

to narrating executions but rather was close to becoming a hallmark of intellectual inquiry at that time.

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A Tale of Ritual Murder in the Age of Louis XIV: The Trial of Raphaël Lévy, 1669.

By *Pierre Birnbaum*. Translated by *Arthur Goldhammer*. Stanford Studies in Jewish History and Culture. Edited by *Steve Zipperstein* and *Aron Rodrigue*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012. Pp. 178. \$60.00.

In this fascinating but also somewhat uneven book, Pierre Birnbaum tells the story of the trial and execution of Raphaël Lévy, a seventeenth-century Jew from the town of Boulay in Lorraine. Lévy was accused of the kidnapping and ritual murder of the four-year-old boy Didier La Moyne outside Metz in September 1669. After being arrested, interrogated, and convicted, Lévy was hung and his body burned at the stake on January 18, 1670.

This is not your run-of-the-mill scholarly monograph. Rather, it is a passionate and almost personal book, in which Birnbaum, who has written in the past about the role of Jews in modern French politics and about the Dreyfus affair, uses Lévy's chilling case to make a larger point about the persistence of prejudices against Jews in modern France. The author's personal investment in Lévy's story is evident throughout the book, contributing to its many strengths—but also to its weaknesses. It allows the author to delve into the most minute details of Lévy's trial in order to prove him innocent, but occasionally it also leads him to lose any semblance of scholarly detachment from his topic. The result is a combination of captivating storytelling and fascinating details with some very problematic historical statements.

The book is divided into eight chapters. The first three describe the historical background of Lévy's trial, which Birnbaum identifies as Lorraine's precarious political situation in the seventeenth century, the rise of the absolutist state, the "Counter-Reformation," the winding down of witchcraft accusations, and the general history of European Jews, including, of course, the long list of blood libels against them from Norwich (1144) to Trent (1475) and beyond. Chapters 4–7 recount the actual details of Lévy's trial and its immediate aftermath. The eighth, and final, chapter deals with the uses to which Lévy's trial was put during the Dreyfus affair.

Birnbaum is at his best when he describes the details of Lévy's trial and its much later uses during the Dreyfus affair. He allows us to follow Lévy on his way to Metz on September 25, 1669, to buy wine, supplies, and a shofar for Rosh Hashanah services in Boulay; he discusses the disappearance of Didier La Moyne in the woods outside Metz; and he explores the connection between the two cases—Lévy's trip and Didier La Moyne's disappearance—made about a week after Lévy's return from Metz. Through a close reading of the trial documents, the author opens a window into the mental universe of the prisoner, the daily life of and tensions in his community, and the interest of the emerging absolutist state in the fate of Lorraine's Jews. We learn who Raphaël Lévy was, what he was accused of, how his trial unfolded, how he behaved under interrogation and torture, even what he wore on his way to the gallows. We learn a great deal also about Lévy's coreligionists, some of whom were implicated in a "trial within a trial" of Eucharistic host desecration. Expert historians and the general reader alike will find here a wealth of details and a captivating story that will enrich their understanding of ritual murder and host-desecration

accusations. No less interesting is Birnbaum's treatment of the deployment of Lévy's case during the years of the Dreyfus affair. Here, the author demonstrates how Joseph Reinach, the famous Dreyfusard and author of the massive account of Dreyfus's trial, became so fascinated with Lévy's case that he decided to publish a whole book about it during the affair, and how Édouard Drumont, founder of the Antisemitic League of France and famous anti-Dreyfusard, deployed Lévy's case as well. As Birnbaum repeatedly demonstrates, for these people Raphaël Lévy's case was anything but distant history.

Historians of the early modern period will find a long list of problematic statements in this book. It is untrue, for instance, that witchcraft accusations "almost always led to the stake" (22) or that mysticism was ever classed by the Catholic Church as a heresy alongside witchcraft (26). Birnbaum has an especially negative idea of the Middle Ages that no serious historian would accept today: it was a period, he claims, that was characterized by "credulity, fanaticism, myths, tall tales, and idle gossip" (142). The Jewish Haskalah could not have influenced the movement around Sabbatai Zevi, for the simple reason that it started many decades after Zevi's conversion (47). And King Herod did not commit the "deicide that for Christianity was the central event in the history of the world" (95), nor could he possibly have been "after the blood of Christian children" at a time when Christianity was yet to be founded (97). The author's views on Christianity in general and Catholicism in particular are often quite extreme. In explaining the persistence of accusations of ritual murder for so many centuries, Birnbaum invokes the "deepest recesses of the Catholic imagination" (115), "the depths of the Christian consciousness" (135), and a "veritable madness, rooted in certain unshakeable Catholic prejudices" (123). In such moments, the author gives up any semblance of objectivity or nuance, his personal investment in exonerating Lévy, so useful in other parts of the book, turning into a stumbling block.

Arthur Goldhammer's translation from the French flows naturally and retains Birnbaum's elegant prose. A few errors did sneak into the text, however. A *bonne ville* in early modern France is not simply "a good city" (153); *Wissenschaft des Judentums* should never have been translated as "Jewish science" (169n2); "risdalers" are obviously Reichstalers (108, 124); and "Trèves" is Trier (51).

Despite its unevenness, *A Tale of Ritual Murder in the Age of Louis XIV* will interest a wide audience. It contributes to the literature about blood libels, the Dreyfus affair, and French-Jewish history more generally. Its weaknesses are compensated by the close attention to the details of Raphaël Lévy's tragic story, which, though it happened over three centuries ago, is not as distant from us as we would perhaps like to believe. On this point, and on many others, the author is certainly correct.

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Eating the Enlightenment: Food and the Sciences in Paris, 1670–1760. By *E. C. Spary*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012. Pp. xii+366. \$45.00 (cloth); \$7.00–\$36.00 (e-book).

Everyone, it seems, is writing about food these days. So it was in early eighteenth-century France too, Emma Spary's contribution to this burgeoning area of history writing suggests. Spary has produced a history not of what got eaten but rather of learned discourse or "knowledge claims" about taste, digestion, and consumption during the reigns of Louis XIV and Louis XV. Her point is that food, and the seemingly everyday matter of con-