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indispensable tool for any scholar working on the eastern Mediterranean in early modern times. Based on articles and essays, most of which have been published before in earlier versions, the collection nevertheless has sufficient cohesion, and enough new material and insights, to constitute a major new contribution to this field of study.

Substantial numbers of Jews exiled from Spain in 1492 settled in the Ottoman Empire, forming communities that were subsequently enlarged by the thousands of Jews who had been more or less forcibly converted to Christianity in Spain and Portugal but who sought to return to normative Judaism in the eastern Mediterranean. One consequence of this migration was that Spanish and Portuguese-speaking Jews had ousted the Venetians and Florentines from their previous dominance over the long-distance trade of the Balkans and Istanbul by the opening decades of the sixteenth century. After their war with the Ottomans in the 1530s, the Venetians—in contrast to what had happened after previous such wars—were unable to resume the commercial operations they had traditionally plied. By 1541, the Venetian Senate was compelled to acknowledge that the republic's international trade was in grave crisis and that, in effect, Sephardic Jews now dominated the overland commerce of the Balkans.

One immediate consequence of this new situation was that Venice's traditional policy of excluding Jewish merchants from the city was abandoned, and Jewish merchants who were Ottoman subjects were given permission to settle in the Ghetto Vecchio (or "Old Ghetto") of Venice. The new status of the Jews in Venice was resented by many Christian Venetians, however, and the mounting friction between Venetians and Jewish merchants and customs officials (a handful of whom—including the legendary Joseph Nasi—stood in high favor with authorities in the ports of the Ottoman Empire), generated a remarkably complex and fraught Venetian-Jewish relationship that was a strange mixture of hostility and collaboration. This relationship was one of the key elements in the history of the Venetian Republic over the next century or so and has long been known to historians, but no one has yet explored its subtleties with as much good sense, erudition, judicious judgment, and fairness to scholars with whom he disagrees as Arbel. My only complaint is that the book is not longer. We are told rather less about the Jewish communities and their trade in such Venetian colonies as Corfu, Zante, and Crete than perhaps we ought to have been, and several crucial episodes, such as the important Jewish role in the Venetian-Ottoman struggle over Cyprus in 1570–1571, might well have been explored more fully.

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CARL IPSEN. *Dictating Demography: The Problem of Population in Fascist Italy*. (Cambridge Studies in Population, Economy and Society in Past Time, num-

ber 28.) New York: Cambridge University Press. 1996. Pp. xvii, 281. \$54.95.

The last decade has produced a steady and previously unexampled stream of major monographs about fascist Italy. Deserving of an important place among them is Carl Ipsen's new study of the regime's population policy. Ipsen demonstrates that exhortations about demographic growth, given special prominence in the "battle for births," were an essential part of the formation of the "totalitarian" state after 1926. Moreover, the ramifications of government control over population size were vast and intruded into fascist definitions of the state and of welfare as well as into deliberations about gender, class, and, of course, "race." In this sense, Ipsen is right to reiterate that demography was the "problem of problems" in fascist Italy (p. 2), central to Mussolini's "vision of a new Fascist civilization" (p. 68).

Ipsen writes with span; he is praiseworthy aware of the context of his subject. He realizes, for example, that fascist Italy was not the only society seeking to harness its demographics, and he tells his readers of the possible parallels with such different states as Nazi Germany and democratic Sweden. He knows, too, that a fascist comprehension of the Italian family was not born fully grown from the head of the *Duce*. One avenue that Ipsen briefly and fruitfully explores is the history of statistics in post-Risorgimento Italy; it is difficult for a state to have a population policy until its agents can count accurately and consistently.

Migration is another matter at the heart of any demographic concern, and so Ipsen is driven to survey issues as various as the Liberal reaction to pre-1914 emigration to the Americas, the motivation of fascist land reclamation schemes, and the fascist view of the relationship between city and countryside. Another aspect of the problem was "race," especially as, from 1937 onward, the regime hardened its legislation and propaganda against "non-Italians." Here again, statisticians played a role. Ironically, one of Italy's best practitioners in the field was Giorgio Mortara, a Jew. He emigrated, to watch sadly as his erstwhile colleague, Corrado Gini, accepted the demographic ideas of the Nazi new order and hoped for the military victory of the "most vigorous races" (p. 250). In other words, while pursuing what might seem a somewhat narrow theme, Ipsen casts light on a host of major problems in the history of fascist Italy.

What, then, is his conclusion, especially with regard to what remains the most disputed point about fascist Italy: was it really a "totalitarian state?" Emilio Gentile and the new generation of (especially American) cultural historians usually assure us that, despite some idiosyncracies, it was. Victoria De Grazia and other social historians imply that it was not, or at least they argue that the structures of the *longue durée* of Italian life were too powerful for so superficial a thinker and so short-term a political manipulator as Mussolini to overcome. Where does Ipsen stand in this debate?

The answer seems to be somewhere in the middle. "The example of demographic policy," he tells us, "confirms that Mussolini did aspire to create a totalitarian regime" and that, despite its relative benignity compared with Nazi Germany or Stalin's Soviet Union, it was "part of a larger plan to control Italian industry, labor, culture, society, and politics" (p. 253). Nonetheless, Ipsen concludes in the last sentence of his book, fascist attempts to intrude as master into national bedrooms failed: "The Italian Fascist regime proved unable to manipulate demographic phenomena to the degree and in the direction desired" (p. 255). After all, as he had remarked earlier, "Fascist pronatalism seems to have done little to stave off declining Italian birth rates" (p. 184).

The old conundrum is not resolved. Fascism continues to look totalitarian from above and much less than totalitarian from below. What a follow-up study to that of Ipsen might attempt is to go where, for example, De Grazia and Luisa Passerini have already led and to examine not so much what the fascist regime thought was its demographic practice as what constituted the reaction of the peoples of all the Italies to birth and other family questions under the dictatorship. Then we might know more about how and in what sense the family is indeed a durable structure of Italian life.

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SYLVIE ANNE GOLDBERG. *Crossing the Jabbok: Illness and Death in Ashkenazi Judaism in Sixteenth- through Nineteenth-Century Prague*. Translated by CAROL COSMAN. (Contraversions: Critical Studies in Jewish Literature, Culture, and Society, number 3.) Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press. 1996. Pp. xvii, 303. \$45.00.

Sylvie-Anne Goldberg's book is the first serious attempt to deal with the Jewish concept of death within the study of mentalities. While Philippe Ariès is the godfather of this study, it is clear that his magisterial study of death and dying in Europe dealt with Christian tradition(s) and reactions to it.

Let me begin by noting that this book, which was first a dissertation and then a French monograph (1989), is a major addition to the literature on representations and experiences of death in Europe as well as to Jewish Studies, a relatively new academic field with a long prehistory. This is not unimportant, given the complex and contested history of the *Annales* school of historiography and the role that overt and repressed anti-Semitism as well as Jewish self-hatred played in its formation.

With the work of Goldberg and her French Jewish contemporaries, a vital and missing link in the writing of the history of mentalities has been forged. As with the writing on the Shoah over the past decade, however, it is striking that the site for this reparation is not France (or Paris) but Prague. Just as it was possible for French intellectuals of all schools to write critically

(and insightfully) about the Shoah as long as they saw it as a "German Problem," so, too, it is possible to imagine an alternative narrative of death and dying among the Jews projected into the still vaguely frightening world of Prague Jewry: the world of the Maharal and the Golem, of the *Altneusynagog*, and of Franz Kafka, coughing his way through the streets, dying in life.

That being said, this is a brilliant and insightful book. It begins by providing a solid summary of traditional rabbinic views of dying, death, and the meaning ascribed to the dead body. Goldberg, in the opening chapter, sets the stage for the *Sonderweg* of Prague-Jewish history. Her study is both a broader study of the ways that Jews deal/dealt with death and dying as well as a detailed and often compelling history of the working out of these ways in one, rather unique Jewish community: that of Prague. Prague is unique (as all communities are unique one from the other) because of its peculiar history, its multicultural and competitive communities, its relationship to the various forms of Christianity before and after the Reformation, and its odd place in Habsburg culture and thought. Prague Jewry was more unique (never thought you would find that tautology used self-consciously and correctly) than other cities in the Habsburg empire because of its need to orient itself to the strong German and Czech communities and the role that Jewish intellectual culture played in a trans-regional way in Bohemia. Goldberg shows this in great detail, using unpublished records from the Jewish community as well as published documents as the basis for her work.

Central to Goldberg's tale is the history of the Prague burial society. The famous series of paintings of its activities from ca. 1780 are reproduced in this volume. These images, and the Prague burial society, are by far the best known representations of death within the history of European Jewry. They were often borrowed and even graced the opening room of the 1911 Jewish pavilion at the Dresden International Hygiene exhibition, where they served as visual documentation of the "advanced scientific" nature of Jewish dealing with corpses. Goldberg shows that Jewish burial rites had been highly contested in the nineteenth century with the rise of anxiety about premature burial and the Jewish practice of quick burial. Suddenly, the meaning attached to these representations in the early twentieth century shifted. They became proof of the correctness of Jewish "scientific" rituals of burial in an age no longer haunted by the specter of premature burial.

But Goldberg's narrative covers many more areas. She has a remarkable discussion of the role of Jewish physicians in Prague culture. Her concern is not only their medical practice but also the question of the role of the physician in the determining of death and the influence this had in shaping a "scientific" rereading of dying and death within Jewish ritual. Goldberg's documentation here is rich, and her discussion of Prague