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also persuasively argues that a greater awareness of diversity and transnationalism will assist us with a more nuanced understanding of culture and pluralism. Her work builds on existing debates about citizenship and cosmopolitanism by adding an often neglected religious dimension, aiming to make explicit some of the most pervasive and powerful connections that bind us to one another.

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Eliezer Ben-Rafael, Thomas Gergely and Yosef Gorny, eds, *Jewry between Tradition and Secularism: Europe and Israel Compared*. Leiden: Brill, 2006, xiv + 322 pp., ISBN 9789004151406, €108.00/US\$161.00.

keywords: European Jewry ♦ Israel ♦ Jewish studies ♦ Judaism ♦ Zionism

The question of what constitutes the Jewish people has been debated at least as far back as the destruction of the first temple, but it becomes increasingly difficult in the post-Enlightenment period. Into what was already a highly globalized, dispersed and ethnically diverse Jewry, the last three centuries have seen the introduction of a whole new set of schisms, tensions and forms of diversity into Jewish life. Given this ever-growing, ever-shifting diversity, the question asked by the editors of *Jewry between Tradition and Secularism*, 'Are Jews today still the carriers of a single and identical collective identity and do they still constitute a single people?' (p. 9), is a highly relevant one. Moreover, given conflicts over the future direction of Israel, the Jewish state's relation to the diaspora as well as conflicts between different Jewish religious denominations, how one answers the question

potentially has consequences going way beyond academic Jewish studies. The answer the editors give is that 'despite the variation, the Jewish people are, for the time being at least, still one' (p. 9).

Most of the essays in this volume – based on papers presented at the second international seminar of the Klal Yisrael project in Brussels, September 2003 – would more or less support this conclusion. But even if they tacitly affirm the existence of an identifiable Jewish people, the contributions to this collection are so fragmented by widely differing interests and approaches that they call into question the existence of an identifiable thread running through the volume. The chapters differ not only in their subject matter, but in their length (one is only three pages long), their scholarly depth, the quality and extent of their referencing and even in their referencing style.

The book is divided into four sections. The first, 'Contemporary Practices', deals with European Jewry; the second, 'Jews Beyond Europe', mostly with Israeli Jewry (with one out of place chapter on Jewish American women); the third, 'Identity, Singularity, Conflict and Cooperation', with wider themes; the fourth is an epilogue. At first it appears as if Europe will be the prism through which contemporary Jewry is viewed. Thomas Gergely's preface, 'Judaism and the Culture of Memory', sets the context of the book within post-Holocaust understandings of Europe as 'Jewish history's largest burial ground' (p. ix) to which different Jewries have responded in different ways through different 'cultures of memory'. Similarly, the editors' introduction, 'European Jewry and Klal Yisrael', situates the book as an attempt to understand European Jewry in a comparative perspective, asking: 'Can European Jewry play an influential role not only vis-à-vis the Jewish world but also vis-à-vis Europe itself in this era?' (p. 2). To this end, the first section of the book presents chapters on Jewry in France, Belgium, Germany, Hungary and Romania. Most of these are no more than useful short introductions to the Jewish communities in these countries, with little attempt to set them in a wider context. The exception is Pierre Birnbaum's chapter, 'Is the French Model in Decline?', which interrogates the French model of official state secularism by examining French Jewry's changing relationship to the French state. Arguing that the current questioning and undermining of the French model by ethno-religious particularism is increasingly experienced as threatening by French Jews, Birnbaum concludes that 'the situation today threatens to place them on a razor's edge in an unstable context that [arises] from the multiple loyalties experienced more intensely than ever' (p. 26).

Absent in the European section of the book is any consideration of British Jewry. From my own research, this absence is entirely in line with Anglo-Jewry's own distance from and lack of relationship with European Jewry. Yet even if Anglo-Jewish leaders and grassroots members tend to lean more towards American Jewry in their identities and models of practice, the relationship between British Jewry – which is after all Europe's second largest Jewish community – and continental Jewry still needs to be examined and the absence of such an examination in this collection is disappointing.

Even if the collection sets out to provide a comparative perspective on world Jewries, the extent to which individual chapters carry out this comparison is variable. Most of the contributors to the book work with a model of global Jewry in

which American and Israeli Jewry are the principal poles in world Jewry, with some contributors arguing that European Jewry can be considered another pole. Clearly, from the title of the book the comparison of European and Israeli Jewry is a key part of the book, but most of the contributors to the second section of the book, which deals primarily with Israeli Jewry, barely consider other Jewries. That is not to say that they are all entirely parochial in focus, rather, those chapters that offer a global focus only do so insofar as a global perspective sheds light on the problematics of Israeli Jewry and Zionism. So Zvi Zohar's chapter 'On European Jewish Orthodoxy, Sephardic Tradition, and the Shas Movement' provides a fascinating account of how Israeli Sephardic orthodoxy has internalized Eastern European-originated modes of halachic discourse and identity. But most of the chapters in this section examine aspects of Israeli Jewry – such as Lior Ben-Chaim Rafael's chapter on secular and ultra-orthodox Israel college students – or aspects of Israeli and Zionist thought – such as Shalom Ratzabi's chapter on Martin Buber and Ofer Shiff's chapter on Hillel Silver. These chapters are interesting (although some are poorly written) but they do not in themselves contribute much to a comparative study of global Jewries – readers are mostly left to do this comparative work for themselves.

The strengths and the flaws in this collection are further revealed in the third section of the book. On the one hand, the chapters by Guy Haarscher and David Meyer reiterate familiar themes on secularization and on diaspora respectively, adding little that is new. On the other hand, those by Dina Porat and Uri Cohen offer incisive analyses of how two modern Israeli institutions construct Jewish peoplehood and identity. Porat presents a critical discussion of the history of Tel Aviv's Diaspora Museum, concluding that 'the Diaspora museum offers a number of binding principles, such as unity, being an integral part of a public, continuity, cultural contribution, the possibility of mixing Judaism and Zionism, and tradition as a tool. But it does not offer a clear-cut modern identity, and perhaps it should not be expected to' (p. 247).

Uri Cohen's chapter on the development of Jerusalem's Hebrew University demonstrates how the project of building and maintaining this institution created a 'transnational community', a coalition of very different global Jewish interests and factions. In these two chapters we see how the empirical study of Jewish practice in one location can illuminate the nature of relations between Jewish communities in very different locations.

The book ends with an epilogue section consisting of two chapters. Eliezer Ben-Rafael's 'Contemporary Dilemmas of Identity: Israel and the Diaspora' offers a useful overview of the question of Jewish peoplehood, arguing that 'After Wittgenstein, we can see that like the members of a real enlarged family, the various expressions of the identity that personify the pluralism of Judaism simultaneously converge and diverge' (p. 288). Thomas Gergely's final chapter concludes the book – somewhat incongruously given its largely empirical focus – with a quasi-theological discussion titled 'Was the Shoah the "Sanctification of God"?'

This collection is therefore an inconsistent one, in which over the course of the book overriding themes appear and disappear only to reappear again, with variable consistency of quality and depth. It is perhaps better suited to be mined by readers for particular chapters of interest rather than read from cover to cover

(and given the obscene price this is likely to be how the book is used). The book reveals some of the weaknesses of the academic practice of turning a conference into a book. It is likely that the 2003 Brussels conference was an interesting and productive one in which post-paper questions and private conversations stimulated interconnections between research themes. In the book, these links are much more difficult to trace. This situation is not helped by the huge variation in the amount of post-conference work done on the papers. Some chapters are clearly little more than the conference papers themselves – unreferenced and short – whereas others are fully formed research reports. It says something depressing about the lack of aspiration among publishers that hardback academic collections such as this should be read – and read widely – that *Jewry between Tradition and Secularism* was not subject to firmer editing control.

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M. Avrum Ehrlich, ed., *The Jewish–Chinese Nexus: A Meeting of Civilizations*. London and New York: Routledge, 2008, 294 pp., ISBN 9780415457156, US\$140.00.

keywords: assimilation ♦ Chinese Jews ♦ cultural hybridization ♦ diaspora

This book is divided into five parts. It starts with a historical-chronological overview (by Ehrlich) of the Jewish presence in China – both historical and contemporary. It sets this overview in the context of a contemporary expert's look at China (presented by Messmer) and the burgeoning of new Jewish and Israeli communities in Asia (as viewed by Buxbaum). The second part of the book delves into the most interesting area of the cultural correspondences and divergences between Judaism and Confucianism, that is, Jewish and Chinese cultures. Under this title several contributions cast new light on difficult issues such as the inner closeness or remoteness of the Confucian and Jewish faiths (Patt-Shamir and Rapoport) and the possibility and difficulties of inter-faith dialogue. In this respect, we learn about the relevance of the Israeli cultural experience for China and common traits of Israel's and China's historical paths (Youde). The last chapter in this part of the book (by Quanhong and Gotel) draws a parallel between the Nanjing Massacre perpetrated by Japanese troops in 1937 and the Nazi Holocaust of Jews during the Second World War. The intention is to emphasize the different meanings given by the Chinese and the Jews to the respective massacres they endured and which, at some point, meet.

The next part of the book focuses on Chinese perceptions of Jews and Israel. We find here an analysis (by Youde) – oriented to political realities – of how China views the Jewish people and how difficult it is for a Chinese, who naturally tends