turn back and return to Jerusalem, then we have the right to go with them, for Abraham is our father as much as theirs.”⁵⁴

As for the apocalyptic New Jerusalem and her Jewish residents, Jung-Stilling was able to find some supporters for this view in Russia. One of these, the prolific writer and memoirist A. Bolotov (1738–1833—incidentally, a great proponent of the spread of Bible translations everywhere), held out the promise of an honorable fate in this future city to pre-Christians as well—particularly to Jews, “who had made a special covenant with God.” Jesus redeemed this people and upon descending to hell freed them from the power of Satan. In the coming Jerusalem, for the all saints, and especially “the righteous Jews who belonged to the beloved people of God . . . the reward will be . . . great blessings, or perhaps a special place of dwelling apart from others.”⁵⁵

By the end of the Pietistic period this attraction to the ancient, formerly chosen people had carried over to the Talmudic tradition. In 1823, the journal *News from Literature*, by A. F. Voeikov and I. Kozlov, published a series of translated homiletical stories from the midrashic *Proverbs* of the German religious writer F. A. Krummacher concerning Noah and Shem, the death of Abraham, David, the wise Rabbi Hillel, and other subjects.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 101–2.

⁵⁵ A. T. Bolotov, *O dushakh umershikh liudei* (1823; repr., St. Petersburg, 2006), 156. Bolotov, notably, predicts the opposite fate—i.e., hell—for those Jews from the moment that they denied Christ; accordingly, he relegates Jews in the Christian era to a denigrated status, referring to them as “Yids” who in hell will curse their teachers (*ibid.*, 140).

⁵⁶ *Novosti literatury*, 1823, nos. 10, 19–22 (trans. V. Tilo).

But the situation for contemporary Jews living in Russia was another thing entirely. The pietistic conception of a pan-human brotherhood including the Jewish people must have struck Russian society of that time as something just as wild and paradoxical as the dream of the Jews' triumphal repatriation. In the last part of Alexander's reign, the Orthodox-patriotic line of thinking prevailed, championed by two very influential dignitaries—the archimandrite Photius and Admiral Shishkov. In the following years, the influence of Protestant ecumenism dwindled. The ideal of cosmopolitan unity was now perceived as a dangerous anachronism. The activities of the Biblical Society in Russia were stopped. Translations of the Old Testament were accordingly placed under a ban: "in the spring of 1825, on the orders of the clerical leadership, several thousand recently published copies of the Russian translation of the Pentateuch were burned in brick factory ovens. On April 12, 1826, by the order of Nikolai I (by that time Alexander had died), the Russian Bible Society was closed and Bible translation suspended."⁵⁷

Nevertheless, these books found their way to a wide grassroots audience, including sectarians, among whom the Subbotnik movement emerged. In the 1830s numerous and highly popular Protestant brochures were translated that heatedly defended the ethical value of the Bible.⁵⁸ Among the accusations vigorously disputed by the Old Testament apologists was the so-called Egyptian theory, which by then, owing to Schiller's book *The Letter of Moses* (*Die Sendung Moses*), was broadly circulated. According to this theory all of the teachings of Moses, an "Egyptian priest," were acquired by him in the land of the Pharaohs (i.e., not by divine revelation).⁵⁹ At the beginning of 1829, Chaadaev, in the seventh of his "Philosophical Letters," responded to similar speculations. On a theoretical level—clearly following the Illuminati and Schiller—he accepts the possibility of this influence yet does not consider it to be significant. The important thing is Moses's religious and intellectual achievement, his monotheism, which predetermined "all the future intellectual development of mankind, derived from this principle."⁶⁰

⁵⁷ M. I. Rizhskii, op. cit., 137.

⁵⁸ One of them, for example, refutes the conventional wisdom that "it is dangerous to read [the Bible]," which the ignorant blame for creating strife and discord and for even "driving people mad" (*Blagotvornoe deistvie Biblii*, [St. Petersburg, 41838], 8–9).

⁵⁹ See in particular Wolf-Daniel Hartwich, *Romantischer Antisemitismus: Von Klopstock bis Richard Wagner* (Göttingen, 2005), 157–58; Ritchie Robertson, *The Jewish Question in German Literature, 1749–1939: Emancipation and its Discontents* (Oxford, 1999), 23–24.

⁶⁰ P. Ia. Chaadaev, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i izbrannye pis'ma* (Moscow, 1994), 1:425.

In the second part of the 1830s Jung-Stilling's popularity began to rise again after having fallen off in the previous decade. In 1832 the Revel (now Tallinn) journal *Rainbow*, which continually conjoined true conservatism with pietistic-mystical impulses, and judophobia with judophilia, under the obvious influence of Jung-Stilling began to exalt Old Testament Jews. Even the global diaspora of the Jews was given providential rather than retributive meaning: "it made universal the knowledge of the Law of Moses, which serves as the introduction to Christian revelation." As to the supposed influence of the Egyptian priests, according to the journal things worked the other way round: they themselves, "in their wonderful pyramids . . . , no doubt read the books of Moses . . . and perhaps even deciphered, from the prophecies of the Holy Books, the revelation appertaining to the Messiah. Vestiges supporting this conclusion are evident in the teachings of Pythagoras and Plato."⁶¹

The highly respected educator I. M. Iastrebtsov (1797–1870), under the influence of Chaadaev as well as Protestant-mystical philo-Semitism, even predicted the victory of the Jews in the struggle among peoples for the right to settle the earth. He similarly interpreted the dispersion of the Jews in a providential light, yet with a slight difference: the Jews were destined to inherit all of civilization: "Humanity, it seems, will experience many changes before any of these nations decisively prevails over all the others. Incidentally, the Bible already decided this issue by promising all the land to the seed of Abraham (Apostle Paul's Epistle to the Romans 4:13). We should note that the unparalleled attribute of the Jewish people—their incredible tenacity despite all hostile, destructive influences, and their dispersion all over the Earth so as to gather insensibly, as it were, all the races of civilization to then unite them in one unified community—may serve as a cue to historians regarding the fate of the Jews."⁶²

The great and longstanding success of *The Victorious History* in Russian⁶³—despite the author's sharp attacks on Orthodoxy—is explained by Jung-Stilling's support and elucidation of the predictions of the Swabian Pietist Bengel (at the beginning of the 18th century) concerning the battle with the Antichrist, to take place in 1836 in Central Asia, in the

⁶¹ *Raduga. Zhurnal filosofii, pedagogiki i iziashchnoi literatury, s prisovokupleniem Ostzeiskikh zapisok*, ed. A. Biurger. 1832, book 2:99–100.

⁶² I. M. Iastrebtsov, *O sisteme nauk, prilichnykh v nashe vremia detiam, naznachayemykh k obrazovanneishemu klassu obshchestva*, second, expanded and improved edition (Moscow, 1833), 31–32. The Academy of Science awarded the author the very prestigious Demidov prize.

⁶³ See Aleksandr Etkind, *op. cit.*, 146, 194; I. Vinitiskii, *op. cit.*, 180–81.

southern outskirts of the Russian Empire. This dramatic prophecy, together with the anxiety resulting from Halley's Comet, produced the well-known explosion of eschatology in Russian culture—reflected in such things as the depiction of the Flood in Pushkin's "Bronze Horseman," K. Briullov's painting *The Last Day of Pompeii* (along with Gogol's review of it), Pushkin's poem "Vesuvius Opened Its Maw," and many other works from the first half of the 1830s. D. Chizhevsky at one point presented the compelling hypothesis that the first edition of Gogol's "Portrait," with its central image of the Antichrist, was influenced by *The Victorious History*.⁶⁴ In support of this hypothesis, I. Vinitsky demonstrated the very transparent influence of Jung-Stilling—in his *Longing for the Homeland*—on the symbolism of Gogol's *Inspector General* (together with his "Leaving the Theater") and related stories of 1820–1830, in which governmental "inspection" is presented as the bureaucratic counterpart to the Last Judgment.⁶⁵

The other idea by Jung-Stilling—i.e., brotherhood with the Jews, even Jewish nationals—continued to be swept aside by a growing patriotic consciousness. At times people projected their apocalyptic fears upon the Jews. In 1833 the journal *Rainbow* issued an apprehensive warning: "The Antichrist may well take advantage of the hardening of the Jews and direct them to believe in him. Therefore the Church Fathers quite plausibly maintain that the followers of the Antichrist will be Jews who have not received Jesus Christ and who are hardened against everything Christian."⁶⁶ (Later, in the second half of the 1840s, Jung-Stilling's residual influence and his judophilia would inform the Yehowist Movement.)

In the Nikolaevan era the Jewish topic in Russian journalism, largely taken over from Western sources, would have the same kind of ambivalence. But on the whole the positive assessments suggested by the borrowed material would predominate.

⁶⁴ D. I. Chizhevskii, op. cit., 140–41.

⁶⁵ I. Vinitskii, op. cit., 138–71. On the influence of Jung-Stilling on other works by Gogol, see A. Hippisley, "Gogol's 'The Overcoat': A Further Interpretation," *Slavic and East European Journal* 20 (1976); M. Weiskopf, *Suzhet Gogolia: Morfologiia. Ideologiia. Kontekst*. (Moscow, 1993), 212, 219–20, 629.

⁶⁶ See S. V. Sm-d-sky, "Rassuzhdenie ob Antikhriste," *Raduga*, 1833, 323–24.

CHAPTER TWO

A LOOK AT FOREIGN JEWRY: THE ADOPTION OF WESTERN MODELS

Western Judophilia in Russian Periodicals

The dream of the Jewish return to Zion, awakened after the Napoleonic wars among English aristocrats and Scottish missionaries, found no more support in Russia under Nikolai I than it had under his predecessor. However, the Russian press did show a certain degree of interest in the project. A colorful American diplomat, playwright, and journalist, Manuel Mordekhai Noah, attracted the attention of N. Polevoi with his Jewish utopia, which he counterposed to the Protestant one.

On September 1, 1825, Noah grandiosely announced the creation of the Jewish colony of "Ararat" in New York State (on Grand Island in the Niagara River) and called on Jewish people everywhere to resettle there so as to prepare for the next repatriation to the Promised Land. (The choice of an American territory for this temporary refuge was the result of Noah's conviction that it was the American Indians, not, as in Jung-Stilling's theory, the European nations, who were the direct descendants of Ten Tribes of Israel).¹ Commenting on this exotic idea, N. Polevoi in 1826 published in his journal *Moscow Telegraph* a note he had borrowed from the Danish press:

Among all the nations of the earth there is none more intriguing than the Jewish nation. Their antiquity, early education, monuments of antiquity, their exalted concept of faith, their great works, their misfortunes, and their strange fate that forced them to live scattered among other peoples yet not join with them—all of this should amaze us and arouse our attention and compassion. If this people has inherited weaknesses, then, on the other hand, it has also inherited virtues and talents that should not go unnoticed by any unbiased man.

¹ For more on Noah see L. Harap, *The Image of the Jew in American Literature: from Early Republic to Mass Immigration* (Philadelphia, 1974), 264–67. The lost tribes were then, as even up to this day, the subject of constant research and all manner of hypotheses. One of the most exotic of these is developed in the book by T. Parfitt, *Journey to the Vanished City: The Search for a Lost Tribe of Israel* (London, 1992).

This short essay on ancient Jewish history ends with the mention of the Jewish rebellion “against mighty Rome” and the unfortunate consequences of the war:

Seventy years after the birth of Christ, the Jewish state was completely destroyed: the capital and the Temple were destroyed after hard-fought battles. Since then this wonderful nation has lived in dispersion among all the people of the world, often troubled, despised, and persecuted. . . . No other people in the world has had the same fate as the Jewish people, and no other deserves so much attention from thinkers. After studying their thought and conditions of life, scholars have come to the conclusion that this nation should no longer be dispersed, but should live independently in some part of the world; yet until now that has only been possible in some Arab villages where only Jews live [this is a reference, *inter alia*, to the Galilean village of Peqi'in, which the Jewish people never left—M.W.].

According to this journal, “the plan of M. Noah sounds like fanaticism. (Otherwise why specifically invite his fellow brothers, the Jews?)” Nonetheless, the project is symptomatic, as it promises a great future role for the state of New York, whose fitting location would foster future prosperity. To this optimistic discussion by the Danish journalist concerning the future regathering of the Jewish people “in some part of the world,” Polevoi appends a cautious remark: “Can a mortal penetrate the fates of Providence?” The possibility of realizing such a project “is highly doubtful, for the Jews are timid, unused to working the land, and unlikely to undertake such a risky endeavor. Would rich Jews accompany their poor coreligionists to a new settlement and overcome, for the sake of conviction, their petty mercenary interests that tie them to the lands they live in?”² Polevoi did have some interest in the attempt by Alexander I in Russia to have the Jews adapt “to working the land.” In 1831 *Moscow Telegraph* provided brief information on nine Jewish colonies in the Novorossiisk region, where, it seems, over one thousand families were already living.³

At the same time, “rich Jews” who had settled in the West were still benefiting from the clear sympathy of the Russian press, and this situation was even reflected in humoristic writings. Russian readers were unaccustomed to the idea of these emancipated sons of Israel, who had so little in common with Russia’s hungry, frightened inhabitants of the Pale of Settlement. In 1825 the literary journal *The Loyalist* (*Blagonamerennyi*, literally,

² “O proekte Mordokheia Noia osnovat’ zhidovskoe tsarstvo,” *Moskovskii telegraf*, 1826, pt. 9, sec. 4 (Modern Chronicles), 164–72.

³ *Ibid.*, 1831, no. 10:82.

the well-meaning one) published the following colorful story, introducing it under the heading “Lesefrüchte” (tidbits): “One rich Jew in France had two sons: the oldest served in the army and owed everyone money, and the youngest stayed with his father and, instead of undertaking clerical work, went hunting every day. ‘Well, Mr. Lebel,’ a friend once said to the father, ‘I envy your happiness! God has given you such good and diligent sons.’ ‘Yes,’ returned Lebel, ‘they are diligent, but they have it all backwards: one son who should be shooting is writing bills of exchange; and the other, who should be writing bills of exchange, is doing nothing but shooting.’”⁴

These Jews are not even reproached with holding to the wrong faith. In fact, in one of the earliest issues of *The Moscow Herald*—a literary and philosophical biweekly journal (1823–30)—a translated article appeared that was very well-disposed toward the Rothschild brothers and noted with great respect that they have held firm to their “promise never to change their religion.”⁵ Generally speaking, this is typical of the press’s attitude toward the Rothschild family at the time, as A. Kraevsky’s newspaper bears out later, at the end of 1830s. There a reporter’s remarks center around two different Rothschilds: the wealthy banker himself and another poor man who shares the same name. Only the latter is called a “Yid” [*zhid*], whereas the former is tactfully referred to as his “coreligionist”:

The wife of a poor Yid named Joseph Rothschild from Pressburg was about to give birth but did not know how to cover the expenses involved. Her husband was a small merchant and could hardly support his family. So the poor Rothschild decided to go to Vienna in order to purchase some merchandise on credit. Two days after her husband left, the wife gave birth to a healthy boy, yet poverty bore down even more oppressively on this wretched woman. So she sent a letter to her husband in Vienna, urging him to return home as soon as possible. Not knowing where he was staying in the capital, she addressed the letter simply to Joseph Rothschild in Vienna. . . . Her letter came into the hands of the rich banker Joseph Rothschild, who shared name and religion with the Yid from Pressburg. The banker read the letter, immediately sent the poor woman 100 florins, and ordered that her husband in Vienna be located. The poor Rothschild came without delay to the rich Rothschild, who received his coreligionist with great kindness and told him that his wife in Pressburg had given birth to a lovely boy. The news did not make the poor man any happier, and he emitted a deep sigh. “Do not worry my dear friend”—said the banker—“I will raise your son and support him

⁴ *Blagonamerennyi*, 1825, no. 1:31.

⁵ *Moskovskii vestnik*, 1827, pt. 3, no. 11:303–9.

in his further endeavors in life. Here is a letter for your wife and a thousand florins from me for small returns in your business. Be honest and you may rely on me as your best friend and coreligionist.” The banker Joseph Rothschild—the article concludes—is well-known in Vienna for his benevolence. He helps everyone who is poor and in need, regardless of his religion.⁶

The tone of the article reflects Western sentiments, however puzzling they may have been at times to Russian journalists. Thus, in 1828 the literary-academic semimonthly *Athenaeum* (published in 1828–30) reviewed, with some perplexity, an outlandish German tract on philosophy and Jewish tradition, published in 1827 in Frankfurt: “The unknown author not only defends the Talmud against accusations of religious sophistry, but considers the same Talmud and the kabbalistic teachings so much under attack today as true sources from which to draw upon for the history of philosophy for the salvation of mankind. Nonetheless, this work is noteworthy for its scholarly and literary aspects.”⁷ Without a doubt, this is referring to the first volume of the four-volume monumental work by F. J. Molitor—an expert on and believer in Kabbalah—*Philosophie der Geschichte, oder über die Tradition* (Frankfurt am Main, 1827).

At the same time the journal also published an anonymous article translated from English, entitled “A Look at the Present Condition of the Jews in Different Countries of the World.” This article emphasized Jews’ efficient housekeeping, domesticity, and other virtues, including a love for education (albeit clouded over by “metaphysical abstraction”). In Germany, “since the time of Mendelssohn’s death, they began successfully attending the universities. Many became great teachers; others made important contributions to medicine. The Israelite youth did not lag behind in the common movement of 1813 to free Germany,” although many Jews unfortunately supported the invasion of Prussia by the French, hoping to gain both riches and emancipation⁸—which consequently sparked the aggressive “anger of the mob” against them.

In clear contrast to the patristic judophobia that took pleasure in the agony of the Jews, the English author stresses that there are those of them “who, to the shame of the Enlightenment, were treated as pariahs in

⁶ *Literaturnye pribavleniia k “Russkomu invalidu,”* 1, no. 17 (1839): 578.

⁷ *Atenei*, 1828, pt. 4, no. 15:252.

⁸ Ludwig Börne spoke out against this accusation, pointing to the significant Jewish participation in the war against the French. Gilman, commenting on Börne’s position, adds that this support (including that supplied by the Rothschilds of Frankfurt) was given in spite of the national interests of Jewry itself (see Gilman, op. cit., 154).

different countries, were able to maintain their national pride, disdain for their persecutors, and unshakable resolve, constantly adding to the sense of their suffering and humiliation. . . . Can one look without compassion on a people whose memory of their former glory and the desperate hope for a brilliant future supply them with new strength against sweeping misfortune?" The author treats even the notorious hardheadedness of this Old Testament people in a positive sense that is not in keeping with Orthodox tradition: "Such obstinacy of character, which according to the testimony of the Holy Scripture accompanied the Israelites in the wilderness, has not left them even now amidst the streets of London or Cairo, or in the woods of Poland: it distinguishes them, like the liveliness in their eyes and their eagle noses, and also complicates communication with them."

Like all publications of this kind, the article combines respectful goodwill toward the Jews with the paternalistic charge (typical for the Enlightenment) that they improve their "ethics" and way of life, which had suffered from many centuries of harassment and isolation. Presumably by means of emancipation and other educational measures they would be lifted out of their present pitiful condition. The persecution of the Jews—as, for example, in contemporary Germany—was an inglorious and injurious anachronism of the Middle Ages. Many Jews were trying to interact more closely with Christians, yet they were being cruelly rebuffed. "Hard-working and amiable in their relationships with each other, they learned to behave likewise in their discussions with foreigners. Sometimes they would even do good to those who were ungrateful—as, for example, a banker who, having made a donation 50 years prior to restore a tiny town (Bourg) that had been burned down, was forbidden to set foot in it. Having been long stripped of all honors, they were forced to seek vile profit in the despised work of merchantry. Perhaps in time, when free from the yoke that encumbers them, they will everywhere be deemed worthy of mutual esteem."⁹

It is interesting to note that in 1831 similar remarks concerning discrimination against rich Jews were made by N. Grech, a former Liberal who at that time became an enlightened conservative of the Imperial brand. The hero of his epistolary novel, *A Trip to Germany*, after finding himself in Frankfurt, declares: "Here I have seen firsthand that no man is a prophet

⁹ *Atenei*, 1828, pt. 6, no. 21:59–89. Several years later Nadezhdin's *Telescope* published a translated article by A. Pishar [Pichard], "O torgovle drevnikh evreev," in which the author argues (contrary to popular biases) that the Jews did not have any inherent predilection for commerce (*Teleskop*, 1835, pt. 28:404–10).

in his own land. A Jewish banker moves millions, has a decisive voice in all the stock markets, corresponds with Castello and Metternich—but he can never become a member of a club (Casino) in Frankfurt. He offers two hundred thousand guilders for the building of a new Casino. ‘No!’—say the members—‘You are still a rotten Yid; we do not want to have him!’—Not smart, but stubborn.”¹⁰ (This anecdote probably refers to Anselm Mayer Rothschild, who had helped the city in their battle with the French.)

A certain discord in the struggle of the Enlightenment with segregation was brought about by Pushkin’s *Literary Gazette*. In 1830 it published an essay by P. I. Poletika—a former Russian Ambassador to the United States—devoted to social life in that country (and presented a passage from his book on the United States, written in French).

In describing American religious tolerance, the author writes: “There are Jewish communities, although not very many, in the United States. What is interesting is that, even though the Jews enjoy all the rights, without exception, of every American citizen, they live apart, carefully avoiding Christian company. There are some exceptions, but they are rare, and for this reason attract notice.”¹¹

The newspaper also touches upon the topic of the medieval persecutions of European Jews. Soon after the above essay, it published, in translation from the French, Sir Walter Scott’s novella *Treasure: A Chronicle of 1394* (*Le Trésor. 1394*), which recounts the expulsion of the Jews from France. According to this work, the savage persecution that befell the Jews of France was directly connected with moneylending, which the author attributes to the entire Jewish nation: “The fate of the Jews in the 13th and 14th centuries was terrible; they humbly endured persecution and boldly cheated the good citizens of Paris. They were hung between two dogs, slashed on the streets during Holy Week, and burned for the entertainment of the people: but the benefits of their trade rewarded the usurers for these insignificant troubles. In vain they converted to Christianity! The Christened Jew was stripped of all of his possessions: they were considered tainted and ill-gotten . . .”¹²

¹⁰ *Poezdka v Germaniiu. Roman v pis'makh*, published by Nikolai Grech (St. Petersburg, 1831), pt. 1:209.

¹¹ P. I. Poletika, “Sostoianie obshchestva v Soedinennykh Amerikanskikh Oblastiakh,” *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 1830, no. 46:76.

¹² Val'ter Skott, “Sokrovishche,” in *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 1830, no. 63:215. The novella recounts how Nicola Flammel (a famous alchemist) received bonds for safekeeping from the Jewish merchant Manasseh. Flammel took the treasure and told his wife that he found the philosopher’s stone. Manasseh was killed by schoolboys.

A true ode to Jewry and its haughty self-isolation was translated in the same year (1830) by N. Shenshin (a friend and classmate of Lermontov at Moscow University) from the judophilic book by the Count Louis Philippe de Ségur, *Histoire des juifs*. The book concludes with the assertion: “The people, dispersed across the face of the earth from the times of Hadrian, have firmly preserved their name, customs, worship, and laws, and, even while living under oppression, have still not lost their hope of a miraculous deliverance.”

It is clear that this forthcoming deliverance in no way corresponded to Christian expectations and the energetic means by which the government of one such country hoped to turn Jews into “useful citizens.” Nikolai’s administration did not consider its own actions to be torture or persecution—and for that reason the national press eagerly condemned these “horrors worthy of the Inquisition” as a shameful throwback to the distant past and Catholic fanaticism—something, of course, foreign to Russia. Yet such undesirable associations were provoked by the historical material itself. Describing harassment of the Jews on the Iberian Peninsula and their expulsion from Portugal in 1497, Ségur, in the translation by Shenshin, tells how they were forbidden to take their children under the age of 14 with them, because they would be subject to forced baptism: “one is hard-pressed to believe such an order, unprecedented even in the history of the most barbarous nations, could have been given. Under such tyranny the desperation of this persecuted people was pushed beyond the limit; many killed themselves to prevent the cruel separation; others killed their children, believing that it is better to see them dead than in the hands of Christians.”¹³

Meanwhile, the latest national example of precisely such “barbaric” treatment was occurring very close to home. Shenshin’s publication appeared soon after the famous decree concerning Cantonists (1827), which called for removing Jewish children from their homes and placing them in a hostile Christian environment. The discriminatory nature of this decree is also acknowledged by Petrovsky-Shtern, who belongs to the “revisionist” trend in Jewish historiography and, in general, positively interprets the legislation concerning Jewish conscription (*rekrutchina*), believing that in the long run it would break Jewish isolation and enable them to culturally engage with local populations. Since the fate of Jewish children in the Russian army strikes a strongly discordant note with this

¹³ *Atenei*, 1830, pt. 1, no. 5:410–11, 427.

concept, the author relegates it to the edges of his research—even though, according to the statistics of M. Stanislawski, out of 70,000 Jewish conscripts between 1827 and 1854, about 50,000 were minors.¹⁴ Nonetheless, Petrovsky-Shtern points out that “Jewish recruits were between the ages of 12 and 25, whereas the other recruits were between 18 and 25. What is more, unlike adult recruits, Jewish children were recruited if they met minimum requirements: they said anyone would do.”¹⁵ (The term of military service was 25 years.) The truth is that the phrase “anyone” meant that right and left they were conscripting children, practically from infancy. From the abundance of data¹⁶ we prefer to quote a non-Jewish testimony—the fully judophobic “independent judgment” of Leskov, in which the reader is told that twelve-year-olds “were being recruited although they were no more than seven or eight years old. There was an endless number of such cases.” “Many of those little Yids were baptized even before the army units set forth from Kiev,”¹⁷ notes the author in passing.

Shenshin’s analogy was all too apparent. (Incidentally, later in 1843, when the Tsar decreed “without exception” to deport all the Jews from within a 50-verst [= 54-kilometer] zone from the border, “in German, French, and English newspapers biting articles appeared about the politics ‘of the New Spain.’”)¹⁸ It comes as no surprise, therefore, that the complete translation of de Ségur’s book was prohibited under clerical censorship.¹⁹ A more comforting conclusion was drawn by Timofei Granovsky, then a young historian at the beginning of his career, in the article “The Fate of the Jewish people, from the Fall of the Maccabees until Our Days,” which was published in *LfR* in 1835 and was generally more philo-Semitic in character: “That decree, which so generously opened up the opportunity to attain military glory and distinction in the Russian ranks and represented the first step toward the profound benevolence of the

¹⁴ M. Stanislawski, op. cit., 25.

¹⁵ I. Petrovskii-Shtern, *Evrei v russkoi armii*, 45.

¹⁶ See the memoirs published by M. Stanislawski—concerning seven- and eight-year old conscripts (as well as those concerning the baptism of children at the ages of 9, 10, and 12). One memoir writer even tells about a five-year old boy (M. Stanislawski, *Tsar Nicholas I and the Jews: The Transformation of Jewish Society in Russia, 1825–1855* [Philadelphia, 1983], 26).

¹⁷ N. S. Leskov, *Sobranie sochinenii* (Moscow, 1957), 6:91.

¹⁸ S. M. Dubnov, *Noveishaia istoriia evreiskogo naroda. Ot Frantsuzskoi revoliutsii do nashikh dnei*, 2:103.

¹⁹ Also banned was a manuscript on Jewish travels to Jerusalem—“Schreiben eines reisenden Juden auf der Vorzeit” (D. A. El’iashevich, *ibid.*, 601).

decree issued this year, should forever improve their fate.”²⁰ (The latter decree to which he refers is the “Statute concerning the Jews” of 1835, which Dubnov termed “The Charter of Lawlessness.”)²¹

In a review of one of the books used by Granovsky²²—on the work by Depping about the Jews in the Middle Ages—*JMPE*, adhering to the rather humane position of its chief, Sergei Semenovitch Uvarov,²³ the Minister of Education, criticized “the fanatical and ignorant clergy of the Western Church,” for being excessive in their anti-Jewish efforts. The journal, in general, supported the French scholar and preferred to assume an ambivalent stance toward the topic: “G. Depping skillfully portrays all the tyrants, persecution, and torture suffered by the Jews, as well as the spirit of their society, morals, life, opinions, their conniving, crafty, and self-serving politics, and the moral blindness of the Jews. Among the depictions of their violence and devilry flashes of wit appear, leaving behind bright and benevolent traces; for during the time of general ignorance the Jews, involved in medicine and finance, often exercised influence on the affairs of Europe, taking charge of its finances and giving direction to the affairs of State. All of this is depicted impartially by Mr. Depping. . . . The survey of the literary activity of the Jews shows that this people, despite the mystical ramblings of their rabbis, sometimes displayed a rich imagination that was only in need of wise leadership.”²⁴

At the same time, Uvarov’s ministry sought to fill the role of such “wise leadership” with increasing determination, inspired by the same motivations Granovsky cited in his article, where he noted the general concern

²⁰ T. N. Granovskii, *Sochineniia* (Moscow, 1866), pt. 1:186.

²¹ The legislative policy of Nikolai’s regime concerning the Jews is discussed in detail in the book by Iu. Gessen, *Istoriia evreiskogo naroda v Rossii* (Leningrad, 1927), 2:18ff.

²² He cites as his main sources: M. (J. B. R.) Capefigue, *Histoire philosophique des Juifs: depuis la décadence des Macabées jusqu’à nos jours* (Bruxelles, 1834); G.-B. Depping, *Les Juifs dans le moyen âge: essai historique sur leur état civil, commercial et littéraire* (Paris, 1834).

²³ “His deep interest” in the Jews Stanislawski construes as a by-product of studying antiquity and Orientalism. As an authoritative precedent he points to Herder, for whom—as for many other scholars—“interest in the ancient Jews grew into an interest in their modern descendants.” The scholar emphasizes that in his first publication—the *Projet d’une académie orientale*—Uvarov refers to the study of Hebrew and Jewish literature as “the key to all the science of God and man.” Regarding the other note published in *JMPE* (1836, p. 11)—on the publication of a journal for the Jews in Strasbourg—Stanislawski points out Uvarov’s conservative and cautious attitude, unusual for Nikolai’s administration, toward proselytizing and brings together this Enlightenment position with Abbot Grégoire’s approach, who was also wary of forcing the process and alarming the Jewish population (S. Stanislawski, op. cit., 63, 68–69; see also S. Dubnov, *ibid.*, 2:137).

²⁴ *ZhMNP* 1835, pt. 6, no. 5:179.

for the Jewish question in the West: “Many well-known writers have lately devoted their pens to the history of the sufferings and errors of the Jews”; the article itself starts with the quote from an English author Watson—who, “with wonder and reverence,” regards the Jewish people as “connecting us with the cradle of the human race.”²⁵ The need for such historical aids was clearly evident in Russia as well. Soon, in 1837, the work of another “famous writer” introduced by Granovsky appeared in Russian translation, along with Depping. The book, by the then-popular (and now forgotten) French historian Jean Baptiste Capefigue, was titled “A Philosophical History of the Jews, from the Fall of the Maccabees until Our Day.”²⁶ In its review of the Russian edition *The Northern Bee* wrote:

In view of our contemporary readers’ universal desire for serious reading, the publication of the Russian translation of Capefigue’s remarkable work on the fate of the Jewish people cannot fail to please our inquisitive countrymen.

The history of the Jewish people is of special interest to us for two reasons: as a history of the most ancient people known and as a history of a people whose religion contained within it the seeds of Christianity. When Homer commemorated the fabled exploits of the heroes of the Trojan War, this nation, isolated from the others, already had a kingdom with a rich history. . . .

Out of all ancient peoples whose history has been preserved in literary monuments, only the Jews have retained their ancient character and religion despite the vicissitudes of fate. What can be more interesting for a thinking man than the lot of this truly marvelous people? . . .

No wonder the history of the Jews has become a subject of deep study among many of the well-known authors in Germany, France, and England. In Russia, however, it has not yet attracted the attention of any of our prominent scholars. . . . We want to sincerely thank Mr. Pugovkin for his translation of the book, which fills a long-awaited need in our literature and has received particular praise in our journals.²⁷

In Russia, under the clear influence of Capefigue, one of these “thinking men” began an argument with materialistic skeptics who denied the exceptional nature of Jewish history. From his Siberian exile Küchelbecker wrote the poem “Agasver,” in which he reflects on the unparalleled fate of the Jewish people “who are neither alive nor dead,” and who for twenty

²⁵ Granovskii, *ibid.*, 155–56.

²⁶ Trans. [into Russian] from French by K. Pugovkin (St. Petersburg, 1837). The book was republished in 1846.

²⁷ *Severnaia pchela*, 1837, no. 87.

centuries have been wandering the earth “tormented and persecuted,” not mixing with other nations.²⁸

A large amount of information, including personal entries (Abarbanel, Bar-Kokhba, R. Akiva, and others), also appear in the encyclopedic dictionary of A. Pliushar (Pluchard), published during 1835–1841 but only completed through the 17th volume, ending with the letter *Д*.

“The Fashion for Yids”

But as Küchelbecker’s long poem testifies, this topic was not limited to historical excursions. Long before that poem was written, at the dawn of Romanticism, a judophilic tradition based on the German Enlightenment had already entered Russia and was known to Russian readers through Kotzebue’s works from an earlier era,²⁹ which had now been revived in the spirit of liberalism. In 1823 the journal *News from Literature* published “a free translation” of the novel by Ludwig Börne *The Novel within a Novel* (in the original, simply *The Novel* [*Der Roman*]). As far as I am aware, this was the first publication of Börne in Russia, though the name of the author was omitted. The main character of the novel, Karl, is a colonel, a veteran of the Napoleonic Wars, and a Jew, whereas his fiancée—Karolina—is a countess’s daughter. Karolina has no idea of Karl’s background. As a prenuptial gift—or rather, as a test—the colonel writes and then reads to her and her family his short, untitled “novel.” Intended as an allegory, the story depicts a happy young couple preparing for their wedding. Suddenly the young maiden—Klara—discovers that her betrothed is a Jew. The “novel” does not have an ending; the colonel stops reading and turns to his fiancée with the question: What would you have done in Klara’s place?

²⁸ “Agasver. Poema v otryvkakh” (2-ia pol. 1830-kh–nachalo 1840-kh godov); V. K. Kiukhel’beker, *Izbrannye proizvedeniia* (Leningrad, 1967), 2:674–75.

²⁹ Similarly, at the very beginning of the 19th century a production of his play was performed about a bankrupted merchant approached by a Jewish creditor with a bill. After seeing the miserable condition of the debtor’s family, the touched creditor tries to give him his wallet and then tears the bill to shreds and leaves. The hero exclaims: “There are indeed some kind people among the heretics! How foolish I was, that I did not even want to look at the Israelites, thinking that they are devoid of humanity. I forgot that the scorned one is better than the one who scorns him. . . . [T]his Jew has given birth in my heart to a sparkle of trust in mankind” (Avgust fon Kotsebu [August von Kotzebue], *Zhertva smerti. Drama v trekh deistviakh*. trans. from German [Moscow, 1801], 48). In Russia *A Russian Gil Blas* by V. Narezhny was probably the only analogue of Enlightenment philo-Semitism. The first three parts were published in 1814 (the rest were banned from publication).

Karolina is shocked: “Such a question! Do you, Karl, really think that I am capable of falling in love with a swarthy, conniving Jew?”—“There are also blond and honest Jews,” Karl quietly objected.” The tirade that follows is missing in the original German version: “In our time we have observed many people from this nation who have abandoned the errors of their fathers, seen the light of the true faith, enlightened their minds with science, and in various countries taken honorable offices and positions.”

Klara objects: “I don’t dispute that there are always exceptions to the rule. But such a man can only hide until one finds out his background. . . . I would have told him, ‘Dear friend! You may indeed be the most honest of men; but you are still a Jew, and I will not be able to show myself in society with you. I am very sorry for you: I did love you until I knew your genealogy. I know that you love me too. . . . Look—here are many diamonds, my tassels, and my money! I give you my entire dowry to remember me by: you can spend it at the first market in Leipzig and drink to my health. Only release me from my troth!’”

“Take it back yourself!” exclaimed the colonel with a trembling voice, and ran out of the room.”

The heroine’s brother, an extreme anti-Semite, challenged Karl to a duel and was mortally wounded. The colonel was so depressed by the events that he left Germany and traveled the world. He wrote to his friend from Cadiz: “You ask me: Why did I leave my Motherland? But I have no Motherland: all people are foreigners to me. Those driven along by fate are my true brothers; from the dark place of poverty and misfortune blows the familiar air of my Motherland.”³⁰ The heroine, shocked by the events, repents and chooses a lifetime of solitude.

This publication constituted an early forerunner of the Jewish theme that was making its way to Russia from the West and arrived there in the second half of the 1820s, along with a Russian translation of Walter Scott’s *Ivanhoe*.³¹ In these translated works of literature the Enlightenment tendencies still remained, although they were beginning their retreat in the face of pressure exerted by Romantic exoticism. An interesting and rare—for *belles lettres*, not journalism—example of the Polish Enlightenment treatment of the Jewish question can be seen in the excerpt of a novel by Julian Niemcewicz entitled *Leiba i Siora* (1821), translated from German

³⁰ *Novosti literatury*, 1823, no. 42:34–35; no. 43:52.

³¹ *Ivangoe, ili Vozvrashchenie iz Krestovyykh pokhodov. Sochinenie Val'tera Skotta*, pt. 1–4 (St. Petersburg, 1826). The English original was published in 1820.

in 1831 by *Northern Mercury*. The editor of the book informs the reader that the novel “portrays with a skillful brush the morals of Polish Jews.” The heroine, Siora, pines for her beloved, Leiba, who had instilled in her a love of education and taught her the Polish language. In the cited passage, presented as a letter from Siora to Leiba, the young lady rejects the modern “Yiddish language” as being essentially “historical German,” saying: “Never did Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, or our lawgiver Moses speak in such a language. Every person’s true language of the people is the language of the land where he is born: we were born in Poland and our native language is Polish; this is the language in which we should be writing and speaking.” The novel contrasts Jews with other peoples, portraying in the most reprehensible manner the pernicious attachment of the Jews to rabbinical scholarship, “prejudice,” and the Talmud. Siora’s father is a rigid and grasping Talmudist, who almost strikes his daughter when, dying from thirst, she asks “a beautiful young Christian girl” for water: “Worthless Israelite! How dare you drink from a cup defiled by the lips of a Gentile! . . . Haven’t you read in our holy books, in the Talmud, that it is only Jews who are God’s creation; only into them that He put a soul? Other people are the children of His enemies, Sitra-Akra [*sic!*]; they do not have souls and they are just as impure as reptiles, insects, and creeping things! . . .”³²

In other words, the publication combines enlightened good intentions with a deep-seated judophobia that attributes to the Jews a hatred for all mankind. Their constant passions—avarice and miserliness—extend even to themselves. Siora’s father, “despite his wealth, was very self-restrained and abstemious with money: a pickle, an onion, and a small piece of bread was his dinner.”³³ Devoid of universal human values, the Jews know neither friendship nor love, as is demonstrated by the scene in which Siora’s father meets with relatives and friends; in Siora’s words: “They came up to him after his long absence, expressing their feelings of tender joy and heartfelt friendship—yet with the coldness always present in their greetings, and with reserve. The truth is that now I am ready to believe that there are no others among all our people, except for the two of us, who can really have feelings. They marry without love and without really knowing each other. . . . The fathers agree on the dowry—or, it may be better said, on the price.” Her father prepares the same fate for Siora—who with horror and disgust describes the Jewish wedding, while at the

³² Niemcewicz, “Otryvki iz romana ‘Leiba i Siora,’” *Severnyi Merkurii*, 1831, no. 64:257–58.

³³ *Op. cit.*, 259.

same time adopting the Slavic popular belief that Jewish weddings are performed over a pile of garbage or manure.³⁴ “On the appointed day the two poor victims are joined in the appointed place, where they are forced to dance on impurity and break a glass with their shoes; they are then ordered to live together forever.”³⁵

However antagonistically Niemcewicz portrayed Jewish tradition and the state of Polish Jewry at that time, he was actually full of goodwill toward Polish Jews. That goodwill is embodied in the young couple, who symbolize the hoped-for healing of their people by means of Enlightenment. In the West, by contrast, it was the traditional but exotic Eastern Jews—and especially the “Jewesses”—who often evoked sympathy. In Russia several serial publications pick up on this wave, influenced by Walter Scott, Byron, and modern Orientalism, which prompted them to stylize Jewish beauties according to the Bible. In 1828, for instance, *Ladies’ Journal* published an abbreviated version, translated from the French, of the quasi-historical essay “A Jewish Lady’s Dress,” which describes the very luxurious lifestyle and jewelry of a certain “young Rachel.”³⁶ Two years later the same essay—but from the English original in *Blackwood’s Magazine*—was once again translated in Delvig and Pushkin’s *Literary Gazette*.³⁷

In 1829 the venerable literary-political journal *The European Herald*, published in Moscow, presented a passage from the novel *Zilla* by the English author Horace Smith, translated into Russian from a French translation of the original, entitled “Portraits of the Jews in the Last Days of the Hasmonean Dynasty.” In the editorial notes the novel is ranked among the “innumerable imitations of Walter Scott” that circulated throughout Europe, and especially England, although its author is described as “one of the most felicitous imitators of the great Scott.” The plot unfolds in the era immediately preceding the birth of Christianity and already casts light on the coming events. The father of the heroine is an assistant to the Jewish High Priest, a highly educated man, fluent in Latin and Greek, who taught his beautiful young Zilla these languages, thus instilling in her a

³⁴ “It was a firm belief, established in eastern Poland, Podoliia, and Poles’e, that Jews were married on piles of garbage. . . . It was also said that Jews performed their wedding ceremonies in a courtyard, on horse dung, in a kitchen garden, and on the road” (O. V. Belova and V. Ia. Petrukhin, “*Evreiskii mif*” v *slavianskoi kul’ture* (Moscow, 2008), 281–82 (with footnoted reference to the Polish ethnographer A. Caba).

³⁵ Niemcewicz, op. cit., 259.

³⁶ *Damskii zhurnal*, 1828, no. 15:96–103.

³⁷ “Ubranstvo znatnoi evreiki,” *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 1820, no. 11.

taste for the best Gentile authors (in other words, he appears in the role of an Enlightener, just as Leiba did in Niemcewicz's story). Deep thinking is merged in her character with humility (a characteristic that hints at her inner inclination toward the coming Christian faith) and, at the same time, with deep godliness, such that "she could be called a Daughter of Jerusalem, of the holy city, for whose children godliness and patriotism were mutually interchangeable synonyms."³⁸ "The only pleasure that she had was an inclination toward music, this distinguishing characteristic of the Jewish religion, which could be described as the most pleasant entertainment of the people. This art was beloved by the Jews from the times of Moses and David, and their true descendants still maintain a constant love for it."³⁹ Unfortunately, this people became tragically degraded; their national pride took over in combination with their hatred toward other nations; they inclined toward idolatry, hypocrisy, and rebellion, the initiators of which was the "sect of the Pharisees," "comprising the strongest faction in Jerusalem." Zilla's stepmother, Salomeia, decides to marry her off to the leader, but the young lady is repulsed by the Pharisees. In order to save the daughter from the chaos and rebellion that threaten to engulf Jerusalem, the father takes her off for a time to Rome. And here the publication leaves off.

In 1835, *LjR*, in a review of "Rachel"⁴⁰—a collection of novellas by the French littérateur Eugénie Foa translated into Russian—states in a somewhat puzzled manner: "It seems that Mme. Eugénie Foa is greatly enamored of Jews; her best novels are based on Jewish mores. She masterfully portrays female characters and knows how to display them in the most advantageous manner."⁴¹ "Most of these pleasantly told tales are published in various foreign periodicals and have given great pleasure to their readers, both male and female"—explains N. Polevoi in *The Northern Bee*, further stating, not without truculence: "Mme. Foa especially likes to portray the customs of the Jews, but not the ones that we are accustomed to seeing on Sennaia or the major roads—no, but rather the Jews of Jerusalem and Algiers; Jews who are shrouded in the most tender Romanticism."⁴²

³⁸ *Vestnik Evropy*, 1824, no. 17:280.

³⁹ *Op. cit.*, 282.

⁴⁰ Eugénie Foa (born Rebecca Eugénie Rodrigues Henriquès). *Rachel, ou l'héritage*, 1833.

⁴¹ *Biblioteka dlja chteniia*, 10 (1835): 17.

⁴² *Severnaia pchela*, 1835, no. 92. Cf. the similar comment of Belinsky in *The Buzz* concerning the novels of Foa: "Their content consists primarily of pictures of Jewish life—yet not in Europe, but rather in Asia and Africa. It is this pure Eastern flavor that makes these

Along with Foa's works, over the next two years (1834–36) a historical novel by the German writer Karl Spindler was published in Russian translation and was in very high demand: *The Jew*. Spindler's novel also displayed certain judophilic tendencies and condemned medieval persecutions: "We are content when we are allowed to breathe"; "Is anyone in the world more unfortunate than the Jew?"—exclaims a character in the book.⁴³ Notably, this humanistic-philosemitic orientation did not occasion any surprise—not even in view of Walter Scott's precedent. Spindler was following the same enlightened German tradition with which Russia had long ago become acquainted through the writings of Kotzebue.⁴⁴

In 1834 the following somber observation appeared in *The Northern Bee*: "The Paris theaters have turned into synagogues; in every theater we see only Jews and Jewesses. In the opera they stage *La Juive*, in the theater de la Porte St. Martin they present *The Tsarina and the Little Jewess*, and in l'Ambigu-Comique—*The Eternal Jew*, and so too in four other theaters—in the Circus, in Variétés, in Gymnase, and in Palais-Royal—they are rehearsing *The Wandering Yids*. This fashion for Yids began with the new novel of Edgar Quinet, in which the Eternal Jew is the main character."⁴⁵

It seems that the Russian reading public was also intrigued by the fate of the Eternal Jew. In 1830 Polevoi's *Moscow Telegraph* published in translation an anonymous novel about this figure; the manuscript was alleged (falsely) to have been discovered in the annals of the Spanish Inquisition.⁴⁶ In 1833 Nadezhdin's paper *The Buzz (Molva)*—a supplement to the journal *Telescope*—published two pieces on this topic at the same time. The first is a story translated from French, "The Charmed Mirror: An Episode from the Life of Cornelius Agrippa,"⁴⁷ in which the Eternal Jew appears before a famous alchemist. The second is a composition by a Russian author—a certain I.S.R.Z.K.—entitled "A Jewish Fable of Agasfer."⁴⁸ All of these texts are unified by the theme of the grief and repentance of the Wandering Jew who, because of his sin, is doomed to roam eternally. In the "Jewish Fable," however, Christ sends the martyr a long-awaited end,

novels so different—the characters are portrayed from a better, more human perspective" (V. G. Belinskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* [Moscow, 1953], 1:189).

⁴³ Spindler, *Evrei. Kartina germanskikh nrayov v pervoi polovine XV stoletia* (St. Petersburg, 1834), 1:35, 46. Incidentally, Belinsky spoke very favorably about Spindler.

⁴⁴ See note 120 above.

⁴⁵ *Severnaia pchela*, 1834, no. 210.

⁴⁶ "Tainstvennyi zhid," *Moskovskii telegraf*, 1830, pt. 1, no. 3.

⁴⁷ *Molva*, 1833, nos. 38–39.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, no. 53.

and the angel of death proclaims over his remains, "Henceforward be at peace, O Jew; abide in peaceful sleep, and know: The punishment of the merciful is not eternal! Your sleep will pass! And you will see the glory of the one whose blood colored Golgotha red, whose grace is available to you, as to all!"⁴⁹ Yet on the whole the character of Agasfer remained marginal within Russian literature, although he was developed in poetry, not only by Küchelbecker and Bernet, but also in the works of the venerable Zhukovsky and Pushkin, although the latter touched upon the theme only in passing.

Byron's *Hebrew Melodies* caught on much better in Russia. They were translated by many poets such as N. Markevich, D. Oznobishin, and others, the most famous of whom was Lermontov. Yet before he started working on these texts (during the summer–fall of 1830), his friend N. Shenshin—the same one mentioned above who translated the *History of the Jews* by the Count de Ségur—published, on May 2, 1830, in the literary organ *Northern Mercury*, his prose transcriptions of Byron's poems.⁵⁰

In 1835 Nadezhdin's *Telescope* translated a lengthy—and hostile—review by Jules Janin of a play by Casimir Delavigne, *Don Juan of Austria*, in which, among other things, it talks about "the restoration of the Jewish people, which is a very popular topic in today's literature. Following the charming portrayal of Walter Scott's medieval Jewess, Rebecca, all the novels and dramas are filled with heroes from among the people of God. . . . The latest poetry swears only by the Yids. A young man of noble background is always falling in love with a Jewess. However well brought up a young maiden may be, if she has been sprinkled by the waters of baptism she is no longer considered to be an interesting subject for a novel, poem, or drama. There is no other god but the God of Israel, Isaac, and Jacob. . . . Formerly it was the turn of Alzira; fifteen years ago it was the turn of Urika; the heroine of our present time is Sarah."⁵¹ Janin is referring here to the heroine of Scribe and Halévy's *La Juive*. At the same time, he forcefully condemns the shameful persecution of the Jews that has darkened their history.

In Russia *La Juive* became a sensation, just as *Ivanhoe* had before it, whereas Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, which was foundational for this theme, twice failed shamefully in St. Petersburg. First it failed in

⁴⁹ Ibid., 216.

⁵⁰ *Severnyi Merkurii*, 1830, no. 53:209–10.

⁵¹ *Teleskop*, 1835, pt. 27:487–88.

1833, probably due to an awkward translation by V. Iakimov.⁵² The second failure came at the end of 1835, when the play was staged in a different, yet similarly amateurish interpretation by the actor A. Slavin, who used not the English original, but rather the German translation of August Schlegel⁵³ (which was in and of itself a first-class translation). N. Grech, who visited Germany in 1835, had the opportunity to contrast the Russian failure of the play with its steady success in the exquisite German version. (The success was of course strengthened by the anti-Semitic context there.) For the fiasco in St. Petersburg he blamed not the translator, but rather the pitiful level of Russian theater-goers: “*The Merchant of Venice* in Russian translation staged in St. Petersburg evoked both astonishment and laughter from most of our audience, who are uneducated in and unfamiliar with the history and merit of the fine arts. Here in Berlin they listen to the play with attentiveness and respect for the genius of Shakespeare, and see in it not a farce, but rather a careful portrayal of medieval morals and characters that are well worth studying.”⁵⁴

At the beginning of 1835 *The Merchant of Venice*, now in N. Pavlov's translation, was staged in the Moscow Theater as a benefit performance for the famous actor M. Shchepkin. In anticipation of the play S. Shevyrev decided to introduce the readers of *The Buzz* to the character of Shylock, “one of the greatest of Shakespeare's creations . . . on the basis of whom Walter Scott created his Isaac in *Ivanhoe*, and in whom anyone who wishes to portray a Jew will find an exemplar.” And then, as advice to Shchepkin, who took the part of the main character, Shevyrev refers to comments by August Schlegel, contained in his *History of the Dramatic Arts*. According to Schlegel, Shylock combines in himself striking individual and national characteristics that in the long run come to dominate him, making the merchant the symbol of all Jewry. There are linguistic instructions for his character (this is particularly characteristic of German anti-Semitism, which looks for the old accent in the speech of the new—rich, and Germanized—Jewish elite): “It seems that even in his words today you can hear a certain Jewish dialect, which is preserved even in the high social class to which he belongs, in spite of his fine education.”

⁵² See the negative review by N. Polevoi, *Moskovskii telegraf*, 1833, pt. 51, no. 9:152–60.

⁵³ See the comments by Iu. D. Levin on these translations in the book *Shekspir i russkaia kul'tura*, edited by M. P. Alekseev, 266–67, 282 (Moscow, 1965). In 1839, in *Otechestvennye zapiski*, N. F. Pavlov's prose translation was published (vol. 5, no. 9).

⁵⁴ Nikolai Grech, “Deistvitel'naia poezdka v 1835 godu,” *Sochineniia*, (St. Petersburg, 1855), 3:136.

His dry rationalism is combined with callousness, revenge, and greed: “Shylock is a very informed man, and in his own way a thinker, but the country in which human feelings reside remains unknown to him. His moral teaching is based on disbelief in kindness and the nobility of the spirit; all his actions are motivated by revenge for the persecution and humiliation that his people have experienced, and together with revenge is also his miserliness. And most of all, of course, he hates those Christians who are true to their religion: an example of selfless love for one’s neighbor appears to him as harassment of the Jews.” And finally, Schlegel, in Shevyrev’s rendition, follows Paul by comparing the brutal Jewish Law to humble Christian grace: “The letter of the Law is his idol: he deviates from the voice of mercy that sounds from the lips of Portia with heavenly eloquence: he continues to hold fast to the old unshakable right, and it falls on his own head. Here Shylock is a symbol of the entire history of his unfortunate people.”⁵⁵

Yet this staging failed as well. Commenting on the failure and lecturing Shchepkin in retrospect, Shevyrev returns to the character of Shylock:

In order to fully comprehend the greatness of this character, one must turn away from the grotesque, caricatured notion of the children of Israel which one acquires in Polish taverns. The Jewish nature in Shylock is expressed not only by his sidelocks, dirty skullcap, his hunched back, and his vile exclamations “God help us and them!” He epitomizes “the Yid,” serving as an expression of the entire physiology, a reduction of the entire history of that unfortunate people who, bearing the stigma of eternal damnation, are condemned to wander among people, serving as undying representatives of mankind driven to extreme social nonexistence, mankind without rights, without a present, with a long-ago perished past and an avidly hoped-for but never realized future!

According to Shevyrev, the fate of the Jewish people in the new European world is the subject of a deep, inexhaustible font of poetry. Shakespeare’s Shylock—this is the “ideal” in whom the reality of the Jewish nature, for the most part “caricatured and piteous, is brought to a level of tragic, astonishing magnitude.”

Shevyrev, in passing, even brings into his article a note of Enlightenment sympathy, albeit very reserved and alternating with his demonization of the character. The inner tragedy of Shylock is that this “rich Jew of Venice”—“the merchant city, where gold was everything”—is nonetheless

⁵⁵ *Molva*, 1835, pt. 9:62, 65.

“sentenced to the most extreme measure of humiliation. Despite his numerous treasures they spit at his beard, they kick him and call him a dog! . . . What can be the result of the combination of such extremes! . . . He is vile and low as a Yid, as a social nonentity, but underneath his villainy is some kind of devilish grandeur, his pettiness has in itself something hellishly exalted. . . .”

Shevyrev’s splitting of the image of the Jew into “low” and “high” sides takes on the features of a metaphysical dichotomy: the “low” features include greed as the foundation of the character’s earthly existence, even as his satanic vengefulness is something like the spiritual component of Jewishness. First “Shylock appears in all the hellish grandeur of a triumphant demon. . . . His earthly greed struggles with the yearning for revenge. . . . But in the fourth act. . . he is left only with the desire for revenge: the bags of gold . . . lose all their seductiveness; cold-bloodedly he sharpens his knife, with which he will cut out the precious penalty. . . . But his revenge is foiled . . . and the Yid returns to his nothingness; from every pore of his body again oozes all the Yid filth and villainy.” Alas, this Jewish heinousness is exactly what our most talented actor Shchepkin did not want to portray: with the first scene he “got carried away in the fervor of his talent; I did not see in him that Yid villainy with which the dramatic story of Shakespeare’s Shylock begins and ends.”⁵⁶

For the Russian stage, all these Shakespearean dichotomies were still too tricky, and instead of Shchepkin’s pathos it was more accustomed to the same “low-comic, caricatured concept” of Jews that so jarred Shevyrev. In serf theaters preference was given to more traditional, lighthearted fare, such as, for example, the staging in 1828 of ensign Peter Mayer’s “hilarious show” *The Fair in Berdichev, or The Enlisted Jew*, with every possible element, including “Jewish dancing.”⁵⁷ Incidentally, the latter was also part of the first ever staging of Gogol’s works, the vaudeville *Evenings on a Farm near Dikanka* (based on the story *The Night Before Christmas*), staged in January 1833 in the St. Petersburg Bolshoi Theatre.⁵⁸

Later, numerous other vaudevilles took their place among these merry productions,⁵⁹ along with prose genres like Vladimir Dal’s collection of popular anecdotes about Jews as well as *The Humorous Adventures of*

⁵⁶ “O benefise g. Shchepkina,” *Moskva*, 1833, pt. 9, col. no. 116–120.

⁵⁷ See V. Vsevolodskii (Gerngross), *Istoriia russkogo teatra*, vol. 1 (Moscow, 1929).

⁵⁸ See O. Danilov, *Gogol’ i teatr* (Leningrad, 1936), 117–18.

⁵⁹ The same comical treatment of Jewish characters became commonplace in the German theater (Ritchie Robertson, op. cit., 203).

Four Jews in Khokhlandia (Moscow, 1844). In place of Shylock, secondary Jewish characters from French melodramas made their appearances on the stage of the capital. Thus, in St. Petersburg at the beginning of 1834 the heart-rending play *Clotilde* by Soulié and Bossange was staged in a “frenetic” manner that prompted ridicule on the part of *The Northern Bee’s* reviewers. The main character dreams of getting married and for this purpose seeks to borrow money from a Jewish moneylender. The moneylender refuses him, whereupon the desperate hero “stabs him, as he should”; but the killer is sentenced to death. In the end he and his fiancée together commit suicide in prison.⁶⁰

This new scourge also penetrated the nascent Russian literature, albeit not to the same degree. While most of its representatives felt no desire for Jewish emancipation, when it came to Jewish women, they were filled with the tender feelings of the sort expressed by Mme. Foa. Such fashionable Orientalism, partially engendered by Byron’s *Hebrew Melodies*, often encouraged the stylizing of Jewish female characters after biblical imagery, adapting the corresponding tones of foreign publications.

As for Walter Scott, his influence was increasingly felt in historical novels of the 1820s, especially in those of the Decembrist Marlinsky (Alexander Bestuzhev), the most popular representative of “violent” Romanticism. Yet he was completely indifferent to the Jewish component of *Ivanhoe*. As far as I am aware, this theme is given expression for the first time by another writer concealing himself under the initials L. S., in the historical novel *Red Ruby*. Set in the 16th century, it was published in 1827 by A. Izmailov and P. Iakovlev in their *Almanac of the Muses*, and was not so much archaic as anti-Romantic. This tone can be seen in the text’s hesitant ambivalence: on the one hand it is openly stylized in the manner of the Scottish novelist, but on the other hand, it polemically plays upon the ubiquitous cult of Scott.⁶¹ In any case, it features the Jewish jewelry maker Samuel, who appears “with constant low bows, tiptoeing to peer through the door, every second looking about.”⁶²

⁶⁰ See *Severnaia pchela*, 1834, no. 46.

⁶¹ Objecting to the alleged criticism for the extreme brevity of his novel, the content of which would have been enough for “a vast novel,” the author states that he was merely writing “an article for the almanac,” purely intended for entertainment. And he adds: “Are there no more people on earth but your Walter Scott? Must we write poorly because Walter Scott writes brilliantly? Is what he does a decree for the rest of us?” (*Kalendar’ muz*, 1827, p. 204). It may be that L. S. was an initialized pseudonym of almanac’s co-editor, P. Iakovlev, who would occasionally sign his materials “Luzhitskii Starets.”

⁶² *Op. cit.*, 172.

In just this manner, entering furtively, the Jewish theme crept into Russian Romantic prose.

The "Jerusalem Nobility" in Bulgarin and Grech's Newspaper

The Russian historical novel, also orienting itself along the lines of Walter Scott, appeared later, at the turn of the 1820s and 1830s. One of its first and leading publishers was the Russianized Pole Faddei (Jan Tadeusz) Bulgarin—the author of *Dmitry the Pretender* (end of 1829) and *Mazepa* (1833–1834). He had managed to touch upon the Jewish theme earlier in his fiction, in his historical novella of 1828, *Esterka* (see below in chap. 7), yet even there, as well as in his later literary production, he followed not so much the tradition of Walter Scott as that of Polish anti-Semitism. This is most aggressively demonstrated in his extremely popular picaresque—“moralistic-satirical”—novel, which has been translated into many languages: *Ivan Vyzhigin* (1829). But as a journalist, he constantly combined this anti-Semitic approach with the humanistic-Enlightenment impulses coming from the West.

The Northern Bee, in general, claimed to shed light on Western and Russian life in a relevant and objective manner (within the ascetic limits allowed by censorship). It should be kept in mind that this was the most widely read Russian newspaper, and its two-sided position on the Jewish question could not fail to reflect the ways in which Russian literature dealt with this question.

From its initial publication until December 1825 it maintained a liberal tone, sharing in the hope for Enlightenment's inevitable success among the Jews and demonstrating a willing compassion for the persecuted nation, sanctioned by Western sources such as *Ivanhoe*. In January 1825, in one of the first editions of *The Northern Bee*, Orest Somov included Scott's “Little Jewess Rebecca” among “the most splendid female characters created by his imagination,” and he attributed the heroine's charm to her “nobility of character amidst the humiliating condition of her people.”⁶³ In May of the same year the newspaper—or perhaps Bulgarin himself—announced, not without gravity: “With great pleasure we would like to inform our readers that the Jews dispersed throughout Polish provinces

⁶³ S(omov), “O romanakh,” *Severnaia pchela*, 1825, no. 9. By contrast, the critic treats the rest of Scott's female characters disparagingly—as support figures.

are starting to take to science. From the Enlightenment of the Jews will come great benefit to mankind. Last year in Warsaw a Jewish paper was published, and recently a Polish grammar was published in the common Yid [*zhidovskom*] language [i.e., in Yiddish—M.W.], which is a mix of distorted Polish, German, and Jewish words. The author of this *Grammar*, Berko Lesselroth, overcame the greatest difficulties. Another Jew, Tugengold, is currently working on publishing a Jewish-Polish dictionary, with concise rules of the language.”⁶⁴

Of course, German *Maskilim* were incomparably more successful in acculturation—especially adherents of Reform Judaism. Bulgarin held them up as an example to the backward Polish Jews. In October 1825 he published, as an exhortation to Polish Jews, some very exciting news: “Twenty-five Jewish families in Cologne have united into one society and resolved to pray in German, to celebrate the Sabbath on Sunday, to abolish the rules of *kosher* and *treyf*, and to eat meat butchered by Christians: here is a great step toward enlightenment! Throughout Germany in general the Jews are opening schools and seeking to assimilate to the other inhabitants of Europe. What would the Polish Yids say to that?”⁶⁵

Not long after this, unfortunately, the “Polish Yids” completely disappointed the paper, after which it began to display an extreme animosity toward these people, who had now become Russian subjects. In 1835 Bulgarin lumped them together under this diagnosis: “Most of the Polish Yids are moral invalids and, moreover, stubborn ones.”⁶⁶ As we already saw, his co-editor, N. Grech, had a much calmer attitude toward the sons of Israel, and perhaps it is specifically to him that *The Northern Bee* (as also *Son of the Fatherland*, which they likewise edited together) owed its more civilized Western manner of presenting the topic, a manner for the most part—but not always, to be sure—devoid of any anti-Semitic thread. Nonetheless, in 1843 Bulgarin would take all the credit for this himself.

In Germany, which Grech visited quite often, he was mostly interested in the sweeping infiltration of emancipated Jews into the cultural and social life of the country—especially in Berlin—as well as in the highly energetic opposition that it engendered. He had already familiarized himself with German anti-Semitism during the post-Napoleonic period, marked by the explosion of ambitiously nationalistic and anti-Jewish

⁶⁴ *Severnaia pchela*, 1825, no. 58.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, no. 118.

⁶⁶ F. B(ulgarin), “Putevye zapiski v poezdke iz Derpta v Belorussiiu vesnoi 1835 goda,” *Severnaia pchela*, 1835, no. 149.

attitudes, and thereafter he often revised his impressions. In his traveling notes of 1835, published in *The Northern Bee*, and then again in 1837 as a separate book, Grech mentions in passing the “street fights between the young citizens of Hamburg and the Jews.” During that same trip he also visited one of the local theaters in Berlin, which was

owned by a private party, a Jew, I think. . . . They have good actors—for instance, the comedian Shmelka—yet everyone in it had a Yid nature. In general all the Jews of Berlin play a very important role with their wealth and influence. The best country houses. . . belong to Yids. About twenty years ago an actor by the name of Wurm, well-known to us in Petersburg, appeared on the Berlin stage. He played Yids with unmatched talent, causing Christians to give loud applause and the Jews to lose patience. They decided to ruin him and brought against him an accusation of abominable sin [in all likelihood this refers to the actor’s homosexuality—M.W.], furnishing witnesses. Wurm was put in prison, but as everyone knows, the accusation was based on slander and bought testimony, and he was secretly released from prison and advised not to enter Prussian domains. Soon after this (in the fall of 1817) I saw him on stage in Leipzig, where he entertained Saxons by ridiculing Berlin and Berlin Yids.⁶⁷

This humorous anecdote exhausts all of Grech’s anti-Semitism. At the same time, however, he touched upon a very serious subject. The Albert Wurm affair was a significant symptom of the rising active anti-Semitism that resulted in the pogroms in August 1819.⁶⁸

Sometimes European letters supplied the paper with less aggressive comic material. In 1834, advertising a collection of anecdotes by Karl Krai under the rubric “New Books,” *The Northern Bee* cites one from among them, worthy of the absurdist writer Daniil Kharms:

Soon after the ban on taking more than six-percent interest, an officer calls in a Yid-moneychanger and asks him for money. The Yid, in specifying the percent of interest, writes on the door the number 9. “Come now, you swindler, aren’t you afraid of God?”—exclaims the officer. “Why should I be afraid? God looks down and sees only 6.”⁶⁹

⁶⁷ “Deistviteĭnaia poezdka v Germaniiu v 1835 goda,” in Nikolai Grech, *Sochineniia* (St. Petersburg, 1855), 3:40, 137–38.

⁶⁸ For more on this and the struggle between Wurm and Ludwig Börne, see Gilman, *op. cit.*, 156–59; Ritchie Robertson, *op. cit.*, 206–8; Peter R. Erspamer, *The Elusiveness of Tolerance: The “Jewish Question” from Lessing to the Napoleonic Wars* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1997), 142–49.

⁶⁹ “Al’manakh: Anekdoty Karla Kraia,” *Severnaia pchela*, 1834, no. 118.

As to the pan-European operations of the Rothschilds, *The Northern Bee*, much like other Russian publications, maintained a rather equitable tone, even to the extent that they preferred not to mention the family's beliefs or nationality. Grech himself, after extensive European travels, had an occasion to make the acquaintance of one of these bankers while attending to some business in Naples. He left this touching recollection of the encounter:

I was walking along the street adjoining Chiaya and I saw a house that stood out among all the others around it because of its architecture, cleanliness and a certain English comfort. "This must be the house of Rothschild!"—I thought, and without any introduction asked the doorman a question: "Is the baron home?"—"No, sir,"—answered the porter, to my astonishment without asking for a tip.—"The lord baron is still at his dacha, but he will return soon. If you are here on a business matter, here is the entrance to the office." . . . I went to the office, comprising several spacious and tidy rooms, and gave a credit slip to a clerk. He took it and politely asked me to wait in the living room. I entered. Imagine my joy: on a large table before the sofa were several newspapers: *Journal des Débats*, the *Times*, and the *Allgemeine Zeitung*. I threw myself at them with gusto and started reading, from the first line to the last. . . . Then a very distinguished man with an intelligent face entered the room, bowed, and looked at me with inexpressible pleasure. . . . "I am so happy"—he said—"that within my domicile you have found something pleasurable that makes you forget about money." "Pardon, Lord Baron!"—I answered. "I am a writer, a journalist, and have gone for too long without the pleasure of reading foreign papers."⁷⁰

—and so on. Following this they have a mutually pleasing conversation about Naples.

As we can see, Grech admires Rothschild's baronage.⁷¹ Likewise, his paper expresses warm feelings about the knighthood of Moses Montefiore.

⁷⁰ Nikolai Grech, *Pis'ma s dorogi po Germanii, Shveitsarii i Italii* (St. Petersburg, 1843), 2:280–81. Earlier, in 1842, Grech published his notes in "*Russkaia beseda*" (pt. 3).

⁷¹ European and Russian aristocrats did not look as favorably on the title. Count Buturlin remembers how in the mid-1820s "society began talking . . . about the Rothschilds, who were by then beginning to gain a reputation in the financial world. One of the arrogant representatives of that firm, speaking at the negotiations over a loan by the Austrian government, said something to the effect that 'La maison d'Autriche peut compter sur celle de Rotchild.' (The house of Austria can count on the house of Rothschild.) But to one of his brothers the French ambassador to Rome, Duc de Montmorency-Laval, said: 'Do you know the difference between us? I come from the first Christian baron, and you—the first Jewish baron'" (M. D. Buturlin, *Zapiski grafa M. D. Buturlina. Vospominaniia, avtobiografiia* [Moscow, 2006], 1:155). Cf. the similar report quoted by Pushkin in *Table Talk*, as well as the ironic inversion of this theme in Herzen's *Past and Thoughts*, "Imperator Dzheims Rotshil'd i bankir Nikolai Romanov."

In 1837, in the notice “A Dinner Given in Honor of the Queen of England in Guildhall, London” (in the column “Current Notes”), *The Northern Bee* reports that the Queen “awarded the knighthood to Sheriffs Sir John Carroll and Sir Moses Montefiore. The latter professes the Israelite faith and in the London papers it is noted that this is the first time that the Queen has given such an honor to a Jew.”⁷²

Indeed, the *Bee* was itself ready to grant knighthood to the ancient, Biblical Jews if it was being done in the West. In 1840 it published an article by Granier de Cassagnac, “On the services rendered by the nobility to the enlightenment and literature,” wherein he notes that “all the great men among the Jewish people, from Moses, the direct descendant of Abraham, to Malachi, the last prophet, were all of noble origin, coming either from kings or from the Levites. This has been demonstrated by the research of the Church Fathers.”⁷³

Commenting on the philo-Semitic book by Carlo Cattaneo published in 1837 in Milan, “Ricerche economiche sulle interdizioni imposte della legge civile agli israeliti” and, together with the author, condemning “all banning laws” decreed against the Jews “in different Christian countries,” the paper nonetheless attributes these types of persecution to “the long-lasting and persistent moral struggle of the Jews with Christianity.” The review inclines toward a humane interpretation. “Such laws,” continues *The Northern Bee*, “had one of two goals: either to take away from the Jews the means for owning real estate, or else to limit their personal rights—for example, banning them from the free study of science and the arts, requiring them to wear special clothing, forbidding them to leave the areas to which they had been assigned to live, and so on.” It is unclear why the reviewer failed to connect the restrictions he condemned with the Russian Pale of Settlement or the expulsion of Jews from the villages (measures Bulgarian cheerfully sanctioned). But like Cattaneo, he uses just such restrictions to explain the notorious greed of the Jews: “The author, assessing the consequences of these constraining measures in a political-economic light, argues (convincingly, by the way) that the ban on Jews owning real estate in fact fostered the growth of their capital and freed them from paying a multitude of state taxes. Therefore, we should not grumble over the Jerusalem nobility’s greed for gold: we ourselves encouraged in them this fervor!” (A malicious note accompanies the expression

⁷² *Severnaia pchela*, 1837, no. 58.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 1840, no. 144.

“Jerusalem nobility”: “Every Jew considers himself of high nobility by dint of his genealogy.”)

Similar treatises were published in other countries as well, to which the same reviewer—probably Bulgarin himself—reacts with perplexity, ending his review in a somewhat manipulative manner. “Recently,” he adds, “one German professor stood up for the rights of his oppressed relatives, Yids, praising the oath by which they everywhere and always are required to empty the pockets of Christians.”⁷⁴ Prudently omitting the name of this German professor, as we can see, the reviewer simply invented this imaginary Jewish oath.

Grech, however, interprets the economic activity of German Jews in an entirely different manner in his traveling notes of 1837 (“Strolls along the Rhine”): “In the thirteenth century,” he says, “Cologne was a strong ally of the Hanseatic League, and being an important trade city it took part in the business of Lübeck, Bremen, and Danzig. Yet this flourishing period of its existence was not long-lived. Catholics, encouraged by a wrongly motivated zeal for the faith, hated the Jews who lived there in great multitudes and who were active in commerce. Their expulsion was the first strike against the welfare of Cologne.”⁷⁵ (And the final blow was what followed, the flight of Cologne’s Protestants.)

Under the influence of its Western sources, the paper held to a humane, well-meaning tone in relation to more exotic worshipers of the Law of Moses—for example, to “Jewish Negroes,” by which was meant dark-skinned Indian Jews living in Kochi (Cochin): “Everyone knows that there are black Muslims, Christians, and pagans; but not everyone is aware of black Jews. . . . They have a beautiful synagogue, decorated with china and surrounded by a gorgeous garden. The Dutch gave them a clock with a chime. During the holy days, for the worship service, they display many gold and silver vessels. They used to be rich merchants but now are extremely poor. . . . Black Jews differ from their white brethren by their particular honesty; all of them are artisans, the fields and gardens of whom are worked by Hindus. According to the opinion of many scholars the Israelite Negroes are descendants of black slaves, who several centuries before were purchased by one rich Indian Jew, who raised them under Jewish Law and then freed them.”⁷⁶

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 1838, no. 52.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 1837, no. 164.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 1841, no. 186.

In an anonymous article on Morocco we read: “There are many Jews and Negroes in the Moroccan empire, which consists of different tribes united into one nation. The Negroes, however, are not persecuted to the same degree as the Jews. . . . The Jews came here from different countries, especially from Portugal and Spain, when they were starting to be persecuted. *Without the Jews the wheel of politics and leadership would probably have stood still.*”⁷⁷ On another occasion the paper sympathetically quotes Capefigue’s view of the Koran: “This Muslim holy book is derived from Jewish tradition and rabbinical works. Nonetheless, the Jews are being strongly persecuted by Islam, which exhibits the same spirit of intolerance as Western Christianity.”⁷⁸

“The Jewish Socrates”: Jewish Thought Through the Eyes of Russian Society

Later, summarizing Capefigue’s *History*, which had already been published in Russian, *The Northern Bee* claimed: “What is most interesting to the attentive reader is how this nation has preserved an ancient idea that was first made known to them, the idea of a Great God.”⁷⁹

A broad panegyric to this same idea and its adherents appears in Chaadaev’s seventh “Philosophical Letter,” dated February 16, 1829. Comparing the culture and thinkers of antiquity to “the two giants of Holy Scripture”—Moses and David—the author exalts the former in every possible way for “the idea of the Great God,” and he exalts the Jewish people for “the great mission” of preserving this idea for all mankind. By this same mission Chaadaev justifies the ancient nationalism of the Chosen People, who were obligated to fence in “the understanding of the one God” from the threat of erosion from the Gentile nations; he also praises the patriotism of Moses—that is to say, everything that was considered part of the “national narrow-mindedness” of Jewry, so emphatically foreign to Christian ecumenism.⁸⁰ Taking into account the author’s Catholic-ecumenical inclinations, such a defense of spiritual isolationism at first glance seems rather strange. But the important thing here is the Jews’ defense of the

⁷⁷ Ibid., 1840, no. 106.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 1827, no. 73.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 1837, no. 87.

⁸⁰ P. Ia. Chaadaev, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i izbrannye pis'ma* (Moscow, 1994), 1186–90; translation, pp. 431–35.

“oneness of God,” which Chaadaev projects onto his own view of the oneness of all world history as developed in Christian teachings.

Jules Michelet also celebrates Jewish monotheism, and in 1833 the *Moscow Telegraph* printed related passages from his introduction to *World History*, in which the author connects this idea to the well-intentioned separation of the ancient Jews from their Arab and general Asian surroundings: “Let wandering tribes of Arabs come from the south, without habitation and without laws: Israel sees in them the descendants of his brother, Ishmael, but does not hold out a hand to them. Perish, O you foreigner—you shall not enter the Holy City: she guards in her womb the priceless pledge of Truth, Unity, and Spirit, for which they will come to beg her on their knees when the destiny of the West, Greece, and Rome is fulfilled.”⁸¹

In 1832 *Rainbow* presented a hymn to the intellectual greatness of the ancient Jews in the same article where the teachings of Pythagoras and Plato were traced to “the Books of Moses,” allegedly received through Egyptian priests. The journal continues:

According to Philo and Josephus we can tell that the Jews . . . were the most educated people, and the reason for this is easily unraveled. Where did the Greeks get their calendar? Newton gave credit to the Jews. From the example of Daniel we can see how respected these excellent people were in Babylon, where, without question, the sciences flourished. The great rabbi Maimonides said that at the end of the Babylonian captivity many Jews did not want to return home and remained in Babylon, where they enjoyed absolute freedom and great respect, and that the preservation of all the secret archives in Ecbatana was entrusted to the most select among them. Peter Kuneus in his *Jewish Republic* relates a very interesting anecdote about Aristotle, who after a conversation with one Jewish man in Asia declared that by comparison to this man all the greatest scholars of Greece seem as barbarians.”⁸²

In a portion of Capefigue’s book published by *The Northern Bee* before the complete publication of the book itself, emphasis is given to the intellectual achievements of the Jews in medieval Spain and other countries: “Amidst the violence of the Middle Ages it is very interesting to see the unusual success of Jewish literature: the intellectual activity of the Jews of that time is amazing; their schools were multiplying in all synagogues.”⁸³

⁸¹ *Moskovskii telegraf*, 1833, pt. 49, no. 1:14.

⁸² *Raduga*, 1832, book 2:99–101.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

Such a characterization, probably prompted by Capefigue himself—and possibly also by Depping or Granovsky—is repeated by Küchelbecker in “Agasver”:

In this age, blind and capricious,
 They were hardly taken for people,
 Burned, slaughtered; and meanwhile into their hands
 fell faded learning,
 And gold. In every land a stranger,
 A financier hated yet needed by all,
 Torn to pieces, yet still indestructible,
 Israel wandered.—Formerly a doctor
 To popes and emperors, the persecuted Jew,
 Who had been a moneylender, a translator
 Of Arabic books of frequent service to monks,
 Who would later lead to the scaffold
 Their teacher, or cast him into the fire.

The line about “Arabic books” is accompanied by a note from the author (who added to the list of Jewish scholars also some who were not Jewish): “The mediators between Arab scholars and French barbarians were (almost exclusively) Jews. And in spite of the chains placed on their minds by persecution in combination with the Talmud, they exceeded the Christians of the day in education and scientific advancement. Names such as Benjamin of Tudela, Avicenna, and Averroes will remain unforgettable: all three were Spanish Jews.”⁸⁴

The names of Jewish philosophers from antiquity also remained “unforgettable.” Speaking about the rise of Neo-Platonism in Alexandria, Nadezhdin emphasizes “an amazing similarity, appearing in all its glory, between these last days of Greek life and the last period of Jewish history. In Alexandria, the new New York of the ancient world, the remains of all civilizations and resonances of all religions and philosophies gathered together . . . , and when these manifold elements came into contact with each other, they immediately aligned themselves with those that were similar and joined in one mass: Jewish beliefs became Hellenic thought, and the Jewish Philo, a zealous keeper of the Law of Moses, was privileged with occupying a place in the Holy scripture [the Book of the Wisdom of Solomon was

⁸⁴ V. K. Kiuchel'beker, *ibid.*, 111–15. *Contra* Küchelbecker, neither Avicenna (Ibn Sīnā) nor Averroes (Ibn Rushd) was Jewish. V. Tepliakov, in 1839, in his traveling notes on Syria and Palestine, speaks favorably about Benjamin of Tudela (a 12th-century Jewish traveler), whom he puts “a full century ahead of Plano Carpini and Marco Polo” (V. G. *Tepliakov, Kniga strannika. Stikhotvoreniia. Proza. Perepiska* [Tver, 2004], 342).

wrongly attributed to him—M.W.] and having his name included among the list of Greek philosophers, being one of the greatest representatives of Neoplatonism.”⁸⁵

In the early Enlightenment period Jewish philosophical thought is represented mainly by Spinoza and Moses Mendelssohn, who came to fame after the publication of his *Phaedon*. In 1833 *Rainbow*, quoting the Prussian cliché, refers to Mendelssohn as “the Plato of the Wolff school.”⁸⁶ *JMPE* prefers a different title—“the Jewish Socrates.” In 1837 a new Russian translation of *Phaedon* was published.⁸⁷ In its review *JMPE*, out of respect for the Berlin thinker, even adds Mendelssohn to the realm of Christian philosophy—apparently together with Plato himself, after whom the treatise was stylized and put together. Uvarov himself looked favorably upon Mendelssohn as, first and foremost, the founder of the Jewish enlightenment—the *Haskalah*—with the representatives of which the Russian minister built active contacts.

Mendelssohn’s biography is portrayed as a thorny path from “poverty” and “Jewish Law” to the beneficent exuberance of Christian metaphysics. The primary merit of *Phaedon* is its splendid apology for religious values and the immortality of soul—an apology that shattered the damaging influence of French godlessness and English empiricism (thus contributing to the establishment of German idealistic philosophy):

Mendelssohn represents a remarkable phenomenon in the history of literature of the past century. He was born in poverty and under Jewish Law: but his inner desires transformed him into a Christian philosopher. . . . He lived at a time when skepticism and materialism, with all of their grave consequences for morality and religion, had begun to penetrate Germany from England and France. Faith in the immortality of the soul would have been shaken if the first Jewish Socrates—as I recall someone has named Mendelssohn—, together with other well-minded thinkers, had not resisted the influence of these damaging ideas.

⁸⁵ N. Nadezhdin, “Ne dlia g. Shevyreva, a dlia chitatelei. Poslednee slovo ob ‘Istorii poezii,’” *Teleskop*, 1836, pt. 34. no. 11:41–12. “Perhaps in our new world the same period had started for us,” the author adds dreamily.

⁸⁶ *Raduga*, 1833, book 1:53.

⁸⁷ Moisei Mendel’son, *Fedon, ili O bessmertii dushi. Tri razgovora*, trans. from German by V. Myznikov (St. Petersburg, 1837). Some early research identified the influence of *Phaedon* (especially the first and second “Conversations”) on Radishchev’s tractate *On Man, His Mortality and Immortality*. See especially P. N. Miliukov, *Ocherki po istorii russkoi kul’tury* (Moscow, 1995), 3:386; G. G. Shpet, “Ocherk razvitiia russkoi filosofii,” in G. G. Shpet, *Sochineniia* (Moscow, 1989), 80.

What follows is a detailed exposition of *Phaedon*, at the end of which the reviewer (probably Kraevsky) welcomes the Russian translation “of the work by this pleasing and virtuous philosopher” and “wonderful writer.”⁸⁸

And, to be sure, they showed even more respect to Spinoza, whose system, coming to them by way of Germany, remained a relative novelty. He was almost always referred to—together with Fichte—as one of the most important precursors to Schelling, the idol of the Romantic Era. Thus I. Kedrov believed that the “genial Jew Spinoza revived” ancient pantheism, and after him followed Schelling.⁸⁹ Here one often cites the testimony of one of the former *liubomudry* (“lovers of wisdom”) of the 1820s—A. Koshelev: “The main character of our discussions comprised the fundamental elements upon which human knowledge should be founded; Christian teaching seemed useful only for the masses, but not for us, the *liubomudry*. We especially valued Spinoza and placed his works above the Gospels and the other Holy Scriptures.”⁹⁰ The famous literary critic Vissarion Belinsky, in his letter to Bakunin of November 1, 1837, spoke with similar exuberance of Spinoza, comparing him to Giordano Bruno: “Spinoza—behold another giant! If Priamukhino has *The Encyclopedic Dictionary*, find the article on “Bruno”: you will see therein that Italy had her Spinoza.”⁹¹ In 1839 Spinoza was still called “an idol of the newest philosophy.”⁹²

To more pious individuals, Spinoza’s “dreadful system” (an expression used by Nadezhdin), with its rational pantheism and biblical criticism, evoked fearful dislike combined with a certain degree of respect.⁹³ Such a

⁸⁸ *ZhMNP*, 1838, pt. 17:457, 462.

⁸⁹ I. A. Kedrov, *Opyt filosofii prirody* (St. Petersburg, 1838), 35.

⁹⁰ *Zapiski Aleksandra Ivanovocha Kosheleva (1812–1883 gody)* (Moscow, 2002), 15.

⁹¹ V. G. Belinskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* (Moscow, 1956), 11:201–2.

⁹² V. Sboev, “Gnosis i gnostiki,” *Uchenye zapiski Kazanskogo universiteta*, 1839, book 11:187.

⁹³ See, for example, the later article of another former *liubomudry* member, I. Kireevskii, “O kharaktere prosveshcheniia Evropy i o ego otnoshenii k prosveshcheniiu Rossii. Pis'mo k grafu E. E. Komarovskomu,” I. V. Kireevskii, P. V. Kireevskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 1:97–98 (Kaluga, 2006). In 1833 *Rainbow* grouped several odious names into one satanic cohort: “As Hegel thought, so thought our philosophers, so thought Spinoza, so thought Simon Magus, so thought Lucifer. . . . Thoughts may be of different kinds—they may be luciferian, human, or learned, or they may be of God, they may be inspired and holy” (*Raduga*, 1833, book 1:37). See also Ivan Gagarin, *Dnevnik. Zapiski o moei zhizni. Perepiska* (Note of October 25, 1834) (Moscow, 1996), 124–25; F. Sidonskii, “Vvedenie v nauku filosofii.” *Severnaia pchela*. (St. Petersburg, 1833), 376–77. Ecclesiastical writers, including Kedrov and F. M. Nadezhnin, were hostile toward Spinoza, and the archimandrite Gavriil, in the manner of *Rainbow*, even referred to him, together with Schelling and Hegel, as “a monster in the world of morality.” (In the 18th century Spinoza was also criticized by the Masonic teacher I. Schwarz, after

dualistic attitude found an interesting reflection many years after the *liubomudry*, in *The Northern Bee*. An article on Amsterdam published therein in 1841 concludes with the philosopher's biography. Spinoza is portrayed as a rebellious Jew, a holy martyr of free thought, who challenged his inert coreligionists, and, on the other hand, as a dangerous skeptic and "miserable forerunner" of the ungodly encyclopedists. As a victim of Judaism he is even thought to have converted to Christianity:

About two hundred years ago a weak child was born in Amsterdam to poor Jewish parents. The first language that he learned was Hebrew; the first book that he read was the Bible; his first teachers were rabbis. The weak child was gifted with an unusually bright mind, which received false guidance and became skeptical. The boldness of his ideas troubled his coreligionists, and the leaders summoned him to present himself. In vain, however, they demanded that the young man recant, and after heated arguments the meeting ended with a complete rupture. Rejected by his coreligionists, the young man became a Christian . . . and started studying Descartes. The French skeptic became his only companion. . . . The rabbis excommunicated the maverick from the faith of their forefathers, and one fanatic even wounded him with a dagger. An outcast [. . .] he lived a very secluded life, devoting himself entirely to science. He was notable for his stoic abstinence: he was content with a few pennies for food. Meanwhile the fame of the new philosopher did not remain hidden; he began to receive a flood of students with difficult questions about higher metaphysics. Despising money, the philosopher rejected the most brilliant offers, including a position in the department of philosophy at the University of Heidelberg, to which he was invited by Prince-electoral Palatine. This student of Descartes became a piteous forerunner of the philosophers of the 18th century and died at the age of 45, rejecting the comfort and help of religion.

This Yid was Spinoza.⁹⁴

whom the attack was renewed at the beginning of the 19th century, sometimes in very exotic publications—for example, in Astrakhan's newspaper *Vostochnye izvestiia*, 1815, no. 36:284). Apparently Chaadaev was the first in Russia who specifically lauded Spinoza's religious pathos, referring to him as "a great thinker" in the fourth of his "Philosophical Letters" and again in one of his aphorisms ("Otryvki i raznye mysli," no. 58); see P. Ia. Chaadaev, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i izbrannye pis'ma* (Moscow, 1991), 2:460.

⁹⁴ *Severnaia pchela*, 1841, no. 179. This article may have been influenced by the novel of the German-Jewish author Berthold Auerbach (Moses Baruch) entitled *Spinoza* (1837, in Russian), in which Spinoza was portrayed as an honorary Protestant in comparison to Luther (see Robertson, *op. cit.*, 90). Spinoza's fate of being excommunicated from the Jewish community is usually projected onto Moses Mendelssohn, as it was thought that he received the same punishment for publishing a German translation of the Pentateuch. Robertson notes a tendency among Enlighteners to demonize their opponents (*ibid.*, 25, 90).

The word “Yid” [*zhid*], so dramatically crowning the article, supplies an effective tension between the lofty—albeit ambivalent—status of the thinker and his odious background. Usually, however, when speaking about his famous Western tribesmen, *The Northern Bee* is reluctant to refer to them as “Yids,” and in most instances calls them “Jews” [*iudei* or *evrei*] or, as in the case of Moses Montefiore, after the French manner as “Israelites.” Every so often, as in the case of the Rothschilds, ethnicity disappears completely.

Eventually Bulgarin would take credit for the paper’s respectful attention toward rich and cultured foreign Jews, as if to compensate for his animosity toward the Russian “Yids” [*zhidky*], whom he vilified in his publications and novels. In 1843, in his book *Die Schönwissenschaftliche Literatur der Russen*, the former Odessan Wilhelm Wolfson, who became a well-known advocate and translator of Russian literature in Germany,⁹⁵ spoke disparagingly about Bulgarin’s *Ivan Vyzhigin*, with its anti-Semitic character types. Bulgarin responded quite heatedly, emphasizing that his perspective on Jewry was fashioned by the times. He knew how to benefit even from criticisms against him, and in this case, as was his habit, he added self-advertising to his self-defense. Hinting at the Jewish background of his opponent, Bulgarin exclaimed:

Find comfort, O shadows of Movsha, Rifka, Khatskel, and Yossel! Be comforted, for you have been avenged, and I must cry out: Oy vey, Oy vey mir! . . . Mr. Wolfson, however, is extremely mistaken if he thinks that the author of *Ivan Vyzhigin* has harshly portrayed the knavery of Movsha, Rifka, Khatskel, and Yossel exclusively because of hatred toward the tribe. The author of *Ivan Vyzhigin* proceeds in step with the age, he holds no prejudice toward the tribe, and he distinguishes people only by their heart, mind, and conduct. He respects (not knowing him personally) the well-minded banker of Hamburg, Heine, who has been charitable to the unfortunate, not asking after their religion or background; he respects Rothschild, who has been able to garner worldwide respect; he reveres the philosopher Mendelssohn; he adores some other writers of the same tribe as well as the musical talent of Meyerbeer, Halévy, Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, and others, and he respects all honest citizens, coreligionists of Movsha, Rifka, Khatskel, and Yossel; yet out of love for the common good he has desired to root out the wretched *shakherstvo* [crookery] of most of the Polish Jews, against which all their honest, bright, and educated coreligionists are crying out. The author of *Ivan Vyzhigin* would have considered himself unworthy of being called a

⁹⁵ See V. I. Kuleshov, *Literaturnye svyazi Rossii i Zapadnoi Evropy v XIX veke (pervaia polovina)* (Moscow, 1966), 101–2, 312–13, 350–52.

European of the 19th century if he had loved or hated people according to their race!⁹⁶

As we can see, a very impressive place is given in Bulgarin's list to Jews who were famous for their musical talent. Their names constantly appeared in the paper without any intimation of their ethnic origins.

Jewish Composers

In 1838, in the column "Biographical Sketches," *The Northern Bee* published the laudatory article "Maid Rachel," which opens with the words: "The entire journalistic world of Paris has come alive over Miss Rachel. Unanimous approval has greeted the talent of this sixteen-year-old maiden, who without intrigue or pretense, by dint of her genius alone, has appeared to resurrect the tragedies of Corneille and Racine."⁹⁷ Neither here nor in any of the praise for the actress that follows—for example, in speaking about Rachel's triumphs in London—is anything mentioned about her ethnicity. In one notice dedicated to Meyerbeer, his father is classed as "a rich and educated Jew"—but the Jewishness of the composer himself is never touched upon.

In 1832, in the column "Paris News," the paper *The Buzz* states: "The opera *Robert the Devil* continues with great success. Never before has this kind of opera been so popular."⁹⁸ In the second part of the 1830s, a veritable worship of the same Meyerbeer and his coreligionists—Halévy and Mendelssohn-Bartholdy—held its sway in the pages of *The Northern Bee*. In July of 1838, for example, in the column "Biographical Sketches," a large panegyric article on Meyerbeer appeared: "The fame of his name grows greater every day. Our readers, no doubt, will be grateful for the biographical sketch of the famous composer." A discussion of his operas *Robert the Devil* and *Huguenots* follows: "During the first two years *Robert* was performed over a hundred times in Paris and soon it came to every European theater. The French king granted Meyerbeer the Legion of Honour and His Majesty the King of Prussia appointed him as the court music director and as a gift sent him a china vase with scenes from *Robert*." Further on he writes about *Huguenots*: "The most impressive thing about the opera

⁹⁶ *Severnaia pchela*, 1843, no. 80.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 1838, no. 255.

⁹⁸ *Molva*, 1832, no. 26:104.

is its marvelous order that connects all the separate parts. Never before has Meyerbeer's great gift manifested itself in such great splendor. . . . The opera *Huguenots* is Meyerbeer's sublime step into the field of art, and it has crowned the fame of *Robert*." The composer's other merits are also valued in complimentary fashion: "In addition to musical talent, Meyerbeer is able to demonstrate his profound education. He has a sophisticated and observant mind, a perfect knowledge of society and people. . . . The distinguishing features of his character are gentleness, humbleness, modesty, and consideration toward everyone with whom he deals. His wallet is always open to anyone in need, though when it comes to himself, Meyerbeer is very frugal."⁹⁹

Meyerbeer was adored by many, from Heine to Wagner; the latter, in fact, was one of those who was always "in need," and to whom Meyerbeer was so generous—for which Wagner repaid him in a very peculiar way. As we have seen, this august attention also contributed to Meyerbeer's fame. In 1840 *The Northern Bee* reverently reported that: "Meyerbeer is working on a special request of HRM the King of Prussia: the composition of a large biblical oratory."¹⁰⁰ One indication of Meyerbeer's popularity in Russia itself is the special brochure devoted to an explanation of his opera.¹⁰¹ *Robert* enjoyed the admiration of Russian Romantics like V. Botkin, V. Belinsky, A. Grigoriev,¹⁰² and the young Ia. Polonsky.

Halévy also experienced a similar triumph in Russia. In a review (signed "P. M.") of the German production of his *La Juive* in the Bolshoi Theater, *The Northern Bee* declared: "This opera is the work of a person with rare and original talent, who neither compromises with the crowd nor seeks to imitate or flatter anyone, but boldly follows the path he has chosen, clearing a new path to his goal." In other words, Halévy, with the help of a quote from Pushkin, was triumphantly stylized as a Romantic man of genius. The review concludes: "One needs to listen ten times to Halévy's opera in order to understand and grasp this exalted work of musical art."¹⁰³

⁹⁹ "Meierber," *Severnaia pchela*, 1838, no. 107. At the end of the review is the abbreviated signature "Am. Posl."

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 1890, no. 213.

¹⁰¹ Nikolai Pokrovskii, *Legchaishee rukovodstvo k izucheniiu muzyki Meierbera k opere 'Robert', sochinennoe dlia liubitelei muzyki, ne uchivshikhsia semu iskusstvu* (St. Petersburg, 1836). Appearing among the multitude of his fans, incidentally, was also Gogol's Khlestakov, who is depicted "whistling from *Robert*."

¹⁰² See the commentary by B. F. Egorov, *Apollon Grigor'ev. Vospominaniia* (Leningrad, 1980), 416.

¹⁰³ *Severnaia pchela*, 1837, no. 246.

It seems that the Russian public shared this opinion, insofar as the same P. M. observes that “with each appearance, the public likes *La Juive* more and more, and the theater is always full.”¹⁰⁴ It is possible that the success of the opera was due not only to its musical merits, but also because of the libretto written by Scribe, who captured the tragic character of the very alluring Jewish heroine.

In only a few months, moreover, in the column “Paris Theater News,” the paper wrote about the next opera by Halévy—*Guido and Ginevra, or The Plague in Florence*—that “[u]nanimous bravos greeted and accompanied the new opera. Musicians value this opera even more than *La Juive*, the first opera by Halévy.”¹⁰⁵ The list of these “musicians” included Berlioz himself, whose highly positive review the paper soon carried. It opened with the statement, “The author of *La Juive* has written a new opera that has all Paris in the throes of delight.”¹⁰⁶

The paper connects the names of Meyerbeer and Halévy with reverent frivolity in the translation of an anonymous French article entitled *The Eccentricity of Modern Composers*, which describes for the public their domestic lives and some habits. The author writes that he first visited Meyerbeer, and “then after this famous Israelite, I visited his French coreligionist, his brother in art, in craft, and in talent.”¹⁰⁷

Beginning in 1838 *The Northern Bee* began to elevate F. Mendelssohn-Bartholdy. Notices by the music critic K. Bitterman inform readers about the upcoming performance of his oratory *Paulus*, adding in a polemical tone: “Yet I am interrupted with questions: ‘What is this?’ I am asked: ‘What is *Paulus*?’ Probably some people do not know who Mendelssohn-Bartholdy is, since we hear the question raised: ‘What is an oratory?’ Without answering this last question we would repeat the following tough but fair statement: *Paulus* by Mendelssohn-Bartholdy is a work clearly proving that nature has not yet broken, as many have supposed, the mold that created Handel. If the majestic choruses of this oratory, sung by the court choir, do not touch you to the very depth of your soul, then you lack any sense of music, you are not a musician. . . .” A short time later, in the anonymous notice “Adolf von Henselt and Today’s Piano Playing,” the

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 1837, no. 262.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 1838, no. 68.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 1838, no. 77.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 1841, no. 203. Here, in a very kind manner, are portrayed Halévy’s dedicated helpers—his sisters (“tender helpmates”) and brother, the poet Leon, who adapted poems by Scribe or Saint-George to music.

paper declares that the works of Mendelssohn, in which “the compositions of Bach and Beethoven have come together,” and which at the same time are distinguished by their originality, “constitute a special era in the world of art.”¹⁰⁸

In early 1839 *Notes of the Fatherland* published a novel by Count Sollogub, for which he became famous: *The History of Two Galoshes*. The main character, the romantic dreamer and luminous musician Carl Shultz, performs Mendelssohn’s concert in St. Petersburg: “The passionate music of the Jew harmonized with the turbulent state of his soul.”¹⁰⁹

At the same time, in the nearby countries, Jewish success in music and other arts had already begun to give rise to a bitter anxiety that likewise spread to Russia. In the meantime, in 1838, *LfR*, in the anonymous compilation *Polish Jews*, was quick to comfort its readers:

We can’t really say whether a Jew has a natural talent for any kind of work or art. If lately many of them have made a mark in music, if the Jews have produced from among themselves Meyerbeers, Mendelssohns, and Hertzes, then it is probably because music is a very easy activity: it attracts thousands of Jews among whom, by necessity, one will encounter two or three prodigious artists. But it would be wrong to attribute these isolated successes to an inherent gift for music or a special ability to appreciate refinement. On the contrary, refinement is completely contrary to the Yid nature.¹¹⁰

Regardless of Halévy’s ethnicity, at the beginning of the 1840s his popularity declined somewhat as a result of the general decline of the tumultuous Romantic movement, which by this time critics were attacking with increasing gusto. His operas, however, were still being staged. In January 1841 Kraevsky’s *Literary Gazette* wrote: “Halévy’s newest opera is called *The Bloody Nun*. Its author is the very talented composer who, in one of his operas, fried a Little Jewess in butter, like an old clay pipe, and who set to music *The Plague in Florence*. Berlioz, a tender Romantic just like

¹⁰⁸ *Severnaia pchela*, 1838, nos. 58, 107. Bach is mentioned with reference to the fact that it was Mendelssohn who revived attention for the forgotten composer, becoming his greatest promoter. Meyerbeer and Mendelssohn were spoken of favorably by such music lovers as I. Vielgorsky in his diary. See E. E. Liamina, and N. V. Samover, ‘*Bednyi Zhozef’: Zhizn’ i smert’ Iosifa Viel’gorskogo* (Moscow, 1999), 219, 254, 267, 302.

¹⁰⁹ V. A. Sollogub, *Povesti. Vospominaniia* (Leningrad, 1988), 53.

¹¹⁰ *Biblioteka dlia chteniia*, 38 (1838): 63. But, the journal generously adds: “a Jew loves to sing and his songs are always laments” (ibid., 67). The view that the Jews “by their nature” do not have a sense of refinement was a common stereotype in neighboring Germany. In 1835 it was expressed by T. Mundt (see Gilman, op. cit., 157).

Halévy, has given the music world a new overture.”¹¹¹ Meyerbeer, on the other hand, was still in favor. During 1842–46 a German opera company toured Moscow and performed *Robert the Devil* to great acclaim. The poet and literary critic Apollon Grigoriev wrote a panegyric sketch about this production: “The audience shook from applause, I was unable to catch my breath. . . . I was shaking feverishly—I was chained to the colossal, harmonious, incredibly attractive character” (“*Robert the Devil*,” 1846).¹¹²

Börne in Russia

A much different—a more careful and more cautious—attitude was expressed in Russia toward Jewish writers from the anticlerical “Young Germany”—or “Young Palestine,” as it was named by Menzel and other German nationalists. In 1832, in response to Börne’s *Letters from Paris*, I. Kireevsky’s periodical *The European* stated: “The *Letters* of Börne and his friend Heine are exquisite, especially in a literary sense. Both belong to the left wing in politics and in the world of letters, for the latter in Germany has its own right wing and opposition, even if it seems that it does not have a center.” As for Börne, “they say he is a Yid or at least from among the Yids. The same is commonly said about most of today’s well-known German writers: Heine, Raupach, Hans, and Immermann.” In spite of such a great list of alleged Jews, the reviewer is unconcerned about nationalist overtones. As far as politics go, out of understandable caution, he prefers to focus on Börne’s style: “His style is alive and original, his satire is wicked and clever, and in general everything that Börne says is said either from the heart or with heart.”¹¹³

This applies equally to that same novel by Börne that was initially published in 1832, without his name and with some changes, in *News from Literature*, and again 13 years later in Nadezhdin’s *Telescope*—this time

¹¹¹ *Literaturnaia gazeta. Vestnik nauk, iskusstv, literatury, novostei, teatrov i mod*, 1842, no. 2:40. At the end of the same year the paper acknowledges Meyerbeer’s steady success in the music world of Italy: “Not much is new in the theaters of Italy. Meyer-Beer has conquered Italy by his fiery talent: his *Robert* and *Huguenots* are in every theater” (ibid., no. 46:947).

¹¹² A. Grigor’ev, *Vospominaniia*, 183.

¹¹³ *Evropeets. Zhurnal I. V. Kireevskogo*, 1832. Published by L. G. Freezman (Moscow, 1989), 89, 91. See also B. S. Itenberg, “‘Govoriat, on iz zhidov’: Liudvig Berne, evreiskii vopros i russkaia literatura XIX veka,” *Arkhiv evreiskoi istorii*, ed. O. V. Budnitskii, 1:89–109 (Moscow, 2004).

with the author's name and in a new and much better translation by B. F. Hizhdeu. Even taking into account the encouragement given by reviewers to foreign writers, this text is a great example of the literary philo-Semitism that was given expression in publications of the 1830s. Compared to the previous edition, this one gave clear expression to the political background of the text. This time the character's francophilia is brought out, whereas his friend, to whom he writes a letter from Cadiz, is a French liberal. In the new translation, the confession from the letter quoted earlier here preserves the political acuity so intrinsic to the original but subdued in the previous edition. In the *Telescope* version the fragment reads this way: "You are asking why I am running away from my motherland? I do not see foreigners anywhere. Wherever there are dungeons, there is my motherland; wherever I am persecuted, there I breathe the air of my childhood. To me the moon is just as close as Germany."¹¹⁴ Symbolic, indeed, is the dating of the letter itself, which carries such a distinct autobiographical flavor—the end of 1819, which was the time when Germany was in the grip of an anti-Semitic campaign.

The version of Börne's novel published in *Telescope* was all the more remarkable for its direct attacks against aristocratic "brainless peacocks." (These attacks undoubtedly impressed the editor and priest's son Nadezhdin, whom Russian aristocrats looked upon with disdain.) Also striking were the humanistic exhortations in the piece styled after the manner of "Young Germany." The main character, moreover, was a supporter of Napoleon, having fought with him in 1812 against Russia and even dedicated an ode to him (which the 1823 version prudently replaced with an "Ode on the Fall of Napoleon"). It is possible that the government was taking revenge on Nadezhdin for this material when it soon thereafter placed a ban on his journal for publishing the "First Philosophical Letter" by Chaadaev.

That same year, in 1836, A. Pliushar's *Encyclopedic Dictionary* (then edited by Grech) stated: "Ludwig Börne, born a Jew, belongs to the list of the most well-known German political writers of modern times. . . . In 1817 he converted to the Lutheran Faith and at his baptism changed his family name, Baruch, to Börne. . . . One cannot deny that Börne has incredible talent; his mind is educated and his style is powerful, though not always noble; he demonstrates a certain crude integrity, a certain stubborn constancy in the defense of outdated rules. But the foundation of

¹¹⁴ Ludwig Börne, "Roman," *Teleskop*, 1836, pt. 2, no. 8:479–94.

his works—a predominance of rebellious spirit that strives within him to bring down the existing order, cultivated and established over centuries; his disrespect for the greatest and noblest individuals and the debasing of their thoughts and achievements when they do not fit his yardstick; bold mockery of his Fatherland, Germany, with its devotion to its lawful rulers and ancient laws—all of this makes us regret that his work has not taken a different and better direction. Expelled from Germany for his demagogic ideas, in 1830 he moved to Paris, where at first his cynical mien, thoughts, and style turned the heads of the crowd, though at the present time he is immersed in total obscurity.”¹¹⁵

The Moscow Observer marked the writer’s passing with a warm but evasive obituary, in which Börne’s political sarcasm was chalked up to the ethnic cantankerousness that had characterized him; at the same time the Parisian stage in his writing was presented in a much more positive light: “Börne, one of the wittiest German writers, who lately together with Heine exercised considerable influence on society, died last month in Paris from influenza with complications from another illness. During the past several years he had been living in France and earned great respect both for his talent and for his character.” Why he had earned “great respect” is not very clear from the text, especially as the next statement reads: “Being a Jew by background, he was a constant victim of his irritable character and unpleasant circumstances.”¹¹⁶ At the same time, in the same issue, the periodical managed, albeit casually, to touch upon the problem of Jewish left-wing radicalism in Germany, “where the revolutionaries are predominantly Yids, and only because they were persecuted for so many centuries.”¹¹⁷ Then in 1838, E. Guber, attacking Heine and “Young Germany” in *The Contemporary* from the conservative side, calls Börne “a martyr to his unfulfilled idea” who suffered mostly from the sting of his own “bitter ridicule,” which he heaped upon his beloved motherland: “Death has lately resolved for him all those unsolved mysteries that were the curse of his entire life.”¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵ *Entsiklopedicheskii slovar'* (St. Petersburg, 1838), 5:407–8.

¹¹⁶ *Moskovskii nabliudatel'*, 1837, pt. 10, no. 2:243.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 211.

¹¹⁸ E. Guber, “Vzgliad na nyneshniuu literaturu Germanii,” *Sovremennik* 10 (1838): 15–16. It is interesting to note, incidentally, that the characterization of the writer as a martyr who suffered from his own “bitter jests” over his fatherland is a paraphrase of a passage in the introduction to Börne’s article “Menzel der Franzosenfresser.” Another post-mortem eulogistic reference to Börne was made in 1839 by professor Foigt of Kazan University, in his article “Ob istoricheskome znachenii epopei,” where he in passing speaks of Börne’s

“An Educated German”: Heine’s Prose in Russian Periodicals

In any event, Börne’s influence made itself known much later in Russia—as is evident, for example, in the work of Akim Volynsky. But Heine’s situation, as well as the relationship between the two German-Jewish writers, was much more complicated. Here, however, I will limit myself to the aspects of this subject that are relevant to our discussion.

As is well known, already in 1827 *The Northern Bee* first published Heine’s poems in a translation by Tiutchev, the Russian poet and diplomat who served in Germany and maintained friendly connections with Heine.¹¹⁹ The German writer’s prose also entered Russian print at an early date: in 1832 readers were introduced to it through *The European* and *The Northern Bee*. The first of these published an excerpt from “Heine’s Letters on the Paris Art Exhibition in 1831.” The publication in *The Northern Bee* was notable for its ingenious attempt to employ Heine’s left-wing liberal satire, fitting it to the requirements of Russian conservative thought. In his periodical Bulgarin presented a translation—from French, albeit with chaste phrasing and in general softened—of the preface to “A Journey to the Hartz”¹²⁰ from *Reisebilder* (*Travel Pictures*), in which Heine ecstatically mocks the disciplinary mustiness and pedantry of German universities, as well as the Romantic-nationalistic ambitions that were taking hold of German students and a significant portion of society. Such sarcasm appealed to Bulgarin’s own “official enlightenment” prudence and satiric inclinations. He could tolerate neither abstract scholarship nor Russian rebels, nor archaic and wistful German chauvinists, whom he paradoxically accused of liberalism and “demagoguery.” In addition, their anti-Napoleonic pathos, which gave a strong boost to German nationalism, naturally wounded Bulgarin’s unshakable Bonapartean sympathies, which he partially held in common with Francophile Heine—although Heine’s sympathies had an entirely different foundation. In short, Bulgarin had suddenly found a

“very clever” historical thinking (*ZhMNP*, 1839, pt. 21, no. 3:252). One should also bear in mind that the number of observations on these topics was significantly constrained by the censors, who, according to Kuleshov, placed a ban on “speaking about the German rebels Heine and Börne” (V. I. Kuleshov, *Otechestvennye zapiski i literatura 40-kh godov XIX veka* (Moscow, 1958), 89.

¹¹⁹ In addition to the classic article “Tiutchev i Geine” (Iu. N. Tynianov, *Poetika. Istoriia literatury. Kino* [Moscow, 1977]), it is enough here to mention the monographic survey by Ia. I. Gordon, *Geine v Rossii (v 1830–1860 gody)* (Dushanbe, 1973), 29–68. However, because of the political restraints of the time, Gordon carefully avoids the Jewish topic.

¹²⁰ “Stranstvie na Bloksberg, v gory Gartskie (Otryvok iz ‘Puteshestviia Geine po Germanii’),” *Severnaia pchela*, 1832, nos. 194–200.

like mind on the political left and felt joy—or rather, he simulated joy—in meeting him. Heine, to be sure, would have been surprised at this alliance, had he known of its existence.

Bulgarin prefaced his translation with an edifying note in which he excoriated kowtowing to the West and praised the educational advantages of isolationism during Nikolai's reign: "We are still not entirely cleansed of the tendency to consider everything foreign as better. There are many who do not like the prudent and truly patriotic decree banning young Russians from studying abroad. Some used to think—and apparently still do—that overseas they are selling education by the pound, and gulping wisdom by the spoonful or drinking it in glassfuls. Listen to what an educated German has to say about an educated Germany and find comfort! We have universities and educational institutions no worse than in Germany; we only need the desire to study!"

Where Heine mockingly describes the exotic clothing of German patriots covered in "black caftans of ancient German cut," Bulgarin adds in a note: "This is the attire of the German demagogue, whom the author rightly mocks!" Then again, in a note on Heine's use of the word "radically," Bulgarin states: "Radicals are called demagogues—those who dream about a fundamental change in the existing order. . . . The author of the article rightly makes fun of these empty loudmouths."¹²¹ To be sure, one cannot help but be impressed by the pluck with which Bulgarin opposes German conservatives, joining the camp of the author of the scandalous "The Book of Le Grand," which crowns Heine's *Reisebilder*.

For the sake of practical utility and out of respect for a foreign luminary, the editor of the *Bee* here presents Heine the Jew as one of the "educated Germans." Heine's countrymen had a different opinion about his nationality, and this opinion was shared by many in Russia as well. In 1833 *Telescope* translated a long excerpt from a monograph by Oskar Ludwig Bernhard Wolff, a professor at the University of Jena, on new European literature. The author recognizes Heine's talent, "the sweet harmony" of his poems, but at the same time criticizes the poet for "playing with all that is sacred and remaining unpunished"; "his enjoyment is in destruction." Wolff incriminates Heine for his devotion to the grotesque, a "disdain for all laws," and emotional disharmony, which is explained by his "lack of a humble, harmonious nature, fashioned by faith, love, and hope." However, the author adds, "Heine is too much a son of his age, and any harsh

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, nos. 194, 198.

disapproval that he has earned falls more upon the spirit of his times than upon him personally. Thus, for example, the impudence that he puts up against meanness, so as to excoriate the latter, is not a quality that is exclusively his: he borrowed it from his surroundings.” Nadezhdin provides an introduction to the article that takes a much harsher tone. Alluding to Heine’s piece on modern German literature, published at that time in the Parisian journal *L’Europe littéraire* (and soon afterward published in revised form in *The Romantic School*), the publisher rebukes Heine for a shameful lack of patriotism (on which point, incidentally, he is in complete agreement with German nationalist and conservative critics): “We much prefer it when our fellow countrymen offer praise rather than the kind of fierce criticism with which a certain splendid modern writer—namely, Heine—began his remarks on European literature before an Enlightened Europe. One cannot look without indignation at the son who slaps his mother in the face or, like Ham, reveals his father’s nakedness.”¹²²

Soon, however, the emphasis noticeably changed—the “nakedness” of German Romanticism, so sinfully revealed by Heine, became useful to Nadezhdin for his aesthetic program (which, for all its ambition, was in essence quite archaic). It should be kept in mind that Heine pointedly attacked the medieval nostalgia and Catholic fixations of the German Romantics. His criticism was now enthusiastically received by Nadezhdin, who had also begun to attack Romanticism, albeit from positions more closely aligned with Hegel. Seeing in that school a backward medieval heritage, he dreamed of overcoming it within the framework of a future synthetic culture, designed to unite Romanticism with Classicism or, in his own words, “to balance the body with the soul.” Heine strove for the same balance in his own way,¹²³ relentlessly making fun of the neo-Catholic yearning for “gaunt and dreamy” spiritualism. Nadezhdin, a graduate of the Orthodox Ecclesiastical Academy, liked this anti-Catholic ardor, of course, but only up to the point where it became anti-Christian. Within these parameters he adapted Heine’s liberal and anti-ecclesiastical neo-Romanticism to his own needs. In early 1834 the editor of *Teleskop* published therein an excerpt (“Goethe and Schiller”) from the previously criticized sketch of Heine, supplying it with a preface in which he, too, spoke disapprovingly of the Romantic “passion for the medieval era” and

¹²² *Teleskop*, 1833, pt. 13; no. 9:98; pt. 13, no. 10:503. In 1835 Wolff’s book was published in Moscow in an abbreviated Russian translation.

¹²³ See also I. I. Zamotin, *Romantizm dvadtsatykh godov XIX stoletia v russkoi literature* (St. Petersburg, 1911), 1:333–34.

“Catholic intrigues,” thereby expressing his agreement with the author. At the same time the journal challenged Heine’s general attacks on the imposition of “Christian” and “moral” goals upon art. Thus in the “translator’s introduction” Nadezhdin asks rhetorically, “Does not the real world, which occupies the first and foremost position, have a right to demand that art respect its *religious* and moral opinions?”¹²⁴ Once again, therefore, the criticism leveled at Heine, while not emphatic, singled out his supposed rejection of Christianity and tied it to moral nihilism.

Heine’s anti-spiritual and anti-Catholic invectives also caught the fancy of Nadezhdin’s former colleague Belinsky, who for a short time subscribed to the Hegelian, well-intentioned conservative manner. His defense of Heine is a defense of the flesh and of a fully sensual life. In his letter to Stankevich of October 2, 1839, he pounced upon Schiller’s “abstract” idealism, adding: “Now I understand Heine’s statement that the Christian religion gives everything to the spirit and that it should be abolished so that the body might regain its rights; I remember that this phrase made you furious with Heine, but the eccentric was right from his point of view, for he was thinking of the Christian religion in the abstract form of the medieval period.”¹²⁵

“A German Frenchman”: Heine’s National-Cultural Orientation and “Young Germany” as Perceived by Russian Critics

During the last period of its existence, however, *Telescope* tended toward more direct criticism of these pagan intrusions. In 1836 Nadezhdin published a translation from the French (from *Revue germanique*) of the German article “Young Germany with Respect to Literature,” in which it is not Heine who is incriminated with blasphemous pathos and sensuality, but his pitiful enemies—the narcissistic pulp-writers of “Young Germany.” In agreement with Menzel, the author places the responsibility for ruining literary morals (and for engendering Heine’s demonic sarcasm) with Goethe, for his provocative *Faust* and his animosity toward Christianity. With respect to Heine, the article takes a dual position—condemnation and admiration: “When it was recognized that Goethe, for all his outward

¹²⁴ *Teleskop*, 1834, pt. 16; no. 3:128–39.

¹²⁵ V. G. Belinskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 11:386. Belinsky says nothing about the Jewish or liberal sources of Heine’s position—generally speaking, the Jewish topic does not interest him.

calm, harbored within himself the troubling thought that Mephistopheles, the spirit of doubt, was dwelling in his soul, then this same Mephistopheles penetrated the souls of others and opened their eyes to the negative side in everything. At first *this demon attached himself to Heine, grappled with his poetic inspiration, fought with him, subdued him, and dug with his demonic claws into his statements, prying out of them his hellish laughter.* This is the sort of thing that leads young German writers to become disillusioned with life.” But Heine was not involved in the other cardinal vice of “Young Germany.” According to Gutzkow, “carnality and sensuality are the only virtues of society that comprise the foundation of human happiness. Such is the transformation heralded by Young Germany!”; “The primary trait of all these people is their incredible boasting. Tell them that Goethe, Heine, and Hegel are the true heads of the school to which they belong: they will be beside themselves. . . . They will say that Goethe is an egotist who only thought of himself, and *Heine had become for them a laughable and pitiful creature*: Mundt attacks him bitterly, and the historian Kühne loftily repeats the words of Mundt.” The article finishes with a flash of hortatory optimism: “Young Germany is more a game of boasting and ambition that has gone too far. The [German Confederation] Bundestag has taken steps to restrain these children, and public opinion has approved these measures in advance. Serious and thoughtful Germany should be ashamed of such childish behavior!”¹²⁶

Menzel, in much harsher fashion, imputed all the vices of “Young France” to “Young Germany,” believing that they were making this group of “Jews” dangerous. He charges them with universalism (which is hostile to nationalism); commitment to revolution; and godlessness, combined with materialism and amorality. Commenting on this view, Gilman points out that popular German writers married such concepts as “Paris, revolution, Jews, satiric prose.”¹²⁷ For Russia all of this was just as irrelevant as the figure of the emancipated Jew himself; nonetheless, German attacks on Jewish literary radicalism were received from time to time with sincere sympathy.

As we may recall, in *Telescope's* translation of Wolff, Heine's ethnicity was only hinted at (in references to how Christian “meekness” and the trefoil of New Testament virtues were alien to him). Not long after this, however, in 1835—first in Prussia and then by the decision of the

¹²⁶ *Teleskop*, 1836, pt. 36, no. 4:625, 628–29 (emphasis mine).

¹²⁷ Sander L. Gilman, *Jewish Self-Hatred*, 164–65.

[German Confederation] Bundestag, which officially charged the members of “Young Germany” with anti-Christian activity and placed a ban on all their works—, the Russian critic E. Korsh, in *LjR*, after first slandering Heine, spoke out about his comrade with old-style German bluntness. He calls the author of *Reisebilder* “a destructive meteorite” who quickly “acquired fame as one of the wittiest writers of his times,” but whose “impudence” and “wickedness” immediately discouraged his “most zealous fans.” This is why Korsh omits Heine’s name: “it does not bring honor even to itself.” Börne’s name likewise remains unmentioned, replaced by a vindictive reference to his Jewish background: “There is still another new writer whom the champions of German *Witz* are smugly exhibiting—a Yid, shameless and lawless, recently christened but unfaithful to Christian law; he is presented as a famous German wit, but unfortunately, his wits have been hopelessly lost.”¹²⁸

Another hostile article about Heine was published anonymously in 1838 in *The Encyclopedic Dictionary*, notwithstanding the intimation here that the poet was a Christian from birth (in point of fact, he converted to Lutheranism at the age of 28):

Heine, Heinrich—a well-known German poet and, after Börne, one of the best known of all German political writers for the boldness of his thoughts. He was born in Düsseldorf in 1797, came from a Jewish family that embraced the Christian faith, studied law. . . . [H]e lived interchangeably in Bonn, Berlin, Göttingen, and finally, after much deserved persecution for his immoral ideas in religion and politics, in the 1830s [1831—M.W.] chose Paris as his permanent place of residence.

The anonymous author’s hostility toward Heine’s “immoral ideas” reached such intensity that he even shortened his life, listing as his year of death 1837 (perhaps by dint of a careless association with the death of Börne or the demise of Pushkin), thereby unwittingly reducing his life span by almost 20 years. The article ends like this:

Heine died in Paris in 1837. He was gifted with luminous talent and remarkable wit, yet well-meaning people of all nations came to resent and despise him for the impudence of his thoughts, his subversive principles, his harsh disrespect for the sacred, and his ridiculous desire to be known as the German Voltaire.¹²⁹

¹²⁸ E. Korsh, “Noveishaia iziashchnaia slovesnost’ v Germanii,” *Biblioteka dlia chteniia*, 12 (1835): 92.

¹²⁹ *Entsiklopedicheskii slovar’* (St. Petersburg, 1838), 13:424.

Such tirades are early and vacillating heralds of the coming racial anthropology. Many years would pass before Russian critics accepted the German theory of the ubiquitous danger of a Jewish contribution to world culture.

An abrupt dispute between Börne and Heine went unnoticed by other authors until it came into Grech's field of vision—narrow as it was. Still, his judgments are of a certain interest as they relate to both the Conservative rhetoric and the Jewish question as such. In his aforementioned travel notes from Germany of 1835, fully published in 1837, Grech initially gave his very negative take on "Young Germany" and its "half-witted writers," who were fortunately silenced by the Frankfurt Bundestag and "the mild Prussian government," and he then turned his attention to Börne and Heine. Grech fully attributed Börne's radicalism to his Jewish hardships and displayed open sympathy in this regard:

This Young Germany, which made so much noise in journals, did not in fact deserve so much attention. Her main representatives were Börne and Heine. Börne, born a Jew, a very gifted man with a quick wit, grew up under cruel oppression, the humiliating slavery that was laid upon all of his coreligionists in Germany. He was baptized, but this did not free him from censure: he continually experienced insurmountable obstacles, bitter humiliation, and mortal affronts. His coreligionists searched for salvation and happiness in riches, and then with self-satisfied contempt they saw how those who used to offend them were now at their feet. Börne had either no ability or no desire to use such means. In his soul he harbored a deep antipathy toward people. It spilled out in brash and impudent writings. He began to be persecuted; he moved to Paris, and there he lives, sick, deaf, and forsaken by all—even his former friends and comrades.

Grech presents Heine's genesis and fate in a very different way. He is not interested in the Jewish roots of his sarcasm and former opposition and paints the dispute between Börne and Heine in a naïve anecdotal light, but all his sympathies are with the poet. The Russian critic greatly admired Heine's political evolution in the France of Louis-Philippe. Perhaps it served him as a nostalgic reminder of his own transformation from moderate freethinker in the 1820s to measured conservative.

Heine, a nephew of Hamburg's richest banker, attracted the attention of German readers with his wittily humorous compositions and brilliant poems. Excerpts from his *Reisebilder* were published in *The Northern Bee* (1832), and his *Florentine Nights* in *The Moscow Observer*.¹³⁰ His magnificent and,

¹³⁰ Referring to the publication of 1836, pt. 6, no. 4.

perhaps, unexpected success spoiled the young man. He started to write more and more brashly, especially after the July revolution, from which the Germans had no idea what to expect. They began to watch him more closely and he escaped to Paris, thinking that there he might find refuge and freedom. But then the fashion for demagoguery faded in France. . . . Heine came to his senses and turned completely to the right. . . . Since then he has been writing for leading French periodicals: translations of his articles have been published in *Revue des deux mondes*, and the originals themselves in the *Morgenblatt*. . . . He completely parted ways with Börne. On one occasion, when Heine was receiving several sophisticated, dapper, well-dressed Frenchmen, a clumsy Börne barged into his room reeking of tobacco and garlic, disheveled and unwashed, demanding straight away—in a very familiar manner—beer and a pipe. The young Parisians burst into laughter, and Heine was deeply embarrassed. Later he scolded his countryman for his self-neglect, bad manners, and ignorance of how to live in society. Börne, becoming very angry, called him a renegade and cursed him in the papers.¹³¹

In the context of these national-cultural ties it is interesting to note that soon, from an absolutely contrary position, Belinsky, then a faithful Hegelian, supported and interpreted the French portion of Heine's work. Belinsky preferred to Germanize all the positive sides of Heine and attribute all his free-thinking political sarcasm to a depraved France. Challenging Guber who, in his righteous anger, recoiled from Heine's "horrible irony" and "poisoned humor," Belinsky divides Heine in two, contrasting the acrimonious, cynical prosaist of the French school with the other, lyrical Heine—"a poet of great talent, not a French chatterbox, but a true German artist." At the same time Belinsky, as a true Hegelian, criticized "Young Germany" for challenging "the eternal laws of rational necessity." Just two years later, however, the critic dramatically shifted to the left and exhibited a striking change in his views: on rational reality, on his own Hegelianism, on the French, on the Germans, on "Young Germany," and, lastly, on Heine himself. In December 1840, in a letter to his friend—the critic and sketch-writer Botkin—, Belinsky muses that among the Germans there are many "Hofrats, Philistines, sausage makers, and other bastards"—but the French, to whom Heine relocated, are humane supporters of liberalism, and the Young Germans are their disciples: it is "a distinguished brigade of enthusiasts of freedom, at the head of whom stands such a wonderful and brilliant character as Heine, upon whom we at first looked with disgust, being carried away with our childish,

¹³¹ N. Grech, *Sochineniia*, 3:109–12.

one-sided convictions. . . .¹³² In January 1841, in another letter to Botkin, he once again praises Heine—this time for his liberal, French-styled German patriotism (which was as selfless and morbid as Börne’s patriotism, in Guber’s estimation): “Heine understands the vacuity of French thought and art, yet he has so devoted himself to the idea of individual worth, it is no wonder that he sees in France the blossoming of humanity. He curses and loves Germany, but he loves it more purely and more strongly than any Hofrats and philosophers, and much better than any defenders and supporters of the present reality in whatever shape it takes, even that of a sausage. Heine is a German Frenchman—exactly what Germany today needs most of all.”¹³³ All of this represented a strange anachronism, insofar as Belinsky managed to overlook Heine’s evolution and his drawn-out conflict with “Young Germany”—just as he had managed to overlook the anti-Semitic nature of the campaign conducted against Heine at the turn of the 1840s by German nationalists on the left as well as the right.¹³⁴ The critic and educator Ia. Neverov (1810–1893) was also very close to their thinking, and in 1838 he condemned Heine in his survey of German literature. The author called this “Düsseldorf native” a renegade “who, unfortunately, turned his talent in a harmful direction.”¹³⁵

*“A Wanderer from Egypt and Palestine”: Rahel Varnhagen in
the Appraisal of a Russian Journalist*

In that same year, 1838, *Son of the Fatherland* published another sketch by Ia. Neverov, this time on Rahel Varnhagen (née Levin) von Ense—a well-known hostess of one of the main Jewish literary salons in Berlin,¹³⁶ whom T. Mundt referred to as “the mother of ‘Young Germany.’” This article, the appearance of which coincided—after significant delay—with the posthumous publication of her correspondence, represented an inspirational dithyramb according to which Rahel “*was higher than any other known*

¹³² V. G. Belinskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* (Moscow, 1953), 2:504, 750.

¹³³ *Ibid.* 11:577; 12:17.

¹³⁴ Many works were written on “the Jewish problematic” in Heine; see, specifically, the book by M. N. Gelber, *The Jewish Reception of Heinrich Heine*, *Conditio Judaica* 1 (Tübingen, 1992); as well as S. S. Praver, “Heinrich Heines jüdische Porträtgalerie,” in *Juden und Judentum in der Literatur*, ed. H. A. Strauss and Ch. Hoffmann, 78–105 (Munich, 1985).

¹³⁵ *ZhMNP*, 1838, pt. 18:130.

¹³⁶ See H. Arendt, *Rahel Varnhagen: The Life of a Jewess*, trans. R. and C. Winston (London, 1957).

woman of our time"; "Rahel, with the help of her rich soul and uncommon wit, became the heart of the best and most splendid Berlin society; at a time when Berlin was a place for aristocracy, *everyone gathered around Rahel.*" "*The greatest of Germany's women, she was the first to sacrifice part of her fortune for the Fatherland and to take care of the sick and the wounded. . . . When, after the war, they wanted to award her the Order of Louise, she not only refused, but in fact with all her energy resisted accepting an honor for that which she considered to be her duty.*"¹³⁷ Regarding her letters, the article gushes: "What richness of ideas! What power of fantasy! What a soft, gentle, yet at the same time penetrating evaluation of events, people, and writings! So much knowledge—such a wonderful soul!" The article quotes Wilhelm von Humboldt, who was spellbound by "her wonderful book of letters," as saying: "It does not contain any dead letters—I do not know any other book of which I can say the same." The article adds that Rahel's friends include "Prince Ludwig of Prussia, Prince de Ligne" and that she was "admired by Goethe, Jean Paul, Tieck, both Humboldts, the Schlegels, Schleiermacher, Novalis, Hegel, and all of Germany's giants of literature and art, who knew her personally and for whom conversations with her were a treasure. . . ." It concludes: "What a singular destiny this woman has!"

Still further it may be asked: How did such "a singular destiny" tie in with her Jewishness? On this subject Neverov quotes the deathbed speeches of Rahel herself about how she despised her Jewish background, which had become for her a somewhat tormenting but necessary initiation—a heavy burden on the path from the ancient, pre-Christian world into the Christian Promised Land of German culture. Her ignominious Jewish past brought her closer to Christ himself, who suffered the same pitiful fate: "‘A wanderer from Egypt and Palestine,’ she said to Mr. Varnhagen as he was standing at her bedside, ‘here, with you, I have found help, love, and care. . . . With great joy I think back on my background and my own personal lot, in which, notwithstanding their distance, ancient memories of mankind have come into contact with the latest order of things. I would never now renounce, for any price, that which throughout my life was my greatest suffering and misfortune—my Jewish background. Won't it one day be the same with these physical sufferings? Will it not be with the same joy that I rise up? . . . I thought of Jesus and cried about his sufferings. Never before have I felt him so close to me!’"

¹³⁷ In all three of these citations the emphasis is my own.

Another aspect of the Jewish-Christian theme in Neverov's review has a less traditional ring. The biblical antiquity of Rahel's background, in connection with her moral and intellectual perfection, makes her similar to a resurrected Adam or the sacral ideal of a woman—indeed, a renewed Eve untainted by the first sin. To quote the confession of the aforesaid August Varnhagen: “it seemed to me as if I had seen the original exemplar of man in all of his purity and perfection, just as he was when he left the Creator's hands”—to which Neverov adds the following sentiments:

Rahel's correspondence is not only the best book to appear during the last decade [at the beginning of the same decade the second part of Goethe's *Faust* was published—M.W.], but it is also a book that ranks on a par with the best literary creations of the present century. In it one can see a woman in all of her purity, sublimity, and perfection . . . a woman of just the sort that Providence intended to send to man for help, for comfort, for joy. . . . If there is any soul that has not yet lost its heavenly gifts, it will love this conversation [i.e., Rahel's correspondence—M.W.], it will become accustomed to it, and the magnificent image of Rahel will come alive before you and awaken you to all that is beautiful.¹³⁸

Never—either before or after—has any other woman of Russia ever taken Rahel's throne, enjoying such a profound, ecstatic, and all-embracing panegyric in which, for all intents and purposes, Rahel is equated with the Mother of God. Properly speaking, it is no longer a review, but a hymn. Yet here the Jewish question, as we see, is moved to the background. Of course, such dithyrambs changed nothing for the Jewish people in Russia. Such was also the case with respect to Jewish tradition in those instances when it was given proper attention: except for some rare exceptions, it was perceived as having nothing to do with contemporary Jewry.

¹³⁸ Ia. Neverov, “Rakhel' Varnhagen von Enze,” *Syn otechestva i Severnyi arkhiv*, 1 (1838): 7–17. The motivation for this article was the author's personal acquaintance with K. A. Varnhagen, to whom he taught Russian in 1837. Neverov compared Rahel to another “wonderful woman”: E. P. Frolova (née Galakhova), albeit not with such grandiose expressions. See Ia. M. Neverov, “Timofei Nikolaevich Granovskii,” *Russkoe obshchestvo 30-kh godov XIX veka. Liudi i idei. Memuary sovremennikov*, ed. I. A. Fedosov, 348–49 (Moscow, 1989). See also V. I. Kuleshov, “Literaturnye sviazi Rossii i Zapadnoi Evropy v XIX veke,” *ibid.*, 61–71 (and *ibid.*, 59, which quotes Stankevich that Rahel “. . . with her brilliant mind received the attention of all Europe”); K. M. Azadovskii and A. L. Ospovat, “Tiutchev i Varnhagen von Enze (K istorii otnoshenii),” *Literaturnoe Nasledstvo*, vol. 97: *F. I. Tiutchev* (Moscow, 1989), 2:458–63.

CHAPTER THREE

THE MAGIC OF KABBALAH AND THE AESTHETICS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

Kabbalistic Motifs in Russian Culture during the Years 1830–1840

Recognition within Russian letters was given not only to Jewish philosophers or contemporary writers living in the West. What *JMPE* described imposingly as “the mystical delusion” of rabbis, or their “extravagant fantasy,” was also in fashion. Yet whereas Kabbalah—or, to be precise, its Christianized version—was familiar enough to the previous generation—i.e., Masons and Rosicrucians, who incorporated it into their literary works,—Russian Romantic literature limited itself merely to superficial references, relegating “kabbalistics” to the foggy realm of black magic and sorcery.¹ Thus, according to P. Svinin (*The Court of Shemiaka*, 1832), Mongolian astrologers in their Golden Horde diligently busied themselves with “kabbalistic computations.” Also noteworthy in this respect is Bulgarin’s story “The Kabbalist,” published for the first time in 1834, in which this Jewish magic is presented as a mere pretext for a discussion of the danger of tempting fate and predicting the future: “Overwhelming happiness tortured me and prompted me to look for what I did not need. I became enamored of mystical fortune-telling and predicting the future. Fate led me to make the acquaintance of a Yid who was well-versed in ancient Kabbalism and looked into the future as if into a mirror. He died in my house and on the threshold of death revealed to me his secret. Only once did I then look into the future and since then my happiness has forever fallen apart!”²

¹ In Russian society this trend began with G. Derzhavin (“Opinions on the Jews,” 1800) and in the time of Nikolai was supported by administrative officials such as the captain of the gendarmes A. Vasiliev, who considered “Kabbalism” to be malignant “sorcery.” See O. Minkina, “Zhandarm i tsadiki,” *Lechaim*, 2008, no. 5 (193): 48.

² *Severnaia pchela*, 1834, no. 109, republished in F. V. Bulgarin, “Sochineniia” (St. Petersburg, 1836), 1:290–303. Such an approach to Kabbalah as a system of fortune-telling—mainly numerology—was widespread also in popular culture in the West, whence it came to Russia in the 18th century, successfully competing with abstract Masonic metaphysics. Thus, in 1793 in Moscow, a translation from the German was published: *The Oracle of Kabbala, or The Wonderful Art of Knowing the Future and Adventures*. See A. I. Burtsev, *Obstoiatel’noe bibliograficheskoe opisanie redkikh i zanimatel’nykh knig* (St. Petersburg, 1901), 3:77.

Official Orthodoxy condemned Kabbalah, associating it with dichotomizing Apostle Paul's "spirit and letter" and favoring "the sensual": Jewish literalism. Discussing the Jewish cult of "the ineffable name of Jehovah," the magazine *Christian Readings* concluded in 1835 that "such belief, at its inception, had a foundation in the well-known biblical teaching on the all-creating and all-affirming Word of God. But in the childish minds of the sensual Jews, who stopped at the letter and never penetrated the spirit of Scripture, such deep faith devolved into crude superstition. Their exceptional reverence for the letter of the Law and, in particular, for the commandment not to express the name of God in vain, engendered kabbalistic subtleties and focused the strength of their superstition primarily upon the four-letter name of Jehovah."³

An entirely different attitude toward Kabbalah prevailed in neighboring Germany,⁴ and a certain, albeit not very significant, influence from there is discernible on Russian writers. Within the framework of their unfocused occult fancies, interest was generated mainly in the graphics of the Hebrew letters and the secret meanings that were given to them in the tradition deriving from the kabbalistic *Sefer Yetsirah* (*The Book of Creation*) and especially *Sefer ha-Temunah* (*The Book of the Image*)—to which latter the Christian reader was introduced in the 17th century by Knorr von Rosenroth in his famous compendium *Kabbalah Denudata*. As was shown by K. Burmistrov and M. Endel, Russian Masons were introduced to *Sefer Yetsirah* at the end of the 18th century. In the Russian State Library (Moscow) scholars found a much later translation of the book, dated to the middle of the 19th century and translated, apparently, from Hebrew; in the same handwritten collection, belonging to A. Filosofov ("The Philosophical and Secret Meanings of the Letters"), they also found, together with excerpts from the *Zohar*, long passages from *Sefer ha-Temunah* copied from Rosenroth. As to the *Zohar*, "it was the most important and well-known kabbalistic text among Russian Masons."⁵

³ *Khristianskoe chtenie*, 1835, pt. 1:297. The author, repeating a popular mistake, mixes up *shem ha-mefurash* with the Tetragrammaton. Cf. also the attack on rabbi Akiva, whom Jewish tradition considers to be one of the pillars of Kabbalah: "The Yids, who thought that he was able to expound on even the smallest letter of the Bible, falsely attributed to him many writings" (*Entsiklopedicheskii slovar'* [St. Petersburg, 1835], 1:350).

⁴ See especially the following articles from the specialized German collection dedicated to this subject, *Kabbala und die Literatur der Romantik*, ed. E. Goodman-Thau, et al. (Tübingen, 1999): Guy G. Stroumsa, "Gnosis and Judaism in 19th-Century Christian Thought"; Christoph Shulte, "Zimzum bei Schelling"; V. Roelcke, "Kabbala und Medizin der Romantik: Gotthilf Heinrich Schubert."

⁵ See K. Burmistrov and M. Endel, "Kabbalah in Russian Masonry: Some Preliminary Observations," *Kabbalah: Journal for the Study of Jewish Mystical Texts*, 1999, no. 4:24–25.

In 1829 *The Moscow Herald* published the related opus by D. A. Obleukhov treating the secret meanings of the Hebrew (though not only the Hebrew) letters, in which were represented both the “laws of Nature” and the parts of the human body (which are, in their turn, “the ideal of the outward material world”):

⌘ Aleph = resembles a brow with a nose, the outline of a face, which corresponds to the meaning of the word Alef, in Hebr. “chief, superior, commander, front, in front, face.”

⌚ Beth, resembles a beard.

⌛ Gimmel, a chin with a throat and a part of a chest⁶

—and so on. These letters also correspond to feelings, elements, etc. In the 1830s very similar analyses were presented by Nadezhdin in *The Buzz* (1831) and by D. Yevetsky in *Telescope* (1832). In 1832, moreover, Alexander Veltman in his novel *The Wanderer* played on the secrets of the Hebrew alphabet, portraying quasi-mystical travels along the letters, crowned with the meeting of a lovely “maiden” (apparently a semi-burlesque personification of the *shekhinah* or the kabbalistic *sefirah* “Malkhut”):

“Alef!”—sounded in my ears . . .

“Bet!”—continued the coachman . . .

“Gimmel, dalet, hey, vuv, zain, chev, tet! . . .”⁷

Many years later, in 1843, an article was published in *The Lighthouse (Maiak)* by N. S. Ilyin, the future founder of the Yehowist religious movement, entitled “The Common Alphabet in Human Nature,” the tenor of which is very close to Obleukhov’s studies.⁸ One must make allowance, however, for the fact that Ilyin fell under the belated influence of pietistic

⁶ D. A. Obleukhov, “Otryvki iz pis'ma k N. o gieroglificheskoi iazyke,” *Moskovskii vestnik*, 1830, pt. 4:111–12.

⁷ A. F. Veltman, *Strannik*, 130. Cf. also the examination of the influence of letter-mysticism on German Romanticism: D. Kremer, “Kabbalistische Signaturen. Sprachmagie als Spiegel romantischer Imagination bei E. T. A. Hoffmann und Achim von Arnim,” in *Kabbala in der Literatur der Romantik*, ed. E. Goodman-Thau, et al. (Tübingen, 1999); K. Reichert, “Kabbala in der deutschen Romantik. Zur Einleitung,” in *The Language of Adam* [Die Sprache Adams], ed. A. P. Coudert (Wiesbaden, 1999). A good deal of information on letter-mysticism and sorcery in Christian “Kabbalah” is contained in the book by A. B. Kilcher, *Die Sprachtheorie der Kabbala als ästhetisches Paradigma: Die Konstruktion einer ästhetischen Kabbala seit der Frühen Neuzeit* (Stuttgart, 1998).

⁸ On the relationship between, on the one hand, a literal utopia and the search for the heavenly proto-language with, on the other hand, Kabbalah (in its Christian reception), see A. Assmann, “Schriftspekulationen und Sprachutopien in Antike und früherer Neuzeit,” and D. Kremer, “Kabbalistische Signaturen als Brennpunkt romantischer Imagination bei E. T. A. Hoffmann und Achim von Arnim,” in *Kabbala und die Literatur der Romantik: Zwischen Magie und Trope*, ed. E. Goodman-Thau et al. (Tübingen, 1999).

theosophy and especially *The Victorious History* by Jung-Stilling. His favorite reading, moreover, was the old *Zion Herald*; Molostvova in particular aligned his spiritual search with several publications in this journal (1806–1808), in one of which, for example, was said: “Numbers are to the mind in understanding of intellectual beginnings what the letters are in understanding the material world.” It should be mentioned that in this maxim, as in all of Ilyin’s grammatical studies, glimpses can be seen of the early kabbalistic *Sefer Yetsirah*. Finally, one must take into account his frequent contacts with Jews. As Molostvova points out, Ilyin said “that the first inkling of the universality of all religions came to him during conversations in the synagogues, when he was trying to explain to the Jews why one religion is preferred over others. In resolving these questions”—adds the scholar—“and after carefully studying the Bible, he fixed upon it as the cornerstone of truth and the foundation of wisdom, for both pagan religions of the past and the Christian religion of the present. Here too one should note the influence on Ilyin of his mystical readings.”⁹ As to the question of the possible connection of the same Yehowists with Kabbalah, this requires special attention beyond the framework of our subject.

Magical letters were occasionally replaced with combinations of unknown “words.” The insane hero of the only story by Baratynsky—“The Ring,” published in 1832—fancied that he had been born a few centuries earlier in Spain, where, having given himself over to “illicit studies, secretly talking to educated Yids, delving into kabbalistic books,” “he would try all orders of magic words . . . all magical drawings.” Finally a demon appeared to him, and the main character sold him his soul in exchange for “power over life and nature.” In short, “Kabbalah” as a whole is here reduced to absurd black magic, requiring of the author no actual acquaintance with the subject. Especially strange is the portrayal by Nadezhda Durova, the famous cavalry maiden turned writer. In her novel titled *Gudishki* she depicts a horrible stableman named Voimir Gorilo-Rogach, a pagan and “cursed kabbalist” who is married to a Jewess and is perfecting his “satanic mastery” of breaking in mad horses.¹⁰ Underlying this far-fetched depiction, perhaps, is some vague connection with Jewish demonology—to be exact, with the conception of Lilith, whom the book of the *Zohar* portrays as the wife of the lord of the demons, Samael. However, I could find

⁹ E. V. Molostvova, *Iegovisty. Zhizn' i sochineniia* kap. N.S. Il'ina. *Vozniknovenie sekty i ee razvitie* (St. Petersburg, 1914).

¹⁰ Aleksandrov (N. A. Durova), *Gudishki* (St. Petersburg, 1839), 4:127, 196.

only an earlier version of their marriage in Russian literature: in 1834, in his novel *The Lunatic*, Veltman mentions in passing “Lili, the first wife of Adam.”¹¹ Another version of the *Zohar* was given to Russian readers in the same year by Spindler, who refers to “the angel of death, Sammael” as “the husband of the terrible nighttime bride, Lilisa, the mother of all wrongful deeds!”¹²

In general it was easier to learn about Kabbalah from foreign works than from Russian publications, since the censor had a much more critical attitude toward Jewish mysticism than toward any other kind. For those who had a genuine interest in this secret knowledge, an authoritative source could be found in the German polymath F. J. Molitor’s works (mentioned above),¹³ which in the middle of the 1830s were translated into French (*Philosophie de la tradition*) and received a favorable review in Uvarov’s journal. Even Prince V. F. Odoevsky was limited to drawing on the pseudo-kabbalistic, albeit very popular, *Comte de Gabalis* (written by Bérenger Saunière, de Montfaucon de Villars), when in his Hoffmannesque *La Sylphide* (1837) he vividly described a romantic dreamer who decided to “test for himself the kabbalistic mystery,” by invoking nature spirits: “O, now I believe the kabbalists; I am astonished, in fact, at how I formerly looked at them with sneering mistrust. If there is Truth in this world it exists solely in their creations!” In Odoevsky’s much earlier story “The Improviser” (1833)—likewise stylized à la Hoffmann—one can discern the faint echoes of kabbalistic *gematria*. Here we meet the satanic doctor Segeliel, who exposes both nature and human souls to ice-cold rational analysis, for which he makes use of magical books, filling up his room with “living numbers and letters”: here is both “the Arabic aleph” and “the old Chaldean polygraph.”¹⁴ The character’s name itself comprises the Hebrew words *sekhel li el*—that is, “To me reason (or ‘the mind’) is god.” However in another, unfinished work written in 1832, yet published in 1838, a character by the same name plays the role of a good-natured

¹¹ A. Vel’tman, *Lunatik. Sluchai* (Moscow, 1834), 1:5.

¹² Spindler, *op. cit.*, 1:432.

¹³ As pointed out by K. Burmistrov, the publication of his books on Kabbalah was financed by the Grand Duke Constantine Pavlovich, governor of the Polish Kingdom. For more on Molitor (as well as on Jewish letter mysticism), see Christoph Schulte, “Die Buchstaben haben . . . ihre Wurzeln oben. Scholem und Molitor,” *Kabbala und Romantik*, 144–58.

¹⁴ See V. F. Odoevskii, *Sochineniia* (Moscow, 1981), 1:134–35; 2:110, 117. Cf. also the motif of “kabbalistic numbers,” used in alchemy, in his “Salamander” (1841) (*ibid.*, 208).

and naïve Faust, who in trying to help people comes into conflict with Lucifer.¹⁵

As for Durova, her villain was an homage to the tradition that ascribed Jewish characteristics to the canonical figure of the Terrible Sinner. In Russia it arrived long before Romanticism, and at a time when the Jew as a household figure had not yet entered the sphere of its literary interests. Demonized Jews—villains of the sort portrayed by Schiller—appear already in the first dramatic excerpts of young Narezhny's *The Vengeful Jews* (1799) and *The Day of Wickedness and Vengeance* (1800); but they are not involved in sorcery.

In the Romantic era, before Odoevsky and Durova, the paradigmatic and most vivid characterization of the terrible sinner and sorcerer was created by Gogol in his early story "A Terrible Vengeance" (1832). It is precisely here, as I have elsewhere sought to demonstrate, in the image of the Romantic monster, that elements of kabbalistic allegory are introduced, combined with additional echoes of Judaism. In particular, the sorcerer's "miraculous hat," "covered in writing that was neither Russian nor Polish," entered here from Jung-Stilling's *Longing for the Homeland* (in the latter as an exorcist's band "with different red magical letters," inspired by applied Kabbalah); some of his other features hearken back to the Wandering Jew, the protagonist of the translated novel published in 1830 in *Moscow Telegraph*.¹⁶ There are also some plot similarities between "A Terrible Vengeance" and the *Aggadah* and *midrash* (*Bereshit Rabbah*, *Midrash Tanhuma*), which were adopted into Ukrainian folklore. Thus, the initial division between the two blood brothers Ivan and Petro of "everything that they could lay their hands on" has an analogy in the *midrash*, which tells of how Cain and Abel agreed on dividing the entire world; and the story of a sorcerer who causes his ancestor to be tortured is comparable to the midrashic story of Lamekh, who killed his own ancestor Cain.¹⁷ Suspicious gastronomical habits of the sorcerer are condemned by his Orthodox son-in-law Danila as Jewish: "I know you prefer Yid noodles," he says to himself, when his father-in-law refuses to eat Ukrainian dumplings. And the father-in-law's dislike of pork prompts Danila to say: "Only Turks

¹⁵ V. F. Odoevskii, "Segeliel, ili Don Kikhot XIX stoletii. Skazka dlia starykh detei" (Excerpt from Part 1), in *Sbornik na 1838 god* (St. Petersburg, 1838), 89–106.

¹⁶ *Moskovskii telegraf*, 1830, pt. 32, no. 3:338.

¹⁷ The latter story appears in Ivan Franko's collection of Ukrainian folklore: I. Franko *Apokryfy i legendy z ukrainskikh rukopysiv*. vol. 1 [in Ukrainian] (Lvov, 1896), 72.

and Yids do not eat pork.” The indirect influence of kabbalistic allegory is later seen in Gogol’s “The Overcoat,” with its motif of magical rewriting.¹⁸

In 1837 in Moscow a certain Efrem Baryshev (1812–81) published the poem “The Jew.” It was written in imitation of Pushkin’s “Poltava,” in which the Ukrainian hetman Mazepa, who betrayed Peter the Great during the campaign against the Swedish army (for which he was excommunicated by the Synod of the Russian Church), is portrayed as the ultimate scoundrel. Baryshev’s protagonist, Iakov, is the son of the previous hetman, Ivan Samoilovich, who fell victim to Mazepa’s intrigue and, together with his two sons, was exiled to Siberia. The author furnished his Iakov with an absolutely fantastic biography, sending him for a number of years to Palestine, where he masquerades as a Jew, out of love for the “fiery Rebecca.” Iakov is likewise a terrible sinner, but he is a repentant one: he takes revenge on Mazepa not only for his family troubles, but also for his betrayal of the country. Iakov’s demonism is combined with occult pursuits and astrology: “I studied the book of mysteries, / Hiding my knowledge from everyone”; he entrusts his fortune to the stars.¹⁹

Exactly what these Jewish “mysteries” are is not explained here, as the author clearly did not possess the necessary information. The less knowledge he had, the more freedom he was given for flights of poetic fantasy, unchained by pedantry. The “smile without a cat” grew ever wider. Russian Romanticism, which valued extreme fervor above all else, assigned the role of the power-hungry sorcerer to the mysterious Zakharii (Skharia), who in the fifteenth century initiated “the heresy of the Judaizers.” In his novel *The Heretic* (“Basurman,” 1838) Ivan Lazhechnikov made him a kabbalist and alchemist, and Nestor Kukolnik, in his drama on the same subject, *Prince Kholmisky* (1840), followed Baryshev’s example, adding astrology to this list. (In point of fact, the “Judaizers” indulged themselves in astronomical computations, comparing the Russian Orthodox and Jewish calendars). Lazhechnikov portrayed Zakharii sympathetically and Kukolnik—with extreme animosity, endowing him with the qualities of a terrible sinner. Nevertheless, both authors portrayed Kabbalah as a combination of black magic and charlatanry and condemned it to differing degrees (Lazhechnikov’s criticism was modest). In Moscow Lazhechnikov’s Zakharii bedazzles his visitor—a certain Mamon—with sweet music and technical effects, enshrouded in a “gray mist.” In the absence of

¹⁸ On this topic see M. Weisskopf, op. cit., 441–49.

¹⁹ E. Baryshev, *Evrei. Poema* (Moscow, 1837), II, 109.

adequate sources, the author of *The Heretic* takes the scene of Kabbalistic magic from a typical Masonic initiation ritual; there are also similarities with Gogol's archetypal "Terrible Vengeance," with the story "The Mysterious Yid," from the *Moscow Telegraph*, and with Jung-Stilling's *Longing for the Homeland*, with its "red magical letters":

Before him stood a table of enormous size, covered with brocade, in which gold was so thickly interwoven in innumerable particles that it pained the eyes to look on it. On the table stood seven candles [i.e., a Jewish candelabra, or "menorah"—M.W.] of pure white wax, of a virgin whiteness, in golden candlesticks; and there lay on it, beside, an enormous open book, so ancient that it looked as though the slightest touch would reduce it to dust, and a human skull. Mamon observed the head of a serpent peering out from its eye-sockets. Behind the table, on a kind of elevation, sat an old man. His stern glance from under bushy white eyebrows, his tawny face, the white beard reaching to his knees, the black, ample mantle inscribed with kabbalistic characters in the color of blood—all this must have struck with awe the one who came to consult the oracle.

"The reason why thou comest is known to us," said the mysterious old man, in a voice that seemed to issue from the grave. . . .²⁰

The outward antiquity of the old man, in this case, is a sign not only of his Old Testament nature, but also of his supposedly accumulated wisdom. Wisdom is also allegorized as a snake emerging from Adam's head; together with the ancient mysterious book it suggests legends of the *Zohar* and Adam himself, whose knowledge was inherited by Kabbalah.

In certain instances it is valid to assume, if not the direct influence of Jewish esoterics, at least a typological convergence (a problem in Christian mysticism linked, as is well known, with the tradition of Jacob Boehme and, more generally, with Gnostic-neoplatonic theosophy). A poem by V. Sokolovsky (1808–39) entitled "Creation," first published in 1832 and then in a second edition in 1837, portrays the creation of the world according to the book of Genesis. Both editions received enthusiastic reviews in *The Northern Bee*: first it was praised by B. F. (probably Boris Fedorov),²¹ and the second time by Fedor Koni. Remarking on "the wonderful talent of the young poet," Koni notes that "1,200 copies of the first edition were sold out without any journalistic endorsements, without any trickery of brazen strategizing. . . . His 'Creation' should take the same place in

²⁰ I. I. Lazhechnikov, *Sochineniia* (Moscow, 1963), 2:564–65; English translation cited, with some adjustment, from idem, *The Heretic*, trans. E. B. Shaw (New York, 1844), 104.

²¹ "We welcome a new poet; and we rejoice to see the dawning of a new, brilliant talent" (*Severnaia pchela*, 1833, no. 55).

Russian literature that ‘Messiada’ takes in German letters and ‘Paradise Lost’ takes in English letters”²²

In Sokolovsky’s poem the hexaemeron of Creation is preceded by the chapter “Before Time” (*Dovremennost*):

Preeternity was shining with joy,
 Spiritual Light was streaming within her,
 And darkness with its clothes
 This glorious Light did not embrace. . . .
 Without course or borders,
 Permeated with Truth and Glory,
 It was for the mighty Creator
 An uncreated dominion.
 Out of Love he flowed—
 This inexhaustible Spirit and Light,
 And in that inconceivable love
 The Word everlasting remained . . .
 Inseparably submerged
 In His Holy immensity
 There shone forth with eternal beauty
 The holy Triunity.

And further on:

Full of His sublime mystery
 The Creator, sitting on the throne . . .
 Humbly shared wisdom
 With love in the joyful Word.

 Here all merge into one
 Without end, and without beginning.

In the depiction of this “uncreated dominion” one can clearly see an allusion in all of its details to the *Zohar* and, even more so, to the general kabbalistic designation for God: the *Ein-Sof*—i.e., the Eternal, conceived of as the transcendental original Unity of all that exists (in comparison: “Here all merges into one / Without end, and without beginning”). Russian Masons, following Christian kabbalists, firmly adopted the apophatic (negative) concept of the *Ein-Sof*, though at the same time attempting to make God more concrete and imbuing Him with, in Burmistrov’s words, “numerous positive attributes.”²³ The concept of the *Ein-Sof* among the

²² Ibid., 1837, no. 155.

²³ See. K. Burmistrov, “Kabbala v russkoi filosofii,” *Vestnik Evreiskogo universiteta*, (Moscow-Jerusalem), 2000, no. 4 (22): 42–43.

Romantics was to a certain degree mediated by Schelling's concept of the "Absolute" or *Ungrund*.

It is conceivable, in my opinion, that Sokolovsky's graphically distinguished categories constituting his "Tri-unity"—Light, Love, Word, or Wisdom, Love, Word—intersect with the ubiquitous set of *sefirot* that in Christian Kabbalah comprise the Trinity: *Keter* (Crown), *Hokhma* (Wisdom), and *Binah* (Understanding). Similar to Truth (which in Kabbalah is Wisdom) or Glory (which, to be sure, it is quite tempting to equate with the kabbalistic term *Kavod*), to Sokolovsky these are not so much fully personified entities as they are theological metaphors that gravitate toward personification, which is enabled by way of emanation ("effusion" or "outpouring"). The latter, it would seem, is quite possibly connected to a certain impersonal version of Christian Neoplatonism. Indeed, one of my Russian readers pointed out to me the typological similarity of Sokolovsky's cosmology to the ideas of the Polish Arians—radical Protestants of the 16th–17th centuries, inspired by Gnostic-neoplatonic tradition. But something else is significant here. According to Sokolovsky the creation of the world was preceded by a series of different, vanished universes, which the Creator recalls:

With My powerful Words
 Out of the cold gloom of nothing
 I begat life and happiness
 And filled it with worlds.
 But time was passing fast,
 Centuries flew by in moments,
 Completing their journeys, the worlds grew old
 And again died down into chaos.

 Now again My Love
 Will erect a Royal Word,
 And in this abyss of darkness once again
 I will create a wonderful world.²⁴

This decidedly heretical interpretation, which fundamentally contradicts Christian dogma, could only have been inspired by Jewish cosmogony—in the same form as it is presented in the *midrash Bereshit Rabbah* (on Gen 2:1) or in the *Zohar*, or, finally, in *Sefer ha-Temunah* (in the "Introduction to the third image"). In all probability Sokolovsky acquired such

²⁴ Vladimir Sokolovskii, "Mirozdanie". *Stikhotvorenie* (St. Petersburg, 21837), 7–8, 12, 13–14.

views from Russian masonic-occult tradition, or else based them on certain foreign compilations. At the same time, Jewish cosmological conceptions reflected in *Aggadah* (and, incidentally, not accepted in Judaism), are, in and of themselves, not regarded as a mystery. In 1834, for example, they were recounted with much hostility by the periodical *Christian Readings* in the article “A Glance at Modern Judaism”; the secular reader could acquaint himself with them from a review by Kraevsky in *JMPE*. It turns out that God, according to the Talmud, “makes the rounds of eighteen worlds that He created. Now ever since the creation of these other worlds, He has plenty of time, whereas before He was constantly creating and destroying them.”²⁵ Nonetheless, as far as I am aware, in Nikolai’s Russia no detailed and systematic exposition of Kabbalah or related Jewish teachings existed—at least not until 1846.

“Sacred Jewish Poetry” in the Aesthetics of Russian Romanticism

Noncanonical interpretation could inspire the reading of the Old Testament itself. Indeed, the Bible in those years became the field of aesthetic battles for Russian Romantics who clashed with each other in support of various imported theories. The situation became even more complicated due to what had then become a broad interest in ancient literature, the allure of Oriental studies, and the dictates of self-sufficient “artistry”—all of which drew readers to the poetic beauty of the Old Testament, and occasionally to its people. In April 1836, responding to the disappointing drama *Bloody Vengeance* by M. M. (M. Mikhailovsky) enacting Old Testament times, an anonymous *Northern Bee* correspondent writes: “Its author chose a subject from the life of the Jewish people. What a cornucopia for the poet; what a pageant for inspiration! We can promise him a laurel wreath in advance. . . . We begin to read with great anticipation, and sadly! We do not find here any Jews—these fortunate children of such magnificent nature, these blessed sons of God.”²⁶

Rarely, more as an exception, poetic beauty was found in rabbinic literature, which, generally speaking, was viewed with predetermined condemnation by Russian Orthodox tradition. In 1832 Nadezhdin’s paper *The Buzz* published the eighth chapter of *Behinat ha-‘Olam* by R. Iedaya

²⁵ *ZhMNP*, 1835, pt. 6, no. 6:304–5.

²⁶ *Severnaia pchela*, 1836, no. 88.

(Jedaiah, b. Abraham Bedersi). According to the introduction the author “is considered one of the best of the moralistic Jewish poets; and his famous creation . . . is a sun among other similar creations.” This work is “consistent with the folk imagination, national spirit, and the Jewish character—and you will clearly see that a Jew is able to be a narrator, and not only for money. Recounting the tales about Iedaya—about his long journeys—is perhaps the single greatest pleasure of the rabbi, judging from his excitement in relating them, the number of metaphors and epithets that brighten the narratives, and from the profound joy and tears of his listeners—Jews, of course.”²⁷

The enthusiastic aestheticization of the Old Testament found a venue for expression at the juncture of Pietism and still nascent Romanticism. Thus, in 1824 the *Ukrainian Journal*, while zealously propagandizing “in favor of Holy Scripture,” at the same time published the article “On Poetry and Eloquence in the East”—a panegyric “on unmatched and truly divine Israelite poetry.”²⁸ In the course of a year the same publication printed the poem by Fedor Marchevskii entitled “The Lament of the Captive Jews in Babylon,” based on Psalm 135, and, at the same time, a response to the Byronic theme (“By the Rivers of Babylon . . .”).

Following Herder the Jewish poetic legacy was variously praised by Katenin, Shevyrev, Nadezhdin, and F. Glinka—the author of *Experiments in Sacred Poetry*. Küchelbecker in turn wrote lengthy poems on biblical themes—i.e., “David” and “Zerubbabel.” “A child of the East, the spiritual poetry of the Jews acquired an unmatched character of grandeur and beauty,” wrote N. Polevoi about what he called “the holy and true religion of the Jews.” In his view one of the merits of the Reformation was that it “brought into European education a new source of erudition—the study of the Hebrew language. The beauty of biblical style impressed the poets.” “Unfortunately,” he later continues, “a false classicism, created by the French,” engendered the impossible “mix of Jewish phrasing with Greek-French forms of poetic creation.”²⁹ The all-around superiority of the Hebrew word over a Greek one, and over any other Gentile culture, is remarked upon by many authors. “The Jews were much more precise than

²⁷ *Molva*, 1832, no. 87:346. Includes a foreign bibliography.

²⁸ *Ukrainskii zhurnal* (Kharkov), 1824, pt. 2, no. 6.

²⁹ N. Polevoi, “O dukhovnoi poezii,” *Biblioteka dlia chteniia* 26 (1838): 97. The article was written as a harsh polemical response to the biblical poems of V. Sokolovsky, though the editor of *LjR*, Senkovsky, with typical cavalier attitude, removed certain insinuations, changing the text as well as the name of the article (see N. Polevoi, *Ocherki russkoi literatury* [St. Petersburg, 1839], 1:xviii).

the Greeks in portraying the morals of other nations,” notes Küchelbecker in passing.³⁰ An article titled “Hebrew poetry” that appeared in *Rainbow* began with the following panegyric: “Hebrew poetry differs from Greek poetry as much as the worship of the true God differs from the worship of idols.”³¹

Everything looked much different against the background of the “true” successor to Judaism: the principal non-equivalent attitude toward the two Testaments was seen in the fact that “poetry” was applied exclusively to the first—aestheticization of the second would have been blasphemy.³² At the same time, such differentiation had its advantages. Old Testament material was better suited to the creation of a new Russian epos, about which such theorists of Russian literature as Shevyrev were dreaming in the second half of the 1830s. One result of this attitude was the genre of Gogol’s *Dead Souls* and the biblically stylized passages of that *poema*, which K. S. Aksakov declared to be a national epos. When the same Polevoi, after berating stilted “spiritual poetry,” turned to “the ideal of the future Christian epic,” he proposed that it be based upon the Old Testament rather than the Gospel:

Suppose a poet selects the topic of “Moses” and in his poem he decides to recreate the story of the divine seer and the deliverance of Israel from Egyptian bondage. Set aside the ancient epic form; do not give us bogatyrs;³³ narrate just as the Holy Bible tells the story of Moses. Enter into this poetry of the East, carry yourself into the lifeless Arabian wilderness, into the beautiful mountains of Lebanon, onto the black cliffs of Palestine, into the yellow golden Syrian air. What subject is better suited for an epic than this fight between human pride and the will of Heaven, this Midian shepherd who stood before the throne of the terrible ruler of Egypt in obedience to the Word of God, and these plagues that humbled miserable human pride before the Word of the Creator? Where else can we find images such as the crossing of the Red Sea and God’s talk with the leader of Israel on Mount Sinai? And what a wonderful conclusion for the poem: the divine seer veils his face from the people who are unable to behold the radiance of his glory, who by prayer annihilates the enemies’ armies and finally dies at

³⁰ V. K. Kiukhel’beker, op. cit., 1:504.

³¹ P. S. Sviashchennik [P. I. Sokolov], “O poezii evreiskoi (sravnitel’no s grecheskoiu),” *Raduga*, 1833, 369.

³² The Censor K. N. Borozdin, it is true, criticized Katenin for viewing Old Testament books “meritoriously, but as common human works, which diminishes respect within the truly Christian soul for the holiness of the Word of God” (T. K. Baturova, *Literaturnaia gazeta’ A. S. Pushkina i A. A. Del’viga*, [Moscow, 1988], 227).

³³ Cf., by contrast, in Gogol’s *poema*: “Should not the bogatyr be here, where there is a place for him to spread out and walk around?”

the threshold of the Promised Land, where the eternal mystery hides his grave from men! . . . Imagine such a poem, created by the genius of Dante or Milton unbound by the rules of ancient epic forms, and you can easily understand that by comparison to such a creation Klopstock's "Der Messias" and Milton's "Paradise Lost" would seem weak and poor.³⁴

A similar aesthetic pathos—unavoidably involving some secularization of the text—is applied as well to biblical monotheism, which was considered the greatest achievement of ancient Jewry. Here again Shevyrev's position is significant, surprisingly at odds with his hostile and contemptuous assessment of these people in the post-biblical period. Now, in his *History of Poetry*, he writes about ancient Israel: "When the chosen one of God received His command to tell His people about Him, he asks the Almighty: 'What should I tell Israel Your name is?' The Lord answers: 'I Am Who I Am; thus you shall say to the sons of Israel: 'I Am has sent me to you'' (Exod 3:14)." Exuberantly Shevyrev adds—"What a pure, clear, and entirely abstract, profound concept of the living God! Here, perhaps, begins the notion of the absoluteness of God, Who is because He is. This notion was sought via endless paths and endless labyrinths by the greatest of the world's philosophers, and they found it in a dead absolute, in the absoluteness of the beginning, in that skeleton of the idea on which nineteenth-century philosophy is based; yet already more than 3,300 years before us that idea was expressed with such simplicity, clarity, and vitality—and told to whom?—to the humble shepherd of Jethro's sheep." At the same time, however, hidden in this panegyric evaluation is a denial of the inspiration of the biblical text, which Shevyrev turned into an "abstract concept" or philosophical "notion of the absoluteness of God." It is impossible to imagine the author having the audacity to praise for the same philosophical depth any of the sayings of Jesus or, for example, the Sermon on the Mount, crediting it rather to the apostles who received the message, as he does above with the Jews and Moses.

In the notion of "I Am" Shevyrev merges three categories of time: the past, the present, and the future, captured in ancient Hebrew "poetry," in its four forms: "History, Prophecy, Law, and Wisdom." In this way the Old Testament, consistent with Christian dogma, takes on an educational purpose. In particular, "The Psalms are the preparatory educational embodiment of the Word of God in human words, sanctified by grace from above. This is why they contain prophecies of the Christ!" His coming completes

³⁴ N. Polevoi, *op. cit.*, 105–6.

the positive national mission of the Jews, which deserves much praise, especially for the “concept of monotheism” that took root among this people. (The author says nothing about the contemporary fate of this people.) Here Shevyrev is in complete agreement with Chaadaev when he says:

Among the other nations of Asia it is the Jews, primarily, who are representatives . . . of the pure understanding of the one God. This sublime notion, the notion of the one God, bringing salvation to the whole of humanity, the fundamental notion of any pure morality, the germ of any harmony, any order in the world of humanity, was nurtured in the peaceful tents of the people of Israel, it was the center of their life. This idea is tied in to the whole history of the Jews; it is the foundation of their unity as a nation, of their political strength. It is in this idea that the strength, richness, and glory of this shepherd-nation lies.

It is difficult in the history of any nation, even those that have died out, completing their national cycle of life—it is difficult to find unity, an idea that they engendered in mankind; it is difficult to sum up all of their deeds, all the events of their complicated history into one point of view. Yet this quite difficult task is easily resolved in the history of the Jewish people, for all of their history is the history of the notion of the one and true God amongst ancient mankind.

Shevyrev’s continuation of the “notion of the one God,” which in Christian teaching necessarily differentiates into the concept of the Trinity and of the precreation birth of the God-Son, is not as clear. His manner of expansively interpreting the dogma of the incarnation of “the word of God,” projecting it onto “the human word,” takes on completely heretical overtones, consistent with his overall aesthetic. He argues for an overall Romantic sacralization of poetic writ specifically by means of an Old Testament text, the story of Creation—this time carefully and silently evading an identification of the biblical creating Word with Jesus himself: “Remember the first chapter of the book of Genesis,” he writes in his *History of Poetry*, “the inspired and simple tale of the creation of the world. How was this world created? God . . . in the repose of His might, speaks, and the entire world is merely the creation of His Word, it is this Word that took on image and flesh”—the world, and not Jesus, contrary to the Gospel, where it is said specifically of Jesus: “And the Word was God”; “And the Word became flesh” (John 1:1, 14). Hence the conclusion suggests itself that for such total and all-permeating monotheism Christ is not necessary. Yet this all-absorbing monotheism, according to Shevyrev, takes on an almost pantheistic aspect: “Thus, according to Jewish teaching, the entire universe with all its beauty is merely the material word of God And the history of mankind, in both their view and ours, is likewise the word of

God made material, the continuous conversation of God; historical events are living expressions or fulfillments of the words of God.”³⁵

There is no doubt about the dependency of these conclusions on the historiography and mystical linguistics of Restoration. From time to time, incidentally, these theories also reached the pages of the Russian press. In 1833 in Odessa, M. Rosberg, in the thrall of conservative philosophical studies, published in his *Literary Papers* voluminous fragments from the *Theory of Language* by Ballanche, who long before Shevyrev referred to the world as the incarnation of the biblical word: “the foretype of both the thought and feelings of man resides in language, which is given to him by God Himself”; and “the primogenital word, revealed to man, is poetry.” “The entire universe is the manifestation of the word of God, the written, crystallized thought of God.”³⁶ This notion is captured in the ancient Hebrew language—but also in Sanskrit: a compromising tribute to the mystical Indology of the brothers Schlegel.

Nadezhdin immediately attacked Shevyrev’s book in a lengthy review,³⁷ after which two more of his polemical articles followed.³⁸ Shevyrev answered his critic in *The Moscow Observer*, expressing outrage over Nadezhdin’s superficial conflation of “the poetry of two aboriginal peoples of the East: the Indians and the Jews.” (Nadezhdin was inclined to broad classifications after the German manner, even without a German education.) What do they have in common?—asks Nadezhdin. It is hardly surprising that Russian writers, among others, are poorly informed about Indian poetry—but with respect to Jewish poetry it should be different: “For almost two thousand years its holy relics have left behind a subject of deep study for all enlightened peoples!” According to Shevyrev, continues the critic, Indian and Jewish poetry “are similar in their religious or symbolic character, full of a sense of God.” But exactly what God? “Jewish poetry is eminently spiritual,” says Nadezhdin, “whereas Indian poetry is eminently material.” To be sure, the reviewer admits that he is no expert on the latter. The same can be said for Shevyrev, who was inspired by poorly understood German research. But unlike him, Nadezhdin was very well acquainted with Jewish literary arts: “We know Jewish poetry,

³⁵ “Istoriia poezii. Chteniia ad”iunkta Moskovskogo universiteta Stepana Shevyreva” (Moscow, 1836 [1835]), 202–4, 218–19, 233, 285.

³⁶ *Literaturnye listki. Pribavlenie k Odesskomu vestniku*, 1833, nos. 37–40, pp. 507–10.

³⁷ *Teleskop*, 1836, pt. 31, no. 4:665–716. Nadezhdin also published the article in that same year as a separate brochure.

³⁸ Concerning this dispute, see Iu. V. Mann, *Russkaia filososfskaia estetika* (Moscow, 1969), 52, 173–185, 207, 219.

we studied it *ex officio*, in the original”—whereas his opponent is content with mere lofty speculations; and even those are borrowed from “the great Herder.” Shevyrev’s *History of Poetry*, Nadezhdin venomously clarifies, “belongs to the best pages of Russian eloquence”—but not to science, aesthetics, or theology.

As to the delicate question concerning the treatment of the Holy Scriptures as a literary artifact or work of “poetry,” Nadezhdin, as almost all proponents of such an approach, alludes to the earthly circumstances of the existence of the biblical texts. As is typical in such cases, a dichotomy unfolds between the divine “spirit” and the changeable human “nature” or “form”: “Certainly Jewish poetry, because of its divine character, should be elevated above the manifold circumstances and limitations of human action: its spirit cannot be influenced by earthly changes or carried away by momentary excitement, for it is the spirit of God; yet the organ, by which the spirit found its expression, was of a human nature—a nature that is changeable and short-lived; the word of God was pronounced by a human mouth, in human forms that grow old and die out. . . . It was pronounced by the mouths of the prophets in halls and by fortunetelling, at that time it still dealt with children, until finally it was expressed in pure truth through the person of the Son of God.”

The reference to “children” is derived from Apostle Paul, who associated the entire Old Testament period of mankind with childhood: “When I was a child, I used to speak as a child, think as a child, reason as a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face” (1 Cor 13:11–12). Just as in church tradition, this intrinsic infantilism of the Jewish people in Nadezhdin’s account conflicts with the dogma of its “ancientness.” In order to erase this contradiction the author moves Jewish “childhood” from an intrinsic state to that of a developmental, biological category, following the organic ethnology of German Romanticism—but immediately succumbs to logical fallacies.

Thus, the history of the Jewish people, similar to the history of any individual, suffers the vicissitudes of age, reflected in the “sacred poetry of the Hebrews”—but the age-related milestones he associates with shifts in the provisional thematic connections of Scripture. The truth of the Old Testament, in the development of Nadezhdin’s thought, also “applied to the different ages encompassing the fifteen centuries of the chosen people’s lifetime. During the first period, immediately following the creation of the Jewish nation at the foot of Sinai, the religion was focused entirely on the past. . . . It lived and was fed on remembrance. When, after centuries had

passed, the Jewish people deviated from patriarchal simplicity, neglected peaceful blessedness, and desired to become a distinct kingdom, the religion aligned more closely with the present, becoming law and the wisdom of life.” As we see, according to Nadezhdin, a mark of Jewish “distinctiveness” is estrangement from God (which is certainly bad), but on the other hand, in compensation the Jewish people acquire state “wisdom” (which is of course good). Nonetheless, “wisdom” does not save people from falling, which in the author’s treatment takes on a very strange form:

Finally, this distinctiveness, acquired by falling away from Jehovah, yielded its fruit: the people exhausted themselves through misapplication of the will and wild eruptions of passion; they began to sense their advanced age: then religion turned to the future and began to consist entirely of hope. . . . This is why the first relics of the Jews are mainly psalms and songs, the second are proverbs, and the third are visions [i.e., prophecies—M.W.].³⁹

The problem here is not only that Nadezhdin ignored the Pentateuch and the many other biblical genres not covered by his temporal classification, nor is it that those who received “the law and the wisdom of life” suddenly reacted with outrage and willful rebellion, nor is the problem the comical combination of these “wild passions” and simultaneous “decrepitude”—he simply inherited this unlikely union from patristic judophobia (for example, from John Chrysostom). Nadezhdin’s aesthetic-organic scheme is also marked by other inconsistencies, motivated by the desire to bring it into conformity with ecclesiastical exegesis. The author here identifies Jewish “childhood” with their devotion to the “past”—a poor fit with that exuberant age—whereas to the already decrepit Jewish people he attributes a sudden obsession with “the future” (an obsession not usually characteristic of old age) and the “hopes” reflected in the writings of the prophets. This “last phase of life, consumed by the fire of passion,” results in “decrepitude” and an ardent longing for the Messiah.

In the last of his three polemical articles Nadezhdin decisively crushed his opponent with his general erudition as well as his knowledge of Hebrew (drawn from the *Concise Hebrew Grammar* by Professor G. Pavsky). Now, consistent with ecclesiastical dogma, he declares all ancient Hebrew writing to be generally “propaedeutical” to Christ. At the same time the author brings precision to the definition itself of “sacred poetry.” A triumphant panegyric to the chosen people and their book follows:

³⁹ *Teleskop*, 1836, pt. 31, no. 4:708.

Sacred poetry, emerging from the insight of its chosen vessels by the Spirit of God, could take only one form—lyrical. It was full of exaltation, feeling, and song! The exclusively lyrical character of the poetic inspiration of the Jews is solemn testimony to its divine origin . . . If the Jews had had any drama or epic, it was not written, but lived: their history itself is a wonderful epos. . . . Their historical and biographical books in no way belong to poetry properly speaking: they are sacred, inspired prose. Poetry, in the deepest sense of the word, only becomes palpable in such books when they touch upon the lyrical moments of life, when the events themselves become hymns and psalms loudly preaching the glory of God, the triumph of faith, and the rapture of love, when they are throbbing with feeling.

The present, generally speaking, does not represent the true fate of the Jews as “the people of God”—that fate is too majestic for the banality of everyday existence. Nadezhdin challenges all other notions of the everyday life, prudence, and practicality of Israel, supporting his contention by means of Hebrew grammar:

Could this people, whose language did not even have a form to express the present tense, adhere to the framework of everyday wisdom and practical day-to-day prudence?

The entire existence of the Jewish people falls into the past and the future. After its “final burial under the irrecoverable ruins of Jerusalem”

the historical purpose of the Jews was fulfilled, their fate never having been tied to the present: they were put here as a sign to the World, as an indelible remembrance of the past, and as a mysterious prefiguring of the future.⁴⁰

Polemically this tirade is directed against Shevyrev—to be precise, against one part of his review concerning the Moscow staging of *The Merchant of Venice*. The review was published a year prior in *The Buzz*. In it Shevyrev described the Jews as a pitiful people “without a present, with nothing but a long-perished past and a covetously demanded, yet unborn, future!”⁴¹ Nadezhdin had now, as it were, transferred this line to another—higher—semantic register, imbuing it with a solemnly providential ring.

⁴⁰ N. Nadezhdin, “Ne dlia g. Shevyreva,” 11–12.

⁴¹ *Molva*, 1835, pt. 9:117.

CHAPTER FOUR

RUSSIA AS THE NEW ISRAEL

The “Tabernacle of Happiness,” or the Russian Solomon

It is interesting to note the contrast between Nadezhdin’s verdict that the Jews have no present and Chaadaev’s position, stated in his “First Philosophical Letter,” which by this time had been in the possession of the editor of *Telescope* and was published in the fateful 15th issue of the journal, a few weeks after the cited discussion with Shevyrev. Here Chaadaev bitterly remarks on Russia’s noninvolvement in the fate of humanity, about Russia’s estrangement from European historical development:

We live in the most limited present, without past or future, amidst flat stagnation.¹

Nadezhdin’s Israel appears as a direct antipode of Chaadaev’s Russia, which is chained to the present. Nadezhdin largely shared Chaadaev’s pessimism: he saw the attainment of spiritual independence as a key condition for Russia’s full development (“Europeanism and nationality in relation to Russian letters”). A reflection of these hopes is evident in his ambivalent relationship to the “identity” of ancient Judaism: we’ve already seen Nadezhdin’s special sympathy for the subject and his closeness to the doctrine of “Official Nationality.” Related parallels can be seen in his anti-Shevyrev polemics, in their final phrase, where, while reflecting on the reasons for the fall of ancient Israel, he attributes to the Jewish prophets a “holy resentment against the continually increasing corruption of the Jewish nation”²—with a transparent allusion to the terrible, lurking danger for Russia: forgetting its own national origins and spiritual individuality.

¹ Trans. [into Russian] by D. I. Shakhovskoi. The version in *Telescope* is somewhat different: “We live in a certain indifference to everything, in the most restricted of horizons, without past or future.” Cf., however, in the original: “Nous ne vivons que dans le présent le plus étroit, sans passé et sans avenir, au milieu d’un calme plat” (P. Ia. Chaadaev, *Polnoe sobranie*, 1:91, 325); and see the comment of Z. A. Kamenskii (ibid., 691).

² N. Nadezhdin, ibid., 419.

Such analogies were then fairly popular. In Nikolai's time the overall political-domestic side of the Old Testament was brought into the mainstream of imperial rhetoric with its cult of Russian Orthodoxy, monarchy, and nationality. Russia was more often and more openly portrayed as the direct successor of Israel. The latter's God, following the model of 1812, was replaced by the "Russian God," and their kings by the Russian Tsar. At the end of October 1826, three months after the punishment of the Decembrists and two months after Nikolai's coronation, Somov wrote in his review of *Experiments in Sacred Poetry* by F. Glinka (who had already been exiled to Petrozavodsk): "Imagination loves to correlate past events with what is happening in our time, and to extrapolate for itself providential signs. The following verses (from the poem "Woe and Grace") seem as if they were written for the present, though they are in fact derived from Psalm 78:

God chose humble David
 And gave the young fighter
 His Spirit, His blessing,
 And commanded the sorrow to stop;
 And so restless troubles hid,
 Mercy became manifest in justice;
 Evil was unable to use his craft
 And the righteous did not suffer.
 The law, like a strong wall,
 Protected the cities of Israel;
 Gardens bloomed in tranquility,
 Peace and quietude met with a kiss!"³

Professor Pogodin, listing all the "miracles" of Russian history, announces that once more "God's hand is leading us, just as in ancient times He led the Jews to a certain lofty goal."⁴ Later Kraevsky, one of the most prominent propagandists of "Official Nationality," unreservedly compares his country to "the chosen people of Israel": like them, Russia is destined by Providence Itself for the impending "renewal and edification" of the rest of

³ *Severnaia pchela*, 1826, no. 130. Cf. the poem "K izvaianiiam Minina i Pozharskogo" (pamiatnik v Nizhnem Novgorode), ("To the Sculpture of Minin and Pozharsky" [a monument in Nizhny Novgorod], signed "Spirit" [*Dukh*]: "I saw then two cherubs / Rushing forth with fiery wings / To defend Jerusalem") (*Damskii zhurnal*, 1828, no. 18:232).

⁴ "Vzgliad na rossiiskuiu istoriiu: Lektsiia professora Pogodina," *Uchenye zapiski Imperatorskogo Moskovskogo universiteta*, July 1833, no. 1:14.

the world.⁵ We likewise find a rich repertory of officious biblical-patriotic allusions among Romantic anti-Semites such as Kukolnik, in his drama *The Hand of the Almighty Saved the Fatherland*.⁶

In the fall of 1833 V. Olin—somewhat in advance of history—published his brochure *A Sketch of Russia's Well-being from 1825 to 1834*,⁷ in which this well-being, together with deification of the Emperor, is portrayed in extreme biblical tones. The suppression of the Decembrist uprising—this “vile sedition”—he presents as follows: “A single glance of the Tsar, a single look at His Divine countenance perplexed the offenders—and they were no more!” Even the evil rebels, “after seeing the triumphant brow” of the Russian tsars, “shudder in repentance and turn into dust before them, as before some deity!” If here Nikolai Pavlovich is portrayed as Sabaoth, then in the rest of the doxology Olin ascribes to him attributes of the Almighty-Creator: “Just as Providence, though unseen, is comprehended by the works and creations of His wisdom, governing and guiding everything, *so too* is the spirit of the Tsar’s wisdom, which from the height of His throne both governed and guided all events”; “We have already seen in our Tsar *more than an earthly divinity*: we have seen in Him the hand of God—the tabernacle of our happiness and the covenant of the world’s well-being!...”; “Our great Tsar has always appeared as *something of a divinity*, eternally just and merciful!...”⁸ The author, indeed, earnestly appeals: “Forgive, dear citizens, this unflattering yet involuntary outpouring of my heart, steeped in devout reverence for our Tsar!”

Olin, to be sure, went overboard in devotional ecstasy—his flattery quite alarmed the addressee, who never meant to take upon himself the role of the Lord.⁹ Other psalmists preferred to compare the monarch to great men of the Bible—not only to “humble David,” but also to Solomon.

⁵ A. Kraevskii, “Mysli o Rossii,” *Literaturnye pribavleniia k “Russkomu invalidu,”* 1837, no. 2:11. The article was published immediately after Kraevsky replaced Voeikov as the editor.

⁶ Cf., for example, this dialog about the Russian army, full of Old Testament quotes: “And how many? / It is easier to count stars, / than the army troops /—And who is their leader? /—I asked and got the answer—God!” (Nestor Kukol’nik, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* [St. Petersburg, 1851], 1:171).

⁷ St. Petersburg, 1833 (Oct. 18, 1833).

⁸ The emphasis in each of these three quotes is my own.

⁹ Not long before this F. Ryndovsky expressed himself much more prudently, dedicating his poem “The Creation of the World” “. . . with reverence to the Russian Sovereign.” This poem avoids any identification of the earthly tsar with the heavenly king; any connection between the two remains in the realm of metaphor. See Fedor Ryndovskii, *Sotvoreniia mira. Poema.* (St. Petersburg, 1832), 5.

In particular, such comparison was applied to the juridical activity of Nikolai in undertaking to establish an organized code of law (a monument “stronger than any bronze or obelisk,” as Olin wrote).

In 1838 in Moscow, a third edition of M. Maksimov’s *Patriotic Songs* was published; one of the songs, entitled “The Tsar-Bell,” concludes with the words:

How bright and radiant
Is Russian Glory! O Understand,
Our heart is grateful,
Russia’s bright throne is joyful,
And on the throne—behold Solomon!

Associations with Solomon were also supported by circumstantial parallels: both kings began their rule with a victory over rebels. At the time of his coronation, the Metropolitan of Moscow Filaret triumphantly compared the emperor to the biblical monarch, and Svinyin, describing the event, compared Nikolai’s prayer to “the prayer of Solomon.” The corresponding bas-relief—Abraham and Isaac, David and Solomon—together with scenes from Russian history, decorated the Cathedral of Christ the Savior, which was built in commemoration of the victory over Napoleon.¹⁰

Rainbow, through the words of its author-priest, called upon all countrymen to learn patriotism from the ancient Jews, even to the point of understanding the concept “the sons of Judah” in a positive light (in what was a unique instance in journalism at that time). Russians were to finally burn with love for their motherland “just as the sons of Judah in ancient times felt pride: ‘If I forget you, my Motherland, may my right hand forget me,’” etc.,¹¹ all based on Psalm 137, only substituting the Russian motherland for Jewish Jerusalem.

When *Rainbow* crossed over to the total sacralization of the Russian empire and its bureaucratic establishment, it activated a hierarchical comparison of the two Testaments that immediately transformed into a Marcionite-Manichean animosity toward the Jewish Bible. Through the mouth of its editor, Burger, a Baltic German, the journal exposed bureaucrats’ sinful love of holidays and rest, depicting it as a legacy of Jewish

¹⁰ See R. Uortman [Richard S. Wortman], “Stsenarii vlasti: Mify i tseremonii russkoi monarkhii.” T. 1: *Ot Petra Velikogo do smerti Nikolaia I*, trans. (from English) by S. V. Zhitomirskii (Moscow, 2002), 378, 381, 504. (Original title: *Scenarios of Power: Myth and Ceremony in Russian Monarchy*.)

¹¹ “Nadgrobnaiia rech’ sviashchennika i zakonouchitelia 1-go Kadetskogo korpusa magistra I. Raevskogo,” *Raduga* (Revel, 1833), book 5:355.

legalism, greed, and earthly self-love, in contrast to that Christian grace that swept over the Russian state service and remained unattainable only to soulless Germans: “Our spirit, like a piece of clay, thirsts for rest. Even if we were mere German chimney-sweeps, a German chimney-sweep lives for himself: it is excusable for him to rejoice at the end of work and the beginning of Sabbath. . . . You are right, O chimney-sweep, finding solace for yourself in the Sabbath day, sanctifying this day. . . . But we, the servants of the Motherland, . . . are we our own masters? . . . Does the Tsar not pay us for work, and does he not grant us our wages? . . . Does not the Christian present himself as a gift to the Tsar and to the Motherland? . . . Or do we sell ourselves instead of bestowing ourselves? Do we measure our value in gold? Do we measure the value of the body of Christ in gold? [The State is identified with the Church as “the body of Christ”—M.W.] Who are we?! Do we seem like Judas Iscariots? . . . O God! grant me strength; teach me to celebrate the Sabbath day not with joy, but with a repentant attitude . . . over my own weaknesses and in preparation for Your judgment!”¹²— exclaims Burger in conclusion. It is telling here that the implicit judgment is of the Old Testament Creator, who, as it is said in Genesis 2:3, rested on that day from all His work, and therefore sanctified it.

Biblicized Russia in Late Gogol

Gogol’s position with respect to the Jewish Bible would later be marked by ambivalence—a position that demonstrates at this juncture an impressive divergence between his Romantic prose of the 1830s and later didactics, which in great measure represented the actualization of the pietistic utopia of Alexander’s time. He compensates for his animosity toward the Jewish God and biblical heroes in *Taras Bulba* (on which see below), and his frequent anti-Jewish attacks in general, with great reverence for the Old Testament in his works of the middle and late 1840s, where he holds aloft the same dream familiar to us from the pages of *Rainbow* in the 1830s, of a sacral-bureaucratic and economic transformation of Russia. The utopia of Russian life, exemplified in the second volume of *Dead Souls* by the Kostanzhoglo estate, is based on chapters 25–26 of the book

¹² *Raduga*, 1833, book 1:60–61.

of Leviticus.¹³ This “amazing man,” celebrating labor as an imitation of the Creator, prefers to speak with indirect or explicit quotes from the Pentateuch: “‘Cultivate the land by the sweat of thy brow,’ it is said.”

In the uncensored version of “Diary of a Madman” (1834), the Sabbath, which crowns the biblical hexaemeron with rest, and the Creator who established it, are both treated in a more hostile manner (as in *Rainbow*), even though the Jewish God is carefully replaced with symbolic “rab-bis” (“But people unjustly adhere to reckoning by weeks. This was introduced by Jews, because their rabbis wash at this time”). Now, however, the exemplary, wise Kostanzhoglo in his Old Testament piety expresses literal adherence to the command concerning the Sabbatical (seventh) year: “Work for *six years* in a row sowing and digging the earth without taking rest even for a moment. It is hard, very hard. But then *later*, as soon as you stir up the earth, it will begin to help you . . . in addition to your *seventy-odd* hands, there will be *seven hundred* more that are invisible. *Mine do not even move a finger now*—everything is accomplished on its own” (emphasis mine). The conceptual function of this passage becomes clear in light of the book of Leviticus, in which the keeping of this and other important commandments is made a necessary condition for the proper administration of the country and the prosperity of its people. The Kostanzhoglo estate, accordingly, is the Russian promised land, which is managed according to God’s laws and therefore receives heavenly benefits: “When there is a drought everywhere else, it does not have a drought; when all around the harvest is poor, it is prosperous” (cf. Lev 26:34). This oasis of righteous living is surrounded by a vast zone of chaos—dying lands, inhabited by a people who have forgotten their duty before God, and who are paying for their sins with devastation, slavish bondage to foreigners, sickness, and death (cf. Lev 26:15–16; Deut 28:15–22, 27–28, 35).

In the last surviving pages of the *poema* the governor general, entering into a fight against the evil and troubles that plagued the country, commands his subjects to adopt saving wisdom directly from the Bible—as if Gogol were writing this during the times of Alexander I and the Biblical Society.¹⁴ The general then elevates the Jewish people as the work’s collective protagonist and author:

¹³ See my book *Siuzhet Gogolia: Morfologiia. Ideologiia. Kontekst* (Moscow, 2002), 388, 398–99, 631–32.

¹⁴ Cf. G. Florovskii, *Puti russkogo bogosloviia* (Paris, 1937), 267.

This book is then to be read eternally, not for any particularly religious reasons,—no, but out of curiosity, as a monument of a *people surpassing everyone in wisdom, poetry, and legislation*, and which even unbelievers and Gentiles consider to be the greatest creation of the mind, the teacher of life and wisdom.¹⁵

In order to understand how much Gogol's position evolved it is enough to remember that earlier, in *Arabesques* (1835), describing Judaea in the time of Christ's birth, he called the same people "contemptible": "Stony ground, contemptible people" ("Life").¹⁶

In *Selected Passages from Correspondence with Friends*, Gogol expressly aligns Russian poets with the Jewish prophets. This analogy itself is rooted in the Romantic cult of the poet, but with Gogol it received a more pronounced Old Testament overtone, inspired mainly by Shevyrev (with whom he had been friends for some time), and also by Shevyrev's critic Nadezhdin. To Shevyrev the essence of Jewish "poetry" is an overwhelming love for God—the vain yet heroic desire to capture His "infiniteness." Shevyrev's concept combines in itself the Schellingian Romantic keynote (perhaps here focused on the kabbalistic "Ein-Sof") and "selige Sehnsucht" with an Orthodox-Hesychastic tendency that denies any attempt to capture God in sculptural or other restricted forms. Jewish poetry, according to Shevyrev, is "like Jacob, eternally struggling with God, eternally languishing under the yoke of His infiniteness, eternally seeking to express it in every word—exhausting itself under the burden of its task. It is these efforts that give such poetry its inspirational, lyrical, and colossal character. . . . These efforts have by far a stronger influence on the soul than the prideful conviction of other poetry that is more peaceful and attempts to capture and portray God in sensual-bodily manner." According to Shevyrev, the Jewish lyre is governed only by "the unquenched

¹⁵ The emphasis here is my own. Curiously, long before Gogol, the same characterization of Scripture was given by *Entsiklopedicheski slovar'*, under "Bible" (the author of the article was most likely G. Pavsky, known for his Protestant inclinations): "Even without a divine background and lofty goal, the Bible is a very valuable creation of which mankind should always be proud. It is just as rich as its wonderful collection of political, religious, and moral facts, on which our responsibilities, societal order, happiness, fundamentals of the great Enlightenment, and the means of salvation are based, and the same cannot be found in any of the other creations of the geniuses of mankind. . . . Men of goodwill, who are experienced and educated, . . . have acknowledged and preached its great advantages before all other creations of the Eastern mind, or of the geniuses of Greece and Rome, before all other human works" (ibid. [1836], 5:529).

¹⁶ N. V. Gogol', *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* (Moscow-Leningrad, 1937–52), 3:566; 7:279; 8:84.

thirst for God.” Such love for God is embodied by David, the psalmist-king, on whose account “the kingly psalms and songs to God became common songs. Thus it became obligatory with the Jews; the song dedicated to God became a favorite song among the people; the king, God’s singer, was at the same time a national poet.”¹⁷

Nadezhdin did not challenge, but in fact sharpened Shevyrev’s theme of inspired lyricism as a main characteristic of the Old Testament, pointing out “the exclusively lyrical character of Jewish sacred poetry.”

In his letter to Zhukovsky (1845–46), included in *Selected Passages* as the article “On the Lyricism of Our Poets,” Gogol contrasts the works of foreign poets with inspirational Russian lyricism, to which he attributes precisely the same biblical features, further connecting them with Shevyrev’s Hesychastic tone. “In the lyricism of our poets,” says Gogol, “is something that does not exist among the poets of other nations, to wit—something *so nearly biblical*,—*that elevated state of lyricism* that is foreign to passionate movements and provides a firm springboard to the wisdom that represents the divine victory of spiritual sobriety” (emphasis mine). We should again bear in mind that the Hesychastic vision—this very “spiritual sobriety” or “wise vision”—emphatically excludes any attempt to sensually or bodily represent the divine: the same feature that Shevyrev attributed to “biblical poetry.”

In Gogol’s article the “colossal” scope of Jewish poetry touted by Shevyrev is replaced by Russian “bogatyir-likeness” (*bogatyirstvo*), combined with Hesychastic inspiration: “This bogatyir-like (*bogatyirsky*) sober strength, which from time to time even combines with a certain unconscious prophesying about Russia, is born of unconscious contact of human thought with divine Providence, which is so clearly heard in the fate of our Motherland”; its future “can be heard by the poet or . . . visionary, by means of the all-hearing ear.”

Another side of Gogol’s “high lyricism” is that he replaces the Shevyrevian *Jewish poet-king’s love for God* with the *love of Russian poets for the tsar*, and he adds, “from the multitude of hymns and odes to the tsars, our poetry . . . has received a certain majestic-imperial expression.” And further, he states: “The more sublime meaning of the monarch was perceived by our poets, not the legal experts, and with awe those poets discerned the will of God to realize that meaning in Russia in the form of the law; *it is for this reason that, each time the word ‘tsar’ rings from their lips, their tone*

¹⁷ S. Shevyrev, *Istoriia poezii*, 222–23, 280–81.

becomes so biblical" (emphasis mine); "This is what is happening among us," Gogol admonishes Zhukovsky. "How can you desire that the lyricism of our poets, who discerned the full meaning of the tsar in the books of the Old Testament and who at the same time perceived so clearly the will of God in the events of our Motherland,—how can you desire that the lyricism of our poets *not* be replete with biblical overtones?"

What is this "legitimate form" that every Russian sovereign must recreate in himself? Gogol discusses it in detail in the original version of the article.¹⁸ A real sovereign "in his actions will follow the example of God, which is clearly seen . . . in the history of *that people whom God set apart for the specific purpose of reigning over them Himself* and showing the tsars how to reign. And O how divinely He did reign!" (emphasis mine—M. W.) Immediately he refers to God's love for the Jews, which was to become the foundation of the Russian messianic nationalism professed by the author of *Selected Passages* (and this, incidentally, despite the New Testament ecumenicalism, according to which "there was neither Jew nor Greek"; cf. Gal 3:28): "How was He able to love His people above all others?! . . . He gave them examples in His anointed kings David and Solomon, who with their whole being abided in God, as if in their own house."

Gogol solved the problem associated with this monarchical rhetoric, which expressed preference for Old Testament models over the Gospel, through functional bifurcation, which he projected onto the image of the monarch as a divine being. Consistent with established tradition, the tsar here appears as a kind of synthesis of Christ and Sabaoth. In the main body of his article Gogol says that the tsar should "become like Christ in the smallest actions of his private life, and he should become like God the Father in his sovereign actions dealing with all the people. In this Book [i.e., the Bible—M. W.], and nowhere else, is provided a complete definition of the monarch. It has not yet entered the mind of European rulers, yet our poets have already discerned it, and this is why their works are taking on biblical tones."

It was likewise natural for Derzhavin to strive for "biblical-colossal majesty," writes Gogol in another article in the same collection, "What is the essence and the nature of Russian poetry?"; generally speaking, it is only in Russia that one finds depicted "the image of a man in such biblical majesty, so closely patriarchal." Both sides of the biblical ideal, that of the Old Testament and that of the Gospel, were embodied by Peter the Great

¹⁸ N. V. Gogol', op. cit., 8:679–80.

(to whom, in the 1830s, Gogol had been fairly hostile—as to the tsar who had enslaved his motherland Ukraine)—the monarch had, so to speak, become human through selfless everyday labor.

If for Nadezhdin Jewish poetry “*was all enthusiasm, all feeling, all song,*” for Gogol the same enthusiasm imbued Russian poetry—a fervor not for God, but for His earthly substitute—the tsar, who had transformed Russia and kindled her spirit: “*This fire was enthusiasm, enthusiasm arising from awakening. . . . This enthusiasm is reflected in our poetry, or better yet—it created it. This is why our poetry . . . took on such exuberant expression, aspiring to express at one and the same time admiration for the light brought into Russia, amazement over the great course lying ahead of her, and gratitude to the tsars who enabled it all*” (emphasis mine—M. W).

As is well known, such passages prompted a sarcastic rebuke by Belinsky in his famous letter to Gogol in response to *Selected Passages* (1847): “I mark only one thing: when a European, especially a Catholic, is overcome by religious fervor—he becomes a denunciator of unrighteous government, similar to the Jewish prophets, rebuking the lawless leadership of the land. Here, on the contrary, a man, even a respectable one, is overcome with the sickness known by psychiatrists as *religiosa mania*, immediately burning more incense to the earthly god than to the heavenly—doing so, moreover, to such a degree that his earthly god would reward him for his slavish efforts, though he knows that by this act he will compromise himself in the eyes of society. . . . Such a brute is our brother, the Russian!”¹⁹

“Religious fervor,” however, had overcome Gogol long before, in the first volume of *Dead Souls*, in which there was not yet even a word concerning love for the tsar. Shevyrev’s contention concerning the infiniteness of God as the main theme of Jewish “lyrical poetry” was replaced in this work with hymns to eternal Russia, whose infinite expanses took on a sacral-metaphysical status related to the deity Himself, filled with solicitude for His beloved country. In his idiosyncratic imagery Gogol already drew upon that biblical-prophetic grandeur that in *Selected Passages* he would ascribe to Russian poets. Moreover, in his *poema* the image of the prophetic narrator is fashioned from direct quotes from prophetic expressions. Compare the phrase “Already the head was smitten by a

¹⁹ V. G. Belinskii, *Izbrannoe: Estetika i literaturnaia kritika* (Moscow, 1959), 2:637. A quite curious detail of this Soviet edition is that “evreiskie proroki” (Jewish prophets) were replaced by the meaningless “evropeiskie proroki” (European prophets).

thundercloud, fraught with coming rain” with the biblical verses “My doctrine shall drop as the rain” (Moses’s speech in Deut 32:2), “For as the rain and the snow cometh down from heaven, . . . So shall My word” (Isa. 55:10–11), and “He shall come unto us as the rain, as a late rain that watereth the earth” (Hos. 6:3). Gogol’s biblical pathos clearly corresponds to the narrative of “God’s miracle” in the last lines of the *poema*, in which Russia “sweeps ahead, fully inspired by God.”

However much the author may have been at odds in his nationalistic inspiration with more moderate forms of official messianism, his understanding of Russia as God’s new chosen kingdom remained part of the patriotic consensus. Young, mighty, and immense Orthodox Russia preserved, as it was customary to say, the original purity of gospel faith, not simply succeeding Israel as God’s chosen—combining in itself both church and kingdom—, but also becoming the universal—“catholic”—New Israel, called to lead all of mankind, forging ahead of “all other nations and states.”

CHAPTER FIVE

THE IDEOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL BACKGROUND OF THE
JEWISH IMAGE

The Attack on Jewry: Administration, Society, Literature

Inevitably, with such ambitions, Israel, being old and Talmudic, was looked upon as an odd competitor, an absurd rival along the way toward realizing the bureaucratic national-religious utopia. If, from the beginning of the 1820s, Alexander I's position on the Jewish question became more aggressive,¹ then during the reign of his successor, who was obsessed by the idea of unification, persecution snowballed.² How the decree touted in 1835 by Granovsky, which "generously opened up to them the arena of military fame," actually looked in practice, is told many years later by Herzen. Here I will take the liberty, following Stanislawski's example, of quoting Herzen's sad but well-known testimony from *My Past and Thoughts*, when in that same year (1835) he was taken into exile in Viatka and on the way struck up a conversation with an elderly "escorting officer":

"Whom are you taking, and where to?"

"Oh, don't ask; it'd even break your heart. Well, I suppose my superiors know all about it; it's our duty to carry out orders and we're not responsible; but, humanly speaking, it's an ugly business."

"Why, what's the matter?"

"Well, you see, they collected a crowd of wretched little Jewish boys, eight or nine years old. Whether they're conscripting them for the navy or what, I don't know. At first the orders were to drive them to Perm, then there was a change, and now we're driving them to Kazan. I received them over a hundred versts [= 66.29 miles] ago; the officer who handed them over said, 'It's dreadful—simply put; a third of them were left on the way' (and the officer pointed to the ground). Not half will make it to their destination," he added.

"Have there been epidemics, or what?" I asked, deeply moved.

¹ Klier, *Rossia sobiraet svoikh evreev*, 159ff. (Russian version: pp. 282–91); D. Z. Fel'dman, *Stranitsy istorii evreev Rossii XVIII–XIX vekov*, 93–98.

² See especially D. Z. Fel'dman, *ibid.*, 100.

“No, not epidemics, but they just die off like flies; a little Jew-boy, you see, is such a frail, weakly creature, like a skinned cat; he’s not used to tramping about in the mud for ten hours a day and eating biscuits—then again, being among strangers, without father, without mother, without any affection; well, they cough and cough all the way to Mogilev. Do me a favor now and tell me, of what use are these children to them? What can they do with little boys?”

...

They brought the little children and formed them into regular ranks: it was one of the most awful sights I have ever seen—those poor, poor children! Boys of twelve or thirteen might somehow have survived it, but little fellows of eight and ten. . . . Not even the blackest brush could evoke such horror on canvas.

Pale, exhausted, with frightened faces, they stood in thick, clumsy, soldiers’ overcoats, with stand-up collars, fixing helpless, pitiful eyes on the garrison soldiers who were roughly getting them into ranks; the white lips, the blue rings under their eyes bore witness to fever or chill. And these sick children, without care or kindness, exposed to the icy wind that blows unobstructed from the Arctic Ocean, were going to their graves.

And note that they were being taken by a kind-hearted officer who was obviously sorry for the children. What if they had instead been taken by a military-political economist?”

I took the officer’s hand and, having said, “Take good care of them,” threw myself into the carriage. I wanted to weep; I felt that I could not hold my tears back. . . .”

And, as if arguing with the apologists of Nikolai’s regime—both then and now—, Herzen concludes:

What monstrous crimes are obscurely buried in the archives of the wicked, immoral reign of Nikolai! We have become used to these everyday occurrences, committed as though nothing were wrong, unnoticed, lost in the terrible distance, noiselessly sunk in the silent sloughs of officialdom or kept back by the censorship of the police.³

This period, from the mid-1830s (i.e., within eight years after the statute concerning the Cantonists) up to the Crimean War, marked an escalation of all sorts of repressive and “educational” measures⁴ that were in accordance with cultural priorities. Even an anti-Semite such as Bulgarin bemoaned the fact that censorship did not permit the portrayal of positive Jewish characters: “A novel in which a Jew is portrayed as a righteous

³ A. Gertsen, *Byloe i dumy* (Moscow, 1969), 1:202–3; translation cited, with modification, from Alexander Herzen, *My Past and Thoughts*, trans. C. Garnett, abridged by D. Macdonald (Berkeley, 1982), 169–70.

⁴ On all of this see M. Stanislawski, *Tsar Nicholas I and the Jews: The Transformation of Jewish Society in Russia* (Philadelphia, 1983); S. M. Dubnov, op. cit., 2:152.

man (even though in the same novel not one Christian is portrayed as evil) is considered to be immoral because Jews cannot and must not be righteous.”⁵ In 1841, for the third time, V. Narezhny’s novel *A Russian Gil Blas* was prohibited from publication. The censor A. Freitag rebuked the late writer for the fact that “in the novel all the noble and upper class characters are without exception portrayed in the darkest colors; in contrast to them many of the commoners, including the Jew Ianka, are distinguished by honest and irreproachable actions.”⁶

One can understand the anger of the censors toward Narezhny, who parted from anti-Semitic stereotypes. In truth his “Jew Ianka” was given the noblest of qualities. A Christian protagonist, Ianka’s friend, mourns his death thus:

There is no need to recount what my soul was then feeling. Were all my fields burned down and my gardens decimated by hail, were half my body paralyzed by stroke, I would not have been as smitten. Dropping to my knees I kissed his cold lips and with bitter tears falling from my eyes I lifted my hands to Heaven and cried out with tender anguish: “Son of the Living God! Would you really reject . . . the soul of this martyr, just because he did not know You? Be Merciful! Be Merciful! . . .

“I dug a grave next to a sweetbrier bush and reverently laid therein the honorable remains of the kind Jew. I spent all night at the grave, praying for the repose of his soul.” Yet on that same night local Christians—inhabitants of the village of Falaleevka—desecrated the remains of the deceased: “I have no abode,” [said the Christian protagonist,] “and so for the moment the grave of Ianka will be my headrest. Later I come to the grave and—horror of horrors!—I see his corpse dug up from the earth and mutilated, lying on the surface. The evil and inhumanity of this drove me absolutely mad. I solemnly cursed all the dwellers of Falaleevka and decided to quit my Motherland—never to return.”⁷

Narezhny, however, lived in a naïve, pre-Romantic era. In later times such sentiments would have been simply unthinkable. To be sure, censorship policy regarding this topic during the Uvarov-Nikolai period requires separate study, though there can be no question but that a decisive role was played here by the position of the Romantic authors themselves, whose

⁵ F. Bulgarin, “O tsenzure v Rossii i o knigopechatanii voobshche,” quoted from A. G. Altunian, “*Politicheskie mneniia*” *Faddeia Bulgarina: Ideino-politicheskii analiz zapisok F. B. Bulgarina k Nikolaiu I* (Moscow, 1998), 179.

⁶ Quoted from comments of Iu. V. Mann in the book *Narezhnyi, V. T. Sochineniia*. (Moscow, 1983), 1:610.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 584–85.

tastes for the most part coincided with the tastes of the censors.⁸ Besides, as we have already seen on more than one occasion, the censorial ban was much less pronounced for journalism—which was primarily imported from abroad or presented as a compilation—and for translated literature, where Jews were allowed to be portrayed as righteous. Regulated Russian journalism usually combined vigilant conservatism with moderate Enlightenment “progressivism” (a combination mainly oriented toward Uvarov himself). Naturally, it officially exposed “medieval superstitions” and did so with the same enthusiasm with which Romantic nostalgia drew upon its own inspiration for their historical, ethnographical, or folkloric fantasies.

Pushkin, when he was in the role of publicist and critic, was not obliged to share the beliefs of his Hussar who flew to the sepulchral Sabbath [the “Shabbash”] and got into an argument with a witch (in his poem “Hussar” [1833]). Corresponding to the restrictions of particular genres we find, for example, in one of the *Songs of the Western Slavs*, “The Battle at Great Zenitsa,” with the following lines: “We crossed the forbidden stream, / And began to burn the Turkish villages / And hang the Yids in the trees.” To the last verse Pushkin adds, almost sympathetically, a comment from Mérimée: “The Jews in Turkish provinces are a subject of constant persecution and hatred. During the war they suffered from Muslims and Christians. Their fate, notes W. Scott, is similar to the fate of the flying fish.”

In other words, in Russian letters of that time there existed a kind of division of labor.⁹ All in all, fictional prose and poetry related to their Jewish characters with much more animosity than did historiography, essays, and literary criticism to the ancient, medieval, or modern Jews living in the West, who to Russian readers represented something otherworldly—remote and mysteriously exotic, and in no way connected to ordinary life.

⁸ But sometimes the censors would display certain humane impulses, however confused and inconsistent. According to O. Minkina, who told me that in the Department of Manuscripts of the National Library of Russia (NLR) she happened upon a manuscript (fund 350 [OSPK] F XV 43) of a novel by A. A. Protopopov entitled *Pan Iagozhinskii, otstupnik i mstitel'* (1836), with the censor's notes. The censor deleted a significant portion of the author's discussion about the Jews: that for money they were prepared “to destroy the law of the covenant, to reject the faith,” “to trample upon consciousness and the law of nature,” “to set into motion a horrible lethal plot,” and so on; yet the censor did not expunge the author's description of the Jews as “insects with sidelocks,” along with a number of other denigrating characterizations.

⁹ Cf. the very similar situation in German culture: “Many writers whose attitudes to the Jews are highly liberal resort, at least half unwittingly, to familiar stereotypes when representing Jews in literature” (Robertson, *op. cit.*, 203).

They could extol “biblical poetry” or, like Bulgarin (and later many other anti-Semites), praise Heinrich Heine but not his coreligionists in Russia, who found themselves under the critical pen of Russian belletrists.

The most aggressive or derogatory approach is observed among second-class authors, whose servitude and toadyism toward those in power was compensated by victimizing the deprived citizens of the Pale of Settlement. Such double-mindedness was, of course, directed not only toward the Jews, and it was especially characteristic that one of the most voracious Jew-haters, R. Zotov, transferred the same polar sentiments to his native Russian life: obsequious enthusiasm for high authority and the contempt of a Chinese emperor toward his subjects. It will be enough just mention two of Zotov’s works, insofar as both bear out a Jewish (or rather anti-Jewish) theme. A quite positive, even ideal character in Zotov’s play “The Arrival of the Vice-Governor” talks to his valet only in the following manner: “Go to hell, you fool!”; “Why are you standing around, knucklehead!”; “Don’t argue, idiot; do what you’re told!”¹⁰ One character in his novel *Leonid*, the exemplary officer Zorkin, in exactly the same manner scolds his best subordinate Varlam, who dared to share his ideas about the battle: “For such wise thinking you deserve one hundred *fukhtels*,¹¹ you dolt! Is it your place to show off your intelligence, knucklehead?”

But to the emperor the book’s main protagonist comes as if to a shrine with relics—“kneeling with reverence and humility.” The monarch wonders how Leonid managed to reach him so quickly with the dispatch—indeed, it should not have been physically possible. He gives a simple and passionate answer: “Why, I flew, your majesty. The eagerness of your faithful servant provided me with wings. . . . I forget everything when I behold your majesty and experience your sovereign mercy toward me,’ Leonid bowed again, grabbed the emperor’s other, lowered hand, kissed it with exaltation, and left.”¹²

To his Jewish characters, as a matter-of-course, Zotov deals out various sorts of “*fukhtels*” at every step, but among more responsible authors one can see a certain degree of differentiation. In belles lettres at that

¹⁰ A quote from *Sto russkikh literatorov* (St. Petersburg, 1839), 209.

¹¹ The *fukhtel’* is an old punishment in the Russian army: a beating with the flat of a sword.

¹² R. M. Zotov, *Leonid, ili nekotorye cherty iz zhizni Napoleona* (Moscow, 1994), 128, 566. These words are directed to Alexander I, though with the same prayerful devotion the character also refers to his enemy, Napoleon, believing that the life of any monarch “is holy to Russians.” On Zotov and his novel see M. Al’tshuller, *Epokha Val’tera Skotta v Rossii. Istoricheskii roman 1830-kh godov* (St. Petersburg, 1996), 193–200.

time there predominated a cursorily disparaging (usually exaggerated, less often kindhearted) dash of occasional Jewish characters, especially modern ones: all sorts of cabbies, tailors, barbers, small merchants, and tavern-keepers. Yet as soon as more legendary and exotic historical material is brought into the story, or the significance in the story of a certain Jewish character is increased, then, together with the sharper focus, the mechanism of demonization is activated, fanned by religious clichés and anti-Semitic folklore. So it is, by rights of the Romantic expression of the “folk soul,” that the literature of the Golden Age begins to give vent to the most archaic fears of society, spitting out what was stored up in the depths of its religious worldview. On a broad scale the Jewish theme in Russian literature was, of course, incited from the outside, but the influence came not only from civilized England or France; much of it was brought in from neighboring traditions—Ukrainian as well as Polish—that developed from the powerful store of medieval and baroque anti-Semitism.¹³

In Russia these influences found easy root, for they fell upon ground richly manured by ancient animosity toward Jews and Judaism as the embodiment of foreignness,¹⁴ and they were corrected only by real impressions, mainly sporadic. The beneficial influence of these sporadic impressions, however, should not be overestimated. Russia did not have many “kind-hearted” officers of the sort mentioned by Herzen; more often than not we see another type, represented by the character Zurin in Pushkin’s novel *The Captain’s Daughter* and retaining all of his relevance in later times: “During the campaign, for example, when you come to a shtetl, what will you find to occupy yourself with? You can’t just beat Yids the whole time. Willy-nilly you go to the tavern and start playing billiards.”¹⁵ Beatings, sometimes combined with other methods, were used everywhere to stir Jews into action. In the story by Dzhigitov (the pen-name of V. P. Titov—a member of the *libomudry*, and later a well-known Russian

¹³ The main influence came from 18th-century Polish literature and folklore. See in particular H. H. Ben-Sasson, *Trial and Achievement* (Jerusalem, 1974), 248–50; J. Tazbir, “Anti-Jewish Trials in Old Poland,” *Studies in the History of the Jews in Old Poland, in Honor of Jakob Goldberg*, edited by A. Teller, 233–45, *Scripta Hierosolymitana* 38 (Jerusalem, 1998); J. Kalik, “The Attitudes toward the Jews in the Christian Polemic Literature in Poland in the 16th–18th Centuries,” *Jews and Slavs* 11 (2003). Characteristically, the primary motives of Polish anti-Semitic folklore have remained in the same state of stagnancy up to the present day; see A. Cala, *The Image of the Jew in Polish Folk Culture* (Jerusalem, 1995), chaps. 4–5.

¹⁴ See O. Belova and V. Petrukhin, “*Evreiskii mif*” v slavianskoi kul’ture (Moscow, 2008).

¹⁵ Judging by the chronology of *The Captain’s Daughter*, visits like Zurin’s to shtetls were pure anachronisms: at that time Poland was not divided, and there were no places to “visit.” “Beating Yids” in Russia began some time later.

diplomat) “A Station Near Berdichev,” an impatient officer, clearly favored by the author, awakens his Iankel in the following manner: “With a kick of his foot he woke up his greasy driver sleeping in the mudroom and sent him to fetch the horses, speeding him up with a silver ruble and a whack on the teeth.” The latter order “was given with a ‘belenkaia’ furiously thrown at his nose and a strong slap in the face. Both brought the dexterous Yid to life.”¹⁶ Much in the same manner, though without the use of money, a colonel traveling “on government business” in N. Kovalevsky’s story *Gogol in Little Russia* (1841), gets his own way. A Jew, the keeper of a post station, humbly explains to the colonel that they do not have any horses, yet he hears in response: “‘I am speaking Russian to you: give me horses, or else this will try out your back,’ said the colonel, grabbing the whip from the driver’s hand and showing it to the Yid.”¹⁷

Speaking about the Nikolai era, Saul Ginzburg emphasized:

The extremely humiliating position of the Jews with respect to the law and administrative practices of the period under discussion fully corresponded to the treatment that the Jewish population experienced from the surrounding Christian society. The social order, resting on the rule of serfdom . . . , was not fertile ground for the development of respect for human dignity in general, or for the Jew in particular. It is easy to imagine how little the societal atmosphere of that time protected against the abuse of the Jew, whose rights had been so curtailed. Such a helpless and meek being as the Jew was a perfect target for the “cruel mores” of the times; anyone could bully them to their heart’s content. To cut off the sidelocks or beard of a “Yid,” or to spread pig salve on his face—such were then considered blameless acts of bravado.

The attitude toward the Jew in that period’s literature was not much better; the Jewish character in literary compositions of that time was the embodiment of craftiness, cruelty, and betrayal—in other words, all possible sins available to the author’s imagination—and this type of character was zealously developed by literary fraternity. Beginning with “the despicable Jew” in Pushkin’s poem “Black Shawl,” and the well-known Jewish characters in Gogol’s *Taras Bulba*, the literature of the period under discussion boasts a long list of Jewish characters consistently involved in the procurement of women, illegal trade, tavern-keeping, counterfeiting, and other such things.¹⁸

¹⁶ *Literaturnye pribavleniia k “Russkomu invalidu,”* 1837, no. 18, 170. In point of fact, this story comprised the sixth chapter of the novel by Titov, “F. P. Katalkin” (St. Petersburg, 1837). “Belen’kaia” was the common designation for a twenty-five-ruble bill.

¹⁷ *Panteon russkogo i vsekh evropeiskikh teatrov* (St. Petersburg, 1841), part, no. 1, 19.

¹⁸ S. M. Ginzburg, *Minuvshee. Istoricheskie ocherki, stat’i i kharakteristiki* (Petrograd, 1923), 15–16.

In other words, there existed a certain harmony between the social and literary status of Jews living in the Russian Empire. Unlike the *littérateurs*, however, the leaders of Nikolai's administration hoped for a future "correction" of the empire's Jewish subjects and strove to attain it.

"The Soil of the Old Testament"

Some time during the second half of the 1830s, the government, according to D. Elyashevich, finally settled on the notion "that the primary source of 'Jewish depravity' appears to be the Jewish religion in the form that it took under the influence of the Talmud. The Talmud was thought to be the primary evil that should be fought against. . . . The official position became that the Talmud, 'having left the soil of the Old Testament, is deceiving the Jews who confirm their superstitions through references to passages in the Bible that do not in fact exist there at all.'"¹⁹ This conviction, accepted by the government through the generous agency of certain *Maskilim* and ancient Christian tradition, nonetheless contained some dangerous inconsistencies. It shockingly diverged from the very reverent approach to the Old Testament—to be precise, of the Masoretic text—demonstrated by the spiritual leadership when translating it from Hebrew into Russian. The strongest misgivings arose specifically over the "prefigurative" material of Scripture, which seemed to evaporate upon any attempt at elucidation.²⁰

During those same years, when the government decided to redirect the Jews from the Talmud to the Holy Scriptures, the archpriest Pavsky, a professor at St. Petersburg Orthodox Ecclesiastical Academy (who taught Nadezhdin "Hebrew grammar"), in his courses passionately translated from Hebrew and commented on the books of the Old Testament. In 1838, after he left the Academy, his former students began to lithograph and circulate these translations; the texts were circulated in other seminaries as well as among various priests. Then, toward the end of 1841, a huge scandal erupted, the details of which I now borrow from the book by M. Rizhsky. The informant, the hieromonk Agafangel (Soloviev)—afterward the metropolitan Volynsky—wrote about the work of Pavsky with great outrage: "The Christian who comes to this translation in search of the word of God

¹⁹ D. A. El'iashevich, *Pravitel'stvennaia politika i evreiskaia pechat' v Rossii*, 194.

²⁰ The reality of this problem is substantiated by the experiences of the present author, who took part in a new translation of the Hebrew Bible into the Russian language.

will leave with tears, finding, instead of the words of the living God, the abuse of the ancient Serpent"; "Readers will be astounded, above all else, by the errors concerning the prophecies of Jesus Christ and His church. When reading the translation we see not one prediction concerning His Divine Person. Even if they wanted to see these things, consistent with the very clear depiction of characteristics and actions of the Savior, and with the complete precision of the Gospel writers, the translator offers notes on these passages that give an entirely different meaning to the words of the prophets."

"Biblical Poetry" did not at all charm the Russian spiritual leadership, but it inspired Pavsky.²¹ Even the Metropolitan of Moscow Filaret (Drozdov), while theoretically supporting the idea of a translation, sternly criticized him for "turning the prophets into poets and completely destroying the prophecies about the Christ." At the same time the archbishop of Tomsk disciplined Makarii (Glukhovskoi) for arbitrary translations of the Scriptures from Hebrew into Russian.²² Work on the Synodal translation was begun only after the death of Nikolai I, though in 1845 Filaret stipulated in advance a number of conditions and in decisive instances gave preference to the Septuagint:

We should follow primarily the text of the Septuagint except where there is a compelling reason to move to the Hebrew text. . . . A distinguishing feature of the true reading in the text of the Seventy [i.e., the Septuagint] is the idea that a reading of the Hebrew text that does not agree with the Greek yields an incorrect meaning. . . . If there is a passage in the Old Testament whose meaning, when read according to the text of the Seventy, is determined according to the interpretations of the Holy Fathers to be a prophecy about Christ, whereas today's Hebrew text of the same passage yields a reading that diverges from that prophetic meaning, then in such a case the testimony of the ancient fathers serves as the authoritative basis for distrusting the authenticity of today's Hebrew reading.²³

Such doubts never entered the thoughts of Nikolai's secular administrators when it came to Jewish enlightenment. The fight against the Talmud

²¹ At the same time, according to El'iashevich, Pavsky's Hebraic scholarship "was based on the assumption of the superiority of Orthodoxy" over Judaism; accordingly, he earlier enthusiastically supported Ia. Lips in his crusade against Jewish publication; see D. El'iashevich, *ibid.*, 187–88. On the situation with Pavsky see also G. Florovskii, *Puti russkogo bogosloviia* (Paris, 1937), 194–95.

²² These translations were compiled in the edition published by the "Jehovah's Witnesses": *Sviashchennoe Pisanie* (Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania, 1996).

²³ M. I. Rizhskii, *Istoriia perevodov Biblii v Rossii*, 141–43, 160–61.

was undertaken for the purpose of their assimilation and also in the hope of their initiation into the self-evident “prefigurative” truths of the Old Testament. The authorities, apparently, took no heed of the rather strange fact that the more likable Karaites, who resolutely denied the Talmud (and hence, according to the prevailing opinion, far surpassed the Rabbinic Jews “on a moral level”), never converted to Christianity.

In the 1830s two books were published at the initiative of converts and supported by the authorities—both of them published by the St. Petersburg Academy of Science. The first one, published in 1832 with parallel texts in two languages (Russian and “German-Hebrew”—i.e., Yiddish), was a catechism by V. Levenvald (Lewenwald) entitled *The Confessions of an Israelite Christian*. Then in 1835 in St. Petersburg the aforementioned book by the convert Osher Temkin was published: *The Path Cleared to the Knowledge of the True Faith*, written “with the approval of Bishop Gavriil of Mogilev” and with the passionate backing of G. Pavsky. According to Elyashevich, before this work was published the governor-general of Vilna showed the manuscript to Nikolai I. “The emperor was so taken with it that he ordered not only that it be published with a Russian translation, but also that it be distributed free of charge among the clergy of the western provinces, and that O. Temkin be granted 1,000 rubles and considered for appointment to the position of censor of all Hebrew writings.”²⁴

The attitudes of Russian writers toward the Talmud were no better than those of the government, and they knew even less about it, though they still managed quite well without any recourse to experts or specifics. This in no way interfered with their pathos-filled exposés, such as the reproachful lines of D. Oznobishin in 1830 when he wrote:

How miserable are all your schemes,
And your prophecies, O Talmud!
The sons of gloomy Judah
Have been waiting in humility for ages.²⁵

In view of its poor knowledge of these “contrivances,” Russian literature returned the image of the Jew to its customary “Old Testament soil,” albeit giving this image an interpretation quite removed from what it received from Jung-Stilling and other philo-Semites—and also often quite removed from the interpretations of the Russian Orthodox Church. Maliciously ignoring the Christian dogma concerning the replacement of abolished

²⁴ D. El'iashevich, op. cit., 163.

²⁵ D. P. Oznobishin, *Stikhotvoreniia i poemy* (Moscow, 2001), 1:335.

Jewish Law with the Gospel, and of the old Israel with the new Israel (i.e., the Church), post-biblical Jews in such literature continued to claim their chosenness, appealing to the ancient promises from that Book of which they set themselves up as the protagonists,²⁶ and whose high language they employed. In *The Last Novik* by Lazhechnikov even the convert, pseudo-monk Abraham, boasts in his conversation with another convert, Niklaszon, about his talent for deceiving “Christian dogs.” He validates his actions by invoking the tribal “God of Jacob and *Abraham*.”

The truth is, this Jewish-Old Testament eloquence is often vitiated by a profusion of polonisms, an odd accent, and the obligatory “vey iz mir” (more often “vey mir” or simply “vey”) as a trademark of national color. A Jewish (i.e., Yiddish) pronunciation was easily given to the characters: it was enough simply to replace the Russian “sh” with “s,” “zh” with “z,” and both “z” and “ch” with “ts.” The result was a pronunciation sounding something like that of Lazhechnikov’s Abraham (a Jew who became a monk): “O vey, o vey! Ne znayu kak i pomots’ [Oy vey, oy vey! I don’t know how to help].”²⁷

What is more significant is that such a sharply negative portrayal of post-biblical Jewish characters discredited the Old Testament itself, the only reason for its preservation therefore being its “prefiguring” and edifying parallels and the beauty of its magisterial rhetoric. In other words, the Jewish figures of the Bible appeared to become stratified: all of their homiletic majesty was given to the Russian tsars, whereas all of their negative potential was passed onto the Jewish characters of Russian literature. The wise Nikolai Pavlovich, who in the performance of his duties resembles a Russian Solomon, is one thing. Entirely another thing is the treacherous and cunning Solomon of Pushkin’s tragedy *The Covetous Knight*, or the sly Mordecai in Gogol’s *Taras Bulba*, for whose supposed wisdom his compatriots draw a comparison to the same Jewish king. (In medieval tradition Solomon was perceived as a figure connected with Jewish witchcraft and devilry; both authors find a certain resonance with this view.)²⁸ Thus,

²⁶ In Narezhny’s “Bursak” one among several Jewish characters has an exemplary Old Testament name (albeit pre-Jewish): “the Yid Ham” (who by the way does not seem harmful in any way).

²⁷ The author explains in the notes: “Even though the monk was speaking German to Niklaszon, I tried in my translation of Abraham’s speech to convey something of the Yid pronunciation of the Russian language” (I. I. Lazhechnikov, *ibid.*, 1:246).

²⁸ Joshua Trachtenberg, in his important study, notes that during the Middle Ages the figure of Solomon as the lord of the demons, in light of the identification of the latter group with the Jews, was reconceived as a satanic Jewish sovereign; see J. Trachtenberg, *The Devil*

without undue ostentation, all the Jewish protagonists of the Bible went through a general reconception. By identifying with them, post-biblical Jews cast a sinister shadow back upon their ancestors and predecessors, or, to be more precise, they were reverting back to them, to the nocturnal depths of the Old Testament, not yet illuminated by a Christian-allegorical perspective.

The biblical teacher of the Law and wonderworker Moses, whom Michelangelo crowned with horns—i.e., rays (per the Hebrew term *karnayim* [cf. Exod 34:29–30], signifying both “rays” and “horns”), is transformed in the writings of Durova into a satanic kabbalist—the mighty Rogach, or Voimir (a name clearly chosen with a view to the stereotypical expression “vey mir”). This character, quite likely, was inspired by the folklore of that region in which the novel is set (Lithuania and neighboring Poland)—i.e., with the Polish folk conception of *horned Moses*, which was for its part also linked with Christian-eschatological legends of the horned Jewish Messiah and, in general, with the widespread Slavic belief in the satanic nature of the Jews, who either hid their horns or replaced them with *tefillin*.²⁹ The supernatural radiance of Moses, which brought fear to the ancient Jews, gives way to the black flames of hell, which bring horror to the Christians encountering the Horned One: “The unusual blackness of the face, the bloody eyes, and *the two protrusions on the sides of his head* make Him look like an evil spirit and bring horror to everyone who looks carefully upon him, especially at night. . . .”³⁰

Whereas in Christian-liturgical tradition the matriarch Rachel mourning her children foreshadowed the massacre of the innocent children by Herod (Matt 2:18) and, at the same time, “prefigured” the sorrow of the Mother of God over Her crucified Son, in Grebenka’s novel *Chaikovsky* (1843) the modern Rokhlia (a common Yiddish form of the name Rachel) prefers to tirelessly and mercilessly take vengeance on the Christians who robbed her of her children: she “nurses” her Christian patients to death. But Rokhlia, just like the Horned One, operates in strict accordance with the stereotype of “Old Testament cruelty,” which precedes the Christian injunctions to mercy and forgiveness.

and the Jews: The Medieval Conception of the Jew and Its Relation to Modern Anti-Semitism (Philadelphia, 1983), 25.

²⁹ On all these popular beliefs see O. V. Belova and V. Ia. Petrukhin, *ibid.*, 201–2.

³⁰ Aleksandrov (N. A. Durova), *Gudishki* part 4, 119 (emphasis mine). One more parallel: Moses brought His people out of Egypt into the Promised Land—The Horned One leads trusting travelers into a swamp.

Another example of symbolic reinterpretation centers on the name Jacob, the bearer of which, according to Gen 32:28, also received the name Israel, which became the designation for the entirety of the chosen people (I would call to mind, *inter alia*, Shevyrev's discussion concerning "biblical poetry as Jacob's struggle with God"). We have already noted the bombastic-patriotic usurpation of this continually assumed double identity of Jacob/Israel in the poems of S. Glinka ("God of Jacob—God of Russia"), where Russia takes the place of Israel. Yet the same biblical pathos has a bluntly negative ring to it when the subject turns to crushing the archetypal Old Testament Israel, steeped in sin—as, for instance, in P. Obodovsky's poem "The Fall of Jerusalem," in which we read that God—"the invisible chastiser"—will, with the hands of their enemies, disperse like ashes "the delinquent children of Jacob."³¹

Holding fast to its biblical associations, this theme appears less majestic when fallen Israel's miserable offspring, wandering in foreign lands, move to the fore. N. Andreev's impatient traveler asks his coach-driver (a nameless Jew): "Where is Sofievka?" *Israel* turned his head, smiled, shrugged his shoulders (this is a habit of the Yids), fixed his hat, whipped the horses, and after two minutes halted the skinny trotters and said: 'If you please: this is your stop, Your Nobleness! You are in Sofievka.'³² Quite often, as in Gogol's *Taras Bulba*, the Jewish man is named Iankel—which is simply a Yiddish variant of Jacob (Heb. *Ya'aqov*). Gogol's "Yid" thus personifies the entire *people of Israel*. This was already a well-established symbol.³³ For comparison, consider the Jankel in Mickiewicz's "Pan Tadeusz," and, even earlier, in F. Glinka's story "Luke and Maria" and in the sketches of Ryleev's tragedy "Bogdan Khmel'nitsky," as well as the noble Jew Ianka (who is also Ianka Iankelevich) in Narezhny. Gogol's adjacent lines, accordingly, poke fun at "the poor sons of Israel, having lost the presence of their already meager spirit."

Of course, "Yid cowardice," having become a cliché here and in many other texts (see below), was a by-product of the real-life oppression of the Jewish masses, who were subject to widespread spiritual, administrative, and physical terror; and, in addition, it was a transparent allusion to the

³¹ *Poety 1820-kh–1830-kh godov* (Leningrad, 1972), 1:443.

³² Nikolai Andreev, "Sofievka (Stat'ia iz moikh putevykh zapisok)," *Moskovskii telegraf*, 1833, part 50, no. 5, 69 (emphasis mine).

³³ I have written on several occasions about the symbolism of the name Iankel in connection with Gogol; see M. Weisskopf, "Sem'ia bez uroda. Obraz evreia v literature russkogo romantizma," *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie*, 1997, no. 28, 91; idem, *Siuzhet Gogolia. Morfoloĭiia, Ideologiia, Kontekst* (Moscow, 22002), 607.

biblical curse (for failure to observe the laws of the Torah) coupled with expulsion to foreign lands: “And as for those of you that are left, I will send faintness into their hearts in the lands of their enemies, and *the sound of a driven leaf shall put them to flight . . .*” (Lev 26:36; emphasis mine). In this light consider in Somov: “The Yid Gershko walked alone on the road; he would often stop, *listening* to the howling of the wind and *the rustling of the yellow autumn leaves*, falling to the ground and dancing along the road; *he would lose his nerve at the slightest rustle*, ready at once to hide himself in the bushes” (emphasis mine—M.W.). The scene in Gogol wherein Iankel needlessly runs away from Bulba (“He ran for a long time without looking back between the Cossack encampments and then still further across an empty field, though Taras did not chase him at all”) and all of its later variations, including “Rothschild’s Fiddle” by Chekhov, are narrative realizations of another threat from the Pentateuch: “. . . and you shall flee when none pursues you” (Lev 26:17).

This negative key could be used to reinterpret any biblical theme, such as, for example, Jewish circumcision, which, according to church dogma, bodily “prefigures” the spiritual union of God and man (in the festal calendars of Russian Orthodoxy and Catholicism, January 1 marks Christ’s circumcision, not the New Year). In Romantic literature, however, this sacrament is markedly reduced to its original Jewish-sensual nature and given a mercantile analogy. Since it was prohibited from being explicitly mentioned in published literature, it is symbolically replaced with *the circumcision of golden coins*, as attested by Prince Lev Shakhovskoi (in the comedy *The Gamblers*), in Bulgarin’s *Movsha* (in *Ivan Vyzhigin*) and other “descendants of Judah,” including those introduced by Lazhechnikov in *The Last Novik*. And the noble protagonist in N. Polevoi’s “*Abadonna*,” the poet Reichenbach, bitterly and sarcastically disparages his era as heartless and calculating: “Our century is a coin rubbed by usage, circumcised and eroded by Yids and moneychangers.”³⁴

As portrayed by Russian writers, Jewish conspirators in their close-knit circles readily justify the rectitude of anti-Semites. Even in their conversations with Gentiles they readily admit their guilt for the crucifixion of Jesus: “We, who are unrighteous Jews, crucified your Christ,” reminisces Lazhechnikov’s Abraham in passing.³⁵ According to Orest Somov (“*The Rebel: A Little Russian Tale*”) and many other authors, Jews refer to them-

³⁴ Nikolai Polevoi, *Abadonna* (St. Petersburg, 21840), part 2, 7.

³⁵ I. I. Lazhechnikov, *Sochineniia*, 1:439.

selves as “sons of Judah.” Once again, this self-designation in Romantic literature was being continually balanced between references to the Jewish patriarch and the Jewish traitor. To be more precise, the Church’s model of prefiguration, which Romanticism adopted, made it easy to transform the first Judah into the second one (i.e., Judas Iscariot), whom the writers of that time consistently identified with the Jews. (At the same time, the rest of the apostles, who shared Judas’s background, were not guilty of betrayal and were never associated with it.) A Jewish person was branded a “Judas” for any, sometimes very trivial, reason. Thus, in N. Kovalevsky’s aforementioned story *Gogol in Little Russia* an effusive traveler calls the keeper of the mail-post a “wretched Judas”—whereupon his companion brings him to reason: “Yes, yes—but what is Judas guilty of, when all the horses are gone?”³⁶

But sometimes these Jews did not understand why they were identified with their ancestor-traitor (i.e., Judas), and they rose up against this label, laying claim to their human dignity. Thus, in *The Gamblers* by Prince Shakhovskoi (1828)—a popular playwright and director of the Imperial Theater—the comical swindler Leiba, in an argument with a Russian merchant, asks to be called a “Jew” instead of a “Yid,” and to be referred to by his given name and not by an ethnic nickname:

No, I am an honest Jew. . . .
 Why am I a Yid, or Judah?
 I am Leiba Lazarich.³⁷

The ridiculing of this name in Shakhovskoi’s play was clearly intended as a specific nod to his former friend and co-author of *Deborah*, Leib Nevakhovich,³⁸ who after his baptism took the name Lev Nikolaevich. However, this tendency among Jews to russify their names and break their religious ties was something that occurred on a large scale much later. More often the Jews in this earlier period themselves refer back to their Old Testament beginnings, as happens in Somov’s “The Rebel,” when the Jewish characters talk frankly among themselves: “God took our strength

³⁶ N. Kovalevskii, *ibid.*, 17.

³⁷ Prince A. A. Shakhovskoi, “Prolog komedii ‘Igroki,’” *Atenei*, 1828, part 1, no. 1, 31.

³⁸ Cf. in D. B. Dashkova’s satire “The Marriage of Shutovskoi”: “My Jew wrote *Deborah*, / And I plagiarized it” (*Arzamas* [Moscow, 1994], 1:241). On the relationship of prince Shakhovskoi and Nevakhovich see David E. Fishman, *Russia’s First Modern Jews: The Jews of Shklov* (New York, 1995), 128. About L. Nevakhovich see the related article by A. Zorin, K. Rogov, and A. Reitblat in the bibliographical dictionary *Russkie pisateli, 1800–1917 gody*. (Moscow, 1999), 4:244–45.

and boldness, and we were forced to use our deception and conniving”; the master’s servants are “greedy, just like our forefathers in the desert.”³⁹ In other words, the incrimination of the Jews’ greediness—in this instance by dint of their own testimony—is symbolically aligned with the biblical story of their ancestors’ worship of the Golden Calf (as well as, by implication, the Gospel account of the expulsion of the merchants from the Temple). Usury, which from the Middle Ages, because of well-known historical factors, was often seen among the Jews, was traced directly back to the biblical vow: “And You shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow” (Deut 28:12); though flashing behind Jewish “interest” were always the silver coins of Iscariot—the purse-bearer and God-seller.

In P. Kamensky’s novel *Jacob Mollet*, set within the time of the Crusades, the Jerusalem moneylender Malkh—“a son of the tribe of Judah”—feasts his eyes not on his native Zion, to whose beauties he is indifferent, but on his stockpile of riches: “With greed Malkh’s eyes gazed upon the gold acquired by deceit and cunning; this was the interest taken from indigent pilgrims and poor crusaders: *this was the poisoned fruit of blood-stained payment, thirty silver coins, multiplied by the covetousness of that rejected tribe*. . . . It seemed as if the tears and the blood of Christians . . . had hardened on the cold coins; yet they were not disturbing to the evil Jew—on the contrary, they brought him comfort, and godless speech flowed from his unclean lips” (emphasis mine—M. W.). This “godless speech” was itself filled with florid, pseudo-biblical phraseology: “‘Gold, gold!’ cried out Malkh, . . . ‘O, sons of Judah! amass gold, save it: in it is your shield and footing, even vengeance on your persecutors. Squeeze it out without remorse, together with the blood of the unrighteous dogs; hold back your sympathy and do not heed their pleas, cries, and prayers—the outcasts aren’t worth it.’ ”⁴⁰

Yet post-biblical Jewry was often cut off from its biblical past, and Jacob and Iankel went off in different directions, toward distinct spheres with no connection. We see a similar split, for example, in the works of Somov, F. Glinka, and several other admirers of “biblical poetry,” including Shevyrev, the castigator of Shylock. At the same time that *The History of Poetry* was published, its author railed in the pages of *The Moscow Observer* against the “commercial direction” being taken in Russian literature and journalism. One of Shevyrev’s metaphors is as follows: “Criticism, as some

³⁹ O. M. Somov, *Byli i nebylitsy* (Moscow, 1984), 24, 25.

⁴⁰ *Sto russkikh literatorov* (St. Petersburg, 1841), 2:561–2.

say, is a faithful commissioner of mercantile speculation: it is kept in journals as a pragmatic friend in commercial transactions, like a Yid-agent who is able to speak in different languages.⁴¹ It is completely unclear if this “agent,” like Shakespeare’s Shylock, bears any relation to his God-inspired ancestors, praised by the same Shevyrev. He praised them also in his 1841 review of the painting *The Bronze Serpent* by Bruni, “the main character” of which, according to the critic, is “the entire Jewish nation,” and the main thought of which is “the miracle of faith.” Something of a transitional step from these ancient Israelites to their diminished progeny may be identified, according to Shevyrev’s interpretation, with certain figures on another canvas—Alexander Ivanov’s famous painting: its “two Pharisees, in whom is portrayed the decrepit Jewish world, no longer able to approach the Johanine cleansing font so as to properly greet the Coming One.”⁴²

Not long before Gogol praised both the wisdom of the ancient Jews in the second volume of his *Dead Souls* and their inspiration in his letter to Zhukovsky (“On the Lyricism of Our Poets”), in another letter—dated January 8, 1844—to the same addressee, he thanks him for sending money, dispatched to Nice and addressed to the banker Avikdor:

I wrote the name “Avikdor” in Russian since I was sure that you would write it correctly. First of all you will say: Avikdor the banker—he is therefore a Yid. If you use the letter “k” his name acquires a Greek physiognomy; if “g,” then it appears to be Spanish. Therefore, in order to preserve a Yid physiognomy one should use the letter “c.” Indeed, however you wrote the address, the letter would still get to its destination without fail. Money always gets to a Yid: already from the time of Judas money has known its master, and if instead of Avikdor you had written Kurlepnikov, the money would still have arrived directly into the hands of Avikdor.

It is hard to tell how Gogol was able to mentally reconcile the contemporary descendants of Judas Iscariot with “the people who surpassed all others in wisdom, poetry, and legislation.” Nonetheless, he definitely perceived a connection between biblical and modern Jewry, and one passage from his article “The Historical Painter Ivanov,” also included in *Selected Passages*, was quite paradoxical. Whereas the Jewish characters in *Taras Bulba* are comical and ugly, here their coreligionists, the banker Avikdor’s fellow tribesmen, are imbued with ethnic picturesqueness and

⁴¹ *Moskovskii nabliudatel'*, March 1836, book 1:70.

⁴² *Moskvitianin*, 1841, no. 11:146–47, 151.

piety (incidentally, without any mention of “decrepit” Pharisees). It turns out that in Ivanov’s painting “the faces received their distinctive likeness in agreement with the Gospel and, at the same time, with a Jewish likeness. You can sense by their faces in what land the event is taking place. Ivanov traveled everywhere in order to study Jewish faces.”⁴³

The Egyptian past of Jewry led some littérateurs into a rather complicated line of thinking that, *inter alia*, inspired a Jewish association with Gypsies, who, as was then believed, had also come out of Egypt. Whereas in Germany von Arnim, in his judophobic *Isabella von Ägypten* (*Isabella of Egypt*), had on this very basis compared Jews in detail to likable Gypsies, who represented something of a refined, alternative Israel, Russians were satisfied with hasty, yet fascinating speculations. P. Svinyin, in his novel *The Court of Shemiaka* (1832), presented the Gypsies as the descendants of the same Egyptian magicians who, according to the Bible, endeavored to resist Moses in the court of Pharaoh.⁴⁴ Later, in his ethnographical book on Russia, Svinyin presented a more appropriate theoretical basis for the fate of modern Gypsies, associating them with Jews: “If the Jews are being punished by Jehovah, why should we deny the fact that Gypsies come from ancient Egyptians, whose dispersion and suffering was foretold as well?” Even their fixation with horses and horse-stealing the author traces back to Pharaoh and his soldiers who drowned in the Red Sea together with their horses and chariots. And in general “Gypsies do not lose their native qualities . . . [;] in the West they call themselves Christians, in the East—Muhammedans [i.e., Muslims], and among the Jews—Yids.”⁴⁵

As for the Jews, the unity of their ethnic character over the course of millennia intrigued not only painters or art critics. In 1838 *JMPE*, in its adulatory review of Avraam S. Norov’s book *Travels in the Holy Land in 1835*, calls attention to the author’s sketch of an ancient Egyptian bas-relief depicting a slain Israelite, whose face “is a true imprint of the Jewish people of our day”⁴⁶ (see below in chap. 9).

There was, nonetheless, no definite clarity on this quite delicate question, and it often seemed as if writers were talking about two completely distinct peoples.⁴⁷ One of them was a modern group, for the most part

⁴³ N. V. Gogol, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 8:331; 12:245.

⁴⁴ Pavel Svin’in, *Shemiakin sud, ili Poslednee mezhdauusobie udel’nykh kniaziei russkikh* (St. Petersburg, 1832), part 1:90–91.

⁴⁵ *Kartiny Rossii i byt raznoplemennykh ee narodov. Iz Puteshestvii P. P. Svin’ina* (St. Petersburg, 1839), part 1, 380–81.

⁴⁶ *ZhMNP*, 1838, part 20, 181–82 (Biographical column).

⁴⁷ Cf. the very similar distinction in German literature of the same period discussed

designated “Yids” [*zhidy*],⁴⁸ and the other group, in keeping with biblical tradition, was simply known as “Hebrews/Jews” [*evrei*]. *JMPE*, incidentally, in their continuously published lists of books printed in the Russian Empire, distinguished between publications in “Jewish and Yid languages” (by which second term they meant Yiddish).⁴⁹

In those instances when, either explicitly or implicitly, the notion is advanced that there is a break in the continuity of biblical and post-biblical Jewry, it is nourished by the dogmatic idea that Israel was forsaken by God. “Sabaoth [i.e., the Lord of ‘Hosts’] rejected the evil sons of Abraham”—was the way Obodovsky summed it up, not without a certain relish. Küchelbecker echoes him in his “Agasver (A Poem in Fragments)”: “We are forgotten by Heaven! / There will be no day for us . . .”; “By the Lord of Might / Were you rejected.”⁵⁰ Another version of God’s rejection of Israel may be seen in Gogol’s *Taras Bulba*. When attempting to free Ostap from imprisonment in Warsaw, Taras turns for help to the wily Mordecai. The latter aspires to the role of his biblical eponym—the savior in the book of Esther whom God helped to save his doomed people. It is to this precedent, as well as to the special closeness of the chosen people to God, that Mordecai here hints when encouraging Bulba: “When we and God will decide to act, then it will be accomplished as it should be.” Yet immediately his claim is discredited: “But God did not will it.”

The People of a Savage God

On the other hand, this ruthless God, Father of Israel, fell under serious suspicion himself. When, in connection with various punitive events

by Jefferson S. Chase, “The Homeless Nation: The Exclusion of Jews in and from Early Nineteenth-Century German Historical Fiction,” *Jewish Culture and History* 6, no. 1 (2004): 62–63.

⁴⁸ In Ukraine, however, as in Poland and Lithuania, this word did not have a pejorative meaning, being a neutral and commonly-used ethnic designation; see H. Birnbaum, “Some Problems with the Etymology and the Semantics of Slavic *Zhid* ‘Jew,’ *Slavica Hierosolymitana* (*Slavic Studies of the Hebrew University*), vol. 7 (1985), in which the author traces the beginning of the differentiation in Russian literature between the words *evrei* (“Jew/Hebrew”) and *zhid* (“Yid”), which were originally mutually interchangeable, with more decidedly negative semantics being associated with the second of these terms by the time of Pushkin’s “Covetous Knight” (*ibid.*, 8–9). In point of fact, however, the negative connotations of this term are seen much earlier, as, for example, in the writings of Prince Shakhovskoi.

⁴⁹ *ZhMNP*, 1838, part 17:50 (List of published books).

⁵⁰ V. K. Kiukhel’beker, *Izbrannye proizvedeniia*, 2:39, 90.

undertaken by the military and police, He was portrayed in the role of the “Russian God,” his severe disposition proved quite useful to the Motherland, yet in his original role as the Jewish national deity “Sabaoth” clearly shared—and even carried direct responsibility for—the odious qualities of his Jewish “firstborn sons.” First among these vices, as we have already seen, was the “maliciousness” affirmed by Church tradition. The article “A Glimpse of the Rabbis’ Testimonies Concerning Jesus Christ,” in the journal *Christian Readings*, goes so far as to open with a statement along those lines: “The Jews, who killed the true Messiah, have placed no limits on their violent malice.”⁵¹ This perspective took root in Russian society during Nikolai’s reign.

In the 19th century Christians continued to expect symmetry in feelings and strangely suspected a deep hatred on the part of those who were in fact completely indifferent to the Christian religion. It was assumed that “violent malice,” together with other sins of the Jews, was inspired by their denomination. The vindictiveness of the Jew—“his strongest passion,” according to the experts of *LJR*⁵²—appealed, of course, to the Old Testament rule of “an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.” Religion-ethnic self-esteem played up the contrast between this violent law of vengeance and Russian society’s Christian humility. Thus, through the image of the “stiff-necked Jew,” proud of his divine chosenness, was displayed the image of “Jehovah, the Lord of vengeance,”⁵³ to whom Jesus as the “God of Love” was more or less openly compared. “Jehovah himself condemned me / To be the victim of rage and disdain!” cries out the Judaizing protagonist of Baryshev’s poem “The Jew.” Confessing to his fierce hatred for Christians and to other sins, he says about himself: “To everyone I seem even worse than Judas.”⁵⁴

The stereotype of “Jewish vindictiveness” was already well established in Russian literature by the end of the eighteenth century, when that literature had not yet even had time to become properly acquainted with Jews. This perception underlies the title itself of the aforementioned work by the young Narezhny, *The Vengeful Jews* (1799). Executed in the dramatic style of the German “Sturm und Drang,” it depicts a Jew who kills a Christian elder only because the latter condemns his inhuman hatred

⁵¹ *Khristianskoe chtenie*, 1835, pt. 1:287.

⁵² *Biblioteka dlia chteniia*, 23 (1838): 15.

⁵³ A. Kochubinskii, “Plach evreev. Podrazhanie evreiskomu,” *Biblioteka dlia chteniia*, 23 (1837): 15.

⁵⁴ E. Baryshev, *Evrei: Poema*, 11–12.

for Christians. In relating this “anecdote” the author adds: “Perhaps it will strike many as incredibly cruel and bloodthirsty—which is in fact doubtful—yet I would urge the reader to consider that every Jew, despite his ignominy and servitude, is haughty and inwardly scornful of all other creatures, and that his hatred of Christianity has often driven him to horrific extremes.” Young Ezekiel, “with rage and fury tore open his [the old man’s] chest and removed the quivering heart.” Learning of this, and “biting a dagger” with joy, the father of the murderer—a loyal “servant of God Almighty”—exclaims: “Let me drink of this blood, the vile blood of a Christian! Nowhere will it bring upon itself such torment as when mixing with my blood and turning in my veins!” The only thing that aggrieves him is that his son immediately struck the heart of the martyr and did not inflict many blows so as to prolong the victim’s suffering.⁵⁵ Narezhny soon published a dramatic piece entitled “The Days of Crime and Revenge,” in which he presented another bloodthirsty Jew, also endowed with an Old Testament name. He encourages himself with the words: “Do not be shy, Boaz: nature has made you a Jew, the most despised creature in Christian lands; she has scattered your people over all the face of the earth—I will exact vengeance for all!” Then an insidiously satanic plan is laid out for revenge, to a certain extent anticipating *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*: “I will arm brother against brother, father against son; I will sever the hearts of lovers and strike them subtle blows.”⁵⁶ We should note here that this same Narezhny would eventually quite radically change his views concerning this “scattered people.” It was nonetheless quite characteristic that, unlike the righteous Ianka, who was forbidden by the censors, the portrayal of terrible, satanic Jews met with no opposition. During the Romantic era such portrayals of Jews would become an unquestioned commonplace.

It is hardly a surprise that Jewish rage found its ultimate expression in Russian literature that depicted the Crucifixion of Jesus. In Küchelbecker’s poem “Agasver,” written under the influence of Klopstock, the “blind” Jewish nation boasts of its chosenness, waiting in vain for the Messiah to break the Roman yoke of bondage and “free desecrated Zion.” Instead of such a Messiah, however, the humble Son of God arrives and does not save Israel from slavery, but rather saves all mankind from the chains of original sin.

⁵⁵ *Ippokrena, ili Utekhi liubosloviia* (Moscow, 1799), pt. 2:17–27.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* (1800), pt. 7:379.

Jesus's sentence of death is met by "the stupid, stubborn, and insane Jew," overtaken by "fierce madness," with an evil joy:

And he made an animal-like cry, trembling.
 (In the cry there was laughter, squealing and rasping,
 Which, like the cry of one executed, pierced one's very soul.)

Behind the usual comparison (evil Jews—sweetest Jesus) another theological dichotomy, bordering on ditheism, unfolds here. It is understood, after all, that such a peace-loving deity, "the comforter of those in mourning and healer of souls," cannot be identified or in any way even associated with the heavenly punisher, the God of Hosts, who violently avenges His crucifixion on "all of Judah" with a violence equal to that of the Jews themselves:

The Lord Himself drove forth
 With angry hand, menacingly lifted up,
 Over His city, doomed for desolation!

 The radiance of your light
 Has died out: O Judaea, You are dying!

Küchelbecker strengthens this juxtaposition with an oblique reference to the ethnic side of the problem. The author, albeit very carefully, questions the Gospels' fixation with the Jewish background of Jesus (thus anticipating the racial hypothesis of Tübingen theology). In the words of Agasfer, Jesus came to the Jews "from the darkness / From Galilee, the rejected region, / Muddled by mixing with foreign blood." Küchelbecker supplies these lines with a footnote: "Galilee was populated by the Jews; yet among them lived many Samaritans and Gentiles, as well as, among others, Galatians or Asian Gauls, remnants of the Gallic invasion under the second Brennus."⁵⁷ Jewish hatred of Christians becomes an inherited doom, triggered, as with early Narezhny, under any condition, without any relation to time or place. Thus in the novel *Nalivaiko* (1833) by P. Golota, set at the end of the sixteenth century in Ukraine, in the portrait of the Jew Abraham fear and obsequiousness are mixed together with natural Jewish

⁵⁷ V. K. Kiukhel'beker, *ibid.*, 83–86, 92–93. On this poem see also G. Strano, "Stranstvovanie Agasfera v tvorcestve Kiukhel'bekera i Zhukovskogo," *Jews and Slavs*, vol. 11 (Jewish-Polish and Jewish Russian Contacts; Jerusalem, 2003). Küchelbecker's work, for the most part finished by 1842, was never published during his lifetime. "Excerpts" were first published (in *Russkaia starina*) only in 1878, and then in 1908, when the theme of the "Arian Christ" was already in everybody's ears.

spite. He watches his Polish “pan,” his cruel lord, “with extreme abjection, servility, and trembling. . . . In his large, bulging, black eyes flickered something unusually evil, the impression of which was increased by thick, overhanging eyebrows and a face practically covered with hair of the same color; yet the cunning Israelite knew how to hide his *innate* sentiments behind a smile” (emphasis mine).⁵⁸

The events presented in the drama *Prince Kholmsky* by Kukolnik take place in Livonia and the northwest part of Russia. But the “innate sentiments” of the Jews remain unchanged. Consider, for example, the dialog of young Rachel (hopelessly in love with a Christian) and her father, the kabbalist Skharia:

O Parent—revenge!
 Revenge, my daughter!

 Destroy, O parent—destroy their happiness!
 O Mighty Lord of unseen powers!⁵⁹

A striking exception, however, is young Lermontov’s drama *The Spaniards* (1830), created, in the view of L. P. Grossman, under the influence of Velizh blood libel,⁶⁰ though according to I. Z. Serman in a verbal communication, it was created under the influence of an article by N. Shenshin—to wit, his translation of Ségur (see chap. 2). As was mentioned earlier, already before Lermontov the same Shenshin had begun translating Byron’s *Hebrew Melodies*, thus setting an example for his friend. In Lermontov’s *Spaniards* it is the Jews who are given the virtue of mercy, whereas Christians, like the inquisitor Sorrini, are distinguished by bloodthirstiness, vindictiveness, and the soulless stinginess by which “the sons of Judah” were typically incriminated. Compare, for example, the following two monologues—the first by Noemi, condemning Christian “law”:

As if the Jews were not people!
 Our race is older than the Spanish—and their
 Prophet himself is born in Jerusalem!
 Laughable! They want us
 To receive the law—but for what?

⁵⁸ P. Golota, *Nalivaiko, ili Vremena bedstvii Malorossii* (Moscow, 1833), pt. 25.

⁵⁹ N. Kukol’nik, *ibid.*, 451–52.

⁶⁰ On this and the Jewish theme in Lermontov, see L. Grossman, “Lermontov i kul’tury Vostoka,” *Literaturnoe Nasledstvo*, vols. 43–44: Lermontov, book 1 (Moscow, 1941), 715–35. See also *ibid.*, 716–718, about Lessing’s drama *The Jews* and the related English dramaturgic tradition (Richard Cumberland and others) as sources for Lermontov.

To bring doom upon each other, as they do?
 They elevate meekness,
 Love for those who are like them, mercy—
 And say that therein lies their law!
 Yet we have not seen this yet,—

And Fernando:

You love without rules—yet Spaniards
 Only hate their neighbor without rules! . . .
 Their heaven and hell are all in the scales,
 This country's wealth buys the happiness of heaven,⁶¹
 And people cause the demons to blush
 By their wile and love for evil! . . .
 The father among them sells his daughters,
 A wife sells her husband and herself,
 The King sells his people, and the people—their freedom.

With any other author such a reclassification of roles would have been unthinkable, though many of them, including Küchelbecker, rebuked Christians for their extreme violence toward the Jews. In *Jacob Mollet* by Kamensky we saw above how the Jew Malkh dreams of taking vengeance on Christians—in this case for murdering his brethren during the Crusades:

“When a son of Israel,” he remonstrated to himself, “—When You, Malkh, have the opportunity to oppress and torture a servant of Belial, remember the shame and humiliation borne by your brothers in Toulouse, in Bezier, in Provence, and in Burgundy; remember the bloodshed in the house of Jacob during those days when the unrighteous journeyed to the Promised Land; remember the horrors and devastation that occurred here, when their feet first entered the gates of Jerusalem, the Temple of Solomon [the author refrains from specifics, only hinting at the fate of the Jewish population, whom the Crusaders burned alive in their synagogues—M.W.]. Remember and embolden your spirit; let no compassion enter into it, and take vengeance on the oppressors; let there be no less solidarity, no less fraternity, among the oppressed sheep themselves than among the bloodthirsty, savage oppressors!”

This Jewish rancor—entirely contrary, of course, to Christian kindness—grieves the storyteller himself, who continues: “The Jew’s ungodly speech was followed by deep silence. Malkh gathered the gold into a single pile and looked at it with an evil grin. And in this pile, in this mountain

⁶¹ A reference to indulgences.

of greed and lies, he honored Moloch, paying homage to his calf... to vengeance.”

In other words, the name *Malkh*, well-known as one of the names of the Eternal Jew, is brought into harmonious alignment with the Canaanite deity *Moloch*, with the Golden Calf serving as a symbol of vengeance (in obvious contrast to the Gospel injunction to love and forgive). When, moreover, Malkh is visited by an unfortunate knight seeking a loan to pay for his kin who have been kidnapped by Muslims, and the knight promises to repay the Jew at any rate of interest, Malkh answers him with a scoffing refusal:

An evil smile of joy was Malkh's answer to the distressed cry of woe. The knight sobbed, and the Jew laughed. The knight wept, spreading out his hands in humiliation, and the Jew scoffed.

Did we not, in the same way, stretch out a hand to you when the flames were destroying our homes along the walls of Jerusalem, when the swords of the Crusaders were ploughing through the blood of the children of Israel? Did you have mercy then? Did we not in the same way beg you to give back to us our wives and our children?... Did you show us mercy then?⁶²

Finally, the desperate visitor takes the gold by force and kills the Jew, and the latter, with the spirit of vengeance common to his people, manages to curse the crusader before dying and plunge the crusader into mortal terror.

The impression that there are two different Gods directing Christians on the one hand and Jews on the other is seen even in *The Spaniards*—for example, in the highly contradictory tirade of the elder Moses. First he impresses upon the Christian Fernando, “We have the same God...”—yet immediately thereafter he dualizes this image: “Your God will requite you.” In another place Moses grieves over the brutality of his own deity—“the God of Israel”—in punishing His people: “The God / Of my fathers has no pity.”⁶³

Based squarely on this notion M. Mikhailovsky titled his Old Testament drama *Bloody Vengeance*. Its savage characters urge obedience to “the laws of Jehovah,” who is described as “God the Terrible, the Just,” and

⁶² *Sto russkikh literatorov*, 2:563–66.

⁶³ Speaking about the dualistic background of Medieval judophobia, Trachtenberg (op. cit., 20) connects the Christian demonization of the Old Testament God the Father not with the Manichaean or Cathar tradition, but, *inter alia*, directly with New Testament anti-Jewish polemics: “Your father the devil” (John 8:44) and “synagogue of Satan” (Rev 2:9; in Russian translation: “a satanic gathering”).

unforgiving of crimes—in this case, killings: “But God Jehovah will help Himself. / He will sear the heart with vengeance.” One of the elders curses the soul of the slain:

Vengeance, righteous vengeance!
 Arise, O dead one! Arise from the grave!
 Breathe vengeance into the heart of Goel,
 That his breast might heave with rage,
 That by that rage he might live and breathe,
 That he might know no peace by day,
 And that during the dark night
 His eyes might wander without sleep,
 Until he takes vengeance,
 Until the killer’s blood
 Is emptied out on the holy land!”⁶⁴

However, in the prophetic hearts of some of the Jewish characters the dawn of gentle Christian grace resounds. The Jewish law of vengeance is about to be replaced by a new law enjoining one to love one’s enemies. Jesse, who should have become an avenger, providentially calls out:

Why does the world persist in deception?
 Should not another prophet arise
 And put in the hearts of the people a new
 Law; set in their hearts a new thought?
 O Great God of Israel—Almighty
 Creator of heaven and earth!—incline
 Your ear to my prayers! Make wise
 Your people! Soften the law of blood!

Jesse encourages the foolish Gerson, in his speech anticipating the coming “prophet”:

... Make an oath,
 That you shall not be a tiger ... Make peace with the killer,
 And forget the name Goel

 And the *grace* of the Lord will be over you
 Forever

 The Lord did not command me to thus take revenge.
 He commanded me to love my enemies.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ M. Mikhailovskii, *Krovavaia mest'. Drama v 4-kh aktakh* (St. Petersburg, 1836), 9, 62–64. *Go'el* (Heb.) means “redeemer.”

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 85, 110–12.

The riddle, it seems, remains insoluble: why does Mikhailovsky in his drama have the same Creator pronounce such contradictory “laws”? What we see here, in effect, is yet another example of disguised ditheism, conveyed by a light, hardly noticeable lexical shift. The term “God” in this instance is applied only to the vindictive Jehovah, whereas the command to forgive one’s enemies comes from “the Lord,” in whom, of course, one perceives the gentle Jesus.

Interestingly, these anti-Old Testament insinuations triggered a protest by the above-quoted author of the anonymous review of *Bloody Vengeance*. Among the main weaknesses of the drama the critic points out the following: “The plot is taken from the law of Moses: if one person kills another, then the closest relative, if he does not want to forgive the killer, has the right to avenge him by death. . . . In his drama he [i.e., Mikhailovsky] presents this vengeance, which is merely permitted by the Law, as a duty from which the Jew cannot refrain. This view is wrong.”⁶⁶

With an even stronger foundation this same rebuke for bloodthirstiness might well be readdressed to the Christian characters of Russian literature who annihilate Jews. Thus, a patriotic character in *Prince Kholmisky* promises the kabbalist Skharia that he will meet with fire “if a word of your Scripture / Meets me in a baptized land.” To be sure, in Russian literature the same fate also awaited Catholics for seducing Russian Orthodox believers into Uniatism. It is just such retribution that Nalivaiko, the protagonist of the eponymous novel by Golota, prepares for all his enemies on behalf of gentle Orthodoxy:

The religion, the oppressed religion, embraces all its deviant sons and with roving eyes searches for the man who would drive away the wild wolves and steer the humble, gentle sheep back toward the path of righteousness. It is I! . . . With what joy will I then regard the disfigured faces of the dying fiends, listen to their last breaths, become intoxicated by their shed blood; with what joy will I destroy their altars, rob their homes, annihilate their cities, and disperse the predators’ ashes across the face of the earth. . . . Death and horror to the enemies of Orthodoxy!⁶⁷

—Compare this with the verdict passed by Kukolnik’s Prince Kholmisky on his son, suspected of adopting Judaism:

. . . Such thirst
Will be satisfied only by Yid blood!

⁶⁶ *Severnaia pchela*, 1836, no. 88.

⁶⁷ P. Golota, op. cit., 84–85.

The death of a secret Yid is meritorious, a heroic deed!
 Come hither, say farewell to your bride!
 Thank her for the torments of hell,
 With which I am torturing this Yid! . . .

.....
 And the knife desecrated by the blood of the Yid
 I will burn together with his unclean corpse.⁶⁸

At the same time the conviction of the moral superiority not only of the Russian Orthodox Church, but of all Russian society over callous and violent Judaism remained unshakable. This conviction, indeed, stood out even in purely legal materials. In 1839 S. Ornatsky, discussing the legislative foundations of the Russian Empire, at the very beginning of his article makes a disparaging reference to “the Law, given at some point by the hand of Moses to those people of God who were previously chosen but now rejected, yet already long-ago abrogated by the power of Grace and beyond that disfigured by the interpretations and ideas of false teachers.”⁶⁹

According to such a hierarchy no one, including the church, would ever seriously think of comparing, for example, the Russian habit of victimizing serfs (“If they have teeth, strike the teeth; / If not—break the jaw.”—Nekrasov) with the Old Testament legislative norm that accompanied the notorious rule of “an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth”—to wit: “When a man strikes the eye of his slave, male or female, and does harm, he shall let the slave go free for the eye’s sake. And if he knocks out the tooth of his slave, male or female, he shall let the slave go free for the tooth’s sake” (Exod 21:26–27). The Russian tradition of killing people by whipping them with a thousand stripes was for some reason not compared with Jewish punishment: “Forty stripes may be given him, but not more; lest, if one should go on to beat him with more stripes than these, your brother be mutilated in your sight” (Deut 25:3). (The Talmudic “false teachers” in fact reduced the number to 39, lest a mistake be made in counting.) But no one, indeed, would dare to correlate serfdom with the Jewish Law,⁷⁰

⁶⁸ N. Kukul’nik, op. cit., 505–6. In 1860 the humorists were already ridiculing this blood-thirsty tirade. See *Russkaia teatral’naia parodiia XIX-nachalo veka* (Moscow, 1976), 323.

⁶⁹ S. Ornatskii, “Ob otnoshenii mezhdu obshchim i chastnym v zakonodatel’stve i zakonovedenii,” *ZhMNP*, 1839, part 23, issue 2:63–64.

⁷⁰ Exceptions to this were made only by religious dissidents, such as captain N. Ilyin, the leader of the Yehowists (Yehowist-Ilyinities), who condemned serfdom in his poems: “For taking people into slavery / Is cursed by God Jehovah” (quoted from V. D. Bonch-Bruевич, *Izbrannye sochineniia* [Moscow, 1959], 1:300).

“abrogated by Grace,” which limited slavery to six years (Deut 15:12–15), and which also called for giving gifts to slaves upon freeing them.

In other words, in juridical as in other aspects, the attitude toward Jews and Judaism was, in the final analysis, determined by hardened stereotypes rather than by a careful study of the material itself.

From Witchcraft to Demonic Conspiracy

Occasionally, in the images of satanic Jews, emphasis was placed not on ethnic characteristics, but rather on the impersonal, stereotypical features of the Romantic stranger that made them similar to the conventional portrayals of Gypsies, Germans, and others.⁷¹ On the other hand, the alienation of the Romantic character from the rest of human society occasionally resulted in his taking on the image of the Jew, as happens with Baryshev’s Samoilovich:

He was tall, but slim and pale,
All dressed in black from head to toe.
A certain kind of demonic joy
Was noticeable in the eyes of the Jew.⁷²

Romanticism, impressed by all kinds of pensive and ambivalent figures, was quick to employ characters of this kind who were connected to the borders between antagonistic spaces. A Jewish spy or smuggler would sometimes serve as a guide for the protagonist or mediator (for example, a letter-carrier) in love affairs.⁷³ A highly effective Jewish helper of this sort is presented by the aggressively anti-Semitic Kukolnik in his historical novel *Eveline de Vallerolle*, set in the times of the French King Louis XIII

⁷¹ Cf. I. Petrov, “Predskazatel’nitsa,” *Teleskop* (Moscow, 1835), pt. 30:279: “Madam Rosenberg, by her own words, was born in Switzerland and moved to Russia during the French immigration; she looked more like a mix between a Jew and a Gypsy than a compatriot of Wilhelm Tell. In her features there was something Egyptian.”

⁷² E. Baryshev, op. cit., 8.

⁷³ Cf. the well-known “recipe” in the magazine *The Muscovite* regarding the typical historical novel: “In the description of a siege there is always a great deal of combat and clatter, while at the same time two lovers are introduced, one of whom is among the besieged and the other among the besiegers. Among the various historical figures will appear a fabricated character, a magician, a Gypsy, or a Yid. This Yid will appear everywhere, as a *deus ex machina*, connecting or disconnecting all the threads of the plot” (quoted from I. N. Zamotin, “Romanticheskii idealizm v russkom obshchestve i literature 20–30-kh godov XIX stoletia,” *Zapiski Istoriko-filologicheskogo fakul’teta Imperatorskogo Sankt-Peterburgskogo universiteta*, 1908, pt. 87:334).

(first published in the journal *LfR*, 1841). This mysterious, cunning, and pervasive Jew, Goiko, unfailingly rescues the positive protagonists.⁷⁴ And Gogol's Taras Bulba, when seeking to save his son, hopefully seeks magical help from the Jews: "‘Listen Yids!’—he said, and in his words there was something exuberant—"you can do anything in the world: you can dig yourselves out from the bottom of the sea; indeed, as the well-known proverb says, ‘A Yid will steal from himself, when he wants to steal.’ Free my Ostap; give him the chance to flee those diabolical hands."

Jewish magicians or fortune-tellers⁷⁵ were portrayed as unerringly predicting the future to Christians, as in the case of Bulgarin's kabbalist or, for example, N. Grech's fortune teller in *The Black Woman*, who is depicted in a rather mundane, everyday light:

An old Yid woman read the soldiers' future by cards, foretelling a generalship for one, retirement for another, and a young wife for the third. The soldiers laughed and joked with each other: "Stop listening to her!" said one. "It's all nonsense; she's lying! How can this old harridan know what our brother's future is! Let's go home, and let her fool recruits!" "No, Spiridonych!" says another. "Do not make fun of this. A demon itself is under her tongue! It would have been one thing if had she only told us the future, but she counts the past on her fingers. She told me how I was given to be a soldier, and how I was injured by the Swedes. . . ."⁷⁶

Jewish doctors are portrayed as healing injured or sick characters, as in Narezhny's *The Divinity Student* (1824): "The experienced doctor, brushing aside his grey sidelocks, carefully inspected my wounds, cleaned them with some kind of mineral water, applied healing ointments, then stood up and stated, 'I can vouch for his recovery—if he himself will assist me in the process.'"⁷⁷ Following a similar vein is Gogol's "knowledgeable Jewess" who healed Taras Bulba.

⁷⁴ See M. Altshuller, *Epokha Val'tera Skotta v Rossii. Istoricheskii roman 1830-kh godov* (St. Petersburg, 1996), 268.

⁷⁵ On the medieval genesis of this Jewish image and all its elements, see J. Trachtenberg, op. cit., 57ff. Russian readers were also given a theoretical foundation for such beliefs from various authoritative national publications, such as *The Encyclopedic Dictionary*, in which the Roman emperor Hadrian's persecution of the Jews in the second century is said to have been motivated by their devotion to magic; or the compilations by Granovsky, in which it is said that divination "gave them a secret and dark influence on the citizens of Rome, who, despite all their disgust for the Jews, would come to them with deep faith in their knowledge of the future and, in reward for successful answers, became their patrons" (T. N. Granovskii, *ibid.*, 161).

⁷⁶ Nikolai Grech, *Chernaia zhenshchina* (St. Petersburg, 21838), pt. 1:115–16.

⁷⁷ V. T. Narezhnyi, *Sochineniia* (Moscow, 1983), 2:171.

So too, in the above-mentioned novel in the style of Sir Walter Scott, *Red Ruby* (1827) by L. S., the jeweler Samuel takes under his wing his savior, a young knight, who has rescued him from bandits and received a deadly wound in the process. The Jew relates this to a kind and sympathetic duchess—as it so happens, the injured knight's former beloved (thinking that he had been killed long ago, she agreed to marry another—a violent and evil man—and now, right before the wedding, with horror she learns the truth). It turns out that the grateful Jews bound his wounds and brought him into their home, then summoned an experienced doctor. “‘Ah, duchess!’ said Samuel, wiping away genuine tears. ‘Even though your fiancé says that Jews are not people, I am quite able to appreciate the goodness that has been shown to me.’” His gratitude, however, is limited to a very modest contribution: “I would give a tenth of my estate to the one who can resurrect of my savior, the noble knight.”⁷⁸

Even Zotov's odious Moses is capable of some heroic acts of mercy: he saves a protagonist from his enemies⁷⁹—for a large bribe, of course—by hiding him in his house, “pretending he was his brother on his deathbed . . . and using the lure of gold to convince a good doctor not to leave the sick man”; then “with tears of joy” he meets his gentle patroness, a certain “Duchess Aurora B.,” to whom he is fully devoted.⁸⁰

Somov, who often encountered Jews in Ukraine, ironically plays upon the popular perception of Jewish ties—both mercenary and technical—to facility with black magic. In 1830 in the *Nevsky Almanac* he published “Tales of Treasures,” which parodied cheesy Romantic plots. Among the characters presented is the cunning Jew Itska Khopylevich Nemirovsky—a jack-of-all-trades as well as a tavern-keeper and resourceful loan shark. All his technical skill, on the one hand, is placed under strong, albeit obscurely motivated suspicion; yet on the other hand it is presented as a rationalistic explanation of supposed Jewish magic, in which the country folk innocently believe—naturally, to the great profit of the Jew. The portrait of Itska, in other words, emerges somewhat confused. A mill-dam belonging to one local landowner

was repaired by the Yid handyman, who presented himself as being extremely skillful at dam-building and various other tasks of domestic upkeep, which the simple Little Russians partially attributed to supernatural

⁷⁸ *Kalendar' muz*, 1827, 178–79.

⁷⁹ On this and similar situations in Lazhechnikov, and even in Gogol's *Taras Bulba*, see also M. Al'tshuller, op. cit., 197.

⁸⁰ R. Zotov, op. cit., 532.

knowledge. Thus, for example, a knowledgeable miller, dam-builder, hiver, or beekeeper, and certain other people like them the simple folk in Little Russia considered to be sorcerers or wizards.

But the point was not that Itska Khopylevich actually had this “deep knowledge”—which, of course, he had all just made up—but rather that he was “simply lucky enough to somehow strengthen the dam.” He skillfully talks his way into a higher payment, insisting that “in his work on the dam he engaged in such difficult labor that his ancestors of biblical memory had not done the same when working in the land of Egypt, and that now the dam, because of his fortification and because of *the spell* that was cast upon it by this *honest Jew* [in Pushkin’s time this phrase was for the most part used humorously—M. W.], would not be washed away even by a new worldwide Flood” (emphasis mine—M. W.). In contrast to his coreligionist in another story by Somov, “The Witches of Kiev,” Itska Khopylevich possesses no witchcraft, but he attempts to exploit his neighbors’ belief that he does when he mumbles ridiculous pseudo-spells: “Zukh Rabbin, Cain, Abel!”⁸¹ But this multifaceted character does no great harm to anyone, and at the end of the novel he even fills the role of a musician at the protagonists’ wedding.

A tale by the self-taught peasant poet Egor Alipanov (first published in 1837) depicts a greedy and industrious “Yid [*zhidok*] Judas,” who worked hard to meet all the needs of his fellow villagers:

He sewed, painted, cut, and shaved,
Silver-plating earrings for girls,
Making toys for children,—

In other words, he was ready for any task, including the making of cosmetic items. Yet although Alipanov himself was an artisan and labored in a factory, he expressed no professional solidarity with “the Yid.” At the same time, Jewish witchcraft is here replaced by the cunning and deception of the Jewish “manufacturer.” In particular he makes false scales for the merchants: for “Somehow / Cunning deceit / Is holy labor to a Yid.”⁸²

⁸¹ O. M. Somov, *Byli i nebylitsy*, (Moscow, 1984), 190–91, 195.

⁸² The reviews ridiculed Alipanov’s book, and Belinsky expressed extreme irritation toward it (see his dismissive response to the second edition of 1842). The unbelievable ignorance of this composition did not prevent its great popularity and continual reprinting. At the National Library of Russia I was presented with a copy of the 20th edition: *Skazka o mel’nike-koldune, khlopotlivoi starukhe, o zhidkakh i batrakh* (St. Petersburg, 1904), 13–14, 18.

In Slavic folk culture, with all its deep-rooted judophobia, there was a firmly established belief in the miraculous talents of rabbis and zaddikim—to whom the Christian population of Western Ukraine⁸³ would constantly come for help.

In Romantic literature, however, Jewish characters mostly gravitated toward black magic, which is connected or directly identified with the Jewish faith itself. Veltman's novel *The Wanderer* (1831–32) presents a “Jew-sorcerer, who through the use of spells summoned evil spirits into a glass of water. . . . The Jewish sorcerer stands over the glass with a huge Talmud, reads out prayers and spells, and repeats the speeches of evil spirits; he foretells the future and—everything comes true!”⁸⁴ Appearing even more malicious is the heartless Rokhlia in the novel *Chaikovsky* (1843) by E. Grebenka:

Soon after this beyond the Dnieper a fortune-teller appeared—a wise woman . . . and she began whispering to Orthodox people, treating the sick, and to whomever she whispered, to whomever she gave a potion to drink—they would all die, none would get up, they would lie there < . . . > like roaches hit by a frost in a Moscow hut. Many years already she been going about, tormenting honest people. At night she comes to a fresh grave where she laughs wretchedly and sings merry songs.⁸⁵

Despite such portrayals, strangely enough, the ubiquitous charge of the Jews' utilization of Christian blood met with no support among the littérateurs of that time (aside from one episodic attack by K. Bazili and the spurious portrayal in the *Researches* of V. Dal). The Velizh case was closed, but at the end of 1825 it was reopened on the order of Alexander I and became the first blood libel to be supported, enthusiastically at that, by the Russian administration. It continued for almost ten years, yet at the beginning of 1835 all the suspects were exonerated, and those who had survived the torture were freed. Announcing (in the bibliographical column) the publication in 1837 of the Jewish apologetic book *Efes damim* (I. B. Levinzon), the editorial staff of the *Journal of the Ministry of Public*

⁸³ See O. V. Belova and V. Ia. Petrukhn, op. cit., 506–12 (and *ibid.*, 506–7, on the contemporary veneration of the graves of zaddikim among Ukrainians). It is quite characteristic that the Nikolaevan gendarme A. Vasiliev should be so concerned about such Christian faith in the beneficial power of the zaddikim. (See O. Minkina, “Zhandarm i tsadiki,” in *ibid.*, 43.)

⁸⁴ A. F. Vel'tman, *Strannik* (Moscow, 1977), 75.

⁸⁵ E. P. Grebenka, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* (St. Petersburg, 1902), 4:82. Cf. J. Trachtenberg, op. cit., 97–108. On the connection of Jewish medicine to witchcraft and poison in medieval and Renaissance conceptions, see also Sander L. Gilman, op. cit., 27, 74.

Education supplied this gloss of the title: “i.e., Blood Is Unnecessary, or Protection of Israelites from accusations that they Utilize Christian blood for the Passover Festival.”⁸⁶ Well before this, in 1828, the authorities banned from stores the book *Yid Rituals* supporting blood libel and in 1837 (i.e., after the acquittal of the prisoners of Velizh) they banned the reprinting of the book.⁸⁷

The myth of Jewish ritual killings also seeped into translated literary publications. In 1827 *The Moscow Herald* published a passage translated by Titov from Maurier’s novel *The Adventures of Hadj-Baba of Isfahan*, which quickly attained noticeable popularity in Russia (in 1831 a translation of precisely these passages was published in *Son of the Fatherland and Northern Archive*; in 1830 and 1831 separate editions of the novel were also published). From this the curious reader was able to learn how the Jews had long ago been found guilty of the ritual killing of not only Christian but also Muslim babies: “It is well known that in Turkey and in Persia the Jews not infrequently celebrated this ritual, which was in their opinion a godly one.” (In the Islamic East, incidentally, the blood libel accusation had at this time not yet appeared, but talk of ostensible Christian victims of this practice got active local support, as in the Damascus affair.) Nonetheless, the *Herald’s* editorship did not have any deliberate anti-Jewish goals, and this comment was made only in passing. Russian writers did not in any way address these insinuations, and even in the 1840s (i.e., already after the aforementioned Damascus affair) Bulgarin himself mocked the blood libel. Perhaps there was as yet no need for such accusations—there was quite enough mythology already in circulation.

An essential character trait of the Romantic Jew was his bottomless hegemonic will, accompanying a burning hatred of Christianity. In the same way that the Jew would identify himself with his Old Testament forefathers, he would likewise equate the nations of his time with his ancient enemies, referring to Christians as Philistines, the children of Haman, etc. But his dreams of historical revenge, of a Jewish victory over Christianity, and of world domination more often than not took the form of economic and political satanic conspiracy.

Nikolai’s government, with its deep-seated skepticism toward such supposed satanic conspiracies, for a long time denied them any official recognition, leaving such rumors to the belletrists, the first among whom was

⁸⁶ *ZhMNP*, 1838, part 17, op. cit., 24.

⁸⁷ D. A. El’iashevich, op. cit., 161–62.

Faddei Bulgarin. This is indicative of the failure of Major-General Trukhachev, who in 1826 sought to connect the Decembrists with a Masonic conspiracy led by “Rabbi” Muraviev-Apostol.⁸⁸ A few years later the same misfortune befell another vigilant dreamer—Prince Andrei B. Golitsyn.⁸⁹ The administration was not moved by the conspiratorial revelations of the gendarme captain A. Vasiliev, whose plan, given to the emperor, called for the radical reorganization of Jewish life. As noted by Minkina, who published this material, Vasiliev exposed the “hussids”—i.e., Hasidim (who were “practically the same as the Illuminati”)—and their zaddikim—in the commission of all seven deadly sins. He feared that a “Russian Bar-Kokhba” would emerge from their midst “to instigate the people to oppose the government.” The Russian captain thought that following the overthrow of the Sanhedrin by king Herod, the Jews still possessed remnants of secret “autocratic Bevsdins” (apparently referring to the *beit din*—rabbinical court). It was necessary to transform these courts, making them subservient to the government, ensuring that power was given to “prominent rabbis” from among “trustworthy Jews.” In this formative part of his plan Vasiliev suggested following the example of Herod in his fight with the Jewish nobility. Suggested corrective measures entailed: converting the Jews into peasants [*krest'iane*] and their shtetls into agricultural colonies (of the Arakcheev type), abolishing the entire system of Jewish religious education and replacing it with government schools, putting a stop to “free and secret book printing,” destroying “dangerous books,” etc. In enumerating these and other points of the plan, Minkina underscores that some of them were “indeed put into effect over the following decades” and that persecution of the Jewish press began already in 1836.⁹⁰

Almost at the same time as Vasiliev, the *Maskil* Ia. Lips (who later became a censor) submitted his own report. In it, according to Elyashevich, “there appeared for the first time in Russian literature the idea of a horrid ‘Jewish conspiracy,’ a Jewish *status in statu*.”⁹¹

It would be more accurate to say that this was the first time the idea appeared at the government level, for in belletristic publications it had appeared much earlier, already several years before Vasiliev and Lips. In

⁸⁸ O. Kiianskaia, “‘Zhidomasonskii’ zagovor 1825 goda: Dekabristy v otsenkakh sovremennikov,” *Solnechnoe spletenie* 8, no. 27 (Jerusalem, 2004).

⁸⁹ See Ia. M. Gordin, *Mistiki i okhraniteli: Delo o masonskom zagovore* (St. Petersburg, 1995).

⁹⁰ O. Minkina, op. cit., 48–49.

⁹¹ D. M. El'iashevich, op. cit., 187.

the novel *Esterka* by Bulgarin (1828) the idea of “a secret Jewish government” emerges, acting mostly in partnership with other treacherous powers, with malicious designs against all mankind. The plot of the novel is based on the legend of the love of the Polish king Casimir (14th century) for a beautiful Jewess. The novel depicts nightly gatherings in the forest of “a terrifying Jewish court, the Sanhedrin.” This is yet one more replica of Napoleon’s plan with his “Synedrion” in 1807, insofar as the primary theme of the novel was tied to the traditional Polish demonization of Purim. Bulgarin depicts how, at the order of this clandestine nightly Synedrion, a certain Rifka [*sic!*] endeavors—albeit in vain—, through the respectable Esterka, to encourage the king to grant the Jews all sorts of mercantile privileges in order to fully take complete control of the State: “Then the people of Israel will come back to life; then all the gold will come into our hands; then will be laid the first stone of the new Jerusalem.”⁹² (In fact, in the estimation of other characters of the novel—haidamaks—the Jews had, even without this, already achieved their goal). Vatican ambassadors also became involved in this Jewish intrigue—a combination later canonized by the antinihilistic novel, which would further add to this category the schemes of revolutionaries and the Polish rebellion.

Yet Bulgarin, religiously combining a loyalist pathos with the remains of eighteenth-century Enlightenment tradition, exhibited little interest in or respect for the Catholic faith, or for religion in general. In the novel *Mazepa* (1833–34) an antigovernment conspiracy is portrayed with quasi-rationalistic characteristics, anticipating the antinihilistic vision in ever-increasing measure. The protagonist, the baptized Jewess Maria Lomtkovskaia, reveals to her beloved—Bogdan Ognevik—a terrible secret:

I am in contact with Polish Yids. You should know, Bogdan, that the world is ruled not by power, as those uninitiated in the secrets of politics may think, but by cunning, which possesses power. Catholic Europe is ruled by Yids, clergy, and women—which is to say, money, superstition, and passion. These coils invisibly interlock in a sublime engine that propels the world! I know its intricacies, and I have the key in my hands. Mazepa himself, dreaming of power, <...> is nothing but a weak weapon, thrust into action by the main coils. Polish Yids, Catholic priests, and women have themselves undertaken to make him the sovereign ruler of Ukraine for their own personal profit.⁹³

⁹² Faddei Bulgarin, *Sochineniia* (5 vols. in 10 parts) (St. Petersburg, 1828), vol. 3, pt. 6:49.

⁹³ Idem, *Sochineniia* (Moscow, 1990), 516–17.

Even contemporary Western Russia, according to Bulgarin, is enslaved by the Jews: “The truth is that landlords enjoy only the sound of coins and the sight of payment-notes, though in reality it all belongs to the Yids” (*Ivan Vyzhigin*, chap. 7).⁹⁴

Another, albeit not very intelligible example of Jewish conspiracy—or, to be precise, of a conspiracy by converts—is given by Lazhechnikov in *The Last Novik*, which he began to write already in 1826, but published from 1831 to 1833. The plot unfolds in Livonia. In the novel the cunning Niklaszon, who for the sake of appearances accepted the Lutheran faith, works together with the infernal pseudo-monk Abraham (discussed above), who in his excess craftiness joined the Old Believers (who are also despised by the author and whose leader, the elder Andrei Denisov, was intentionally relocated by the author from the region of Vyg to the Baltics). Niklaszon says to his accomplice: “We are both from a great tribe; we should deceive and not be deceived; you were not created to serve this Christian dog, who will kick the bucket at any moment: you should become the Old Believers’ leader and *the teacher of our faith*.” At the same time, judging from the following words by Niklaszon, both converts appear to be mere agents of certain more mysterious powers: “We have already accomplished some significant things, and have been rewarded; let us not betray each other, and we will not be forgotten.” (The gratitude of these unknown powers is expressed, naturally, in gold.) Abraham purposefully follows the plan in order to fulfill his evil designs against Andrei Denisov: “The last comrade to stay with him, the Yid Abraham, was simply waiting for the perfect moment to rob him and flee to the outskirts of Tula, where a Seleznev Old Believer group had been reestablished, *based purely on the Law of Moses*. Abraham devised his evil plots in the uninhabited woods along the Neva” (emphasis mine—M. W.). In the end he burns the mortally-wounded Denisov alive and then hides in the forest, “loaded with rich plunder.”⁹⁵

The content of these “evil plots” is left untold to the reader, though from the context we can infer that, generally speaking, they are directed against Russia and Peter I, who is preparing to build a great empire with its capital on the Neva. (Abraham, in all likelihood, joins the Old Believers because they too are staunch enemies of the “true church” and tsar-reformer.) We

⁹⁴ Ibid., 62.

⁹⁵ I. I. Lazhechnikov, op. cit., 1:246, 441–43. On the judophobic views of early Lazhechnikov, see M. Al'tshuller, op. cit., 141–43.

shall see that, within a few years, Lazhechnikov, in *The Heretic*, would noticeably soften his attitude toward the Jews, as represented by the legendary Skharia—yet even this latter adheres to some unintelligible plan that is harmful to Orthodox Russia.

A more prosaic picture of the Jewish conspiracy is presented in an anonymous composition (undersigned by three asterisks) published in 1833 in *The Buzz* (nos. 95–97), combining elements of both historical sketch and belletristic narrative. The action is set in the era of Alexander. The protagonist, an honest and kind-hearted police captain with the “talking” surname Dobroslavov (derived from “good” and “fame”), has decided to free Little Russian peasants from the Jewish presence: “Yids had at that time invaded the villages and towns of Little Russia, like locusts devouring the property of the simple folk who were not yet acquainted with either the sophistication of knaves or the craftiness of hypocrites. Dobroslavov was the first to present the civil governor with a plan for expunging from the state, villages, and estates the children of Israel, who through fraudulence were destroying the wonderful edifice of accomplishment that had been raised through the solicitude of the Government and its laws, digging at its very foundation.”⁹⁶ In his struggle, however, Dobroslavov faced an irresistible Jewish conspiracy—a conglomerate of slander, in which many of his colleagues had become involved, living off of bribes and abuse. “The Betrayers of Christ” brought terrible accusations against the righteous captain, and these fabrications of “the Yid imagination”⁹⁷ ruined him. The composition finishes with a panegyric on the new era of Nikolai and its attendant justice, which promises to free the country from its former horrors.

This unknown author, like Bulgarin or Somov, supports his judophobia with a claim to precise knowledge of the Jewish theme. Most Russian writers were unable to boast the same. As a rule, the images of Jews in their works were received second hand.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ *Molva*, 1833, no. 95:379.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, no. 97, 386.

⁹⁸ *Molva*, 1833, no. 95:379.

CHAPTER SIX

ENCOUNTERS WITH JUDAISM AND THE JEWS: AMENDMENTS BASED ON REAL IMPRESSIONS

The Problem of Authorial Erudition

The question inevitably presents itself: How much did the writers of this period know about real Jews, not just their mythological doppelgängers? As a general rule, the answer is: very little. As is to be expected, authors who took a fancy to the topic of ancient biblical Jewry generally did not sparkle with ethnographic erudition. As the author of a review of *Bloody Vengeance* lamented in *The Northern Bee*: “The daily life of the Jews is unclearly portrayed—or, it may be better said, it is portrayed as being very similar to that of Russians. For example, the trading, the arguing, and the complimenting are performed in a very Russian manner. Where is the life full of poetry, filled with the glory of a religion infused with the virgin delights of the East, nourished by the fragrant air of the Promised Land—the folk life of the Jews?”

Yet the dramatist russified Jewish life¹ for reasons that went beyond his lack of acquaintance with the daily life of his Jewish contemporaries. In discussing the anti-Semitism that characterized the Nikolaevan era, S. Ginzburg adds: “The only thing that was able to rival these writers’ animosity toward Jews was their ignorance of Jews’ everyday lives, which they were portraying in their work. Literature of that time would refer, for example to ‘tsitsis’ and ‘tefillin’ [respectively, the knotted fringes of Jewish prayer attire and phylacteries—M. W.] as ‘the favorite food of Yids’; the ignorance of writers who sought to portray daily Jewish life even extended to unfamiliarity with Jewish names—hence such names as Khayl, Moss-hiekh, Manchester, etc. are given to the Jewish characters of that time.”²

This ignorance also concerned purely legal matters. The folk poet Alipanov portrayed a “Yid” (*zhidok*) living peacefully in a *Moscow suburb*, to

¹ To cite one of the more colorful details illustrating this: one of the biblical Jews is described as wearing an “image” of his deceased mother around his neck (*Krovavaia mest’*, 138).

² S. M. Ginzburg, *op. cit.*, 16.

which administrative fantasy was added a religious-ethnographic seasoning: *on a Saturday night*, when the Jews are supposed to celebrate and are forbidden to do any work, this particular “Yid,” for a chervonets (ten-ruble coin), keeps vigil over the body of a deceased Christian miller suspected of witchcraft.³ Yet that which may be excusable in a self-taught, albeit talented, writer looks somewhat bizarre when the same topic is touched upon by much more educated people. A. Stepanov, in his novel *The Inn* (1835), sends his “son of Judas” off even further: his Jewish character is an informer, liar, and provocateur who poses as a wandering merchant selling his wares along the banks of the Volga—i.e., thousands of versts from his native Pale of Settlement—thereby ignoring not only legal and moral norms, but even the rules of logic.⁴ Simply put, the author needed this “scoundrel of a Yid” to heighten his demonization of some act of Romantic villainy. (Jewish tradesmen would eventually be allowed to ply their trades in the inner provinces, but only later, in the 1840s–50s.) Alipanov and Stepanov, however, were simply adhering to the same distinct, moralistic logic as the Russian administration, having never in their lifetime actually seen Jews. S. Ginzburg, with reference to I. Orshansky, tells how “in 1837 the Interior Ministry demanded that the local authorities submit a variety of statistical information; from the city of Kaia (in the province of Viatka), concerning, *inter alia*, the question of the moral condition of the inhabitants, the district authority sent back a very concise answer: ‘There are no Yids in the city of Kaia.’ This was clearly stated to underscore the impeccable moral condition of the city of Kaia.”⁵

According to the definition of B. Gorev, in Russian society Jews were “a remote peripheral presence, whom officers and clerks encountered only during short-term service in the western and southwestern outskirts of Russia”⁶ It is hardly surprising, therefore, that Russian writers of the

³ The same “tale,” incidentally, also contains a parenthetical story that agrees in large part with Pushkin’s “Tale of a Priest and His Workman Balda”—except that here the role of the greedy priest is filled by the rich “Yid Itska,” who is punished by his Russian farmhand; see E. I. Alipanov, *op. cit.*, 20–30.

⁴ [A. Stepanov,] *Postoiayli dvor* (in 4 pts.) (St. Petersburg, 1835), 2:98–101.

⁵ Ginzburg, *Minuvshee. Istoricheskie ocherki, stat'i i kharakteristiki* (Petrograd, 1923), 14.

⁶ One such clerk was Andrei Glagolev, who, as he says in his book *Zapiski russkogo puteshestvennika s 1823 po 1827 god*, pt. 1 (St. Petersburg, 1837), in this venue “acquired his first knowledge about Jews” (quoted from an article by Alla Sokolova, “‘Belyi gospodin’ v poiskakh ekzotiki: evreiskie dostoprimechatel'nosti v putevykh zapiskakh i iskusstvovedcheskikh ocherkakh (XIX-nachalo XX veka),” *Russko-evreiskaia kul'tura*, ed. O. V. Budnitskii, O. V. Belova, and V. V. Mochalova (Moscow, 2006), 407.

classical era showed so little familiarity with Jewish life and spirit.”⁷ Yet here, too, it may be objected that even prolonged everyday interaction does not guarantee a deeper familiarity with the “life and spirit” of “the other.” Consider, for example, the curious mistakes made by the author of *Esterka* in describing Jewish norms and customs—even though Bulgarin did deal with these topics in historical textbooks and, as he claimed, collected information from Jews themselves. But even a genuine “familiarity with . . . life and spirit” can be reflected in different ways. The naïve enlightenment-styled faith in the benefits of mutual understanding and close interaction between different peoples is in general not borne out. Take, for example, the history of Polish-German or Russian-Polish relations: as is well-known, during the days of civil war and various social disturbances fellow countrymen and neighbors were the ones who showed the greatest enthusiasm when endeavoring to kill each other.

Everyday Acquaintanceship, Social and Ethnographic Observations

Writers from Ukraine and Poland came into closer contact with Jewry than their Russian counterparts, but this acquaintance affected them differently. Clearly this kind of everyday interaction led the mature Narzhny to part with his youthful anti-Semitism, which had had a borrowed, speculative quality to it. On the other hand, Bulgarin’s long-standing and frequent contacts with Jews only strengthened his anti-Semitic feelings. As historical writers Grebenka in *Chaikovsky*, Golota, and Kukulnik (who spent several of his grammar school years in Nezhin) placed their caricatures in the very remote, yet always exotic past. Somov and Gogol likewise focused their anti-Semitic invectives primarily within historical genres, whereas the Ukrainian Jews of their day were sketched with quick, ironical strokes and without any animosity.

M. Edelstein rightly remarked on the total conventionality of Pushkin’s Jewish motifs, which “are marked, first and foremost, by the total absence of any personal feelings or individual-specific overtones.”⁸ Nevertheless, Pushkin did occasionally meet with Jews—even more often with Jewesses—because of his exile in the south. I would point out that, unlike the dark images in “The Covetous Knight”—or, on the other hand, the

⁷ B. Gorev, “Russkaia literatura i evrei,” op. cit., 8.

⁸ M. Edelstein, “Istoriia odnogo stereotipa,” *Russkie pisateli o evreiah i zhidakh*, 385.

imagery of his biblical pastiches (“Before the proud satrap / Israel did not bend his neck . . .”) ⁹—, in his Kishinev poems a playful eroticism prevails, echoing the bawdy “Gavriliada”: “Christ has risen, my Rebecca! / Today, following with my soul / The law of the God-man, / I kiss you, my angel. / And tomorrow I am even ready, O Jewess / to begin believing in the faith of Moses / For a kiss I will not be shy—/ I will even present you / with what distinguishes a true Jew / From Orthodox Christians.” ¹⁰ In his diary, moreover, we can discern some curiosity: “Three days ago they buried the local metropolitan; out of the whole ceremony I liked the Yids most of all.” In general Pushkin’s Jewish theme develops within a spectrum, from poisoners (“The Covetous Knight,” “Elena and Stamati”) to the gracious complacency in his epigram on Bulgarin: “You could be a Tatar—/ I would see no shame. / You could be a Yid—that would be no matter; / The trouble is that you are Vidocq Figliarin.” ¹¹

Some writers, to be sure, were beginning to take a closer look at Jewish customs, beliefs, and traditions (including cooking: thus in 1841, in the serial *The Steward* [*Ekonom*], a piece was published under the title “Pike, Jewish-Style”). Romantic preferences and religious circumspection encouraged the observer to attribute a disquieting magical glow to the most ordinary everyday figures. In 1825 A. Kornelius found himself in the city of Kremenchug, where in the shopping arcade he was struck by the sight of the Jewish merchants. These “dark sons of Israel, all in black clothing, kept one hand tucked behind their belts and, with the other, bowed down and touched ground, inviting passers-by to enter their stores.” ¹² In 1830 in *Tales of Treasures* Somov authoritatively introduced readers to the belief of “superstitious Polish Jews” in “the Grabber”—a demon who kidnaps one of them on the Day of Judgment. ¹³ In that same year P. T. Morozov took an interest in, among other Odessian landmarks, the Jewish cemetery

⁹ See, for example, V. Vatsuro, “Pushkinskoe perelozhenie iz Knigi Iudif,” *Jews and Slavs*, 1994, no. 2:135–44.

¹⁰ Cf. *ibid.* on the jealous threat concerning “Tadarashka” (T. Krupensky): “I am growing cold from fear: / Ah, Jewess, God will kill! / If we believe Moses, / the bestializing woman must die!” (“Yawning after dinner . . .”) However, the Jewess here is referred to as the daughter of a Moldovian boyar; see further D. Z. Fel’dman, O. Iu. Minkina, and A. Iu. Kononova, “*Prekrasnaia evreika*” v *Rossii XVII–XIX veka: obrazy i real’nost’* (Moscow, 2007), 94–96.

¹¹ Eugène François Vidocq (1775–1857) was a former French crook who joined the police: here Pushkin alludes to Bulgarin’s work as an informer. *Figliarin* derives from *figliar*, or clown.

¹² A. Kornelius, “Opisanie Kremenchuga,” *Ukrainskii zhurnal*, 1825, part 5, no. 4:267.

¹³ O. M. Somov, *op. cit.*, 205, 218.

adjoining the city cemetery in Moldavanka: "Here all the monuments are represented as arches facing the West. Among the gravestones hiding the remains of the worshipers of the Law of Moses loom the black shadows of children's cribs, symbolically connecting death and birth": among the Jews, he explains, "children's cribs are placed at their graves."¹⁴

Veltman demonstrates knowledge beyond Lilith or a kabbalistic understanding of the Hebrew alphabet. In general he was distinguished by his ethnographic and linguistic curiosity, and in the third part of his *The Wanderer* an unexpected knowledge of a Talmudic maxim is on display in the following illustration of the expression "to become so inebriated on Purim that one 'cannot distinguish Mordechai from Haman'": "I go to the tavern—in the tavern all are drunk! / And Berka is drunk. / Ah, what is to be done?! / Mordechai from Haman / he, the lazy bugger, could not tell apart!"¹⁵ A little later, in 1838, he uses the same benignly satirical tone to portray "a learned Jew" who lost himself in "tales of the Talmud" in the novel *Heart and Head*:

A pale Jew was sitting before a window; a pair of glasses straddling his nose, in his hand was a greasy candle-stub with which he illumined from right to left the lines of the book lying open before him.

He was reading the song of Hadaakam [Хадаакам], about the great pike Leviathan, every day swallowing a carp three miles long, and about a great bull, every day consuming several thousand mountains, served on a platter, during the celebration of the coming of Messiah at a table where all the Jewish people will gather; and, finally, about a bird that once dropped an egg while flying. The egg fell to the ground, broke a cedar forest, then cracked and, with the yolk and its white, flooded the entire region.¹⁶

In 1835 *The Moscow Observer* published the novel *The Mysterious Dresser*, signed by the initials "A. K." Here, among other things, is a description of an act of collective Jewish prayer, introduced with great interest and without any animosity, yet with a slight admixture of demonological associations, invoked to set up an atmosphere of mystery (this late-Romantic text parodies the clichéd theme of ghosts).

Consistent with the tradition of their fathers, the Jews began to prepare themselves for prayer; first they put on hats, for which they had asked special permission, then covered themselves with white woolen vestments with

¹⁴ P. Morozov, "Odessa v 1830 godu," *Odesskii al'manakh na 1831 god*, published by P. Morozov and M. Rozberg (Odessa, 1831), part 1:58–59.

¹⁵ A. F. Veltman, *Strannik*, 125.

¹⁶ Veltman, *Serdse i dumka. Prikluchenie*, (Moscow, 1986), 195–96.

three black-edged fringes, then encircled their naked arms with narrow belts; attached to their foreheads tfilim [*sic*], which resembled small square arks on the front of which were carved the letter “shin,” the first letter of the great name Shadoy [*sic*]. These arks hold thin scrolls of parchment on which are clearly and beautifully written commandments and prayers. First two sons of Israel quietly bowed down, turning their faces to the wall, and then they began a voiceless, incessant mumbling—reading books; then, raising their voices louder and louder, they raised such a cry that everyone else in the room was drowned out: the duet, however, soon merged together, creating a stream of wild, strange, yet harmonious sounds—pleasant even to the unfamiliar ear. The transitions were unexpected; the lowering and raising of tones were fast and amazing; their calls varied: sometimes you would hear moaning; sometimes crying or wailing—like the howling of the wind in the desert; sometimes the singing and reading stopped completely, and like thunder would suddenly start up again. . . . The rain and storm cried between them in the courtyard.¹⁷

In 1838, in the opening of *Gudishki*—published among her *Notes of a Cavalry Maiden*—Durova referred in passing to “the mournful cry of the Jews praying to God” in their tavern. When “the devout howling behind the partition died down,” there appeared “the tenant, a tall, thin Jew with knavish physiognomy, yet at the same time intelligent and mocking.”¹⁸

From Morozov’s perspective, the most impressive aspect of modern Jewry to be observed in Odessa was the incredible continuity of the national type, enduring despite all the misfortunes of this people:

The people, although dispersed over the face of the earth by the wars of Titus, did not change from one century to another, from one country to another. . . . In the steppes of Novorossiisk the Jews have almost the same manners and customs as the ones by which they were distinguished while wandering through stony Arabia. On a Saturday look at the streets of Odessa: before your eyes will appear the fulfillment of the 4th Commandment. With the beginning of that day, dedicated to God by the Law of Moses, all the Jewish stores in Odessa are closed. The tables [for money changing—M. W.] disappear where, under the bronze meshwork, the money of the whole world shines. Thoughtful factors (brokers) begin to walk back and forth, no longer thinking about filling orders.¹⁹

¹⁷ *Moskovskii nabliudatel'*, 1835, part 3, no. 10:225–26.

¹⁸ *Literaturnye pribavleniia k "Russkomu invalidu,"* 1838, no. 44:863.

¹⁹ P. Morozov, *op. cit.*, 70. This passage was misunderstood by S. Tsipperstein in *Evrei Odessy: istoriia kul'tury. 1794–1881*, ed., trans. (from English) by A. Lokshin. (Moscow, 1995), 74. In this edition many mistakes and inconsistencies in the original English version are corrected—yet not all of them, unfortunately.

Later, in connection with another ethnographic subject, S. Dzhunkovsky advanced a similar conclusion in *The Northern Bee*, laying claim to scientific thoroughness: “The main population of Poltava, it would seem, consists of Jews, whom you run into everywhere you go and who surprise you with their clothing, which has remained practically unchanged for the past 2,000 years [in point of fact he is referring to Polish clothing, which was retained by the Jews from the 17th century—M. W.]. The old men walk about in large hats, and the women in *turbans*.”²⁰ The appearance of an Orthodox Jew truly puzzled the observer. Particularly baffling to him were the sidelocks—the same ones that the wise doctor Ioad in Narezhny’s novel “brushes aside.” In Somov’s *Tales of Treasures* Itska Khopylevich, by contrast, craftily “lets them fall over his face (perhaps so that no one could discern his intentions from his expression).”²¹ Russian writers in general attempted to assign this detail of the Jewish image some sensible purpose. This is why in *The Last Novik*, by Lazhechnikov, a tender-hearted Jew, when observing an execution, “dried his tears with his sidelocks”; Narezhny’s young Tovii does the same thing in a different situation: after an enemy has cut them off, he “carefully picked up his sidelocks, which were lying in mud, and with them dried his tears.” Sidelocks could also be used in making oaths, as other Narezhny characters do: “I assure you on my honor and swear by the sacrosanctity of my sidelocks . . .” (*The Seminarist*); “I swear on my late father’s beard and sidelocks . . .” (“The Tale of Two Ivans, or A Passion for Litigation”).²²

As for Morozov, in his *Odessa* he traces not only age-old cultural features, but also new trends—like the striking success of the Enlightenment. In describing the local schools, the writer marvels at the achievements of the Jewish students, even though their futures will be limited to the commercial sphere:

Among the educational institutions for young people in Odessa, first place is taken by the Richelieu Lyceum and the Institute for Noble Maidens. After these monuments of government solicitude, employed by the government for the furtherment of intellectual development, special attention is merited by the schools of Jewish [or “Hebrew”] and Eastern languages. Whoever visits during examinations in the first of these will gain a clear understanding of the skills of these people, often despised without any good reason. Students of the Jewish [or “Hebrew”] schools demonstrate extraordinary

²⁰ *Severnaia pchela*, 1841, no. 16.

²¹ Somov, *Byli i nebylitsy*, 195.

²² V. T. Narezhnyi, *Sochineniia*, 2:200, 417.

achievement in the subjects taught to them. These hard-working students will in time go on to gain renown in the world of trade, which encompasses all of the financial activities of their compatriots.²³

Elena Gan refers in passing to “the dirty streets of the Jewish shtetl” with its “ragged, half-naked Yid children [*zhidenki*]” and adult “sons of Judas” (*The Ideal*, 1837)—and in the same Odessa her irritated attention is drawn to “the ubiquitous twitter of the tireless, all-knowing, and busybody Yids [*zhidki*]” (*Theofania Abbiaggio*, 1841), for whom she has even less regard than Morozov. What is more, the Jews had gotten into the habit of attending the local opera house, sitting in the peanut gallery: “High under the ceiling heads peeped through sporting the yarmulkes and sidelocks of those people who were scattered over the face of the Earth” (*Numbered Theater Box*, 1840).²⁴ Yet the Jews had already filled up the orchestra seats as well. The journalist, bibliophile, and Masonic publisher Nikolai Vsevolzhsky, when visiting Odessa, was quite amused by the Jews’ exuberant and thunderous reaction to the opera:

Having attended the Italian opera on many occasions, I had the opportunity to observe that most of the audience in the orchestra seats were Jews. They seemed to me to be quite passionate lovers of music. They followed the performance of this or that actor with such enthusiasm! They applauded with such joy! They verily deafened the spectators in chairs and were constantly calling out to the actors, shouting in ecstasy! I must confess that these *fanatiko per la musika* [*sic*] amused me tremendously. In general the public here loves music and supports entertainment.²⁵

In 1842 I. S. Finkel, a local *Maskil* and teacher of Russian language in one of the Jewish schools, published in *The Odessa Herald* a long sketch about the Jews in Odessa, which was republished one year later over several

²³ Morozov, op. cit., 81–82. Perhaps the author’s affection for the Jews was encouraged by his service under general-governor M. S. Vorontsov, who was very favorably disposed to the Jewish community and considered it to be beneficial to the city’s development. In particular, as pointed out by Tsipperstein (op. cit., 175), Vorontsov in 1843 protested against the discriminatory measures proposed by the Interior Ministry. Regarding Vorontsov’s position on the Jewish question, see Iu. Gessen, *Istoriia evreiskogo naroda v Rossii* (Leningrad, 1927), 2:100–103. On Morozov, see the article by O. V. Golubeva, “Russkie pisateli 1800–1917,” *Biograficheskii slovar’*, vol. 4 (Moscow, 1999).

²⁴ E. A. (Zeneida R-va) Gan, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* (St. Petersburg, 1905), 12, 391, 447.

²⁵ N. S. Vsevolzhskii, *Puteshestvie chrez Iuzhnuuiu Rossiiu, Krym i Odessu, v Konstantinopol’, Maluiu Aziiu, Severnuuiu Afriku, Mal’tu, Sitsiliuu, Italiuu, Iuzhnuuiu Frantsiiu i Parizh v 1836–1837 godakh* (Moscow, 1839), 1:100. Tsipperstein also misunderstood this passage (as a judgment), though he underscored the special love of Odessa Jews for music and the opera, in which, according to the townsmen, “they practically monopolized the seats” (S. Tsipperstein, op. cit., 74–75).

issues of *St. Petersburg News*. The author exhibited great pride over his native city and the achievements of its Jewish inhabitants. (Since he believed that it should fall to one of their coreligionists to write about them, he dedicated himself to the task.) We will return to this matter, but first it is worth noting Finkel's complaints that his compatriots had still not embraced contemporary culture. "The Jews in Odessa spend large sums on education and training," he writes, "yet with the exception of one music teacher for beginners, among Odessa Jews there are no other fine arts teachers—although they do have a substantial number of amateurs who display wonderful talent."²⁶

Not everyone, however, was enamored with bourgeois Odessa. In 1841 the highly patriotic journal *The Muscovite* published a rather cheerless correspondence from there (which the editors themselves rebuked for excessive and unfair animosity toward the city). The anonymous writer complains about the egoism and social disconnectedness of Odessans: "Everyone who lives here lives for himself and by himself. . . . The people give off a coldness. No one seems even to have heard of Russian hospitality, let alone seen it. Indeed, how can any truly fresh, warm, or holy feeling exist in a city inhabited primarily by Jews and immigrants from Western, decrepit, cold, and dying Europe? A merchant might thrive in this atmosphere of conversation concerning import and export, but a man with higher needs will wither from the lack of compassion."²⁷

The widespread Jewish presence in Novorossia is also mentioned by other observers—usually with some acrimony. In enumerating the ethnic groups that settled in Odessa, one of these observers concludes with reference to "the pushy Jews that have invaded this land."²⁸ After ten years Belinsky, having found his way to the south, relates similar impressions to his wife from exotic Ekaterinoslav: "On the streets pigs wander with their piglets, along with confused horses. The city is infested with Yids."²⁹

²⁶ I. S. Finkel', "O torgovle, promyshlennosti, prosveshchenii i obrazovanii odesskikh evreev," *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti*, 1843, no. 117.

²⁷ *Moskvitianin*, 1841, no. 4:554–55. This note outraged another Odessan who sent to the editorial staff a polemical letter in which he dismissed the claim that the city was populated almost exclusively by Jews: "The greater part of the population consists of Russians" (*ibid.*, no. 6:536).

²⁸ K. Pavlikov, "Odessa," *Severnaia pchela*, 1836, no. 78. According to Morozov's data, in 1830 "the remains of Israel residing here" constituted 7,190 people—one-sixth of the population of Odessa (P. Morozov, *op. cit.*, 67). In 1842 Finkel already speaks of 12,000.

²⁹ A letter to M. K. Belinskaia dated June 14, 1846: V. G. Belinskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 12:291.

Jews hold complete sway in Berdichev as well. In 1836 *The Encyclopedic Dictionary* sadly declares that the Jews have taken into their hands all the local fairs. This official information was confirmed by Titov in his characteristically artistic manner: “Here the Yid is everywhere; the smell of Yids is everywhere. The poor Yid factor (middleman/broker) and the important Yid merchant grab hold of you and each other, screaming, blustering, cheating each other, cheating themselves. In secret they sell you permitted goods instead of smuggled ones and vice versa; they drag you from counter to counter, from home to home, to cellars and basements; they get into your eyes like flies, despite being beaten, kicked out, or thrown into dirt together with a piece of *vebb* or half of a *sedan*.”³⁰ Nonetheless, as a result of this “outrageous obtrusiveness,” Berdichev was transformed into the business capital of the entire western region, as *The Encyclopedic Dictionary* also points out.

The Jews here are not only involved in selling products. The entire manufacturing industry of the city is in fact restricted “to a few small factories for the weaving of wool materials, called ‘talysy’ [from Ashkenazic Hebr. *tallis*—M. W.] and used by the Jews as prayer attire”; yet “besides this, in Berdichev many different trades and crafts are present and represent the full range of manufacturing and crafts common to all civil society. All these establishments are owned by local Jews.”

The dictionary also points out another side of local life, which, due to a lack of time, Titov’s officers had ignored in their preoccupation with beating the Jews. As the dictionary notes, the city has “. . . 12 Jewish schools, including prayer houses, and 2 Jewish publishing houses. These publishing houses represent the notable concentration in Berdichev of modern Jewish thought. The embodiment of the latter is ‘Rabbi Levy.’” (Here the author refers to the famous Berdichev zaddik Levy-Yitshak—who died, however, in 1810, a fact about which the author is apparently unaware.) From his “interesting book” it emerges that, for the Jews, this city

represents the hub of their higher scholarship. This importance of Berdichev is generally recognized by all the Jews, making it the repository of everything deep and esoteric in their teaching and national ethos, an honored and respected place, and, by consolidating the strong influence of the Berdichev rabbis on Jews in even the remotest lands, constantly attracting to itself Jewish travelers who come for edification and conversation, as well as for selling and buying. From here these travelers disseminate the first fruits

³⁰ V. P. Titov, op. cit., 168.

of a new teaching begun in Medzhybozh . . . and systematized in Berdichev, known by the name of "Hasidism," which has today captivated almost all the Jews who formerly belonged to the sect of the rabbinites, or Pharisees.³¹

In the belles lettres of this period, along with the rabbis, factors, mechanics, tailors, cabbies, healers, supplicants, and sidelock-sporting music lovers, musicians were already appearing and forming musical ensembles throughout the Pale of Settlement. P. Golota sent his Jewish zimbalist back into the sixteenth century. In order to divert the attention of a lustful Polish gentleman from his beautiful daughter, "the Yid stroked the strings with deep feeling, and an enchanting harmony filled the hall. The artist exhausted all of his artistry, that by his playing he might distract the fickle gentleman, and, so it seems, he succeeded in doing so."³² In the last lines of Somov's *Tales of Treasures*, in the description of a wedding celebration, there once again appears the Jewish mechanic and unsuccessful sorcerer, albeit in a new role: "The Jew Itska Khopylevich, being a man capable of anything and always ready to please his landlord, came with his cimbalom and played along with the harpist and the two violinists whom he had brought from the city."³³ One of these orchestras was also described by Veltman in his 1835 story "The Provincial Actors": "Four Yids with violin, a cello, a cimbalom, and triangles took their places in front of the stage."³⁴ At that time also, in the same journal (*Library for Reading*), A. Shidlovsky, in a decidedly unamiable manner, described a Jewish ensemble in his story *The Comely Cash-Keeper*: "Here there river Phlegeton is boiling over; there a Tartar wails; and there—is a Yid kahal! . . . At the door itinerant Yid-musicians are sitting, red-headed, shaggy, soiled, and stinky." (Half a century later Chekhov would describe a Jewish orchestra in "Rothschild's Fiddle" in the same way.) Yet even worse—it turns out that the Russian Meyerbeers don't really know how to play: "Out of sync and without harmony, they hoot, scream, and hammer away on the cimbalom, tambourines, and violins."³⁵

Much more favorable impressions of Jewish ensembles are given by the district residents, who in Count Vladimir Sollogub's novel *The Chemist*

³¹ See "Berdichev," in *Entsiklopedicheskii slovar'* (St. Petersburg, 1836), 5:338–39.

³² P. Golota, *Nalivaiko, ili vremena bedstvii Malorossii*, 2:9–10.

³³ Somov, op. cit., 215.

³⁴ *Biblioteka dlia chteniia*, 10 (1835): 214. This novel, incidentally, is considered to be one of Gogol's sources for *The Inspector General*.

³⁵ *Biblioteka dlia chteniia*, 9 (1835): 128.

(1841) reminisce about former noble gatherings: “There were balls; the landlords came together. There was so much fun—and there was Yid music! The people still remember.”³⁶

Jews in Neighboring Countries: Travelers’ Accounts

Travel accounts give us many Russian snapshots of the Jews living in regions adjoining the Russian Empire—as, for example, in Constantinople, where N. Vsevolzhsky noted “plenty of Yids, who silently and sheepishly made their way along the wall.”³⁷ While traveling through Austrian Galicia another Russian traveler melancholically observes: “The local homes and hotels are better, of course, than Russian ones, but not excellent; the cities are ugly and full of Yids.”³⁸ Already at that time, both in Russia and abroad, Jews were readily compared with Armenians³⁹—sometimes favorably. This was true in the case of Ami Boué, a well-known Austrian/French geographer, ethnologist, and geologist who traveled in the East. In his travel notes, translated in *The Northern Bee* in 1841, he wrote: “All the other peoples of Turkey do not like the Yids or Armenians, however the Yids, because of their strict rules, enjoy somewhat better respect than the Armenians, who surpass the sons of Israel in trading trickery.”⁴⁰

Many foreign travelers showed an interest—sometimes of a scientific nature—in Turkish Jews. Vsevolzhsky arrived at the capital of the Ottoman Empire together with Orientalist M. Pinner: “He was traveling

³⁶ V. A. Sollogub, *Povesti. Vospominaniia* (Leningrad, 1988), 144.

³⁷ Vsevolzhskii, *op. cit.*, 128.

³⁸ *Severnaia pchela*, 1836.

³⁹ This comparison, along with a very hostile assessment of both nations, appears even in such an official reference book as that published at the beginning of 1837 entitled *A Survey of Russian Estates beyond the Caucasus . . . Compiled and Published by Imperial Assent*. About the Armenians it says: “These people are the same everywhere: cunning, complacent to the extreme, calculating, and very capable in commerce. They have money and all the virtues of the Yids, and by all rights they may be designated the Christian Israel. . . . Just like the people of Moses, the Armenians are dispersed over the face of the Earth, gathering up riches that, under the sword of their sovereigns, they would be unable to enjoy in their own land. The Armenian has become cosmopolitan; his motherland becomes that country where, with greater advantage and security for himself, he can use his shifty mind for profit. . . . Guile, craftiness—these are his strengths: in buying and selling he considers every type of deceit permissible, any measure of acquisition legal” (quoted from the [enthusiastic] review in *Biblioteka dlia chteniia*, 26, section 5 [1838]: 23).

⁴⁰ “Kharakteristika narodov, zhivushchikh v Turtsii. Iz Puteshestviia ‘Ami Bue,’” *Severnaia pchela*, 1841, no. 81.

to Constantinople in the hopes of gathering some information from the local Jews and, if possible, obtaining some manuscripts that he needed for an immense work: a translation of the Talmud into German.” On the way Pinner suffered from seasickness, but “he was encouraged by a single hope: to find, from the Yid *Kakhan-pasha* in Constantinople, something unknown to him in Hebrew.” And, indeed, continues Vsevolzhsky, he “politely offered him service and assistance in all of his research, and Pinner spent all day among the old manuscripts, returning covered in their pearly dust. . . . He still had much to do, working in the *Kakhan’s* library, talking to rabbis, and not losing hope that he would make the necessary discoveries and acquire enough materials for his work. We spent the rest of the day together, smoked, and held pleasant conversation about Eastern customs, Jewish antiquity, and our plans for the following day, after which we departed to our rooms, quite content with ourselves.”⁴¹

Jewish bohemian scenes—with a certain demonic angle—were sketched by the Russian diplomat K. Bazili in 1835 in that same Istanbul, at the time of the city festivals, which for some reason took place at a cemetery: “During the holidays the itinerant Yid-minstrels entertain the passersby: their shaman music, exuberant libations to Bacchus, and the noisy ebullience of the passing crowds unmercifully disturb the peace of the dead.”⁴²

In his book *Sketches of Constantinople* (1835) Bazili frequently talks about Turkish Jews. At the Dardanelles in Çanakkale, he writes, a central role “is played by the Jews, who because of their knowledge of languages fill different positions at the consulate and occasionally serve as representatives for the European nations. I remember reading somewhere that the Trojans, during the Greek invasion, sent an embassy to Judea to ask for help and Jews sent them a mercenary army; perhaps it is upon this ancient union with the country’s rulers that the Jews of the Dardanelles base their important privileges.”⁴³

Even more believable is Bazili’s recollection concerning the ancient origins of the apparently mutual animosity between modern Greeks and

⁴¹ Vsevolzhskii, op. cit., 406, 440–41. The reference to collaborative speculation is, perhaps, not simply empty prattle: unlike his fellow countrymen Vsevolzhsky had some, albeit not very deep, information on Judaism—I should point out that even in the time of Alexander he had published works on Kabbalah.

⁴² *Biblioteka dlia chteniia*, 10 (1835): 126.

⁴³ K. M. Bazili, *Ocherki Konstantinopolia. Bosfor i Noye ocherki Konstantinopolia* (Moscow, 2006), 22.

the Jews. Bazili was the son of a prominent Greek nationalist, and even during his Russian diplomatic service he maintained correspondingly nationalist preferences. This should be taken into account when reading how the author describes the joy of the “Istanbul Yids” over the execution of the Greek patriarch Gregory and how they committed outrages on his lifeless body. In this way they expressed “their hatred, fed by longstanding humiliation.” With this event Bazili encourages the anti-Jewish attitude of the Greeks in Odessa (including the pogrom of 1827), adding: “In Greece, during the civil war, Jews were persecuted with even greater ferocity than Turks.”⁴⁴ At the same time, claiming impartiality, the author describes a very staid, rich Jew—a kind of Istanbul Rothschild, although not connected with the authorities: “The Yid Shapchi was one of a few Jews who, in following the Law of Moses, preserved the patriarchal virtues of the ancient East. Through trading and banking he acquired several millions; he never served in the government and never dealt with Porta; he left his money-dealings and lived the rest of his life peacefully among his satchels. Charitable by nature, he generously helped the poor of every religion, without discrimination, and they referred to him as the father of many orphan families.” But he was strangled by the executioner at the order of the Sultan, who coveted Shapchi’s riches. “This was no punishment, but murder, plain and simple. The poor came around at the usual time for their alms, but found instead the disfigured body of their benefactor and the Sultan’s seal on the doors.”⁴⁵

Bazili’s judophobia comes through mainly in his description of Istanbul. Thus, while the author continually condemns Turkish dirtiness, he attributes this trait with even more insistence, and a touch of superstition, to the local Jews. In the suburbs of Istanbul they make up, according to his portrayal, an entire city population of 70,000 inhabitants,

“who may be considered to represent the world capital of Israel. One might think, looking at the continual efforts of the Jews to gather together in one corner of the city and not mix with other tribes, that they are attempting to compensate themselves for their dispersion over the earth. Yet no imagination can dream up more horrible pictures than those presented by their Istanbul capital.” Along dirty, stinking streets “groups of little Israelites” crawl naked among the dogs, and at the gates, with spindles in their hands, “dry, withered, yellow, old Jewish women looking like families of

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 177–78.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 179.

gnomes sit...with mysterious signs on their heads, like the witches of *Macbeth*....”

You will see very few men here; they spend all day making their living in Istanbul; here too, as anywhere else, they have taken all the small trades into their hands. Among them there are many who are rich..., but the majority of the tribe is poor. Both the rich and the poor Jews are easy to recognize at the bazaar by the anxious attentiveness that has become a habitual feature of their faces and takes over their movements; by their sheepish way of walking, always looking down and with their heads turned to the ground—the dirt of which seems to have penetrated to their souls and all of their thoughts. But they can also be recognized by the color of their clothing. It is known that each ethnic group in Turkey has prescribed colors for their clothing; to the Jews the Sultan has permitted the color blue. A cylindrical woolen hat bound with a simple scarf, a wide caftan, and shoes—all are a dirty-blue color. Even their homes are painted blue.

This description is presented within a significantly historical-philosophical context. From Bazili's text one could conclude that a plan for the Jews to return to Zion was already underway; but at the same time the author regards positively their present residence in the Muslim world, where they are treated better than in many Christian countries. In remarking on the relative equality enjoyed by the Jews and other non-Muslim minorities in Turkey, he even alludes obliquely to Russia, with its discriminatory legislation:

They came here from the West; like birds from warmer climates, they embarked on a fast and wide circle of migration and once again came closer to their motherland. These are the descendants of those 800,000 Jews whom the inquisition of Ferdinand and Isabella inhumanely exiled from Spain in the 16th century. They left the kingdom of Ferdinand just as their ancestors left the kingdom of the Pharaohs.... The sons of Israel, finding no refuge in Catholic Europe, ran to the hospitality of the East and found both protection and religious tolerance in the kingdom of the Koran. Even today they are much happier with their lot here than in many European cities and enjoy equal rights with all other tribes under the Turkish authorities. Many of their beliefs and the customs of their law even align them more closely with the Muslims: they despise pork as the Turks do; their writing is also from right to left; they do not worship icons; and their religion, just like the religion of Mohammed, consists in pure deism.

In spite of their “pure deism,” which Bazili so pluckily ascribed to the Jews, he seems to have been inclined to believe the blood libel and the well-known fabrication of “the monk Neofit.” This accusation, still unfamiliar in Russian literature, is adopted by the author through the dependable medium of traditional Greek anti-Semitism:

But this tribe is fierce and ferocious;⁴⁶ nowhere can there be found such a degree of hatred toward Christians as theirs . . . as it was expressed at the execution of the patriarch. If any of them should turn to Christianity, he must move to a country where the vindictive hand of Israel cannot reach him; there have been many examples of such inescapable vengeance. In Constantinople, moreover, horrible tales have circulated about a Jewish custom of kidnapping Christian children for their blood, which they need for Passover. Recently a child of one merchant in Pera [i.e., Beyoğlu] disappeared without a trace; his beauty caused people to suspect that he was kidnapped and sold into captivity, but then his body was found in the sea. The child had been slaughtered with a knife, and all suspicions fell upon the Jews, especially since this took place at the time of their Passover. Similar suspicions were confirmed by the book titled *A Refutation of the Jewish Faith, written by Neofit, a Greek monk, formerly a Rabbi*; it was published in the Moldavian language in 1803 in Iași [Yassy]. At that time the Jews bought all the copies, destroyed them, and with a large sum of money, given to a lord, prevented any new publication of the book. Later, however, it was translated into Greek and once again published in 1818 in Iași. The first chapter talks “about blood, taken by the Jews from Christians, and about its use. . . .”

“I do not know to what extent the words of the former rabbi deserve to be trusted,” the author adds skeptically, “but they gave strength to the rumors circulating among the people of Jews killing children. Let us remember that in the first days of Christianity the Jews accused Christians of the same crime.”

The concluding part of the essay, consistent with Orthodox tradition, aligns Jewry with the theme of decay and ashes. Just as in the scene with Jewish minstrels in *LJR*, the action is concentrated in the cemetery. Yet the funereal atmosphere there is counterbalanced with the respect shown for the “religious heroism” of the ancient people who yearn for their lost motherland, which has now become a mere cemetery:

Adjoining the Jews’ city, on a wide hill, is their cemetery; the cemeteries in Constantinople are the city’s best decorations; they are gardens and groves. . . . But the Jewish cemetery in Hasköy is without shade or even a

⁴⁶ This view was also supported by *LJR*, alluding to a Romantic-styled history recounted by an unnamed “German traveler” who visited Constantinople. A certain local Jew, who had converted to Islam, held “important state appointments,” but before his death he repented and secretly returned to the faith of his forbears. His compatriots also secretly came together to bury him in accordance with Jewish tradition. However, a Turkish officer, who had been informed about the planned burial, solicited a large bribe from them; then for an even larger bribe, he agreed to name the one who had informed him about the burial, but in fact identified another, innocent Jewish man, whom his coreligionists executed violently right in the synagogue (*Biblioteka dlia chteniia*, 18, issue 7 [1836]: 83–86).

single bush; within its wilderness are only the white spots of the marbled gravestones, and a cold wind issues forth from it. Amidst the beautiful images of Constantinople's suburbs this cemetery would seem like a piece of Palestinian land, from which the angry word of Jehovah has removed the clothing of life and substance. Perhaps Constantinople's Jews like its nakedness, which reminds them of the valley of Jehoshaphat and the graves of the kings of Israel.

Every year several old men from Hasköy set out on their way to the ancient capital of their tribe, forever parting from their families, breaking all ties of home life, and, after a self-imposed moral death, begin to spend the colorless remains of their exiled days in bitter poverty under the sanctity of Jerusalem, so that their bodies can be laid to rest in the valley of Jehoshaphat. There is something exalted and poetic—there is, one might say, a religious heroism in this touching attachment of the unfortunate, persecuted, and despised tribe to that land, the memories and hopes for which constitute their ideal motherland, and to which they religiously bequeath their bones.⁴⁷

Bazili would later become the Russian consul in Syria and Palestine, yet even then he would tie the Jewish nostalgia for Zion with the desire to die.

The Jews from Bukhara did not escape the notice of the Russian press. R. Gelmensen (Helmensen, a subject of the Russian Empire) mentions them in his German book, a passage from which was translated in 1840 in *Notes of the Fatherland*: "The Yids in Khiva are about 200 in number. They do not own homes, they rent; they are engaged in silk farming, weaving, and dying silk and half-silk fabrics. Here, just as in Bukhara, the Yids are forced to clothe themselves in such a way that they can be distinguished from other peoples. No one bows to them, and the khan, upon seeing them, turns away. They live quietly and love to play cards and dice for money."⁴⁸ The author does not accuse them of engaging in any other evils.

Kind or Helpful Jews in Russian Memoirs and Travel Notes

Sometimes everyday reality diverged too much from the stereotypes and myths, and compromises had to be found. In large part this was a question

⁴⁷ Ibid., 191–93.

⁴⁸ "Khiva v nyneshnem svoem sostoianii," *Otechestvennye zapiski*, 8 (1840): 105. Many years prior to this *The Northern Archive* (*Severnii arkhiv*, 1824, no. 2:82–86) had also written about Bukharan Jews in the article "Otryvok iz puteshestviia v Bukharii u polkovnika barona Meiendorfa v 1820 i 1821 godakh."

of genre. Memoirs required at least some semblance of authenticity, but this was not the case with imaginative fiction. Thus even Bulgarin, when describing his childhood in his memoirs (1846–49), recalls with sincere gratitude how the innkeeper Iosel saved his family from a kind of gang during the uprising in Kościuszko. The family, together with its servants, was hiding in the forest waiting for the help Iosel had promised them, although one of the servants, Semen, “who did not like the innkeeper Iosel due to the fact that he, by order of my father, did not give him vodka on credit, . . . said that he suspected Iosel of betrayal. This opinion was shared by all of our servants, who from birth had felt a loathing toward Yids.” Yet Iosel, risking his life, brought rescuers into the forest—fifty Russian soldiers. “My sisters began hugging and kissing Iosel out of joy, and my mother’s tears were dropping like rain. . . . First Iosel kissed my mother’s hand, then mine, and then he took from his pocket a gingerbread and gave it to me, just as in old times. My mother burst forth in tears. ‘Iosel!’—she said—‘To the end of my days I will never forget this gingerbread!’” On yet another occasion, when Iosel, together with a coreligionist of his, helped the family out of trouble, even Bulgarin’s father—“the fiercest persecutor” of their nation—was touched: “‘You’re a kind man, Iosel!’—said my father, turning away so as to hide his tears from everyone.” How does all of this square with Bulgarin’s general position toward the Jews? It is summed up at the end of his book: “Should it be asked: Are there any honest Yids? Without a doubt, there are. And why not?! Gold and diamonds are not born in the land where Petersburg is built, however gold and diamonds may yet be found in the streets, at the doorsteps, in theater halls and noble gatherings. I found a diamond: the Yid Iosel, of whom I spoke in the first part of my Memoirs!”⁴⁹

Much earlier, in 1835, while discussing Jewish business tricks in *The Northern Bee*, Bulgarin abruptly adds: “All of these swindles, however, are well known by non-Yids as well. . . . But many would assure you that after having learned all of the Yid tricks, they would prefer to buy from them rather than from Christians merchants.”⁵⁰ Indeed, the breadth of his satirical palette leads him to incriminate not so much the Jews, for their passionate love of money, as their Christian surroundings. In 1842 in his book *Mosquitoes* he recounts a related historical anecdote: “When

⁴⁹ Faddei Bulgarin, *Vospominaniia* (Moscow, 2001), 22, 62, 728.

⁵⁰ *Severnaia pchela*, 1835, no. 212.

His Highness Prince Potemkin-Tavrichesky was in Belorussia, a delegation of Jews sought audience with him, and the spokesman, while praising the prince, assured him of the Jewish people's readiness to do good out of their love for him, etc. 'Empty words'—said the prince, smiling—'You only think about how to get more money.' 'And what are we to do?'—responded the Jewish spokesman—'Christians do not like us, but they do like money: therefore we, out of our love for Christians, are seeking to get more of what they like.'" Bulgarin sums it up this way: "This farce is awfully similar to the history of the Jewish people in Europe!"⁵¹

His colleague at *The Northern Bee*, N. Orelsky, after visiting (in 1839) the city of Shklov ("this Belorussian pre-Christian Jerusalem"), and while following the tradition of reviling the local Jews, makes an unexpected remark about how helpful they are to travelers. The myth of Jews' mercenary nature is taken as a given: "For one or two zlotys a factor will run all day throughout the city, and without leaving your room you can order anything you want."⁵²

In 1839–40 *Son of the Fatherland* published the memoirs of E. K. Avdeeva (the sister of N. and K. Polevoi), which were later added to her book. One of the sketches, devoted to Odessa, levels a devastating critique at an array of anti-Semitic stereotypes:

After Russians, the largest part of Odessa's population consists of Greeks and Jews. The Greeks are mainly merchants; among the Jews there are many merchants as well who sell both wholesale and retail, *but the majority of them are craftsmen*, tinkers, whitesmiths, tailors, and factors. Moreover, the Jews have their own bakers and butchers. Now, if I may, I would express my own opinion about the Jews. Generally everyone is used to thinking that they are the worst of people. Having spent two years in Odessa it was impossible to avoid interacting with them, and I will say quite sincerely that I have always been pleased with them. True, a Jew will not miss out on making a profit, but who would? And what a tireless, nimble worker a Jew is! If he is confident that his efforts will not go in vain, he will do anything for you with exactitude—and, I must add, with complete honesty. At any rate I was never cheated even once by a Yid.

She also defends slandered factors and deflects other stereotype-based accusations against Jews:

⁵¹ Bulgarin, *Komary. Vsiakaia vsiachina. Roi pervyi* (St. Petersburg, 1842), 217.

⁵² *Severnaia pchela*, 1840, no. 68.

Do you need to buy, sell, or barter anything? Do you need help finding a person or an apartment? Just ask a Yid and worry not—it will be done! Many among us talk about how unkempt the Yids are and even suppose that there is something of a bad Yid smell in their homes, despite their riches; yet this is pure nonsense: I happened to visit rich Jews, and their homes were clean and tidy, just like those of a Christian.

Avdeeva, however, is not given to idealizing and shares the general opinion about the mercenary nature of Jews, yet she justifies it by their living conditions in a foreign land: “Without a motherland, the Yid puts all his felicity in money.” At the same time she, like the Odessan Morozov, accentuates completely different sides of Jewish life, including their piety and ubiquitous benevolence toward the poor. It must be said that this position is completely inconsistent with her remarks about Jewish greed:

In general Jews have intelligent, expressive faces; the women are good-looking and not infrequently one may find a real beauty among them, but their beauty fades fast. I have not seen any poor among the Jews; they are always helping each other. Using the privileges of citizenship and the freedom to practice their religion, the Jews strictly follow their religious code. Saturday is a day dedicated to prayer and rest. On that day all of their shops and stores are closed; they walk along the boulevards and streets.

The description concludes on an optimistic note of enlightened humanism—in marked contrast to the population’s enduring anti-Semitism and its attendant superstitions, also noted by Avdeeva, who in general distinguished herself through her ethnographic observations:

Thanks to the Enlightenment we now look at the Jews with different eyes. The educated Jew enjoys the same respect accorded other foreigners, yet among our common folk anti-Jewish superstitions still persist.

Of these she cites one that is rather nonsensical: “In October the Jews celebrate Tabernacles [*Kushchi*], and at that time Odessa almost always experiences wind and changeable weather; the common folk say that all of this is due to the fact that the Yids are celebrating *kuchki* (this is how they refer to the Jewish holiday).”⁵³

⁵³ K. A-va [E. K. Avdeeva], “Eshche otrivki iz moikh vospominanii,” *Syn otechestva i Severnyi arkhiv*, 2, issue 5 (1840): 828–30. Cf. the similar Belorussian and Ukrainian legends tied to the Feast of Tabernacles: O. V. Belova, “Na reke Shmaevke,” *Solnechnoe spletenie*, 2003, no. 24–25:294–95.

In Romantic poetry and belles-lettres, however, far less innocuous “anti-Yid” prejudices predominated, distorting the reality that was itself informed by literature. We will now become acquainted with these prejudices in greater detail.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ My discussion in the next chapter is based on empirical data derived from Russian literature and, in dealing with Jewish images, I have refrained—with a few exceptions—from turning to the well-studied Western-European stereotypes. On the latter, see Carol Margaret Davison, *Anti-Semitism and British Gothic Literature* (NY: Palgrave, 2004); Frank Felsenstein, *Anti-Semitic Stereotypes: A Paradigm of Otherness in English Popular Culture, 1660–1830* (Baltimore, 1995); Jonathan Freedman, *The Temple of Culture: Assimilation and Anti-Semitism in Literary Anglo-America* (Oxford, 2000); Edgar Rosenberg, *From Shylock to Svengali: Jewish Stereotypes in English Fiction* (Stanford, 1960); Sheila Spector, ed., *British Romanticism and the Jews* (New York, 2002).

CHAPTER SEVEN

LITERARY TEMPLATES

The Old Adam, the Werewolf, and the Vampire

In 1833 A. F. Voeikov, who was at that time editing the newspaper *The Russian Invalid*, published in its *Literary Supplement* a short narrative (unsigned, presumably his own) entitled “A Jewish Family in Petersburg,”¹ comprising a mixture of everyday impressions largely borrowed from Balzac and Gothic tradition and adapted to “the frenetic school.” It should be stated at the outset that there were two to three hundred Jews living in the capital with Nikolai’s permission—merchants and craftsmen²—who were subject to very strict police supervision. The narrative focuses on a family of seal-cutters,³ though their main trade remained, naturally, moneylending and a related national trade—trimming chervontsy (ten-ruble coins). The Jews devoted themselves to all of these illegal activities on an unthinkable scale and entirely without fear of being reported. Having bribed a greedy servant, the narrator manages to penetrate without obstacle “all of the secrets of this impenetrable family” (thus anticipating well in advance the usual reconnaissance technique of the antinihilistic novel).

Living in the “outlying part of St. Petersburg,” on the top (fourth) floor, the Adamsky family consists of five people: a decrepit old man, his son, two grandsons, and a granddaughter, Rachel. The patriarch’s name itself—*Ivan*—testifies to the author’s poor knowledge of Jewish life. More significant, however, is his family name, Adamsky, which symbolizes, together with the ancient décor of his residence, the pre-Christian *Old Adam*, hemmed in by his soulless carnality and covetousness. Decrepitude, bestiality, carrion, and vampirism are all markers in this family scene: the house features “dilapidated stumps” and “old upholstery.” The

¹ *Literaturnye pribavleniia k “Russkomu invalidu” na 1833 god*, 1833, no. 23:177–81.

² In 1826 there were 248 Jews; see M. Beizer, *Evrei v Peterburge* (Jerusalem, 1990), 8.

³ In Russia this was truly a Jewish profession. Later, under Alexander III and Nikolai II, in this field the father and son Grilikhes were especially distinguished for their work engraving state seals, anniversary medals, and eagles on the coins of the Russian Empire; see *Kratkaia evreiskaia entsyklopediia*, 2:222.

family's patriarch, who wears a torn "wolf fur," lies immobile and dying. On the small windows "spiders have spread their webs." Despite their family name, the inhabitants of the house are not human, they are *creatures* "alien to men"; also alien among them is the romantically beautiful yet frozen Rachel, whose white face is framed by "long black curls . . . like a funereal covering draped over an alabaster tomb. Upon her large, bulging eyes, shadowed by long lashes, a dreamy look had settled. It was impossible to discern in those eyes either human thoughts or anything inspired. There was only an enduring flame without shine or glimmer, ignited by a fire that burned but gave off no light." Equally "sad, pale, and speechless" were her brothers—though in their "lowered eyes" one could discern "a sharp fire, which burned without flame"—that is to say, the same that can be seen in Rachel, the dark fire of hell.

Like wolves they would go out "only at night and come home very late." The Old Testament stiff neck became hardness of heart and satanic callousness. "It was nothing for them to wait for three hours in the dark corner of a vestibule; they were callous to the insults of servants, callous to the requests of lords; their hearts were made of granite." They would take cannibalistic interest from their victims—18,000 rubles for a 10,000-ruble loan. Lurking in wait for their debtors, the Jews would freeze by the wall "like caryatids." One of their Christian clients, an arrogant dandy, would turn pale upon meeting with his "young moneylender":

On that day the time came to pay a bill of 15,000 rubles, signed to the name of Ivan Adamsky from Poznan; the creditor was guaranteed a payment of 30,000 rubles. The debtor asked for a deferment of six months, to which the answer was given: "The deadline has come." For a deferment of three months—the answer was the same. For two months . . . For a month . . . For two weeks. . .—the answer was the same. The young Israelite remained immovable. Squeezing his hands, and looking down to the ground, he seemed like an iron idol: even his breathing was imperceptible. The debtor's rage approached its limit. He firmly grabbed the moneylender by the shoulder, threatened him, and showered him with curses. . . . The same indifference. He must be done with him. The grand nobleman sees that this is not a person, but a stone. He calms down and asks the Yid to come into the office, shows him several diamonds, and the son of Adamsky leaves, agreeing on a renewed lending bill and an additional pawn.

With the domestic life of the "Israelites," including its matrimonial side, everything is just as grim as in the above-quoted novel by Niemcewicz, who exercised a significant influence on the image of the Adamsky family. Just as in Niemcewicz's work, in Voeikov's sepulchral Jewish world there

is no mutual love—only greed and submission to parental will. Rachel's life, concludes the observer with erotic compassion, will

elapse between four walls until her parents announce to her that a young man, having arrived from Poland, is her betrothed. Then her father will declare: "Daughter, here is your groom!" And without love, she will become his wife . . . , then a mother, perhaps of another Rachel, with the same exquisite look as hers! . . .

Her grandfather died, the same old man . . . on the sofa, covered with wolf fur. He languished away and finally passed into the next world, un mourned by anyone. . . .

This was their lot.—Living on the fourth floor; under the roof itself; stripped of all life's pleasures; in silence, secrecy, and bad air; despised by everyone. Dead on a half-collapsed bed and not one tear of sorrow! But here, in this empty corner, in this old trunk with thick iron-siding and iron bars, from which no one looked away, there was hidden . . . a million.

It is unclear, to be sure, why these Jews should need this million dreamed up by the author, since they continue under the same conditions in a miserable state. Be that as it may, the main gothic components of these images—partially patterned after Balzac-type extortionists like the moneylender Cornelius and associated with iron, stone, a trunk, stiffness, and hellish heartlessness—would soon be adopted by Gogol for his satanic "Asiatic" moneylender from "The Portrait."⁴

Blasphemers, Poisoners, Smugglers, and Spies

It must be admitted, however, that the unimaginable social and administrative conditions in which the Jews of Russia lived did not encourage their goodwill and moral excellence. The same can be said of the systemic corruption of Russian society itself, which always astounded foreigners. Not everyone was like Avdeeva in Odessa, who chanced to meet only honest Jews (indeed, at that time things were unfolding smoothly⁵ in that

⁴ On the connection of Romantic and, in particular, Gogolian merchants in Russian literature with the gothic and the theme of "Old Adam," see my book *Suzhet Gogolia*, 510–12.

⁵ See S. Tsippershtein, op. cit., 50–51; M. Polishchuk, *Evrei Odessy i Novorossii: Sotsial'nopoliticheskaia istoriia evreev Odessy i drugikh gorodov Novorossii 1881–1904* (Jerusalem-Moscow, 2002), 23; L. Belousova, "Integratsiia evreev v rossiiskoe soslovnnoe obshchestvo: pochetnye grazhdane goroda Odessy evreiskogo proiskhozhdeniia," *Moriia Al'manakh*, ed. G. Katsev (Odessa, 2006), 6–7.

center of Jewish enlightenment, which would later become the center of Jewish gangsterism). Pushkin's "Jew in black curls" who was active in "a gang of swashbucklers" ("The Robber-Brothers," 1821–22), was not simply a literary phenomenon.⁶ Crime in Jewish society was truly large-scale—thus by the beginning of the 20th century the lexicon of Russian thieves sounded more like a dialect of Yiddish.⁷ Among the Jews there were many thieves, receivers of stolen goods, loan sharks, and counterfeiterers. Jews even competed successfully with Gypsies at horse-stealing, and sometimes they worked with them directly.⁸ In short, the inhabitants of the Pale of Settlement were as far from ideal as they were from Satanism, which was constantly imposed upon them by imaginative Romantic "Yid-eaters."

In the West the canonical image of the Jew as criminal provided Dickens with his character Fagin in *Oliver Twist*. In Russia this novel was translated by *Notes of the Fatherland* in 1841, already at the end of the Romantic Period. Even without Dickens's influence, however, the main characteristics of the Jewish criminal-demonic set had by that time already become established in Russian Romanticism. Many of these characteristics were listed by S. Ginzburg. This list requires some additional details that will shed light on the ideological aspects of the "Jewish intrigues" this literature depicted. A common feature of these stories is that as soon as one of these Jewish characters became in any way significant for the development of a Romantic plot, he immediately abandoned his everyday business—i.e., small trades or craftsmanship—and threw himself headlong into advancing within a diabolical table of ranks. In 1832 P. Golota summed up these unchanging, always interlinked roles of the spy and traitor, enemy scout, and eavesdropper:

⁶ Cf., for example, such imposters as Gerts Dillon, who "in 1812, under the guise of an officer, attacked an estate with 'Cossacks that he had taken to himself'" (Gessen, op. cit., 1181), or the story quoted by Minkina of a Jewish prisoner, "the leader of a gang of bandits, condemned for robbing several churches" (O. Minkina, "Evreiskie deputaty pervoi chetverti XIX veka v semeinykh predaniakh i fol'klornykh narrativakh," *Materialy 13-oi Ezhegodnoi Mezhdunarodnoi Mezhdistsiplinarnoi konferentsii po iudaike* (Moscow, 2006), 382–83; the author references the book by S. Tsitron, *Shtadlonim* [in Russian] [Warsaw, 1926], 103–13).

⁷ A special section was dedicated by Gilman to an analogous situation in German linguistic culture in the third chapter ("The Language of Thieves") of his book on Jewish self-hatred (Sander L. Gilman, op. cit., 68–86).

⁸ In penal exile in Siberia they were often placed together. Cf. Speransky's diary for 1820: "Kainsk—a small town, just brought into the plan. There is a large number of Yids and Gypsies" (quoted by V. Romanova, "Vlast' i evrei na Dal'nem Vostoke Rossii: istoriia vzaimootnoshenii (vtoraia polovina XIX veka–20-e gody XX veka)," *Evreiskie obshchiny Sibiri i Dal'nego Vostoka*, no. 7. (Krasnoarsk, 2001), 22.

Dzenkuuu [from Polish for “thank you,” *Dziękuję*] for your kindness, the Yid joined in, and immediately began to cheat and act treacherously, as his ancestor Judas had.⁹

The Jews, in essence, were simply following the example of their ancestors and were incapable of acting any other way—that is to say, of *not* spying and *not* being scoundrels. This inherited fate is humbly confessed by Lazhechnikov’s Abraham, whom the author (following Pushkin’s phrase from the poem “The Black Shawl”) designates a “contemptible Jew”: “I listened to everything through the wall: what else could I do? Such is our custom!” So too, these traitors and spies are always assisted by their nefarious ethnic cunning. Bulgarin’s hetman Palei is surprised by this when he is about to kill one of the representatives of the hated tribe: “Cursed Yids, how smart they are! Look, now, at how this Judas has guessed it!”¹⁰ In Kukolnik’s *Prince Kholm’sky* the Russian woman Ilyinishna echoes Palei when talking about the kabbalist Skharia: “It’s a pity that he is such a ‘heathen,’ and much too smart! He should be the mayor, and then he would quit magic. . . .”¹¹

Recounting in *The Last Novik* how a Jewish friar managed to outsmart the crafty and experienced Andrei Denisov, Lazhechnikov explains whence Abraham acquired his wonderful astuteness (which Abraham had further honed by his training with Catholics and coastal heretics): “The Jew tricked the Russian sectarians. . . . Should anyone be surprised? Inherited cunning flows in Abraham’s blood; he had become seasoned, moreover, in hypocrisy, having lived several years as a monk in a Catholic Hungarian monastery, which he robbed, and he finally concluded the course on satanic cunning in the position of monk in a coastal Vygoretski hermitage and as an interpreter for Andrei Denisov.” The main source of Abraham’s “inherited gifts,” and the one who is truly behind “the Law of Moses” to which the pseudo-Christian Abraham remains faithful, is clearly implied: “For *the student of Beelzebub* one minute is enough to think of everything that he needs to do and say.”¹²

Yet while a Jew is capable of tricking sectarians and other enemies of the true church, in the long run he is no match for the Orthodox mind. And this holds true not only for insidious evil intent or Jewish intrigues.

⁹ P. Golota, *Ivan Mazepa. Istoricheskii roman, vziatyi iz narodnykh predanii* (Moscow, 1832), 1:43.

¹⁰ Faddei Bulgarin, *Sochineniia* (Moscow, 1990), 432.

¹¹ Nestor Kukol’nik, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* (in 10 vols.) (St. Petersburg, 1852), 2:414.

¹² I. I. Lazhechnikov, op. cit., 1:247, 438–39 (emphasis mine).

Let us take the example of chess or checkers. In *The Court of Shemiaka* by Svin'in the "cursed Yid," having settled down in the capital of the Golden Horde, Sarai, wins over all the other heathens. It is a different matter with the Russian man Bunka: "Moses was known in Sarai as the foremost player, but he stayed away from Bunka. . . . Why would a Yid compete with the Orthodox?"¹³

It occasionally happens that, in contrast to Lazhechnikov's Abraham, a Jew does not betray his benefactor, but, on the contrary, selflessly serves him, as in another novel by Lazhechnikov—*The Ice Palace*. There the Jew Lipman serves Biron, an archenemy of Russia, although his faithfulness is still expressed "infernally": "Don't worry about me. My body and soul are ready to go into the furnace for you. For you, were it necessary, I would with my bare hands dig out all the dead in the cemetery and bury alive the same number in their place."¹⁴

Connected with the idea of the Jews' satanic nature was an accusation that proved quite profitable for historical Romanticism, and which later became an ideal justification for the pogroms—to wit, the belief that, during the period of unification, the Jews in Ukraine purchased Orthodox churches on lease. This perception most likely arose by analogy with an ancient Orthodox practice that was widespread among the Greeks. On the eve of the Romantic period an anonymous author, a certain naval officer, visited the island of Corfu and reported this to the reading public: "Everywhere you go there are customs that should not be criticized; yet for one of the local customs, it would seem, there can be found no parallel. Would you believe that the remains of St. Spyridon, revered by the authorities of the island, belong to one nobleman who has the right to pass them on as an inheritance or as a dowry? Moreover, all over Greece, consistent with ancient tradition, churches are being leased, and the builder of the cathedral takes the profit without a twinge of conscience."¹⁵

We can assume that, in the context of unification, interdenominational hatred, and the Orthodox annihilative campaign started by Bogdan Khmel'nitsky, the recollection of the Balkan practice of leasing churches was transferred to non-Christians by adherents of Ukrainian Orthodoxy. Much later this accusation of the Jewish desecration of churches was sanc-

¹³ P. Svin'in, *Shemiakin sud*, 1:208.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 2:123.

¹⁵ *Novosti literaturny*, 1823, pt. 3, no. 19. With respect to Corfu the editor in his notes contradicts the author, clarifying that the local nobleman is not considered to be the owner but "merely a keeper of the remains." In my opinion this difference is not significant.

tioned by the mythologized *History of the People of Rus* (ascribed to the archbishop Georgii Konisky), in which it is stated: “Churches that failed to consent to the unification of parishioners were given to Yids on lease, and for any service there would be a monetary payment from one to five thalers, whereas for the baptism of babies and the burial of the dead, from one to four gold coins.” The Jews, these irreconcilable enemies of Christianity and universal drifters, “took away the church keys and bell cords to their taverns.” Every time a church elder would have to pay a Jew for the right to serve in the sanctuary, the Jew would mock the Christian worship to his heart’s contentment, “calling it ‘Gentile’ or, in their talk, ‘goyish.’”¹⁶ Although the book was not published until 1846, it had circulated prior to that in manuscript copies and had influenced the likes of Gogol in *Taras Bulba*, as well as second-tier authors like Golota in his novel *Nalivaiko*, where a nobleman reminds a Jew: “Listen Abraham, you haven’t yet given me all the money for the lease of the churches.”¹⁷

In historical and more current genres the Jew, portrayed as a conspirator or traitor, presents himself as something of a cross between the New Testament Christ-betrayer and the Old Testament conspirator Mordechai. Often he is also portrayed as a poisoner—if not in the direct sense (“His chervontsy will smell like poison, / Like the shekels of his ancestor”), then in a figurative sense, as in Bulgarin’s *Mazepa*: “Wine darkens the mind, therefore it is the best weapon in the hands of a swindler living at the expense of others.”¹⁸ The accusation of spreading alcoholism had become fixed in Russian journalism and literature much earlier, even during the time of Alexander. Thus, for example, in his “popular novel” *Luke and Maria* (1818) F. Glinka, curiously enough, placed an unbaptized Jew among the Orthodox “tselovalniki”¹⁹ with whom Great Russia was then swamped: “Trouble, after all, begets trouble: suddenly from Poland there came the unbaptized Yid Iankel . . . and this infidel began carousing and making trouble. . . . In vain the parochial priest, father Polycarp,

¹⁶ Georgii Koniskii, archbishop of Belorussia, *Istoriia russov ili Maloi Rossii* (Moscow, 1846), 40–41. In the periodicals of that time many materials of a similar nature were published—for example, a note that recounts the anti-Jewish riots in Mogilev, in 1708, when the locals “wanted to kill all the Yids of Mogilev” (“A Fire in Mogilev,” *Literaturnaia gazeta* [in the column “Russkie vospominaniia”], 1842, no. 20:412).

¹⁷ Golota, *op. cit.*, 2:9.

¹⁸ Bulgarin, *op. cit.*, 510. (On the Jewish characters in *Vyzhigin* see also S. M. Ginzburg, *op. cit.*, 16–19.)

¹⁹ “Tseloval’niki” were Orthodox tavern-keepers who would kiss a crucifix as a sign that they would honestly keep the agreement with the state regarding the leasing of drinking establishments.

spoke with and castigated the villagers: ‘O laymen, O laymen! Do not go to the unbaptized Yid; do not dissipate your Orthodox souls in wine! . . .’ A year passed—a rather short time, it would seem, yet already the village of Khleborodovo was left without bread [*khleb*], though bread was still to be found with one *tselovalnik Yid!* . . . Having fed himself on the bread of another, Iankel started walking, his hands tucked behind his belt, like a real laggard. The Jew neither looked at anyone nor did he doff his hat for anyone.”²⁰ Comporting himself in a much different manner, incidentally, is Narezhnyi’s Iankel, who reminds his regular customers: “You often listened to the Yid Iankel when he admonished you not to drink anymore in the tavern, especially not on credit, and did not take your pledges; but you begged me, and I yielded and let you drink on credit.”²¹ Only in post-reform times, when statistics were much more seriously studied in Russia, was it discovered that in the Pale of Settlement and in the Polish kingdom there was much less drinking than in the interior Russian states, where wine was sold not by “unbaptized Yids,” but by Christian tavern-keepers.

With respect to the charge of Jewish trafficking in actual poison, there is remarkable unanimity on this score in Russian literature, among literary geniuses and amateurs alike. In 1832, two years after Pushkin wrote “The Covetous Knight” with its exhibition of multi-faceted Jewish commerce (“Your old man sells poison. / Yes—even poison”),²² and four years before he published this tragedy, Rafail Zotov, in his novel *Leonid*, presented readers with the same character Moses, who was not only a spy, but also a greedy man of business:

“We are people of business: we sell what they request. For whom and for what our wares are used—this is not our business.”

“So would you then procure poison, should someone request it?”

“And why not? We sell anything. Whatever important people should want, we will do it.”

²⁰ F. M. Glinka, *Pis'ma k drugu* (Moscow, 1990), 381. In 1845 I. Kireevsky responded to the republication of the book with a sympathetic review: I. V. Kireevskii and P. V. Kireevskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* (in 4 vols.) (Moscow, 2006), 2:156–63.

²¹ V. T. Narezhnyi, *Sochineniia*, 1:133.

²² All these Romantic types, as Minkina noted, were supported by folkloric stereotypes. She calls attention to the documented rumors in police reports of Jewish poisoners, about whom rumors circulated in Moscow and Petersburg in 1812–1814; see Minkina, “Prekrasnaia evreika’ i drugie mifologemy rossiiskogo obshchestvennogo diskursa pervoi poloviny XIX veka v literature i dokumental'nykh istochnikakh,” *XIV ezhegodnaia mezhdunarodnaia konferentsiia po iudaike. Tezisy* (Moscow, 2007). On Jewish themes in “The Covetous Knight,” see O. Proskurin, *Poeziia Pushkina ili Podvizhnyi palimpsest* (Moscow, 1999), 348–75 (bibliography provided).

“In other words, for the sake of wretched money you are willing to poison hundreds of souls.”

“Ach! Great and noble captain, we poor Jews have nothing, except *penenzy* [from the Polish for “money,” *pieniądze*]. You have a homeland, your ranks, honor, and glory, yet from us the God of Abraham has taken everything, leaving us with hardship, the insults of Christians, and money.”²³

When the Jew is not engaged in extortion or espionage, then he is more than anything else engaged in smuggling, which Bulgarin playfully termed “the goddess of Jewish provenance,” “pouring forth gold from the horn of plenty onto the tribe of Judah.”²⁴ The Jews of that time, to be sure, did not shy away from this occupation—especially seeing that they had not yet had time to familiarize themselves with such an exotic innovation as the borders of the Russian Empire shifted far to the west, suddenly cutting them off from their family, coreligionists, and firmly established economic ties. Yet the smuggling itself would not be possible without the strong support of the police, customs department, and various other authorities who themselves profited from such dealings. Thus, it may be noted, the customs officer Chichikov portrayed by Gogol makes a cozy, illegal deal with Jewish smugglers. And, reminiscing at his “Staging post near Berdichev” about the St. Onufry Fair of 1818, Titov writes: “This fair was at that time a clearinghouse for contraband—contraband for customs, for ethics, and for morals; and at that time all who were near and far crowded together in this enormous engine of mercantile human activity, driven by the Jewish tribe instead of steam.”²⁵

Even more in demand in Romantic literature was the role of the Jewish spy, whose conception was reinforced by several aspects of Jewish everyday existence: mobility, homelessness, and a constant liminal state. At that time spies did not get to be heroes; usually (apart from a few pleasant exceptions, such as Zotov’s Leonid) they were considered traitors—albeit of some use to the motherland. As for the Jewish spy, this role combined in itself the sin of Judas—perhaps with a recollection of some Old Testament scenes (e.g., the spies in the Pentateuch, Joshua, and other passages)—and a biased, prepared slice of reality: in the war of 1812 the Jewish population of the western regions, as was mentioned above, supported the Russian army, supplying them with vital intelligence.²⁶

²³ R. M. Zotov, *Leonid, ili Nekotorye cherty iz zhizni Napoleona*, 175.

²⁴ *Severnaia pchela*, 1835, no. 212.

²⁵ Titov, *op. cit.*, 168.

²⁶ See, for example, D. Fel’dman and D. Peters, “O nagrazhdenii medaliami rossiiskikh

Nevertheless, in patriotic belles lettres the Jewish spy is more than willing to serve the enemy of Russia or another Christian army favored by the author: in Lazhechnikov he works for the Swedes (*The Last Novik*); in Kukolnik—for Riga’s archbishop (“The Statue of Christopher in Riga”), for the order of Livonia (*Prince Kholmisky*), for the French occupiers in Germany (“Leizevits”); in Shakhovskoi—for Crimean Tatars in their fight with the Polish; in Golota—for the Polish against the Orthodox; and in Svinin, whose Yid Moses in the 15th century managed to spy for the Golden Horde (not to mention that “he became tax farmer for the Tatars in Galich,” after which, like the Iankel of Glinka, he became intolerably pompous: Moses “is now an important man in Galich, afraid of no one, with everyone bowing down to him”).²⁷ The same conceptions took root in everyday life. Examples can be found in Pushkin. When on the road he happened upon his friend, the Decembrist Küchelbecker—now under arrest and being transferred from one prison to another—he at first did not recognize him. Before him, wrote Pushkin, stood “a tall, pale, and slim young man with black beard, in a Frisian coat, and by the look of him a real Yid—indeed I took him for a Yid, and the inseparable notions ‘Yid’ and ‘spy’ produced within me a commonplace reaction; I turned my back . . . thinking that he was summoned to Petersburg for a report or explanations. Seeing me, he looked intently at me with animation. I turned to him involuntarily. We studied each other closely—and I recognized him as Küchelbecker. The gendarmes pulled us apart.”²⁸ Pushkin’s “inseparable notions ‘Yid’ and ‘spy’” were so firmly fixed in the cultural consciousness that sometimes it produced rather exotic combinations. In the debut novel by N. D. Neelov, *A Woman of the 19th Century* (1839), we meet a demonic scoundrel, the Italian duke Valentini. Among his other crimes during the war

evreev v pervoi polovine XIX veka,” *Vestnik Evreiskogo universiteta*, 2001, no. 5 (23): 27–37. This activity, however, had a very unflattering continuation. According to Kiianskaia, “the army authorities often used Jews as police agents. This practice was started during the period of the Patriotic War of 1812 and was not stopped in the post-war years.” She explains that such people as Pestel and other Decembrists employed the service of Jews during the conspiracy of the second army (O. Kiianskaia, *Iuzhnoe obshchestvo dekabristov. Liudi i sobytiia. Ocherk istorii tainykh obshchestv 1820-kh godov*. [Moscow, 2005], 124).

²⁷ Svin’in, *Shemiakin sud*, 2:68. It is possible that Svinin’s source was the reference by one chronicler to a certain “Yid” [*zhidovin*] who was a tax collector for the Tartars and “brought hardship” upon the people of Kashin (Rostov principality); see A. Pereswetoff-Morath, *A Grin Without a Cat*, 22.

²⁸ A. S. Pushkin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, (in 16 vols.) (Moscow, 1949), 12:307. It is possible, incidentally, that these “Jewish” traits in Küchelbecker himself somehow stimulated his interest in the Jewish theme.

is his espionage against the Russian army—for which he masquerades as a Jew, exchanging his clothing for the special uniform, so to speak, of an enemy agent.²⁹

An exception to this trend is the novel by N. M. Konshin, *Count Obolensky, or Smolensk in 1812: The Story of an Invalid* (St. Petersburg, 1834), in which Jews are portrayed favorably, although not without irony, as sympathizers with the Russian army. They hearken back to, among other things, the tribulations of Shneur-Zalman, founder of the Hasidic Chabad movement, who together with the retreating Russian troops left a village named Liady. One of Konshin's Old Testament patriots—"the Yid Itska"—is so virtuous that he is sometimes even called a Jew. The protagonist of the novel exalts his merits in every possible way: "Your companion, the Jew Itska, visited me. I could not admire his faithfulness to the Russians enough." Itska operates among Russian spies—"Yids and vivandières in the enemy army." This "Jew, an honest man . . . , served me as a key to the revelation of many things." Even the local judge, when meeting with him, "bowed to the Yid Itska."³⁰ As a rule, however, the acceptance of Jewish merits in the war of 1812 was relegated to the work of memoirists (Denis Davydov, Benkendorf, Lanzheron) or the notes of diaries (as of the Great Prince and future emperor Nikolai Pavlovich).

In fiction entirely different paradigms prevailed, even among very informed authors such as Zotov. Yet it must be taken into account that, as often happens in such cases, his true Russian sentiments are unrealistically intensified on account of his non-Russian parentage: he was the son of a Crimean Tatar. Zotov, who himself participated in the anti-Napoleonic campaign and therefore knew how Jews actually behaved, in his *Leonid* nonetheless preferred to portray the greedy, cowardly, and repulsive Yid Moses as a double agent, constantly threatened with execution for his supposed espionage on behalf of the French (although he swears to his hatred for those robber-"Hagarites"):

"What do I see?" cried out Evgeny in surprise. "Is that you, Moses? Where the devil did you come from? They haven't yet given you the noose?"

Moses, who had been bowing and kneeling at the first few questions, at these last words became pale and stepped back.

"The noose? My God, what for?" he asked with trembling voice.

"What for? For the usual: for the neck."

"Yes, but for what reason?"

²⁹ Zakamskii (N. D. Neelov), *Zhenshchina XIX stoletia* (in 2 parts) (Moscow, 1839), 2:10ff.

³⁰ Cited in *Tri starinnykh romana*, (in 2 books) (Moscow, 1990), 2:381, 430, 462, 501.

“You know this better than me. You probably flew to Warsaw to talk about our secret campaign.”³¹

Meanwhile, according to the laws of that time, it was the protagonist of the novel himself—Leonid—who should have been hung: for, as ironically reiterated by Altschuller, it was he in particular who had become a spy for Napoleon, who “generously rewarded him for this less-than-honorable office with money and titles.”³² The author does not judge Leonid, but rather explains his service to the usurper by reason of his life circumstances and selfless love for all lords. To the Jew, of course, such indulgences do not apply.

“A Horror and a Laughingstock”

The image of Moses bent over and grimacing, numb with fright, belongs to a series of popular anti-Semitic clichés. Very similar behavior is exhibited in Golota’s novel by the Jew Abraham, who despite his malicious nature is nevertheless a loving father when a nobleman demands that he show him his daughter:

The miserable Yid shrank, trembled with all his being, dropped the hammers with which he intended to strike the cymbaloms’ strings, and with an open mouth fixed his terrible eyes on the smiling nobleman. . . .

The poor Yid became as white as a sheet and gnashed his teeth. . . .

“Ach, vey mir!” he cried out piteously.³³

Even a compassionate reader would be unable to restrain himself from laughing at the cries of this Jew who has fallen into the hands of Christian merry-makers. And this is true of not only Christians. In 1829 *Son of the Fatherland and The Northern Archive* reprinted a story by the English traveler MacFarlane about Turkish soldiers making fun of an old Jewish peddler in a café in Istanbul. The soldiers sneakily “set burning coals in the fold of his hat and from them lit their pipes. When the thick felt of the hat began to smoke they started laughing uproariously. I must admit, I was also unable to keep from laughing, looking at the Jew walking among the guests and offering his goods, while all the time his head was smoking like a pipe. . . . When the coals burned through the hat and the fire touched his

³¹ Zotov, *Leonid, ili Nekotorye cherty iz zhizni Napoleona*, 175.

³² M. Al’tshuller, op. cit., 107–8.

³³ Golota, *Nalivaiko, ili vremena bedstviu Malorossii*, 2:7–8.

head, the unfortunate Jew screamed horribly . . . and then everyone began laughing, in which I also took part against my will, despite my compassion for the poor Jew.”³⁴

All of this, to be sure, raises a moral problem—was it not too flattering to the Jew for noble people to deign to make fun of him? In Durova’s novel *Gudishki* an entire story is to be presented in the words of a rabbi, whom the Catholic rector (the action takes place in Lithuania) introduces with the following words:

“For these inquiries I advise you to betake yourself to the local Rabbi Samuel, an educated, cunning, intelligent Jew, and—in addition to these merits—laughably superstitious! He will tell you about this incident with all the necessary trimmings: with sincere sorrow on his face, in his eyes; with a shiver, with cries, and, finally, with his hands raised high to the sky! . . . This last gesture, you will see, is truly picturesque.”

“Would it not be too much honor, father-rector, for a Yid rabbi,” urged the storyteller resentfully, “that you deign to laugh at him?”

However, the “Yid rabbi” did not disappoint their expectations. His behavior was indeed picturesque:

Samuel leaned on his knee, bowed his head, covered his face with his hands and remained in this position for a minute; then he finally sat up again and, gazing up at the sky, after a deep sigh began to speak:

“Oy vey mir, vey mir!”³⁵

The entire narrative trajectory of the Jewish character in the literature of that time lies between those two poles—laughter and fear, between the miserable “vey mir” and the evil “Voimir.” Occasionally, as, for example, in Voeikov, Lazhechnikov, or Kamensky, the Jew is not funny, but frightening. Indeed, together with fear he usually inspires in others an involuntary aversion. The guests of the duke—the ill-fated protagonist in Durov’s novel—are shocked by the arrival of Voimir:

“How could you, Duke! You dared to invite this wretched Yid into our company?!”

“You were not ashamed to open the doors of your home to this evil magician?!”

“The cursed kabbalist—apprentice of the devil!”³⁶

³⁴ “Novoe turetskoe voisko i zhidy v Konstantinopole,” *Syn otechestva i Severnyi arkhiv*, 7 (1829): 60.

³⁵ Aleksandrov (N. A. Durova), op. cit., 1:6–7, 9–10.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 4:195–96.

When the Jew was not instilling horror in others, then he was trembling from horror himself, doubled over in amusing spasms. This laughter³⁷ over the “wretched Yids” stripped them of their tragic aura and provided a means of escaping superstitious fear of the Jew³⁸ as well as any compassion for his fate. Much here was prompted by folklore: comforting tales about a dim-witted demon defeated by a Christian. In the majority of literary texts a humoristic element was added to Jewish figures in all of their interpretations and on any occasion—including, for instance, the pictures of Jewish life in *Taras Bulba*. Such a combination of demonization with comic characteristics was also often given to converts. The biblical curse extended to Jewish characters, it seems, as well as to their real prototypes: “The LORD will bring you . . . to a nation that neither you nor your fathers have known; and there you shall serve other gods, of wood and stone. And you shall become a horror, a proverb, and a laughing-stock, among all the peoples where the LORD will lead you away” (Deut 28:36–37).

I will limit myself to one very telling example of the service into which Jews were forced by Titov’s protagonist; the example is emblematic for the entire theme of Exile. Torrential rains had turned the city into “a sea of dirt, with white islands of Yid structures.” Fortunately, the officers stationed there were able to find themselves comfortable transportation—to wit, “Yid-factors”:

With difficulty they pulled their feet from the mud, each one of them grunting and hunched under his burden, each one of them saddled with a cheerful officer, and this cavalry, incapable of a cavalry attack, screamed at the top of its lungs. . . . This cheerful crowd included the riff-raff of all types of Russian armed might. The lords had allowed themselves to take breakfast and make merry in an apartment in a Yid house, and now in a long line they passed along astride the Yids into a tavern to take dinner and continue their debauchery.”³⁹

As a rule, the Jew in this culture was stripped of everything that afforded human warmth and dignity. Often this meant that he was stripped of his humanity, or even life itself.

³⁷ The Russian word *zhid* (“Yid”) itself, like later the word *evrei* (“Jew”), often served as a comic signal, a generic convention for this or that anecdotal situation—as, for example: “One Yid [*zhid*], walking one dark night along a very narrow path flanked by two deep ravines, died from joy when in the morning he saw the path and the ravines and realized what danger he had faced during the night” (*Severnaiia pchela*, 1831, no. 203).

³⁸ Cf. the similar situation that developed long ago in German culture, replete with comical Jewish types: Gilman, op. cit., 24, 155–57; Ritchie Robertson, op. cit., 203–11.

³⁹ Dzhigitov (V. P. Titov), op. cit., 168.

Executing the Jew: Drowning, Hanging, and Laughing at the Victim

Descriptions of the primary punishment applied to the Jew most frequently alternate between two types of execution, which in turn correspond to two related religious stereotypes: drowning or hanging. In Pushkin we see Solomon being promised the same fate with which Zotov's Moses was threatened: "Indeed, do you know, O Yid soul, / dog, serpent! That right now I / will hang you on the gate?" This type of execution was motivated by the Gospels: "To hang him on a beech tree: that on which his brother Judas also hung himself" (Somov).⁴⁰ For comparison, consider the depiction in Bulgarin's *Dmitry the Pretender* (1829) of hanging as a punishment for the crucifixion of Jesus: "What did I do? How am I to blame?" cried the Yid in despair. "Why did you torture Christ?" asked Khlopka with an evil grin. "I didn't torture anyone," said the Yid, drowning in his tears. "It's all the same, whether it's you, your grandfather, or your great-grandfather. To the tree with him, Erema!"⁴¹

As to death by drowning—this draws upon historical memory, seasoned with an unclean conscience. In the Middle Ages Jews were often given the choice of either baptism or death. Those who stood their ground were drowned by the crowd, condemned, as it were, to a baptism by death. In the winter of 1563 the same scenario unfolded in Polotsk when Ivan the Terrible captured the city and ordered that about three hundred Jews, who refused to be baptized, be drowned in the river together with their wives and children. In Somov this motif is masked by a simplistic inversion: they want to drown a Jew who in horror then offers "to become a Christian"—which, incidentally, does not ultimately help him to escape execution. The richest executorial inventory was presented by Golota in his *Ivan Mazepa*: "So here he is, Judas! . . . To the tree with the Yid—tongs, pliers, . . . nails, hammer: we're really going to let you have it!"⁴² In plot lines of this sort the death sentence of a Jew is usually carried out by notoriously cruel Cossacks, outlaws, etc., thus providing a moral alibi to the compassionate author, who empathetically, yet, as it were, from the sidelines, describes the details of the execution, the need for which he does not usually dispute.

⁴⁰ Somov, *Byli i nebylitsy*, 31.

⁴¹ Bulgarin, *Dimitrii Samozvanets*, (Moscow, 1994), 141.

⁴² Golota, *Ivan Mazepa* (Moscow, 1832), 2:21–22.

Not only the suffering, but also the killing of a Jew is, as a rule, presented in a humorous fashion (Golota's Cossack, as a matter of course, teases a young and pretty Jewess, singing to her a humorous song about his wish to see her "little Yid children [zhideniata] die") and accompanied by ritual *laughter*: "Into the water with him, men! . . . A splash into the water rang out, and the Yid, thrown with a flourish into the river, sank to the bottom like a stone. 'An eternal Sabbath rest to you!' cried the Cossacks. The throng resounded with their *laughter*";⁴³ "The Yid screamed for the last time, and Erema started singing with hellish *laughter*: 'To memory eternal!'" (Bulgarin, *Dmitry the Pretender*); a Jewish character in Shakhovskoi tells of the same type of sport on the part of nobles: "When the nobleman wants to have fun: / 'Hang a Yid.' / The Jew hangs, and the nobleman *laughs*."⁴⁴ The narrator in Titov also refers to debauchery among the nobility that involves "... a Yid on the gallows for fun." In N. Filimonov's drama "The Silver Prince," the cruel Pole Jasia, preparing to shoot a traitor, the rich man Laiba, "roars with laughter, seeing how the Yid dangles by his feet, asking for mercy."⁴⁵ This model is followed by Kukolnik in *Prince Kholm'sky*: "Burn, Judas! We shall *laugh* / at the comical fire of a Yid execution"⁴⁶—and by Gogol in *Taras Bulba*: "They seized the Yids by the arms and began to hurl them into the waves. Piteous cries resounded on all sides; but the grim Zaporozhians [i.e., Dnieper Cossacks] only *laughed* when they saw the Yid legs, encased in shoes and stockings flailing about in the air."⁴⁷

The victims, in their turn, behave just as shamefully, deflecting any compassion. As pitiful cowards they grovel before their executors, pleading in blood-curdling fashion for mercy. Their ridiculous gestures, yelping, and pitiful pleas for mercy have nothing in common with normal human behavior—their agony seems more like that of abused animals, and their grotesque spasms call to mind marionettes, amusing the spectators until their stomachs hurt from laughter. "It cannot even be called hatred,"

⁴³ Bulgarin, "Mazepa," *Sochineniia* (Moscow, 1990), 432.

⁴⁴ *Moskovskii vestnik*, 1827, part 3, no. 11:228.

⁴⁵ N. Filimonov, "Kniaz' Serebrianyi, ili Otchizna i liubov'. Drama v stikhakh," *Panteon russkogo i vsekh evropeiskikh teatrov*, 1841, pt. 2, no. 6:9.

⁴⁶ Kukol'nik, op. cit., 466.

⁴⁷ *Taras Bulba*, trans. I. F. Hapgood, 108 (here cited with some adjustment). If not laughing, then the Russian reader was able to find national joy in the depiction of the upcoming hanging of a Jew in translated English literature—for example, in *Oliver Twist*, when it describes the sentence pronounced by the jury upon "the Jew Fagin": "Guilty! The building rang with joyful cries, which grew louder and louder as it was taken up by the people outside. The Yid would die on Monday" (*Otechestvennye zapiski*, 19, no. 11, issue III [1841]: 174).

writes Jabotinsky about the pogrom in *Taras Bulba*, “—it is worse: it is thoughtless, unadorned festivity, unobscured by even the slightest thought that those funny legs kicking in the air were the legs of living human beings; it is an incredibly simple and wholesale contempt for an inferior race, not even worthy of animosity. . . . [T]here is no reason to stick only with Gogol, citing passages from him and not from his brothers in this high-minded literature. What makes him worse than them or them better than him?”⁴⁸

For a fuller picture, following Zhabotinsky, I would cite other examples of this “high-mindedness”—specifically, those that came to Rafail Zotov by way of his Bakhchisaraiian imagination. Indeed, in his *Leonid* we are presented not with a man, but with some kind of humanoid *creature*, endowed with the ability to croak and howl rather than engage in intelligent speech—a creature shuddering from desperate, dog-like horror, described with evident relish by the narrator. The scene unfolds on a dilapidated bridge during a firefight between the Russians and the French, and it concludes very humanely—with the saving of the victim—and the usual *laughter*:

Leonid's ear was shocked by the wild, penetrating shriek of a man who was grasping the railing on the right and creeping along one of the crossbeams through the bullets whistling around him. Before Leonid managed . . . to cross the water and reach this creature, whose frantic cries had silenced even the sound of the battle, he saw that Varlam [an ever-vigilant corporal who accused all the Jews of treason and espionage—M. W.] had pulled him down from railing and, quickly tying his hands and legs, was preparing to throw him into the water.

As we can see, even in the thick of battle, Varlam, submitting to the religious narrative canon (baptism by death), finds time to tie the hands and legs of the Jew in preparation for drowning him—even though it would have been easier just to shoot him. The further hysterics—all the bodily movements and grimaces of the *creature*—recall the shocked behavior of Friday at his meeting with Robinson. Finally, a miraculous victory of Jewish terror over nature itself occurs—the Jew runs directly over the water, as if on dry land:

This creature, recognizing Leonid, with a screech of joy and cry of despair entwined his stiff hands over the former's knees and in a wild voice screamed: “My Savior, angel, my God, spare me!”

⁴⁸ V. Zhabotinskii, “Russkaia laska,” *Fel'etony* (Berlin, 31922), 125–26.

In the light of the fire Leonid could hardly recognize the face of Moses, so disfigured was he by horror! Varlam got right up in Leonid's face, prepared to throw the blackguard directly into the water, since he was a guide for the French. . . . Five soldiers could barely tear Moses's hands away from Leonid's knees, so frozen were they to the spot. A blood-curdling cry struck terror into the hearts of those gathered about. With each finger that they tore away from Leonid, Moses felt death inching closer, and when he was finally pulled away he let out such a penetrating scream that it seemed as if thousands of red hot knives had cut into his body; in his mad exclamations he called out for the help of God, demons, the French, the Russians, his children, and his forefathers. Finally, Leonid, being unable to stand this horrible scene of human frenzy, ordered that he be freed, on the condition that if he ever again showed up in a place occupied by the Russians, he would immediately be hung.

For a minute Moses could not believe his happiness; his wandering eyes bulged, he raised bloody and trembling hands, he mumbled something to himself; finally, when Leonid repeated to him that he must forthwith take himself away to the devil, Moses with a joyful shout threw himself into the water to kiss Leonid's feet, and almost drowned. With disgust Leonid pushed the traitor away, waved at him to run, and Moses, like a dog who sees the open road, jumped up and broke into a run across the water with amazing speed, grabbing up the tails of his clothing. The soldiers' *laughter* broke out in his wake. Only Varlam did not approve of Leonid's action.⁴⁹

The tone of squeamish compassion that slips into many of these works would develop independently several decades later in philo-Semitic literature. The Jew, almost without fail, would be depicted in two guises: as a character either touching and amusing or miserable and wretched, crying out, finally, for the right to mercy.

*"Yid Cowardice": The Ban on Jewish Heroics and Its Contravention
in Non-Belletristic Genres*

The portrayal of the centuries-long, heroic resistance of the Jews to forced baptism, including repeated mass suicides—resembling those mentioned by Ségur—was taboo in Russian literature, since the shocking reality was so different from the favored stereotype of the “fainthearted Yid [*zhidok*].” What is more, such an image cast the Jew as a martyred hero, a role only appropriate for a Christian. It was an entirely different matter with respect to foreign literature, where this cliché was easily circumvented—as, for

⁴⁹ Zotov, *op. cit.*, 215–16 (emphasis mine).

example, in the aforementioned story by Börne about the Jewish colonel, published in the *Telescope* in 1836 (see chap. 2). Among Russian belletrists it was not customary to speak about the heroic military deeds of ancient Israel—all the more about similar deeds in more recent events, such as the active Jewish participation in defending Lvov and Warsaw in the 18th century. Exceptions, as always, were to be met with in journalism and historical excurses, such as the note about Mordechai Noah printed in 1826 in the *Moscow Telegraph*, where, among the other things, mention is made of “the heroic splendor of the Maccabees.”⁵⁰

In 1832 *Rainbow* celebrated the military spirit of ancient Jewry: “The Jews, known for their unparalleled faithfulness and bravery, were employed by various monarchs in their armies. Alexander preferred them to all other soldiers. Lagus entrusted them with the most important Egyptian fortresses; in order to defend the cities captured in Libya, he settled Jews in them. . . . Philomater and Cleopatra commissioned two men from among these people to govern the kingdom and maintain command over the army.”⁵¹

In 1837 Bulgarin and Grech published in their newspaper an excerpt from the aforementioned book by Capefigue, under the title “The Appearance of a False Messiah during the reign of Hadrian,” in which, with references to Dio Cassius and Saint Jerome, an account was given of the Bar-Kokhba rebellion:

This war was conducted with such determination, the victory of Roman weaponry was coupled with such labor, so much blood was shed on both sides, that Hadrian, in his report to the Senate on the suppression of the rebellion, did not employ the customary forms of congratulation for the republic’s victory. . . . During this war, over five hundred and eighty thousand Jews died by the sword—not to mention, adds Dio, those who succumbed to hunger and fire.⁵²

Turning to more timely deeds, *Son of the Fatherland* in 1831 described (in translation from the German) the famous attack of Suvorov on Prague, the eastern suburb of Warsaw, “populated mainly by Yids, who were soon to suffer for the guilt of their arrogant neighbors.” Here “the number of armed people reached up to 26,000; among them was a Jewish regiment,

⁵⁰ *Moskovskii telegraf*, 1826, part 9:170.

⁵¹ M. Prostodumov, “Pis'mo k izdatel'iu,” *Raduga*, 1832, book 2:101.

⁵² *Severnaia pchela*, 1837, no. 49. Cf. also *Entsiklopedicheskii slovar'* (1835) 4:360–61, cf. “Bar-Kokhba”: “This war, being a tragedy for the defeated, also cost much blood from the victor.”

who were not among the last ones to express their zeal in the revolution [i.e., the Polish rebellion—M. W.]. The best regiments in the Polish army, along with several thousand of the bravest citizens of Warsaw, defended the fortification.” Suvorov, nonetheless, was able to overcome them, and then began the reprisals:

Here the Russian bayonets raged. The Poles. . . , almost to the last one, fell to the ground, among them also the Jewish regiment, which, against all hope, had fought with great bravery: they were shown even less mercy, for the soldiers saw in them not only the enemy, but Yids as well. Only one remained alive: colonel Girshko, who very wisely remained in Warsaw.

It did not stop, however, with the killing of prisoners of war:

The enraged victors burst into homes and mercilessly slaughtered everyone without distinction. Being especially enraged against the Yids, as the most despised of people, the soldiers simply could not forgive their participation in the revolution, and they brought them out as sacrifices of revenge, regardless of whether they were armed or not.⁵³

The phrase about the wise Jewish colonel, it should be noted, is simply incorrect. The commander’s name was not Girshko, but Berko (Berek) Ioselevich, and he did not lie low in the rear, but fought together with everyone else. After the defeat he escaped to France and participated in many of Napoleon’s campaigns, becoming a chevalier in the Legion of Honor. In Poland he was counted among the national heroes; songs were sung about him, and stories about his bravery made their way into textbooks. In his *Memoirs* Bulgarin recounts how, not long before the war of 1812, a conversation took place with Prince Poniatovsky about Jewish officers:

The prince mentioned a colonel Berko or Berkovich [i.e., Ioselevich—M. W.], saying that he was a true hero. I asked one of the officers about this Jerusalemite hero and learned that he was the same Yid who formed the Yid [*zhidovsky*] regiment in Warsaw in 1794, then served in the Italian legion and in the French corps, where he continued to serve until he attained the rank of captain and was promoted to the rank of colonel in a cavalry regiment, when in 1807 they formed the Polish battalion; he was distinguished in the campaign of 1809 against the Austrians and was killed in the same city in which he was born, in Kock [Kotsk] on the river Wieprz. He stopped for a night with two squadrons, summoned all of his family and threw them a lavish feast, with no thought of any danger. Several squadrons of Hungarian

⁵³ “Sturm Pragi 24 oktiabria (4 noiabria) 1794 goda. (Iz biografii Suvorova, sochiniaemoi na nemetskom iazyke g-nom Shmitom,” *Syn otechestva i Severnyi arkhiv*, 18 (1831): 41, 108, 114.

hussars forded the river, circled around the town and attacked the careless Poles during the night. Colonel Berko managed to gather together a hundred of his jaegers and retaliated. They fought fiercely on both sides and Berko was, as the saying goes, hacked to pieces. The Yids buried him outside the city with great honors and over his grave erected a tall kurgan, which is probably still there.

To this, however, the memoirist sarcastically adds that Berko

Belonged to a highly rare phenomenon in the Jewish world. With amazing bravery Berko combined in himself uncommon open-heartedness, selflessness, and amiability. The ancient Jews also exhibited bravery during the wars of Vespasian and Titus, yet they were not distinguished by open-heartedness and selflessness [Bulgarin omits the names of these unknown mercenaries—M. W.]. . . . Officers and soldiers loved him. He steadfastly followed the Law of Moses with respect to the main points of faith, but he ate everything without distinction, whether it was *treyf* or *kosher*, albeit without eating the meat of animals forbidden by Moses.⁵⁴

As to how, in actual fact, this or that “Moses” in Russia actually behaved—the reader may glean from the notes of V. I. Panaev entitled “Events of 1812,” published in 1841 (in the same collection where Kamensky’s “Iakov Molle” was published). These notes comprise memoirs about the patriotic tribulations of his acquaintance, the nobleman Gabbe, who joined the fight against the French invaders. He received a letter from a partisan division of Seslavin inquiring about the number of the enemy forces amassed in Shklov. The letter was delivered by “a young Jew, tired and shivering from the cold.” Though the letter was written by a guard lieutenant and nephew of Gabbe himself, the anxious patriot was worried that it might be a trick.

“Be not in doubt, your Honor,” said the Jew, observing the bewilderment of Gabbe. “Do not offend me with your suspicion. Despite what we may be in popular opinion, in today’s troubled times we have proven that we are committed to the lawful Monarch and his just work. Many of us have already set our shoulders to service in the Russian Army. I did not want to stay behind and so took this commission, which, to tell the truth, is quite dangerous; yet half of it—praise God—I’ve happily completed.”

“And the other half?” objected Gabbe. “The other half, perhaps, will not be achieved so easily—at any rate, it may not only cause you to perish, but me as well. How did you cross the Dnieper and elude the watchmen on the bank?”

⁵⁴ Bulgarin, *Vospominaniia*, 746–47.

“I didn’t cross it, but rather swam across; I made my passage further down from where the watchmen were stationed. They slept so deeply in the cold, and the night is so very dark. And how I myself froze! I nearly froze to death in the river, but after running here for four versts [ca. 2.6 miles] I have just about warmed up. Yet I cannot waste any time; please write the answer, your Honor.”

“To write is to incriminate myself. What if you get caught? Is it not better for me to tell you?”

“No, Your Honor. I was clearly ordered to bring back a written answer, otherwise how can I prove that I saw you and fulfilled what I agreed to do? Don’t worry, for if I get caught I will not bring any trouble upon you; I alone will perish, but not before swallowing your note.”⁵⁵

But again, memoirs are a particular kind of genre; this sort of subject matter normally did not penetrate Russian belles lettres. Neither did scenes of everyday life, such as the one Narezhny captured in his *Russian Gil Blas*, where the Jew Joseph, having impregnated a Christian woman, was forcefully laid upon to convert to Russian Orthodoxy: “When the foremen threw themselves at Joseph with all their fervor—so typical of the offended individuals in such a sensitive affair—the indefatigable Yid, instead of submitting as his namesake the son of Jacob in Egypt had, chose to emulate Samson’s mettle and with all his might knocked down one of the bravest attackers with his fist. The blow was so cleverly placed that the attacker was knocked off his feet and, in the fall, struck the nose of the elder with the back of his head and the moustache and beard of his highness of Fala-leevka were doused in a rain of blood. Anyone could see that this was no joke. As bravely as Joseph fought, however, he had to yield to the strength of the others”⁵⁶ (after which, however, he ran from his guards and saved himself from forced baptism).

For similar reasons it was not deemed proper to talk about the multitudes of Jews who joined the ranks of the elite (elder servicemen) Zaporozhian and hetman Cossacks. It is quite possible that a certain indistinct resonance of this reality made its way into Baryshev’s fictional story about a hetman’s son who announced himself to be a Jew. The truth is that Jews sometimes became Zaporozhian atamans and colonels. Pushkin could not know that his dashing Cossack in the poem “Poltava” who conveyed to the tsar Kochubei’s denunciation concerning “the evil hetman” Mazepa (“Who, by the stars and the moon / Rides by horse so late?”) was a bap-

⁵⁵ *Sto russkikh literatorov*, 2:648–49.

⁵⁶ Narezhnyi, op. cit., 1:579.

tized Jew. Yet the major general of Mazepa himself—Gregory Gertsik—was a baptized Jew as well. In recollection of him, Grebenka in *Chaikovsky* called his evil Cossack—the baptized son of Rokhlia—Gertsik. A Jew in such literary scenarios was portrayed exclusively as an enemy spy or coward, a hard-headed scoundrel not worthy of joining a freestanding army.

Homelessness, Poverty, and Lost Gold

Homelessness, vagrancy, exhausting travels—often in search of penny wages—were perceived as the direct realization of the biblical prophecy concerning the deportation and dispersion of Israel (which Christian tradition interpreted, quite naturally, in its own way): “And among these nations you shall find no ease, and there shall be no rest for the sole of your foot” (Deut 28:65). The notorious homelessness of the Eternal Jew⁵⁷ is in Russian literature extended even to such seemingly mighty Jews as the power-hungry conspirator Skharia. According to Lazhechnikov he subdued a multitude of Muscovite boyars—yet he walks about in Moscow with fear and timidity. “I must confess to you,” he says to the protagonist, “that I do not have a permanent residence: today I am spending the night with one of my own, tomorrow with another one.”⁵⁸

⁵⁷ On this personage, dated to the 13th century and impressed upon Christian mythological consciousness since the beginning of the 17th century, see the collection *The Wandering Jew: Essays in the Interpretation of a Christian Legend*, ed. Galit Hasan-Rokem and Alan Dundes (Bloomington, 1985). Cf., in particular, the discussion there of Agasfer [Ahasuerus] as the embodiment of Jewry, already irrevocably severed from the Christian world (in contrast to medieval models that held out the promise of salvation for the Jews) (Adolf L. Leschnitzer, “The Wandering Jew: The Alienation of the Jewish Image in the Christian Consciousness,” 230–34). In another article (Hyam Maccoby, “The Wandering Jew as Sacred Executioner,” 237–61) the symbolic role of the Eternal Jew as a living testimony to the gospel truths and the victory of Christianity is underscored; he appears at the same time as an instrument of decide, from the guilt of which Christians are cleansed. According to the author, the subject of Agasfer is a Christian fantasy that compensates for the refusal of Jewry to take the burden of responsibility for the crucifixion. As for Russian literature, which is not the focus of the collection, the most well-known piece on this topic is the unfinished poem by Zhukovsky. See in particular L. Kiseleva, “Baironovskii kontekst zamysla Zhukovskogo ob Agasfere,” *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie*, 2000, no. 42; G. Strano, “Stranstvovanie Agasfera v tvorchestve Kiukhel’bekera i Zhukovskogo,” *Jews and Slavs* 11 (2003). For interesting material on the Russian wanderings of Agasfer, see R. Iu. Danilevskii, “‘Moskovskii’ epizod v nemetskoj narodnoi knige ob Agasfere,” *Sravnitel’noe izuchenie literatur. Sbornik k 80-letiiu akademika M. P. Alekseeva* (Leningrad, 1976).

⁵⁸ Lazhechnikov, *Sochineniia*, 2:632.

This constant dynamic impressed Russian onlookers who visited the western region:

The closer to the Polish border, the more brightly defined is the Jewish tribe. A certain kind of restlessness is displayed in those expressive Eastern faces; some unexplainable spirit of bustle induces Yids to fly and prowls around in all countries, by foot, by horse, or in gigs; one can often see entire wagons stuffed with pensive Yid industrialists, and cities and towns closest to the border are swamped with this tribe like anthills: no matter where you turn you will see a son of Israel.⁵⁹

But such references to “restlessness” were masked attempts to justify the constant deportations of the Jews (per the decrees of 1807, 1816, 1822, 1825, 1827, 1829, 1830, 1837, and 1843). Bulgarin, even though he praised those actions, preferred to explain Jewish homelessness differently: “To the Yid, as is well known, nothing is sacred. He is always ready to sell for profit; even the richest of them, for the sake of money and comfort, will refuse peace under his home roof” (*Mazepa*).⁶⁰

Writers and journalists, however, had to face another—and for them quite uncomfortable—side of the Jewish question that logically demolished all conjectures about such “profits.” They were accustomed to blaming the poverty of the Christian residents of the western region (where, incidentally, it was much less pronounced than in the inner provinces) on the Jews: indeed, the claim was that Jews were merciless in exploiting the common folk and profited from their sufferings. But then these writers were faced with explaining the extraordinary fact that the very ones who were in possession of these untold treasures were themselves suffering from abject poverty, dressed in rags, and huddled in piteous huts. An unusual solution to this riddle is suggested by one L. S., the author of “Three Years of a Police Captain,” depicting the grievous fate of Little Russia, devastated by the Jews: “All possible property was going into the hands of those active devastators of any labor and industry, who constantly walk about in rags before everyone, as if to prove that their greed will never be satisfied.”⁶¹

The same situation prevails in Gogol’s *Taras Bulba*, where Iankel “had gradually got all the neighboring noblemen and gentry into his clutches, had slowly sucked away most of their money and had made his Yid pres-

⁵⁹ “Evrei” (unsigned), *Biblioteka dlia chteniia*, 96, issue 7 (1849): 40.

⁶⁰ Bulgarin, *Sochineniia* (Moscow, 1990), 510.

⁶¹ *Molva*, 1833, no. 96:384.

ence severely felt in that region. For a distance of three miles in every direction not a single cottage remained in a proper condition: all were falling in ruins; all had been drunk away, and poverty and rags alone remained; the whole neighborhood was devastated as if after a fire or an epidemic.”⁶² It would seem that the great profit sucked out of the area by Iankel should have transformed his own house into a beautiful palace or in some way been evident from his living conditions. However, with the exception of one detail—its “sparrows” (associated in folklore with Jews)⁶³—Iankel’s poor domicile in no way differed from the other huts that “were falling in ruins” because of him: it was a “dirty, stained hut, whose tiny windows were barely visible, blackened as they were with some unknown dirt; the chimney was plugged with a rag; and the roof, which was full of holes, was covered with sparrows.”⁶⁴ Where, then, did the money disappear to, and why did the rich man Iankel languish in such wretchedness? Gogol “does not give an answer” to this question—unlike Somov, who in *Haidamak* gracefully gets around it: it turns out that the Jews “almost always hide the riches they have accumulated under an old roof from curious and envious eyes.” This also explains the “million” that the hawk-like eyes of Voeikov managed to spy through the walls of a trunk (see above).

The accounts of Somov and Voeikov agree with the popular notion that “the Jews traditionally hid their riches in the house—in the fireplace or under the threshold, and also in deep basements.”⁶⁵ An analogous solution was suggested to Russian authors by Western writers as well—for example, by Karl Spindler, in his description of a Jewish neighborhood. The poor Christians looked jealously upon the life of the Jews, who

endeavored, by every possible expedient, to conceal their growing wealth from their envious Christian neighbors. This is why they allowed their homes to fall apart on the outside; this is why they wandered the streets with a bag slung over the shoulder and a staff in hand; this is why they received visitors in the lower room of their houses, displaying poverty and self-neglect at every step; this is why on the Sabbath they kept their windows and doors closed, so that the sparkling of light and the festive tables did not reveal their satisfaction, in order to evade their neighbors’ lawless rapacity. The house of David Ben Joachim, the senior of their tribe, . . . was no exception to this rule. It was outwardly as black and somber as any other in the street;

⁶² N. V. Gogol, *Taras Bulba: A Tale of the Cossacks*, trans. I. F. Hapgood (New York, 1917), 241 (here cited with some adjustment).

⁶³ O. V. Belova, V. Ia. Petrukhin, op. cit., 363.

⁶⁴ N. V. Gogol, op. cit., 240.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 312.

but such as were admitted within its walls on the Sabbath were ushered into an elegantly furnished apartment, where the holy day was observed in sumptuous privacy.⁶⁶

Perhaps Russian Jews were even better at dissimulating. Because their “million” remained completely intangible: its existence was pushed back into the fabled times of Zorich (the last decades of the 18th century) or the Polish campaign. Yet where, since that time, did this mythological gold go, which had then, according to Bulgarin’s assurance, so richly fallen “on the tribe of Judah”? Whence in the western provinces did such unimaginable Jewish poverty arise? The Russian reader, accustomed to thinking of the Jews as moneylenders, was nonetheless able to discern even from their cherished national literature that the truth was entirely the opposite: it was not the Jew who took interest from landowners, but the landowners who took it from him. The protagonist of Vladimir Vladislavlev’s novel *At the Ball and in the Village* (1835), an officer who had occasion to serve in Little Russia, went to ask for the hand in marriage of Nastenka, a landowner’s daughter—but when he arrived he was shocked at the dirtiness and uncouthness of the local landowner’s life. Among other things, in the hallway he met a Jew, who had come “to bring interest for borrowed money” and, referring to his poverty, requested that the interest might be lowered.⁶⁷

Vladislavlev does not doubt such poverty, but other writers had a harder time with it. Those who were always ready to count money in Jewish pockets floundered amidst conjectures. What emerges from the conflicting hypotheses is the superstitious idea of the devil’s gold, which without fail turns into dust. Bulgarin is either sincerely perplexed, or else simulates perplexity:

One would like to know: where are the vestiges of the good times? Millions of chervontsy passed through Yid hands. Where are the children of those fathers who handled the millions? Where are the wonderful Jewish merchant homes? It is an amazing thing that among the Yids one finds only very rare examples of the riches of the father passing on to a son, let alone to a grandson. In fact, I have not heard of any such cases. The treasure of the Yid inflates, like a soap bubble, it shines and then pops just as fast as it

⁶⁶ Spindler, *Evrei. Kartina germanskikh nraov v pervoi polovine XV stoletii*, 1:92–93. The English translation given here represents an adaptation, *vis-à-vis* the Russian text, of that published by Harper & Brothers: *The Jew* (in 3 vols.) (New York, 1832), 1:51–53.

⁶⁷ V. Vladislavlev, *Povesti i rasskazy* (St. Petersburg, 1835), 1:45.

inflated. In trading the Yid always stakes everything. The more the success, the more the risk.⁶⁸

The author clearly does not understand the true reason for the financial ruin that inevitably touched even flourishing “merchant homes,” although he should have encountered it in Russian families as well. Indeed, such “homes” did sometimes appear in the Pale of Settlement, but there was no right of primogeniture, and therefore the wealth was divided, dispersed among the typically large number of descendants in Jewish families. The overwhelming majority of the Jewish population, however, did not have to face the problem of inheritance, for there was nothing to inherit. Yet Bulgarin prefers inspired fantasies to these mundane truths. Whereas he explains the poverty of the Jews as the result of commercial boldness and gambling, N. Orelsky, on the contrary, in presenting his impressions of Mogilev, attributes it to commercial pettiness and miserliness. In the first case it is not explained to whom the lost Jewish “millions” were transferred; in the second they likewise somehow evaporated:

Those Yids are a strange tribe! What do they do with their money? Great sums passed into the Jews’ hands when the headquarters of the first army were stationed here, without providing any benefits to the region. Experience has convinced me that the Yid tribe, even with millions, will live in their dirty taverns, trade in vodka, and occupy themselves with wheeling and dealing, bringing riches neither to themselves nor to others! In other words, the millions have sunk to the bottom here, as in a bog.⁶⁹

What value, then, was to be found in all the talk concerning “the golden calf,” enslaving Christians? It could be found in the home of local administrators, as well as landowners, distilling vodka from wheat. Yet their peace was carefully protected by censorship.

Among the people, meanwhile, the opinion was growing stronger that the Jews, before dying, would hide all their treasure in their graves. In Viatka, according to the famous ethnographer and writer V. Dal, there even existed the specific profession of the “Yid-exhumer” (*zhidokop*): they exhumed Jewish graves in the hope of finding gold therein.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Bulgarin, “Putevye zapiski v poezdke iz Derpta v Belorussiiu vesnoi 1835 goda,” *Severnaia pchela*, 1835, no. 212.

⁶⁹ N. Orelskii, “Poezdka v Malorussiiu v 1839 godu,” *Severnaia pchela*, 1840, no. 68.

⁷⁰ See *Tarbut, Sbornik materialov, po evreiskoi kul'ture*, (Jerusalem, 1983), 2:118. My gratitude to M. Kipnis for calling my attention to this testimony.

The "Young Jewess"

But there was another treasure the "tribe of Judas" most assuredly did possess. From English literature Russian writers learned that it was a characteristic of the Jews to love not only ducats but also their daughters—and, in general, Russian writers allowed the Jews to retain this attribute. The benevolent interpretation of Jewish images was most often reserved for the lovely successors of Walter Scott's Rebecca,⁷¹ who were endowed with the exotic charm and passion of the biblical Salome. Their entourages alone intrigued reviewers. In 1828 the *Ladies' Journal* published an abbreviated translation of the French quasi-historical sketch "The Attire of a Jewess"—portraying the luxurious life and ornamentation of "the young Rachel."⁷² And in two years the same sketch was published in translation once again—this time from the English original in *Blackwood's Magazine*—in Delvig and Pushkin's paper.⁷³

Together with other biblical themes, the type of the young Jewish woman traditionally took hold in art—and was reflected in Russian Romantic writings that dealt with artists. The protagonist of Ivan Panaev's novel *The Daughter of a High-Ranking Man* (1839) labored for a long time on a portrait of the Old Testament Rebecca—"a charming young maiden, who at her very birth was betrothed by the Lord to Isaac." In the end he gives her the features of his own beloved—a young maiden just as dusky and dreamy. Yet the image itself was undoubtedly suggested both to the artist and the author by *Ivanhoe* (in fact, in Panaev's somewhat earlier story "The Wallet" [1838] a young man, an admirer of Walter Scott, dreams about the same "dark-skinned face of charming Rebecca").⁷⁴ And in the novel *Delirium Tremens* (1840), a direct continuation of *The Daughter of a High-Ranking Man*, this painting is mentioned once again, now on display in the Academy of Art. A tired visitor was hardly able to reach "the last room to catch his breath. . . when suddenly, and much unexpectedly, his sight caught the wonderful Jewess, a true beauty, gracefully standing at the well, and upon whom one might well stare in wonderment,

⁷¹ On the theme of the "lovely Jewess" in period German literature, which was also strongly influenced by *Ivanhoe* (F. Grillparzer, K. Spindler, W. Hauff), see Jefferson S. Chase, "The Homeless Nation: The Exclusion of Jews in and from Early Nineteenth-Century German Historical Fiction," *Jewish Culture and History* 6, no. 1 (2003): 64–68.

⁷² *Damskii zhurnal*, 1828, no. 15:96–103.

⁷³ "Ubranstvo znatnoi evreiki," *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 1830, no. 11, 12.

⁷⁴ I. I. Panaev, *Izbrannye proizvedeniia* (Moscow, 1962), 51–52, 95, 103.

even after viewing the wonderful painting by Horace Vernet. . . . The tired attention of the viewer, after looking at the Jewess, would heat up again, and with empathy he would draw closer to the painting to look at her more closely.”⁷⁵ In exactly the same way, in 1841, Shevvyrev’s attention “heated up” after looking at “the wonderful beauty of the dark-eyed Jewess” painted by Bruni: “Her charming foot had become entangled in the hanging folds of her checkered blue clothing, upon the color of which one’s gaze is arrested. . . . Yet it is arrested even more by the face of the beautiful Jewess, lingering more than anything else on her eyes, in which the painter clearly portrayed a sense of fright. . . .”⁷⁶

“Lovely Jewesses” also flicker in everyday sketches of the 1820s–40s, not without foreign literary sanction. “Jewesses are known for their beauty in Warsaw and Volhynia,” authoritatively declared a certain English magazine to Russian readers, already in 1828, through the pages of *Athenaeum*.⁷⁷ And in 1831 *Molva* published a note entitled “Israelite Women in Tangiers”:

The capital of Morocco, Tangiers, is especially famed for the beauty of its Israelite women, who are much respected despite being the children of slaves and captives. . . . They are strictly forbidden to leave their homes, and because of this young Israelite women of 18–20 years are often never seen outside and sometimes do not even leave their homes. And if this does happen it is only at night and under great secrecy. In spite of such imprisonment, these poor creatures seem to be always happy and joyful.⁷⁸

And in Turkey, according to the above-mentioned traveler Ami Boué, “among the Jewesses are many beauties.”⁷⁹ No less compelling are their compatriots in Germany—for example, Spindler’s Esther, “who for beauty had no equal from the Rhine to the Main.”⁸⁰ Another example of such a Jewish beauty is given by Eugene Guinot in his story “A Student of Heidelberg University,” which appeared in translation in *The Northern Bee*. Here the reader is introduced to young Rachel, the daughter of a banker who fell in love with a German student: “her beauty was extraordinary. Her hair, as lovely as a crow’s wing, fell in thick braids upon her lily-like, exquisite

⁷⁵ Ibid., 47.

⁷⁶ *Moskvitianin*, 1841, no. 11:143.

⁷⁷ *Atenei*, 1828, part 6, no. 21:62.

⁷⁸ *Molva*, 1831:164–65.

⁷⁹ *Severnaia pchela*, 1841, no. 81.

⁸⁰ Spindler, op. cit., 1:95. In the original: “Die an Schönheit ihres Gleichen nicht hatte am ganzen Rhein- und Mainstrom” (cited by F. Krobb, *Die schöne Jüdin*, 128). See also *ibid.* (p. 130) on the influence of Walter Scott’s female protagonist on the image of Esther.

white neck; the paleness of her face was blinding; dark, large, beautifully-shaped eyes shone with a serene resplendence.”⁸¹

In the West and in Russia the main literary role of such Jewish enchantresses was to long for, if not Christianity, then at least a Christian man,⁸² and then, with his help, to find “the true faith.”⁸³ Narezhny, to be sure, had not yet familiarized himself with all of these conventions, and therefore carelessly violated them, not thinking about the censorship ramifications. In his *Russian Gil Blas* it is not a Jewess who falls in love with a Christian; the initiator of the connection is instead the Orthodox tavern keeper Ustinia, about whom the author says: “This sort of person is well known. Even though she was a maiden, she lived unrestrictedly, not thinking about marriage.” But after becoming pregnant by the comely Joseph, Ustinia decides to marry him and therefore convert him to Russian Orthodoxy. The Jew, not wanting either, tried to explain to the judges that the tavern keeper had become the victim of her own curiosity: “It was not I who seduced the tavern keeper, but she—I swear on the Decalogue [i.e., the Ten Commandments—M. W.]—who seduced me. She spared nothing in order to bend me to her will; for she herself admitted that as soon as she saw me she was overcome by a strong desire to experience the difference between the circumcised and the uncircumcised.”⁸⁴

In Narezhny’s much later (1824) novel *The Seminarist* (in the chapter “The Lovely Jewess”), a Christian falls passionately in love with the Jewess Susannah and even contemplates converting to the Jewish faith, but he fears imminent judgment if he does so: “‘What if I should do it in secret, becoming a Yid just for the sake of appearance,’ I sometimes thought, ‘and

⁸¹ Evgenii Gino [Eugene Guinot], “Geidel’bergskii student,” *Severnaia pchela*, 1838, no. 258.

⁸² In their work “On the question of the conversion of Jewish women to Christianity in Russia during the end of the 18th–beginning of the 19th centuries” Feldman and Minkina present the investigative data about and life stories of Jewish women converted to Christianity by their erotic partners. Tying these materials together with an erotic plotline, touched upon in my book, the authors summarize: “The logic of literary works in this case agrees with the logic of bureaucratic documents, inasmuch as both derive from circles adhering to the same general ideological scheme” (D. Z. Fel’dman, O. Iu. Minkina, A. Iu. Kononova, *“Prekrasnaia evreika” v Rossii XVII–XIX vekov*, 92). In the same work, as a notable exception, the case is cited of Lea Rafolovich-Stalinskaia, who after marrying admiral S. Greig patronized the Jews in every possible way and even remained a fervent admirer of the Ruzhin zaddik (82–89).

⁸³ Krobbs dedicated an entire chapter to this theme—“Lust zur christlichen Religion”: *Bekehrungsromane in Abenteuerengewand* (op. cit., 21–54). He traces the theme through German material as far back as the 17th century.

⁸⁴ Narezhnyi, *Sochineniia*, 1:578, 580.

then ask Ishmael for the hand of his daughter? The danger is obvious! I would be found out, the immensity of my love would not be enough to justify it, and I would perish forever. How can Susannah be made into a Christian?" Kidnapping the maiden, the protagonist appeals to her with words: "Susannah! Our fate is decided! Today you must become my wife! 'I? Your wife?' she asked in horror. 'Perhaps you've forgotten that I am Jewish?' 'This poses no real problem,' I answered, 'we Orthodox respect the memory of many of your people! Come what may, tonight you will become a Christian!' And with these words I took out a gun and cocked the hammer."⁸⁵ He immediately escorted the weeping Jewess, who was convinced by this argument, to a church, where a priest who was bribed married them.

Incidentally, a Muslim version (popular, not literary) of such conversion accounts may be found in the above-mentioned note in *Molva* concerning Jewish women in Morocco. The last lines present us with the reason why the parents of the "Israelite maidens" kept them in strict confinement, hidden as far as possible from the eyes of strangers. The truth is that "their beauty attracted the attention and passion of the Moors. This situation results in beautiful Israelite women leaving the faith of their fathers and converting to Islam, becoming the wives of Moors."⁸⁶

Romantic tradition paints a much more favorable picture than Narezhny—a picture wherein Jewesses weep because of their hopeless love for a Gentile. One exception here is Voeikov's memorable Rachel, deathly indifferent to the Christian storyteller and obedient to parental authority and the family covenant. An exception of another sort is presented by Durova in the wife of Voimir, a former noble and later stableman, who, instead of converting the Jewess to Christianity, became a Jew himself. Voimir "added to the imperfections of his mind and soul yet another deed that forever shamed him: he married a Jewess and, on top of everything, a sorceress. All classes but the lowest renounced him, and even the class of the people among whom he now hides from total contempt hardly tolerates him."⁸⁷

As a rule, however, the young Jewess is set in contrast to her vulturous Jewish surroundings or, following the model inherited from *The Merchant of Venice*—albeit then softened in *Ivanhoe*—her greedy old father who

⁸⁵ Op. cit., 2:106, 109.

⁸⁶ "Izrail'tianki v Tangere," op. cit., 105.

⁸⁷ Aleksandrov (N. A. Durova), *Gudishki* part 3:233.

despises Christians.⁸⁸ Another such father appears in Lermontov's ballad "Whereto so nimbly, young Jewess! . . ." (1832):

My father said that the Law of Moses
 Forbids me to love you,
 My friend, I listened to my Father without blanching,
 For I was listening in love. . . .

He promised me suffering and torment,
 And sharpened the fatal knife;
 And he left. . . . My friend, beware his revenge,
 He will be like a shadow at your heels. . . ."

Following "the Law of Moses," the enraged father kills both Sarah and her Russian beloved. This same overall blueprint provides the basis for Guinot's plot—with, however, one curious omission: the Jewish banker, who refused to let his daughter marry a pauper, is concerned only about the financial side of the romance. Both he and the female protagonist herself somehow manage to forget about confessional differences throughout the entire course of the novel. Yet for the male protagonist the national-religious aspect would have far-reaching consequences: "Franz scratched his head. It was hardly possible to deal a more devastating blow to his newly begotten love. 'She is called Rachel,' he said, sighing, 'and she is Jewish!'. . . Love was wrestling with superstition."⁸⁹

A strangely humane softening of this model was suggested to Russian readers by Spindler, who with bright colors depicted his female protagonist's father, Ben-David—a moneylender, yet one who was honorable and kind. Out of her love for him Esther rejects both baptism and her hope of marrying a Christian, yielding to her Christian rival. The angelic kindness of the female protagonist touches her beloved: "Why is she not a Christian! Dagobert exclaimed: 'She could have become righteous.'" In essence,

⁸⁸ However, in Hauff's *Jew Süß* (1827) the father's role is taken by the brother of a lovely Jewess—the demonic financier Süß, who, for very complicated political reasons, himself seeks to marry her off to a Christian (see Krobb, *op. cit.*, 123–27).

⁸⁹ This "wrestling" was well known to German characters—for example, to Gustav from *Jew Süß*. The same thoughts and hesitations also already appear in relatively early American literature. They overtake the protagonist of the novella by Henry Ruffner, *Judith Bensaddi* (1839): "Am I really in love with the daughter of a Jew? Am I to connect myself with that accursed tribe?" (p. 16). Although the lovely and virtuous Judith, as required, is drawn to Christianity with all her being, the main character is tormented by doubts: his children will "be half-blooded Jews." And what will the neighbors say when the couple goes to church? What if, instead of church, Judith should prefer "her Rabbi and her synagogue"? (*ibid.*; see L. Harap, *The Image of the Jew in American Literature* [Philadelphia, 2003], 74–75).

however, her moral triumph takes on all the characteristics of Christian self-sacrifice,⁹⁰ including a vow of chastity: “Your child,” she says to her father, “will never be espoused either to a son of Edom or to a son of Jacob. I will care for thee until thine eye wax dim in death, and then fulfill alone and in peace the oath I swore to God. . . . Henceforth my consolation is remembrance and hope”—hope for a reunion in the hereafter with her beloved “and his spouse . . . amid the harmony of the golden harps of the righteous—amid the hallelujahs of angels!”⁹¹

At its root this was a conflict between savage Law and eroticized Grace. It was also the source of the entire “gender” issue: the beauty and charm of Jewesses contrasted with the repulsive features of their fathers or husbands, submerged in irredeemable Jewishness. Leon Poliakov points out that Châteaubriand devotes a special discussion to this problem in his *Génie du christianisme* [The Genius of Christianity], where he refers to the fact that Jewish women did not participate in the crucifixion of Christ as an explanation of their attractiveness.

On the other hand, literary-religious templates did sometimes manage to square with live impressions. In *Notes of a Cavalry Maiden* Durova corrects a remark concerning the beauty of Jewish women in a skeptical, matter-of-fact manner. Her female (?) protagonist orders coffee in a tavern, suspiciously stealing glances at the attending, “dark-browed Sarah, with darting eyes and red lips . . . Jewesses are very pretty, but you should get your own sugar”⁹²—since they are saving money on it. Bulgarin in his *Travel Notes* admits that both Jewish genders can be distinguished by

⁹⁰ Cf. Krobb, *op. cit.*, 130.

⁹¹ Spindler, *op. cit.*, 4:432, 435–36; the English translation presented here is adapted, with the Russian text in mind, from *The Jew* (in 3 vols.) (New York, 1832), 3:323–24. Minkina found in the archives of the National Library of Russia (f. 452. Op. 1. D. 596) a novel in verse by a certain Sofia Müller [Müller] entitled *The Jewess* [Zhidovka] (1832), in which the usual plotline is curiously deformed. A beautiful Rachel cares for a wounded soldier (consistent, of course, with the Walter Scott motif)—a Russian cavalry captain who was taken captive by the Poles. Even before that she managed to be secretly baptized into Russian Orthodoxy. The cavalry captain suggests that she should run away from home in order to avoid “becoming the wife of a despicable Jew.” However, the female protagonist is afraid of her father’s curse and out of a sense of duty even considers returning to her former faith—though in the end she runs off with her beloved. The captain is then killed in action. Rachel dies as well, after having reconciled with her father, who falls to his knees and “religiously crosses himself.” The novel ends with a scene of two old men weeping at the couple’s grave: the priest who baptized the young lady, and her father. Beside them an orphan plays—the son of Rachel and the captain.

⁹² *Literaturnye pribavleniia k “Russkomu invalidu,”* 1838, no. 44:864. Comely but cunning Jewess-tavern-keepers, helping their husbands to make Christians drunk, are also unfavorably depicted by Golota and Somov.

their good looks (see the remark by Avdeeva: “In general the Jews have intelligent, expressive faces; their women are pretty”)—it is just that both are unpleasant to the author. What is more, Bulgarin was hurt that Jewesses seemed indifferent to his masculine charms and Polish gallantry, and they seemed to regard him without any longing:

The business is carried out by Jewesses, among whom are some real beauties. The features and the color of their faces are phenomenal, and their eyes—heavenly! But their facial expressions are unpleasant, in their movements they lack agility, in their looks there is no tenderness and, generally speaking, they do not have what I would call enticement for the heart. Their beauty is plastic; they are good-looking, but not sweet. Among the Yids there are also men with striking faces, truly handsome—but their habits, movement, gait, and looks are even more unpleasant than those of the women, and sometimes even repulsive.⁹³

Nevertheless, in his belletristic works Bulgarin prefers to follow the gender canon, albeit bringing to it some major additions and corrections.

In the meantime the underlying springs of this religious-erotic plot deserve special analysis. Either way, we can sense here the slight taste of a hidden polemic with the Old Testament, in its delayed revision. Thus, for instance, Titov’s landlady, a smiling, dark-eyed Leah, reciprocates the display of affection from her boarder, who flirts with her. This is the same officer who beats up Iankel in her apartment. Thus, little by little, the Old Testament marital union is broken up: for the biblical *Leah* was the first wife of the patriarch *Jacob*, and now the rights to her, as it were, have been transferred to a new master of her life, a Christian. The redistribution of roles has also another hidden meaning. The beautiful Jewess whose image is charged with the prefigurative richness of her biblical forerunners stands in, so to speak, for the Virgin Mary herself.⁹⁴ (In particular the Old Testament Rebecca, the eponym of Walter Scott’s heroine, was considered to be a prototype of the Mother of God.) On the other hand, her old, hard-hearted father or husband, whom the heroine attempts to leave, is in effect the stand-in for the jealous God the Father of the Bible.⁹⁵

⁹³ F. B., op. cit., *Severnaia pchela*, 1835, no. 191.

⁹⁴ As noted by Krobb, Spindler remarks upon the similarity of even a secondary figure—the Jewish female character—to “the skillful depiction of Mary” (das kunstreichere Marienbild); see F. Krobb, op. cit., 130.

⁹⁵ Theoretically speaking, this plot borders on the forbidden yet very persistent interpretation of the “Holy Family” theme. The truth is that in this paradigm, the Christian beloved of the Jewish heroine, stands in for Jesus himself, according to the logic of “prefigurative” exegesis: since Mary, for whom the Romantic Jewess stands in, was interpreted

Because Esther is considered one of the “prototypes” of the Holy Virgin, her name was also often given to Jewish beauties, as was the case with Spindler. Romanticism complicated the religious-erotic canvas of *The Merchant of Venice* with a Sentimentalist motif: the Christian might turn out to be unworthy of his Jewish beloved’s tender and naïve love. We saw a strange commercial version of this motif in *Gudishki*, where the Jewess is offended and disappointed by the poverty of her non-Jewish husband: she, “despite her father’s kabbalistics, was unable to discover that Voimir, who was promising her that he would soon receive an inheritance and riches, was lying to her.”⁹⁶ In the above-mentioned story by Guinot, the noble Rachel tirelessly cares for her idol, the student Franz; but he, after becoming rich with her help, immediately cheats on the Jewess and marries a German gold digger, who in turn robs and casts her husband out of the castle that he had bought. The poor and completely mad Franz is taken in by Rachel (whose father has already died). She forgives his betrayal, “receiving the poor friend with open arms. Nothing could extinguish her deep, true passion, and now they are living in a humble hut.”

Of even greater significance for the fate of this plot in Russia was, of course, Sarah—the fierce yet gracious heroine of *La Juive* by Scribe and Halévy. Taking revenge on her unfaithful Christian lover, she gives him into the hands of the Inquisition—but at the last moment, out of compassion, takes the blame upon herself, that she alone might go into the fire (the opera, nevertheless, has a happy ending).

Her gloomy type in Russian literature is the demonic Jewess, considerably far removed from any resemblance to Mary. Even after converting to Christianity, she is more likely to bear the stamp of the treacherous and cruel Judith or Jael; her destiny is to be a temptress, a femme fatale. “Parent!”—exclaims Rachel in Kukolnik’s drama *The Statue of Christopher in Riga, or: There Will Be War!*—“Perhaps it is a premonition, or perhaps a dream, but the axe of Judith will not escape my hands!”⁹⁷ Certainly such superstitious beliefs come across more clearly in the portrayal of Eastern Jewesses, untouched by Christian grace, such as the vengeful heroine of

as the “New Eve,” the logical conclusion (well known in many heretical circles) is that her fiancé can only be the “New Adam”—a designation for Christ (cf. Rom 5). As for the connection of such heresy with incestuous problematics of the dogma regarding “consubstantiality” and its literary realization, see M. Weisskopf, “Golub’ i liliia: Romanticheskii siuzhet o devushke, obretaiushchei tvorcheskii dar,” *Shipovnik: Istoriko-filologicheskii sbornik k 60-letiiu Romana Timenchika* (Moscow, 2005), 28–29.

⁹⁶ Aleksandrov (N. A. Durova), op. cit., part 3:234.

⁹⁷ Kukol’nik, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* (in 10 vols.) (St. Petersburg, 1852), 2:332.

the poem by Karolina Pavlova “The Daughter of a Yid” (1840, pub. 1841), who at the moment of making love seeks to pierce the heart of the cruel emir with a knife.⁹⁸

Yet even fatal Jewesses can display noble impulses. In Bulgarin’s *Mazepa* the Eastern, fiery Mariia Lomtkovskaia, a spy, gold digger, and poisoner, proves capable (by virtue of her exotic temperament) of selfless and self-sacrificing love for a Christian. Witness her monologue (borrowed, however, from the old lady in Voltaire’s *Candide*): “In the veins of every European woman there flows not blood but milk, sweetened with girlishness. In my veins flows fire. . . . Within me boils the entirety of hell, Bogdan; but through this hell they enter into a heaven of pleasures! . . .” Here too, the fatal Jewish woman takes upon herself the characteristics of a witch, “a prophetess or sorceress, a caster of spells”; yet in Bulgarin these magical trimmings do not go beyond the metaphoric.⁹⁹ In similar tones in Grebenka’s *Chaikovsky* a portrait is presented of the baptized Jewess (Rokhliia’s daughter) Tatiana—a harlot,¹⁰⁰ who rose up to a passionate and selfless love for a Cossack. Other Jewish female images may have been hybrids from along these lines and also from *La Juive*. In *Prince Kholm’sky* Skharia persuades his daughter to kill her Christian beloved in the usual Jewish manner—with poison and witchcraft: “Feast your eyes on the death of the

⁹⁸ *Moskvitianin*, 1841, part 6, no. 11:1–3.

⁹⁹ Bulgarin’s decorative pseudo-Romanticism, as with many other writers of the time, was a pragmatic tribute to the fashion for Walter Scott. His true partiality lay with “moral-satirical” didactics. His personal take on the Enlightenment was the cult of the “bureaucratic” mentality—mundane, calculating, and prudently critical. This mentality is *moderate* in every sense. Accordingly, his Jewish witch communicates with her lover in the rationalistic jargon of the 18th century: “Are you not free from childish prejudices?” asks Mary. “Do you believe that one tribe is created by God better than another?” The enlightened author himself was “not free” from these prejudices (although he condemned them in *The Northern Bee*); yet, for his part, he interpreted “Jewish dominance” in a rationalistic manner, always admitting that Jews possessed unusual “minds” and “intelligence.” To the Romantic-ambivalent delight of her lover, who sees in Mary “the powers of hell or heaven,” she responds on the same skeptical note: “It is the power of the mind,” she objected, smiling” (Bulgarin, *Sochineniia* [Moscow, 1994], 515, 518, 524). In the insecure rationalism of Bulgarin the anti-Semite there appears to be a specific dualism, and more careful analysis will undoubtedly bear out the potential connection of the Jewish “mind” both to devoutly old-guard tirades concerning the “satanic arbitrary mind,” and to a new anti-Semitic thesis regarding the uninspired rationality of the Jews and their predisposition to deadening analysis.

¹⁰⁰ The stereotype of the Jewish harlot would be used in Russian literature much later (as in Chekhov’s “Tina”). On “the Christian image of the profligate Jewess” and on “the long tradition” into which it entered, see Gilman, *op. cit.*, 74.

enemy, Rachel!"¹⁰¹ Yet Rachel, rejected by her beloved (and then betrayed by her scheming father), prefers, with all of her Old Testament vengefulness, not the fate of Judith but rather that of Ophelia or Poor Liza from Nikolai Karamzin's novella of the same name: out of desperation she picturesquely takes her own life, throwing herself into the water "in all the beauty of Yid attire."

Even before this, E. Bernet (A. Zhukovsky), in his poem "Perlia, daughter of the banker Mosshiekh" (1837), in the vein of Walter Scott or Spindler, softened the opposition between father and daughter: she loves him sincerely, and the banker himself is not lacking in human attributes—he is generous and tender-hearted. It is another thing when Perlia's young fellow tribesmen attempt in vain to gain her hand: "Hope no more, my brothers! / This sacred fruit is not for you; / into the unworthy hands, / of the meek Perlia will not fall. / To be the wife of a coreligionist, / To kiss the sordid ice— / It would better that the maiden's heart / should be pecked out by a black crow!"

Naturally, the fiery Perlia finds her erotic ideal in a Christian. Hence Bernet imbues her characterization with the features of Sarah from *La Juive* while at the same time splicing the plot about the smitten Jewess to the Rousseauistic-Romantic trope about the touchingly trustful, unassuming girl who is unfamiliar with the hypocritical coquetry and prudence of the daughters of civilization.¹⁰² As in Lermontov's ballad, Pushkin's "The Prisoner of the Caucasus," and Baratynsky's "Eda," here again a familiar tension is at work surrounding an exotic maiden's love for a member of the enemy camp. Such narratives unfailingly lead to a sorrowful finale. Most of the time the heroine becomes, as in "Eda," the victim of the hero himself, who is exposed as a cruel seducer. In the end—and in accordance with the eclectic chaos so characteristic of late Romanticism—Perlia's Christian lover fulfills the function of a seducer, who was interested only in the heroine's riches and indifferent toward her feelings—i.e., he takes upon himself the canonical character role of the greedy and cynical Jew. The inhumanly deceived heroine, anticipating Kukolnik's Rachel or Pavlova's odalisque, contemplates a typical course of Jewish revenge:

¹⁰¹ Kukol'nik, op. cit., 449–50. Perhaps Rachel's inclinations here to witchcraft correspond in a certain manner to the fondness of her biblical namesake for idols (which she stole from her father); see Genesis 31:19.

¹⁰² Cf. her monologue: "But they know all about propriety,— / And Perlia knows more about feeling! / Foreign to me is the art of seducing / Lovers with words or clothing: / Yet I am able, with a passionate glance, / To answer soul with soul."

Now, without fear, I will render
 Righteous revenge for my shame

.....

And I will fill you not with kisses—
 But with poison!

But she prefers, as Rachel did, to commit suicide. Perlia drinks her Jewish poison—and just before she dies, she emulates Scribe's Sarah, forgiving her seducer in a Christian-like manner.¹⁰³

In Russia, however, the image of the meek young Jewish lady, exhibiting interest in the Christian and Christianity, also underwent various changes tied to a new reading of the Bible.

The Revision of "Esther"

V. Sokolovsky, arrested in July of 1834 for writing "libelous poems" about the tsar, spent a year and a half—from April 1835 until December 1836—in solitary confinement, where he studied Hebrew and the Bible along with biblical commentaries, and also translated the Prophets. While there, evidently following the example of Racine, he wrote the dramatic poem "Esther," and afterward started to write an epic poem about the Mother of God—"Al'ma" (from which later were published only extracts). After being released from prison, in the first half of 1837, he republished "Creation" ("Mirozhdanie") and delivered "Esther," under the new title of "Pury" ["Pur"—from Esth 3:7—with a Russian plural ending], to the general censor; but they sent it to the religious censor, who condemned the work, finding in it "much that disagrees with sacred historical truth." The author then renamed the poem "Khever" and gave the protagonists different names, after which he returned the text to the secular censor, whereupon the publication was allowed.¹⁰⁴ The apprehension of religious authorities was well founded: in his new poem Sokolovsky subtly imbued the bibli-

¹⁰³ *Biblioteka dlia chteniia*, 24 (1837): 5–28. Incidentally, the name of the heroine's father—Mosshiekh (a corruption of the Heb. *mashiah*—Messiah) is unknown among Jews; it belongs to the same collection of curious pseudo-names about which S. Ginzburg writes.

¹⁰⁴ On Sokolovsky, see A. Iu. Balakin's article "Russian Writers," in *Bibliograficheskii slovar'* (Moscow, 2007), 5:717–19. After his imprisonment, Sokolovsky was sent by the tsar first to the North, to Vologda, and then, after he became gravely ill, to the Caucasus. Sokolovsky died in a hospital for the poor in 1839, at the age of 31.

cal text and the dogma of the Trinity with an anti-Old Testament (and partially anti-Jewish) meaning.

To be sure, the author, in agreement with Church tradition, found it necessary to express a certain measure of solidarity with the people of Israel and Esther. At the same time, however, he so forcefully and entirely accentuates a typological, Christian interpretation of the story that any specific ethnic content is erased. Yet such a poetical-allegorical interpretation of events is ascribed only to Esther/Khever, mystically awaking to the truth of the New Testament, and not to the other Jews, who interpret the events with their typical tribal narrow-mindedness. This contrast is borne out by the argument that takes place between the heroine and Mordechai (presented under the name Asadai, her stepfather). He demands the execution of Dedal (i.e., Haman), the main enemy and tormentor of the Jews. Khever, on the contrary, makes an appeal to mercy in the spirit of the New Testament. It may be that her call to forgive the criminal was stimulated by the prison sufferings of the poet himself, though at the same time the theme of mercy bears out an acute theological dichotomy. Khever exclaims: "Let us repay evil with good / Rising above our *old* passions / Let us lay hold of what is now *new*. Forgive them . . ."—and further on: "—Stop, father! . . . You are *old*, and that dawn is *new*."¹⁰⁵ In response to Asadai's rejoicing—"Let everyone know that God is for Judah!"—she says: "No! . . . God is for everyone!"¹⁰⁶ He calls everyone to heaven." This variation—forgiveness instead of hanging—entailed condemnation not only of Khever's stepfather, but also, in effect, of God the Father Himself, who dealt with Haman in a completely different manner than what Sokolovsky's heroine was seeking (in the poem *Dedal*, contrary to the biblical Haman, is not executed, but rather dies by reason of his own madness).

¹⁰⁵ Vladimir Sokolovskii, "Khever'. Dramaticheskaia poema v trekh chastiakh" (St. Petersburg, 1837), 227, 242, 243 (emphasis mine).

¹⁰⁶ *The Northern Bee* reviewed "Khever" much more harshly than "Creation," perceiving in it an anachronistic influence of the Haskalah, with its humanistic ethics and monotheistic universalism. V. Stroeve wrote: "The first poem by Sokolovsky, 'Creation' . . . was inundated with applause and recognition from all readers and critics. His second poem, 'Khever,' in which Mr. Sokolovsky endeavored to present himself as a thinker, will not enjoy the same brilliant success. . . . Stick to what you know! . . . The poet mutilated a ready-made plot with addenda and long monologues in which he develops various thoughts unknown to the ancient Jews and only innovated in the last century. This is poetic license! . . . In the desire to give his poems a Jewish flavor, the author fell into the use of bombastic rhetorical figures" (*Severnaia pchela*, 1837, no. 295). A. Herzen called the poem "an absurdity."

In other words, the interpretation of both testaments is highly reminiscent of the one presented a little earlier in Mikhailovsky's *Bloody Vengeance*. It is this antithesis of the Law and grace that attracted Kraevsky, who in his *Literary Supplement to 'The Russian Invalid'* included "Khever" among "the most comforting and important literary phenomena of 1837" (piquing other publications, which sharply berated Sokolovsky's poem). On the one hand, he clearly contrasted the positive Jewish protagonists with the evil and lustful Gentile Dedal; on the other hand, he highlighted the New Testament alternative, embodied in the heroine: "You see here two representatives of Jewish people: the first, Asadai, is faithful to the faith of his fathers, loving Jehovah but still obeying the ancient Law, remaining within the sphere of ancient ideas and, consequently, cruel, violent, prideful; then there is Khever, a Jewess, who already possesses a ray of new grace, anticipating the laws of meekness and love told to us by the Heavenly Savior."

The triumph of the heroine, stresses the critic, is aligned with her purity and innocence—according to which an exaggerated Christianized Romanticism of the 1830s implied the total atrophy of the genital organs and sexual drive. Despite her harem physical beauty, "'Khever' is all love—yet love of the heavenly, spiritual kind, detached from the sensual world and totally devoted to heaven."¹⁰⁷ Indeed, Khever is oriented to the same purely otherworldly joy as her forerunner in Mikhailovsky—the prophetic virgin Mariamna, who, unlike her earthbound Jewish peers, dreams in Christian-like fashion only of death and "the long-awaited world"—the Kingdom of Heaven:

What joy elevates my chest!
My soul streams toward the New World;
There is no want on Earth, no sorrow,
No joy—my end is near!¹⁰⁸

In Bulgarin's prose, the image of the biblical heroine underwent a completely different transformation, far-removed from this righteous necrophilia. As we have seen, the story of Esther, transferred to the new, Christian era, was presented by him as a Jewish conspiracy against mankind. According to this interpretation the author's beloved "haidamaks" in "Esterka" identify themselves with Haman, envisioning the completion of his work:

¹⁰⁷ *Literaturnye pribavleniia k "Russkomu invalidu,"* 1838, no. 1:5, 8–9.

¹⁰⁸ M. Mikhailovskii, op. cit. 131.

It is for good reason that our king has been called 'Artaxerxes' . . . [;] Casimir invites Yids to come to Poland from everywhere, protecting them with privileges and—in an even closer parallel to the Assyrian [*sic!*] King, also has his Esterka and his Mordechai. Now he only needs Haman. . . . She does whatever she wants. The Yids own everything. The Yids have taken hold of all the gold. . . . They must also have their Haman, they must have Haman! Haman . . . did not like the Yids and wanted to kill them all. . . . Long live Haman!

Such a depiction of the heroine, of course, irreversibly diverges from the traditional theme of the lovely Jewess attracted to Christianity. As a compromise Bulgarin softens her image by contrasting Esterka with other Jews. Gathering in the woods, the terrible "Sanhedrin" condemns her to death for refusing to help her coreligionists take power in the country and for breaking the Law of Moses. But this verdict (which the Jews, however, had no time to execute) does not preclude a certain negative rethinking of her image by Bulgarin. In the end the author, for the sake of posterity, is compelled to justify Casimir's love for the righteous Esterka, who, sadly, continued to express no desire to become a Christian: "His grateful descendants forgave King Casimir his love for the beautiful Jewess. . . . Even in the sun there are spots; and heroes are subject to human weaknesses."¹⁰⁹

Also typical are the bloodthirsty monologues of Dedal/Haman in Sokolovsky, related by the author with clear relish, which feature a wide array of anti-Semitic invectives imported from Poland and Germany. Included in the list of the criminal offenses is even the accusation that Jews were fostering a spirit of revolution and anarchy (still premature for Russia). Dedal warns the king about the dishonorable and prideful people, full of "violent obstinacy," who have settled on his land. This people despises the king's laws and slanders the king, setting a dangerous example for his other subjects. Then something like a "final solution" is proposed:

Dedal

Judah—that foreigner! . . .

I must seize and discard him;

He is the root of evil and overall mischief . . .

Rafim [a compassionate character—M. W.]

. . . All the hundreds of thousands of them?

Dedal

Yes.

¹⁰⁹ Bulgarin, *Sochineniia* (St. Petersburg, 1828), vol. 3, part 6:7, 62. The data regarding his subjects "calling Casimir 'Artaxerxes' due to his love for a Jewess" are given with reference to historical sources (p. 63).

Rafim

And their wives? And their poor children? . . .

Dedal

All of them, Rafim, they must all be killed! . . .

It should be decreed that these dangerous criminals
Are to be hacked, burned, hanged, and suffocated.

The official Orthodox sympathies of the author are ultimately with the biblical Jews—yet certainly not with their contemporary descendants, who have hardened under the “old passions” of Mordechai.

Bestializing the Jewish Image

A sign of some hesitation in realizing the post-biblical Jewish theme, and an attempt at humanizing this theme, may be discerned in certain reverberations of Shylock’s famous apologetic monologue. These moments occur in the works of Shakhovskoi, Lazhechnikov, Kukolnik, Gogol, and even Bulgarin. Gogol’s Shylock—Iankel—defends his people thus: “Because everything evil that exists all falls on the Yid; because everyone takes the Yid for a dog; because they think that, as a Yid, he is not human.” Echoing him is Kukolnik’s Skharia, whom a Livonian knight compels to give false testimony in exchange for the right to live in Riga (“The Statue of St. Christopher in Riga,” 1840). Curiously enough, Skharia’s monologue is structured according to the French stylistic model—with the same symmetry of thesis and antithesis that occurs in the famous confession of Lermontov’s Pechorin:

O, yet again you take from us this horrible tribute for the right to hide in a dark corner of Riga! . . . Slander haunts the Jews, and to this slander they listen: guilty, not guilty—it’s all the same—the accusation is never lifted from them, and Jews have no other way but to carry on in the path of this slander. . . . We are poor; they demand riches from us: we must then start stealing; we are miserable; they do not believe us: we must take recourse to deceit, and then we feel better, at peace. . . . Suffering takes over and, angered by injustice, we turn into poisonous snakes, vindictive. . . . We are truthful. . . . but we must buy life at the cost of false testimony!! . . .¹¹⁰

But clearly this was in large part nothing but a thematic cliché; in most cases the complaints and protests of Jewish characters in literature were immediately discredited by their actions.

¹¹⁰ Kukol’nik, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 2:331–32.

Common sense, though not the most welcome guest for wide-scale anti-Semitic literature, once in a while seeps out onto its pages, albeit much more rarely than in journalism. In the long run it was simply impossible not to take notice of the phenomenal economic activity of Jews and the benefit that it was bringing—yet Zotov's protagonist interprets it in the following manner:

“Tell me, duchess, for God's sake, what is your business with this Yid? I have a very bad opinion about him.”

“I too, dear Leonid, but these nasty creatures represent an essential link in all of our business dealings; they are like leeches that suck the blood from society, yet which are very useful to the sick.”

“I hope you do not have any illness for which you will need the help of these vampires.”

“Sometimes also in the abundance of health and in plenty such animals are useful. To be sure, all of our landowners would perish without the Yids, for they would not know where or to whom to sell their wheat. Prussian merchants do not become involved in large ventures; each one buys only the amount that he can use, and they have no use for common trade. Only the Yids, as independent brokers, can dig customers out of the ground.”¹¹¹

With the exception of desirable Jewesses, escorts, useful spies, and sorcerer-healers—as well as harmlessly exaggerated everyday characters (cab drivers, craftsmen, etc. in early Gogol, Veltman, and others)—Jews in the texts of the 1820s–40s lost their basic human traits, as if to prove the words of Iankel: “they think that, as a Yid, he is not human.” The useful qualities of the “Yid” were also bestialized, always ready for application. It was enough to just stimulate him to action: “Hey, Iankel! ‘What is your order, Your Grace?’—the Yid factor inclined his ear, listened to the order, and quickly ran to where the crowd was thicker, sniffing, like a pointer dog, in every direction.”¹¹² Even in the novella *Red Ruby*, where the Gentile heroine, as we have seen, was patronizing Samuel, the image of the “kind Jew” is suddenly subjected to a grim correction. The duchess becomes sick when she hears that the wounded knight thinks that she is unfaithful, and she asks a Jew to untie her belt (in order to examine her). He, “shivering with his whole body,” does what she asks. “His thin, bony hands were shaking at the duchess's beautiful, rising peaches; it was the first time that *such an unclean creature* was coming so close to the throne of love.”¹¹³

¹¹¹ Zotov, *Leonid, ili Nekotorye cherty zhizni Napoleona*, 198–99.

¹¹² Dzhigitov (V. P. Titov), *Stoianka okolo Berdicheva*, in op. cit., 169.

¹¹³ *Kalendar' muz*, 1827:184.

Instead of human qualities the Jews are given those of Kukolnik's "asps" or Zotov's "leeches," the qualities of satanic reptiles and chthonic monsters: "Throngs of Yids appeared among the people, like reptiles creeping out of their holes at the appearance of light" (*Mazepa*).¹¹⁴ In *The Ice Palace* by Lazhechnikov (1835) the deceitful Lipman worked for his cruel lord Biron like "a mole in his hole, the dark tunnels from his hole being sufficient under all locations from the palace to the squalid hut." Moreover, in the chimerical portrayal of this executioner and informer the mole is for some reason combined with a hare: "his mouth stretched into a smile up to his ears, and his ears twitched like those of a hare." But this is a rather unique hare, ravenous and bloodthirsty: scoffing at the patriot Volynsky, "the villain prepared to finish slicing his enemy at the joints, and began wiggling his ears as a sign of triumph."¹¹⁵ His forerunner on the path of deceit undergoes a peculiar transformation in *The Last Novik*: "Abraham removed from himself several snake skins and, as a result, was in full possession of his hellish powers."¹¹⁶ In Grebenka's *Chaikovsky* the poisoner Rokhlia joyfully whispers about herself to her victim: "This is poison from a female snake whose children were taken away" (the female avenger here mistakenly kills her son).

In this literature, as in the vision of Pushkin's hussar, "the Yid marries a frog," and the sepulchral Sabbath (*shabash*) takes place under Jewish musical accompaniment, hyperbolized by an anti-Semitic imagination. This is how in 1833 Somov transformed the image of the cimbalom player Itska along with the entire theme of Jewish concerts: "The Yid goliath was sitting on his haunches before a cimbalom the size of a boat, on which the strings were no thinner than a rope; the Yid hammered on them with large rakes, shaking his pointy beard, blinking his eyes and distorting his

¹¹⁴ Bulgarin, *Sochineniia* (Moscow, 1990), 493. To be fair, Bulgarin entertained almost the same affection toward other nations as well—for example, toward the ethnically isolated inhabitants of Constantinople's Pera quarter, whose "only goal in life was the accumulation of money." So too "Armenians are only occupied with trading, exchanging and transferring money." As for serving the Golden calf, the Greeks are just as good as any of them: "Profit is their one deity, whom they constantly worship." Bulgarin has harsh words for "Asiatics" as well: "Ignorance, cruelty, and rudeness of manners are the main qualities of these peoples" (*ibid.*, 164–67). Against this consistently intolerant background a claim by Altschuller appears somewhat extravagant: "Bulgarin was one of the few Russian writers in whose writings there was no nationalistic arrogance or xenophobia. . . In his inclusiveness, tolerance, and absence of nationalistic arrogance Bulgarin was closer to Scott than other Russian writers" (M. Al'tshuller, *op. cit.*, 124–25).

¹¹⁵ Lazhechnikov, *op. cit.*, 2:118, 177.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 1:247.

face, which was already quite repulsive" (Somov, "The Witches of Kiev").¹¹⁷ Lazhechnikov's Lipman "was smiling with his huge lips in such a way that the host of spectators in Hell, no doubt, applauded this artistic arch-demonic smile."¹¹⁸

Even the forest is filled with an unclean Jewish spirit: "Here in Poland they travel in the thick forest, and in the forest it smells like . . . well, maybe it's onion or garlic . . . at any rate, it smells bad. 'Hey now, fellows,' said the colonel, 'can you smell it, the smell of the infidel bone?' 'We smell it,' replied the young men: 'It smells of Yid'" (*Chaikovsky*).¹¹⁹ Even the Russian house spirits take up Jewish habits, approaching the heroine "with a Jewish sneer, and villainous manners" (Baron Rosen, "The House Spirit")¹²⁰—and in Galician legends as well the house spirit was depicted in the image of a Jew. In Ukrainian, Polish, and Belorussian folklore the same image was ascribed to demons. In Polesie not only demons but also mermaids were called "peisaty" (i.e., adorned with *peyos*, or sidelocks), and Poles on the river Narew said that a water spirit looks like "a little Jew in a yarmulke and robe, murmuring something in Jewish."¹²¹

In short, if, consistent with its ideological assumptions, Romantic literature became the mouthpiece of the folk consciousness, then in this instance its function was to supply the educated layer of society with all the possible resources of folk anti-Semitism, making it a familiar and integral part of Russian culture.

The Rejected Brotherhood

Jewish characters often were excommunicated from human solidarity—indeed, from the "human race" itself—already in the 1820s, if not earlier. Such is the case, for example, with Prince Shakhovskoi—the same one who at one time wrote *Deborah*. In 1827 *The Moscow Herald* published "The Tatar Camp"—the first part of his dramatic trilogy *Kerim Girei*, which had been fully staged in 1825 and had experienced great and long-lasting success. (Excerpts from other parts were published in Bulgarin's

¹¹⁷ *Novosel'e* (St. Petersburg, 1833) [part 1], 348. This story, like his "Skazki o kladakh" ("Tales of Treasures"), was published under the pen name Porfiry Baisky.

¹¹⁸ Lazhechnikov, *op. cit.*, 2:97.

¹¹⁹ E. P. Grebenka, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* (in 10 vols.) (1902), 4:80.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 321.

¹²¹ Belova and Petrukhin, *op. cit.*, 455–56.

theatrical almanac *Russkaia Taliia* ["The Russian Thalia"] not long before it was staged, but the complete trilogy was not published until 1841 in the theatrical journal *Pantheon*.) The authoritativeness of this work by Shakhovskoi derived from the perception that the play was an open—though very free—variation on the theme of "The Fountain of Bakhchisarai" and was received by the theatrical audience, with Pushkin's silent approval, as a direct dramatization of his poem.¹²² All the scenes of "The Tatar Camp" belonged, however, to the dramatist himself.

A dedicated conservative, supporter of Admiral Shishkov, and hater of Protestantism and cosmopolitan theosophy, Shakhovskoi, by the end of the 1820s, became one of the most outspoken heralds of the Orthodox-Nationalist movement. In *Kerim Girei* his conservative thrust took on radically anti-Semitic forms, in that Jewish claims to brotherhood with other nations in Shakhovskoi are rejected not by Christians, but by Muslims, who have the most provocative mission of disputing the Old Testament, which established a common origin of the Jews and Ishmaelites as the descendants of Abraham. The Tatars are approached by the Jewish spy Khaim, endowed with such rascality that he even disowns himself:

"Ah, this is you, Khaim!"

"No, not I."

"But here is your face and beard. How come 'you' are not 'you'?"

"It's not I, and that's that."

"No, you are Khaim, the tavern-keeper, robber, and rich man."

Despite this restrained greeting, Khaim boldly insinuates himself among Ishmael's kin:

Khaim

"How can it be that good Muslims should not receive help from honest
Jews;

They are our brothers."

Makhmet (*Jumping up and grabbing a dagger*)

"Yid!"

Khaim

"What did I do?"

Makhmet

"How dare you

Fraternize with us?"

...

¹²² For more on *Kerim Girei* see S. N. Durylin, *Pushkin na stsene* (Moscow, 1951), 23–28.

Haim

“Not I! I heard from my people
That Ishmael is from among our people.
And that your prophet is from Ishmael’s race.”

Makhmet

“So what!”

Khaim

“So he is in some small part a Jew.”

Makhmet (*lunging with the dagger*)

“A Jew! Away with you, infidel! . . .”

Khaim is saved from impending death by a captive, the Christian Jan, who offers his own life instead: “Although he is a Yid, he has a wife, / A crowd of children. . . It is a good deed to save by my own death one who, although a Yid, / is nonetheless a person.”

This futile appeal to ancestral human solidarity in Shakhovskoi is also disavowed. Christian self-sacrifice and humanitarianism toward the Jews are completely inappropriate, for Khaim, although saved by Jan, is only full of boiling hatred for Christians. He helps the Tatars to destroy them, offering his service in the canonical character role of a spy or guide. Yet the reward for his efforts must still be death:

Khaim

“See now, I am serving you
And happy to go through fire and water for you.”

Girei (*following the Yid*)

“And there you’ll be!”

The theme of Jewish foreignness is reinforced here by additional assertions:

Khaim

“*Ours.*”

Yusuf

“Who is yours?”

Khaim

“*The same as yours.*”

Makhmet

“Excuse me?”

Khaim

“We are poor wanderers on the earth;
Whosoever loves us, he is ours.”

Makhmet

“I hate all of you.”

Khaim

“And we are praying to God for you all.”

Yusuf

“Who is asking you to pray?”¹²³

Gogol most likely became acquainted with “The Tatar Camp” in school in Nezhin, where he developed a taste for reading *The Moscow Herald*, even before becoming a genuine theater enthusiast. The motif of “yours” and “ours” was placed by him within a purely comical framework in the dialogue between Taras Bulba and Iankel, in which no real distinction is made between these two categories: “—What were you doing in the city? Did you see ours?’ ‘Did I! There are so many of ours there: Itska, Rakhum, Samuila, Khayvalokh, a Jew-tenant . . .’ ‘Hang them all, the dogs!’ exclaimed Taras in anger: ‘Why are you poking me with your Yid tribe! I’m asking you about our Zaporozhians.’ ‘I didn’t see any of our Zaporozhians. But I saw the nobleman Andrii.’”

More importantly, as we will see below, Gogol borrowed from Shak-hovskoi’s play the motif of the rejected brotherhood with the Jews, in the scene of a pogrom. His other source was Bulgarin’s *Mazepa*, where the Cossack ataman Palei, highly favored by the author, gives the order to drown a Jew, who with tears in his eyes was begging for mercy. Bulgarin’s Jew and Gogol’s Iankel¹²⁴ turn to their would-be killers with the same request (emphasis mine):

Mazepa

“O vey!” cried the Yid. “Most illustrious nobleman, please listen! . . . I will tell you . . . something very important . . . something very secret . . . Only show mercy . . . [T]ake pity on my wife and orphans!”

“I am not a nobleman, nor even a gentleman, but a simple Zaporozhian Cossack,” said Palei, “however, I am ready to listen to you.

Taras Bulba

“Most illustrious lords! suffer us to say a word, only one word! We will reveal to you what you never yet have heard, a thing more important than I can say,—very important!”

“Well, say it!” said Bulba, who always liked to hear what an accused man had to say.

Whereas in Somov the Jew pleads with his executioners, telling them of his readiness to become a Christian, in *Mazepa* the plea takes a different turn: the “important matter” formally consists in the fact that, in order to save his family, the Jew is ready to reveal to Palei a military-political

¹²³ *Moskovskii vestnik*, 1827, part 3, no. 11:228–29, 230 (emphasis in all of these citations is my own).

¹²⁴ Cited from *Taras Bulba*, trans. I. F. Hapgood, 106.

secret. However, the actual “matter” is really his reminder about simple, important, and universal human feelings, such as the sense of unity among all humankind. These are the “wife and children” of the executed Jew, on whom the tender-hearted Christian Jan in Shakhovskoi’s play takes pity:

“I have a poor wife and four poor children. . . . Without me they will die from starvation. . . . Forgive! Show mercy!” The Yid once again threw himself at Palei’s feet and wept.

“So this is your important matter!” objected Palei. “Your life, wife, and children are important to you, but not to me. Your little Yid-children will just turn into big Yid-rascals like you. . . . Into the water with him!”

Then the Jew, still hoping for salvation, openly declares his secret, but he is drowned anyway: “Into the water with him, men! . . . An eternal Sabbath rest to you!” cried the Cossacks. The throng resounded with their laughter.¹²⁵

This statement by Gogol’s Iankel prompts a similar reaction from the Cossacks (emphasis mine):

“We never yet,” continued the gaunt Yid, “have had any secret intercourse with your enemies, and with Roman Catholics we will have nothing to do; may they dream of the Devil! *We are like blood brothers* to the Zaporozhians. . . .”

“*What! Do you mean to say that the Zaporozhians are brothers to you!?*” exclaimed one among the throng. “*Don’t wait; accursed Yids!* Into the Dnieper with them, noble sirs! Drown all unbelievers!”

These words served as the signal. They seized the Yids by the arms and began to hurl them into the waves. Piteous cries resounded on all sides; but the grim Zaporozhians only laughed when they saw the Yid legs, encased in shoes and stockings, flailing about in the air.¹²⁶

There can be no question that the key—and, as stated by Iankel, inexpressibly “important”—word in this episode was prompted by Shakhovskoi’s term “brothers” (associatively connected with the overall symbolism of the novel, which explores, on the one hand, Orthodox “comradeship” and, on the other hand, the tragic decay of the Cossack family). Gogol preserved this passage in the expanded edition of 1842, which he prepared at approximately the same time as his text of “The Overcoat,” which is entirely devoted to the topic of brotherly love: here one’s neighbor is

¹²⁵ The above-cited passages are in the fifth chapter of *Mazepa*, which chapter Bulgarin, apparently hoping to advertise, published separately before the novel itself: *Kometa Bely. Al’manakh na 1833 god* (St. Petersburg, 1833), 309–10, 314.

¹²⁶ *Taras Bulba*, trans. I. F. Hapgood, 107–8 (here cited with some adjustment).

represented by the wretched, hunted Akaky Akakievich, and his moving plea: "Let me be. Why do you offend me?" The narrative voice comments, "and in these penetrating words rang other words: 'I am your brother.'"¹²⁷

That these "penetrating words," unlike the "important word" of Iankel, here become a moral imperative, is explained by Akaky Akakievich's membership in Christian society. After "The Overcoat" this philanthropic mood imbues all of Gogol's writing. He no longer touches upon Jews in any way, however, although it is interesting to note that, besides the negative resolution in *Taras Bulba*, one can discern the possibility of a different approach. Consider the following dialogue between Iankel and Taras (emphasis mine):

"Great lord! Most gracious sir! *I used to know your brother*, the late Dorosh! He was a warrior who was an ornament to all knighthood. I gave him eight hundred sequins when he was forced to ransom himself from the Turks."

"*You knew my brother?*" asked Taras.

"God is my witness that I did! He was a magnificent nobleman."

...

"Good," said Taras; and then, after thinking it over, he turned to the Cossacks and spoke as follows: "There will always be plenty of time to hang the Yid, if it proves necessary; but give him to me for today."

So saying, Taras led him to his wagon, beside which stood his Cossacks. "Now, crawl under the cart; lie there and don't move.—And as for you, my good men, don't you surrender the Yid."¹²⁸

The uncompromisingly rejected (so it would seem) brotherhood¹²⁹ is placed within a metonymical framework: taking its place is the Jew's acquaintance with Taras's brother, which rescues him. Iankel is pardoned this time by Gogol, for the simple reason that he is needed to serve as both an informer and guide for the protagonist.

As for the other examples, it will suffice for us to sum up the formulas of excommunication from mankind so as to clearly bear out their full conceptual uniformity. Thus (emphasis mine):

¹²⁷ All passages from "The Overcoat" are quoted from *The Collected Tales of Nikolai Gogol*, trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky, (New York, 2008).

¹²⁸ *Taras Bulba*, trans. I. F. Hapgood, 108 (here cited with some adjustment). This episode is symmetrically echoed later on in the novel, when Iankel, in turn, hides Taras at the bottom of his wagon so as to help him get to Warsaw to save his son.

¹²⁹ Cf. the similar, yet more complicated, interreligious situation that developed in Poland: M. Opalski and I. Bartal, *Poles and Jews: A Failed Brotherhood* (Hanover-London, 1992).

"How dare you fraternize with us?" (Shakhovskoi)

"Leave me, lovely Jewess:

I am a Christian and not your brother;

I only wanted to make sport of you." (Lermontov, Noemi's Dream in the drama *The Spaniards*)

"*Daughter of a rejected brotherhood.*" (Bernet)¹³⁰

"*What! Do you mean to say that the Zaporozhians are brothers to you!? . . . Don't wait; accursed Yids! Into the Dnieper with them, noble sirs!*" (Gogol)

As an exception, it must be said, it occasionally happens that a Jew himself rejects any notion of brotherhood with Gentiles. Such is the case with Kamensky's Malkh, who seems to redirect the anti-Semitic speech by Bulgarin's Palei: "'Your brothers, your sisters, your mother and father are not my brothers, not my sisters, not my mother and father; your God is not my God,' he said to the Crusader." (In point of fact, this denial is another example of the revision of the Old Testament text, as it represents an inversion of the lines by the biblical Ruth [1:16]—a non-Jew who wants to become a Jew: "Your people shall be my people, and your God my God.") Further on Kamensky lays out the same realistic motivation for this animosity: Malkh does not want to save the Crusader's family because the Crusaders killed his own family.¹³¹

The Brotherhood of the Rejected: Lazhechnikov's Heretic

This theme is resolved in a fundamentally different manner in Lazhechnikov's last historical novel, *The Heretic*, published in 1838 and reflecting the influence of recently translated works by Spindler and Capefigue. The novel is set at the end of the 15th century—approximately at the time when the events of Spindler's *The Jew* take place—and in the same German lands. In Western Europe this was the period of the Renaissance and the Reformation, one repercussion of which, according to the majority of historians, emerged as "the heresy of the Judaizers," which the mysterious Skharia (in the course of his novel Lazhechnikov changes his name to Zakharii) brought into Novgorod and which proceeded from there to Moscow, taking over its spiritual and governmental elite, including the

¹³⁰ *Biblioteka dlia chteniia*, 24 (1837): 9.

¹³¹ P. Kamenskii, *Iakov Molle*, in op. cit., 565.

prince's daughter-in-law, Elena. The educational impact of Jewish teaching is generally interpreted by Lazhechnikov, however, in a negative manner—as an ugly manifestation of European “15th-century curiosity,” which, unsatisfied with our planet, sought to steal the secrets of heaven. “This contagion” made its way to Rus “in the form of the Yid heresy.”

... Skharia boasted of his knowledge of the kabbalistic art. It pretended to solve the enigmas of life and death; the thirst for explaining these mysteries tormented the wise official [i.e., Fedor Kuritsyn, in effect Muskovy's Interior Minister—M. W.], and therefore he plunged headlong into this chaos, taking for his guide the cunning Yid. The powerful example of the official, the example of the wife of the young Ivan, Elena, who was infatuated by the quackery, the dexterity and cunning of the missionaries—credulity, sense, and folly—all united at length in maintaining the Jewish heresy, which had threatened, at Novgorod and Moscow, to shake the cornerstone of our well-being. Clergy and women, princes and serfs, rich and poor, crowded in multitudes to the synagogue. . . . So strong was the contagion that even the head of the Muscovite church, the metropolitan Zosima, took a lively interest in it. In his palace there not infrequently took place assemblies of the heretics

The arrival of Skharia in Moscow was, for his partisans and disciples, a veritable triumph. They said that he had obtained possession of a book, which Adam had received from God himself, and also the head of our primogenitor; that he had brought with him diverse new secrets that would astonish mankind.¹³²

For a long time the Grand Prince Ivan III himself supported this heresy, taking it for “a science of philosophy.” The protagonist of the novel also comes into close contact with the heresiarch. But unlike in Lazhechnikov's previous books, here the Jewish conspirator is portrayed very sympathetically. Like Samuel from *Red Ruby* or Spindler's kind and conscientious Ben-David, Zakharii (Skharia) harbors endless love and appreciation for his Christian protector—in this case, a Bohemian German and Catholic, the young noble Anton Erenstein, who is the protagonist of the book. At one point in Prague he saved his life, rescuing him from the hands of nasty schoolboys who were on the point of hunting down Zakharii with dogs.

Anton, because of complicated family circumstances, was brought up away from home, in wonderful Renaissance Italy, where he successfully studied medicine and other sciences. Soon after his studies he received an offer to come to Muscovy to become a physician in the court of

¹³² Lazhechnikov, *The Heretic*, trans. T. B. Shaw (New York, 1844), 102–3 (cited here with some adjustment).

Ivan III and promote the education of that barbaric, yet attractive and promising country. In Lipetsk the doctor is met by a certain Jewish coachman (who is in fact Zakharii), who takes him to Moscow. Learning about this from a trusted servant, Anton's mother is overcome by dismay: "A Jew!" exclaimed the baroness, clasping her hands and raising her eyes to heaven. "Mother of God, shelter him beneath thy merciful protection! Angels of the Lord, drive far from him every evil spirit!"¹³³ Yet the servant who saw off his master comforts her: from the exclamations of this "despicable Yid" he realized that the latter is selflessly devoted to Anton, since he owes him his life.

Following Old Testament habit and in the manner of Lazhechnikov's Abraham, Zakharii also gave an oath by his tribal deity. This was not an act of betrayal, but rather a promise of eternal loyalty to his protector in which, according to the servant, Zakharii kissed the fringes of Anton's clothing: "Thou art my benefactor, my savior!" he said. "... I can never forget your kindness; when I do, may the God of Jacob and the God of Abraham forget me! In Moscow I have many powerful friends, men of consequence: speak but the word; I am at your service. Dost thou need money? Say, 'Zakharii, I want such and such an amount,' and I will bring it to you in the darkness of the night. I will walk softly, I will not breathe, that they may not see, may not hear, that you had it from a Yid."¹³⁴ (Here it is worth pointing out that the historical Skharia's appearance in Moscow and the entire story of his earlier acquaintance with Anton are pure invention by the author.)

Just as Spindler's grateful Ben-David looks after Dagobert in every possible way, so Zakharii secretly looks after the young German, tirelessly protecting him from the numerous dangers that await the foreigner in Moscow, the citizens of which abhor this "heretic." After some time, however, a harsh persecution of the heresy begins and Zakharii is forced to leave Russia. Before his departure he says his goodbyes to Anton. The grateful young physician, nonetheless, ventures to show friendly emotion, yet only under the cover of night:

"How can I ever thank thee, good Zakharii!" answered Anton, pressing the Yid's hand with feeling. This expression of gratitude took place at night; no treasures would have bribed the young man to have touched the hand of

¹³³ Ibid., 11 (cited here with some adjustment).

¹³⁴ Ibid. (cited here with some adjustment).

the Yid by daylight, before witnesses, in spite of all that he had done for him. . . .¹³⁵

His gratitude is immediately put to a serious test, for many of Zakharii's "friends" are in fact his cohorts, the "Judaizers." The Jew reveals to Anton a terrible secret:

" . . . The miserable Jew, whom the schoolboys of Prague could with impunity bait with dogs—thy driver—is the founder of a far-reaching sect in Russia. Here I have my little empire; my word is law," (the Jew drew himself proudly up; his eyes sparkled;) "here I avenge myself for my humiliation in the German lands, taking with interest all that those close to me, my kind, deny me. In the families of princes and boyars, in the palace of the metropolitan, even in the family of the Grand Prince, I have my pupils and followers. Many women, through whom much may be done, notwithstanding their seclusion, are my most zealous protectresses.

The young man listened to the Yid's disclosure with horror.¹³⁶

This horror, however, does not prevent the characters from harboring mutual devotion. The Jew, moreover, is very well aware of his place in the hierarchy of humanity and thus delicately forestalls Anton's squeamishness: "Permit me—for a farewell—permit the Jew . . . here no man can see us . . . I will put out the candle . . . permit me to embrace thee, to press thee to my heart for the first and last time." What then follows is practically a utopian apotheosis of interreligious and international friendship:

The young man did not allow Zakharii to put out the candle; he embraced him in the light . . . with a feeling of love and sincere gratitude. . . . As he returned home, he deeply considered the noble sentiments of the Yid with peculiar gratitude; but he determined to make a proper ablution, after being touched by the hands that had crucified our Savior.¹³⁷

The scrupulous Anton himself soon became the victim of intrigues. Because he was unable to heal a Tatar tsarevitch they put him in prison, in order to later deal out to him a Tartar punishment. The prisoner is visited by Zakharii's main adjutant—the powerful official Fedor Kuritsyn,¹³⁸ who, by commission of the heresiarch, delivers to Anton food and "writing supplies." The hero, touched, asks Kuritsyn to tell his "good Zakharii":

¹³⁵ Ibid., 130 (cited here with some adjustment).

¹³⁶ Ibid. (cited here with some adjustment).

¹³⁷ Ibid. (for both this and the preceding citation; given here with some adjustment).

¹³⁸ The author, incidentally, nearly endowed Kuritsyn with sidelocks: "On his bald head, behind the ears alone, there remained, as if for a sample, two or three pair of orphaned curls" (ibid., 26).

... in the other world, at the throne of God, I will pray for the salvation of his soul. When thou see'st Zakharii tell him that I, before my death, thanked him with tears in my eyes; and that I will not forget him on high.¹³⁹

The nearest source for this scene, in all likelihood, was Spindler's novel—to be exact, the heartfelt retort by Dietrich (the father of the protagonist), spoken to the Jews and expressed at the very end of the book: "Dietrich wiped a tear: 'Have mercy, God, on these poor blind ones, so headstrong in their deceit. You have shown me kindness as a brother would, and like a brother, I am compelled to love you.'"¹⁴⁰

At the same time, the exotic friendship of Lazhechnikov's characters demonstrates a corresponding socio-cultural context: they are brought together by their outcast, castaway status. Back in the West Anton's profession put him in an ambiguous and dangerous position, and indirectly connected him with Jews, who were also constrained to take on the physician's trade. Quite naturally, Anton's father, the baron, bitterly endures the family's shame:

The son of a baron a physician? . . . Strange! Wonderful! How to reconcile with his profession the pride of the German nobility of that day? To judge what the baron must have felt, we must remember that at this period physicians were for the most part Yids, those outcasts of humanity, those pariahs of society. In our own time, and not far back, in enlightened countries they have begun to speak of them as men—they have begun to assign them a fixed station in the civic family; but how were they looked upon in the fifteenth century, when the Inquisition was established, burning them and the Moors by the thousands? when even Christians were burned, quartered, strangled like dogs for being Christians according to the theory of Wycliffe and of Huss, and not according to the canon of a Pius or a Sixtus? The rulers persecuted the Yids with fire, sword, and anathema; the populace, enraged against them by reports that they stole children and drank their blood on Easter-day, avenged on them one imaginary crime by real ones a hundred-fold greater. They thought God's light, the air of heaven, defiled by their breath, their impure eyes; and hastened to rob them of God's light, of the air of heaven. Hangmen, armed with pincers and razors, even before the victims reached the place of execution, ripped and tore the skin from their bodies, and then threw them mangled into the fire. The spectators, without waiting until they were consumed, dragged the horrid remnants from the pile, and trailed the tatters of humanity through the streets, bloody and blackened, cursing over them. To prolong, if but for a time, their miserable existence, the Yids undertook the most difficult duties: to avoid Scylla they

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 143 (cited here with some adjustment).

¹⁴⁰ Spindler, *op. cit.*, 4:432.

threw themselves headlong to Charybdis. The medical profession was then one of the most perilous: we may guess that a great number of these involuntary physicians deceived many with their involuntary science, or were paid with interest for their cheats and ignorance. Did the patient depart into the other world?—they sent the physician after him. . . . How many, then, of these martyrs must have perished obscurely, not deserving the mention of the annalist? After all this, a non-Yid must have possessed great self-denial, and great devotion to science and humanity, to dedicate himself to the profession of medicine.¹⁴¹

Even greater “self-denial” is expressed by Lazhechnikov’s “non-Yid” Anton, who decided to settle in the Moscow of that time, where superstition equated physicians with sorcerers. These circumstances also raise a certain affinity between the protagonist and Jewish practitioners of black magic. As it was, popular hatred had from the beginning equated the two newcomers—the “Yid” and the “heretic”: “Yids and heretics!” [. . .] “accursed heretics!” [. . .] “Dogs! . . . they crucified Christ! Yids! Devils!”¹⁴²

The plot of *The Heretic* was consistent with the new, moderately Western orientation of Lazhechnikov which, incidentally, engendered condemnation in *The Northern Bee* and *Son of the Fatherland*. The author borrowed the dark pictures of Muscovite isolation and xenophobia, as well as the central conflict of the book (the tragic fate of a foreigner from Renaissance Europe) and added the complication of a Jewish theme, from A. Timofeev’s novel *The Black Magic Practitioner* (1836). It is tempting to think that Anton’s selfless devotion to enlightenment, both premature and futile, in some way resonates with Zakharii’s “love of wisdom”; yet the author does not go this far. On the contrary, in explaining the Jewish heresy he returns each time to the old reductionist patterns, worked out by him already in *The Last Novik*. In the end, the entire grand conspiracy of the cunning Zakharii amounts to nothing more than trivial chicanery and schemes to make enough money to protect himself against persecution in Germany. Leaving Russia, the Jew carried with him “the rich offerings accumulated from credulity, from folly, and the love of everything wonderful, everything mysterious—that disease of the age. In his wagon he carried treasures wherewith in future time he might redeem himself and his family from the persecutions of the German citizens and princes.”¹⁴³

¹⁴¹ Op. cit., 12 (cited here with some adjustment).

¹⁴² Ibid., 30, 39, 133; see also p. 30: “foreigners and infidel heretics.” About these exclamations, and about Lazhechnikov’s repudiation of his former xenophobia, see also M. Al’tshuller, op. cit., 161.

¹⁴³ Op. cit., 132.

In other words, as the author reminds us, Western Europe was also overcome by a spirit of religious intolerance, and was in this respect not much different from barbaric Muscovy. Quite notably, therefore, the Catholic physician in Russia experienced the same fate as his Jewish colleagues in the West: he was executed for unsuccessful treatment. But the indecisive dualism of Lazhechnikov is seen here as well. The implied commonality of fates is immediately borne out by the same sort of anti-Semitism to which Jewish physicians in Italy became victim. On the last pages of his novel the author, with reference to historical events, adds that after Anton's execution his place at the court of the Grand Prince was taken "by Master Leon, a Yid by birth; . . . this master treated the young Ivan and killed him from overtreatment, and was for this crime publicly executed on Bolvanovka, beyond the river Moskva. At this no one was sorry: well did the villain deserve his torments!"¹⁴⁴

The dualistic position of *The Heretic* coincided to a certain degree with the humanist-paternalistic attitude toward Jews to which, by that time, Uvarov's administration subscribed, disapproving the segregation of Jews from society as an act that promoted their continued "moral corruption." This corruption itself was not questioned. Lazhechnikov, for his part, pointed to the constant "humiliation" of Jews: because of this, explains Zakharii, "our kind is so cunning." On this same basis the author explained the mercenary spirit he imputed to "black magic practitioners." The time had come when the Minister of Education decided to correct this and other Jewish flaws.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 148 (cited here with some adjustment). In point of fact, Master Leon treated the tsarevitch with cupping glasses applied to his back, from which he suddenly died—and the doctor was beheaded.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE JOURNALISTIC CAMPAIGN OF 1838 AND ITS REPERCUSSIONS

Preparation for a New Onslaught

In 1838, the same year in which Lazhechnikov finished writing his novel, the Minister of Education, S. Uvarov, met with enlightened Jews of Vilnius who had joined the so-called “Berlin Haskalah” (Nisan Rosenthal, Hirsch Zvi Katsenelenbogen, Israel Gordon), as well as with influential German *Maskilim* [i.e., proponents of the Haskalah, the Jewish “Enlightenment”] in order to discuss a program for Jewish education in Russia.¹ Soon, at the beginning of the 1840s, administrators would put the program into practice under the active support of the same radical *Maskilim* who had incited the government against the traditional values that they abhorred—such as the cult of rabbinic knowledge, Kabbalah, and Hasidism. Here they were met with the full and even excessive sympathy of the authorities. According to S. Tsinberg, “the progressives of the 1840s, true to traditions of the ‘Berlin Haskalah,’ held ‘enlightened absolutism’ in high esteem. . . . Progressives harbored no doubt that Nikolai’s administration bore the most humane intentions and were ready to carefully consider all Jewish needs. They believed that the government of that time was the embodiment of progress and culture.” As for Uvarov, adds Tsinberg, though he was quite wary about the enlightenment of the Russian masses, he, at the same time, “not only seemed friendly to our ‘*Maskilim*,’ but was indeed a sincere friend to the Jewish enlightenment,” for he “was deeply convinced that it was only by means of universal education that the Jewish ‘fanaticism of dissociation’ could be destroyed.”²

Under the circumstances, the administrative war with the “fanaticism of dissociation” would in time take on more severe forms, though the initial results of this collaboration immediately made themselves known. Already

¹ See M. Stanislawski, *Tsar Nicholas I and the Jews: The Transformation of Jewish Society in Russia* (Philadelphia, 1983), 63. On the further development of these reforms, and in particular on the role of Max Lilienthal, see *ibid.*, 69–109.

² S. L. Tsinberg, *Istoriia evreiskoi pechati v Rossii v svyazi s obshchestvennymi techeniiami* (Petrograd, 1915), 35.

in 1839 the censor placed a ban on *The Key to Jewish Kabbalah, with an Exposition of Spinoza's Teaching*. (It also banned a novel translated from the Polish, titled *Discovering the Secrets of Jewish Kabbalah, or A Picture of the Moral and Ingrained Prejudices of the Jewish People*.)³ It is symptomatic that one of the censors was the enlightened conservative Senkovsky, who was generally intolerant of any philosophy or esoterics. Even before that, however, the contacts made with *Maskilim* in 1838 impacted official and semi-official periodicals. At the end of 1838—practically coinciding with the publication of *The Heretic*—the *Journal of the Ministry of Public Education (JMPE)* published the lengthy anonymous article “On Judaism.” The journal, which only three years earlier had spoken indulgently of Molitor’s kabbalistic studies, this time treated Kabbalah as “the ugly fruit of immature scholarship and an Eastern imagination.” As one of my reviewers observed, this derogatory perception was perhaps a reflection of the animosity and contempt toward Kabbalah that predominated among the Jewish scholars of the time—the representatives of Prussian *Wissenschaft des Judentums*. Yet more pointed criticism in *JMPE* was directed against the Talmud, “which remains the sole center binding together all the dispersed Jews.” This connecting role was what most irritated the government publication. Whereas the book by O. Temkin, published in 1835, was primarily intended for the Jews themselves and for Christian clergy, the publication in Uvarov’s journal was aimed at a much wider bureaucratic audience. It first had to explain why it was necessary, specifically at that time, to expose this “dystopian, wicked, and pathetic belief,” which had long ago fallen away from the enlightened teaching of Moses and the Prophets. To be sure—as the journal notes—there were a great many Jews in Russia, and Christians would often encounter them and get into arguments about religion. The tone was mostly civil, with a pretense to objectivity.⁴

Disputing with the Jews about faith is of particular importance for the Christian: (a) because the Jewish faith is based mainly on the Old Testament writings and for this reason is worthy of respect; (b) because Christianity itself came out of Judaism and embraces in its composition all that is pure, universal, and eternal; and (c) because, finally, such disputation . . . precludes

³ D. A. El'iashevich, op. cit., 162.

⁴ Cf. the evaluation of this material by John Klier, *Russia Gathers Her Jews*, 176–77 (Russian version: p. 301). See also *ibid.* on the role of the anti-Talmudic book by abbot (and professor at the University of Warsaw) L. A. Chiarini, *Théorie du Judaïsme*, which was published in 1831 and exerted an influence on Russian publications.

any reconciliation and necessarily presupposes the baselessness and falsehood of one of two sides, that one being Judaism. . . .

To resolve their mutual disagreement Christians and Jews have two judges, the importance of whom is admitted by both sides: the Word of God as contained in the books of the Old Testament, and common sense. . . .⁵

The journal frowns, however, on the Jews for their irresponsiveness to Christian teaching, explaining this as a result of their “sensual way of thinking” and sordid worldliness. It also supplies corresponding bibliographical instruction. The danger of Judaism, emphasizes the anonymous author, is connected to the fact that it has always given birth to Christian heresy, such as “chiliasm, or the teaching concerning the earthly thousand-year kingdom of the Messiah,” which “to this day retains all its followers.” But Judaism represents an urgent threat to Russia’s well-being, a threat to which the author refers with deliberate brevity:

Moreover, Judaism has more than once directly intruded into the bosom of Christian churches, examples of which we have also had. We think of the sect of the Subbotniki [Judaizers], etc.⁶

The entire point here is represented by the “etc.,” which implicitly signifies the danger of new religious movements such as Protestantism, or the direct conversions of Orthodox Russians to Judaism.

In addition to these “two judges,” by which the Judeo-Christian argument may be impartially resolved, the journal should have added the third and most decisive: the Russian Criminal court, which restrained the Jews from excessive argumentation. According to article 202, volume 15, of the Code of Laws “if a Jew, Muslim, or idol-worshiper should, by force, deception, or any other means [for example, by logical argumentation—M. W.], compel an Orthodox Christian to forswear his faith and receive the other’s own law, he is to be stripped of all rights of possession, punished by whipping, and exiled to a forced-labor prison.” In other words, even though Judaism, unlike Christianity, did not endeavor to proselytize in their polemics, the Jews still had to be extremely careful. This was, as it were, a boxing match in which one of the fighters was constrained to fight with bound hands.

The problem, however, lay not only with the Jews. Nikolai had at that time adopted the course of general unification, part of which became Uvarov’s program as well. Already by the second half of the 1830s the

⁵ “Ob iudeistve,” *ZhMNP*, 1838, part 19:503–28.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 514.

government had enthusiastically embarked upon the reformation of “Judaizers” and other deviants, and at the beginning of 1839 it initiated the *voluntary reunification* of Uniates (Eastern Rite Roman Catholics) with the Russian Orthodox Church, a move celebrated by official publications.

But when, according to this article, did that “pathetic belief” appear that had replaced the faith of Moses? And what were the historical circumstances that predetermined its development and encouraged the rejection of Christ by the Jews? As it turns out, it all began several centuries before the Judaism of today, “during the time of the Babylonian captivity.” It was then, according to the article, that “sects first arose that deviated from the spirit of true religion . . . and prepared the foundation for the Talmud and Kabbalah.” The most dangerous of these sects was that of the Pharisees, who embodied “the soul of rabbinic teaching.” They grossly distorted “many important tenets, especially concerning the Messiah,” which is why “the true Messiah was unrecognized, rejected, and crucified, and because of this the Jewish people ceased to be the people of God.” Despite the destruction of Jerusalem, the victory of Christianity,

their world-wide dispersion, and all sorts of misfortune, the Jews continued to hope for the earthly kingdom of Messiah and to expectantly await a world conqueror to arise from among themselves. The Pharisees’ teaching, early on so favored by the people, took on more prominence than other sects. . . . The Talmud . . . , which was accepted among all the Jews, soon . . . occupied a place almost above that of the writings of Moses and the Prophets, casting a thick shadow over their true meaning. Kabbalah soon joined the Talmud as a metaphysical addendum to the historical-ceremonial collection. It represented the ugly fruit of combining rabbinicalism with the loftiness of Eastern philosophy. The abstractness of Kabbalah prevented it from becoming an integral part of overall Jewish teaching, and it remains accessible only to a few. Thus, by about the eighth century, Jewish education had already attained its present fullness.⁷

Touching upon the secular life of the Jews, the author remarks that today “their main occupation is commerce, and from this it follows that their national spirit is one of commercial speculation. In some countries they are beginning to receive full rights of citizenship, but for the most part their enjoyment of these rights is limited, and outside of Europe, especially in the East, they are still experiencing much persecution.” Judging from the tone, *JMPE* looked disapprovingly upon this “persecution,” but in general it avoided this disturbing theme and focused instead on reli-

⁷ *Ibid.*, 509–510.

gious issues. The article, in passing, briefly describes the structure of the Talmud—albeit expansively demeaning its “fables” and “absurdities”—, mentions some of its compilers, and even thematically enumerates the sections of the Mishnah, yet with some grammatical mistakes: graphically similar letters are confused—as, for example, *nun* (נ) and *gimmel* (ג). This confusion may be explained by the fact that the information was taken from secondary, German-*maskil* sources. Almost all the mistakes in the transliteration point to the same German-language sources—except for those that were prompted by Slavic-Greek practice (e.g., “vereshif” instead of “bereshit” [the Hebrew title of the book of Genesis]). The influence of the Haskalah is also evident in the respectful attitude expressed toward the rationalist thinker Maimonides, who was determined to systematize the “shapeless” Talmud and to allegorically reinterpret its “fables.”

In Kabbalah an equally direct emphasis is placed upon the magical, fundamental concept of *gematria*—which the author ridicules—as well as upon related beliefs and notions like *notarikon*. The principle difference between the Talmud and Kabbalah, from the journal’s point of view, is established by the two symmetrical flaws of post-biblical Judaism, “a religion that tends, on the one hand, toward exteriority and sensuality, and on the other hand, toward getting lost in the mist of arbitrary dreams and abstractions.”⁸ An absolutely unquestionable precondition for these apparently mutually exclusive “tendencies” (i.e., the material and spiritual) is not even clear to the accusers themselves: the Jewish rejection of the dogma of the Incarnation—that is to say, of the dualistic, “divine-human” nature of Christ.

In the same year—but this time in an academic journal—the archimandrite Gavriil (Voskresensky), in his rather primitive *History of Philosophy*,⁹ in passing reproaches “kabbalistics” as being “similar to the teaching of the Gnostics,” yet imbibing “lies about demons” and similar “fables of all sorts of crackpots.”¹⁰ Soon after this, in his chapter titled “Mysticism, Kabbalistics, and Magic,” Gavriil acquits the famous humanist of the 16th–17th centuries, Johann Reuchlin, the Hebraist and follower of Christian Kabbalah:

⁸ Ibid., 510.

⁹ In commenting on the first part of the separate edition of this work (in total six parts were published, from 1837 to 1840), *The Northern Bee*, which had no patience with “over-intellectualizing,” praises the author specifically for the fact that he “expounds upon the history of Greek philosophy without clever over-intellectualizing” (*The Northern Bee*, 1837, no. 141).

¹⁰ *Uchenye zapiski Kazanskogo universiteta*, 1838, book 2:154–55.

“In spite of the fact that he is lost in the labyrinth of rabbinicalism and kabbalistics, he does not transcend the bounds of enlightened intellect.”¹¹

The most complicated literary response to these sentiments turned out to be that of Durova’s hostler-kabbalist, in a novel finished toward the end of 1838. But Romantic judophobia, which disparaged Jewish magic, shied away from the enlightened rationalism that was given expression by Lazhechnikov. One response to his *Heretic* became Kukolnik’s drama *Prince Kholm’sky* (1840), which highlighted only one—the nationalistic—side of Uvarov’s ideology. Skharia’s undertaking is here brought down to the level of a satanic conspiracy against Orthodox Moscow, intended to obstruct its becoming the center of the coming Russian Empire. Lazhechnikov’s theme of a humanistic attitude toward Jews is rejected just as determinedly as the notion of any favorable influence by the West. Kabbalah and its attendant alchemy—this despicable mixture of charlatanry (“the magic lantern”) with black magic—are allegedly brought to Russia by Skharia. As we may recall, Lazhechnikov’s character was given a similar milieu, but Kukolnik adopts an extremely hostile tone. The Russian patriot—the prince’s jester Sereda—who is able to discover Jewish secrets (and so, like the protagonist of “The Jewish Family,” serves to advance the picaresque plot of the antinihilistic novel), scornfully declares to the exposed practitioner of black magic:

Begone, disappear, wicked one!
 With your Yid Kabbalah you could have killed
 Unrestrained or feeble-minded children.

With Kukolnik it is worth noting, among other things, that the motif of Gnostic acosmism is also present. His Skharia, similar to Baryshev’s Iakov, is engaged in astrology, which the author presents as a union of the Jews with dangerous cosmic forces. By censuring the Jewish astrologer, the dramatist unknowingly joins the ancient Gnostic-Manichean tradition, decrying the biblical Creator as the Lord of stars and fate. Consider Skharia’s hopes (adorned, to create a stronger ethnic flavor, with the nonexistent “Jewish” names “Ehim” and “Khevil”):

I believe you, traveling stars!
 By diamond-like ways you bear along
 The fates of kings, peoples, and centuries.
 You prophesied to the teacher Ehim

¹¹ Ibid. (1838), book 4:15.

About the rebirth of the Jewish nation,
 And since then, from the banks of Khevil
 To Volkhov, Israel multiplied!
 The wind of fatuity filled our sail,
 And our ark, rejected by the earth,
 Swept over the storms unharmed . . .

For a long time, Prince Kholm'sky of Pskov, an honest but naïve Westerner, believes in his astrology, infatuated by this “wind of fatuity.” The prince dreams about bringing European Enlightenment to his motherland, and therefore, at Skharia's instigation, comes out against a redemptive union with Moscow: he is convinced that the stars portend the flourishing of independent “commercial cities.” But, in the end, the prince is dissuaded of this idea by another patriotic character. The Orthodox sun of the Muscovite monarchy wins, and the dilapidated stars of nocturnal Judaism, and fainthearted Russian princes, succumb to his charms; indeed, the victory is portrayed with a backward glance at the Christmas troparion, except that Christ as “the Sun of Righteousness” (cf. Mal 3:20 [4:2]) is replaced with “the Russian Sun”:

The Prince, the Russian Sun, like God—United!
 See now, it is immovable above us—
 And the stars are falling, like autumn leaves,
 Just like you, O princes, before the Muscovite Sun.¹²

*“A Man of a Different Kind”: The Attack on Polish Jews
 in Senkovsky's Journal*

Returning to the journalistic campaign of 1838, it must be said that the most notable event was the extensive article “The Polish Jews” by Senkovsky (published in the *Library for Reading*), which was much more aggressive than the one in *JMPE*. In my detailed exposition of the content of the article, in the first (Russian) edition of this book, I pointed out that it is a compilation, the result of a coordinated journalistic campaign reflecting a government initiative. My assumption was quickly and fully confirmed by the archival research of O. Minkina. She established that the main source (but not the only one) for the article was an official treatise by Karl Fodello—a baptized Jew from Prussia who in 1806 became a

¹² N. Kukul'nik, *Kniaz' Kholm'skii*, in op. cit., 448–49, 465, 483.

Russian subject, and then a secret police agent.¹³ Starting in 1826 Fodello participated in the preparation of a new “Statute on the Jews,” and his memorandum, as Minkina points out, was given to Nikolai I on April 8, 1827. Senkovsky subsequently borrowed the text from the Secret Archive of the Third Department (Secret Police)—leaving no doubt about the specially ordered origin of the publication. Fodello’s treatise included an anthropological description of Polish Jewry, fully utilized by the *Library for Reading*—although the journal’s practical suggestions noticeably part ways with Fodello’s project, while his anti-Semitic attacks were sharpened and bloated. Be that as it may, this summarized ethnographical survey bears the imprint of that boundless arrogance with which Polish Jews were treated by the Germans and their urbane, Germanized Jewish compatriots, who, more than anything else, were afraid of being counted among their poor, unkempt Eastern relations.¹⁴ (Heine, however, displayed a shocking preference for the Polish Jews over his enlightened countrymen.) In essence, this constituted an amalgam of radical-maskilic criticisms and purely anti-Semitic accusations in the vein of Staszic and the German tradition. With this article Russian journalism had finally interlocked with the dominant anti-Semitism of the literature of that time.

LfR talks about the “territories of the former Polish Kingdom that belong to Russia, Austria, and Prussia. In other lands the primitive Jew almost disappeared and assimilated to the appearance, morals, and life style of the foreigner: here, on the contrary, he is a person belonging to a different part of society and *almost of a different species* in his physical and moral bearings. No wonder Russians know so little about the Jews, who comprise a large and most active part of the Empire’s population: this tribe is so different from anything else around that even those citizens of the regions where they are so numerous have false ideas about them. Nonetheless, precise knowledge about them is important for the ethnographer and for the political economist, for the government official and for the private citizen.”¹⁵ Indeed, of all these territories, the largest number of Jews, over a million, were then in Russia.

The appearance of the “primitive Jew,” emaciated and dwarfish, engenders revulsion: “pale and yellowish of complexion”; “a narrow chest, weak

¹³ O. Minkina, “Nevidimyi kagal. Iz tetradei Karla Fodello. 1827 god,” *Lechaim*, Oct. 2008, no. 10.

¹⁴ On this attitude toward *Ostjuden* see in particular John Klier, *Russia Gathers Her Jews*, 176 (Russian version: p. 301).

¹⁵ *Biblioteka dlia chteniia*, 28, part 3 (1838): 49 (emphasis mine).

of lung and leg." "Within thirty or so years almost every Yid becomes ugly or pitiful, if not outright repulsive." As usual, however, a pleasant exception is made for the weaker sex: "But among the women there are many noticeable beauties. Their skin is often thoroughly soft, their eyes captivating, their complexion beautiful." Yet the author is quick to bridle such erotic animation with the reasoning of cold intellect: "Nonetheless, when thinking this through from a dispassionate perspective, it is hard to understand how one whom nature did not make a Yid could be seduced by the beauties of a Polish Jewess. First of all, almost all of them have bad breath. When speaking they distort their faces, and because of this they develop contractures of the facial muscles." Those who are married, moreover, hide their hair "under a scarf."

Striving to increase their numbers, the Jews are weakened by early marriages. Overall, they are very hard to deal with. With respect to their appearance, because of their beards and the uniformity of their clothing, they are almost impossible to tell apart, which makes legal proceedings exceedingly difficult. (It is interesting that this popular legal argument was never extended to Russian peasants, who also wore beards and nearly identical clothing.) "The Jew has just as little feeling for the beauty of nature as for neatness"; he does not plant gardens; he does not keep animals and does not like to walk in the suburbs. He avoids hard labor: "the professions of blacksmith, carpenter, mason, stonemason—the Jew considers himself too weak for them. He is ready to become a tailor, lace maker, tinsmith, and so on, though very rarely a shoemaker. In general Polish Jews do not like any kind of work." Whereas they are no good for physical labor due to their laziness or "bodily weakness," the author continues, "their limited artistic abilities derive from their intellectual limitations," for "the fine arts are completely contrary to the Yid nature" (they engage in music only because it is "easy"): "They will never look at a painting, except to ask about its price, paying no attention to its artistic merit." Their only calling is commerce, because they have a "dry commercial spirit" which is marked by mental impoverishment. But in business they demonstrate an amazing energy: "the boldness of their dealings transcends understanding. . . . Some, during the last war, came from Trieste and Livorno with heavenly apples [i.e., "etrogs"—citrons ritually employed on the feast of the Tabernacles—M. W.] in order to sell these fruits to their coreligionists."

Spiritually they have been enslaved by superstition and ignorance. The Jewish religion of today, underscores the compiler, is not "the mild and simple faith of their ancestors, but subservience to . . . the Talmud, which

for them has completely taken the place of the Holy Scriptures and in which one frequently meets with absurd rules that completely disagree with rational thought.” This “distorted compilation,” written “in a vulgar language that is understandable only to a few” ought to be translated into the Polish language (an old idea of Staszic)—for then simple Jews would be able to see for themselves its absurdity. “Holy kabbalistics, the center of all wisdom for the scholastic Yid, consumes all of his intellectual abilities”; its adherents are immersed in “false teaching” and “are able to ascribe secret meaning to every letter of the alphabet”—in short, their minds are “deeply distorted by the study of the Talmud and kabbalistics.” All the “Hasidims” [*sic*] are kabbalists, worshiping “Sogar” (i.e., the *Zohar*, one of the central books of Kabbalah; this transliteration, as in *JMPE*, testifies to the article’s German sources). In raising their prayers the “Hasidims,” for some reason, sing, dance, and rejoice; and all their teaching is pure nonsense. Yet at their weddings it seems that the Jews do not celebrate, instead making their marriage covenant only for the sake of money. And even that does not bring any benefit: “They sacrifice everything for the sake of money—not to bring themselves pleasure, but just to possess it.” Explaining Jewish poverty in this way, as we can see, the compiler is in complete agreement with Russian writers such as Somov, Bulgarin, and Voeikov.

However, because of his egotism the Jew loves his wife and children, for he cares deeply about “proliferating” and longs “to see the expected Messiah arise from among his descendants.” “Some of them,” the author admits, “are very honorable.” The Jews even have some social virtues, though “they cannot be great.” Thus, “they are committed to the Russian government for offering them protection from feudalistic high-handedness [from the Poles—M. W.]... [T]hey are very caring toward their brothers: you will find parishes that support thousands of their coreligionists, providing them with food, clothing, and housing; they are charitable, when they have earned enough money: there have been cases when a Jew has even rendered such service to a Christian, whom the latter’s own brothers refused to help.” But, in essence, what kind of morality can these people really have? (It is only characteristic of the Karaites, who deny Talmudic authority.) Indeed, having said all this, their strongest passion is a vindictive hatred for Christians, “whom they willingly ruin with their slander and accusations.” The Jews live upon contraband and the sale of stolen goods—which is their real “kabbalistics.” For the most part they are heartless, and in their *kahals* [i.e., local Jewish communal councils, from the Heb. *qahal*, “assembly, council”] the rich severely exploit the poor,

hungry masses. The poverty of the latter has become worse as a result of the redemptive decree of the government concerning the house-to-house expulsion of the Jews from villages, where “Old Testament tavern-keepers” and their countless accomplices despoiled the peasants “like locusts.” The wisdom of these administrative measures deserves full praise—especially the decree concerning recruits, which opened to the Jews “the path to high honors.”

The date of this decree (August 26, 1827), along with the reference to the “Regulation” of 1835, clearly places the *LfR* article outside the chronological borders of Fodello’s memorandum. As insightfully noted by Minkina, the compiler irreversibly diverges from Fodello in his conclusions regarding the measures needed for changing the Jewish way of life. Whereas Fodello proposed the radical reformation and strengthening of *kahals*, *LfR* unquestionably censures them. To integrate Jews “within society” it would be necessary to completely eliminate the *kahal* system of self-government (described in detail in the article), *kahal* tributes (container taxes), and any display of ethnic insularity, including specialized clothing and ludicrous “German-Polish-Yid” jargon, meaning Yiddish; control over all the Jews was to be relegated to the Russian authorities (again, in Minkina’s view, contrary to Fodello, who complained about the mastery of corrupt district police officers). It is worth noting, moreover, that the author’s battle with “the top *kahal* hierarchy,” in order to rescue the oppressed Jewish masses, preceded the demagoguery of Jacob Brafman and his *Book of the Kahal* by three decades, and may have been in some way connected with the general populist tendencies that distinguished Russian policies in the western region after the Polish uprising of 1830–31. It should be borne in mind that strong attacks on the *kahal* system were also characteristic of *Maskilim*, especially those working under government contract. On the other hand, abuses by the *kahal* did indeed often create resentment among the Jewish masses.¹⁶

The author of the article very insistently contrasts the *kahal* with the rabbis. At some point the rabbis acquired the reputation for being educated and worthy people, “and retained this same distinction in England, Austria, Germany, France, Denmark, and Sweden,” though their administrative capacity was strictly regulated by the law. However, in the Polish Kingdom and in the Pale of Settlement their authority and all privileges

¹⁶ For details about the *kahals* see *Kratkaia evreiskaia entsiklopediia* (Jerusalem, 1988), 4:17–21.

were not only usurped by the *kahal*—the latter “also slowly destroyed the office of the rabbi; it remains now only among the Hasidim and in a very small number of other communities.” The author then underscores: “It is significant that in societies where the office of the rabbi was preserved—where, however, it does not retain its former importance—one can always perceive a greater morality and well-being; *state taxes are paid on time*, and the *kahal* does not permit itself the same abuses as in other places” (emphasis mine).

The marriage of moral and fiscal reasoning would inevitably have far-reaching consequences. In point of fact, this was the same course of action that was proposed in 1830 by the *Maskilim* and which, by the end of 1840, resounded in the *Notes* of Count P. D. Kiselev and thereafter in the recommendations of his Committee on the Radical Reformation of the Jews. The Tsar approved these suggestions and soon the authorities commenced their implementation, which in turn took on a bureaucratic-repressive character.¹⁷ In 1844 the *kahal* as an administrative institution was effectively eliminated (in the Polish Kingdom this happened already at the end of 1821), although it still retained its fiscal function, as well as the responsibility for delivering recruits—a measure that was devastating to the morale of Russian Jews and that undermined their national solidarity. The persecution of the *kahals* accompanied an attempt by the government to rely on the rabbis, as suggested by the author (or authors) of the article. As Elyashevich writes in connection with another topic, “from the first half of the 1840s it was the rabbis—willingly or not—who were the vehicles for governmental ideas in the realm of education and social order. It is also well known that, starting from that time as well, the authorities actually encouraged the growth of rabbinic authority while at the same time ‘tethering’ the rabbis to the government by conferring upon them various advantages and benefits—for example, releasing them from recruitment, etc.”¹⁸

Here we should add that such tactics reflected Nikolai’s general attitude toward the clergy. Under the administration of the Chief Procurator

¹⁷ See Gessen, *Istoriia evreiskogo naroda v Rossii* (Leningrad, 1927), 2:78–81; El’iashevich, op. cit., 195. Stanislawski (op. cit., 47–48) remarks upon the structural similarity between this policy and the earlier one that followed the uprising of 1830–31 and which was directed toward the Polish and polonized population of the western region (namely, the systematic liquidation of their legal autonomy and the persecution of small-scale *szlachta* [noble classes], who were reassigned on a mass scale to the status of *odnodvortsy* [“single-householders”] or “citizens”).

¹⁸ El’iashevich, op. cit., 620.

of the Synod at that time, Count Protasov, who, per the assessment of G. Florovsky, “was a committed conduit of Nikolai’s principles or regime in church politics,” the state organization of church administration “as a ‘specific agency’ among others” came to an end. Florovsky should have taken into account that, for the successful utilization of the clergy, it was necessary to raise their social status as well as to ensure their financial dependence on the state. This is precisely why, in 1842—approximately at the time that the authorities began to patronize rabbis—, the tsar appointed salaries for village priests (who until then, unlike city priests, were entirely dependent on parish donations).¹⁹ As Florovsky notes, Protasov, for his part, compelled them to study the rudiments of medicine and agriculture: for comparison we might consider the essentially identical—albeit differently executed—utilitarian approach to the idea of “state rabbis.” A commonality of methods is also evident in Uvarov’s project involving the creation of nationalized Jewish schools—and in the much earlier attempt by the same department to unify Orthodox religious schools with district schools, bringing them under the supervision of the Ministry of Education.²⁰

On the other hand, the author of the *LfR* article is extremely antagonistic toward the rabbis’ rivals—the traveling preachers that filled the western region. He ascribes to them the darkest penitential attitudes, tied to an awakened dream of Atonement, which embraced Jews in the Pale of Settlement for a very long time after the inauguration of the conscription regime (*rekrutchina*) and its mixed blessings. Here the author sees only an absurd and useless religious hysteria, aroused by these traveling orators: “Their messages ought indeed to stir the people to repentance, as they announce the imminent coming of the Messiah, usually speaking over the loud sobs of righteous Israel, before whom they portray hell with all its horrors and pronounce terrible curses.” According to writer, the *kahals* are also at fault for condoning this “tragicomedy,” despite the fact that “the senseless messages of these fanatics were highly detrimental to the morals and enlightenment of the Jews.”

Here we must add that this great contempt for the Jewish intellect, which had supposedly been ruined by religious prejudice and “the ludicrous and harmful Talmud,” later did anti-Semites a disservice when they

¹⁹ P. O. Lebedintsev, “O sposobakh sodержaniia pravoslavnogo dukhovenstva v Kievskoi gubernii,” *Rukovodstvo dlia sel’skikh pastyrei*, 1860, no. 10:239.

²⁰ G. Florovskii, *Puti russkogo bogosloviia* (Paris, 1937), 203–4, 209.

were stunned by the invasion of Jews into the fields of mathematics and other precise sciences. The castigators were unable to grasp that precisely their Talmudic studies, which aided in the development of logic skills, had served Jews as a wonderful preparation for this triumph.

The Odessa Alternative

As this was not yet the Soviet Union, but only Nikolai's Russia, such articles were not received with the force of directives; yet they often did engender clear opposition. As we will recall, in the early 1840s Avdeeva enthusiastically defended Odessa Jews from many attacks of the sort found in *Son of the Fatherland*. At that same time, as if in answer to the state-enlightenment, anti-Semitic campaign against Talmudic "fables," the Odessa *Maskil* I. Finkel published his translation of *Jewish Legends*, demonstratively "taken from the Talmud"—the poetic tales of Rabbi Akiva, King Solomon, and Rabbi Meir.²¹ These legends were published in *The Odessa Almanac*, at that time edited by Nadezhdin, who had for a long time shown an interest in the Jewish theme.

Like the Austrian *Maskilim*, Finkel loathed Hasidim but had a high regard for the Talmud. On both points he found common cause, on a shared rationalistic basis, with the conservative opponents of the Hasidism—i.e., the so-called *Mitnaggedim* (in Yiddish/Ashkenazic Heb.: *misnagdim*), or "talmudists," as they were designated in Russian publications. This commonality appears even more natural when one takes into account that Finkel himself came from an anti-Hasidic Lithuanian Jewish background.

In his extensive article of 1842, which we have already mentioned and which was reprinted from *The Odessa Herald* by the capital city paper, he assertively—yet not without challenge—tied Jewish devotion to the Talmud and Holy Scripture to the ideals of the Enlightenment as they had materialized in his native city. Finkel countered anti-Semitic tirades, of the type deployed in *LfR*, with an exhibition of renewed Jewish life that anticipated the Zionist program of national revival, with its ideal of efficient labor and a fully structured society. But Finkel located his Zion on the banks of the Black Sea. "Different trades and businesses," he wrote,

²¹ I. Finkel, "Evreiskie legendy," *Odesskii al'manakh na 1840 god* (Odessa, 1839), 291–97. Finkel studied *Aggadah* (early rabbinic legends and homilies) for many years, but it was only during the post-reform period, after his death, that the Jewish periodicals *Rassvet* and *Zion* published his vast collection of "Talmudic legends."

“are now flourishing among the Jews of Odessa. Each honorable tradesman lives a happy and carefree life.” Most importantly, the Odessans had developed a taste for those jobs that anti-Semites, such as the author of the article in *LfR*, had always thought beyond the strength of the “sons of Judah.” Many of them were laborers, longshoremen, and masons.

The Jews in Odessa have taken up various trades and jobs of sorts that one does not see among them in the other cities of Empire; and this is the greatest proof that Jews do not shy away from even the hardest labor, as long as it provides them with an honest, if small livelihood. . . . These day-laborers, usually older men [i.e., emigrants from the nearby regions—M. W.], make a touching spectacle when, during the suffocating hot weather, they go about their jobs in the open air and sweeten their hard labor with verses from the Holy Scripture and the Talmud. I must admit, such scenes unconsciously prompted heartfelt tears from my eyes. . . . People of the lower class, yet no less honest and hard-working, may be found working in quarries around the city, and there is no public building, and not a single church, for which the Jews did not cut a stone and water it by the sweat of their brow.

Such employment positively influenced the moral orientation of the whole Jewish population, including the more notorious factors [small-time middlemen], who are few in number here: “Obtaining an honest, albeit meager, subsistence for themselves under such conditions, it is not surprising that the number of factors in Odessa has been reduced incredibly, although they are completely innocuous.”²²

Finkel clearly considers this entire exhibition to be a prototype of impending Jewish well-being in Russia. Yet how could he explain such success, which created such a stark contrast between the city and the Pale of Settlement? “These conditions are: first, the geographical position of Odessa and the diverse make-up of the society itself; and second, the opening of a Jewish school in 1826” (i.e., the very institution where the author teaches Russian). Odessa, continues Finkel, “located on the bank of the Black Sea and surrounded by vast steppes, sufficiently removed from those places that have for a long time been populated by Jews, was at first filled with the most desperate opportunists, people without families, looking for luck or adventure wherever it might be found, who, like members of a marauding gang, would stop here as if camping out.” In other words, the city had all necessary conditions to foster the creation of a new ethnic type of Jew, the most beneficial of these conditions being, in Finkel’s view,

²² *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti*, 1843, no. 118:545–46.

the territorial distance of Odessa from the old Pale of Settlement, with its stuffiness and conservatism.

However, the Jewish enlightenment had stubborn enemies in the city, the most malicious of whom were the Hasidim. It is here, in a lengthy note, that the author finally presents the Russian reader with a coherent, although highly tendentious exposé of this “sect of Jewish rabbis, founded on the study of Kabbalah.” His animosity, interestingly, does not extend to the Ba’al-Shem—the founder of Hasidism, which Finkel considers to have completely died out as a movement. In any case, his discussion of this aspect of Jewish spiritual life parts ways with the understanding expressed by the author in the *LfR* article, who paid almost no attention to the Hasidim; and the government, despite the specific accusations, did not make any specific distinction between them and their opponents, the *Mitnaggedim*.²³ Finkel states:

This is not the place to expound on the intrinsic merits of the sect or to what degree the Hasidim of our day reflect the intentions of the sect’s founder, Israel Ba’al Shem, who lived during the beginning of the second half of the last century, in the town of Medzhybozh, in the present-day province of Podolsk. The heated imagination of the illiterate who are enamored with miracles finds abundant nourishment for itself in one of the sect’s tenets: “Emunas Khakhamim,” that is, the belief in the supernatural power of the rabbis’ prayers; and stories about the holiness of life and the miracles performed by the sect’s leaders comprise the topics of conversation of the always idle Hasidim during gatherings of the rabbis and the meetings in their prayer houses—gatherings enlivened by singing, dancing, hand-clapping, and a generally cynical joyfulness, for the Hasid must escape sorrow and sadness, and this impels him not infrequently to have recourse to the assistance of inebriation.

The author shares the extreme annoyance of the *Maskilim* and *Mitnaggedim* over the violation of decency that he perceives in the ecstatic character of the movement. He is also outraged by the Hasidim’s predilection for mysticism and metaphysics, totally foreign to the Haskalah. To this is added the general Enlightenment conviction that any religious elation has a commercial-economical rationale, and in this sense Finkel’s *zaddikim* are no different from the cunning and calculating “priests” of French Enlightenment mythology. At the same time, however, the author clearly respects Chabad—a movement that preserved close ties with the intellectual tradition of the Litvak *Mitnaggedim* among whom it was born:

²³ See El’iashevich, op. cit., 195–96.

The Hasidim are not satisfied by the historical or purely moral reasons for their religious decrees: the performance of every rite and every prayer has a higher mystical meaning, the power of which, according to them, influences the heavenly spheres: they attribute special power to the prayer and blessings of a Rabbi. The leaders of the sect and their myrmidons are striving by all means possible to encourage these latter beliefs among their adherents as a certain means of preparing a rich harvest. An exception to some of these attitudes is represented by the so-called Chabad-Hasidim.²⁴

The author's evident distaste for the kabbalistic idea concerning influence upon "the heavenly spheres," accepted by Hasidism, seems to me to have certain psychological foundations. One may discern here a sense of jealousy regarding the very claim to such influence. Indeed, educators such as Finkel also sought to influence the "higher spheres"—although not heavenly ones, but rather quite worldly, governmental ones, and in this they attained a certain success. In this case a mutual understanding was achieved on the basis of shared animosity toward Hasidic elation and its mediators. The issue at hand was perceived as a struggle between light and darkness, with the Hasidim for some reason representing the latter, despite their "cynical joyfulness" and buoyancy (emphasis mine):

Odessa Jewish society contained, in general, elements of European civilization as well as of ignorant fanaticism, and . . . from the beginning of its existence displayed the ability to accept any direction, however such might be presented to it by *gloomy Hasidism* or true enlightenment. Yet here, as anywhere else, the spirit of light overcame the spirit of darkness, and, due to a beneficial confluence of circumstances, the struggle was not long-lived: people who were truly gifted with talents and bright minds prevailed over the ignorant crowd, which blindly followed the suggestions of a few enemies of civic consciousness who knew well how to take advantage of its weakness.

This time city authorities enthusiastically supported the victory of light over darkness and resolved, at the insistence of the *Maskilim*, the problem of wandering preachers that so aggrieved the author of the article on Polish Jews in *LfR*. The era of prosperity was dawning, moving Jews toward Russian patriotism and the Russian language—the subject of the professional study of the author himself. The enlightenment, in accordance with the general tenets of Nikolai's regime, acquired an aspect that was not at all freethinking, but rather decorous and religious:

²⁴ *Ibid.*, no. 119:551.

From the walls of our city the wandering Hasidic rabbis are expelled, and the entrance is closed to them forever, which has given birth among these masters to the well-known saying: “Four miles from Odessa burns Gehenna.” It seems that deep-rooted prejudices are disappearing, abuse is being eradicated, and the seeds of civic virtue and love for mankind are, in general, germinating in the hearts of all Odessa Jews. . . . Everything is merging into one mass, everything is receiving a new and beneficial direction; the old indifference is gradually being replaced by a stronger, more consistent character, exhibited in the higher respect for religion. . . ., in better morality, more useful activity, love for the Motherland, and in the increasingly predominant Russian element, engendered primarily by the study of the Russian language.

Here, unlike in the shtetls of the western region, religious tolerance and pluralism reign. The Jewish inhabitants of Odessa demonstrate “the success of education in full bloom,” they possess all the “European languages used throughout the world,” and they comport themselves in such a way that the impressed onlooker “involuntarily asks himself: ‘And these are Russian Jews?’”²⁵

Finkel silently juxtaposes all of this maskilic splendor with a gloomy portrayal of Jewish everyday life and the Jewish people, with which anti-Semitic publications were overflowing—beginning with an article in *LfR*.

Filth, Blindness, and Disease

One of the most common accusations vented in *Library for Reading*, and exasperating Avdeeva, concerned “Jewish filthiness.” Since this touches upon an old and very tenacious anti-Semitic stereotype,²⁶ it is worth close consideration. The article about Polish Jews specifically singled out this supposed “filthiness,” rather than any of the other conditions in which “the followers of the Law of Moses” were placed, crowded into barracks in the Pale, to explain their real and alleged diseases:

Filthiness, unquestionably, is the main reason for their pale complexion and weak constitution. From childhood the Polish Jew is accustomed to living in self-neglect, a natural cause of all skin diseases, to which he is quite indifferent. . . . Generally speaking, the small homes into which they squeeze

²⁵ *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti*, 1843, no. 119:552; no. 120:556, 559.

²⁶ See, for example, A. Sokolova, “Belyi gospodin’ v poiskakh ekzotiki: evreiskie dostoprimechatel’nosti v putevykh zametkakh i iskusstvovedcheskikh ocherkakh (XIX–nachalo XX veka),” *Russko-evreiskaia kul’tura* (Moscow, 2006), 407–13.

with their whole families and where they live on top of one another must necessarily affect their constitutions. . . . Polish Jews very often suffer from diseases of the eye: their lifestyle, especially their food, is the sole reason for this; the room in which they live and sleep also includes the kitchen, and quite frequently in such living conditions one can hardly open one's eyes from the smoke.²⁷

With respect to similar ethnographic sketches, A. Sokolova reasonably remarks that “the lack of amenities” was not only a problem of the Jewish shtetls, but also of the small towns in the “central provinces.”²⁸ But was it only the small towns? Were things really much better in the capitals? The reader of Gogol's Petersburg tale “The Overcoat” encounters an equally unappealing picture, but this time in an “Orthodox version,” when the one-eyed Petrovich is introduced: the staircase to his apartment was “all dressed with water and redolent throughout of that spiritous smell that makes the eyes smart and is inevitably present in all back stairways of Petersburg houses”; the door to the apartment “was open, because the mistress of the house, while cooking fish, had filled the kitchen with so much smoke that even the cockroaches themselves could no longer be seen.”

There is no disputing the everyday credibility of such descriptions, but they also carry an additional semantic load. Dirt and stench are part of the usual entourage that accompanies the *unclean*, which, according to D. Chizhevsky and several other Gogol scholars, interlocks with the image of the tailor Petrovich. Jewish “diseases of the eye” signal demonic possession, as does Petrovich's blind eye or the smoky blaze, which obscures the gaze and connects up with the popular notion of the mutual blindness of the living and the dead.

As demonstrated in a special study by Sander Gilman on the somatic mythology of anti-Semitism—*The Jew's Body*—skin diseases, such as scabies, are indispensable attributes of the “dirty Jew” from the viewpoint of his enemies. But the diseases themselves, “written on the skin,” were considered a mark of national/ethnic rejection: “[t]here had been a long tradition in Europe which held that . . . the skin of the Jew is marked by a disease, the ‘Judenkratze’ or ‘parech,’ as a sign of divine displeasure.”²⁹

²⁷ *Pol'skie evrei*, op. cit., 30–31.

²⁸ *Russko-evreiskaia kul'tura*, 409–13.

²⁹ Sander Gilman, *The Jew's Body* (New York/Leningrad, 1991), 100–101. Concerning “parech” Gilman notes (ibid.) that it “was a disease long attributed to Eastern Europeans including Jews under the designation ‘plica polonica.’”

Parallel perceptions were acquired by Eastern Slavic folklore, including the Russian street invective directed to “parech Yids” (*zhidy parkhatye*).³⁰

In my opinion, the main features of such accusations are ultimately derived from the Old Testament, although the anti-Semites themselves may have not have realized it. This was, so to speak, a generic memory, manifesting itself in the diagnosis given by *LjR* to the emaciated and miserable Jews. According to the journal, “scabies, eye and chest diseases, and an overall appearance of ghastliness settled in among them.” The study of the Torah, and especially of the Talmud, grimly affected a Jew’s character and appearance—this was the cause of his “pale face; constrained posture; wandering gaze; cautious gait, with which he skirted every stone; beetle-browed look; skittishness; and tendency toward melancholy.”³¹ Moreover, this entire array, including eye diseases that lead to blindness (a synonym of or allusion to mental blindness), was foretold in the Torah where it speaks of the future exile of the Jews to foreign lands:

... and you shall be a horror to all the kingdoms of the earth. . . . The LORD will smite you with the boils of Egypt, and with ulcers and *scurvy and scabies*, from which you cannot be healed. The LORD will smite you with madness and *blindness and confusion of mind; and you shall grope at noonday, as the blind grope in darkness*, and you shall not prosper in your ways; and you shall be only oppressed and robbed continually, and there shall be no one to help you (Deut 28:25, 27–29; emphasis mine).

It would seem, moreover, that with respect to skin diseases, Christian judophobia stood closer to another source for such views, already mediated through Tacitus,³²—to wit, the biblical stories³³ about the temporary leprosy with which were smitten Moses (Exod 4:6), Miriam (Num 10:15),

³⁰ O. V. Belova and V. Ia. Petrukhin, op. cit., 285–86.

³¹ *Pol'skie evrei*, op. cit., 67–69. The inventory of Jewish sicknesses given in *LjR* corresponds very closely to the stereotypical inventory already presented in the medical conspectus of F. I. de La Fontaine, who in 1792 surveyed the new Polish provinces of Prussia and devoted a special chapter to local Jews. The sources of their sickness are identified as filth, the Jews’ surroundings, their food (which *LjR* also blames), and even their sexual habits—i.e., their early marriages, which weaken the bodily system of newlyweds (see Gilman, *Jewish Self-Hatred: Anti-Semitism and the Hidden Language of the Jews*, 153).

³² J. N. Sevenster, *The Roots of Pagan Anti-Semitism in the Ancient World* (Leiden, 1975), 142–43.

³³ Cf. in Gilman the similarly bible-related and extremely antagonistic description of Viennese Jews by the Bavarian writer of the end of the 18th century Y. Pezzl, who connects this odious image with “the twelve tribes from Galicia” and the High Priest of the Jerusalem Temple (See Gilman, *The Jew's Body*, 172).

and Job (Job 2:7–8), as well as the Mosaic laws concerning leprosy and scabies presented in the Pentateuch (Lev 15:32–56).³⁴

The notion of the Jews' religious-genetic "blindness" also suggests a correlation to the tendentious reinterpretation of Isaiah 6:10: "and shut their eyes, lest they see with their eyes." Most significantly, however, the Old Testament prediction of Jewish blindness (literally as well as figuratively) could be intentionally or unintentionally interpreted as a realization of Apostle Paul's metaphor concerning the decaying "veil of Moses," corresponding to the veil in the Jerusalem Temple, the blindness of the Synagogue, and the blindfold over her eyes.³⁵

On the other hand, the intrinsically "hygienic" aspect of the Jewish theme is connected not with the Bible, but with folkloric-semiotic universals, touched upon above. "Dirt and stench" is a cliché most frequently applied to foreigners, the image of whom, by definition, gravitated toward infernal associations. Jewishness emerged as the universal and ultimate cause of such demonization. Thus, for example, we find in Gogol's *Taras Bulba* "a dark, narrow street bearing the name of 'The Filthy' and also of 'the Yids' Street,'" and which "greatly resembled a back-yard turned wrong side out" (a demonic inversion of space); and the language of its meddling and ever-present inhabitants is such that "the devil himself cannot understand [it]."³⁶

³⁴ Gilman notes that as soon as syphilis began to spread in Europe during the 15th century, people began attributing this sickness to the Jews, since it also left traces on the skin. In my opinion there is no question of the direct association between this slander, which remained for a long time as a fixed feature of anti-Semitic mythology, with the aforementioned Old Testament leprosy and the Egyptian plagues (turned, as it were, against the Jews), as well as with the biblical laws concerning the isolation of men suffering from "discharges," which latter were often interpreted as sexually transmitted diseases. (L. Katsis, in an oral communication, also remarked the potential relevance to this issue of the Talmudic treatises concerning hygiene.) When it was proven that Jews suffered from fewer occurrences of syphilis than Christians, racist doctors began to explain this as the result of Jewish immunity to the disease, acquired over the course of many centuries (Gilman, *The Jew's Body*, 96–97, 100).

³⁵ Cf. L. Livak, "Prolegomena to the Study of 'the Jews' in Russian Literature," *Jews and Slavs* 13 (2004): 58.

³⁶ *Taras Bulba*, trans. I. F. Hapgood, 249, 253 (cited here with some adjustment). In the last instance we are also dealing with one of the central constants of the Jewish image that has become entrenched in other cultures, particularly in the German one. Gilman devotes much space to this linguistic theme in his book on Jewish self-hatred. See in particular the first section of the fourth chapter entitled "The Secret Tongue of the Jews" (Gilman, *Jewish Self-Hatred: Anti-Semitism and the Hidden Language of the Jews*, 137–39; see also pp. 24 and 71).

Without the magical undercurrent, and much more often than Gogol, the Pole Bulgarin loved to refer to “Yid filth.” Yet most likely he was using one stereotype to compensate for another one that was very offensive to him: notorious references to “Polish filth,”³⁷ which was a constant source of ridicule by foreigners, particularly German observers. Generally speaking, rebukes of this sort between national cultures that came in contact with one another were exchanged with great willingness. Russian travelers, starting with Fonvizin, were astounded by French filth, and the French—for example, de Custine—by Russian filth. The Jews, on their part, might easily have fended off Bulgarin’s attacks had they been reading his paper.

In the articles similar to the one in *LfR*, deliberate lacunae are no less telling than direct statements. Thus, ridicule over the supposed absurdities of Jewish education obscured the fact that the overwhelming majority of the empire’s Christian population was illiterate, whereas nearly all Jewish men knew how to read and write—even if they were reading the wrong books and in the wrong language.³⁸ In condemning Jewish uncleanness, the author says nothing about ritual Jewish baths—i.e., mikvahs—which had played a significant role in their everyday life³⁹—his reason being, no doubt, not to put the neighboring Christian population at a disadvantage and not to undermine the reader’s faith in its superiority. To be sure, “Yid filth” was even rebuked by provincial young ladies—those who in their own homes were accustomed to washing according to occasion: “for a large” or “for a small décolletage.” Ethnographers, incidentally, are well aware that in the Ukrainian provinces practically all the baths (“lazni”) were formerly mikvahs.

Also characteristic here are some troubling yet rather vague remarks concerning Jewish childbearing and love for their children. “For all that,”

³⁷ The medical literature even reflected this attitude: the official term for plica (matted, crusted hair) was *plica polonica* (see Gilman, *The Jew’s Body*, 172).

³⁸ Citing the ruminations of captain Vasiliev, Minkina also notes his concerns that the Jews “cross the line of education needed for the people.” “It is remarkable,” remarks the scholar, “that Vasiliev arrives at this conclusion based on data from the region, never having heard about the amount of scholarship among the Jews” (O. Minkina, “Zhandarmy i tsadiki. Kapitan Vasil’ev v poiskakh rossiiskogo Bar-Kokhby.” *Lechaim*, 2008, no. 5:49).

³⁹ To be precise, he mentions the *mikvahs* nearly 30 pages later—at a point where he needed to condemn the love of profit on the part of the *kahal* administration, which farmed taxes from the baths. Hence the reader suddenly finds out that “almost every Jewish community has its own baths for men and for women. These establishments are divided into spring-fed baths, hot and cold” (op. cit., 83).

the author sadly notes, “the Jews increase their numbers much more than Christians.”⁴⁰ Their alarming numbers could be explained not only by reason of the biblical command (which the writer, in order to avoid arguing with the Bible, preferred to ascribe to the evil Talmud), but also by their adherence to very simple hygienic laws⁴¹ and constant solicitousness toward their children. In the surrounding milieu they experienced yet a different attitude. In 1908 Vodovozova recalls how matters would have stood even in the family of a landlord in the mid-19th century—with reference, incidentally, to the Smolensk region, directly bordering on the Pale of Settlement. Speaking of “the enormous mortality rate” among the children of the nobility, she says that at that time “very few reached maturity”:

It could not be otherwise: at that time among the landlords any understanding of hygiene and the physical nurture of children was entirely lacking. . . . Children’s rooms were extremely stuffy: all the younger children were put into one or two rooms, and right there with them on the benches and trunks, or simply on the floor, shoving underneath them whatever rubbish came to hand, slept the nurses, nannies, and maids.

Superstition went hand in hand with the lack of cleanliness. In many families where there were young potential brides there reigned a belief that black cockroaches portend happiness and a quick marriage, and therefore many of the landlords’ wives would breed them on purpose, placing them under the lower molding of the inside baseboards with pieces of sugar and black bread. In such families black cockroaches would fall like stones at night upon the sleeping children. As for other parasites, such as red cockroaches, bedbugs, and fleas, they would bite the children to such an extent that many of their faces were continually covered with some kind of rash.⁴²

In other words, regardless of how shabbily everyday shtetl life may have appeared, there was still no true basis for anti-Semitic sanitary-hygienic

⁴⁰ “Pol’skie evrei,” *op. cit.*, 53.

⁴¹ When an epidemic of plague broke out in Western and Central Europe, in the middle of the fourteenth century, the death rate among the Jews, because of their hygienic practices, was significantly lower—which in turn prompted mass pogroms: the Jews were accused of bringing on the plague. (Later, notes Gilman, this accusation was replaced by insinuations regarding sexually transmitted diseases, including AIDS.)

⁴² E. N. Vodovozova, “Na zare zhizni” (Moscow, 1987), 1:96–97. Cf. *ibid.*, 99–100, regarding the constant beating of children who “were completely without rights, like serfs,” and regarding their nutrition: “Most of the tastiest pieces went only to the strongest—which is to say, the parents or the older children. . . . Every jar of spoiled jam or marmalade would be shown by the nurse to the mother, who, after tasting it, would say something like: “What a tragedy! To be sure, this is no longer good for anything! Well, then—give it to children!”

snobbism⁴³—not to mention the Christian *a priori* certainty of their superiority. Nonetheless, it was specifically this certainty, encompassing all aspects of Jewish life, that fully shaped the politics of the government as they strove—up to a certain time—to integrate the Jews into Russian society.

⁴³ For skeptics I would suggest turning to the writings of Gleb Uspensky or Leskov's "The Cattle-Pen."

CHAPTER NINE

BAPTISM OR REPATRIATION?

“A Forgiven Thief, a Baptized Yid”

The Haskalah invoked the lost universal values of the Old Testament, and the Ministry of Education, in an attempt to acculturate contemporary Jews, sought to place its policies within the same historical retrospective. In 1841 the *Journal of the Ministry of Public Education* published a compiled anonymous essay titled “On the Enlightenment of the Jews of Antiquity,” where a critical discussion appears concerning the return of the popular notion that this was a culture that borrowed from other cultures. This polemic, no doubt, also merged in the minds of the publishers with the doctrine of “Official Nationality,” according to which the development of Russia was built upon benefiting from the best foreign achievements— not rejecting them. In this context the accusation of Jewish “borrowing” seemed totally inappropriate:

They say: the Jews did not create anything by themselves, but rather adopted the best from the Egyptians and other nations. Without denying this at all we say that it is good to adopt intentionally and important to put what is borrowed to good use. In the example of denizens of the New World anyone can see that the active attempts at their Enlightenment have gone without success for a long time. However, it is impossible, without obvious injustice, to refuse [the Jews] a place in the history of enlightened peoples of antiquity.

Following this are references to “the time of Solomon” and to Deuteronomy 4:6, praising the wisdom of the Jewish people.¹ But what lends the article topicality is the idea that the enlightenment of Russian Jews by the state has enabled them to master a “better”—namely, Christian—culture.

Just as in Russian internal politics, so too in literature the Jew, even the “enlightened” one, had only one theoretical means of gaining entry as an equal into Russian society: conversion to Christianity. Hence N. Polevoi,

¹ *ZhMNP*, 1841, part 31, no. 8, issue 5:68.

already in 1826, made a subtle distinction between the two religious categories. Refuting the statistical data of a Danish journalist concerning the population of Jewish people in the Russian capital, he specifies: "In Saint Petersburg there is *not a single Yid* who is a permanent resident, *with the exception of Jews who have converted to the Christian faith.*"² In actuality, however, they still remained "Yids" to their new coreligionists, and the attitude toward them was defined by a proverb that remained unshakably popular: "There is nothing worse than a medicated horse, a forgiven thief, or a baptized Yid." Gabriela Safran—who cites this proverb in a slightly different version—says with respect to the fate of General Arnoldi, the former Cantonist: "No matter how convinced certain Jews may be that they had successfully managed to adopt non-Jewish culture and enter non-Jewish society, their 'true' identity will always remain unchanged—both in their own eyes and in the eyes of other Jews and non-Jews, who will, all the same, never forgive converts their Jewish background." Safran continues, with reference to Jeffrey Brooks, that in the popular literature of the last decades of the 19th century there "can hardly be found a Jewish character who converted to Orthodoxy and assimilated among the loyal citizens of Russian Empire."³ However, in the literature of the first decades of that century that is precisely the picture painted: but baptism did not at all affect the status of converts, who continued to exemplify all the sins of the rejected tribe. We have already seen in *The Last Novik*, by Lazhechnikov, how the converts Niklaszon and Avraam comport themselves, or Lipman in his *Ice Palace*, whom the author mistakenly also made into a convert. The righteous patriot Volynsky tells him with disdain: "Who will believe a Yid or an anabaptist? An informer, scoundrel, besmirched with mud from head to toe!" The author himself explains: "Born a Yid, he will remain a Yid, even though he renew himself on the outside with water and the Spirit."⁴ Exceptions were made only for gentle Romantic Esthers, yet even their conversion to Christianity is fraught with tragedy:

² *Moskovskii telegraf*, 9, no. 10 (1826): 167 (emphasis mine).

³ G. Safran, "‘Perepisat’ evreia . . .’ Tema evreiskoi assimiliatsii v literature Rossiiskoi imperii (1870–1880 gg.)" (St. Petersburg, 2004), 10, 17. Originally "Rewriting the Jew: Assimilation Narratives in the Russian Empire" (Stanford, 2000).

⁴ I. I. Lazhechnikov, *Sochineniia*, 2:76, 176. It is true, as noted by Altschuller (op. cit., 149), that the writer for some reason made the righteous (because he supported Volynsky's anti-German conspiracy) Eichler a nephew of Lipman, but the Jewish background of this positive character is not mentioned in the novel.

Yesterday at daybreak I had a dream
 That my beloved baptized me:
 It was not into a baptismal, not into a baptismal that he lowered me—
 He lowered me into a grave.

(E. Bernet)

Naturally, the truth about their Jewish background caused the native Christians horror and fear:

And for a long time the fishermen, in speechless fear,
 Stared at the departing Yids, and crossed themselves. . . .⁵

The semantic design of these scenes of self-disclosure remained the same over many years:

1830: "Listen to me! . . . I am a Jewess!"—Ognevik involuntarily drew back.
 (*Mazepa*)

1843: "Why do you stare so? What do you see? I am a Jew!" . . . With horror everyone stepped back from Gertsik (*Chaikovsky*).

Somov's cunning, sneaky convert Leiba, who became a haidamak, retains his Jewish greed and so prompts this rebuke from his comrades: "It looks now like you are still the same Yid: with you everything is for the sake of gold,"⁶ In *Mazepa* the covetous "convert from among the Yids, the hetman's favorite" continues to make his living by the traditional ethnic means—"spying" and commerce: "The convert, having forsworn the faith of his fathers," writes Bulgarin, "nonetheless retained their custom: he . . . looked for profit in everything, using people like merchandise."⁷ (Bulgarin's constant "moral-satirical" incriminations of the Jews with respect to their involvement in spying and commerce sounds especially impressive coming from the lips of this informant for the Third Department and leading representative of "the commercial trend" in Russian Literature.) "Jews who profess the Christian faith for the sake of converting things into money" are mentioned even in his satirical fantasy—the novel *Mitrofanushka's Adventures on the Moon*.⁸ In Bulgarin's view, moreover, conversion to Islam also does not change the Jewish nature. In *Ivan Vyzhigin* a "Yid renegade" becomes a Muslim and castigates his former coreligionists for serving the Golden Calf; it turns out that the renegade himself is a thief, liar,

⁵ N. Kukol'nik, *Kniaz' Kholmsskii*, in op. cit., 495.

⁶ O. M. Somov, *Byli i nebylitsy*, 31.

⁷ F. Bulgarin, *Sochineniia* (Moscow, 1994), 551.

⁸ *Severnaia pchela*, 1837, no. 133.

and trader in live merchandise. Baptism could even serve as a means for a Jew to become French. In his satirical sketch of 1826 entitled “A Man of Taste” M. Bestuzhev-Riumin (1798–1832) depicted an adroit and flattering rogue, capable of adapting to every situation and able to develop skillfully profitable friendships: all of this constituted his “taste.” At the sketch’s conclusion, the author comments: “His father, most likely, was also a man of taste, for he considered that it was an unpleasant thing to belong to a tribe that does not enjoy society’s high opinion, and . . . he transformed from a Jew into a Frenchman!”⁹

The fact that in Germany converts experienced no better attitude could be discerned by the Russian reader from Spindler’s novel, in which we meet the terrible villain Tsodik, who tirelessly takes vengeance on mankind for his forced baptism: “And thus, slowly but boldly, he proceeded in the path of evil deeds.” Another character summarizes the attitude toward converts: “A baptized Yid! . . . This is a dangerous people: often they are Christians only on the outside, but in their hearts—the most evil of Yids!”¹⁰

We have already met a Germanized convert, though of a somewhat different kind, in Lazhechnikov: outwardly his Elias Niklaszon is a fairly respectable person, but in reality, as we know, he is a traitor, flatterer, and swindler. In addition to this he is a “vodka producer”—that is to say, an improved version of the tavern-keeper. Niklaszon is a “young, adroit Jew, converted to Christianity and prepared to change his faith on a daily basis, as long as that change will bring him money”; “[this] descendant of Judas was secretive, smart, and cunning.” The money-maker’s characteristics were romantically interwoven in his portrait with demonic and brigand-like attributes: “His face was always smiling, yet in his chest hellish passions were at work. . . . His facial features were regular but disfigured by a scar on his forehead, the indelible sign of a violent life.”¹¹ Niklaszon, just like Bestuzhev-Riumin’s character, served as the material from which Gogol would later fashion his Chichikov in *Dead Souls*.

In 1835 Voeikov had already parodied the chronic demonism of romanticized converts in his story “God’s Judgment”: “The postman Negodiako was an anabaptized Yid, scarcely able to read the writing on his letters; in his barbaric soul burned an animal passion and Asiatic jealousy; it took

⁹ *Sirius. Sobranie sochinenii i perevodov v stikhakh i proze*, published by M. A. Bestuzhev-Riumin (St. Petersburg, 1826), 109.

¹⁰ Spindler, *op. cit.*, 1:434; 4:125.

¹¹ I. I. Lazhechnikov, *op. cit.*, 1:120–21, 375–378.

over all his abilities, darkening his kinder thoughts and feelings”; “He had rough features, a stern and loud voice, an unpleasant grin, and something deathly in his bluish-pale face.”¹² Ironically, the “deathly” features presented here were also an echo of the stereotype that imputed to the Jews, if not criminal passions, then a vampire-like ghastliness. (In point of fact, the combination of both was a typical feature of all Romantic demonization.) Yet this deathliness is much the same as that which Voeikov earlier attributed to soulless Jews of the Adamsky family, who settled in St. Petersburg.

In 1837 Senkovsky gave sepulchral, vampiric qualities to his character Shpirkh in the novel *Prejudice*, where death itself moves through the streets of Petersburg in the shape of this “accursed moneylender”:

Along the Kamennoostrovsky bridge a small black figure slowly moved along, bent into an arc and seated in a dirty, broken-down droshky drawn by a sickly horse.

... Shpirkh was a microscopic creature, grimy, pale, skinny, dried up, without substance or blood, without feeling, without a heart, without a soul... This house spirit of Nevsky Prospect—a moving skeleton on springs—was as light as a marrowless bone, boiled down in a pot and covered with leather or skin alone.

At the same time Shpirkh has an inexhaustible talent for shameless mimicry (anticipating Chichikov’s talent). Only one indirect detail points to his Jewish background:

He is French in those homes where they adore the French, even those like him, and he is German with those who condemn everything French. On Sundays and important holidays he is Russian; *on Saturday he probably reverts to his true nationality, for on Saturday you cannot find him anywhere.*

And further:

With him everything is assessed in rubles and kopecks—weather, intellect, mud, life, beauty, friendships, passions, and pleasures—with whatever interest and redrafts might accrue if it were all deposited in the bank. And his mind? His shallow mind was fashioned like a counting board, upon which he arranges all his feelings, hopes, and prospects with inhuman precision, and upon which his cold, stiff deliberations move like balls on a wire, with a deathly thud.... He is unable to think or converse without contrivance; the usual rhetorical device in his conversational style is evasion; and when he decides to distinguish himself by honesty, leaving your pockets at peace, his

¹² *Literaturnye pribavleniia k “Russkomu invalidu,”* 1835, no. 38, 302–3.

trickery involves only the sounds of the alphabet, and he expresses himself using wordplay. You can fool him as much as you want: he'll take everything with a smile, without becoming angry or red; but when you sign over the bill to him, all of your quips and all of his smiles will come out in the sum total of capital and interest.¹³

Specialists on Lermontov are well acquainted with the fact that Senkovsky's Shpirkh found renewed existence in Lermontov's drama *The Masquerade* (published in 1842), where Shpirkh is transformed into the evil moneylender Adam Sprikh.¹⁴ This is how he appears in the dialogue between two characters:

Arbenin

...

I do not like him. . . . I have seen many mugs,

But one like this cannot have been concocted on purpose;

A wicked smile, eyes . . . just like glass beads.

To look at him, he is not human—but he is not a demon either.

Kazarin

Ah, my brother—what do his looks matter?

Let him be the Devil himself! . . . he is still a useful man,

You have only to ask, and he will lend.

I cannot tell what nationality he is:

He speaks all languages.

Most likely he's a Yid.

He knows everyone, has dealings everywhere,

He remembers everything, knows everything, is always busy,

¹³ Baron Brambeus [Senkovsky's pen name], "Predubezhdenie. Stat'ia odnogo che-loveka," *Biblioteka dlia chteniia*, 7 (1834): 221–23 (emphasis mine). Senkovsky, however, does not concentrate on the supposed Jewishness of Shpirkh and in the same story mentions, without any reference to Shpirkh and in an entirely neutral manner, one of the novels by Disraeli, which is discussed at a high-society gathering. Characteristic of the editor of *LfR*—a professional scholar and an equally professional journalist—was a rather far-reaching and essentially ambivalent interest in the Jewish people. This attitude led Senkovsky to countenance both laudatory and extremely aggressive assessments, such as those contained in the article about Polish Jews. Among other things, Senkovsky—who loved to taunt Russian nationalists and refer to ancient Rus as "an extension of Scandinavia," and to Russian byliny (epic tales) as variations of Scandinavian sagas—noted in passing the direct dependence of the chronical tales of St. Vladimir on the Jewish book *The Kuzari* by Judah ha-Levi (d. 1141). See also his article "Skandinavskie sagi," *Biblioteka dlia chteniia*, 1 (1834): 31.

¹⁴ See in particular S. Ivanov, *M. Iu. Lermontov. Zhizn' i tvorchestvo* (Moscow, 1964), 130.

He has been beaten more than once—with infidels, he is an infidel;
 With the holy hypocrites, he is a Jesuit, with us—a fierce gambler;
 And with honest men he is the most honest of all.

A. Penkovsky, in his very substantive book, noted “the play on his name: he (consistent with the literary tradition of naming Russian Germans . . .) is Adam [meaning “man” or “human” in Hebrew], but, according to Arbenin, he is not human!”¹⁵ This insight, I believe, should be corrected: the issue here lies not with “Germans,” but with the markedly Jewish background of the name *Adam* Sprikh, which establishes a connection to other unbaptized moneylenders of Petersburg via the similar name “Spirkh.” (The connection implies that they too are “non-human” “Adams”).

In 1840 the number of these vampires increases with the help of I. Panaev’s character. In his story “A Wonderful Man,” published in *Notes of the Fatherland*, we meet a certain

creature of very short stature with oily black eyes, with crimson-colored cheeks and a diamond ring on his finger—a quite mysterious creature. It served in some department, rarely “attended to duties” and received a salary of only 450 rubles per year; . . . yet this creature lived in an apartment costing 2,500 rubles, wonderfully furnished, with candelabras, mirrors, and bronzes; he had two trotters, globe-shaped droshkies, and a coach. . . .

This is Shneid, my dear friend, a lovely chap: a moneylender, he takes 50 or 60 percent, sometimes capital for capital, and with a deposit. In Petersburg, they say, there is a happy hunting ground for loan sharks. He is one of those Yids, and, you know, Yids and Armenians love money. . . .¹⁶

It is understandable that the literature of “Official Nationality” would exclude baptized Jews from utopian pictures of Russian national unity. Notable in this respect is the novella “The Arrival of the Vice-Governor,” published in 1839, by Zotov, who had by then become a very popular dramatist and belletrist. The utopia of brotherhood receives a favorable bureaucratic guise. The novella, as it were, delicately corrects the plot of Gogol’s *The Inspector General*, recounting the story of the honest and hard-working young clerk Vladimir, who decides to bring order to his native city, to which he has moved from Petersburg in order to take the position of vice-governor. Here he meets his old acquaintance from Petersburg, a

¹⁵ A. B. Pen’kovskii, *Nina: Kul’turnyi mif zolotogo veka russkoi literatury v lingvisticheskom oveshchenii* (Moscow, 22003), 57.

¹⁶ I. I. Panaev, *Izbrannaia proza* (Moscow, 1988), 162–63 (emphasis mine).

repulsive rogue and schemer, formerly called Laiba, but now known as Lev Lvovich:

“My God! That Yid is here? Now I remember him. He made the circuit in every foyer . . . He was called Laiba, but, it would seem, he’s been baptized and now goes about in tails. . . .”

“Out your way he became rich by tax farming,” explains Vladimir’s companion, “then he joined a guild and came here to work in the bureaucracy. He is already an office clerk, brother, almost an officer.”

This is, unquestionably, yet another literary fantasy on the theme of the tax farmer Leib Nevakhovich, who after baptism became Lev Nikolaevich. In this instance, most likely, the author’s personal experiences were also brought into the story. Zotov was forced to leave his post as director of repertoire for the Russian theater amidst a scandal in 1836, the same year in which Nevakhovich’s oldest son, Aleksandr Lvovich, began his successful theater career. At that time he became secretary to the director, and later he himself became head of the Repertoire Department. Zotov then went for many years without a permanent post. In his novella he settles scores with his successful rival, caricaturing the image of the latter’s father in every possible way, portraying the new Christian’s treachery, meanness, and nosiness. Zotov’s character, together with the German gold digger Karolina Karlovna, had, by the time of Vladimir’s arrival, managed to seize full control of the city. In other words, the novella incubates a pair that is in the end well prepared for the antinihilistic novel or Dostoevsky’s grotesque caricatures.

The patriotic hero saves the city from this unclean dominion. Giving the clerks prudish admonishments and uniting them into a family of citizens, he majestically ignores the pitiful and servile Lev Lvovich (whom, however, he continues to call Laiba):

Walking about the gathering during the conversation and at last seeing Laiba, who had been bowing to him this whole time, Vladimir silently passed him by without giving him a single glance. Yet Laiba was not one to be put off by such an encounter. He followed after Vladimir with the same deep prostrations and, finally touching Vladimir’s boots with his hand, made him stop.

The subservient convert immediately accosts the new authority with a denunciation of one among the present gathering. It is in vain, however, for Vladimir still takes no notice of him; incriminating information received from a Jew, even if it is the truth, by default does not warrant attention, and the vice-governor immediately comforts the victim of denunciation: “I have heard not even a word from Laiba and, in any event, would much

rather believe you.”¹⁷ In this enlightened bureaucratic city Laiba is a new arrival from the realm of the dead, a ghost disconnected from the spiritual revival of its residents.

The Struggle for Zion

In spite of this socio-cultural blockade, the Russian administration during the pre-reform period firmly believed that redemption for the Jews lay only in their forced assimilation. Hence, there was no need to talk about their return to a homeland. In the meantime the situation in Palestine was irreversibly changing, especially starting in 1831, when the country was taken over for an entire decade by an insurgent pasha—the viceroy of Egypt Muhammad Ali. It was during this same period—the 1830s–40s—that, in anticipation of the inevitable partition of the Ottoman Empire, Protestant England and Catholic France undertook by every possible means to activate their presence in Lebanon (gripped by the interminable Druze-Maronite conflict), as well as in Damascus and the Holy Land. Russian periodicals also record the incursion of Western pilgrims, geographers, and simply curious observers. Thus, in 1834 *Telescope* translated an article from *Nouvelle revue germanique* entitled “Syria and Palestine in Their Present-day Condition.” This review article (mainly occupied with decrying the greed and devilry of the Palestinian Bedouin) opens with the statement: “Those countries in which the people of Israel arose merit the highest degree of scholarly attention as those who first understood the exclusive teaching of monotheism. In these countries the commercial and industrial spirit of the Phoenicians flourished, as the Phoenicians covered the seas with countless ships. . . . These countries spark our curiosity with their ancient history and attract our attention also in this era in which we live.”¹⁸

During this period Russia entered into energetic, though not very successful competition with the West, first and foremost with France, rapidly increasing missionary and intelligence activity in Palestine¹⁹ and generally in Turkey. The director of intelligence was K. Bazili, introduced to us

¹⁷ *Sto russkikh literatorov* (St. Petersburg, 1839), 1:202, 273–74.

¹⁸ *Teleskop*, 1834, no. 7, 391–92.

¹⁹ *Siriia, Livan i Palestina v opisaniakh rossiiskikh puteshestvennikov, konsul'skikh i voennykh obzorakh pervoi poloviny XIX veka*, compiled by M. R. Ryzhenkov and I. M. Smilian-skaiia (Moscow, 1991), 40, 244.

above, now in the Russian Council in Beirut (incidentally, he was Gogol's classmate in the Nezhin Gymnasium). In time Russian ambitions would devolve into the Crimea War, the cause of which was, as is well known, interdenominational squabbling over the right to repair the cupolas above "the Lord's Sepulcher" and over the keys to the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. But this rivalry also bore additional religious nuances tied in with the Jewish question.

As was mentioned earlier, from the end of the 18th century—mainly after the Napoleonic Wars—in Western Europe, above all in England, interest steadily increased in the idea of Jewish repatriation. This theme, which was connected with Byron's nostalgic *Hebrew Melodies* (1815), also echoed in Lermontov's adolescent drama of 1830, *The Spaniards*. This play contained a variation of the poem "Oh! Weep for Those"—to wit: "Weep, Israel! O weep!—your Solim is deserted!..." In these verses Lermontov also employed the motif of "Israel's scattered race" from "The Wild Gazelle": "In the deserts your tribe is dispersed."

Touching upon these poems and alluding, in particular, to Byron's "Zionophilic" sentiments, L. Grossman speculates that "Lermontov, 'together with Byron,' could well appreciate the sympathy of the English poet for the people who were at that time denuded of equal rights even in 'liberal' England. Familiar with the biography of the creator of 'The Corsair,' Lermontov would have known that Byron had defended Jewry in his famous speech of 1812 in the House of Lords and in his works constantly remarked upon the unshakable perseverance of the Jews throughout their severe misfortunes. All of this may have influenced the creation of Lermontov's first tragic images, in which, as in Byron, we can discern in the defense of this ancient people a 'concern about their modern fate.'"²⁰ But Lermontov was not alone in partaking of Byron's stylizations—Rotchev, Borozdna, and other poets also took a fancy to them. In the first of his "Jewish Songs" ("Triumphant, bright, and rosy . . .," 1838) the seventeen-year old Apollon Maikov, in the spirit of the time, laments over the destruction of Zion, and, in agreement with the Bible, foretells its triumphant revival.²¹

Meanwhile, proto-Zionist activity in the West was taking hold in larger and more diverse circles. In the 1830s–40s it engaged Scottish mission-

²⁰ L. Grossman, "Lermontov i kul'tury Vostoka," op. cit., 719.

²¹ A. N. Maikov, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* (in 4 volumes) (St. Petersburg, 1914), 1:46. We would also call attention to the earlier "Imitation of Psalm CXXXVI" by Iazykov: ("In the days of captivity, full of sorrow, / On the banks of Babylon . . .").

aries, American Mormons,²² British ministers, and, among the Jews of Great Britain, Sir Moses Montefiore. In 1839 he visited Muhammad Ali to make an agreement concerning the settlement of Palestine by the Jews (the pasha approved the agreement)—but soon became engaged in neighboring Damascus in the fight to save the Jews who, in February 1840, were accused by French consuls of ritually murdering the Capuchin monk Father Thomas. This Damascus affair, which incited violent protests against France (Russia was among the protestors),²³ only encouraged the desire of the Protestant world for a positive solution to the Jewish question—but in France it resulted in an explosion of anti-Semitism.

Already in 1829 *The Northern Bee* took up the topic of Jews in the Holy Land. This was a new and unusual event for the Russian reader and one that undermined all of his cherished stereotypes of the commercial predilections of the Jewish people. The article “The Jews in Syria”—in the column on “Ethnography”—, talked about the inhabitants of Tiberias, a city in Galilee:

Tiberias, one of the four holy cities according to the Talmud, is located on Lake Gennisaret. The majority of the Jews living there are not involved in any commerce; it is a society of religious people, participating only in the rituals of their faith; you can hardly find anyone who is becoming rich through commerce, and those who are incessantly occupied with study and prayer call the others “kafry” [from Heb. *kofrim*, heretics] or “those of little faith.” Religious Yids come together in these four holy cities from all parts of the world and spend their lives in prayer for their own salvation and the salvation of their brothers, tossed about in the storm of the world. Observing their religious rituals is even more important to them because, according to the Talmud, the Universe will devolve into primordial chaos if people do not pray to the God of Israel at least twice a week, in the four Holy cities. This is why Jewish missionaries are annually sent out—some to the shores of Africa, from Daliett to Mogador, others to the shores of Europe, from Venice to Gibraltar, a third group to the Archipelago and Constantinople to collect alms to provide food for their religious brothers, who by their righteousness

²² The Mormons, having inherited the Puritanical self-identification with the ancient Jews, also saw in America “a New Zion.” But for them “America was only an interim Zion...; the original Zion would be restored when the Jews returned to Palestine” (L. Harap, *The Image of the Jew in American Literature*, 136).

²³ Nikolai I, according to Jonathan Frankel, hesitated, supposing that “there is no smoke without fire,” but on this issue found solidarity with England, Austria, and Prussia. Until May 1840 Russian publications were completely silent about the Damascus affair, but then they did touch upon the subject, albeit rarely and sketchily, defending Jews from slander; see J. Frankel, *The Damascus Affair: “Ritual Murder,” Politics, and the Jews in 1840* (Cambridge, 1997), 139–40.

are saving the world from the threat of catastrophe. . . . Jewish worshippers spend all day in the Synagogue, repeating verses from the Old Testament or the Talmud, which many of them know by heart.²⁴

Avraam S. Norov (the future Minister of Education) traveled in 1835 to the Holy Land, strangely believing in the success of local Protestant missionary propaganda—though not finding the courage to tie it directly to Jewish repatriation. In general, when speaking about the local Jews, he continually expresses a certain ambivalence. On the one hand, they seem to stand closer to Christianity than their brethren in exile, and therefore repatriation to Palestine is for them a good thing (but even here, as we will soon see, Norov is not very consistent); on the other hand, according to his conviction, this country in which they so longed to live is already forever lost to them:

Interestingly enough, the Jews born here consider themselves foreigners. In general Palestinian Jews have an advantage over others in religious and moral respects. Christian missionaries have clearly brought benefit to them by shaking the Talmud's authority and turning the Jewish people toward careful study of the Old Testament, which has already drawn many of them to Christianity.²⁵

It is not clear whence Norov derived this encouraging report, which diverges so much from the aforementioned description of the Palestinian Jews' attachment to the Talmud. In any event, such information was completely unknown to Bazili, who, throughout the term of his service, followed British political and missionary activities much longer and more attentively than Norov. By the end of 1847 he finished his fundamental book about Syria and Palestine—which, incidentally, enraptured Gogol, who wrote about it to Zhukovsky in February 1848 from Jerusalem: “[It is] an ocean of knowledge, and interest is strong. I know of no other book that gives the reader so much knowledge of the essence of a part of the world.”²⁶ It turned out, however, that there was too much knowledge in the book, for Bazili included some very confidential official information, as a result of which the book's publication was not permitted at that time (the work was not published until 1862).

²⁴ *Severnaia pchela*, 1829, no. 51.

²⁵ Avraam S. Norov, *Puteshestvie po Sviatoi Zemle v 1835 godu* (St. Petersburg, 31854), 260–61.

²⁶ N. V. Gogol', *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 14:53.

Though the author still reproaches the Jewish people for their supposed “fanaticism and hatred toward other nations,” he expresses interest in and even sympathy for the repatriates. In a short historical excursus Bazili recounts how, under Vespasian, “after a fanatical uprising,” the remaining Jews “were dispersed over the face of the earth in fulfillment of biblical prophecy.” Later they were persecuted not only by Christians—“Mohammed already while in Mecca showed his cruelty toward the Jews; and his successors in the conquest of Palestine and Syria did not stop persecuting this unfortunate tribe, the suffering remnants of which almost disappeared completely in these countries during the storm of the Crusades.” Yet the sons of Israel determinedly came back to the land “which had long ago been given to their forefathers by Jehovah and which, after 30 centuries, is still considered to be the ideal homeland for their wandering progeny. In our time the repatriation of the Jews to Palestine is growing stronger. Every year Jews come here for permanent residence from other Turkish provinces, from barbaric domains, from Germany, from Russia. Improved information and word of mouth about religious tolerance and public amenities in the East are favoring repatriation.”

At the same time the author does not at all believe in the coming restoration of a Jewish state, nor does he wish for it. Attributing—as was the custom in official Russia—the Jews’ hopes of restoration to “the fatal influence of the Talmud’s mystical ravings,” Bazili writes:

We would further remark that the journalistic stories about certain unheard-of negotiations between the Sultan and rich bankers of the tribe of Israel concerning the granting to them of Palestine have brought to life Jewish dreams and hopes about the restoration of the kingdom of Judah and the Temple. From the time of the apostate Julian and his strange call to Jewish people and the thrice-attempted restoration of the ruined Temple, there has scarcely been any time when these dreams and hopes, so tied to the spiritual hopes of Israel, were as alive as they are in our days.

From the author’s point of view these “spiritual hopes” represent nothing more than a naïve and unrealizable faith in the Jewish Messiah, from time to time taking on curiously ecstatic forms: “No longer ago than in 1842, the Jews flocked to Tiberias to meet the Messiah, who was supposed to have come to them walking on the waters of the Sea of Galilee.” Talking about the work of Montefiore, Bazili stresses only its anti-missionary side—the desire to save Jewish residents of the Holy Land “from the good works of the Anglican mission and its preaching.” To this he adds that “the Palestinian Jews, for all their poverty, are especially concerned about spiritual

education.”²⁷ (Contrary to Norov, he does not mention any success resulting from this Anglican “preaching.”)

At the beginning of 1846 the Interior Ministry commissioned Dr. Artemii Rafalovich to conduct “very careful research on the Black Plague” in the Ottoman Empire. The research materials were published in the journal of the same agency. Being a converted Jew, Rafalovich was able to make a very successful career, though he never lost interest in or sympathy for his Jewish compatriots. As I. M. Smilianskaia rightly noted, “the Jewish background of the ‘Russian doctor’ Rafalovich explains, to a certain degree, his interest in the situation of the Jewish community in Odessa and Arabic lands, at a time when Christian writers relegated the Jewish population to the category of marginal ethnic groups, not worthy of a detailed description.”²⁸ One of those “Arabic lands” happened to be the land of Israel, which Rafalovich visited in 1847 and wrote about in his “Notes of a Russian Doctor dispatched to the East.” The author reports that “in Jerusalem there are from 13,000 to 14,000 inhabitants of both genders, including about 5,000 Muslims and up to 6,000 Jews of different nations, weeping over the ruins of their Temple, the place of which is taken by the two mosques Kheram and Sherif²⁹. . . . The majority of Christians live on alms from the monasteries. The Jews are supported by money given annually by their coreligionists from all over the world; the Muslims are no richer.”

Rafalovich does not fail to mention the Anglican missionary work among the local Jews, but in keeping with his profession he stresses its medical-philanthropic aspects. Like Bazili, he notes that Montefiore, troubled by this missionary work, opposes it. In Jerusalem, Rafalovich writes,

a hospital opened five years ago thanks to the support of the London Society “for the Spreading of a True Understanding of the Holy Scriptures among the Jews.” The doctor, surgeon, and pharmacist are English; the pharmacy is very good and receives all of its medicine, simple and compounded, from London. The establishment accepts only Jewish patients. . . . The food is prepared in strict adherence to the Jewish dietary laws. In addition to residential patients, the hospital receives daily a significant number of walk-in patients who are treated free of charge.

²⁷ K. M. Bazili, *Siriia i Palestina pod turetskim pravitel'stvom v istoricheskom i politicheskom otnoshenii* (Moscow, 2007), 407–9, 411.

²⁸ *Siriia i Palestina v opisaniiaakh russkikh puteshestvennikov, konsul'skikh i voennykh obzorakh pervoi poloviny XIX veka*, 93. On Rafalovich see also S. Tsipperstein, op. cit., 76.

²⁹ Haram Ash-Sharif (“noble court” in Arabic) is the name of the territory of the former Jerusalem Temple, with mosques Dome of the Rock and Al-Aksa.

Another hospital was created by Jews who were concerned that British philanthropy was a thinly veiled means of proselytizing. Upon building the hospital, they installed a Jewish doctor, invited from Bavaria. But soon they became convinced that the English were not terribly concerned with the religious convictions of their patients and that the kitchen was kept in strict adherence to the laws of Moses. As a result, the Jewish population slowly returned to the first, much better run establishment and left the second one to descend into slow decline.³⁰

Rafalovich's respectful and delicate attitude toward the Jews and the subject of conversion to Christianity serves as a silent reproach of Russian methods. Yet the new situation forced Russia—for the first, and, so it seems, for the last time—to defend her Jewish subjects who had settled in Palestine—specifically, in its two Galilean cities of Tiberias and Safed. As Bazili recounts, “under Egyptian rule these two cities were in the grip of disaster: the inhabitants of the surrounding areas, the Muslims and the Druze, enticed by the steadily rising prosperity of the Jewish colonies, attacked by surprise and robbed 700 or 800 defenseless families. Several weeks later a terrible earthquake [in 1837—M. W.] killed many unfortunate people by burying them under the ruins of their homes. Since there were many Russian Jews among the victims, Mehmet Ali, at the insistence of our consul, seized from the robbers over a million piastres to distribute among the plundered Jews.”³¹

In the Western, especially English, press at that time many compassionate articles appeared about the Jewish people longing for their homeland. The project of Jewish repatriation to Zion, with the support of the prominent newspaper *The Times*, was promoted in every way possible by English aristocrats: Lord Lindsay, Lord Palmerston, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Great Britain, Lord Salisbury, Lord Manchester, Lord George Eliot, and Lord Ashley (that is, Lord Shaftsbury).³² In the United States this company was joined by Mordecai Manuel Noah, who in 1844 published his *Discourse on the Restoration of the Jews*, which soon became a herald of Political Zionism.³³ In 1845 the governor of South Australia, Sir George Gawler, called upon Jews to take practical steps toward the

³⁰ *Siriia i Palestina*, 112–13.

³¹ Bazili, op. cit., 410.

³² Further on this subject, see Frankel, op. cit., chap. 5 (“Jewish Nationalism in Embryo”), 311–28.

³³ See Harap, op. cit., 265.

renewal of their homeland,³⁴ and three years later the American consul in Jerusalem, Warder Cresson, established in the Valley of Rephaim (in Jerusalem) the first Jewish agricultural settlement. Among the entirely urbanized religious Jews of that time, these agrarian beginnings did not take root (truly intensive agronomy would develop much later, in the pre-Zionist and especially in the Zionist period). This only reinforced Bazili's skepticism. "Not one settlement," he states, "has Jewish farmers. This unassailable aversion of the Jewish tribe in every place, even in the country revered as their covenantal inheritance, to agricultural work, the foundation of civil society, and which commandment was expressed in the first part of God's revelation [see Gen 1:28; 2:15; 3:23], was, it seems, completely left out of the picture by those who envisioned the restoration of the Jewish kingdom."³⁵

A curious resonance of the revived Old Testament theme can be seen among Russian writers even beyond the genre of *Hebrew Melodies*—for example, in Belinsky, who adopted a specifically "prefigurative," or symbolic, approach to the Exodus theme. In his letter to Botkin of June 13, 1840, he laments the fate of Russian culture and society itself after the death of Pushkin: "Yes, our generation is that of the Israelites, wandering in the steppe, fated never to see the Promised Land. And all of our leaders are Moseses, not Joshuas. Will a leader of the latter sort come soon? . . ."³⁶

Touching upon the lyrical facet of related motifs, it should be borne in mind that Romantic poetry had long ago managed to transfer religious terminology into the sphere of its inspirational erotica ("idolizing," "adoring," etc.). In principle, the image of Zion could also be transferred to this erotic register. The famous lyrical poet Afanasy Fet (1820–92), who eschewed Jewishness and always hid his own Jewish background, at the beginning of his career, out of the blue, it seemed, responded to the proto-Zionist campaign of the 1840s. In 1842 he took up the Romantic image of the Madonna, applying to her a title that was absolutely unfamiliar to Russian poetry: "Mistress [Vladychitsa] of Zion,³⁷ before You . . ."—and two years later he wrote these well-known lines, which were influenced precisely by these awakened expectations:

³⁴ G. Gawler, *Tranquilization of Syria and the East: Observations and practical suggestions, in furtherance of the establishment of Jewish colonies in Palestine, the most sober and sensible remedy for the miseries of Asiatic Turkey* (London, 1845), 6ff.

³⁵ Bazili, *op. cit.*, 410–11.

³⁶ V. G. Belinskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 11:528.

³⁷ L. Katsis, in a personal conversation with me, suggested that by "Vladychitsa Siona" (Mistress/Ruler of Zion) Fet meant the Jewish "Queen Sabbath."

When my dreams beyond the borders of bygone days
 Find you again in the misty haze,
 I will weep with delight, like the first Jew
 At the edge of the Promised Land.³⁸

A Dead Country

But what did this land look like, the restoration of which was still only in the planning? Its entire image, it would seem, wonderfully proved the Gospel prediction that Norov recalls: “And how terribly, amidst the desolation, these words echo: ‘Behold, your house is left to you desolate’ [Luke 13:35].”³⁹ These words were founded on Old Testament texts, where the punishment for deviation from monotheism or the Torah was given not only to the nation of Israel, but also to its land. To cite one of those numerous prophecies (as reinterpreted, of course, by church tradition in a Christian vein):

And the generation to come, your children who rise up after you, and the foreigner who comes from a far land, will say, when they see the afflictions of that land and sicknesses with which the LORD has made it sick—the whole land brimstone and salt, and a burnt-out waste, unsown, and growing nothing, where no grass can sprout, an overthrow like that of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboiim, which the LORD overthrew in his anger and wrath—yea, all the nations will say, “Why has the LORD done thus to this land? What means the heat of this great anger?”

(Deut 29:22–25)

Among these “foreigners” now increasingly more were Russians, including inordinately curious officers of the General Staff, like Lieutenant Colonel Lvov and captain Dainezy, who studied this region in the 1830s.⁴⁰ As for pilgrims, their number “in 1820s had already risen to 200, and in the 40s—up to 400 people a year.”⁴¹ Those of them who wrote of their travels prior to Norov⁴² affirmed with both horror and tenderness the complete

³⁸ A. A. Fet, *Stikhotvoreniia i poemy* (Leningrad, 1986), 165, 230.

³⁹ Norov, op. cit., 100.

⁴⁰ See *Siriia i Palestina v opisaniakh russkikh puteshestvennikov*, 173. At the beginning of the 1840s, after Muhammad Ali gave back these territories of Turkey, Russian military intelligence ceased its activity, but civil and religious authorities continued to collect information.

⁴¹ B. N. Romanov, “Zvezda Erusalima,” *Vetka Palestiny. Stikhi russkikh poetov ob Ierusalime i Palestine* (Moscow, 1993), 14.

⁴² For a list of Norov’s predecessors, see the review of his book in *Literaturnye pribavleniia k “Russkomu invalidu,”* 1838, no. 40:790.

realization of the biblical prophecies. Russian readers also received proof of them from foreign sources. Thus, for example, in 1831 the French historian Josef-Francois Michaud described Jerusalem as a dark, poor, and ugly city, filled with tombs, ruins, and empty homes:

There is no joy, no noise, and no movement: it is precisely like a large prison, where the days are as silent as the nights are horrible—or, better yet, like an immense monastery, in which all of the inhabitants are in a constant state of prayer.

Parts of Jerusalem are like distinct cities, separated by faith and customs. The children of Israel, whose lot it was to live in the worst places among all the cities of the East, are no freer in Solomon's capital. The area around Kharam-el-Yehud, or Jew Street, is a large wasteland, which may just as well be called the sewage outlet for all of Jerusalem: there are entire piles of horse, donkey, and dog carcasses and bones, mixed together with the broken pieces of crockery, and the steam rising up from there gives off a steady stench. A foreigner, passing by this field of death, inevitably asks himself—for what crime were these people imprisoned in such a habitation? It should be added that lepers were ordered to live in the same place. . . .⁴³

Though Russian literature just as willingly portrayed dark scenes of chaos and abomination,⁴⁴ it was for the most part devoid of the compassion for the Jews that was shown, for example, by Lamartine and other Western travelers. In Russian letters any compassion was almost always combined with a severe rebuke. One of the humane exceptions is a poem by N. Gogniev, "To the Singer of Jewish Melodies," which depicts "the judg-

⁴³ *Biblioteka dlia chteniia*, 10 (1835): 19–20. A separate (condensed) Russian edition of the book appeared later under the title *Ocherki Ierusalima, Vifleema, Vifanii, Iordana, Pustyni sv. Ioanna, Monastyrnia sv. Savvy, Khevrona i drugikh sviatykh okrestnostei. Iz perepiski o Vostoke Misho i Puzhele. Izdanie ukrasheno vosem'iu otlichno litografirovannymi vidami* (St. Petersburg, 1837). (Both here and in other such publications a good portion of such "scenes" are tombs and graves.) At the same time *Biblioteka dlia chteniia* (vol. 24 [1837]) published a very positive review of "this beautiful and entertaining book." Even more sumptuous compositions were also translated, such as *Palestina i mesta, osviaschennye mucheniem i stradaniami apostolov. Sorok vosem' zhivopisnykh vidov, po risunkam Gardinga, Turne i drugikh znamenitykh khudozhnikov, s prisovokupleniem karty Zemli Obetovanoi i plana goroda Ierusalima*, trans. [from the French] by N. Bobylev (in 4 parts) (Moscow, 1838).

⁴⁴ From Palestine's lifelessness Russian periodicals sometimes drew quite extravagant conclusions of a practical nature. Reviewing the book by Avraam S. Norov, *LjR* retells with horror his description of the Dead Sea, "filled with putrid water and surrounded with asphalt springs, into which fell the princes of Sodom and Gomorrah during their retreat, becoming stuck fast forever. We recall this event only because there are some who want to install asphalt sidewalks" (*Biblioteka dlia chteniia*, 30 [1838]: 9).

ment of heaven” over the Promised Land. Zion, desolate and desecrated, is populated by foreigners:

Lebanon has faded away. On the heights
The cries of the sons of Egypt can be heard!
On the banks of the Jordan
An Arab is shepherding wild camels!

Within the green valleys,
In the shade of secluded palms,
A savage bedouin prowls,
A resident of the holy walls of Solim...⁴⁵

On a similar vein, we have the iconic lines of Lermontov’s poem “The Dispute” (1841): “Here at the feet of Jerusalem / Burned by God, / Speechless, immovable, / A dead country.” Quite similar depictions, however, are given by authors that are founded on real travel impressions. Commenting on a statement of A. N. Muraviev, who visited Palestine in 1835, E. Rumanovskaia remarks: “The primary motif of this description is the death of everything that is tied to ancient Jewish life after the appearance of Christianity.”⁴⁶ I would add to this a quote from Grebenka’s story “Jerusalem” (1846), already mentioned at the beginning of this book: “... Terrible is God’s damnation! Jerusalem is empty and languishing is its land... The closer we came to Jerusalem, the more barren the land became: everywhere were bare, reddish stones, sand, misshapen olive trees scattered about, most of them without leaves, and the prickly aloe plant; everything was lifeless and depressing, with a kind of deadly and solemn stillness bearing witness to the anger of God and spreading over this place of the the Savior’s suffering and death. Such is the biblical land, flowing with milk and honey! Where are you, O magnificent Zion, your shady forests, abundant streams, spacious vineyards, and fragrant groves, whose balsam had twice the value of gold?”⁴⁷

It may be noted, finally, that in February 1848 Gogol also made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land (under the patronage of Bazili, who traveled with him). Two years later, in response to a request by Zhukovsky, who was at

⁴⁵ *Syn otechestva*, 1, no. 1 (1840): 33–34. The poem “Synov Egipta slyshny kliki” (From the sons of Egypt cries are heard) is an allusion to the political situation at that time—the rule of the Egyptian Pasha.

⁴⁶ N. Rumanovskaia, “O nekotorykh znakovykh situatsiakh russkikh palomnichestv (I polovina XIX veka),” *Jews and Slavs 10 (The Semiotics of Pilgrimage)* (Jerusalem, 2003), 213.

⁴⁷ Grebinka, op. cit., 3:444.

that time working on “Agasfer,” he shared his very dismal impressions of the land. As for the modern Jewish immigrants, he generally preferred to take no notice of them—only the biblical ancestors of an extinct Judea seemed to interest Gogol:

You ask me, my friend, for a description of Palestine with all of its local colors presented in such a way that they might prove of some use for your “Eternal Yid.” Do you know what a difficult task you are giving me? . . . What can the present-day sight of all Judea with its monotone mountains, looking like the endless grey waves of the roaring sea, say to the poet-painter? All this, to be sure, was picturesque in the Savior’s time, when all Judea was a garden and every Jew sat in the shade of the tree planted by him; but now, when you meet five or six olive trees on the entire slope of the mountain, with leaves as grayish and dusty as the mountain rocks themselves, when only a thin membrane of moss and a few tufts of grass show some green in the midst of a bald and uneven field of stones; and when, after five or six hours’ travel, some Arab hut, glued to the mountain, appears, resembling more a clay pot, a shabby oven, an animal burrow, than a human dwelling—how is it possible to recognize in such an appearance the land of milk and honey? Imagine, in the middle of such a desolation, Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and all the Eastern towns, resembling chaotically assembled heaps of stones and bricks; imagine the Jordan, a paltry dribble among bald mountain areas, shadowed here and there by small bushes of willows; imagine, in the midst of this same desolation, the valley of Jehoshaphat beneath Jerusalem, with a few boulders and caves, supposedly the tombs of the kings of Judea. . . . Everywhere and in everything I saw only the barest suggestions of the fact that all these presently denuded lands, and especially Judea (today the most barren), were truly lands of “milk and honey.” On every mountain there are cut-out terraces—the signs of former vineyards—and even now it takes only a handful of dirt to be thrown on these naked stones, and right away there will appear hundreds of flowers and plants: there is so much of that moisture that floral life requires locked up in these fruitless stones! Yet none of the present-day denizens plants anything, for they look upon themselves as nomads and transients, passing only for a time through this God-forsaken land.⁴⁸

The “savage Bedouin,” along with the state of the land itself, for a long time made a fearful impression on pilgrims, and already in 1838 *JMPE*, commenting on Norov’s travels, expresses amazement at his courage: “What

⁴⁸ “Letter of February 28, 1850,” in N. V. Gogol’, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* (Moscow, 1952), 14:167–69. The portion of the quote from “All this, to be sure” to “kings of Judea . . .” is cited, with some adjustment, from Michal Oklot, *Phantasms of Matter in Gogol (and Gombrowicz)* (Champaign, 2009), 3.

won't the firm will of a Christian, strengthened by faith, overcome!"⁴⁹ In all likelihood even firmer was the will of those Jews who not only visited, but permanently moved to this land. In the sketches of Russian pilgrimages, however, their repatriation is presented as a symbol of the Old Testament or of decay, as the touching yet senseless return of old and spiritually blind Jewry to their last refuge. V. Barsky, for example, among all the local Jewish life noticed only the ancient graveyards on the Mount of Olives and the tomb of Absalom: "The wandering Jews, according to their custom, come to visit this graveyard," and pay their respects.⁵⁰ "Heavy-laden by the years, the delinquent and blinded sons of Israel continue to aspire from all the corners of the world to lay their ashes within view of Zion," exclaims Norov.⁵¹ Half-corpse creep to their native graves—to Jerusalem, which is destined, in the words of Muraviev, to remain "a throng of death": "It is touching to see," he writes, "those former rulers of the Promised Land flocking like foreigners, advanced in years, from the ends of the world to a homeland that is foreign to them so as to purchase therein, at a high price from a foreign tribe, a tight little corner in which to rest their bones and often to live in desperate seclusion for many years just for a tiny handful of that dear ungrateful dirt, without which there is no comfort for their flesh"; "Thus Zion, so exultant in the Psalms, has become a heap of ruins and graves."⁵²

Yet even such a compassionate traveler as this believes that the dead of Zion will arise from their graves only for terrible punishment, which awaits them as retribution for the crucifixion of Christ. In 1835 Muraviev finished his article "An Evening in Peterhof," in which he mentions the Kidron Valley, which he saw as he was taking his leave of Jerusalem and where the Last Judgment would take place. Following are the final poetic lines, in which the author solemnly presents a dark summary of Jewish history and the country itself:

Pitiful vale, vale of judgment,
Where the condemners of Christ will awake,
At the sound of their disturbed bones,

⁴⁹ *ZhMNP* 20 (1838): 171. Cf. the similar response in *Literaturnye pribavleniia k "Russkomu invalidu,"* 1838, no. 40:791. Respect for Norov rested on the fact that the traveler was disabled (he lost a leg in the battle at Borodino).

⁵⁰ V. G. Barskii, *Puteshestvie v Ierusalim, s gravirovannymi kartinami . . .* (Moscow, 1847), 35.

⁵¹ Norov, *op. cit.*, 122.

⁵² Quoted from Rumanovskaia, *op. cit.*, 213.

And at the horror of their blindness!
 Pitiful vale—at your bottom
 All is asleep in a deep and deathly slumber,
 Including the dusty Kidron!—Over you
 In the evening hour, like a coffin-shroud,
 Lies the shadow of the desecrated Temple!
 The earthly have all joined in your fate:
 Of the many future days for the world—
 One is left for you—the Day of Judgment!⁵³

Norov transforms the Jews of Jerusalem into troglodytes of a sort or wandering corpses, nestling in the darkness under the ruins of their own majesty:

We arrived at the Jewish quarter. After about a month in Jerusalem, I still haven't met a single Jew. The rulers of the land of Israel are dwelling somewhere between Zion and Moriah in stinking mud huts or under those underground roofs that probably served as the foundations of dwelling places since the time of Solomon. Even in their own quarters the Jews look for a place to hide when they see a foreigner.

Norov equates the physical and spiritual darkness that enshrouds the Jews' biblical studies with the *veil of Moses*—even though Norov himself is well-disposed toward the Old Testament and in his optimism holds it out as an important preparatory step in leading Jews to the Gospel. But as it turned out, this stubborn people continued, as in gray-haired antiquity, to turn their gazes away from the light of the Truth.

In the darkness of their underground dwellings the lamps do not burn out over their books of the Old Testament. “Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their minds” (2 Cor. 3:14–15). . . . Weary of their constant struggle with the reproachful truth of the Old Testament, when they come out to the terraces of their poor homes to catch a breath of fresh air, their eyes gaze toward Zion, toward the mount of Solomon's Temple, from which they were exiled; but they avert their gaze from the sight of the two domes flashing over Golgotha, where salvation awaits them! Is this not the people whose morals Jesus spoke about when he said: “You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness to me!” [John 5:39]. Is this not the same people about whom the prophet Isaiah said, “Hear and hear, but do not understand; see and see, but do not perceive” [Isa 6:9; this quote was employed by Norov as an epigraph to his chapter on the Jews.—M. W.] Render the hearts of these people insensitive, their ears dull and their eyes dim, otherwise they might

⁵³ *Moskovskii nabliudatel'*, 1835, no. 7:500.

see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and return and be healed.”

In describing the Western Wall—the only undamaged part of the Herodian wall that long ago surrounded the Temple Mount (which he confuses with the much older Temple of Solomon)—or the so-called “Wailing Wall”—Norov remarks that “several years ago, for a great sum of money, the Jews received permission from the Muslims to go there to recite their prayers and to cover the small remains of the Temple wall with their tears!” And he adds with superstitious pathos: “The day on which they usually go there is Friday! The same day on which the Savior of the world, who was crucified by them, gave up His spirit on the cross, praying to the heavenly Father for his enemies!”

Norov was not aware that Friday evening is simply the beginning of the holy Sabbath day, for in Jewish tradition, in accordance with Genesis 1:5, the start of the 24-hour day is in the evening, at sundown; Jesus was crucified on Friday before the beginning of the Jewish Sabbath.

Like many other observers, including the reviewers of his book, Norov is amazed at the visual unity of the Jewish national image, carried through thousands of years and tying the modern period to epic antiquity, and the New Testament to the Old. In his wonder we can discern the glimmers of Protestant hope:

Are they not, on the outside, the same people whose image was engraved on the ancient walls of hundred-gated Thebes, more than one hundred years before Christ? I will never forget how surprised I was when, walking among the ruins of Carnac, I accidentally happened upon an image of one of the Egyptian Pharaohs trampling the personified likeness of the Kingdom of Judah; it is represented by the image of a Jew spread out under his mighty heel. The Israelite’s face is an exact representation of the Jewish people of our time. How can we not reflect upon the mysterious fate of these chosen and rejected people who have remained almost the same from Moses until today and who, if they will see with their eyes, hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, may arise from their abject humiliation to stand together with the foremost nations of the world. . . . The proud conqueror of Israel has himself already been beheaded by time. He and his mighty kingdom have been erased from the face of the earth, and the sons of the nation that was prostrated by him still exist without any change.⁵⁴

In 1842, however, *The Northern Bee* introduced a lively dissonance into all these majestic pictures and funeral hymns. In a delayed reaction to

⁵⁴ Norov, *op. cit.*, 254–59, 261.

the changing situation, the newspaper published translated material that presents an absolutely different picture of Jewish Jerusalem and suggests that any talk about the stagnation or end of “old Israel” is clearly premature. The article is accordingly titled “The Present-day Jews of Jerusalem.” The author, Baron Ferdinand de Géramb (Brother Mary Joseph, 1772–1848, founder of the Trappist monastery in the Holy Land and later procurator-general of La Trapp), was himself far removed from any overwhelming philo-Semitism. As was the custom, he incriminates the Jews for their greedy moneylending, yet immediately thereafter points out their good virtues: erudition, care for their children, hard work, and a sense of self-esteem:

These Jews, due to their prosperity, dress much more neatly than the other inhabitants of Jerusalem. Their clothing is even stylish, which is especially noticeable on Saturday. They know many languages and almost all of them speak Spanish and Italian. They pay a great deal of attention to the upbringing of their children. The teachers at their school, which is affiliated with their Synagogue, zealously educate their pupils. . . . I have not seen even a single Jew who was begging or dressed in rags. This is not so much because of the help given to the poor by the rich as it is because of their industriousness. The local Jew is busy, sometimes selling on some stone or other such insignificant trinkets that it makes one wonder how he can make a living on such trade. Yet he sells, nonetheless, in order to earn his daily bread; he sells, preferring this to begging.

The Jews are occupied with all sorts of business, all kinds of crafts. My master tinsmith is Jewish, and, because I require many cases and boxes made from white tin in which to place expensive goods, I see him often, and each time I am amazed at his hardworking attitude. . . . Among the Jews of Jerusalem I have encountered those who are not only beautiful, but who are also distinguished by their marvelous facial expressions. I have also been amazed by the pleasant looks of their children. Those children that I saw in synagogue appeared noble, which I did not at all expect. A special virtue among the local Jews is their courtesy: it drastically distinguishes them from the rudeness of other residents. Those who become lost in Jerusalem or who are looking for a particular street may be certain that some Jew will volunteer to show them the way. The local Jew is so proud that he does not ask any payment for this service; yet he is not so generous that he does not want to receive the payment, which is why, at the end of the journey, he will probably stare at the hands and pockets of the one to whom he provided the service.

What follows is an atypical commentary on the traditional theme of the wretched and neglected Jewish quarter, known to the Russian reader from the book by Michaud. According to Géramb the wretchedness of the main synagogue in Jerusalem is only a mask, protecting it from the greed of

the Muslim rulers. The article concludes with another reminder of Jewish commercial activity:

In the Jewish market you can find anything that you want: silk goods from France, linen from Germany, precious stones, and the like. The only thing of which you must be careful is not to pay twice as much what it is worth.⁵⁵

The problem, however, lay not in the actual ability of the Jews to live in their native country. Notwithstanding the Jewish aversion, at that time, to agriculture, the Anglo-Saxon supporters of repatriation had no doubt about such ability—in spite of the Catholic or Russian authors who painted such a vivid picture of “the death of Zion” and the agony of Jewry. Whereas Russian writers leaned entirely on the fulfilled biblical prophecies of the expulsion and destruction of Jerusalem, pro-Zionist Protestants placed their hopes in alternative prophecies (which are included, incidentally, in the contemporary prayers that are offered up in Israeli Synagogues on the Day of Independence):

Then the LORD your God will restore your fortunes, and have compassion upon you, and he will gather you again from all the peoples where the LORD your God has scattered you. If your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there the LORD your God will gather you, and from there he will fetch you; and the LORD your God will bring you into the land which your fathers possessed, that you may possess it; and he will make you more prosperous and numerous than your fathers.

(Deut 30:3–5)

They shall rebuild the ancient ruins, they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations.

(Isa 61:4)

In Russia they did not like⁵⁶ to quote such texts, and even when they did, they would usually accommodate them to their own homiletic needs. Thus, in giving a speech titled “The General and the Particular in Jurisprudence” at a gala session of the University of Saint Vladimir, in Kiev, Professor S. Ornatsky (the same attorney who contrasted the outdated Jewish Law to Christian grace) ascribed to Nikolai Pavlovich not only the functions of

⁵⁵ *Severnaia pchela*, 1842, no. 255. It is worth adding that the author Baron Géramb was not unknown in Russia, where he immigrated after the French Revolution. Before becoming a Trappist he fought Napoleon in the anti-French coalition; see *Zapiski grafy M. D. Buturlina*, 1:30.

⁵⁶ One of the few exceptions is the poem by M. Dmitriev “The Return of the Israelites,” which constitutes a paraphrase of Psalm 126 (125 in Orthodox tradition): *Mobva*, 1832, no. 28, 108.

the Creator from the book of Genesis, but also the feat of renewing the desolate land that Isaiah reserves for the people of Israel upon their return to their homeland. Indeed, it is specifically these Old Testament quotations that are clearly discernible in the monarchial akathist of Ornatsky, who praises “the sweet fruit of our Government’s Legislative wisdom” in an Empire “where, by the beck of the Sovereign Monarch, *new cities are raised up from nonexistence and bring life to the deserts; where ancient cities are resurrected from a half life to a full life*, to that level of activity that signals the presence of the spirit of life in the community of its inhabitants” (emphasis mine).⁵⁷

As for clerical publications, they did not at all react to the awakened hopes connected with Jewish repatriation and continued to insist that Israel would never come back to life. In 1847 *Christian Readings* concluded a forty-page article concerning the Old Testament with the words that “the people who put the true Messiah to death . . . forever forfeited their political existence.”⁵⁸

N. Polevoi’s Zionist Publication

For Polish-Russian Jews at that time the Old Testament promises also held a fundamentally different meaning than they did for their Anglo-Saxon well-wishers, who connected the idea of the return to Zion with the hope of the second coming of Christ. Orthodox Jews looked expectantly for their own Messiah, during the waiting for whom they were to devote themselves to repentance and prayer while rigorously following all the regulations of the Torah. Despite the proto-Zionist pathos of Protestant missionaries, any attempt to willfully “speed up the atonement” seemed to them—as also later in the case of Herzl’s political Zionism—to be an intolerable blasphemy (liberal, assimilated Jews in the West were just as hostile toward such utopian notions, although for different reasons). Those who settled in the Holy Land, personifying, as it were, these Messianic expectations, thus bolstered the unbreakable ties of the Jewish people to Zion. Many, to be sure, went there simply to spend their remaining days in prayer, finding peace there in their homeland, alongside their forefathers.

⁵⁷ *ZhMNP*, 1839, pt. 23, 194–95.

⁵⁸ “On the Patriarchal Religion,” *Khristianskoe chtenie*, 1847, 2:406.

The Jews of the Diaspora considered it their duty to help those who, under Muslim oppression, extortion, and segregation, lived and prayed for them in the Land of Israel. Notwithstanding their economic activity, as noted by G eramb, the local Jewish community continued to exist mainly because of the voluntary financial support that was collected from all over by “Jerusalemites” (Heb.: *Yerushalmiim*) who traveled for this purpose throughout the entire Jewish world, talking about Zion. They also continually made their rounds of Russia, and the resulting financial outflow from the empire evoked, apparently, some concern on the part of Bazili, who wrote about the Palestinian Jews: “We can estimate that they receive around 25,000 silver rubles from Russia through supporters and those rabbis assigned for the collection.”⁵⁹

Aside from this loss to the treasury, the nostalgia itself for the Holy Land and the messianically-infused hopes of repatriation, stimulated by the emissaries, annoyed the *Maskilim* who, in the union with the administration, strove to acculturate the Jews where they were, without Zion. Therefore the direct attacks by the author of the *LfR* article on these ambassadors are quite revealing: they do nothing but squeeze money out of Russia, and in general—here the author echoes the *Maskilim*—, “experience shows that these Jerusalemites are almost always inveterate charlatans.”⁶⁰ Whereas in England proto-Zionist thinkers promulgated the Bible among the “Israelites” with the specific goal of encouraging them to repatriate, in Russia the attempts to steer them toward the Scripture and away from the Talmud were intended for the opposite goal—to bring the Jews closer to the Christian values of the local Russian society. Here the view predominated that historical Jewry faced its certain doom.

Meanwhile, in 1839, *Son of the Fatherland* published the translated article “The Fate of the Jewish People,” comprising extensive excerpts from a lengthy review by the *Quarterly Review* (then edited by John Gibson Lockhart) of Lord Lindsay’s proto-Zionist book *Letters on Egypt, Edom and the Holy Land* (1838). The Russian journal refrained from adding any commentary (however, it is possible that comments were removed by the censor; the history of this publication requires special study). Enthusiastically describing a “general gravitation” toward the Holy Land, Lindsay discerns in this movement the coming fulfillment of ancient promises:

⁵⁹ Bazili, op. cit., 409.

⁶⁰ “Polish Jews,” in op. cit., 77.

Our lot is cast in very wonderful times. We have reached, as it were, Mount Pisgah in our march; and we may discern from its summit the dim though certain outlines of coming events. The tide of action seems to be rolling back from the west to the east; a spirit, akin to that of Moses, when he beheld the Land of Promise in faith and joy, is rising up among the nations;—whatever concerns the Holy Land is heard and read with lively interest; its scenery, its antiquities, its past history and future glories engage alike the traveler and the divine—hundreds of strangers now tread the sacred soil on which long ago the God-Man himself walked; Jerusalem is once more a centre of attraction; the curious and the devout flock annually thither from all parts of Europe and even America, accomplishing in their laudable pursuit the promise of God to the Holy City: “Whereas you have been forsaken and hated, with no one passing through, I will make you majestic forever, a joy from age to age” (Isa 60:15).⁶¹

The very desolation of the land only encourages the English author. In contrast to Russian pilgrims, he sees in it not the sign of Israel’s eternal rejection, but proof of the Old Testament prophecy that tied God’s punishment of the people to the fulfillment of the seventh, sabbatical year, when the land was required to lie fallow: “. . . while you are in your enemies’ land, then the land shall rest, and enjoy its sabbaths. As long as it lies desolate it shall have rest, the rest which it had in your sabbaths when you dwelt upon it” (Lev 26:34–35). If one prophecy had been fulfilled so vividly, this meant that the others would come true as well. Lindsay writes: “The land, unbroken by the toils of the husbandman, yet ‘enjoys her Sabbaths;’ but Eshcol, Bashan, Sharon, and Gilead are still there, as in the past, and await but the appointed hour (so we may gather from every narrative) to sustain their millions; to flow, as of old, with milk and honey. . . .” The author is absolutely convinced that a Christian “renewed Israel” is meaningfully apart from the rebirth of “the old Israel” and its land:

This interest is not confined to the Christians—it is shared and avowed by the whole body of the Jews, who no longer conceal their hope that the time is not far distant when, according to their fervent conviction, the words will come true: “In that day the Lord will extend his hand yet a second time to recover the remnant which is left of his people, . . . He will raise an ensign for the nations, and will assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth” (Isa 11:11–12).

Doubtless, this is no new sentiment among the children of the dispersion. The novelty of the present day does not lie in the indulgence of such

⁶¹ Cited, with some adjustment vis-à-vis the Russian translation, from *The Quarterly Review*, 63 (1839):166.

a hope by that most venerable people—but in their fearless confession of the hope; and in the approximation of spirit between Christians and Jews, to entertain the same belief of the future glories of renewed Israel. . . . the number of Jews in Palestine has been multiplied twenty-fold. . . . In all parts of the earth this extraordinary people, whose name and sufferings are in every nation under heaven, think and feel as one man on the great issue of their restoration. . . .⁶²

The author ties these awakened hopes to the equally symptomatic start of missionary work among the Jews, in connection with which he assigns special significance to the London Bible Society:

A mighty change has come over the hearts of those people who formerly persecuted, but now seek the temporal and eternal peace of the Jewish people. Societies are established in England and Germany to diffuse among them the light of the Gospel; and the increasing accessions to the parent Institution in London attest the public estimation of its principles and services.⁶³

Lindsay suggests that his government take the process of upcoming repatriation under their wing, thereby helping the Jewish people in their land to become a flourishing agricultural community. Such revival of the land responds not only to the political and economic needs, but also to the religious needs of Great Britain, which ought once and for all to stop persecuting the Jews and facilitate their conversion to Christianity in the land of their ancestors.⁶⁴

This material was published, unquestionably, by the decision of Nikolai Polevoi,⁶⁵ who at that time was the *de facto* editor of the journal. Apropos of this it should be noted that already in 1826 he was preoccupied with the idea of the creation of a “Yid Kingdom,” while a year before Lindsay’s article he praised in *LfR* the “holy, true Jewish religion” and Jewish poetry, and a year later he published in his *Son of the Fatherland* the philo-Semitic

⁶² This and the previous quotation are cited, with some adjustment vis-à-vis the Russian translation, from *ibid.*, 166, 176–78.

⁶³ Cited, with some adjustment vis-à-vis the Russian translation, from *ibid.*, 177.

⁶⁴ “‘Zapiski lorda Lindseia o Palestine, ili Sud’ba evreiskogo naroda’ (iz ‘The Quarterly Review’),” *Syn otechestva i Severnyi arkhiv*, 9 (1839), 163–204—originally “The Letters of Lord Lindsay on Palestine, or The Fate of the Jewish People” (from *The Quarterly Review*, 1838). See also Lord (A. C.) Lindsay, *Letters on Egypt, Edom and the Holy Land* (2 vols.) (London, 21838), 2:70ff.

⁶⁵ He himself, incidentally, was poorly acquainted with the geography of Palestine. The narrator in his *Abaddonna* (St. Petersburg, 21840, 200) yearns with all his soul “for the banks of Hebron”—hardly a realizable desire, considering that the city of Hebron (located in the mountains, in a completely landlocked area) does not have any banks.

notes of his sister Avdeeva. In other words, here (just as with Nadezhdin) a definite tendency is taking shape that diverges from government policies. Especially significant, indeed, are the quotes from Lindsay that highlight the central role of Polish-Russian Jewry in the future repatriation: "In the eastern regions of Europe, the great focus of the Jewish people, the sentiment is most rife that the time of the Israelite captivity is nearing its end." To this statement the reviewer adds the cautious yet meaningful editorial note: "By far the largest concentration of Jews is found in the Russian dominions: their numbers are variously stated, but the calculation lately furnished to us, on which we most rely, estimates them at one million seven hundred thousand souls."⁶⁶ (Whereas in England, Lindsay's homeland, the reviewer adds, there are only "about thirty thousand").⁶⁷ It is quite likely that for Polevoi, who in the years following the ban on his *Moscow Telegraph* in 1834 was forced to side with the official position, this proto-Zionist attitude was one of the relics of former oppositional Westernism.

"Their Hope is a Lie": Eternal Exile

If official Russia failed to show the slightest inclination toward practical solutions to the Jewish question, Russian poetry, as we have seen, was at best content to take up the purely lyrical or exotic side of this fashionable theme. As for the rest, Russian culture rejected and some cases even mocked Jewish hopes of national restoration. Though in 1829 Bulgarin's paper published the aforementioned notice concerning the selfless religious Jews of Tiberias, the ascetic image of these enthusiasts remained, in all likelihood, an incomprehensible mystery to the editor—an anti-Semite and pillar of the "commercial movement." Jewish nostalgia for the Promised Land, so far removed from his perception of Jewish financial motivations, put Bulgarin in a humorous mood. And the humor column is precisely where he published in his paper a story in which he returns fire to one of his literary competitors by portraying him as a graphomaniac who

⁶⁶ Both quotations cited, with some adjustment vis-à-vis the Russian translation, from *The Quarterly Review*, 63 (1839): 179.

⁶⁷ "Zapiski lorda Lindseia," in op. cit., 184.

has amassed for himself a multitude of scribblers who have a pretense to intelligence (just as the Yids have a pretense to possessing Jerusalem) and who write nonsense, anticipating inspiration, just as most of the Yids play the knave, anticipating a time when they will become honest citizens upon returning to Jerusalem as their permanent residence.⁶⁸

In Shakhovskoi the role of the scoffer is taken up by a Muslim, who, in order to mock a Jew longing for his motherland, even refers to the deserted Land of Israel as “beautiful.”⁶⁹ And to the biblical daydreams of his Romantic Rachel, Kukolnik mixes in an ethnically indigenous love of money. In dreaming about the return to her motherland she contemplates taking along as much wealth as possible—apparently following the example of her ancestors who “plundered” the Egyptians when leaving them for the Promised Land:

From mountainous lands
Fell a fog
Upon the valleys

And covered
A graveyard
In Palestine.

The fathers' ashes
For ages awaiting
Renewal.

The nocturnal shadow
Will give way to the day
Of restoration.

The rays of the sun
Will light up
And shine forth.

And the organ,
And timbrel,
And lyre,

And silver,
And goods,
And holy relics

⁶⁸ Bulgarin, “Vopiiushchaia tipografskaia bukva,” *Severnaia pchela*, 1833, no. 141.

⁶⁹ “—We, wretched ones, are everywhere dispersed / And are crying for our fatherland./—Go ahead and weep! . . . It is so beautiful!” (Prince A. A. Shakhovskoy, Kerim Girei’, *Moskovskii vestnik*, 1827, part 3, no.11:243).

*We will carry
To our old home,
To Palestine.*⁷⁰

Quoting the last lines in exactly the same spirit, Dostoevsky, in *The Diary of a Writer* (in the chapter entitled “The Jewish Question”), would later interpret the Jewish dream of repatriation by tying it to ethnic greed.⁷¹

Fortunately, all of Rachel’s expectations were absolutely groundless. Among those who speak about this notorious hopelessness of Jewish nostalgia is V. Krasov (1810–54)—a second-rate poet who received religious education. In his poem “The Jew,” published in 1833 in *The Buzz*, he reasons with the dreamers:

O Jew, O Jew, where is your Jerusalem?
Where did you run from the glorious East?
In your countries are the worshipers of the prophet!
Tell me, O Jew, where is your Jerusalem?
You do not go up to the Temple of Solomon,
You do not dwell in the Land of your fathers,
You will not behold lofty Zion,
The mighty Sabaoth has forgotten you!
In vain, tearfully, you cry out:
“Jerusalem, Jerusalem! . . .”
O Jew, you will not cajole the heavens,
The anger of Jehovah is implacable!
And your life is but a memory
Of a fiery eastern land . . .
And you, in but a moment, in a moment, as in a sweet dream,
Will forget your sorrow and bitter exile!—
...
Where are you, O wondrous Temple, and where—O Eastern maidens?
Alas, all is vanished, as in a blessed dream,
The resounding strains have died away,
Hazy is gloomy Zion! . . .
The Psalter is rent, the timbrel no longer sounding,
A sorrowful image of the beautiful lands,
The Jordan’s holy waters
Refresh Muslim horses!
O Jew, by what fate
Are you in the North; why did you come?

⁷⁰ Kukol’nik, *Kniaz’ Kholmiskii*, in op. cit., 416 (emphasis mine). About the Jewish theme in this play (including a commentary on the song of Rachel) see also V. Levitina, *Russkii teatr i evrei* (Jerusalem, 1988), 34–39.

⁷¹ F. M. Dostoevskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* (Leningrad, 1983), 25:82.

Why did you part with the glorious land—
 Tell me, O Jew, what you are here seeking?
 Whose breast will gently warm you?
 Driven out for centuries, you've become mean of heart,
 And the curse lies heavy upon you . . .
 Alas, O Jew, you crucified God! . . .⁷²

Generally speaking, this reference to doom and the futility of Jewish aspirations was a common motif of Russian poetry at the time. Thus Perlia, Bernet's heroine, compares her people to ashes that will never come back to life:

He will arise no more! That fruit that from the tree has fallen
 Will not to the native tree return!
 It will perish in the grass of futility and oblivion!
 And upon that fruit, once so dear to heaven,
 The passerby will cast a proud look of contempt—
 And step on it with his dusty foot!

Yes, your union with the heavens is dissolved,
 You have betrayed your greatness!
 You have loved nothingness and darkness
 And impoverished your spiritual beauty.
 Cursed son! Answer me now, where is your king?
 Where the divinely-graced fields of your motherland?
 The singers and temple, prophets and altar—
 All have died! In the Scriptures alone they live on.⁷³

As an apropos conclusion to this providential collection I would cite a passage from Zhukovsky's last poem, "Agasfer: The Wandering Jew"—the same passage for which Gogol, at the author's request, recorded his dark impressions of the Holy Land. The protagonist of the poem is a repentant sinner who grasps—alas, with tragic belatedness—the truth of Christianity and renounces his people, speaking of them as follows (emphasis mine):

But they were already strangers to me; and
 To all the earth; nothing
 Earthly could abase them,
 Nor could it exalt them. They were the chosen people—
 The people cast out by God;
 They carry His stamp of blessing

⁷² *Molva*, 1833, no. 39:153–54. I offer my sincere thanks to K. Burmistrov, who pointed out this text to me.

⁷³ *Biblioteka dlia chteniia*, 24 (1837): 6.

Covered over by the mark of damnation.
In stubborn blindness they still await
That which has already come true and
Will not occur again . . .

These last lines, quite likely, were suggested to Zhukovsky by Bazili's book, with which Gogol acquainted him. In it Bazili condemns Jewish "Old Testament learning, which is *deprived of prophetic light* and dead, *looking to the future for those mysterious events that have already come true.*"⁷⁴

Zhukovsky's protagonist continues to rebuke the Jewish people in the same spirit:

. . . they in their madness
 Do not believe in that good
 They so desire yet themselves reject;
 Their hope is a lie, their faith is without meaning.
 I quietly distanced myself from the mourners
 And making my way through the stones with trepidation,
 I recognized no traces of Jerusalem.⁷⁵

There can be no real doubt that such a categorically negative approach also predetermined the resulting antagonism of the Orthodox clergy, as well as of Russian society, to the Balfour Declaration,⁷⁶ and in turn the animosity of the Soviet authorities toward Zionism, in which it perceived a provocative alternative to its own messianic ambitions. In the final analysis, this animosity goes back to those same dogmatic conceptions of Zion's fate that inspired Russian Romantics—and collapsed in such an instructive manner.

⁷⁴ Bazili, op. cit., 411.

⁷⁵ V. A. Zhukovskii, *Sochineniia* (Moscow, 1980), 2:437–38.

⁷⁶ See O. V. Budnitskii, *Rossiiskie evrei mezhdū krasnymi i belymi (1917–1920)* (Moscow, 2005), 413–37; A. Lokshin, "Evreiskoe tsarstvo na sviatoi zemle?" *Otnoshenie Rossiiskogo Palestinskogo obshchestva k Deklaratsii Bal'fura*, *Jews and Slavs* 17 (2006): 11–25.

CHAPTER TEN

A PEOPLE WITHOUT A HOMELAND: THE JEWS IN RUSSIA IN THE 1840S

The New Political and Economic Situation

Throughout the 1840s and almost to the end of Nikolai's reign, the situation of the Jews in Russia continued to worsen, having come under the whip of police enlightenment and military orthodoxy. However, in connection with proto-capitalist tendencies, which were already becoming manifest in the Russian economy, there appeared among the Jews a caste of prosperous entrepreneurs.¹ Acts of repression (many of which the initiators of the reforms—S. S. Uvarov and Count P. D. Kiselev—never originally had in mind)² were increased in every area. Even emphatically reserved Petrovsky-Shtern admitted that “at the end of 1830s Nikolai thought that the baptism of the Jews was the beginning and the end of the solution to the Jewish question.” According to the data presented in his book, from 1827 until the beginning of 1840 a total of almost 40 percent of Cantonists were baptized; but this process fluctuated, depending on local conditions and the zeal of the clergy, as well as this or that army leader. As always in Nikolai's Russia, the dictates and stubborn initiatives of the central government were slowed down by the disorganization and discord that characterized the actions of those executing the orders. “The plan for the comprehensive baptism of Jewish Cantonists,” continues Petrovsky-Shtern, “was implemented later, at the turn of 1842–43. This time the initiative came directly from the Tsar. On February 18, 1842, he ordered that the decree be issued ‘secretly and circularly’ to reduce the

¹ See B. Nathans, *Beyond the Pale*, chap. 1.

² See Iu. Gessen, *Istoriia evreiskogo naroda v Rossii* (Leningrad, 1927), 2:100–1, 109–10. Stanislawski writes, concerning the foundational memorandum by Kiselev: “Despite the conventionalism of Kiselev's diagnosis, his prescription was revolutionary. For the first time a high-ranking Russian official, enjoying the confidence of the tsar, had come to the conclusion that it was impossible to solve the Jewish problem in Russia by repressive methods” (M. Stanislawski, *Tsar Nicholas I and the Jews: The Transformation of Jewish Society in Russia* [Philadelphia, 1983], 44). In practice, however, the only method used was repression.

problem of Jewish baptism to a formal procedure, requiring no special efforts on the part of the commanders of the Cantonist battalions. . . . In practice this meant that all commandants were added to the missionary campaign. They received total freedom of action, limited neither by the control of higher leadership nor by a sense of their own accountability. At the same time a drastic change took place in the general attitude toward Jews in the empire. The change was tied to Nikolai's decisive efforts to reform Russian Jewry. The decision concerning the baptism of Cantonists was a part of this conversion process."³

Moderate resistance to Nikolai's policies even arose among some Russian *Maskilim*, as witnessed in the choice of a book that was translated from German in 1842, in Odessa, by B. Bertenzon: the historical novel *The Marranos* by L. Philippson (a prominent German *Maskil* and reformer, and the founding editor of Leipzig's *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums*). The novel recounted the analogous situation in 15th-century Spain, where the Jews were forced to convert to Christianity. In *Notes of the Fatherland* Belinsky responded to this work—which was in truth rather mediocre from a literary point of view—with a very sour review. But as a Westernizer and supporter of the Enlightenment he welcomed, nonetheless, the trend of progress in the Jewish community, as attested by the work of Bertenzon itself: "As for the translation, it is quite good. It is only a pity that the translator made ill-advised use of his labor; the translation is particularly noteworthy insofar as it was made by a former student of the Jewish college in Odessa and serves as an example of the efforts with which young Jewish men are mastering the Russian language."⁴

The "reformative process" played out along the following basic lines: in 1843, conjointly with forced baptism, authorities of the "New Spain" expelled Jews from a 50-verst frontier, and in 1844, as was already mentioned, they phased out the *kahal* system of self-government. At that time the Jews were subjected to a special tax for wearing long frock coats, and in 1848 for wearing yarmulkes. Two years later they were forbidden from wearing any Jewish clothing at all. At the beginning of 1851 the entire Jewish population was divided into five classes, one of which (mostly the poor and people without a fixed address), declared "useless," was to supply five times more recruits than the others.⁵ According to the decree of

³ I. Petrovskii-Shtern, "Evrei v russkoi armii" (Moscow, 2003), 125–28.

⁴ *Otechestvennye zapiski*, 21 (1842), issue 1:39.

⁵ See the data compiled by S. Ettinger, *Ocherki istorii evreiskogo naroda* (2 vols.) (Jerusalem, 1979), 2:501–3. On the decisive role of Nikolai himself in these persecutions—which

December 27, 1851, for each recruit who did not appear for service, local Jewish communities were required to supply three more “in addition to the one missing.” In 1853 these communities and individuals received the right to present coreligionists without passports in their stead.⁶ An unsuccessful attempt to intervene on behalf of his Russian compatriots was made by Sir Moses Montefiore, who came to Russia in 1846 specifically for this purpose. He was received honorably by the authorities and by the Jews with great enthusiasm, almost as a messiah. (The Jews were subsequently punished for this by the authorities.)

Extortions and repressions led to catastrophic impoverishment. According to the data of Kiselev’s “Jewish Committee,” whereas in 1827 Jewish tax arrears had reached 500,000, by 1853 they “had increased fifteen-fold, comprising around eight million rubles.”⁷ As remarked by Gessen, “this increase in tax arrears was caused primarily by the increasing poverty of the community. . . . It was excessive conscription, in particular, that ensured this impoverishment.”⁸ According to the official statistics of the Interior Ministry, in 1847 only 3.47 percent of the Jews belonged to the merchant class. This was striking for a people regarded as merchants.⁹ Among other things, a devastating blow was delivered to the famous Berdichev Fair, which had become a source of mockery by the authors of anti-Semitic vaudevilles and sketches. In 1836, prefiguring Titov’s satirical attacks, the article “Berdichev” in *The Encyclopedic Dictionary* bemoaned local Jewish dominance: “Purchasing and selling, usually undertaken through the mediation of Jews, is expressed here in the endless progression of transactions, multiplied by the brash and incessant activity of Jewish factors, who, not only without capital, but for the most part without credit, with the help of their unbearable nagging alone, are able to inconspicuously insinuate themselves among innumerable merchants and customers and, on account of their laziness, simplicity, inexperience, and cowardice, to secure their diversified profits without any risk or sacrifice.”¹⁰

worsened significantly after the European revolutions of 1848—see Stanislawski, *op. cit.*, 183–85.

⁶ See on this in particular Ginzburg, *op. cit.*, 22.

⁷ Nathans, *Beyond the Pale*, 63.

⁸ Gessen, *Istoriia evreiskogo naroda v Rossii* (Leningrad, 1927), 2:117.

⁹ On this point Ginzburg (*op. cit.*, 23) adds: “If one takes into account that a considerable number of Jews was not included in the audit, as well as the intense efforts with which every Jew at that time, at the slightest opportunity, sought to enter the merchant class (thus freeing him from the conscription), this percentage is indeed quite telling.”

¹⁰ *Entsiklopedicheskii slovar'*, 5:338.

From this it appears that the success of Christian commerce was prevented by importunate Jews, without whom the former would inevitably have flourished. As it turned out, however, the situation was just the opposite. In that same year (1836), the turnover of the Berdichev Fair totaled 2.5 million rubles. But in 1843 the Jews were forbidden to participate—and then, as D. Feldman noted (with reference to I. Tarnopol), “the fair’s turnover decreased from 2.5 million rubles in 1836 to 230,000 rubles in 1843.”¹¹ The resulting loss was felt not only by Jews, but by a great number of Christians as well.

The persecutions also resulted in an unprecedented rise in the death rate. According to Saul Ginzburg, “[d]uring the period of 1844–1847 the death rate of the Jewish population in comparison to previous four years rose 37 percent—i.e., more than twice that of Christians.”¹²

And yet, despite the government’s destructive zeal, the Jews continued to remain the primary commercial power in the Western Region as well as in the Polish Kingdom, which was entering a period of rapid economic development. Indeed, 27,000 Jews, who by the middle of the 19th century were numbered among the merchant class (i.e., 3.47 percent of the Jewish population, as registered by the Interior Ministry), “comprised almost three-fourths of the merchants in the Pale, and in such provinces as Volyn, Grodno, and Podolsk their proportion was even higher.”¹³ In 1849, in *LjR*, the anonymous author (perhaps A. Starchevsky, at that time the journal’s editor) of the aforementioned story “The Jew” lamented that there was no one to replace the “brooding Yid industrialists.” In his introduction he unwittingly affirmed the complaint of Zotov’s character and Plushar’s (Pluchard’s) encyclopedia, condemning the inertia of the Christian population. The Jews, as it turns out, were not only more active, but also more honest than their rivals. The story opens with the following words:

The Jew is the soul of commercial industry in the Polish Kingdom, Galicia, and the western provinces. As soon as you cross the Dnepr and Dvina from Greater Russia, with every step you take you will come upon a Jew as the primary engine of all large-scale and small-scale commerce. He is a purchaser, he is a seller, he is a wholesaler and a shipper, he is a shopkeeper, he is a tavern-keeper, he is a postmaster, he is a tailor for women and men, he is a money changer; in other words, he is everything.

¹¹ D. Z. Fel’dman, *Stranitsy istorii evreev Rossii XVIII–XIX vekov. Opyt arkhivnogo issledovaniia*, 240.

¹² Ginzburg, op. cit., 21.

¹³ Nathans, op. cit., 56.

The Poles, continues the author, constantly complain about this Jewish dominance,

but what prevents the native residents from competing with them, for example, in the large-scale bread trade? If they were more entrepreneurial, hard-working, and especially consistent, they, with their enormous collective capital, following the example of the Jews, could completely demolish any competition. Unfortunately, however, I am forced to admit that the native merchants are totally unfit for this; with the very first effort they become worse than the Jews, spending enormous amount of money on personal travels, on agents, and on all kinds of plans, and in the end are forced to sell at a much higher price. . . . Polish merchants suffer loss primarily through their agents and salesmen, whereas the Jews for this purpose employ their impoverished brethren, who seldom deceive their benefactors. . . . The Jew does not seek after large profit; he is concerned only with a high turnover, and these multiple pennyworth profits add up to the thousands. Yid interest has become a proverb, but this does not daunt the Jews; their mutual credit is so strong that a Jew, having personal capital amounting to no more than one hundred rubles in silver, sells for thousands. From all this it is evident that the essence of Jewish commerce consists in mutual agreement and a spirit of comradeship.

According to this author, Jews are also unpretentious in the details of everyday life. In this assessment he is in complete agreement with Niemcewicz, who is quoted earlier. Where is that unquenchable greed that Russian *littérateurs* were so given to excoriating?

For breakfast the Jew contents himself with a piece of bread with salt and onion, only on the Sabbath eating more than usual and deciding to purchase a piece of meat and cooked fish; on other days his abstinence and prudence is hard to understand. Yet these things alone may explain why the Jew is content with his paltry profit: to the one who requires so little to satisfy his needs, the least profit represents a satisfactory reward for his labor and enables him to put away something for the future; yet as for him who is used to spending more on himself, necessity requires that he strive to earn much more.¹⁴

Notwithstanding the general corruption of various leaders, salvation for the Jews lay in the economic needs of society, particularly its land-owning classes. Yet this did not consist solely of providing commercial supplies. N. Leskov, who toward the end of his life became a philo-Semite, in his

¹⁴ "The Jew," *LjR* 96, issue 7 (1849): 40–41, 43. The story itself, however, does not follow in any way from this introductory sketch and represents a conglomeration of clichéd anti-Semitic caricatures connected by an anecdotal plot.

brochure of 1884, *The Jew in Russia* (which drew the praise of the famous philosopher V. Soloviev), recalls an interesting occurrence that characterized manor life of the 1840s and stood in marked contrast to government politics. The crisis of serfdom had led to a catastrophic shortage of rural craftsmen, and for any repair work, writes Leskov, “one had to travel to a provincial town, sometimes situated hundreds of versts away from the landlord’s village.” Jewish workers, as energetic and unpretentious as the traders described above, made up for the deficit. Throughout the course of the year, writes Leskov, they would make a circuit of the manors in the provinces of Voronezh, Kursk, Orel, Tula, and Kaluga, where they were impatiently awaited by hospitable hosts, including local priests. Jewish master hands could correct all household problems and defects, asking much less for their work than their Russian colleagues. All the local authorities also patronized these itinerant day workers in every possible way, despite their strict orders not to allow them to travel beyond the Pale of Settlement. To this Leskov adds:

If at that time, in the forties and fifties, the Greater Russian nobility, merchants, and petite bourgeoisie were asked whether they wanted to leave in their settlement those itinerant Jews, whom they were already overusing in contravention of official directives, there can be no doubt that their most sincere answer would have been in favor of the Jews.¹⁵

These were the same Jewish master hands whom we have already seen in Somov and Alipanov, whose very existence was denied in the 1838 article on the Polish Jews, which ascribed to Jews both laziness and weakness. The only thing that Leskov did not take into account was that such risky travels were, for them, a means of saving themselves from starvation in the Pale of Settlement. Unquestionably, the picture of these Jews that Leskov paints appears excessively favorable. To be sure, I am unaware whether any research on this topic has been undertaken, though Stanislawski (who does not mention Leskov’s testimony) notes “a few cases” wherein Jewish master hands worked outside the Pale of Settlement, in each instance legally, because those places had no Christians able to do the necessary work. Nonetheless, their presence prompted a “heated protest” from Christian craftsmen, even when these latter were not qualified

¹⁵ N. S. Leskov, “Neskol’ko zamechanii po evreiskomu voprosu,” in *Sochineniia* (Moscow, 1993), 3:210–13.

to do the work.¹⁶ Most likely, however, the landlords and local authorities preferred not to advertise this practice and, in any event, did not rush to inform the higher authorities about it. In this respect we should also bear in mind that economic necessity is quite capable of softening the heart—at least for a certain time. During the new, post-reform era, when Russian craftsmen were in ample supply, the need for the Jews, in general, disappeared—and consequently their merits were forgotten, much to the surprise of Leskov, who was furious that in the 1880s, which years were stained with virulent anti-Semitism, the papers failed to make any mention at all of this touching symbiosis of Jewish labor and the needs of landowners. The situation was similar to the one that would later arise in the Soviet Union with Jewish engineers and other intelligentsia: it was welcomed as long as the government was unable to supply a sufficient number of its own “domestic [i.e., non-Jewish] cadre.”

In the 1840s, moreover, anti-Semitism remained a fixed feature in the larger cities, which got along quite well without any Jewish technical support. By that time, as a result of Nikolai’s policies, converts became a noticeable phenomenon, though this did nothing to engender any sympathy toward them. The European revolutions of 1848 led to an increased general suspiciousness; the nobility was extremely apprehensive of popular revolts and the abolition of serfdom. Converts, together with other foreigners, were already coming to occupy a prominent position in the expression of these collective fears. In 1848 a certain agent of the Third Department informed the head of the agency, L. Dubelt, about the sentiments of Muscovite society, which was needlessly afraid—saying, “any minute now they will convince the simple folk that the French want to force all of the world’s powers to dispense freedom. But in listening to the talk of the people themselves, there is not one who so much as hints at this.” It was thought that among the revolutionaries malicious designs were being harbored primarily by converts and Poles—and in drawing rooms it was being whispered, “If only there were no baptized Yids and . . . Poles, of whom we have here too many among the bakers, lamp-lighters, and especially within the firemen’s brigade.”¹⁷

¹⁶ Stanislawski, op. cit., 179. The author (on p. 180) also traces, at the same time, a significant shift in the Jewish economy that started to take shape toward the end of Nikolai’s reign: a flight from commerce in favor of craftsmanship.

¹⁷ “Doneseniia agentov o dukhe v Moskve v 1848 godu,” *Minuvshie gody. Zhurnal, posvishchennyi istorii i literature*, May–June 1908, no. 5–6:394–95.

“The Thoughts of an Israelite”

Something else was becoming more and more noticeable: the presence of enlightened Jews—*Maskilim* of “government issue,” whose Hebrew writings presented themselves as paeans of exultant love, passionate and unrequited, for the Russian authorities.¹⁸ In 1846, after a two-year delay, a comprehensive manifesto of the Haskalah was published in Russian: *Thoughts of an Israelite: A Composition by the Jew Abram Solomonov*.¹⁹ Curiously, this monument of emerging Russian-Jewish literature was written in a mixture of clerical and official jargon, of which the author, by his own admission, was unable to divest himself. The reason for this, he writes, “is my constant work with administrative documents, which have so far been unable to conform to the norms of literature.” From his short autobiography it emerges that Solomonov was a Hebrew translator involved in “epistolary matters” in the criminal court of Minsk and served as the burgomaster of Minsk as well as a correspondence clerk to the Delegation of Jewish Societies in Petersburg. His autobiography concludes with the Petersburg period, about which the author talks with nostalgic excitement: “Between 1808 and 1814, and with the closure of the Delegation in 1825 up to 1838, I was occupied with secretarial work for a total of 19 years in Saint Petersburg. Having herewith given, on the model of the ancient Egyptians, a precise account of my work and means of subsistence until 1838, I would add that I spent the best time of my life in the glorious capital—so to speak, in grand political Society.” Afterward the author was sent back from this “grand Society” to the Pale of Settlement, at which, however, he took no offense, just as he also took no offense at the authorities’ refusal to rank him among the tax-exempt classes: “My professed religion,” Solomonov humbly explains, “created the barrier for me.”²⁰ All of his reproaches were directed toward this religion itself—to be precise, toward its devotees who persisted in their unreasonable and “innate fanaticism.”

¹⁸ Elena Rimón remarks that the literary production of these *Maskilim* comprised in essence a variety of colonial prose (E. Rimón, “Russkii iazyk i russkaia kul’tura v ivritskoi prosvetitel’skoi proze,” *Jews and Slavs* 17 [2006]: 295–307).

¹⁹ Part 1: ts. r. [allowed by censor] March 31, 1844; part 2: ts. r. April 14, 1844.

²⁰ A. Solomonov, *Mysli izrail’tianina* (Vilna, 1846), part 1:2–3. The author dedicated the book to his benefactor, “the rabbi of the Vilna Jewish Society, Israel Abramovich Gordon”—one of the *Maskilim* rabbis with whom Uvarov had already met in 1838 and on whom Nikolai’s government now sought to rely instead of the *kahals*.

The main text is introduced with a lyrical appeal—"A Word to Israel!"—in which the author laments the difficulty of his task—to persuade "the entire nation," especially as they have suffered through so many centuries and multiple twists and turns (he follows this with a respectful reference to the book by Capefigue). Solomonov desires "to discuss openly the deficiencies of [his] people," whom he covers with bitter reproaches: "We should have dropped our stubbornness a long time ago and rushed to fulfill the decrees of our government."²¹ Like the majority of the *Maskilim*, the author includes the government's conscription decree (*rekrutchina*), or the "Statute on Conscription Duty," among the ranks of the most "beneficial measures of the Supreme Government"—expressing himself with accustomed solemnity and appealing to Scripture: "Believing in Higher Wisdom, we must also believe that it was the desire of His Holy Will to allow His Anointed, Nikolai I, to provide us with weapons—the anointed one directed by the "God of Hosts," who, from the time that he established human societies on the earth, and considering military art as an indispensable necessity, allowed several peoples to remain in Palestine, unconquered by our ancestors"—that they might learn to fight. He then provides a relevant biblical citation (Judg 3:2) in two languages—Hebrew and Russian. The author, as a matter of course, says nothing about the underage Cantonists, baptisms under threat of torture, and other such aspects of the "conscription duty"—though perhaps not by his own choosing: the entire book was seared by the breath of the censors.

His patriotism, generally speaking, is similar to that expressed by Markevich, who substituted Russia for the Promised Land. However, Solomonov's loyalist version of the Book of Exodus evokes outwardly quite positive, yet in essence rather ominous associations, which reveal how opportune it was for him to compare himself with the "ancient Egyptians." Calling upon his compatriots, in the spirit of governmental responsibility, to become involved in productive—primarily agricultural—work, he draws an indirect analogy between the Russian Empire and slave-owning Egypt, where the ancient Jews were forced to the point of exhaustion to work for Pharaoh. In contrast to the Bible, Solomonov fully approves of this slavery to Gentiles and sees in it the source of Jewish zeal at that time, by which the contemporary Jews of Russia ought also to be inspired. Would it have been possible, he asks, without the Egyptian labor experience, for their ancient ancestors to have become so proficient in the skills

²¹ Op. cit., part 1:6, 8.

and crafts that were required after the Exodus to create “the magnificent Ark”? It is clear that “the ones who did all this work were absolutely proficient at it, long before they washed their hands in the Arabian Sea, on which still remained the traces of Egyptian clay and brick, and this very proficiency had developed as a result of their own specific spiritual disposition and labor while in slavery for 210 years. We should be ashamed if we fail to follow the example of these, our forefathers.”²² Yet why such industrious forefathers had to leave Egypt, the author does not explain.

The entirety of Solomonov’s book is generally presented in this same doctrinaire manner, interspersed with bilingual citations—of which the Russian translations, incidentally, are always precise and put forth irrespective of the Old Church Slavonic version of the Bible (indeed, all the “prefigurative” expressions are absent). But for whom, it may be asked, was this ungainly work intended, this weak spawn of the uneven match contracted between the department and the synagogue? Indeed, the vast majority of Jews did not yet read Russian, and Russian readers had no need to be convinced of the government’s correctness. And why would they need the references in Hebrew, which they did not know? All of these citations, just like the earlier bilingual treatise *Thoughts* by the convert Temkin, are more likely a testimony to the general optimism of the author, his religious competency, and the purity of his intentions. At times the impression presents itself that the book was written by Solomonov for future use, for some yet-to-come Jewish reader, although one who was destined never to appear, considering that the book would lose any of its potential topicality during the period of the Great Reforms, when there would finally arise a generation of Russian-Jewish intelligentsia. Solomonov’s was the voice of a loyal subject crying out in the Jewish desert.

In addition to Enlightenment virtue, the spirit of Uvarov resounded on the other side of Solomonov’s treatise, which arose directly from “Official Nationality,” albeit understood in the author’s own way. He discusses this same long-lost “national ethos” of the Jews and calls for its revival; however, it should not consist in a rebirth of a full-fledged existence for their ethnic group, but rather in close alignment with the Russian national ethos. The Jews do not need their own “national ethos” any more, just as a “national pride” is irrelevant following “the loss of our motherland and dispersion across the face of the earth.” According to “the foundational laws of the Synagogue,” “our ancestors never desired it, and therefore we,

²² *Ibid.*, 54–55.

their descendants, ought not to create a divide between ourselves and the national ethos" (here the national ethos of the adopted country is meant, not that of the Jewish homeland).

The book is, arguably, more interesting in the second part, where Solomonov discusses the reasons for "religious animosity." His political correctness, as it were, extends to the point that, in speaking of Judaism, he each time employs the purely Christian expression—"laws of the Synagogue," which, in the usual manner of the Haskalah, he counterposes to later "deviations" that tarnished the purity of the Law of Moses. In his view, Judaism and Christianity were originally and in essence closely aligned. Indeed, the Christian faith is "not new, but old"—that is, monotheistic and in this respect identifiable with biblical Judaism: "Generally speaking, all the dogmas of the Gospel are based on the specific wisdom of the Law of Moses" (to prove his conclusions Solomonov, like other *Maskilim*, occasionally relies on the authority of Maimonides and M. Mendelssohn, together with the Russian native Filaret). It was specifically the Church that had already in antiquity "cast down Jupiter," and this, its victory over paganism as the common enemy of both religions, constitutes the great historical merit of Christianity: "with the dissemination of which the name of the Lord has spread more and more. And now all of Europe, once filled with such odious idols, worships the one God." So what could have prevented a Jewish rapprochement with Christians? "[Their] customs? These were established by the Church, just as ours are by the Synagogue. Their character? It is adorned in all the virtuous qualities." Who, then, initiated the Jewish-Christian conflict? Naturally, the Jews themselves, to whom the "new way of thinking" was unappealing. "The teachers of the Law in Synagogue everywhere persecuted the teaching of the Gospel. . . . In Alexandria, Caesarea, and in many other places the Jews were zealous persecutors of Christians. . . . It would have been easy to foresee that Christians, once in the ascendant, would have had a just reason for expressing religious antagonism toward the Jews, compounded also by hatred for the troubles they had suffered. . . . This is the fundamental reason for Christian persecution of the Jews, for which our fathers were at fault!" About this reciprocal "persecution," however, Solomonov speaks in a circumlocutory and very reluctant manner: Christians, "on various occasions, especially when Jews made their way through multiple realms and during the Crusades, completely settled the score with us."²³

²³ Ibid., 2:5–10, 28–30.

It is time to bury this sad past in oblivion. Throughout his exhortation, however, the author remains silent concerning the determinative and entrenched reason for religious judophobia—to wit, the accusation of deicide. In order to achieve a rapprochement with Christianity, the “Synagogue” must now renounce its preconceptions, which are tied to a variety of its customs. Christians, not being born Jewish, are not obliged to follow its tribal decrees: they have their own customs, which, however, “should not drastically separate us from Christians.” Especially fortunate are the modern Jews living in Russia, inasmuch as its people are known by their “pious deeds”: “Jews should be thoroughly grateful to this nation, whose people are truly God-fearing, meek, and compassionate, and over whose head the God Sabaoth Himself keeps watch, supplying them with His anointed ones.”²⁴

To be sure, these anointed ones punish their Jewish subjects, but always justly—as, for example, for the outrageous “dissemination of their religious views.” For the same reason, in ancient Rome, “the original decree arose for our expulsion from the state.” It seems that this is one of the sorest points of the book, which was written during the time when the government was strongly intensifying its war against “sects,”²⁵ especially against malicious ones like the Subbotniks. Literary echoes of this latter struggle in particular are preserved for us in the memorable scenes from Lazhechnikov’s novels, as well as in the savage denunciation of “Judaizers” in Kukolnik.

Solomonov, for his part, dolefully lists all of the cases—which, I should add, were isolated—of Jewish activity regarded as “insulting” to “the spirit of Supreme Government” and cited in the decree of April 22, 1835: “(a) In the province of Voronezh some Christians adopted the Law of Moses at the instigation of the Jews; (b) In 1822, in the same province, a Jew pointed out to a Christian various details about the Jewish holidays, customs, and prayers, that are employed by us; (c) In 1826 the Jews were condemned for converting two Catholic women to Judaism. All of these Jews, no doubt, were led astray by certain delusions; they did not understand the maliciousness of their conduct.” There then follows a reference to the Talmud that warns against proselytizing and threatens the one who does so with “affliction for affliction.” It is for this and similar sins that “God poured out His anger on all of us; all of us have partaken of this affliction; *it has*

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 12.

²⁵ See E. V. Tarle, *Sochineniia* (in 12 vols.) (Moscow, 1958), 4:367–69.

been proposed that we alone be minimized within the state, and how can we complain, if only we look upon ourselves with open eyes. . . . This is where we should be looking for the real reason for which our Pale of Settlement with industrial assets, according to the statute of 1835, seems to us limited by comparison to the statute of 1804. . . . The government, in creating the statute of 1835, intended not to constrain us or diminish our benefits, but to prevent our disorderly activities."

Through all of this grotesque well-wishing there emerges, however, a note of bitterness and perplexity over the zealous actions of the central authorities (particularly revealing is the author's silence about the expulsion of 1843). Here Solomonov falls into a certain kind of monarchical mysticism, expressing humility before the will of the throne, which is incomprehensible to the miserable earthly mind: "However, it is not for our limited intellect to comprehend the direct intentions of the Supreme Government." For support the author dishes out another helping of Jewish citations, including Talmudic ones from the treatise *Berakhot* (58a): "The kingdom on earth resembles the Kingdom of Heaven."

This religious conclusion is directed by Solomonov into the fatalistic channel of timid *Maskilic* optimism. The Jews, quite simply, "should believe that the Porphyrogenite Tsar is incapable of wishing affliction upon one who is with all his might seeking to be useful to Him; upon one who with all of his regard, with all of his words, and in general with all of the inclinations of his heart depends not on himself, but on the Highest Wisdom, whom we call God and of whom the Holy Scripture says . . . 'From the mouth of the Most High evil does not come'" (Lam 3:38).

Notable, however, is the choice of the biblical book itself—The Lamentations of Jeremiah, which is a lamentation over fallen Jerusalem and its people, expelled to a foreign land. Yet the choice of this text also signaled an inadvertent association by creating a diapason in which Nikolai's Russia would also come to be included—a range spanning Egyptian slavery and Babylonian exile.

Judaism and Sectarianism

Solomonov's warnings about the dangers associated with Jewish polemical or didactic activity were not entirely unfounded, judging from the evolution of the beliefs of N. S. Ilyin, founder of the Yehowists. In essence he was as much a belated representative of Alexander's time as was the author of *Selected Passages* and the second volume of *Dead Souls*, except

that Ilyin preached a Judaized Protestantism, whereas the later Gogol—a Protestantized Orthodoxy, with a strong Old Testament admixture. From the very beginning, Ilyin’s discussions in synagogues and edifying conversations with Jews, whom the staff captain was endeavoring to convert to the state religion, fueled his attraction to the Bible and already-elevated interest in the Jewish religion—an interest that slowly transformed into a new type of judophilia. “Such an extraordinary attitude toward the Jewish Law,” writes Molostvova, “would inevitably have also created an attitude toward the Jewish people as a people who were chosen and preserved, despite all their historical hardships, ‘by the seal of God’s special providence for them.’ From this it follows that God’s promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, substantiated as well in the New Testament, could not go unfulfilled. . . . ‘And so all Israel will be saved; as it is written, “The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob”’ (Rom 11:26).” “It was on the basis of this conviction that the primary thesis of the Yehowists was also worked out—to wit, that there is only one true religion: ‘the religion of Israel,’ or, what is the same: Christianity.” Ilyin refers to Jesus as “a Jewish prophet” and “the immortal Jew.”²⁶ On the whole his missionary efforts and Old Testament study led his new movement to draw from Judaism, including its Sabbath observance and other forms of Old Testament pioussness. On “Sabbath eve” the sectarians—the new “chosen people”—even took it upon themselves to sing a hymn that was dedicated to this holiday.²⁷

To the end of his life Ilyin held fast to the hope of eventually drawing the Jews to his own Yehowist faith, turning them away from the Talmud and Rabbinism. He wrote *en bloc* “to all Israelite men,” as well as “to ‘the Montefiores,’ on behalf of them and all Mandarins and ‘Rothschilds’”; and he wrote separately in Frankfurt to Rothschild himself, addressing his letter to “the primary opponent of Yehowah, or the Pan-Jewish Rabbi, the hellishly cunning Talmudist of the satanic depths,” calling upon him to renounce his errant ways and join the “true Jews—the Yehowists.” With this same demand he turned to “all the charitable committees started by Satan among the Jewish people,” pointing out to them all the absurdity of their efforts at sending poor Jews to America, Africa, or Palestine,

²⁶ E. V. Molostvova, *Iegovisty. Zhizn' i sochineniia kap. N. S. Il'ina, Vozniknovenie sekty i ee razvitiie* (St. Petersburg, 1914), 24, 113, 287.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 283.

when there is “only one true way of salvation”—i.e., joining the Yehowist brotherhood.²⁸

In the mid-1840s the Interior Ministry also decided to give its charges a thorough introduction to the dangerous Jewish religion, and in particular to the Talmud. In the fall and winter of 1846 the journal of the institution, edited by Nadezhdin, published the large, unsigned article “Jewish Religious Sects in Russia,” written by his assistant, the Orientalist V. V. Grigoriev. A year later it was issued as a separate publication, and thirty years later Grigoriev included it in the collection of his scholarly works.²⁹ Touching upon this publication (and referring to it as an anonymous work), Klier compares it to the article “On Judaism,” published in 1838 in *JMPE*. While this earlier article, according to him, offered a “knowledgeable and objective” discussion of the Talmud, judging from Grigoriev’s article on Jewish sectarians, “shifts had become apparent in official approaches to this issue”—and sharply negative shifts at that: “Significantly, among the sources which were cited as the basis for the article was Chiarini’s mentioned *Théorie du Judaïsme*. This was a public admission of the regime’s concern with the Talmud’s influence, a concern that dated to about 1840 within the government and ushered in a period of new strategies for dealing with the Jewish Question.”³⁰

Klier’s position requires some elaboration. First, the “new strategy” was entirely a part of new and larger political policies tied to religious dissidence in general. Grigoriev’s work resonates palpably with the secret investigations of his superior, Nadezhdin, who during these very years, by commission of the Interior Ministry, was carefully following the activities of Russian sectarians and Skoptsy. Second, as was already mentioned above, the article of 1838 was, in point of fact, not very favorable toward the Talmud. Grigoriev’s treatise, on the other hand, laid claim to objectivity with more justification than that of *JMPE* inasmuch as, together with the aggressively anti-Talmudic work by Chiarini, it also employed available scholarly sources of that time. Grigoriev’s article is in fact a pure compilation, as he himself notes several times very openly, enumerating all its borrowed components. The commissioned character of the material is

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 71–72, 175.

²⁹ *Rossia i Azia. Sbornik issledovanii i statei, napisannykh v raznoe vremia V. V. Grigor’evym, or’entalistom* (St. Petersburg, 1876). All subsequent references are to this edition. It is of interest to note, incidentally, that one of the two of his university mentors to whom he dedicated the book was Senkovsky (the second was N. G. Ustrialov).

³⁰ John Doyle Klier, *Russia Gathers Her Jews: The origins of the “Jewish Question” in Russia, 1772–1825* (Northern Illinois University Press: Decalb, Illinois, 1986), 177.

already intimated by the second paragraph: “For us, Russians, an acquaintance with this subject has . . . one might say, a local interest; for, ever since the time that, having lost their motherland and independent existence as a state, the Jews were scattered and dispersed across the face of the earth, they nowhere and at no time crowded so much into a single country,” as into modern Russia.

In his general approach the compiler is far removed from religious bias: his primary aim is a positivistic, cumulative, fact-based explanation of the material, refreshed from time to time with a dose of moralistic philosophizing. To be sure, consistent with tradition, Grigoriev from the first lines expounds on the gradual degradation of the original Mosaic faith, yet contrary to Christian doctrinal theory, he explains the decline not by the fatal wickedness of the Jewish tribe, but by the inherent propensities of humankind. The result is a certain kind of positivistic version of Rousseauism, weighed down by the inevitable loss of ancient virtues during the course of its historical development. The article opens with the words: “The religion that was given to the Jewish people by Moses was not preserved among its followers in its original state, in that same purity and simplicity in which it consists and appears to us in the inspired books of the great prophet and Lawgiver. . . . This phenomenon [i.e., degradation—M. W.] is common to all religions”³¹ (i.e., theoretically speaking, even to Russian Orthodoxy).

The compiler calmly and diligently moves along in the channel of a borrowed theme, following all of its curves. He displays not even the slightest attempt at originality, and all of his individuality consists in the selection of material. At the same time, unlike all of the previous authors of Russian works on Judaism, Grigoriev deployed a varied and vast spectrum of foreign works. He follows Chiarini, then Capefigue, then A. Frank; he is either a judophobe or a judophile—according to the character of the imported stock. More often, however, he is a judophobe (though a rather half-hearted one); here we also see the power of Russian tradition at work—an influence felt, of course, in this state publication. Nonetheless, Grigoriev gives an informative summary of Jewish religious history, speaking about the Sadducees, Pharisees, Karaites, and others; he describes, in an informed and detailed manner (in considerably more detail than one almost ever finds in *JMPE*), the structure and history of the Talmud, as well as its main authorities and commentators. Klier, to be sure, rightly

³¹ Grigor'ev, *op. cit.*, 418–19.

notes the prevailing animosity here toward the Talmud. Grigoriev accuses it of “a spirit of pride,” fanaticism, “hopelessly circling in the realm of the most empty trivialities,” tyranny, rigorism, “trickery and cunning,” “indecorum,” contempt toward women, “absurdities,” and other imperfections. At the same time, demonstrating scholarly objectivity, he points out the merits of this enormous compendium. From his article the Russian reader learns for the first time that the famous Mosaic rule of “an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth” was set aside and substituted in the Talmud by monetary compensation; and in general “one does in fact find in it good rules of common decency and important moral and edifying proverbs and legends” (as he demonstrates with some impressive examples); “there is much useful information concerning the Law”³²—and reference to this “information” is connected to specific treatises of the Talmud, the juridical side of which, incidentally, is tied convincingly to the law of ancient Rome. However, “everything that is moral in the Talmud is lost amidst the much larger amount of what is immoral.”³³ Even more injurious is the work of the famous commentators and popularizers of the Talmud, of whom the compiler speaks at the same time with great respect: Rashi, Ibn Ezra, and other thinkers (in particular Maimonides, who harmonized the Talmud, and whom he praises for his intellectual freedom and rationalism).³⁴ Yet the very accomplishments of the Talmud, just like merits of its interpreters, are simply a continuation of its defects.

In harmony with Western authorities, Grigoriev pays tribute to the perseverance of the Jewish people, dispersed for so many centuries, connecting their religious unity to the powerful influence of the Oral Torah. Yet precisely these national-ethnic qualities are what the author, following official Enlightenment principles, decisively condemns, since they hinder the exclusive destiny of post-biblical Jewry—to dissolve into the other nations. The Talmud, according to Grigoriev, echoing the official view, bears primary responsibility for the detrimental isolation of the Jews, who held onto it “amidst the most unpleasant circumstances, amidst the cruelest trials one can imagine. Devoid of their motherland, dispersed over the face of the earth, despised everywhere, hated, persecuted, and from every place expelled, the Jews endured and, despite the loss of their national language, remained brothers in flesh and spirit, in every place having the

³² *Ibid.*, 449, 464–67.

³³ *Ibid.*, 473.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 480–83.

same interests, beliefs, hopes, and outlook. This, to be sure, had to be ascribed to the Talmud, for the Jews of different confessions, who preserved the faith of Moses in its greater simplicity, all lost their national-ethnic identity: the Karaites in Europe became Tatars; the remnant of ancient Biblicists in Arabia became bona fide Bedouin; in China they became Chinese; and in Abyssinia they look no different from the natives. But in preserving the national, Talmudism killed the Jews' humanism: it extinguished in them any compassion toward the other members of the great family of Adam, and at the same time deprived them of compassion from the other nations; it fashioned them into self-styled outcasts among men, corpses at the communal banquet of life; it lowered their moral dignity, teaching them greed, abasement, secrecy, and cowardice; it closed the way to spiritual development, immersing them in ignorance, restraining their will, and killing the inclination to anything refined."³⁵

One of the greatest sins of the Talmud is its fatal bond with the Holy Land, which prevents the assimilation of the Jews in Russia and their acculturation to an agrarian lifestyle. Grigoriev quotes the Talmudic treatise *Kiddushin* (37a): "The statutes of the Law concerning the land cannot be fulfilled anywhere else but in the Land of Israel"—and explains in his notes: "This explains, among other things, the aversion displayed by the Jews toward agriculture everywhere that the attempt is made to convert them to this occupation."³⁶

Speaking about Polish Jews' fixation with the Talmud, the author remarks that for it "they would forget the very love of money, and the title 'bahur' (a student of the Talmud) was the most attractive feature in matchmaking, both to the young woman as well as to her family. The designation 'am ha-arets' ('unlearned' in the Talmud), on the other hand, was a great reproach, the harshest possible invective." This, in essence, is all that the compiler is able to say about the intellectual preferences of the Jewish people and their collective love of learning, which stood in such stark contrast to the established dogma about maniacal Jewish greed. A survey of the intellectual history of Judaism is accompanied by attacks on the rabbis, as well as by qualifications stemming from the Western scholarly tradition: "To be sure, among this throng of theological-juridical writers, who, while fanatical and ignorant, are often amazingly ambitious and well-read, there often appeared minds of uncanny brilliance,

³⁵ Grigor'ev, op. cit., 492.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 475.

such as Joseph Albo, or Isaac Abarbanel—selfless people who rose up against abuse and sincerely desired the best for their coreligionists; but the light disseminated by such minds died out in the same deep darkness wherein it was born, their voices drowned out by the hostile outcry of the crowd.”³⁷

Grigoriev’s further task was to point out such “minds” in the New Era—those who were helping to spread “the light”; yet at the same time he also decried Kabbalah as the spiritual foundation of the different Jewish “sects” that opposed enlightenment. In the chapter titled “Kabbalists” he concisely yet coherently expounds upon central kabbalistic treatises—such as *Sefer Yetzirah* and the *Zohar*—even mentioning some bibliographical and conceptual problems regarding their provenance. He offers some minimal information about Jewish metaphysics: about the *Ein-Sof* (although without using this actual term), about divine contraction (i.e., *tsimtsum*, which term is also missing), about “the four worlds” (in the metaphysical rather than cosmological sense of the term), about the “ten *sefirot*” (without listing them), about Adam Kadmon, about the connection between the macro- and the microcosms, etc. Added to this is some laconic information concerning the divergence of Kabbalah from Neo-Platonism and Christian worldviews; preference is given to A. Frank’s theory concerning the connection of Kabbalah to Iranian dualism, which Jewish tradition replaced with the notion of “the unconditional unity of cause and substance.”³⁸

Grigoriev’s attitude toward this “teaching, fatal for weak minds,” fluctuates between deep respect and a righteous indignation against “kabbalistic absurdities.” This fluctuating attitude is expressed by him, however, only with respect to applied and practical Kabbalah. This “egg shell” he contrasts to its philosophical “yolk” (a vague association with the unmentioned kabbalistic notion of *kelippot*—ethereal “shells” or “husks” that captured the sparks of the Original Light). Here the compiler traces all the same dismal stages that characterize the degradation of human thought: “In human actions the petty is always mixed in with the lofty. . . . Over the

³⁷ Ibid., 491, 493–94.

³⁸ In an extensive notation Grigoriev also discusses Christian Kabbalah—from Raymond Lull up to his successors in the 15th century (Pico della Mirandola); a further list of Christian thinkers who were favorably disposed to Kabbalah includes Cornelius Agrippa, Paracelsus, Robert Fludd, Van Helmont, and “even Jacob Boehme.” Mentioned is made of the version of Kircher, as well as the works of other Kabbalah adepts and “the crown of them all—Rosenroth’s *Kabbalah Uncovered*”; also noted is the influence of this teaching “on theology, philosophy, natural science, and medicine” (ibid., 516).

course of time this essence slowly started to be forgotten, eclipsed by the rough patina of mediums and meanings, which should only have served it as a light covering. For many this covering at last completely replaced the essence itself, and kabbalistic teaching came to consist in innumerable combinations of letters and numbers—an arbitrary game of symbols.”³⁹ Grigoriev is truly curious about this “game.” Having fulfilled his metaphysical duty, he descends with obvious relief to the intriguing lowlands of sorcery and black magic, *gematria*, *notarikon*, and *temurah*. He is interested in angelology (up to Metatron) and demonology (including “the she-devil Lilith” and her second husband Samael). He lists their names with great enthusiasm—in contrast to the names and functions of the *sefirot*. With the same enthusiasm the compiler talks about the kabbalistic concept of metempsychosis, about the Jewish heaven and hell (“kabbalists do not believe in eternal suffering in hell”), and about the belief in the coming salvation of the entire created order.⁴⁰

In the past all of this exciting exotica could well have become a stimulus for Romantic pursuits—but Grigoriev’s work was published in a different, already post-Romantic period, tinted by the inclination toward positivistic, lengthy descriptions and realistic literary genres, all of which characterized his own cumbersome compilation—a kind of “physiological sketch” of the Jewish religion. So too, Grigoriev’s audience itself was far removed from metaphysical preoccupations. Their only task was to familiarize themselves with these ideas, and the article facilitated that aim. The primary interest of the author-compiler was Russia—or to be precise, Polish-Russian Jewry. He also therefore devotes a brief sketch to the history of this topic, which accompanies his development of the main theme (and, incidentally, includes a colorful reference to the love of the Polish king Casimir the Great for “a beautiful Jewess”). At the same time Grigoriev shows not the least interest in the social life of Jews—for information of this sort he simply directs the reader “to the intelligent, pertinent, and impartial article ‘Polish Jews,’ published in 1838 in the 28th volume of *LJR*.”⁴¹

The discussion about Kabbalah brings Grigoriev to his main theme—Jewish mystical sects. The discourse proceeds sequentially concerning the Sabbatians (“Shabbtai-Tsevians”), Frankists, and, finally, the “Hassi-

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 513.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 528–32.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 501.

dims [*sic*”]; the corresponding chapters also provide biographical information about the leaders of these groups. As for the Frankists (the leader of whom, Jacob Frank, he for some reason calls Joseph), the author—deliberately, to be sure—fails to mention the famous Lvov dispute of 1759, when the Frankists accused Orthodox Jews of using Christian blood. The blood libel did not sit well with the overall rational-positivistic orientation of Grigoriev’s work, and with the skeptically circumspect and suspicious attitude of the Russian authorities at that time toward this semi-mystical accusation.⁴²

Grigoriev then focuses his attention on the Hasidim, who were thriving in the Russian empire. In his words, they were hoping to find salvation “(1) through blind faith in their *zaddikim* (this is how they refer to the leaders of their sect); (2) through extreme enthusiasm and total detachment during prayer, and directing their spirit toward contemplation of the Godhead, away from everything excessive, even away from their own self-identity; (3) through seeking to master, during the rest of their time, a peaceful and joyful spirit as a necessary shield against everything destructive to the health of the soul, both inner and outer agitations, as well as a better means of preserving in one’s self the ability to behold the Divine.” Despite their cheerful qualities, however, the author joins I. Finkel in looking upon them rather hostilely and making a vague exception for one mysterious sect “which, according to B. Mayer, resides in certain districts in Lithuania and is called ‘Chabad.’ As far as I can tell from the writer’s description, this sect is a branch of the Hasidism that appeared at the end of the last century; its members differ from the rest of the Hassidims [*sic*], who in fact despise them, in that they are more educated and follow the kabbalistic teaching of the school of Corduero, whereas the other Hassidims [*sic*] prefer the commentaries of Luria.”⁴³

As to these “other Hassidims,” at their gatherings they sing “songs of kabbalistic content in the Chaldean language”; striving “to detach themselves from everything external and recreational, even from themselves,” they comport themselves in a completely indecent manner: “during the time of prayer they raise up an absolute Babel, screaming, clapping their hands, jumping about, moving from side to side, and indulging in all

⁴² Already in 1844 the Interior Minister, L. A. Perovsky, ordered from Vladimir Dal “An Investigation into the Jewish Killing of Christian Babies and the Use of Their Blood,” but this brochure (as well as Dal’s work on the Skoptsy) was published only for administrative use, in the total amount of only 10 copies.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 542, 549–50.

kinds of baboonery and convulsive movements. . . . They fritter away their time in idleness and gladden themselves by drinking strong drink, mainly mead and vodka, to which they are even ordered to apply themselves in the event of great trouble. Thus they have freed themselves from fulfilling all the external customs, all the vexatious Talmudic laws, considering them inconsistent with such deep understanding of the divine nature as theirs. The Talmud is read by them either very little or not at all; their only subject of study besides the books of the Besht and his followers is the *Zohar*.⁴⁴ This picturesque characterization, which is even more colorful than the one by Finkel, contradicts the stereotypical opinion about the shrewd, “dry and calculating” spirit of Jewry or its meticulous, traditional formalism, enjoined by the Talmud and rabbinic tradition. As has already been mentioned, the author of the article on Polish Jews in *LfR*, to whom Grigoriev respectfully refers, simply dismissed the Hasidim, brushing them off with terse invective. They also went unnoticed by Russian writers of that time, with the exception of captain Vasiliev. Indeed, no matter how nastily Grigoriev spoke about the “stagnant” talmudists (i.e., about the *Mitnaggedim* or Litvaks), his attitude toward the Hasidim was much worse. (In this respect he hearkened back to Derzhavin.) Perhaps, under the influence of Nadezhdin, he associated them with Russian ecstatic sects, similar to Tatarinova’s brotherhood, the Skoptsy, or the Khlysty, whom the government persecuted tirelessly.⁴⁵

Grigoriev’s work concludes with a brief advisement: “Among us the Hassidims[!] live almost everywhere, but primarily in the provinces of Volhynia, Podolsk, Kiev, Poltava, Ekaterinoslav, Kherson, Vitebsk, Mogilev, Chernigov, and Bessarabia. In the last three provinces the movement of Hassidism is more contemplative than ecstatic, as it is in all the others. In Poltava, Ekaterinoslav and Kherson they say that Hassidism is distinguished by its especial folly and depth of ignorance.” In general it spreads rapidly because of its “love of idleness” and disdain for dry “rabbinic scholarship,” and inasmuch as it answers “to the natural inclination of the people toward enthusiasm and love for anything miraculous. It would have been good had it also been so easy to find the means to prevent the

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 547–48. The phrase “the books of Besht” rings quite strangely: in fact he did not write them at all.

⁴⁵ See A. A. Panchenko, *Khristovshchina i skopchestvo: fol'klor i traditsionnaia kul'tura russkikh misticheskikh sekt* (Moscow, 2002), 186, 188.

further demoralizing of the Hassidims and fashion these useless and dangerous people into somewhat bearable members of society.”⁴⁶

The unquestionable source of this specifically anti-Hasidic attack—which, however, found no organized support in Russia—were the invectives of the Austrian (Galician) *Maskilim*, the fierce persecutors of Hasidism. In presenting the history of the Haskalah itself, however, Grigoriev starts with its Berlin period—i.e., M. Mendelssohn. The author extols his “remarkable giftedness,” his “wonderful soul and noble character,” his desire to “bring the light of philosophical reasoning into the very essence of Jewishness [*zhidovstvo*] and to rightly eliminate the entrenched presuppositions against it.” Grigoriev is impressed by the opinion expressed in Mendelssohn’s book *Jerusalem* that “freedom of thought is a religious principle of Jewishness [*zhidovstvo*] that precludes any dogmatic beliefs”; “but of even greater influence was his earlier-published German translation of the Pentateuch with scholia in Hebrew” (both these compliments were paradoxical in view of the well-known attitude of the Russian authorities toward “freedom of thought,” as well as toward any translation of the Bible into modern languages). Grigoriev praises many of Mendelssohn’s successors in the cause of Jewish enlightenment, thanks to which German Jews attained such “tremendous success” with respect to “education.” With even greater enthusiasm the author talks about the police and education reforms of the Austrian emperor Josef II:

This monarch, unforgettable for the Jews, had the strongest impact on their political as well as moral and intellectual renewal in his empire. On the one hand, he endeavored to awaken in them a sense of honor, for which he freed the Jews from having to wear shameful markings on their clothing. . . , from the obligation to live only in designated neighborhoods, from their inequality with other citizens before the Law, and so on. On the other hand, he established—under state control and governance—special schools where Jewish children of both genders would study in the German language everything that a person and citizen ought to know; as for those showing promise for the pursuit of further education, the doors of all the establishments of higher education in the empire were open to them: not only were they allowed to study, but those who demonstrated special talent and success were even granted stipends.

This example, especially after the French Revolution, was followed by almost all the governments of Europe; almost everywhere Jews were naturalized and received citizens’ rights equal to those of Christians.

⁴⁶ Grigor’ev, op. cit., 547–49.

The result of the cumulative influence of all the above-mentioned circumstances in Germany, Holland, Denmark, France, Belgium, and other countries was a total upset of the inner strength of Rabbinism. If it still exists, then it is only as a tree with a decayed inner core, held together only by its bark.⁴⁷

Grigoriev adopts this same panegyric manner when mentioning the Reform movement that had taken over Austrian and German synagogues. It is doubtful, however, that the Western models he promoted were suitable for Nikolai's regime (incidentally, the reference to Austrian monarchical priority had a tactical goal, insofar as it would have neutralized any antagonistic reminder about the French revolutionary initiative in the matter of the Jews' emancipation⁴⁸ and would thus have disarmed its potential opponents). Indeed, how could the Austrian emancipation of the Jews from having to live only in designated neighborhoods be reconciled with the Russian Pale of Settlement, Jews' expulsion from villages, and the deportation of 1843? And how can one speak of equal "citizens' rights" for the Jews under the conditions of an overall lack of rights in Russia? Nikolai, again, preferred other methods of acculturation, primarily conscription. And of this, notably, Grigoriev, unlike the author in *LfR*, does not say a word. Such a tactic may in fact have reflected a relatively moderate position of the Interior Ministry and its head, L. A. Perovsky, on the Jewish question. Grigoriev is also not at all enthusiastic about the prospect of converting Jews to Christianity.

In addition to the mention of Josef II, the same Austrian—or Galician-maskilic—imprint is evident in a remark concerning the role of the foreign element in the religious life and enlightenment of Odessa Jews: "It was brought here by one of the two Jewish communities of the city that emigrated from Galicia. The two schools supported by that community, one for boys and the other for girls, were established entirely on the model of identical modern schools in Austria and Germany. Here, besides Hebrew, they teach Russian, German, and French. By the same token this community has its own separate prayer house, where its members gather together on Saturdays and other religious holidays for worship accord-

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 496–99.

⁴⁸ Cf. the similar tactics in the memorandum of Kiselev, which tied the success of Jewish enlightenment in France only to Napoleon, making no mention of the emancipation of the Jews during the French Revolution (M. Stanislawski, *op. cit.*, 46). The scholar also notes the superficial-naïve reception of Western models on the part of Kiselev and Uvarov, who apparently never considered the possible implications of such reforms in Russia.

ing to the new rite. The other, much larger Jewish community in Odessa, established by emigrants from the southern provinces of Russia, without harboring any animosity toward the ‘innovators’ . . . shows no inclination toward leaving the old religious lifestyle. Many of its members, however, gladly send their children to Russian educational establishments—the local gymnasium and the lyceum—which helps to advance greatly education among the Jewish population of the city. On the other side of empire some innovations were received by parts of the Jewish population in Courland and Riga.”⁴⁹

The Dangers of Jewish Enlightenment

Matters stood best in Odessa, which had its “own separate prayer house” for liberal and educated Jews. As if to confirm Grigoriev’s assessment, in 1847 *The Odessa Herald* published on its first page the notice “The New Jewish Synagogue in Odessa,” sent in by the *Maskil* Osip Rabinovich—the main pioneer and enthusiast of Russian-Jewish literature and journalism (who was yet destined to go through terrible censorship troubles during the post-reform period). This is an emblematic document of the Russian Haskalah, just as imbued with sincere and deep pain for his native people as with all the deficiencies of borrowed enlightenment. Combined herein is the well-intended complaisance of the Haskalah, its disengagement from the religious depths of ethnic spirit in the name of a flat ethical utilitarianism, curious naïveté, a middle-brow orientation, and derivative-ness in everything associated with the purely outward respectability of Jewish rituals. The discussion centers around the improved rite, close to that of reformed Judaism, which Heine’s comic character had described as “worship with orthographically correct German singing.” In everything else Rabinovich’s text, similar to other works of the *Maskilim*, offers a passionate denunciation of the main body of his crass compatriots—those “enemies of everything refined”:

It has already been seven years since the new synagogue was established in Odessa, known among the Jews by the name “Brotsky” because its founders were Austrian Jews from Brody who received Russian citizenship. . . . Among foreign Jews, who have long since familiarized themselves with the ethos of European education, such synagogues are nothing new; but in Russia, where

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 500.

the greater part of the older generation of Jews still continues in the same moldy ignorance and considers any science to be useless, any emulation of a Gentile to be a deadly sin—prayers with methodical singing, sheet-music in the hands of choir members, stillness and deep quiet among the congregants—, their shaved beards and black frock-coats had inevitably to draw against them a whole horde of fanatics, enemies of anything refined or European, prostrating themselves before their grandfathers' caftans and shoes. Yet not looking back at the frenetic screams of the champions of darkness and ignorance, the new synagogue pushed forward along an uncharted path and with each day progressed more and more; its congregants multiplied, its resources grew, and the tireless zeal of its members combusted, in the full sense of the word.

It would seem that such notices in Russia at that time represented a singular genre, in which a liberal journalistic jargon was being developed for future use. Yet this liberalism longed to serve official policy. Like his predecessors, Rabinovich still firmly believed that Russia had a role in replacing a lost Zion for a renewed Jewry. The new Brodsky Synagogue, the dedication of which was on the Passover holiday—i.e., the anniversary of the Exodus—, is clearly presented as an ideal substitute for the Jerusalem Temple. Just as in antiquity the Jews sacrificed their assets for the construction of the House of God, so now they brought them for the creation of the synagogue—this sanctuary of loyalty, heralded by “methodical singing”:

Each one brought his mite as a gift to the house of the Lord: the rich man sacrificed part of his abundance, the scholar dedicated his pen, the experienced man—his advice, the musician—his musical talent, and the one who had none of this placed on the altar his veneration; and the house of God flourished in peace and tranquility, praising the might of the Almighty and blessing the sage government, under whose benevolent ray it continues to develop its young powers. . . . Last March the 19th, on the eve of the celebration of the freedom from Egyptian slavery, at 5 o'clock, the dedication of the new synagogue was held, before a gathering of many Christians and Jews. The heart fluttered from the joy of seeing the inside of the temple, and when under its high roof the harmonious choir started to sing the well-known cantata “How attractive are your tents, O Jacob”—all eyes were immediately turned toward this beautiful, pure, bright auditorium, so spacious and comfortable, toward the elegant crystal chandelier and bronze candlesticks, toward the honorable crowd, dressed tastefully and expressing pious humility before the sanctuary—at all that elevates the soul and which, unfortunately, is avoided in other synagogues. During the ritual of placing the scrolls of Moses in the ark, after the prayer for the Lord Emperor and the Most August Family, there resounded in Hebrew the warm prayer of the Russian Heart: “God save the Tsar!”—at the sound of which the Jews quickly arose

from their seats and the Christians removed their hats. It was so touching to behold this mixing of the two peoples offering up praise, each according to their own religious understandings and each from pure hearts, to the throne of the Almighty for the longevity and glory of the beloved Monarch.

All that this temple lacked was an ordained high-priest, the eloquent speech of whom would correspond to the refined manners and spiritual needs of the worshippers. His purpose would be not to soar among the clouds, but to inculcate in the congregants the useful virtues of citizenry, love for their tsar and for the motherland:

All the congregants are inspired by the single avid desire to have a preacher—not one who is lost in theological details, expounding this or that in a mystical language concerning what neither he nor his listeners understands, but a learned preacher, with a European name and a powerful gift of speech, who in vivid language would tell us of our duties to God, to the Tsar, to our neighbors, and to ourselves. . . . May this temple flourish for the sake of the name of Almighty God, under the shadow of our benevolent Motherland, in peace, and may the words of the prophet be fulfilled for us: “The latter splendor of this house shall be greater than the former, says the LORD of hosts; ‘and in this place I will give prosperity,’ says the LORD of hosts” (Hag 2:9).⁵⁰

This notice received an agitated response from another Odessa resident—the Orthodox conservative A. Sturdza, one of the ideologues of the ancient Alexandrine period and a friend of Zhukovsky and Gogol in his later period. Rabinovich’s information stirred conflicting feelings in him. On the one hand, Sturdza supported the Jewish desire for progress—hoping, of course, like all the supporters of the Haskalah, that it would sooner or later prod them toward Christianity; on the other hand, he was somewhat alarmed: would this enlightenment go too far in its Western freethinking? The instinct of a guardian moved him almost to defend the “old” forms of Judaism, which preserved an astounding vitality; it would be dangerous to become absorbed only in the outward splendor. As for that sought-for preacher who best suited the new synagogue, he should, according to Sturdza, adhere not to liberal extemporizing (and certainly not to Jewish mysticism), but to the Pentateuch and the prophets⁵¹—which preference on Sturdza’s part is quite understandable when one bears in mind the Christological meaning that Christian dogma assigned to those books.

⁵⁰ *Odesskii vestnik*, 1847, no. 34.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, no. 36. Cf. V. S. Parsamov, *Zhozef de Mestr i Aleksandr Sturdza: iz istorii religioznykh idei Aleksandrovskei epokhi* (Saratov, 2004), 142.

On the Jewish question Russian politics was always characterized by a mixture of judophobia and assimilatory tendencies. The articles by Grigoriev and Sturdza reflect the first stage of this process, marked by the predilection for forced acculturation. Forty years later the authorities, fearing the overwhelming success of this approach, would establish a quota for Jews in educational institutions, after which would follow a series of additional measures directed toward the exposure and segregation of already-assimilated adherents of the Law of Moses.

But in the 1840s, not all Russian thinkers held the same favorable view of Jewish enlightenment as did the authorities of that time, who were attracted by the Western precedent. In this period, marked by new ideological investigations, the simple, old-style Slavophile judophobia was joined, albeit with some delay, by philosophical-theoretical positions presented with a German flair. In place of the former respect for the Rothschilds and enlightened foreign Jews, the distinguished Russian media came to a different—in essence, already racially-based—critical view.

The Slavophile and Romantic A. Khomiakov, sharing the traditional conviction about the Jewish people as a strange anachronism, in 1847 sought, at last, to establish the general national-religious idea that would animate the apparently purely secular Jewish people, as represented in the West by Jewish bankers, composers, and *littérateurs* (he omits the names of Börne or Heine, however), and in the realm of philosophy by Spinoza. For Khomiakov, Rothschild, with his “monetary power,” was the embodiment of all Jewry, this “people without a motherland” who preserved “the mercantile spirit of ancient Palestine and, in particular, that love for earthly benefits that was also unable in antiquity to recognize the Messiah in poverty and humility.”

For the first time in Russia this general pre-Christian phase of Holy History is here openly put under hostile revision. In other words, Khomiakov explicitly draws out the anti-biblical potential that earlier Romantic culture quietly nurtured within itself. Now that which was always considered the highest religious merit of the Jewish people—monotheism—came under scrutiny. Khomiakov ascribes to it a notorious ambiguity: an inclination toward either a concentrated “anthropomorphism” or an impersonal, abstract “amorphism.” What Shevyrev once perceived as the great merit of “Jewish poetry”—its transcendental determinism, if not tacit disengagement from palpable earthly forms and figural embodiment—is interpreted by Khomiakov as a lack of artistic talent, conditioned by the negative qualities of Old Testament teaching. Yes, among the Jews there were great musicians and witty, talented *littérateurs*—though their works

always contained “something false in their minds and feelings.” “Why do they not have sculptors or painters? Figural arts flourished among the Greeks, who were worshippers of human beauty. It also flourished among Christians, for the earthly image of man had, for the Christian, received sanctification and blessing from above. Yet these arts were never present among the Jews, *for the mind of the Jew was above worshipping earthly beauty*; such arts were not present among the Jews *because for them the earthly image of man had not received a higher meaning*” (emphasis mine).

Thus, the ultimate foundation of modern Jewry was their original Old Testament materialism and defective immunity to the Christian idea of the God-man as a synthesis of spiritual and earthly beginnings. Khomiakov explains Kabbalah accordingly, as simply the “mystical covering” of cold Jewish pantheism embodied in Spinoza—who is, “perhaps, the greatest among the thinkers of the new era.”⁵²

As we can see, the author demonstratively effaces the distinction usually made in Russian journalism between adherents of Judaism and enlightened Western Jews who embraced Christianity, in the manner of the composer Mendelssohn (and other “great musicians”) or other writers he mentions. He even places Spinoza within the bosom of Jewry, despite the fact that Spinoza severed all ties with his native religion. In a word, Khomiakov’s position marked a symptomatic departure on the part of Russian Romanticism from both obsolete Old Testament sentiments and the assimilationist tendencies of the Enlightenment. Russian judophobia was preparing to enter a new phase.

⁵² A. S. Khomiakov, “O vozmozhnosti russkoi khudozhestvennoi shkoly,” *O starom i novom. Stat'i i ocherki* (Moscow, 1988), 148–49.

EPILOGUE

THE FURTHER EVOLUTION OF THE JEWISH THEME

The anti-Semitic literary cliché at this time also experienced some symptomatic changes, as we see, for example, in the young Turgenev's anonymous *The Yid* (which shocked even the censor, I. Ivanovsky, who perceived in this the pernicious influence of the "frenetic" French school). This text is notable as a connecting link between older Romantic anti-Semitism and the work of classical realistic prose. While preserving the same narrative canvas discussed above, *The Yid* marked a negative shift in the presentation of Jewish female characters and in the interpretation of paternal love.

The plot unfolds in Danzig in 1813. The Jew Hershel extorts money from a Russian cornet, whom he lures with his beautiful yet equally greedy daughter Sarah (whose innocence he nonetheless protects). Nothing is said here about her interest in Christianity or the Christian protagonist; yet in full agreement with literary tradition the Jew is presented as a spy—for the enemy, of course. He is ultimately condemned to death by hanging—whereupon this coward, in order to save himself, offers his beloved daughter to the cornet as a concubine. However, Hershel is hung nonetheless, and the beautiful Sarah, following the canon of Old Testament vengeance, viciously curses Christians and "all your odious race, with the curse of Dafan and Aviron." In other words, the beautiful Jewess is this time in complete agreement with her people in hating Christianity. The execution itself is presented with the compulsory entourage of Jewish horror and marionette-like convulsions, accompanied by the equally requisite *laughter*:

The soldiers seized Hershel by the arms. Then I understood why they were laughing at the Yid, when Sarah and I ran from the camp. He truly was laughable, despite all the horror of his situation. The agonizing anxiety of parting with his life, his daughter, and his family was expressed by the Jew with such strange, distorted body movements, screaming, and jumping that it made us smile involuntarily, though we truly felt terrible. The poor chap was paralyzed by fear. . . .

Not everything was so droll, however. Though the theatrical censor still tried to protect Russian theater from virtuous Jewish characters,¹ some authors allowed themselves impudent liberties. In 1849, amidst the very heat of anti-Jewish administrative persecutions, the now humane and moderately liberal Lazhechnikov, maintaining his interest in the Jewish problem, finally transferred it into an unambiguously positive register. The heroine of his drama *The Jew's Daughter* is the former Esther, now Natalia Ivanovna Gorislavskaiia, a baptized and virtuous young Jewish woman who was raised in a Christian family (another version of the traditional and still popular theme of the foreign foundling—as, for example, in *The Spaniards* or in *Chaikovsky*). She hides from her groom her shameful background, but on the eve of the wedding a scoundrel blackmails her. In the meantime her father returns from Belostok and solemnly announces his intention to convert to Christianity. The tormented heroine dies, however, without learning of this redemptive decision.²

In a later and more optimistic version of this drama, retitled *Woe from Shame* (1858), the prenuptial conflict is happily resolved thanks to the same touching paternal maxim:

Do not be ashamed of me, sirs, do not despise me. Tomorrow I will become a Christian and then, perhaps, you will extend a hand to me as your brother.³

Such was the highest form of brotherly love that Russian literature could allow itself in relation to the Jews at the decline of the Nikolaevan period and on the eve of the Great Reforms. Soon afterward the negative—Zotovian⁴—line would predominate, with one or another sporadic irregularity, together with a more humane element in the spirit of Avdeeva or Lazhechnikov, until the present day. The philo-Semitic trend was expanded in the 1860s–90s by Mei, Marko Vovchok, Mordovtsev, V. Soloviev, and, in part, by Shchedrin and Leskov in his later works, whereas it became a main

¹ The right to their staging was retained only for foreign authors. For more on this, see V. Levitina, *Russkii teatr i evrei* (Jerusalem, 1988), 137–42. Levitina also mentions two foreign plays that were allowed on the Russian stage, one of which was Richard Cumberland's *The Jew*. One the other hand, she also notes the rise of anti-Semitic vaudevilles in the 1830s–40s (ibid., 65–66).

² *Otechestvennye zapiski*, 1849, no. 1:209–10.

³ Lazhechnikov, *Sochineniia* (in 12 vols.) (St. Petersburg, 1884), 11:112–13.

⁴ “Zotovian” refers here to both father (Rafail Zotov) and son (Vladimir Zotov). In 1858 the latter published in his journal *Illustration* an anti-Semitic article that led to vigorous polemics and to a published condemnation of the editor's anti-Semitic attacks. Regarding this, see, e.g., S. M. Ginzburg, *Minuvshee. Istoricheskie ocherki, stat'i i kharakteristiki* (Petrograd, 1923), 50–54.

facet of Russian cultural life only at the beginning of the 20th century, when this current was joined by such writers as Korolenko, Leonid Andreev, and Gorky.

It must nonetheless be said that by the second half of the 19th century anti-Semitic positions had grown significantly in demand and popularity. This trend gained momentum with the antinihilist novel and was sanctioned to a large extent in the name of Dostoevsky. As for journalism, an analogous evolution in this sphere was facilitated by the removal of meticulous state oversight, as well as by a general orientation toward native Russian tastes, material, and readers. This new orientation replaced the dependency on those imported models to which the authorities had previously given preference. An anti-Jewish upsurge in post-reform Russia was actively stimulated, as is well known, because of the enthusiastic development of capitalism and the various socio-cultural stresses that accompanied its frightening onrush. Under such circumstances, if not the freedom, then at least the well-known autonomy of the press for a long time imbued it with an aggressively anti-Semitic character, which had earlier been intrinsic specifically to literature. At the same time a dramatic change occurred in foreign treatments of the Jewish question and found resonance in Russian publications. Animosity toward Jews, even more radical than the religious judophobia of the Romantic period, over time acquired authoritative support on the part of Western European racial theories and the derivative “scientific” anti-Semitism, which fully emerged in Germany by the end of the 1870s but had even deeper roots. In Russia the prestige of the Romantic tradition smoothed the way for the adoption of this new doctrine.⁵

Near the end of his life Dostoevsky managed to fall under the obvious influence of fashionable racial concepts, which were closely tied to both the Romantic tradition and the antinihilistic movement. In his Pushkin speech (1880) praising the Christian “universal responsiveness” of the Russian people and their desire for a fraternal union with all peoples (a modification of the old officious, Romantic notion concerning the unusual sensibility and capaciousness of the Russian soul), he contradictorily—and in a way not entirely consistent with the Gospel—limits their circle only to Aryan race:

⁵ See in particular E. Weinerman, “Racial Prejudice and Jews in Late Imperial Russia,” *Ethics and Racial Studies* 17, no. 3 (1994); and *Russkaia rasovaia teoriia do 1917 goda*, ed. V. B. Avdeev (Moscow, 2002).

... we have already expressed our readiness and inclination ... for a universal *pan-human* union with all the races of the great *Aryan family*. Yes, beyond all doubt, the destiny of a Russian is pan-European and universal. To become a true Russian, to become a Russian fully, (in the long run, I repeat) means only to become *the brother of all men*, ... To a true Russian, Europe and the destiny of all *the mighty Aryan family* is as dear as Russia herself, as the destiny of his own native country, because our destiny is universality, won not by the sword, but by the strength of brotherhood and our fraternal aspiration to reunite mankind.⁶

Here already one can clearly discern echoes of the popular theories concerning the “Aryan Christ.” The question of the extent to which non-Aryan peoples are fit for Christian brotherhood is shrouded by the veil of patriotic eloquence. More likely than not, Dostoevsky had not yet had the chance to clearly work out this intriguing racial hierarchy, suggested to him by the “science” of his times. As for his mystically arranged Jewish theme, in the earlier passages of his *Diary of a Writer* (for 1877), while demonstrating a clear typological affinity with forthcoming racial anti-Semitism, it is nonetheless softened by humane qualifications. Be that as it may, the very heading that he gives to the last of the series of corresponding notes in his *Diary*—“But Long Live Brotherhood”—epitomizes, as it were, the entire measure of the author’s skepticism about including Jews in the universal family of nations.

The central argument of Russian anti-Semitic literature and opinion-based journalism of the last decades of the 19th century and first decades of the 20th (Burenin, Menshikov, Shmakov, A. Stolypin, Shabelskaia, Bostunich, Vinberg, etc.), resounding far more decisively, amounted to excluding Jews from membership in this universal family—and labeling them “enemies of the human race.” And it is on this point specifically that racist literature of the 20th century, if anything, most clearly demonstrates its dependency on old Romantic literature, which captured those contours of the Jewish image as they were perceived through the biblical veil.

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⁶ F. M. Dostoevskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* (Leningrad, 1984), 26:147; English translation here cited, with some adjustment (and my own emphasis to highlight Dostoevsky’s equation of Aryan = human), from *Pages from the Journal of an Author*, trans. S. Kotliansky and J. Middleton Murry (Boston, 1916), 66.