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Salomón Resnick and the *Judaica* Project: Translation Strategies and Representation in the Making of Jewish-Argentines (1933-1946)²

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Abstract. Objective/Context: This article examines the role of translators as agents and translation as a mediating strategy to establish Jewish-Argentine identities in Argentina, from the rise of Nazism until the end of the Second World War. It presents the case study of Jewish-Russian immigrant Salomón Resnick and his publishing project *Judaica* (1933-1946). The journal translated Jewish literary works to positively influence the opinions of Argentine intellectual elites about Jews, while aiding in the construction of Spanish-language Jewish-Argentine identities and culture. **Methodology:** A qualitative textual analysis of articles and works of fiction, original pieces and works translated by *Judaica*, as well as reviews of translated books of Yiddish literature by Argentine literary critics. These primary sources are interpreted *vis-à-vis* the global and local sociopolitical contexts to identify motives, editorial choices, and reception. **Originality:** This article adds to the historiography of Resnick's work and *Judaica* by unveiling the logics and strategies behind the representations and narratives about Jewishness produced by *Judaica* and the importance of the local context in these editorial choices. It also reveals how members of the Argentine cultural elite reacted to the journal and Resnick's translated Yiddish literature. **Conclusions:** While *Judaica* was limited in its reach and failed to measurably influence new Jewish-Argentine generations and effectively neutralize antisemitism, a study of reception in Argentina's literary circles signals that it had relative success in positively influencing the cultural elite's conceptions about Jews, Jewishness, and Jewish literature.

Keywords: Argentina, curation, editorial, hyphenated identities, Jewishness, *Judaica*, Resnick, translation.

Salomón Resnick y el proyecto *Judaica*: estrategias de traducción y representación en la formación de identidades judío-argentinas (1933-1946)

Resumen. Objetivo/Contexto: este artículo examina el rol de intelectuales traductores como mediadores para establecer identidades guionadas, a través del caso del inmigrante judío-ruso Salomón Resnick y su proyecto editorial *Judaica* (1933-1946). La revista *Judaica* desplegó una estrategia de producción de artículos y traducción de obras para influenciar positivamente la opinión de las élites intelectuales argentinas sobre los judíos, lo cual promovió el desarrollo de identidades y cultura judeo-argentinas en español. **Metodología:** el texto parte del estudio cualitativo de artículos y obras literarias, tanto originales para *Judaica* como traducidas por su *staff*, así como de reseñas de críticos literarios argentinos sobre libros de literatura yiddish traducidos por Resnick al español. Estas fuentes son interpretadas a la luz de los contextos sociopolíticos y culturales

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globales y locales identificando objetivos, lógicas editoriales y recepción. **Originalidad:** el trabajo contribuye a la historiografía sobre Resnick y *Judaica* al mostrar cómo la revista entendía la relación entre lenguaje, cultura e identidad. Expone las estrategias detrás de las representaciones y narrativas sobre judeidad promovidas por *Judaica* y la importancia del contexto local en estas decisiones editoriales. También devela la reacción de la élite cultural argentina al proyecto de Resnick. **Conclusiones:** si bien *Judaica* enfrentó obstáculos estructurales que limitaron su alcance, especialmente a la hora de incentivar el desarrollo de formas autóctonas de identidad judeo-argentina o de neutralizar la amenaza del antisemitismo criollo, logró, sin embargo, influenciar positivamente y con relativo éxito las concepciones sobre los judíos, la judeidad y la literatura judía de parte de la élite literaria argentina.

Palabras clave: Argentina, curación, editorial, identidades híbridas, *Judaica*, judeidad, Resnick, traducción.

Salomón Resnick e o projeto *Judaica*: estratégias de tradução e representação na formação de identidades judaico-argentinas (1933-1946)

Resumo. Objetivo/Contexto: neste artigo, é examinado o papel de intelectuais tradutores como mediadores para estabelecer identidades hifenizadas, por meio do caso do imigrante judeu-russo Salomón Resnick e seu projeto editorial *Judaica* (1933-1946). A revista *Judaica* desenvolveu uma estratégia de produção de artigos e tradução de obras para influenciar positivamente a opinião de elites intelectuais argentinas sobre os judeus, o que promoveu o desenvolvimento de identidades e de cultura judaico-argentinas em espanhol. **Metodologia:** o texto parte do estudo qualitativo de artigos e obras literárias, tanto originais para a *Judaica* quanto traduções feitas por sua equipe, bem como resenhas de críticos literários argentinos sobre livros de literatura *yiddish* traduzidos por Resnick para espanhol. Essas fontes são interpretadas à luz dos contextos sociopolíticos e culturais globais e locais identificando objetivos, lógicas editoriais e recepção. **Originalidade:** o trabalho contribui para a historiografia sobre Resnick e *Judaica* ao mostrar como a revista entendia a relação entre linguagem, cultura e identidade. Expõe as estratégias por trás das representações e das narrativas sobre judeidade promovidas pela *Judaica* e a importância do contexto local nessas decisões editoriais. Também revela a reação da elite cultural argentina ao projeto de Resnick. **Conclusões:** embora a *Judaica* tenha enfrentado obstáculos estruturais que limitaram seu alcance, especialmente no momento de incentivar o desenvolvimento de formas autóctones de identidade judaico-argentina ou de neutralizar a ameaça do antissemitismo crioulo, conseguiu, contudo, influenciar positivamente e com relativo sucesso as concepções sobre os judeus, a judeidade e a literatura judaica de parte da elite literária argentina.

Palavras-chave: Argentina, curadoria, editorial, identidades hifenizadas, *Judaica*, judeidade, Resnick, tradução.

Introduction

As Jewish communities in Europe and the Americas were increasingly threatened by the rise of Nazism, adopted *porteño* Salomón Resnick (1894-1946) sought to guarantee the wellbeing of his Jewish community through cultural activism. The essayist, translator, and editor was devoted to fighting what he perceived as the two main threats to the survival and safety of Jews in Argentina: Firstly, Resnick feared that xenophobic nationalist propaganda would convince the country's elites that the Jewish presence was noxious, especially after Hitler's rise to power in 1933 burnished the political prestige of "scientific" antisemitism in Europe and Latin America alike. Secondly, he dreaded the prospect of full assimilation into Argentine society.

His worries were shared by a majority of the Jewish-Argentine¹ elites and by Jewish leaders all over the Americas. But Resnick stood out for his unique diagnosis of these two existential threats, and his approach to solve both issues with the same strategy: the careful selection and translation of Jewish writings into Spanish.

A firm believer that Jewish cultural and scientific contributions to society were unambiguously positive, Resnick considered that any doubts about the desirability of having Jewish citizens could only be the result of ignorance. Nationalists were taking advantage of the Argentines' lack of information and filling the vacuum with antisemitic propaganda based on eugenics, conspiracy theories, and religious myths to claim that Jews were unassimilable, parasitic, and incompatible with the national character. He thought, nevertheless, that it was possible to counteract those narratives with cultural activism.

Resnick was also convinced that the survival of Jewish ethnic identity required that Jews maintain a fluid relation with the accumulated heritage of Jewishness,² a multilingual tradition that Jews had carried with them (and translated) through numerous exiles and diasporas, while adding to it in their own languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, Yiddish, Judeo-Spanish) and those of their host societies (Greek, Latin, Arabic, German, French, English, Polish, Russian, Spanish, among others). Without access to this cultural "golden chain,"³ Jewishness could die off within a few generations.

These traditions were unknown and unintelligible to Spanish speakers: they required a conscientious effort to curate the diverse, multilingual Jewish heritage, translate the works, and make them available. If done properly and in sufficient scale, this work of curation, translation, and dissemination would guarantee support for Jewish life in Argentina and provide a strong enough connection to Jewish cultural traditions to ensure the development of a new Jewish-Argentine identity.

This article argues that Salomón Resnick and his intellectual circle, through their cultural journal and publishing house *Judaica*, worked as intellectual intermediaries between a multilingual Jewish cultural tradition and Argentine elites, as well as between said tradition and Spanish-speaking native Jewish-Argentines. Resnick's role as a mediator has been studied by scholars such as Alejandro Dujovne and Mariusz Kalczewiak. Dujovne first studied the author's professional trajectory, identified his investment in translating Jewish culture into Spanish for a diverse Argentine audience, and, although focused more on Resnick's role as a book publisher, analyzed *Judaica* through his preference of topics and literary authors for translation. Kalczewiak broadened the scope by incorporating other instances of translation (including translations of Spanish works into Yiddish) and argued that the goal of translating Yiddish literature was demystifying Jews and Jewish culture.⁴

1 I prefer the term "Jewish-Argentines" over the more broadly used "Argentine Jews," because the former emphasizes the national context. See Jeffrey Lesser and Raanan Rein, "New Approaches to Ethnicity and Diaspora in Twentieth-Century Latin America," in *Rethinking Jewish-Latin Americans*, edited by Jeffrey Lesser and Raanan Rein (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2008), 23-40.

2 The term "Jewishness" is preferred over "Judaism," because the latter refers to the Jewish religion, while the former speaks about the character of Jewish identity from a broader, cultural perspective.

3 The Yiddish term for this is *goldene keyt*.

4 Alejandro Dujovne, "Spanish Discovers Yiddish: The Cultural Policies of Salomon Resnick in Argentina in the Interwar Period," in *Literary Translation and Cultural Mediators in 'Peripheral' Cultures: Customs Officers or Smugglers?*, edited by Diana Roig-Sanz and Reine Meylaerts (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 91-111; Mariusz Kalczewiak, "Let Them Understand! Salomón Resnick, Argentine Translations from Yiddish and Expanding the Borders of Jewishness," in *Yiddish and the Field of Translation: Agents, Strategies, Concepts, and Discourses across Time and Space*, edited by Olaf Terpitz (Koln: Bohlau Verlag, 2020), 281-312.

The present study furthers these arguments by considering how curated translation itself operated as a linguistic mediation mechanism to expose both native Jewish-Argentines and the national intellectual elite to Jewish works with specific yet related goals. Through careful analysis of editorial choices and a review of *Judaica*'s contents, this article reconstructs the strategies, narratives, and arguments deployed by this intellectual project to achieve its goals, and links them to existing discourses and representations in Argentina and more broadly in Latin America. It also explores how these strategies may have been received by the Argentine elite.

1. Migration and its Discontents

From the last quarter of the nineteenth century until the Great Depression, the demographic profiles of Latin American nations underwent rapid social transformation. For Argentina, transoceanic immigration became one of the most powerful factors. The country's population in 1869 did not reach 2 million people. Before 1900, it had doubled to 4 million. By 1947, the number exceeded 16 million, including 2,400,000 immigrants from overseas. In 1936, the capital city housed 2,400,000 *porteños*, over ten times as many as in 1869.⁵ That same year, 36% of its population was immigrant.⁶

Jews (native and immigrant), who numbered between 250,000 and 300,000 in the 1940s, were the third largest ethnic group of immigrant origin in the country, far behind Italians and Spaniards. Eastern European Jews—the most numerous subgroup—were the largest non-Catholic ethnicity in the nation and the largest group with a non-Latin language (in a non-Latin alphabet). These qualities, along with their presence in central neighborhoods of the capital, defined them as “exotic” and gave them a visibility beyond their numbers.⁷

Argentina's interest in immigration was reflected in its Constitution, which invited “all men in the world who want to inhabit the Argentine land.”⁸ Although the government had hoped for rural immigrants from northern and central Europe, most newcomers came from poor areas in Spain and Italy and stayed in the cities.⁹

5 “1947 - Cuarto Censo General de la Nación,” Gobierno de Mendoza, Ministerio de Economía, Infraestructura y Energía, accessed August 15, 2020, <http://www.deie.mendoza.gov.ar/#!/censos-productivos/1947-cuarto-censo-general-de-la-nacion-42>; “1914 - Tercer Censo General de la Nación,” Gobierno de Mendoza, Ministerio de Economía, Infraestructura y Energía, accessed August 15, 2020, <http://www.deie.mendoza.gov.ar/#!/censos-productivos/1914-tercer-censo-nacional-38>; Dirección General de Estadística y Censos, “El Censo de 1936. Cuarto Censo General de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires,” *Población de Buenos Aires* 6, n.º 9 (2009): 103-121.

6 Dirección General de Estadística y Censos, “El Censo de 1936,” 104.

7 This visibility exposed Jewish residents, homes, business, and institutions to violence during the Red Scare that followed the Russian Revolution. In 1919, after a protest in the Talleres Vasena metalworks escalated into a general strike, groups of young nationalists, with the consent of the Armed Forces, organized a pogrom against the neighborhood of Once under the guise of hunting “Russian maximalists.” Because most Jews were Russian, as were many labor activists and leftists (and some were both Russian and Jewish), Jews became a target of anti-leftist and xenophobic violence. The mob roaming the area attacked Jewish pedestrians, shops, and organizations. See Ernesto Bilsky, *La semana trágica* (Buenos Aires: Centro Editor de América Latina, 1984).

8 “Constitución de la Nación Argentina,” Organización de Estados Americanos, accessed August 20, 2020, https://www.oas.org/dil/esp/Constitucion_de_la_Nacion_Argentina.pdf. The Argentine Constitution was first enacted in 1853, and the principle of *ius solis* (natural citizenship for those born in the country) was included in the constitutional reform of 1860.

9 Fernando Devoto, *Historia de la inmigración en la Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 2004).

The first Jews to migrate to Argentina were Germans, a small contingent of businessmen and their families, who settled in Buenos Aires around the mid-nineteenth century. So did the Sephardim, who arrived starting in the 1870s, in similarly small numbers. Ashkenazi immigration began in 1889, with the project of developing Jewish agricultural colonies in the Pampas (created by the Jewish Colonization Association, JCA), and it became a large wave at the beginning of the twentieth century, when Russian Jews began to flee worsening political conditions (state-sanctioned pogroms and the blowback from the failed revolution of 1905). Despite the symbolic importance of the colonies, however, over 80% of Jewish-Argentines lived in the country's cities.¹⁰

Jewish-Argentines created institutions and businesses that addressed ethnic needs: religious practice (synagogues, cemeteries, ritual baths, kosher butcheries), education, Jewish culture (theatres, cultural centers, libraries, social and sporting clubs, cafés, printing houses and periodicals), and social issues (mutual aid societies, unions, orphanages, retirement homes, community hospital). These institutions reproduced the community's internal divisions, whether political (liberals, communists, right-wingers), linguistic (Yiddish, German, Spanish, Judeo-Spanish, Arabic), based on the region of origin (Germany, Poland, Bessarabia, Galicia, Russia, Lithuania, Syria, Lebanon, Morocco), or around Zionism (non-Zionists, socialists, religious, liberals, revisionists).¹¹

The unprecedented influx of immigrants, the presence of workers with union and activist experience, and the perception that the newcomers resisted assimilation and negatively impacted Argentine culture spawned a "nationalist reaction" by the turn of the century.¹² Part of the political elite abandoned the liberal consensus about immigration; their movement started small, but it gained strength and support over time, particularly as new political forces in Europe challenged the legitimacy of liberal democracy and pluralistic republicanism in the interwar period. Nationalist intellectuals decried the loss of the Argentine "essence" and the corrupting influence of European cosmopolitanism. They identified Buenos Aires as the epicenter of this nefarious social malady.¹³

Inspired by anti-liberal movements in Europe, the anti-immigrant nationalist movement proposed a narrow and homogeneous vision of the ideal Argentine: Catholic, rooted in Hispanic colonial heritage, and tied to the rural world—an idealized space of nature, tradition, and "purity," the polar opposite to the city, the locus of cosmopolitan contagion.¹⁴ Nationalist intellectuals and propagandists founded several periodicals, such as *La Nueva República*, *Bandera Argentina*, *Combate*, the cultural Catholic weekly *Criterio* (moderate compared to the others), as well as Nazi-aligned (and German Embassy-financed) *Pampero* and *Clarínada*. These outlets propagated negative myths about the effects of immigrants on the Argentine society and identity.

10 Haim Avni, *Argentina and the Jews: A History of Jewish Immigration* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1991).

11 Ricardo Feierstein, *Historia de los judíos argentinos* (Buenos Aires: Galerna, 2006); Víctor Mirelman, *En busca de una identidad. Los inmigrantes judíos en Buenos Aires, 1890-1930* (Buenos Aires: Milá, 1988).

12 Fernando Devoto, *Nacionalismo, fascismo y tradicionalismo en la Argentina moderna. Una historia* (Buenos Aires: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 2003).

13 Devoto, *Nacionalismo, fascismo y tradicionalismo*; Sandra McGee-Deutsch, *Las Derechas: The Extreme Right in Argentina, Brazil, and Chile, 1890-1939* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999).

14 Fernando Aínsa, "The Antinomies of Latin American Discourses of Identity and their Fictional Representation," in *Latin American Identity and Constructions of Difference*, edited by Amaryll Chanady (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 13.

Writers like Leopoldo Lugones (1874-1938) opposed immigration in general, while others, like Julio Meinville (1905-1973) and Gustavo Martínez Zuviría (1883-1962), denounced what they saw as the nefarious, parasitic, and inassimilable character of “the Jew.”¹⁵ The anti-Jewish screeds became bolder in the 1930s, influenced by the success and impact of Nazi propaganda.

2. An In-Between Cultural Agent

Salomón Resnick was born in Russia (today’s southern Ukraine) in 1894, the son of a rabbi. The family moved to Argentina in 1902, where his father worked for the JCA. By 1914, Resnick had moved to Buenos Aires to pursue his intellectual interests. That year, he joined the magazine *Juventud*, which he left for *Vida Nuestra* in 1917.

Resnick began to position himself within the Argentine and Jewish-Argentine intellectual fields, which allowed him to lay down the foundation of his international intellectual network. His work with the YIVO Institute (Yidisher Visnshaftlekher Institut, or Jewish/Yiddish¹⁶ Scientific Institute) and the Joint Distribution Committee in the 1930s and 1940s allowed him to further expand his contacts through South America, the United States, Europe, and Palestine. His work at *Vida Nuestra* also familiarized Resnick with the inner workings of Argentine literary circles and gave him the opportunity to publish his first translations of short stories from Yiddish into Spanish.¹⁷

In 1919, Resnick self-published his first volume of translated short stories of Yiddish writer I. L. Peretz, *Los cabalistas*. The book gathered his published translations (from *Vida Nueva* and non-Jewish periodicals like *Fray Mocho*, *La Vanguardia*, and *Nosotros*), along with new ones, in the second Spanish translation of Yiddish fiction in Argentine history.¹⁸ The volume included a prologue and a preliminary study that introduced Peretz’s work and modern Yiddish literature to Spanish-readers. This strategy, defined by Dujovne as *intraducción* (“introducción” combined with “traducción”, following Joseph Jurt), became one of Resnick’s trusted procedures to familiarize Argentine audiences with Jewish authors.¹⁹ Resnick published a second volume of Peretz’s stories, *Adán y Eva*, in 1922.²⁰

In 1923, he co-founded the weekly *Mundo Israelita*, backed by the Asociación Hebraica (which became Sociedad Hebraica Argentina, SHA, in 1926), the most important integrationist Jewish institution in Argentina. His articles in *Mundo Israelita* prefaced his diagnosis of Jewish-Argentine

15 Julio Meinville, *El judío en el misterio de la historia* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Antídoto, 1936); Gustavo Martínez Zuviría, *El Kahal* (Buenos Aires: Editorial de Hugo Wast, 1935).

16 The term “Yiddish” means both the Yiddish language and the adjective Jewish in Yiddish.

17 Ana Weinstein and Miriam Gover de Nasatsky, *Escritores judeo-argentinos. Bibliografía 1900-1987* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Milá, 1994). See also Alejandro Dujovne, “Traducción y transmisión cultural. La colectividad judía argentina y los primeros ensayos editoriales, 1919-1938,” *Boletín Bibliográfico Electrónico del Programa Buenos Aires de Historia Política – PolHis*, n.º 12 (2013): 1-22.

18 See Dujovne, “Traducción y transmisión cultural.” The first person to translate a Yiddish story (also by Peretz) into Spanish was Yankev Shimon Liachovitzky. See Kalczewiak, “Let Them Understand!,” 284.

19 See Dujovne, “Spanish Discovers Yiddish,” 92, 104, 109.

20 Alejandro Dujovne, *Una historia del libro judío. La cultura judía a través de sus editores, libreros, traductores, imprentas y bibliotecas* (Buenos Aires: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 2014), 133.

problems, his criticism of the community's cultural activism, and his future cultural work. He left *Mundo Israelita* to establish the journal and publishing house *Judaica*, his life's project, in 1933.

Deeply committed to developing a Spanish-language Jewish life in Argentina, and a regular member of the capital's literary circles, Resnick worked hand-in-hand with integrationist organizations, periodicals, and leaders. Integrationists believed that the best way to guarantee the acceptance of Jews was for them to become part of these societies, particularly through the adoption of the local language, customs, and national symbols. Resnick shared with fellow integrationists the belief that Jewish cultural life in Argentina would manifest itself in the Spanish language, because native generations of Jews were mostly monolingual, and because a commitment to the national language could elicit good will from Argentines.²¹

Although opposed to public demonstrations of Jewishness that clashed with mainstream Argentine sensitivities and customs, integrationists feared assimilation as well. Their main strategy to prevent it was mostly based on preventing intermarriage and promoting intra-ethnic socialization of children and youth in spaces such as schools, sports clubs, libraries, and cultural centers.

Resnick's love of Yiddish literature and his interest in linguistics brought him close to the yiddishist movement. Yiddishists, more influential with immigrants than with native Jews, saw Yiddish as the central column of the cultural structure at the heart of Jewishness. All across Eastern Europe—where emancipation and citizenship were works in progress²²—Jews retained Yiddish as their mother tongue, the dialect of home, the street, and commerce.

For yiddishist factions across the ideological spectrum (Hasidim and Orthodox Jews, Communists, Bundists, and Poalei-Zionists), Yiddish was inseparable from Jewish identity itself. As such, the loss of language was equated with assimilation. For them, there was no *Yiddishkayt* (the Yiddish term for Jewishness) without Yiddish. These activists focused on teaching the language to future generations: they created schools, periodicals, libraries, and youth groups, and wrote passionate *cris du coeur* calling for renewed efforts to stem the perceived tide of trans-generational assimilation. Their conceptualization of Yiddish made them unable to see this change as anything other than the erasure of Jewishness. This position also limited the possibility of reaching out to non-Jews (or Jews from other linguistic traditions).

Resnick explained in detail how he conceived the relationship between culture, language, and identity in a three-part essay published in the first issues of *Judaica*, titled “La evolución idiomática de los judíos.”²³ The central concept can be summarized as “Jewish linguistic plasticity,” a product of Jewish history:

Although, during their long wandering on the Earth, Jews demonstrated a heroic resistance to being absorbed by other peoples, they have however shown a remarkable tendency towards linguistic assimilation. What they were unwilling to allow in the racial dimension, they accepted

21 Most first-generation integrationist leaders and intellectuals were fluent in Yiddish, as it was their or their parents' mother tongue. However, their cultural activism took place almost exclusively in Spanish and in Spanish-speaking contexts.

22 The rights, privileges, and legal status of Jews in pre-Napoleonic Europe was limited and conditional. It was the Napoleonic Code that first established Jews as citizens with equal rights, a change known as “emancipation,” which slowly spread through the rest of the continent. Russia emancipated its Jewish inhabitants after the Revolution of 1917.

23 Salomón Resnick, “La evolución idiomática de los judíos,” *Judaica*, n.º 2 (1933): 49-57; *Judaica*, n.º 3 (1933): 118-126; *Judaica*, n.º 4 (1933): 155-159.

in the linguistic one. [...] More than the outside trappings, fundamental to other nations, Israel²⁴ was interested in preserving the Jewish spirit, incarnated, until this century, in religion. The [issue of] national language, thus, never had for [Jews] the transcendental importance it had for other nations. This explains why what we can properly call Jewish literature is expressed in several languages, both ancient and new. [...] In some cases, the language Jews adopted did not suffer any fundamental alterations in its structure, such as the cases of Greek and Arabic; other times, it was slightly modified, mostly by the incorporation of the Hebrew alphabet and terminology, as it happened with Aramaic, Persian, Judeo-Spanish, and—perhaps most noticeably—with Yiddish. All of these languages have left lasting marks in Jewish literature, which is essentially polyglot. [...] Geographic dispersion engendered linguistic diversity, which became from then on a salient characteristic of Jewishness.²⁵

In the above fragment, Resnick separated Jewish identity from Jewish languages: the latter were “outside trappings,” lacking “transcendental importance” compared to the “Jewish spirit,” which once was religious, but had exceeded those boundaries. The article stated how linguistic plasticity—the ability to adopt new and abandon old languages—had become the Jewish trait that had allowed the survival of Jewishness throughout millennia of wandering and foreign domination. Implicit in this argument was the belief that translation was an essential component of Jewish linguistic plasticity.

Resnick granted exceptional status to Yiddish and Judeo-Spanish as languages with deep roots in specific groups. However, he argued that maintaining this exceptionality required continued literary development and use of the language. Otherwise, new generations gravitated towards languages with more than nostalgia to offer.²⁶ Ultimately, the survival of a linguistic tradition depended on the will of the masses and a favorable sociocultural context. A blind and rigid adherence to the “outside trappings” of language risked endangering the survival of the cultural core of Jewishness.

Resnick’s understanding of the “linguistic plasticity of Jews” and his clear differentiation between Jewish languages and the Jewish spirit allowed him to mediate between the yiddishist and integrationist positions. He synthesized what he saw as their strengths. From the integrationist position, Resnick rescued the importance of Spanish to reach local-born Jewish-Argentines and national elites. His deep familiarity with Yiddish literature convinced him of its value to preserve Jewishness in Argentina and win over the country’s intellectuals.

The element that brought together these ideologies in Resnick’s synthesis was curated translation as an intermediary mechanism between Jewish culture and the target Spanish-speaking demographics. Translation allowed Resnick to decouple Yiddish culture and literature from the Yiddish language, to conceive a Yiddish-less *Yiddishkayt*. This operation became the backbone of Resnick’s work as a cultural mediator.

Other scholars have also approached Resnick’s project. Leonardo Senknam studied him as an agent of “Jewish-Iberoamerican transculturation,” and highlighted how he connected Jewish

24 This use of “Israel” is a (often religious) way of referring to “the Jewish people,” not a territory or state.

25 Resnick, “La evolución idiomática de los judíos,” pt. 1, 49-50. Unless otherwise stated, the quoted *Judaica* fragments were translated by the paper’s author.

26 Resnick, “La evolución idiomática del pueblo judío,” pt. 3, 156.

tradition to Latin American modernity.²⁷ Dujovne first identified him as a mediator and explained his cultural activism through the concept of “importing devices,” although he mostly considered his book publishing work, giving *Judaica* only a general view.²⁸ His studies focus on how Resnick’s work interacted with three different spheres: the intra-Jewish disputes about identity and culture; the question of Jewish-Argentine youth and their link to Judaism, and “the relations between Spanish and Yiddish, which are situated within the framework of the global system of languages and translations.”²⁹ This study’s framework is more interested in a macro vision about the world of Jewish (and Argentine) book printing and publishing and intellectual and ethnic networks, which leads to the conclusion that the structural constraints of the Argentine publishing market and competition by more prestigious foreign literatures (English, French, and German) guaranteed *Judaica*’s failure to achieve its goals.³⁰

Kalczewiak’s article covered *Judaica* in depth, but his work was mostly descriptive.³¹ The author contributed to a better understanding of Resnick’s impact by tracing how his translations were reproduced in other journals, Jewish and non-Jewish, in Argentina and in broader Latin America. Kalczewiak understood *Judaica*’s translations as a way to demystify (and thus de-otherize) Jews in the eyes of Argentine readers.³²

This study deepens these insights by analyzing how *Judaica* deployed specific arguments and narratives for its target audiences, and how these connected with existing discourses, preferences, and representations in the Argentine and Jewish-Argentine milieus. Additionally, this work examines editorial choices about which pieces and authors to publish, and which ones to avoid, seeking to delve further into *Judaica*’s understanding of the power of translation and how the editorial staff understood their desired audiences. It also moves beyond previous studies on the question of reception, demonstrating that the journal successfully reached part of its elite readership, as well as the mechanisms through which Argentine literary critics appropriated Resnick’s translated literature.

Judaica summarizes Resnick’s work as activist, translator, editor, and cultural mediator. The journal projected a carefully supervised representation of Jewish culture, including works in literature, philosophy, religion, arts, history, politics, and science. *Judaica* thus introduced this curated Spanish-language Jewishness to Argentine elites and promoted it as a source for developing a Jewish-Argentine identity.

Other publishers, including SHA integrationists and Manuel Gleizer (1889-1966), also translated Jewish and Yiddish literature. What set Resnick and *Judaica* apart was the belief in the centrality of Jewish culture—and Yiddish literature in particular—in order to establish a stable, long-lasting Jewish-Argentineness. For him, translation allowed this process of cultural transplantation to take place. In fact, translation was so important that *Judaica* rescued it from being in the background

27 Leonardo Senkman, “La construcción de un espacio de transculturación judeo-iberoamericano,” *Noaj: Revista Literaria*, n.º 12-13 (1997): 1-3.

28 Dujovne, “Spanish Discovers Yiddish;” Dujovne, “Traducción y transmisión cultural.”

29 Dujovne, “Spanish Discovers Yiddish,” 107.

30 Dujovne, “Spanish Discovers Yiddish,” 108-109.

31 Kalczewiak, “Let Them Understand!”

32 Kalczewiak, “Let Them Understand!,” 300-301.

and brought it to center on the printed page: every piece included the name of the translator, and Resnick published and wrote several essays about Jewish languages and translation.³³

3. Made in Translation: The *Judaica* Project

Judaica required Resnick to apply different skillsets and resources he had developed in the previous decades. He applied his proficiency as translator, his editorial judgment, writing skills, and experience as publisher. Additionally, as editor, he relied on his local and international intellectual contacts, who sent him tips, ideas, and works they found worthwhile, and acted as contributors, translators, and reviewers.

The rise of Nazism, the persecution of German and later European Jews, and its empowering effects on Argentine fascists and antisemitic narratives were a central concern for *Judaica*. Resnick reproduced pieces by European and Argentine writers denouncing the persecution in Europe and supporting anti-German boycotts.³⁴ The journal also fought against local antisemitism present in the press: in December 1933, A. L. Schusheim (1878-1955) wrote a criticism of the director of the Catholic magazine *Criterio*, Gustavo Franceschi (1881-1957). Schusheim, who had previously praised Franceschi's stance against Nazism, objected to the director's belief in a "Jewish problem," an accusation of Jewish "economic imperialism" based on intra-ethnic solidarity and disregard for the welfare of non-Jewish groups.³⁵

Nazism and its local enthusiasts also provided *Judaica* with a sense of urgency: it was no longer merely a race against abstract social forces like assimilation; the threat was human, concrete, and immediate.³⁶ This urgency grew more frantic as the war began, and with the Nazi victories in the Eastern front. As Jewish communities in Eastern Europe—the main producers and guardians of Yiddish culture—faced elimination, Resnick's calls for cultural action became more emphatic. The destruction of "the main centers of Jewish culture" placed a new burden on the Jews of the Americas: they were "called upon to assume the stewardship of a grand spiritual heritage, if only to physically protect it from extinction."³⁷

To this urgency, *Judaica* responded by highlighting the Jewish contributions to medical sciences,³⁸ European music,³⁹ and modern philosophy;⁴⁰ and by translating Simon Dubnow's

33 Max Weinreich, "El idisch como objeto de la lingüística general," *Judaica*, n.º 58 (1938): 145-152.

34 Joseph Roth, "El Auto da Fe del Espíritu," *Judaica*, n.º 8 (1934): 49-57; Simón Dubnow, "El boycott a Alemania," *Judaica*, n.º 5 (1933): 193-197.

35 A. L. Schusheim, "¿Hace falta un problema judío en Argentina? (A propósito de un artículo de Monseñor G. J. Franceschi)," *Judaica*, n.º 6 (1933): 241-255.

36 Unsigned, "Presentación," *Judaica*, n.º 1 (1933): 1-3, quoted in Dujovne, *Una historia del libro judío*, 130.

37 Unsigned editorial, "El deber del momento," *Judaica*, n.º 82 (1940): 129-130.

38 Ernesto Fraenkel, "Los judíos en la medicina alemana," *Judaica*, n.º 5 (1933): 198-204; J. B. Eiger, "Historia de los médicos judíos," *Judaica*, n.º 15 (1934): 130-136; *Judaica*, n.º 16 (1934): 177-185; *Judaica*, n.º 17 (1934): 227-232; Melej Jmelnitzky, "Papel de los judíos alemanes en la medicina moderna," *Judaica*, n.º 76 (1939): 111-122.

39 León Algazi, "Los judíos en la música francesa," *Judaica*, n.º 8 (1934): 62-71; David Ewen, "Nuevos compositores judíos," *Judaica*, n.º 17 (1934): 212-217.

40 Abraham Aaron Roback, "Los judíos en la filosofía moderna," *Judaica*, n.º 15 (1934): 97-110.

(1860-1941) work on Jewish history,⁴¹ among other topics. These essays sought to increasingly argue that Jewish culture was a positive net for humanity and a part of “European civilization,” arguments designed to win over members of the Argentine elite and foster ethnic pride among Jewish-Argentines.

Most of the translated works of literature came from Yiddish. This was most likely due to the volume of modern literary works written in this language and Resnick’s background and personal preference. Pieces translated from other languages, mostly essays, appeared more rarely.

Judaica reproduced works by what scholars consider the three lead authors of the “modern canon” of Yiddish literature: Sholem Yankev Abramovitsh (pen name Mendele Mocher Sforim, 1836-1917), Solomon Rabinovich (better known as Sholem Aleichem, 1859-1916), and Isaac Leib Peretz (1852-1915).⁴² The translated fiction also included contemporary Yiddish authors, such as Joseph Opatoshu (1886-1954) and David Bergelson (1884-1952).⁴³ As part of his pedagogical approach, Resnick included short preliminary studies (biographical and literary) for each author, in order to underline their importance, connect them to the Western literary canon, and familiarize the readers with them.⁴⁴ The reach of this translation project extended beyond *Judaica*: Resnick’s works were sometimes reproduced in different (Jewish and non-Jewish) journals in other Latin American countries.⁴⁵ However, the translator apparently felt ill-equipped for translating poetry. This excluded a large part of modern Yiddish literature, as many contemporary authors were primarily or exclusively poets.

Not every piece in *Judaica* was translated. Many articles were written in Spanish for the journal or reprinted in order to disseminate diverse information about Jewish traditions, people, and communities. An original piece by Eduardo Weinfeld (1908-1977) educated Argentine readers about the community in Mexico, with a similar article for Peru by Peruvian archaeologist César García Rosell.⁴⁶ Bolivian author Porfirio Díaz Machicao (1909-1981) sent a short story about a Jewish immigrant woman marrying an indigenous Bolivian man.⁴⁷ Writers José Mendelson (1891-1969) and Máximo Yagupsky (1906-1996), as well as cultural critic Jacobo Botoschansky (1892-1964),

41 Israel Friedlender, “Breve historia de los judíos en Polonia,” *Judaica*, n.º 55 (1938): 31-36; Abraham Menes, “La autonomía judía en la época bíblica,” *Judaica*, n.º 58 (1938): 161-168; Simón Dubnow, “Maimónides en la historia judía,” *Judaica*, n.º 77 (1939): 147-153.

42 See for example: Sholem Aleijem, “Narraciones de Kasrilevske,” *Judaica*, n.º 5 (1933). Sholem Aleijem, “Guetzal,” *Judaica*, n.º 77 (1939); Sholem Aleijem, “El maestro Boaz,” *Judaica*, n.º 79 (1940): 22-28; Méndele Mojer Sforim, “Aventuras prodigiosas en el río Piatignilevke,” *Judaica*, n.º 71 (1939): 219-224; Isaac León Peretz, “Prodigios en el mar,” *Judaica*, n.º 14 (1934): 61-66. Issue n.º 30 (1935) was devoted entirely to Abramovich’s centennial. Because Yiddish is a phonetic language written in Hebrew characters, Yiddish (and Hebrew) names are transliterated differently into English and Spanish, which accounts for the different spellings. For works about the modern “classic canon,” see Ken Frieden, *Classic Yiddish Fiction: Abramovitsch, Sholem Aleichem, and Peretz* (New York: SUNY Press, 1995).

43 José Opatoshu, “La máquina,” *Judaica*, n.º 73-75 (1939): 47-49; Opatoshu, “La señora Marchese,” *Judaica*, n.º 78 (1939): 216-219; David Bergelson, “Decadencia,” *Judaica*, n.º 85 (1940): 20-27.

44 See, for example, Salomón Resnick, “Presentación de I. L. Peretz,” *Judaica*, n.º 80-81 (1940): 50-67; Salomón Resnick, “David Bergelson,” *Judaica*, n.º 85 (1940): 15-19.

45 Kalczewiak, “Let Them Understand!,” 292.

46 Eduardo Weinfeld, “Los judíos en México,” *Judaica*, n.º 85 (1940): 3-14; César Rosell, “Los judíos en el antiguo Perú,” *Judaica*, n.º 85 (1940): 42-43.

47 Porfirio Díaz Machicao, “El reino de la tierra,” *Judaica*, n.º 87-88 (1940): 154-160, 159.

were among the locals who wrote essays for the issue devoted to the life of departed Hebrew poet Hayim Nahman Bialik (1873-1934); this issue introduced Bialik to a Spanish-speaking readership.⁴⁸ Their words shared space with a translated piece by Russian-born Hebrew poet Shaul Tchernichovsky (1875-1943), celebrating the genius of Bialik.⁴⁹ The issue also included five pages of Bialik's poems and two of his essays.⁵⁰

Several articles written in Spanish (and a few translations from medieval Hebrew) shared a similar goal: legitimizing the presence of Jews in Latin America and Argentina. These pieces presented different arguments that connected Jewish culture to Hispanic tradition; included Jews in the narration of Argentine myths of rural authenticity; established genealogies of Jewish presence in the Americas that went back to colonial or even pre-Hispanic eras; and resignified the meaning of "Argentineness" in inclusive terms that turned the tables on antisemitic narratives.

The first type of essays established points of contact and hybridity between Jewish and Iberian cultures and traditions. These pieces focused on Spain in the early and late Middle Ages—before the expulsion of Jews and Muslims in 1492—, a period of symbolic importance to *Hispanismo*, an ideology embraced by many within the Argentine elite. Both nativist (nationalists, often anti-cosmopolitan and anti-immigrant) and liberal writers (often supportive of an expansive view of Argentineness) in the first half of the twentieth century based their understanding of Argentine identity on the colonial heritage, linked to Iberian cultural and literary production in the Middle Ages and the *Siglo de Oro*.

A typical example is Alberto Gerchunoff's (1883-1950) "The Jewish Spirit in Spanish Culture." The author traced back Jewish presence in Spain to antiquity and constructed a mythical and idyllic cohabitation between Jews and Christians. He admitted that medieval Spanish law included anti-Jewish legislation but argued that these measures had been codified to reassure the Catholic clergy, who feared that collegial proximity would lead Christians to convert to Judaism. Gerchunoff insisted that these laws were rarely enforced. Fiery, passionate impulses towards generosity and hospitality were, he added, part of the Iberian Christian nature. He established, thus, friendly coexistence and tolerance as essential characteristics of a mythical, foundational Hispanic identity, implicitly labeling the chauvinism and antisemitic zeal of twentieth-century nativists as un-Hispanic.⁵¹

Gerchunoff argued that Jews had ample participation in the spiritual and intellectual developments of Spanish kingdoms like Castile and Cataluña. Jewish philosophers and writers, he affirmed, had been essential in the development of "Hispanic culture and the Castilian language"⁵² in fields like philosophy, poetry, religion, and even agriculture. The author described this productive coexistence as a natural evolution that had only been broken by the artificial intervention of the state. He finished with a broader argument that linked his piece directly to the local context: such coexistence was not unique to Spain, but "natural" to the interactions between

48 José Mendelson, "Bialik, poeta y prosista," *Judaica*, n.º 13 (1934): 16-19; Jacobo Botoschansky, "Algunos recuerdos sobre J. N. Bialik," *Judaica*, n.º 13 (1934): 23-28; Máximo Yagupsky, "Bialik, el maestro," *Judaica*, n.º 13 (1934): 41-44.

49 Saúl Chernijovsky, "Bialik: el artífice de la forma," *Judaica*, n.º 13 (1934): 20-22.

50 J. N. Bialik, "Poemas," *Judaica*, n.º 13 (1934): 5-9; "Don Quijote," *Judaica*, n.º 13 (1934): 10-14; "La Mischna," *Judaica*, n.º 13 (1934): 14-15.

51 Alberto Gerchunoff, "El espíritu judío en la cultura española," *Judaica*, n.º 87-88 (1940): 142-149.

52 Gerchunoff, "El espíritu judío," 146.

Jews and Christians. “The Jews had a home in Spain and gifted it with the best that they have, like they have always done with the lands that offered them hospitality [...]”⁵³ Unsaid, but clear, was the promise of all that Jews could do for Argentina, if they were allowed to peacefully integrate.

The second type of arguments presented in *Judaica* to legitimize Jewish presence owed much to Gerchunoff’s work as a novelist. The writer had been the central promoter of the “Jewish *gauchos*” myth with his homonymous novel (*Los gauchos judíos*), published in 1910, on the centennial of Argentine independence.⁵⁴ By the first decade of the twentieth century, Argentine intellectuals had established *gauchesca* literature (a late nineteenth-century genre that mythologized the outlaw cowboys of the Pampas) at the center of the nation’s literary canon: the unbound, untamable *gaucho* represented the distilled essence of Argentineness. Gerchunoff’s book integrated rural Jews from the agricultural colonies into the *gaucho* myth, linking thus Jewish-Argentines to the pillar of national identity.⁵⁵

Due to the centrality of Jewish agricultural settlements to this legitimizing strategy, *Judaica* devoted ample space to JCA and its colonies. Although numerically trivial compared to the Jewish population of Argentina’s urban centers, the colonists had an immense symbolic significance: their presence not only tied Jewish-Argentines to the countryside, the base of the national economy and its romanticized identity, but also protected them from accusations of being classless speculators and parasitic exploiters.

The journal published several articles about the colonies, mostly by Marcos Alperson (1860-1947), writer, settler, and scholar of the colonies.⁵⁶ In 1934, *Judaica* devoted a whole issue to JCA: former administrators as well as activists and writers focused on different aspects, like education, cooperative organizations, and a biography of founder Baron Moritz von Hirsch (1831-1896).⁵⁷ This issue also reprinted JCA documents, including letters in Yiddish and French, the only instance of untranslated documents in a foreign language printed by *Judaica*.

A third type of the legitimizing narratives constructed genealogies that traced Jewish presence back to early colonial times. Weinfeld’s article about modern Mexico included an introductory colonial segment that traced Jewish presence back to the days of conquistadors, in the figure of *adelantado* Luis de Carvajal (1539-1591) and his descendants. Convert Carvajal’s family had brought other *cristianos nuevos* to the Americas, all of whom, Weinfeld assumed, were crypto-Jews, since the conquistador and his nephew were tried by the Inquisition as *judaizantes*. The author asserted that many descendants of colonial crypto-Jews still lived in modern Mexico, particularly among the elites. This time jump, therefore, connected contemporary immigrant Jews to colonial

53 Gerchunoff, “El espíritu judío,” 149.

54 Leonardo Senknam, *La identidad judía en la literatura argentina* (Buenos Aires: Pardés, 1983).

55 Judith Noemí Freidenberg, *The Invention of the Jewish Gaucho: Villa Clara and the Construction of Argentine Identity* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009).

56 See, for example, Marcos Alperson, “La primera Pascua en la Argentina, en el año 1892,” *Judaica*, n.º 128-129 (1944): 117-118.

57 Jedidia Efrón, “La obra educacional de la J. C. A.,” *Judaica*, n.º 18 (1934): 289-297. Isaac Kaplan, “La cooperación agrícola en las colonias judías,” *Judaica*, n.º 18 (1934): 272-279; Salomón Resnick, “Ubicación del Barón Hirsch,” *Judaica*, n.º 18 (1934): 256-260.

crypto-Jewish *adelantados* by affirming the continued presence of “Jews” in Mexico through the *conversos*’ descendants in the local elite (as “asymptomatic” carriers of Jewishness, perhaps).⁵⁸

The figure of Luis de Carvajal the younger (*El Mozo*, 1566-1596) appeared in other issues. In 1938, *Judaica* translated part of a study that Jewish-American Meyer Berger (1898-1959) had published in the American YIVO *Yorrbuch*. Berger had found in the Mexican National Archives a handful of letters written by Carvajal to his family while they were all locked up by the *Santo Oficio*. The journal translated Meyer’s preliminary study and reproduced one of the letters in the original sixteenth-century Spanish.⁵⁹ The author highlights how “in these letters, as is the case for the religion of *marranos* in general, syncretism plays a powerful part. They are full of Bible verses and many quotes from Francis of Assisi.”⁶⁰ Besides reinforcing the claims of Jewish presence in the Americas since the early colonial era, the article posited potential compatibilities between Judaism and Christianity. These narratives were not a phenomenon exclusive to Jewish-Argentines. As Jeffrey Lesser has shown for Brazil, it was a common strategy of recent migrant groups to reassure themselves of their legitimate belonging within the nation.⁶¹

4. Translation as a Double-Edged Sword

Translation operated as a fundamental principle in *Judaica* that rested on the power of culture and literature to shape opinion. For this reason, the editorial staff believed that the enterprise of literary translation should be undertaken with care. Resnick and his contributors were cautious about which authors and stories to translate (and which ones to avoid). Although they saw their project as a pioneering example and expressed the need for similar efforts, they nevertheless zealously policed other translations, particularly the editorial decisions of which works to translate, convinced that the wrong decisions could harm the standing of Jewish-Argentines with Argentine elites.

This is why Resnick often wrote introductory biographical essays, aimed at presenting his chosen authors in the best possible light, contextualizing their work within the modern literary canon, and making their topics relatable to *Judaica*’s readership. Kalczewiak has highlighted the translator’s editorial decisions for making Yiddish literature approachable: for example, his translation of Mendele Mocher Sforim’s *Viajes de Benjamin III* adds the subtitle “El Quijote Judío” in a larger font than the actual book title.⁶²

Judaica’s attention to how certain authors would play with local readers explains which authors they published and which ones they avoided, and the importance of the Argentine context to these decisions. For example, Resnick avoided the works of brothers Israel Joshua (1893-1944) and Isaac Bashevis Singer (1902-1991). It is unclear why he never published their stories. The Singers were well-known by the 1930s and had written in the same literary magazines as other authors Resnick

58 Weinfeld, “Los judíos en México,” 3-6.

59 Meier Berger, “Epistolario del marrano Luis de Carvajal,” *Judaica*, n.º 56 (1938): 55-59; Luis de Carvajal, “Carta de Luis de Carvajal,” *Judaica*, n.º 56 (1938): 60-61.

60 Berger, “Epistolario del marrano Luis de Carvajal,” 56.

61 Jeffrey Lesser, “How the Jews Became Japanese and Other Stories of Nation and Ethnicity,” in *Rethinking Jewish-Latin Americans*, edited by Jeffrey Lesser and Raanan Rein (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2008), 41-54.

62 Kalczewiak, “Let Them Understand!,” 302-303.

published. The reason cannot be ideological: the political preferences of *Judaica*'s published authors ranged from far-right Revisionist Zionists (Ze'ev Jabotinsky, 1880-1940) to communists from the Soviet Union (David Bergelson, purged by Stalin in 1952). Without specific evidence, the reasons for the Singers' absence in *Judaica* remain a mystery.⁶³

The case of writer and playwright Sholem Asch (1880-1957) better highlights the role of the local context in the journal's curatorial choices. Asch's thematic range extended from idealistic depictions of Hasidic Judaism to vivid scenes of "sexual depravity" in brothels. An *avant-garde* Yiddish author, his works courted controversy: his 1916 novel *Motke the Thief* enraged his critics, with the main characters—both Jewish—being a pimp and a madam. His play *God of Vengeance* from 1927, set in a brothel and featuring a lesbian relationship, ended up with the cast arrested and prosecuted for obscenity charges. These topics did not dissuade Resnick—a big fan who had described Asch as a "genius"⁶⁴—from translating a volume of Asch's short stories in 1928. However, and despite his translated stories to borrow from, he chose to keep Asch's work away from the pages of *Judaica* for seven years.

A potential explanation for Resnick's change of heart about Asch's stories can be found in the 1930 Argentine newspapers. In September of that year, after a year-long investigation, the federal judiciary dismantled a network of Jewish sex-traffickers who brought Jewish women from Eastern Europe and forced them into prostitution in Argentina (and Uruguay and Brazil). Although the members of this organization—the Zwi Migdal—had long been shunned by the Jewish-Argentine community,⁶⁵ the crackdown and investigation filled the scandal-hungry newspapers with dramatic headlines, photographs, and testimonies.⁶⁶ Nativists, xenophobes, and anti-Semites exploited this case as proof of the moral degeneracy of Jews, their deleterious moral influence, and the undesirability of their "race."⁶⁷

This local context of the 1930s, sensitive about any real or fictional links between Jews and prostitution or sexual immorality, can help explain why Resnick adjusted his curatorial criterion *vis-à-vis* Asch. Before the 1930s, the author's use of brothels as setting for plays, stories, and novels was *avant-garde*, but after the Zwi Migdal scandal, it could have played into the hands of antisemitic propaganda claiming that Jews shared a racial propensity towards sexual and financial immorality. Although the translator never explained his favorite author's absence from *Judaica*, the sex-slavery scandal offers a potential lens to understand the importance of local context in Resnick's curatorial criteria.

Judaica finally published Asch in 1940. The occasion was, ironically, another literary scandal. However, Asch's new novel, *The Nazarene*, was only problematic from an intra-ethnic perspective. *The Jewish Daily Forward*, where the author had been a contributor for decades, had refused to finish publishing the novel's installments as a result of the controversy. Asch's re-imagining of

63 Resnick, "Presentación de I. L. Peretz," 61.

64 Kalczewiak, "Let Them Understand!," 304.

65 Their exclusion had been so radical that, banned from the Ashkenazi cemeteries, the pimps had been forced to establish their own burial association.

66 Donna Guy, *Sex and Danger in Buenos Aires: Prostitution, Family, and Nation in Argentina* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991); Sandra McGee-Deutsch, *Crossing Borders, Claiming a Nation. A History of Argentine Jewish Women, 1880-1955* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010); Mir Yarfitz, *Impure Migration: Jews and Sex Work in Golden Age Argentina* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2019).

67 Leonardo Senknam and Saúl Sosnowski, *Fascismo y nazismo en las letras argentinas* (Buenos Aires: Lumière, 2009).

Christ's life as a Jewish religious leader had sparked a storm of outrage within Jewish-American cultural circles. *The Jewish Daily Forward's* rejection escalated into a denunciation campaign by Jewish institutions accusing Asch of promoting the conversion of young Jews to Christianity. The full novel was only published in Yiddish in 1943. However, its English version gained wide acclaim with the American public and critics.

The task of defending Asch fell on Samuel Glusberg (1898-1987), a Jewish-Argentine writer (and co-founder of the *Martín Fierro* literary magazine) living in Chile. He chose to sign with his *nom de plume* Enrique Espinoza. In his introductory essay, Glusberg accused the campaigners against Asch of orthodoxy and zealotry and compared their treatment of the novelist to the shunning of Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677)—whose last name Glusberg borrowed for his pseudonym—by the Sephardic community of Amsterdam in the seventeenth century.⁶⁸

The Nazarene explores the life of rabbi Yeshua ben Joseph (also known as Jesus Christ) as a Jewish religious leader defying the religious powers of his time. Academics have interpreted Asch's work as an attempt to reclaim Jesus's origins and relationship with Jewish belief and practice, a way to bridge the gap between Christianity and Judaism.⁶⁹ *Judaica* accompanied Glusberg's defense with the first chapter of the novel, which Glusberg and his wife translated from the English version.⁷⁰

Although Resnick did not address his change regarding Asch directly, we can hypothesize: First, ten years separated the Zwi Migdal scandal from the author's latest novel. Second, the scandal about Asch's latest book was not about sexual immorality, the uproar was intra-ethnic. American readers had overwhelmingly loved the novel, critical reviews in American periodicals had lauded the exercise of historical fiction, and the English version of *The Nazarene* quickly became Asch's best-selling work. This meant that the odds of a Spanish version of the novel becoming fodder for anti-Semitic propaganda were remote. Resnick likely deemed intra-communitarian outrage to be a manageable problem, unlikely to endanger the image of the Jewish-Argentine community. Third, Asch's effort to establish similarities and dialogues between Christianity and Judaism made the novel attractive to *Judaica*, because it could reinforce narratives of Jewish compatibility in the Argentine milieu, specifically in the religious realm where Jews were often vulnerable to "othering."

The importance that *Judaica's* intellectual circle assigned to curatorial judgement meant that a part of the journal was devoted to reviewing other publishers' efforts in translation. The "Bibliography" section, which could occupy up to twenty pages, often included reviews of books translated into Spanish or from Spanish into Yiddish. Resnick often reviewed Yiddish translations and pointed out the quality of the translation. In a review of Paolo Mantegazza's (1831-1910) *Testa* (then part of the Argentine school canon), translated into Yiddish by cultural activist and radio host Samuel Glasserman (1898-1952), he noted: "[his] version, executed with affection, is accurate, and the reading of the text, light in the original, does not suffer much because of the translation, despite the different language and environment."⁷¹ Resnick's standards were high, but

68 Enrique Espinoza, "'El Nazareno' de Scholem Asch," *Judaica*, n.º 82 (1940): 150.

69 Herman Lieberman, *The Christianity of Sholem Asch* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1953), quoted in Ellen Umansky, "Asch's Passion," *Tablet Magazine*, April 24, 2007. <http://www.tabletmag.com/jewish-arts-and-culture/books/801/aschs-passion>.

70 Scholem Asch, "El Nazareno," *Judaica*, n.º 82 (1940): 152-161.

71 Salomón Resnick, "Review of *Testa*, by Paolo Mantegazza, translated by Samuel Glasserman," *Judaica*, n.º 2 (1933): 90.

he acknowledged exceptional work. In the same issue, he gave high praise to José Mendelson's translation of Alberto Gerchunoff's *Los amores de Baruj Spinoza*: the translator "had to conquer countless difficulties to adequately pour Gerchunoff's rich rhythmical prose, imbued of singular colorfulness [into Yiddish.] [A]nd he has done it with unique sureness and elegance."⁷² The editor nominated Mendelson to also translate Gerchunoff's most famous novel, *Los gauchos judíos*.

When the publisher or translator ran afoul of *Judaica*'s standards, their reviews were scathing. In the second half of 1933, a new Jewish-Argentine publishing house released its first book. Editorial Sem translated *Romance of a Horse Thief*, the first Spanish version of Joseph Opatoshu's novel. This book, first published in 1912, told the story of Jewish horse smugglers in Poland and Germany, and romanticized these unsavory characters.⁷³ At first sight, the publishers echoed *Judaica*'s call to make Jewish literature accessible for an Argentine readership. Sem defined its work as an attempt to preserve and disseminate Yiddish culture in Argentina, with the novel as the debut of a collection called "Compendium of Jewish treasures." *Judaica* contributor Antonio Portnoy devoted several pages to his review.

The reviewer disparaged translator Juan Goldstraj's (1899-1968) dominion of local language: his version had "forced and violent expressions, which conspire against the canon and spirit of the Spanish language."⁷⁴ Even worse, Goldstraj had replaced Opatoshu's Yiddish vulgarities with *lunfardo* expressions. As a consequence, the potential readership was limited to the capital city and its immediate surroundings, where such jargon was intelligible.

The worst offense of all, however, was the publisher's selection of *Romance of a Horse Thief* as its debut into the Spanish language. Portnoy considered that this story was far from the best of Opatoshu's works. The author had at least two acclaimed novels that had sold out several editions in the United States and Europe. Additionally, considering the wealth of great fiction in Yiddish, it was a poor choice for Sem's first translation, and as the opening book for a collection seeking to represent Yiddish literature. Most importantly, *Romance of a Horse Thief*, given the character of its protagonist and its reliance on vulgarity, was a terrible ambassador of Jewish-Argentines that could jeopardize how local elites understood Jews and Jewish values:

Schloime [sic], a professional thief, criminal, and fanatic brutalized by alcoholism, is not a worthy hero to launch a selection of Jewish [literary] works[.] [M]ore importantly, [this character] cannot elevate, but rather will demean the concept of the Jewish people in the eyes of the Christians that Sem publishing house is doubtlessly interested in reaching.⁷⁵

The reviewer shared Resnick's belief in the power of the written word to shape the worldview of readers and was concerned that Sem's curatorial malpractice could have detrimental results. For *Judaica*'s contributors, translation was not an end in itself, but rather a central strategy in a broader cultural project with sociopolitical consequences: a mechanism for safeguarding the continued existence of Jewish ethnic particularity and convincing local elites of its value.

72 Salomón Resnick, "Review of *Los amores de Baruj Spinoza*, by Alberto Gerchunoff, translated by José Mendelson," *Judaica*, n.º 2 (1933): 92.

73 "Joseph Opatoshu," Yiddishikayt, accessed August 28, 2020, <https://yiddishikayt.org/view/joseph-opatoshu/>

74 Antonio Portnoy, "Review of *El romance de un ladrón de caballos*, by José Opatoshu, translated by Juan Goldstraj," *Judaica*, n.º 5 (1933): 225.

75 Portnoy, "Review of *El romance de un ladrón de caballos*," 225.

Publishers unaware of this were blindly swinging a double-edged sword and could jeopardize the status of Jewish-Argentines by portraying them as anything other than moral adoptive citizens and productive members of the *patria*. Resnick's staff inhabited the contradiction of seeing their journal as an example for others to follow, while harboring mistrust about new agents challenging their monopoly on curatorial discretion.

5. The Question of Reception

Was *Judaica* successful as a project of intellectual mediation? Did Resnick manage to positively influence the Argentine elites' understanding of Jews and Jewishness? How indebted is Jewish-Argentine identity to his and his colleagues' efforts? These questions are difficult to measure, as is the case with matters of reception. We know that *Judaica* was not in broad circulation: it was an elite literary journal, aiming to reach Jewish-Argentine cultural activists, institution leaders, and members of the Argentine intellectual elites. The data for how many copies each issue had is unavailable, but apparently *Judaica* did not have the reach to strongly influence Jewish-Argentine identity. Resnick's project, particularly his translated books, also faced structural limitations. The Argentine publishing industry was still developing in the 1930s. Moreover, professional editors and publishers privileged translations into Spanish from the canonical literary languages: English, French, and German.⁷⁶ Resnick claimed that the journal reached every country in the Americas with a Jewish community, which is supported in part by the letters he reproduced every so often from writers and intellectuals (both Jewish and non-Jewish) from Bolivia, Chile, Mexico, Peru, and the United States; consequently, questions remain about its impact with Jewish communities in the Americas.

There are indirect sources that can shed light on reception, like reprints of Argentine newspapers for *Judaica*'s tenth anniversary, along with congratulatory letters and telegrams from the Americas, which included famous (non-Jewish) Argentine writers.⁷⁷ The list included, among others, historian and geographer Enrique de Gandía (1906-2000), reader and contributor, as well as anarchist playwright Rodolfo González Pacheco (1882-1949). Surprisingly, one letter congratulating Resnick and the editorial staff was from Manuel Gálvez (1882-1962), author and intellectual aligned with the "nationalist reaction," defender of the importance of the Hispanic character of Argentineness and enemy of "cosmopolitanism." In his missive, he defined himself as "a loyal reader of *Judaica*, one of the most interesting journals of the country. Besides, *Judaica* has allowed us to better know the Hebrew people,⁷⁸ so slandered by the suggestible and envious."⁷⁹ His note, and especially how it echoed Resnick's explicit goals, provides some anecdotal evidence of success.

Another clue into reception lies in the double issue published in 1940 to celebrate Resnick's first works of translation, two books of short stories by I. L. Peretz. This issue reprinted reviews of the books from (non-Jewish) Argentine periodicals. Although Resnick likely chose the reviews that presented a positive reception, an analysis of these pieces sheds light on several aspects of the project:

⁷⁶ Dujovne, "Spanish Discovers Yiddish," 106-107.

⁷⁷ Editorial, "Ecos de nuestro número especial," *Judaica*, n.º 127 (1944): 47-48; Editorial, "Ecos de nuestro aniversario," *Judaica*, n.º 130-131 (1944): 208; Editorial, "El homenaje a '*Judaica*,'" *Judaica*, n.º 132 (1944): 246-253.

⁷⁸ "El pueblo hebreo," in the original.

⁷⁹ Editorial, "El homenaje a '*Judaica*,'" 248.

First, they offer a glimpse of the representations of Jews by the Argentine literary elite. Second, they help understand how local intellectuals “othered” the symbolic “Jew,” saw their own cultural values and ideological positions reflected in this appropriated signifier,⁸⁰ and how they deployed them to validate their literary positions and attack their opponents within the field.

The compiled reviews include pieces published in one of the country’s main newspaper, patrician *La Nación*; a popular magazine, *Revista Atlántida*; the organ of the Argentine Socialist Party, *La Vanguardia*; and two literary magazines, *Hebe* and *Vida Nuestra*, influential among Argentine intellectuals. An analysis of the reviews illustrates two different but interrelated phenomena. First, Resnick’s curation of Peretz’s *oeuvre* allowed the anthology of stories in Spanish to win over Argentine intellectuals from diverse ideological fields and different—even antagonistic—literary schools. Arturo Lagorio (1892-1969), reviewer for *Hebe*, congratulated the translator for having “the undeniable finesse to select, among the enormous production of the great author, the part most accessible to us and to everyone, the most universal.”⁸¹ Of course, this praise implied that most of Peretz’s stories would be too particularistic and foreign for Argentine audiences.

Second, although these critics welcomed the access that these anthologies granted to a previously unavailable literature, they highlighted the “exotic” character of the world from Peretz’s stories. They differed, however, in which themes piqued their interest. The literary critic of *La Nación*, a traditionalist newspaper, focused on the retelling of folkloric Jewish legends and religious stories, particularly about the Hassidic revival of the eighteenth century. For his colleague at socialist *La Vanguardia*, meanwhile,

the common theme in all of [the stories] is the miserable, persecuted Jewry, hated by everyone, isolated in the ghettos. And in all of his stories the understanding of the centuries-long pain of his race is so clear that it is effortlessly communicated to the reader; and, above all, what a sympathy for the poor, the humble ones, such that the little traces of irony present in the pages cannot begin to hide!⁸²

The socialist critic also mentioned Peretz’s position in the debate between Yiddish and Hebrew literature, which he learned from Resnick’s preliminary study. He saw in the historical rise of modern Yiddish literature a popular revolt led by committed authors against the “intellectual aristocracy” to bring culture to the masses. The *La Nación* critic, however, merely mentioned that Yiddish, while a rich language developed by “an old civilization,” had “only recently acquired clear artistic forms.”⁸³

Juan Torrendell (1869-1937) from *Atlántida* was impressed by Peretz’s themes being “all taken from the life of his people [and] his local environment, no matter how profound the underlying thought,” and praised him as “a model for Argentine writers.” This was veiled criticism of vanguardist authors’ rejection of traditional forms, themes, and styles, which Torrendell reinforced

80 Erin Graff Zivin, *The Wandering Signifier: Rhetoric of Jewishness in the Latin American Imaginary* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008).

81 Arturo Lagorio, “Review of *Los Cabalistas* by Isaac León Peretz, translated by Salomón Resnick,” *Hebe* (1919), reproduced in “Algunas opiniones argentinas sobre I. L. Peretz,” *Judaica*, n.º 80-81 (1940): 90.

82 Unsigned, “Review of *Los Cabalistas* by Isaac León Peretz, translated by Salomón Resnick,” *La Vanguardia*, June 22, 1919, reproduced in “Algunas opiniones argentinas sobre I. L. Peretz,” *Judaica*, n.º 80-81 (1940): 89.

83 Arturo Cancela, “Review of *Los Cabalistas* by Isaac León Peretz, translated by Salomón Resnick,” *La Nación*, June 27, 1919, reproduced in “Algunas opiniones argentinas sobre I. L. Peretz,” *Judaica*, n.º 80-81 (1940): 81.

by arguing that Peretz used “no lexical complications; no syntactic delirium[.] [A]nd his austerity in no way means disdain for novelty or elegance.”⁸⁴ Pablo Rojas Paz (1896-1956), however, the critic for *avant-garde* literary journal *Vida Nueva*, found the opposite values in Resnick’s second volume. He compared Peretz’s work to impressionist vanguardist music:

Peretz is not a narrator in the anecdotal or historicist meaning of the word; Peretz expresses states of being, inner struggles. His stories do not conform to the exhausted [narrative] matrix of setup, confrontation, and resolution. Hence why his language is essentially emotional, his words are not the expression of feelings but actual part of those feelings; [in his work,] words are not vessels carrying meaning but meaning themselves.⁸⁵

The literary sections of Argentine periodicals from across the ideological spectrum highlighted the themes, topics, and styles from Resnick’s curation of Peretz that suited their and their readers’ inclinations, and saw these preferences and positions reflected in the author’s stories. Such a plasticity of meaning was not an original component of the work of Peretz: it was a result of the translator’s work of *intraducción*, and the author’s “foreign” and “exotic” status in the Argentine context. Most reviewers mention the exotic character of the stories. The distance established in the exoticization of Peretz’s *oeuvre* allowed critics to realign his literature, from a body of work with its own inherent meaning into a vehicle for reinforcing their beliefs and positions and battling local ideological fights. The “exotic” otherness of Jews actually eased the cooptation of Jewish narratives and experiences to serve new local purposes.

The critical reception of Peretz’s work, however, shows characteristics that differ from how majorities and elites typically construct “the Other.” Rather than constructing a definition of Argentine literature or nationhood based on the contrast with Resnick’s translations, the critics overwhelmingly highlighted the dimensions of the Yiddish author’s work that—for them—reflected their preferred values and ideologies. Despite their diversity, they related to Peretz’s themes and style, and found legitimation in seeing their preferences mirrored in his stories. Even though the perceived exotic character of his work proved useful to Argentine literary circles, the critics simultaneously established this symbolic distance while also bridging it by highlighting their stylistic and thematic agreement with the Yiddish author.

The accolades received by these anthologies from such diverse sources for achieving apparently contradictory feats confirm the translator’s strategy to win over the broadest segment of the Argentine intellectual class, although it is difficult to ascertain the degree of this success and how much of the Argentine elite it reached. These reviews taught Resnick and his contributors that carefully curated literary dissemination could have an impact, which made the case for further cultural work. It remains unclear, however, whether these symbolic constructions of “exotic” Jews effectively influenced how Argentine elites felt about actual Jewish-Argentines.

84 Juan Torrendell, “Peretz, modelo para los escritores argentinos,” *Judaica*, n.º 80-81 (1940): 78-80.

85 Pablo Rojas Paz, “Review of *Adán y Eva*, translated by Salomon Resnick,” *Vida Nuestra*, 1922, reproduced in “Algunas opiniones argentinas sobre I. L. Peretz,” *Judaica*, n.º 80-81 (1940): 92.

Conclusion

Resnick and *Judaica* acted as intermediaries between (a carefully screened) Jewish—and mostly Yiddish—culture and literature, and the Argentine intellectual milieu. Their production of Jewish representations in Spanish had two specific goals: to convince Argentine elites of the positive impact of Jews for the nation (and counteract antisemitic propaganda), and to create an accessible source of Jewish literary tradition for young monolingual Jewish-Argentines to connect with their cultural heritage and keep the “Jewish spirit” alive. A strategy of curation, translation, and dissemination formed the mechanism for this two-pronged mediation, although *Judaica*’s editorial staff’s belief in the power of cultural translation led them to actively police the field and condemn recklessly curated works.

Judaica translated Jewish works into Spanish and produced its own Spanish-language articles to disseminate positive information about Jewish history and contributions to “Western civilization.” To achieve their goals, Resnick and his staff deployed different narrative strategies to build representations of Jews and Jewish culture, legitimize Jewish presence in the Americas and Argentina, and undermine their opponents’ claims about the harmful nature of Jews.

The local reviews of Resnick’s translated anthologies, as well as the collected letters and notes from their interlocutors in Argentina and Latin America, provide a limited window into the matter of reception. *Judaica* did reach non-Jewish elite readers, including members of the nationalists who were traditionally opposed to immigrants and wary of “cosmopolitanism.” These sources suggest that the strategy of curated translation convinced certain critics of the value of Jewish literature. Although the reviewers understood Yiddish literature to be exotic, this “othering” was simultaneously bridged because the curatorial choices allowed the critics to see themselves and their ideological preferences in the stories.

Clearly, *Judaica* did not eliminate antisemitism from Argentina,⁸⁶ nor would it be fair to measure their success against such an impossible outcome. Still, the question remains as to whether this appreciation of the Jewish character on the printed page effectively translated into acceptance of the Jewish-Argentine on the nation’s streets.

86 Although Jewish-Argentines integrated into Argentine society, right-wing nationalist individuals and organizations continued reproducing anti-Jewish narratives. In the 1960s, the fascist organization Tacuara led a wave of antisemitic attacks against Jewish-Argentine people and institutions after Mossad agents kidnapped Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann in Buenos Aires province and flew him to Israel to stand trial. In the 1970s, Jewish-Argentines were overrepresented in the population of *desaparecidos* during the dictatorship’s genocide (1976-1983), and the regime’s torturers subjected them to even more sadistic torture than regular prisoners. See Juan Manuel Padrón, *¡Ni yanquis, ni marxistas! Nacionalistas. Nacionalismo, militancia y violencia política: el caso del Movimiento Nacionalista Tacuara en la Argentina, 1955-1966* (La Plata and Los Polvorines: UNLP/Editorial de la UNGS, 2017); Daniel Goldman and Hernán Dobry, eds., *Ser judío en los años setenta. Testimonios del horror y la resistencia durante la última dictadura* (Buenos Aires: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 2014); Leonardo Senkman and Mario Sznadger, eds., *El legado del autoritarismo. Derechos humanos y antisemitismo en la Argentina contemporánea* (Buenos Aires: Nuevo Hacer, 1995).

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